How Digital Writing Changes the Writing Process: A Research Analysis

Throughout history, the art of writing has always seemed to be a great indicator of a person's future success, both socially and professionally. When people write, they are able to form an identity on the page, and an awareness of their presence in learning environments and environments of social participation. In today's world, it seems as if the necessity for writers has only exponentially increased, even as societies are becoming more technological and digitized. It is interesting to note that this "new" technological world has changed almost every aspect of the way humans live, communicate and interact with one another. The internet, with its various social media platforms, digital cultures and databases of digitized information, has even affected something as timeless as the art of writing. Although there are many people who still ponder whether or not this call for digital writing is more effective than traditional forms of writing, it seems that these opinions do not affect its lingering presence on the world's stage. Thus, the question becomes how the act of writing digitally has changed the fundamentals of the writing process, and how people should adapt their skills in writing to a more modern perspective. It is without a doubt that the computer and other forms of technology have dramatically changed how people write, and the ways in which they use the Internet to develop their writing processes. As Caplan states in her recent 2018 article, "We are surrounded by more digitally infused writing than ever before; not only in our scholarship, but also in the way we encounter literature, news, theatre, visual art and public discourse" (Caplan 150). Essentially, digital writing has changed the way people go about their everyday lives. To understand the nature of digital writing and its impact on the writing process, it is necessary to explore the elements and functions of writing from an entirely different point of view than ever before. With this goal in mind, this essay will explore and analyze the various ways in which digital writing has changed the fundamentals of traditional writing and the writing process. Because it is hard to deny that digital writing is

an entirely new art, the focus will be on change in three categories; how digital writing changes the way writers are able to distribute their work, how it changes the tools that are essential to the writing process, and how it changes the way the act of writing is taught in schools.

Certainly, writing on digital platforms and for digital cultures has changed the way writers are able to distribute their work. With digital technology, writers are everywhere; not only in scholarship, but in chat rooms, emails, text messages, and blogs, responding to news reports and even reporting the news themselves (Yancey 4). With digital writing, the fundamental definition of a writer has changed. No longer is a writer only someone who writes for traditional media sources or scholarly journals. Pieces of writing that range from a blog post to an academic article are now both commonplace in today's world; they are informed without being too fact-based and voiced for both experts and a general audience (Steffi 1). Digital writing has redefined who and what a writer can be, and in this way, allows a newly accepted group of writers to express voice and personal inclination in a variety of ways.

Because the definition of a writer has changed to include a wider breadth of people, it has also changed the way in which information is distributed and received. In this case, the Internet - or more broadly, the digital space where information can be acquired - serves as a strong force in what part of the world those pieces of writing can reach, and the pace at which they are consumed. Over time, an increased number of writing migrated to the Internet, and along with it, standardized technological support for that writing became commercially viable (Brandt 150). In other words, recent years have shown that digital networks are the most effective and most available means of sharing content and information with the rest of the world. In this way, it is safe to assume that it will only continue to increase in relevance as time goes on. Because the outreach on a piece of writing can reach digital platforms, or even

different media and social platforms, the distribution of knowledge and information becomes almost instantaneous and thus, applicable to both professional and global audiences. It has been argued that Internet-based writing practices have turned the world into a more connected, global, and consolidated network; professional consciousness has developed regionally, nationally, and internationally through the use of platforms such as email, digitized databases and websites (Brandt 155). Ultimately, digital writing has proved to be effective in redefining what a writer constitutes as, and reaching a wider audience that is perhaps more targeted while simultaneously being more global. Writing is no longer only for other writers in public discourse and academia, but for all people with an interest in what is being written and how.

Along with a change in the distribution of writing, digital writing has also changed the tools that are essential to the writing process. It is first important to note that certain elements of composing remain the same regardless of the platforms in which they are composed. The dimensions of digital texts are no different from those of print or oral texts; all require attention to the purpose and argument forward by the writer, the needs and expectations of the audience, and the overall sociocultural context of the communication (Eyman & Ball 114). Similarly, the phases of writing remain fundamentally the same; planning, drafting, reflecting, drafting and revising are all key elements to any piece of writing. What changes, instead, is the way in which these different phases are performed, and how they interact with one another digitally. When writing digital texts, the focus is no longer only about what is being written, but how that writing is presented stylistically. The use of tools is different here than in traditional writing. Digital writing requires and invites the incorporation of media such as audio, video, imaging and much more. Authors of digital texts ask themselves a different variety of questions and face different challenges in their writing. For example, the challenges of choosing whether or not to incorporate audio or visuals in their writing (Eyman

& Ball 114-115), or to even see word-processed texts as objects that even require design (Eyman & Ball 115).

