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Incorporating Critical Technical Literacy into a College Composition Program

In my brief experience as a first year composition (FYC) instructor, my best teaching days are those when I've encountered a topic that resonates with students such that a transformation of knowledge crosses from their personal experience to the classroom, when students "get it" because they've associated their understanding with a new concept and become engaged by the connection. This happens too infrequently. But when this type of moment occurs, students are usually engaged in a discussion of issues with which they connect on a personal level. Some examples of these topics include fashion and branding, technology and gaming, Facebook, cost and value of college, alcohol and drug use: common concerns of college freshman at a working class university.

These experiences reinforce my intuitive assumption that as learners we are more apt to critically engage with subjects with which we have personal interest and experience. Bruce McComsiskey agrees with this approach through his pedagogy of "critical inquiry…[that] help[s] student writers tap into the knowledge they already possess about their own cultural experience, thereby demystifying critical writing for students" (qtd. in Duffelmeyer 359). In English 511, we've read about social-epistemic theory as an ideological foundation informing much of the contemporary composition instruction. An important foundation of this theory is the

notion of decentralization of authority in the classroom. I believe that enabling students to pursue their interests and curiosities around content and the digital technology that we use to evaluate and critique that content, is an essential component to decentralization in a 21st century classroom.

Ira Shor and other educator-scholars have shown transformational power that a more traditional social-epistemic approach to the classroom can take. For this research paper, I am taking as a given, that a social-epistemic classroom is a model worth emulating. In addition to the pedagogical theory underlying a curriculum grounded in digital technology, my research is concerned with answering questions related to how composition instructors can most effectively provide a learning environment that enables students to critically engage with their existing registers of discourse (including the academic) using the appropriate media and technology. My approach is fundamentally informed by a contemporary rhetorical position where all communication is developed, refined, and critiqued according to its position to purpose, audience, composer, and situation.

Most students come to us already steeped in technology and most will enter a workforce that, to varying degrees, relies on functional digital literacy. I believe our duties as educators are to prepare students for this workplace. Some scholars, such as Braun and Anson, view this approach as one that positions our students as commodities that "can be prepared ideologically for the new flexible workforce" (Braun 155). I find this critique to be paternalistic and ideologically rigid. I wonder if such a worldview might run the risk of self-limiting our ability as educators to embrace tools and technology from which our students may benefit? Ultimately, I believe that the ability to critically examine digital content in its various outputs is an essential

requirement for all students leaving the university today, and it is our responsibility to help prepare them for this task.

Therefore, I advocate that we continue to critique how composition departments integrate digital technology into composition practices. I make this suggestion carefully and with qualification. Specifically, I am suggesting that we introduce digital technology only to an extent that our underlying composition pedagogical goals justify the use of technology to achieve those goals. My suggestion is motivated by a desire to help enable the exercise of both student and departmental agency. With regard to fostering a pedagogy that enables students to negotiate their stance with a digital culture: the rest of this paper investigates the potential for using digital technology—as toolset, content focus, and environmental component—as an essential element to teaching composition, so I'll not comment further on that here. But in suggesting a more integrated digital technological toolset for composition departments, I hope to reinforce the origin of agency, in the context of advancing technology solutions based on the needs of composition department pedagogy. This approach makes sense for our students, but it is also a strategic approach in the institution. Anson has discussed how composition departments can be the recipients of technology imposed by administrative fiat from above. As a result, such technical solutions are often at odds with actual educational outcomes (qtd. in Braun 154).

And finally, by grounding departmental technical requirements on a critical, social-epistemic pedagogy, I am challenging the critique that Anson articulates in his assertion that brining technology into the composition department is necessarily a symptom of the corporatization of higher education (qtd. in Braun 154). Braun also critiques the notion of corporatizing on the grounds that an eager embrace of technology in composition programs

overly-emphasizes efficiency at the expense of pedagogy. I hope to illustrate an alternative to this relevant observation.

In sum, my goal in this paper is to investigate how both pedagogy and a curriculum concerned with digital technology might be incorporated into a composition program. I'll start by reviewing some technology related projects that other composition scholar-instructors have documented. My focus in these reviews is concerned with how well the projects engage with students' sense of purpose, or their existing interests and discourses. I will then critique the pedagogical rational of a curriculum grounded in critical technology literacy presented by instructor-scholar, Barbara Duffelmeyer. Finally, I will offer some example scenarios to illustrate how integrating a technology-based pedagogy might look in a traditional composition curriculum.

