

Preface

The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago featured an exhibit, *Visible Language: Inventions of Writing in the Ancient Middle East*, which displayed the origins of written language: the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt that often told the narrative of a Pharaoh's life and the cuneiform tablets of Ancient Sumerian and Phoenicians that recorded business transactions, land titles, and the king's expenditures. The exhibit curator, Christopher Woods (2010) said, "In the eyes of many, writing represents a defining quality of civilization" (p. 3).

These early texts reflected aspects of the culture of societies. Each written record had a form, a graphic representation, and a particular function. Written language captured unique histories and stories that reflected the times. Written words ignited revolutions, spread religions, and established and enforced judicial systems. When analyzing and examining writing from a historical perspective, Olson (1994) posited, "new ways of reading gave rise to new ways of writing texts and both gave rise to new ways of thinking about the world and about the mind" (p. 143).

Today we are witnessing another great writing revolution as technology is fundamentally changing how we physically write, the spaces where we produce writing, the ways writing is disseminated, and the amount of people who have access to that writing. Technology and writing have always influenced each other. For example, the radical shift in information and schooling was due to the Gutenberg printing press—books could be available to everyone, ideas could be widely disseminated. However, these recent, rapid changes in technology have prompted new questions about writing and its role in society, education, policy, and culture.

- How has digital writing (including text, tweets, blogs, social media, etc.) changed both the forms and functions of writing in our current society?
- What is the relevance of writing in our digital and technological age?
- What is the function of writing and does digital writing change our thinking? Our culture?
- If technology is changing the form and function of writing, what does this change mean for how we educate members of our society?
- How have digital tools in classrooms created new affordances for students learning to write?
- How do writing in online spaces teach students about the many nuances of writing?
- How do technological tools continue to develop what writing researchers know are effective methods for teaching writing?
- How are researchers and educators using new tools to conceptualize new instructional models for effective instruction?
- Do technological tools and online spaces further divide students' in-school and out-of-school writing practices? Or do technological tools and online spaces provide a bridge to increase teachers' abilities to create culturally relevant pedagogies surrounding writing instruction?
- New assessments, with significant components devoted to writing, are being developed. What do these standards mandate about a technological component of writing instruction? How might technology be used to create platforms for new assessments?

One volume will not be able to answer all of these questions. However, one goal of this book is to promote and disseminate current research exploring technology for writing and writing instruction—research that begins to examine and provide evidence to answer or provide further insight into many of these questions. A second goal is to bring together voices of influential researchers and educators in the fields of writing and technology, as well as, the work of promising up-and-coming researchers. A third goal is to thoughtfully represent the most current research related to technology and writing instruction. Having a sense of the current research landscape strengthens future work in both the research conducted and the practices implemented in classrooms. However, we acknowledge technology is rapidly changing and developing, and so this book is not necessarily intended to highlight specific tools that should be used during writing instruction. Rather, we hope these chapters initiate more general conversations about the affordances of using technological tools in writing classrooms.

The curriculum being enacted in classrooms and the instructional approaches being practiced are heavily influenced by educational policies. Thus, a final goal is that this book can be used by those designing policies to consider the various affordances and constraints of technology for writing instruction.

THE PROCESS OF EDITING THIS BOOK

We are fortunate to work at a university that encourages collaboration amongst faculty members. In March of 2011, we both attended a meeting facilitated by the college Dean with the goal of facilitating interdisciplinary conversations and work. This initial meeting led to subsequent discussions about the intersections of technology and literacy. Our appreciation for each others' work allowed us to engage in many conversations surrounding the issues, challenges, and current research in our respective fields. We shared the articles and books we were currently reading, provided feedback on each others' work, and began collaborating on research and writing projects. This work prompted us to ask how technology was influencing the way people conceptualize writing, how people write, and how we teach writing. The idea for this book evolved from these many and extensive discussions about the intersections between technology, writing, and writing instruction.

It is important to note that we did not select authors to write particular chapters. In the early fall of 2012, we distributed an open call for proposals. We asked for theoretical and empirical chapters focused on topics, such as digital assessments, online writing communities, technology-facilitated feedback and revision, online education, and social media. These are just a few of the many topics featured in the proposals we received. The call for proposals was distributed in multiple venues.

