Introduction to Special Issue

Expanding Landscapes of Academic Writing in Academia

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Academic writing is essential for disciplinary learning, academic success, knowledge creation, social status, and career advancement within academia (Fang, 2021). Academic research, writing, and publishing form the foundations of the majority of academic positions and remain primary considerations for hiring, renewal, promotion, and tenure in most higher education institutions (Ratković et al., 2019; Rawat & Meena, 2014). Early-career researchers must establish a significant track record of research, including publishing in high-impact journals (Couch, 2020). In graduate programs, academic writing competencies are critical for student success, with doctoral students often led to believe that they must be prolific academic writers to gain entry and advancement within academia (Mandke, 2019).

Traditionally, academic writing has been viewed as "written and printed" (Day, 2005, as cited in Akkaya & Aydın, 2018, p. 129), with the purpose of presenting original research results, proposing theoretical frameworks, and forwarding critical thought, reflection, or positionality to "render the unknown known" (Karasar, 2006, as cited in Akkaya & Aydın, 2018, p. 129). For Fang (2021), "Academic writing is a means of producing, codifying, transmitting, evaluating, renovating, teaching, and learning knowledge and ideology in academic disciplines" (para. 4). The importance of good academic writing lies in communicating complex ideas in a concise, "clear, precise, logical, reasoned, and evidence-based way" (Fang, 2021, para. 8). This format of writing is one of the most powerful tools for sharpening "thinking, remembering, learning and problem solving" (Crisp, 2018, para. 1), creating a space for inquiry, discussion, and/or debate.

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Academic writing is acknowledged as a complex, effortful, time-consuming, and nuanced process that requires technical and genre-specific knowledge, time and task management skills, metacognitive awareness, and emotion regulation in addition to content area expertise (Graham, 2018; Woodhouse & Wood, 2020). Given these complexities and the centrality of writing for career acquisition and advancement, writing and scholarly production can be the root of anxiety and fear for many scholars and are often completed with minimal enthusiasm, joy, and/or positive emotion (Bergen et al., 2020; Julien & Beres, 2019). For these reasons, emerging scholars often benefit from participating in academic writing activities and supports, including writing workshops, groups, and retreats that offer opportunities for mentorship, supportive collegial interactions, and community building (Davis et al., 2016; Kornhaber et al., 2007; Ratković et al., 2019). These events and activities may also provide scholars with opportunities to reflect, extend, and experiment with innovative academic writing methods.

Increasingly, scholars are using narrative, fiction, poetry, playwriting, and other forms of expression as venues for knowledge mobilization and translation (Winters et al., 2020). These scholars argue that stories and creative productions hold universal appeal and extend the reach of scholarship beyond the "ivory tower," broadening and deepening engagements with communities outside academia. Such an approach to academic writing mirrors Boyer's (1990) argument that academic work must be created with and communicated to the public. Moreover, creative writing is a natural bridge to enhancing academic writing as well as building self-confidence, a love for writing (Randolph & Ruppert, 2020), and resilience among emergent writers (Kreuter & Reiter, 2014). Poetry, for example, not only provides insights for wrestling with uncertainty, difficult emotions, life purpose, and healing (Keifer-Boyd et al., 2023; Winters et al., 2020) but also carries the potential to convey important scientific information (Illingworth, 2022). In such a context, scholars are encouraged to explore and extend the nature, processes, and theories of academic writing (Woloshyn et al., 2022).

Scope of Special Issue

This special issue of *Brock Education* brings together articles addressing the nature and process of academic writing and the experiences of researchers, faculty, instructors, staff, and students who engage in scholarly writing. Considerations are provided with respect to promoting and expressing writers' well-being within the writing process. Readers are reminded of the critical role that academic writing holds in supporting and sustaining societal well-being, especially with respect to decolonizing academic writing and promoting social justice and equity within the institution and society. Recommendations for engaging in literature reviews and reflexive writing activities that are intended to promote learning and scholarship are offered. Innovative formats for academic writing are advanced and discussed in the context of knowledge mobilization opportunities and tensions. Finally, this special issue provides unique insights and perspectives related to the future of academic writing in an era of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence.

Overview of Articles

Rickards launches this special issue with an open letter to Academia/School. He argues that the open letter, as a form of legitimate academic writing, plays a pivotal role in decolonizing academic writing and academia; it is often used by marginalized groups, initiates relationship building between sender/author and receiver/reader, and shapes the positionality and subjectivity of the sender/author. Rickards engages in this open letter relationship with Academia/School to remind the institution that recycled knowledge rather than new knowledge, or endlessly copied knowledge—rooted in established theories, methodologies, and structures—is never a new, groundbreaking, problem-solving knowledge. Challenging obedience, orthodoxy, and hierarchy in education (and academic writing), Rickards invites spaces of difference and growth.