Literature Review

In this section, I will look at three projects that rely on digital technology. I have two objectives. Firstly, I want illustrate what digital technology projects can look like in the context of composition curriculum. By reviewing these three projects, I am not suggesting that these represent the sum of digital projects; rather, I present these three because I believe they serve as good examples of how relatively straight-forward digital implementations can be used to contribute to some profound results in composition classes. Clearly, the pace of software development will undoubtedly present myriad opportunities for present and future composition instructors who are interested in exploring rhetoric in the digital realm.

Secondly, I hope to show that implementing a curriculum based on digital technology is not necessarily a question of just IT infrastructure, nor is it only concerned with content. It is both, but ultimately, the curriculum I am reviewing relies on digital content as subject, and as

such, two of the three examples I review below do not require IT infrastructure investment. Two of the projects could be implemented with free tools and software that are available online. That said, I hope to show that composition departments ought to continually research technology opportunities and seek institutional support for developing a composition-specific IT infrastructure.

In "Networking, Storytelling and Knowledge Production in First-Year Writing," Octavia Davis and Bill Marsh describe a "private, web-based learning environment…modeled after some of the extracurricular activities (e.g., networking, tagging, blogging, commenting and media sharing) that some of [their] students [already] do" (177). The technical solution—a modular web publishing platform—that the authors implemented for their students differs from institutional courseware (e.g., Blackboard, Angel, Canvass, etc) in a number of ways. The most significant for our purposes here is that the authors' system allows inter-sectional, inter-institutional, and inter-term connectivity. Thus, students are able to contribute to, and benefit from, a discourse community that spans the time, user base, and place beyond that of a single class instance. The result is a much larger discourse community (though still private) that is driven by the interests of the participants. One potential outcome of this broader discourse community is a rhetorical awareness that can emerge from the interactions of students who are critically engaged in subjects of personal interest. The authors illustrate this engagement by describing how keywords applied to content united the students around common interests:

> Recently, for example, numerous students across sections connected through keywords such as "Islam" and "Qur'aan" to share personal experiences, ask questions and try out ideas surrounding fear of Islam in America. In addition, other students brought readings and sharings into their peer review work, saying

> as one did on the topic of homophobia, "I've read your blog entries, and I know you feel strongly about this. I think your writing will be better if you're more blunt, like you are in your blog." (Davis and Marsh 182)

Such an outcome is not likely to occur in a web space limited by class instance that most courseware imposes. As the authors show, by providing a web space that spans across an entire composition department, where many of the students are working on similar writing projects, the potential for critical engagement is enhanced.

While such a solution relies on an IT investment, there is ample educational opportunity presented by the fact that the solution is a web-platform. By deploying a composition-specific web platform within the overall IT infrastructure of the supporting institution, students could work together, in a service-learning model, to design, implement deploy, document, maintain, and archive any number of web-based projects. Later in the document I will outline a potential scenario that further describes how such a curriculum, enabled by a department-specific web platform, might be implemented.

E-zines are another digital project that illustrates how composition students can interact with a discourse community in a meaningful way. Jonathan Alexander describes how he built a FYC class syllabus to "enhance students' rhetorical sensitivity to considerations of audience" (387). Alexander's struggle with what he calls the "staginess" of audience is familiar to me as graduate student teaching composition. Alexander explains how "students wrote for me or for other classmates, a context that students found to be fairly artificial" (388). As instructors, we often place the audience as a primary motivation for rhetorical decision that gives purpose to writing, yet students often (correctly) lament that the "real" audience for assignments is the

instructor wielding the power of the final grade. Alexander's solution, like Paul Sladky before him, was to push audience awareness into the material realm by publishing student work. Sladky, notes that "[w]riting for publication establishes a genuine purpose for student writers by establishing a genuine audience to write for" (qtd. in Alexander 388). Alexander's solution—which culminated in publishing an e-zine—eventually pushed the audience into the center of student-led concern, as they hotly debated, both in class and in online discussion groups, the name, readership, and submission guidelines for their e-zine. The students' debates suggested "a sharpening of insight about the importance—and difficulty—of considering audience" (399). In addition, Alexander found that publishing content to a genuine audience introduced a host of important rhetorical and pedagogical issues into the classroom, where he believed that "students began moving from imitation to invention, from parody to discovery" (399). Some issues the class encountered as central to their purpose were context and genre, that "[p]arodying style isn't equivalent to participating in a discourse community," and that even "traditional writing values [such as] good theses [and] clear organizational structure" were critical to a successful publication (399).

