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From the Editors

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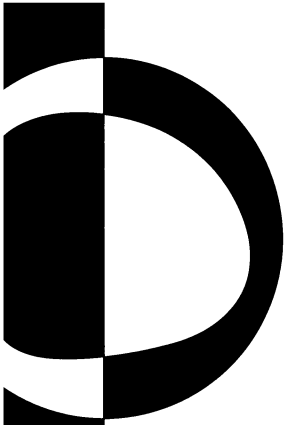
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From the Editors

This is our penultimate “From the Editors” column, and it includes reflections on our time as editors of *The Writing Center Journal*. We knew when we started as editors back in the spring of 2013 that our job consisted of more than producing two issues of the journal annually. Part of our job as editors was to explore opportunities and to anticipate the topics and concerns that impact the writing center field. The copies of the journal that arrive in your mailboxes every six months are important representations of the labor and the thinking of writing center folks—and we’re proud of the quality of work produced by the authors we’ve been honored to work with—but we’ve also been invested in intentionally shaping the identity of the journal and of ourselves as editors.

Editors and journals do not operate in a vacuum; *WCJ* is part of the broader discourse of the writing center community. Because we believe editors play a significant role in how knowledge is generated and articulated for the field, we also we feel the obligation to be answerable to the writing center community. As educational researcher Leigh Patel describes it,

Answerability includes aspects of being responsible, accountable, and being part of an exchange. It is a concept that can help to maintain the coming-into-being with, being in conversation with . . . answerability means that we have responsibilities as speakers, listeners, and those responsibilities include stewardship of ideas and learning, ownership. (pp 73-74)

We’ve always been particularly interested in the “exchange” and “stewardship” aspects of our role as editors. The journal lacks value if it arrives in your mailboxes and only repeats what you already know, or

fails to challenge your understandings in some way, or is simply placed on a bookshelf and is forgotten.

More specifically, we've tried to be answerable as *WCJ* editors in three primary ways:

First, we are answerable for the content of the journal. In our role in serving the IWCA, we have had rich conversations with those interested in the research generated on writing center work. Our tenure as editors began as RAD research was emergent in writing center research, and we continue to believe replicable, aggregable, and data-supported work benefits the field and speaks most clearly to those outside our discipline. The critique of lore and anecdote as the field's sole knowledge base is not unfounded, and intentionally constructed studies of writing center practice can do much to contribute to our knowledge base. However, RAD is not the only way to learn about our work. We value other kinds of projects—theoretical pieces, think pieces, narrative pieces—although we've tended not to receive this type of manuscript. At the end of the day, we've desired pieces that carry enough explanatory power, with or without a study, to teach us something new about our work in writing centers.

Second, we are answerable to our readers. The goal for any journal might be to provide a platform for important ideas the field needs to take up, push back on, uncover, and re-generate—we search for ideas that will engage those working in our field in intellectual ways, ways that foster questions, dialogue, and collaboration. We recognize that a distinguishing trait of our discipline is the range of people in professional roles, everyone from new PhDs in Writing Center Studies to people who have dedicated their careers to writing center work to the faculty member from literature who was told to direct the writing center just two weeks before the semester began—our readers also range from administrators to faculty to staff to graduate students to undergraduates. Along with other editors in other fields, we feel a responsibility to our readers, to our range of readers. This is a kind of ethical stance that makes sense to us: our approach as editors included spending time and energy developing both manuscripts and writers and offering more opportunities for our readers to learn about the research process through our *WCJ Live* events, blog, workshops and retreats, and meetings at conferences. We know our content must complicate understandings and challenge us to explore new ideas—this is how knowledge is generated. We've always asked *WCJ* authors to scaffold their material, to make the writing accessible to a range of readers without compromising quality and complexity. In these ways we have valued inclusivity and helped

steward our field's knowledge base to the next generation of directors and researchers.

Third, we are answerable to our writers. A recent issue of *Composition Forum* included an interview with three editors in the field of composition, rhetoric, and literacy studies. As writing centers fit under this broad umbrella, though the sphere of influence is smaller, we can relate to what these editors tell us. With Victor Villanueva, we see that “a significant part of the job of editor(s) has been in the mentoring.” He advocates reciprocal mentoring with writers that keeps him open to learning as well. We have been able to collaborate extensively with several writers from the early stages of their projects; some met with us after initial submissions, some worked with outside readers, some attended our writing retreats, and all submitted new and better versions of their projects. While this extended process can't realistically happen with every submission, we think our mutual investment has often paid off for the field and the writer—and for us as editors, as we have learned from their engagement in the process.

We hope you'll enjoy and learn from the articles and reviews that follow.

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References

Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability, Leigh Patel, New York: Routledge, 2016.

“Generating the Field” *Composition Forum* 35 (Spring 2017)