

WRITING A REVIEW FOR *JTW*: REFLECTING ON SCHOLARSHIP IN THE FIELD

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This academic year marks a transition for me in my relationship with the *Journal of Teaching Writing*. Having served as a member of the editorial board for some years, I now move into my new role as the book review editor. I do so with great expectation and a goal of continuing the fine work of Janis Haswell and the entire editorial team at *JTW*.

Some twenty-five years ago, when I was just beginning my career, Bill McCleary asked me to step into a similar role at *Composition Chronicle*. As a young teacher-scholar, I found that experience was fundamental to my developing understanding of the discipline and demonstrated to me the immense value of public review of scholarship—for individual readers and the profession as a whole. Through our collective assessments of one another's work in book reviews and review essays, we engage one another in conversation about and collaborative assessment of the research that defines our field—determining the merits and contributions of our colleagues' work. Reviews, in other words, create a space for the community to reflect on the field and its research. Although certainly not equal to the driving force of publishers' editorial boards that determine *what* gets published, book reviewers nonetheless provide a valuable descriptive and evaluative function about what *has* been published. Through their reports, reviewers inform the community about the particular nature of a scholar's contributions, thereby directing readers to

those books most pertinent to their teaching and research interests.

My years with *Composition Chronicle* and my now over two decades of teaching and research have certainly given me new insights into the profession and the scholarship that defines the teaching of writing—insights I anticipate will inform my tenure as book review editor.

My work over the past two decades on initiatives related to P-20 collaborations between the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Board of Regents also plays a significant role in my understanding of the discipline of writing studies—which I conceive as encompassing the work that we all do—in and out of the classroom with students of all ages. I believe I can make a small contribution to this P-20 collaboration by soliciting from colleagues reviews of books, webtexts, websites, and educational software that represent the needs and interests of all *JTW* readers, facilitating a greater understanding of theory and practice across these contexts.

Composing reviews certainly provides reviewers themselves a means of keeping up with current thinking—but *reading* these reviews keeps all of us aware of theoretical and pedagogical innovations across that span of nearly twenty years when students sit in our classrooms. We all become better stewards of our students and their educations through greater understanding of the work that we all do—whether it's in a reading readiness program, primary language arts classroom, first-year writing class, or an advanced writing seminar.

Serving in this role for *JTW* gives me the opportunity to bring to the readership of the journal those scholarly and professional contributions that may well shape the next twenty years of research on the teaching of writing, P-20.

I invite each of you to join me in this endeavor. I welcome from among the readers of *JTW*—especially classroom teachers (both first-time review writers or well-established authors)—inquiries about or submission of reviews on a broad range of texts (books, webtexts, websites, educational software) on a broad

range of related topics, P-20: Language development, language arts pedagogies, discourse theory, writing theory, composition pedagogy, ethnographic or critical case studies of writers and writing, program administration, standards, and assessment.

In other words, I welcome submission of unsolicited reviews or review essays. Although I cannot guarantee publication of every submission, I will work with authors to revise and refine submitted reviews that meet journal expectations.

Please forward all inquiries or submissions via email to halasek.1@osu.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Reviews Guidelines

The Journal of Teaching Writing welcomes submission of reviews or review essays on topics of interest to our readership. Specifically, we seek to publish reviews on recently appearing singly- or collaboratively authored books, edited collections, web-based texts or websites dedicated to composition, rhetoric, writing studies, literacy studies, language arts, digital media studies and related fields.

General Information

Reviews typically run 2000-2500 words, but some may run shorter or longer depending on the title. Please submit the review by the date requested by the reviews editor. Unless otherwise arranged, this is February 1 for the Spring issue and August 1 for the Fall issue.

Please submit your reviews electronically to the reviews editor at halasek.1@osu.edu as attachments as .doc or docx files. **Please note that the reviews editor reserves the right to decline unsolicited reviews.**

Formatting

The header of your review should include the following: Author(s). *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher, Date of publication. No. of pages. Price. ISBN. Please type your name as

you wish it to appear at the close of the review (no titles or degrees, please), along with your institution (school, organization), and its city and state (or country).

Style Guidelines

1. All references should be made **in-text**, rather than as footnotes or endnotes, following MLA guidelines.
2. All reviews should be submitted with American English spelling, rather than British English.
3. Any references should be included in a bibliography, again, following MLA Guidelines.

Some Additional Information on Composing Reviews

In setting out for prospective reviewers some recommendations for drafting a review, I found those of the *CYE Journal* extremely helpful (http://www.colorado.edu/journals/cye/CYE_BookReviewGuidelines.htm). The information below is drawn largely from their recommendations and guidelines to prospective reviewers. As *CYE Journal* points out, “[t]he most important point in developing a book review is to address the Journal’s readership.” In the case of *JTW*, that readership includes independent scholars as well as teachers, administrators, and graduate students teaching and researching in a wide variety of institutional settings P-20. With this diverse audience in mind, consider as you compose:

- The intended audience for the text and who among the *JTW* readership will find it most useful;
- The background of the author and his/her expertise in the areas about which s/he is writing;
- How well the text relates its main ideas and achieves its major objectives;

- The place of the text in its field, including comments on how it fits in with other studies on similar topics, and on the potential value and impact of the text;
- The soundness of methods and information sources used;
- The context, impetus, or exigence for the text—pedagogical innovation, theoretical controversy, research findings that impact our understanding of writing and writing instruction, etc.;
- The conversation that the text is entering and how it compares with other works contributing to that conversation;
- Constructive comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the text;
- The implications of the text for research, policy, practice, or theory;
- *For an edited collection*, the dominant themes that inform the whole with reference to specific chapters as appropriate;
- *For a website or webtext*, the accessibility and navigability of the site as well as its design, functionality, accuracy, and—of course—content. (IE Web Services has some useful information on reviewing websites: <http://www.ieweb services.com/website-review/7-step-guide-to-reviewing-a-website>.)

Legalities and Other Details

Here are some notes on legalities and other details that I've borrowed in large part from Slashdot (<http://slashdot.org/>). Please read these guidelines before submitting your review. Reviews that do not adhere to these guidelines may be declined.

By submitting your review to *JTW*, you represent that the review is your own work, that it is original to *JTW*, and that it is unencumbered by any existing or anticipated contractual relationship; further, you are granting *JTW* permission to publish

your review, including any editing the editorial team finds necessary and appropriate. (Major edits will involve consultation by email or other means.)

If you haven't already, please supply your email address and phone number along with any other contact information you feel appropriate. Please indicate your preference with regard to email privacy: Do you want your email to appear with the review? Not appear at all? Feel free to include a note like [EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE—Please do not print my email address.] and we'll honor your wishes.

If you'd like to be added to our list of potential reviewers (who receive gratis copies of the books they review), please include your mailing address.

Important: If you have a relationship (other than as an ordinary reader) to the author or publisher of a book you're reviewing, disclose that relationship to *JTW* as soon as possible. This typically means both close personal or professional relationship (former dissertation student or colleague) and other relationships (e.g., contributor to the project, person who stands to benefit in some manner from publication of the review). Better to disclose more than you think necessary than *less* than actually necessary. In some cases, the reviews editor will not assign a given book to a reviewer if the relationship may be perceived by the readership to compromise objectivity.

If a submitted review does not meet *JTW* expectations or guidelines, the reviews editor will work with the reviewer to redraft the piece. In cases in which a review cannot be published because of unresolved issues, the review will be returned to and remain the property of the reviewer. Unsolicited reviews will be considered.