Although e-zines have fallen out of favor as the proliferation of blogs have taken their place, there are important lessons we can use and apply from Alexander's experience with e-zines. The impact of rhetorical necessity described here is valuable enough to warrant creative thinking in creating a modernized version of the e-zine, or web journal. A solution that does not require IT infrastructure would be to use a free web-publishing solution like Word Press to publish a class journal that operates within a broader network of other composition journals in the institution. Requiring students to critique and interact with other composition journals might catalyze the type of discourse that engages students in a way that Alexander describes. Ideally,

an e-zine or journal would be created on a platform that is deployed within the user authentication context of the institution, but administered (i.e., delegating user access rights, designing and configuring web spaces, etc) by the composition department. This model would allow both a private and public web space. The private (authenticated) space could be used for pre-publishing: a "staging" area where students could view, comment upon, and iteratively develop the content before it went live to the public space on the internet.

The e-portfolio is another example of a digital project that has the potential to provide a foundation for transforming existing student digital experience into a space of critical awareness. In "The Digital Imperative: Making the Case for a 21st-Century Pedagogy," J. Elizabeth Clark describes the successes of an e-portfolio that spans "across student's tenure at a college," offering "a platform for considering questions of digital identity and audience [where] students explore the public/private nature of writing, ownership of their own writing, and the importance of crafting an argument for a particular audience" (29). The e-portfolio, as a public, chronological artifact of a student's college experience, provides a professional space for students to "actively seek authorship, gaining confidence and a particular authority over their own experiences" (30). Clark also provides anecdotal evidence of how, at the individual class level, an e-porfolio encourages students to create a "connected body of work." The rhetorical situation imposed by the e-porfolio drives purpose into each component piece as a part of the whole. As a result, the e-portfolio has potential to teach the rhetorical nature of the technology that shapes the digital media experience: visual, aural, hyperlinking, tools, standards, formatting, etc.

From an implementation perspective, the e-portfolio is similar to the e-zine; while online freeware and web solutions are available to students, an institutional solution ought to provide a

more flexible, robust and controlled (i.e., ad-free, access-controlled, etc) environment for students. In addition, given its audience—potential student employers—and the public-facing nature of the e-portfolio, a strong association with the student's institution is an important rhetorical consideration.

Rhetorical Analysis

In "Critical Work in First Year Composition: Computers, Pedagogy, and Research," Barbara B. Duffelmeyer expands upon the scholarship of computers and critical literacy by describing a pedagogical approach that centralizes the student content on computers. For the purpose of this analysis, I'll refer to this pedagogy, where content is grounded in the critique of digital technology as *critical technology literacy*. I find Duffelmeyer's elucidation of her pedagogy particularly helpful as a means to position the technology-based projects that I've discussed in the literature review. In fact, as a result of my analysis of Duffelmeyer's article, I've been reminded of the importance of rationalizing the purpose of digital projects more concretely around pedagogy and outcome goals. As this analysis will show, critical technology literacy serves as an ideal pedagogical foundation for the digital projects that I've explored thus far.

Duffelmeyer begins her essay by pointing out that while it's true that the scholarship around computer-enhanced pedagogy may be maturing, the culture-at-large, i.e., our students, are still mostly engaged in a dichotomous either-or relationship with technology. The characterization of the positive influence of technology on our culture, economy, and society is ubiquitous. The opposite conclusion is also shown time and again through the analysis of popular media and journalists' characterization of technology; especially as it concerns the younger demographic that fills our composition classes (Thurlow). With a goal of helping our students achieve a more balanced and nuanced perspective towards technology, Duffelmeyer relies on

Berlin's assertion that writing is epistemic, that "[we] are teaching a way of experiencing the world, a way of ordering and making sense of it" (qtd. in Duffelmeyer 358).