1. We worked with our graduate assistant to gather the names and email addresses of researchers and educators who received funding for work on writing and technology in the last 10 years, as evidenced by a search in the *National Science Foundation* and *Institute of Education Sciences* databases. Using various academic search engines, we found authors who published on this topic within the same timeframe. This information was collected, and authors were emailed the call for proposals.
2. We sent the call using major professional organizations' listservs. This included the ITForum, the LRA listserv, the NCTE discussion forum, the ALER listserv (thanks to Kristine Still), the AERA Writing and Literacies SIG (thanks to Heather Pleasants), and the IRA TILE-SIG (thanks to Julie Coiro).

3. The Editorial Review Board was created. They were asked to share the call for proposals to their network of colleagues.
4. We created a Website that contained pertinent information for potential authors.

Proposals were submitted at the end of September 2012. While we were obviously aware of the growing number of researchers and educators interested in this topic and working in this field of study, we were surprised to receive over 100 proposals. We reviewed each proposal and accepted ones based mainly on their content and appropriateness for the book and the quality of the theoretical or empirical research presented. Authors were notified of the acceptance of their proposal and were given until December 31, 2012 to write their full chapter. Chapters were then sent through a double-blind peer review process with our Editorial Review Board. The Editorial Review Board provided guidance as we selected chapters for acceptance and also provided extensive feedback and insight to authors about their work. Authors whose chapters were accepted had until March 1, 2013 to submit their final chapters.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

This book is divided into five sections:

New Tools and Theories: The chapters in this section examine technological tools to teach writing. Researchers examine tools used in classrooms for instruction and the affordances they create for students. This section also includes chapters focused on new theories about how these tools change the physical act of writing and the linguistic structures of language.

New Tools for Revision and Feedback: This section analyzes tools specifically used for revision and feedback. While this section might seem similar to the chapters in the previous section, it is interesting to note that educators are looking to technology to assist with teaching a particular aspect of the writing process.

Online Spaces for Writing: The chapters in this section highlight online spaces for writing. These chapters examine how writing is changing because of the places where people compose and produce texts.

Writing Instruction: This section includes chapters that examine how the inclusion of technology in the classroom requires educators to reflect on and reconsider instructional practices. These authors provide pedagogical models for effectively teaching writing using technology.

Writing and Identity: The final section of the book examines how it is not only technology, tools, and spaces that are changing because of technology but also the influence of technology on writerly identities. These chapters analyze the ways students and teachers perceive themselves as digital writers and teachers of digital writers.

In order to organize the book, we divided the chapters into sections by asking ourselves about the main goals of each chapter. We asked ourselves, “What is this chapter intending to examine and what contribution is it making to the field?” These sections are not mutually exclusive. There are chapters that represent multiple themes and could have been placed in multiple sections. For example, Stewart’s chapter on the Facebook writings of four Latina/o immigrant youth was placed in the section “Writing and Identity.” This decision was made as one of the main findings was the divide between the youth’s in-school writing and writing on Facebook, which they used to express their Latina/o identities. However, because Facebook is an online space where people write, it could have also been placed in the section, “Online Spaces.”

We used overarching themes to place the chapter in the section that best represented the overall findings and objectives of the chapter. We also used the headings to highlight key topics being researched in the field as evidenced by the chapters. Regardless of placement in specific sections, we hope readers examine each chapter while considering the following questions:

- How have digital tools in classrooms created new affordances for students just learning to write?
- How does writing in online spaces teach students about the many nuances of writing?
- How is technology changing the way we talk and write?
- How do technological tools continue to develop what writing researchers know are effective methods for teaching writing?
- What new models and frameworks are being conceptualized to teach writing?

CONCLUSION

We proudly offer this collected work as a way to support the importance of technology for writing and writing instruction. The chapters in this book represent the diverse and exciting work taking place in our field. This book is offered for discussion about and reflection on the changing nature of writing, the influence of technology, and the research being done in the field. We believe a comprehensive examination of the research surrounding technology and writing will strengthen future work in this important area of study. We encourage educators to continue the exploration of the implications of using technological tools in writing classrooms, and we hope research in this area will influence conversations of policy surrounding technology, writing, and writing instruction.

Respectfully,

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