Lemon, Francis, and Baker invite readers to reflect on ways to support and promote writer well-being and well-being literacy in academia. Using autoethnography, the authors employ reflexive and metacognitive processes to explore the essence of their professional, personal, and collective well-being as experienced within and throughout their scholarly writing. Throughout their collaborative discussions, the authors highlight tensions between writer identity and scholarly production and provide general principles for writing practices that embody and value writer well-being.

There is little debate about the centrality of the literature review for scholarship. Eminent researchers have long and consistently called for increased attention, focus, and instruction on how scholars, especially emerging scholars, including graduate students, can effectively engage with the literature. In education, there is increasing awareness of the literature review as a research question that may be explored through a multitude of research methods. Drawing upon their experiences of completing systematic literature reviews, Pantic and Hamilton outline steps and considerations related to completing these complex reviews within educational contexts. They provide recommendations for successfully completing systematic literature reviews while addressing potential obstacles and barriers.

Holding a focus on supporting writers and expanding writing contexts, Li deliberates the use of mathematical symbols for conveying complex ideas and relationships in academic writing. Using the pendulum motion equation as a reference point, Li demonstrates how incorporating the idea of probability in academic writing deepens the debate among conceptual, verbal, and mathematical academic writing; allows education researchers to discover new ideas drawing on quantum cognition–supported theories; and helps assess student understanding of mathematical ideals. Li proposes a new taxonomy of academic writing and discusses the implications of the taxonomy for teaching, learning, and writing.

With a focus on supporting the initial and in-service training of health-care professionals, including paramedics, Taylor discusses how interpretative autoethnographic writing can be integrated into the health-care curriculum and ongoing professional development activities. Taylor argues that through participation in reflexive autoethnographic experiences, health-care providers and researchers may challenge worldviews and philosophical orientations that are based in positivist, realist, and objectivist epistemologies and embrace instructional practices that support nuanced considerations for the complexities of patients' unique social and cultural contexts and well-being. An autoethnographic examination of a critical incident experienced early in the author's professional career is provided in support of this position.

Several authors in this special series forward arguments for the use of innovative formats for writing instruction and writing production. These arguments are discussed in the context of an increased focus on enhanced knowledge mobilization and dissemination processes. In her article, Morris-O'Connor describes the potential of using poetic inquiry as a pedagogical tool for promoting reflexivity and graduate-level writing instruction. Drawing upon her experiences as a recent doctoral graduate and graduate-level academic writing support specialist, Morris-O'Connor reflects on the use of found poetry in shaping writer identity. In addition to providing pedagogical suggestions and reflective prompts, she includes a collection of poems (collated from the literature and her personal reflections) that represent enculturation experiences in academia. Morris-O'Connor invites readers to critically review and reflect on these writings in the context of the many covert assumptions and parameters associated with academia and academic writing.

Similar to Li's arguments for the use of mathematical symbols to represent complex concepts and relationships, DeWaard, Forsythe, and Baff discuss how sketchnotes can be used to illustrate mental models and support readers' comprehension, retention, and meaning-making of print material. Forwarding the position that sketchnotes are a form of self-writing that holds the potential to shape the self, these authors engaged in collaborative autoethnography, exploring their sketchnote experiences in the context of their work as educational practitioners and open education scholars. The authors conclude by outlining the benefits, challenges, and opportunities associated with this writing format.

Stories hold universal appeal. Aligned with arts-based research methodologies, Taber posits that fiction-based research offers a venue for portraying the complexities of lived experience through imaginary characters, settings, and contexts. Fictional research holds great promise for making research accessible and relevant to the public. Drawing on her scholarship in antimilitarist research, Taber reflects on the process of writing her debut novel and discusses how fiction-based writing can expand the boundaries of academic writing. Taber provides recommendations for conducting fiction-based research and acknowledges tensions and considerations related to research ethics, scholarship, and the craft of fiction writing.

In the final article of this special edition, Poade and Crawford discuss the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) in academia, recognizing that AI may trigger cheating, promote plagiarism, and diminish the art of writing. To safeguard the creativity and depth of academic writing, the authors propose a novel conceptual algorithmic trickle filter model that informs academic writing and embodies the writer's agency. Poade and Crawford describe their proposed model as an interface of academic writing skills and well-being-informed personal success qualities that cannot be meaningfully mimicked by current AI tools.

In conclusion, this special issue brings together the thoughts and experiences of a diverse set of authors who provide unique perspectives about the essence of academic writing. Using insights from their personal experiences as academic writers and scholars, these authors provide suggestions for effectively (re)conceptualizing and engaging in academic writing, as well as share insights about the use of various writing methods and genres in promoting learning and reflection. Considerations related to the intersections of writing literacy and well-being literacy within academia are forwarded. Finally, readers are reminded that innovative academic writing formats can enhance access to scholarship and promote social justice and equity.

Acknowledgments

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