Duffelmeyer asserts that the goal of critical digital pedagogy should be to encourage students to "reflect on and articulate their relationship to digital technology, the forces that influenced the formation of that relationship," and ultimately to articulate their position of agency with regard to digital technology. Specifically, the pedagogy should provoke a student to "think relationally," a concept described by Carspecken and Apple as "the ability to make connections between the microconditions of one's experiences and the cultural macroconditions that affect them" (qtd. in Duffelmeyer 360). It's worth noting in this context that the critical technology pedagogy, as described by Duffelmeyer, is not intended "to promote an ideological stance (e.g., pro-Marxism, anticapitalism, neo-Ludditism)[1]" (360).

A fundamental goal of any critical pedagogy is to explore hegemonic thinking. In the context of technology, according to Duffelmeyer, we start this exploration by discussing the fundamental assumptions our culture believes about technologies. Christina Hass calls these "cultural myths;" they include the idea that technology is a "transparent" or "neutral" toolset; that technology, its effects, and its continual trajectory of "improvement" is out of our control,

[1] One may criticize the idea here that in "not promoting" an ideological stance, we are in effect promoting the powerful cultural hegemony around the myths that surround technology and the underlying effects and assumptions of capital. This critique appears to follow the general trend of Jameson-style Marxist criticism whereupon the conception of indivuation is disregarded as a repressed object of the material society. I side with Rushing and Frentz in their critique of Jameson-style interpretation of Marxist criticism as myopically focused on society to the detriment of the individual potential (Rushing and Frentz 513). Though not the goal, I believe that if properly executed, the pedagogy outlined in this paper would provide a critical framework for students to radically challenge, among other ideological stances, the foundational hegemonic assumptions of late-capitalism.

and certainly not our job or problem; "[i]f there are negative effects, someone else is responsible" (qtd. in Duffelmeyer 359).

One important perspective that Duffelmeyer does not confront is the experience of the technologically marginalized student. Ultimately, there appears to be an underlying assumption in Duffelmeyer's pedagogy that students enrolled in her courses have some basic experience and interaction with computers. Given Duffelmeyer's student demographic at Ohio State University, her lack of perspective here is not likely an oversight. But for educators at community colleges and universities with working class demographics, the technologically marginalized student may be more represented and therefore demands consideration in the context of this pedagogy.

When it comes to exploring the hegemonic thinking around technology, could such a pedagogy further marginalize students who do not have (or have very little) direct experience with computers? While this is an area that warrants further research, the nature of hegemonic values are by definition imposed upon all members of the society, whether marginalized or not. An ideal approach to this curriculum would recognize, respect, and draw out the marginalized perspective as fundamental to a critical inquiry of hegemonic values.

An important element to critical inquiry in the context of composition pedagogy is qualitative analysis through research. Duffelmeyer encourages her students to attempt to qualify the hegemonic stance towards technology. To this end, she poses research questions that pivot on the notion of the technological cultural myths:

> What is the source of these cultural myths? What does it mean that our culture finds them comfortable and accepts them without thinking? How do these myths and our acceptance of them affect our lives (Duffelmeyer 360)?

As a result of this work, she claims that "by revealing and examining commonsense assumptions, such as the cultural narratives about technology...students are co-inquirers and stand to gain considerably increased agency from the results of their inquiry" (Duffelmeyer 360).

The approach that Duffelmeyer takes in this inquiry mainly positions students as consumers of digital technology. If students gain "considerable" agency from the inquiry with a student-as-technology-consumer approach, how might agency be further enhanced by a pedagogy that encourages student-as-producer? As Alexandar suggests in his e-zine project, producing digital, public-facing content serves as a "forum for students' burgeoning awareness of how to move in and among … various audiences, contexts, and sites of potential political and cultural action" (407).

Given this potential, assume the research inquiry Duffelmeyer proposes was framed in the broader context of a digital project, such as a web journal where students would have to define the publishing parameters. At some point, either implicitly or explicitly, students would have to agree on an underlying philosophy on which to implement a publishing process. Do they publish everything? What is the bar? To what extent should grammar matter? What kind of subject is off-limits, if any? I suggest that in the context of student-producer, Duffelmeyer's research inquiry of cultural myths might bring the complexities of the hegemonic influence into a distinctly material realm.