In another way, the tools used in digital writing make the writing process easier and more efficient. For example, spell-checkers and editing programs build less of a reliance on knowledge of language and grammar; as they speed up the process of editing and proofreading. In a 2015 study done on high school students, 94.4% of them agreed that writing with digital tools enabled them to use more interesting vocabulary and varied sentence structure (Nobles & Paganucci 22). What this proves is that writing digitally makes writing easier, and in a sense, better than with more traditional forms. It also allows for a more inclusive and interactive editing process. Not only are writers able to edit their work at any stage of writing, they can edit other's work in real time, as it is being written which allows them to both think critically, and constantly consider ideas from different perspectives (Steffi 1). With digital writing, there is the opportunity to write quicker, better and more efficiently. Fundamentally, it invites instant feedback that can only improve the quality of the writing itself. In this way, we see how digital writing changes the writing process into something that is more open and recursive, instead of the linear, fixed process it is perceived to be. Not only does this allow for creativity in the long run, but ultimately a varied strength in the final products.

In the same way that digital writing changes the distribution of texts, and the tools used in the writing of those texts, it also changes the way the act of writing is taught in today's world. Many of the world's educators have had to change their styles of teaching to match the more inclusive and productive ways that students learn. It is without a doubt that today's students have a more innate knowledge of technology and how to manipulate it, than the instructors who are in charge of their education. It has even been argued that today's teachers continue to teach traditional curricula, rather than teaching content such as software,

as well as the ethics and politics that go with it (DeVoss et al. 26). With this belief comes the notion that writing has changed in its digital form, and thus, the way that writing is taught must also be changed. At all levels, teachers play a vital role in helping young people learn to think critically about new media, to recognize the evolving nature of authorship and audience, and to develop an understanding of the social and ethical issues involved in all forms of communication (DeVoss et al. 5). In simple terms, it is the role and responsibility of educators to begin viewing technology and the digital world as something that can help their students learn and grow.

In terms of writing, there has been a shift in what people understand good and effective writing to be. Students are at the beneficence of so many digital tools that could aid them in their education. There is a call for teachers to help guide their students to become effective digital writers. "For teachers, it is not simply a matter of "integrating technology" into the school day, but rather a matter of uncovering the most powerful uses of technology to accomplish learning goals for specific students" (DeVoss et al. 29). Because technology has become such an integral part of people's everyday lives, it is important to keep up with this shift even in schools. Digital writing requires teachers and students to shift their thinking about what it means to be a writer, how composing happens, and the audience that their writing is addressing (DeVoss et al. 37). Writer theorist Marie Nordmark states, "Writing in the digital classroom means understanding and knowing how and when to use interactional communication and artefacts as learning resources in the classroom (Nordmark 65). Although just one opinion of many, this proves that there has been a shift in the pedagogical approach of writing in today's world. Digital writing requires that flexibility and connectivity that technology can provide. For example, when teachers allow students to compose digitally, they take advantage of digital tools such as word processing and the feedback provided by online environments (Nobles & Paganucci 28). In short, communicating in the twenty-first

century has involved an array of digital environments and tools, and educators around the world have been actively working to shape their curriculums in order to support students as they write in and for digital cultures.

In its most basic form, digital writing has changed the art of writing drastically. The impulse to write is newly technologized, socialized and networked (Yancey 5). There are so many benefits in learning how to navigate digital databases and platforms; as well as an increased need for people who are able to adapt to the changes that digital writing has implemented in the writing process. It has been discovered that the act of digital writing has not only changed the way in which writers are able to distribute their work, but also the way in which people write digitally, and the way they are being taught to write in a digitized world has also changed. Because digital information is such a large part of the current world, the ability to create and share ideas, arguments, materials and information across digital spaces will become a more crucial skill for individuals, workers and citizens (DeVoss et al. 31). Learning how to write digitally is the foundation of learning how to both communicate and interact with others in today's world. It is an important concept to grasp because the world is only becoming more digitized. New technologies and new ways of communicating with people around the world are vital to any individual's place in that world. People who can write effectively in digital cultures, digital platforms and for digitized databases have the potential of becoming powerful agents of success, change, and cultural advocacy.

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