A central theme that Duffelmeyer advocates through her pedagogy is the "social constructedness of perceptions and knowledge" (361). She outlines a process, through the curriculum of the technology narrative, that encourages students to recognize their previous and existing stances with technology so that they may frame an examination of "previously

unimagined or rejected positions" (361). Ultimately, the goal is for students to formulate a "negotiated stance" towards technology. This process, as ideally realized through Duffelmeyer's technology narrative curriculum epitomizes the social-epistemic tradition. She makes a point of including the computer as part of the content, "available for critique, and part of the environment of the classroom," thereby extending the range of technology beyond that of a tool to one, partly, of subject, which enables students to fully contextualize their "negotiated stance" (361).

The final and critically important component of Duffelmeyer's pedagogy is her introduction of multiple viewpoints around technology. In her curriculum, students read essays that "significantly complicate the comfortable hegemonic stance on the social implications of digital technology by presenting views that are neither oppositional nor hegemonic" (365). Students then summarize and analysis these texts. It's difficult to imagine an effective implementation of a critical technological literacy that did not include a core set of challenging reading. While essays from Duffelmeyer's list of readings[2] are engaging and ought to be considered, I believe it's important to keep the list temporally fresh to ensure relevancy for our students. In addition, I would ground the list with one or two essays to serve as a foundation of accessible academic theory, but otherwise tilt the weight of the list more towards popular critical commentary. Though the approach I am suggesting here certainly requires more research, my limited experience with FYC students has shown an eager engagement with popular criticism, especially if it follows a more rigorous academic set of theoretical content.

[2] Clifford Stoll's (1997) "On Classrooms, with and without Computers"; Franklin Saige's (1997) "Mega Buys"; Neil Postman's (1997) "Virtual Students, Digital Classroom"; Michael Meyer and Anne Underwood's (1999) "Crimes of the 'Net' "; May Kadi's (1999) "Welcome to Cyberia"; and Emily Jessup's (1997) "Feminism and Computers in Composition Instruction."

Through this brief analysis of Duffelmeyer's pedagogy, I hope to have provided a useful perspective from which to further evaluate the digital projects which I introduced in this essay. What I hope to have illustrated is the broader pedagogical goals and outcomes that a curriculum grounded and concerned with digital technology might offer. While I do not yet have a comprehensive curriculum defined, this inquiry has provided what I consider a pedagogical foundation, with illustrations of possible implementation, to warrant further development into a composition curriculum. As such, I will conclude this inquiry, not with a curriculum, nor a set of assertive conclusions, but instead, with a sketch of a potential scenario that draws on the pedagogy and curriculum presented in the preceding inquiry.

Scenarios: How a Critical Technical Literacy Might Be Implemented

This final section describes user scenarios for the purpose of illustrating some of the pedagogy and projects discussed in the preceding inquiry. Specifically, the scenarios focus on how a curriculum based on such pedagogy might be phased into a composition department where a more traditional curriculum is well-established. This section is divided into three subsections; first, I start with a brief technical overview, the goal of which is to provide a description of the basic technical infrastructure that is required to realize the scenarios presented in the following subsections. The two remaining subsections focus on describing the composition student experiences in a program where critical technical literacy is just beginning to be implemented.

A. Scenario Technology Overview: CompWeb

The scenarios I present here rely on the creation of a composition department web platform, hereafter referred to as CompWeb. Such a platform would allow the creation of web sites, blogs, e-portfolios, and other common web outputs. Technically, CompWeb would be a server or set of servers that run a web publishing platform, such as WordPress, Drupal, Joomla,

etc. Modern web publishing platforms are relatively low cost, well-understood, and capable of module-based, incremental deployment of features. Conceptually, deploying modular-based features onto a web platform is similar installing an "app" on a mobile device. As such, the modular nature of web platforms is an important characteristic in that it allows flexibility of customization over time. Such flexibility is an essential feature for a composition platform.

CompWeb would differ fundamentally from courseware, or learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard, Canvas) in that CompWeb users[3] would not be bound to the service in the context of a single class instance. Rather, CompWeb would use the existing institution's user directory and authentication mechanisms to authorize and delegate access to institutional users, independent of the classes they are enrolled in. CompWeb would allow publishing content to the public internet and it would allow publishing to private spaces within the institutional intranet[4].

Though CompWeb would be designed and administrated by direction of the composition department, integration and operational cooperation with the existing institutional IT

[3] "User" is a troublesome, jargony, and overused term that takes many shades of related meaning in technical content. For example, in this sentence, a "user" is any person who uses the system, which could be student, staff, or faculty. Later, I refer to "user directory" and "seamless user interaction" where "user" is more abstracted to describe an IT infrastructure component and a design implication, respectively. I employ the word "user" throughout the scenario section according to various technical shades of meaning for the purpose of brevity.

[4] It's worth noting that learning management systems (LMS), such as Canvas, provide some rudimentary blogging and e-portfolio functionality. In the context of rhetorical potential for the students that would be producing content in these scenarios, there is a fundamental difference between LMS and a web platform that bears calling out. That difference is the business that drives the design of a given vendor's software solution. As a web platform, the essential business that drives the software design is to create the easiest-to-use, most customizable, platform on which people (non-specialists) can design, create, and produce web-based content. Compare this to the "business" of educational institutions for which a vendor such as Canvas might optimize their design. The resulting LMS, I would argue, is software that is better optimized for the administrators (both technical and academic) and faculty than it is for the student users. This is a common design fault of enterprise software. Cursory interactions with Canvas "features" such as blogging and the e-portfolio support this critique.

infrastructure would be required for seamless user interaction. As a result, the responsibility for deploying, operating, and maintaining the service ought to reside with the experts in the institutional IT organization. Lastly, CompWeb, as described in these scenarios would not be tasked with service as a document management system (e.g., Sharepoint), nor would it serve as a replacement for the student-related functionality (grading, calendaring, assignment-management, etc) of existing learning management systems.

B. Introduction to Technical Communication Composition Scenario

Because my inquiry thus far has focused mostly on FYC programs, beginning my scenario with a Technical Communication class may seem contradictory. But I like this model because it distributes digital technology pedagogy across a composition department in a way that recognizes the potential for the curriculum to provide a deeper relevance for more students than a curriculum that focuses only on a single composition course.

Our story begins in a second-year English class, "Introduction to Technical Communication." It is day one when April, a Design major, shows up for class. The class is made up of 25 students from the various programs (Computer Science, English, Design, Engineering, etc) that require "Introduction to Technical Communication" as part of the major. As the instructor hands out the syllabus, he describes the course as a "service learning" class. April is eager to find out what the project for the quarter will entail. She is surprised to find that the syllabus includes a functional specification. The specification describes some high-level requirements for the service learning project. The functional specification contains some basic details:

- It defines an end-of-quarter deliverable, a web space called "Composition Journal Online." The primary user-audience is defined as the students in the FYC courses. Secondary users include institutional users (faculty, administration, other students), and anonymous internet users.
- It explains the basic technical platform on which the journal will be built: an institutional version of WordPress hosted on CompWeb.
- It lays out a high-level milestone-based schedule, with required weekly status presentation updates.
- It states that the journal they are building will be the first version on which next quarter's Technical Communication's class will continue to develop. As such, they must document the on-going maintenance and procedural operations that the next class will need to continue publishing the journal.

April and her classmates have many questions that the specification doesn't address. For example, the specification does not describe what kind of academic content should be on the journal, nor does it identify teams or team members. It also does not specify any design requirements. April and other students asks the instructor about these apparent omissions. He explains that these are all issues that the class needs to sort out. In the context of the project, he is available to provide consultation and to help "unblock" efforts that require action from other departments or within the composition department. He then hands out the weekly reading list that contains standard technical communication theory and application.

As the class reads theory about audience, scenario, end state, and desired state, they figure out that a set of interviews must happen very quickly with some of the instructors and

students of the FYC classes. Based on these interviews, the class specifies a plan for the content requirements of the site.

As the quarter progresses, the class implements their understanding of technical design in their development of the site. They are behind schedule, but they are prioritizing their work to make sure they can launch by finals week with a basic set of content. To do so, they must cut some features completely, while scaling others back, and focusing their efforts on the core features of the site.

At the end of the quarter, the site goes live: while rudimentary, it provides a way to highlight student work in the FYC program. In addition, the class has produced comprehensive administrative and design guides for next quarter's class to build upon.

The following quarter, a new batch of Technical Communication students picks up a functional specification on their first day of class. They learn that they are charged with reviewing and updating the design, editorial philosophy, and feature set of the existing site. In addition, they must keep the administrative and design guides up-to-date, and they must create a draft style guide for the Journal. This second class is beset with many of the issues that confronted the first class. Through interviews, they figure out how to prioritize the fixes they want to make to the site and by the end of the quarter, they have incrementally improved the quality, look and feel, and basic functionality of the site.

C. First Year Composition Class Scenario

Anthony is nervous about taking English composition. Although he's lived in America since he was eight, English is not his first language. He was required to take a developmental writing class before he could take the university standard FYC course. Now that the he's enrolled,

he's eager to "get it over with." In the first day of class, Anthony looks through the syllabus to find that it consists of three units: an in-class essay, a narrative, and a researched argument. As the instructor discusses the syllabus, she explains that all of the assigned reading content for the course is centered on digital technology. Anthony is not quite sure what to make of this. While he's had some interaction with computers, he does not consider himself technically savvy.

i. In-class Essay Exam Unit

The first week of reading is difficult for Anthony; the instructor has assigned a challenging academic article about technology. As the class discusses the article in groups and online, Anthony begins to make sense of the broad ideas in the article. The next article is from BuzzFeed and describes the differences in how Facebook and Google generate ads. Class discussion around this article becomes animated when people disagree on what it means to "Like" something on Facebook and how that relates to how the site makes money. Over the next couple weeks the class reads more articles, summarizing, discussing, and rhetorically analyzing them with a goal to determine how the producers of the content conceive of audience.

Prior to the final in-class essay for the unit, students must work out their position for a given technological stance by posting an opinion blog entry on Composition Journal Online (CJO). CJO is a public-facing web site that is maintained by upper-division Technical Communication classes. In addition to posting, FYC students must comment on at least three other blog posts generated by students in other sections of FYC.

ii. Researched Argument Unit

Anthony passes the in-class essay, but he's happy to be done. The Researched Argument is the big unit in the class: it is worth the most points and takes up the most time. During the Essay Exam Unit, Anthony really enjoyed reading about how imagery can be used to make an

"argument." He found the idea fascinating, but he can't quite wrap his mind around how an image can make an argument. He's interested in learning more about that and decides to take it on for his research question.

His first step is to create a draft annotated bibliography. The instructor requires that all students publish their draft annotated bibliographies on CompWeb. Unlike the public-facing CJO, the FYC space configured for annotated bibliographies on CompWeb is only viewable by students in the institution. After Anthony uploads his annotated bibliography, he uses a tool to generate keyword tags. As a result, he notices that two other students in other FYC classes are doing their research project on themes that also rely heavily on visual concepts. As required by the assignment, Anthony connects with these other students to set up an online peer review discussion group. Anthony also uses his key words to search the FYC archives from the previous quarter and finds two more related bibliographies. By the time Anthony sits down to write his initial draft and continue researching, he's armed with a prioritized set of key words and phrases as well as two foundational sources. In addition, he's narrowed his research question to a focused inquiry about online visual advertisements and how it might impact college-aged students.

iii. Technology Narrative Unit

The final assignment in Anthony's class is the Technology Narrative. The narrative will be published to the public internet on CJO. Using the knowledge he's built up from the research paper and the essay exam, Anthony is now interested in critiquing the way he presents his own persona on Facebook and how that influences and relates to the visual media that is generated as he browses the internet. Although he knows that the narrative he is publishing on CJO is probably only going to be viewed by a few peers and some faculty, he's looking forward to

having a finished narrative that is “real” and “live” on the internet. He plans on forwarding the link to his friends and family.

While Anthony is still finding his footing with both academic writing and producing digital content, his time in FYC has provided him with an experience that will allow him to better navigate these new realms with a bit more confidence. His next and final FYC course is a research-based course that will further develop his composition skills and his familiarity with producing digital content. The second FYC course also uses CompWeb and CJO for collaboration, publishing, and research.

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