

In total, *Facing the Center* reminds readers that issues of power and privilege, the center and margin, assimilation and opposition are central to the mission of writing centers and composition teaching, as they are central to higher education. I can certainly see adopting *Facing the Center* in courses on composition pedagogy, writing center studies, and peer tutoring practice. Because Denny introduces readers to identity politics and how they are so intricate within institutions, he also makes an important call for educators to consider deeply our own identities and those of writers. In doing so, he draws attention to writing centers as “sites *par excellence*” for making “local, material and individual all the larger forces at play that confound, impede, and make possible education in institutions” (6). For the broader field of Composition and Rhetoric, this book highlights the social change possibilities in writing centers, important sites in which identity politics are enacted, contested, and subverted on an everyday basis. For writing center practitioners, the book is a call to action, a call I hope more and more writing centers take up in their missions.

Madison, WI

Works Cited

North, Stephen. “The Idea of the Writing Center.” *College English* 46.5 (Sept. 1984): 433-446. Print.

Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition, edited by Alexis E. Ramsey, Wendy B. Sharer, Barbara L’Eplattenier, and Lisa S. Mastrangelo. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2010. 317 pp.

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Working in the Archives offers a valuable assessment of and guide to the increasingly complex endeavors of archival research. The editors state that this collection, which includes eighteen full-length essays, seven interviews, a general introduction, and an introduction to the interviews, “will help scholars find, access, analyze, and compile the archival materials upon which diverse histories of rhetoric and composition might continue to be built” (4). Indeed, while the book accomplishes all of its intended goals, it also provides the reader a welcoming community of scholars from which to learn and feel part of, asking questions that allow us to think about our work in different ways. Notably, the short interviews/essays interspersed with the longer, more academically traditional selections include both novice and experienced researchers into a group whose enthusiasm for and dedication

to their subjects are obvious. The contributors to *Working in the Archives* invite both beginners and expert researchers into their worlds. The collection informs and delights on several levels.

Although the editors state that they have written this book “for the scholar new to the archive in the hope of helping prevent archive fever [a term they attribute to Carolyn Steedman] while at the same time enabling them to more systematically ‘play’ in the archives” (3), the essays included will be as valuable to more experienced researchers as well and to scholars in all disciplines. Not only those in Rhetoric and Composition, but those working on projects in other areas of the humanities and social sciences will find advice, encouragement, and new ways to think about archival research in this collection.

The book is divided into four parts: “General Information for Using Archives,” “Accessing the Archives,” “Working with/through Archival Material,” and “Creating the Archive as Research Process.” In the longer essays, authors explore current issues in archival research as well as recount their own stories of their experiences in the archives. The shorter interviews/personal essays interspersed throughout the text present the reader with the sometimes intangible aspects of archival research, and several of them, such as Peter Mortensen’s “I Had a Hunch” and Kathryn Fitzgerald’s “I’m Open to Whatever I Discover,” point to the serendipitous nature of the work we do as researchers.

Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch’s essay “Invigorating Historiographic Practices in Rhetoric and Composition Studies,” appears first in the book and indeed, the word “invigorating” appropriately describes the entire collection. Glenn and Enoch acknowledge the challenges and opportunities for work in the archives and the need to reconsider the ways that we conduct research. They encourage readers to “broaden the scope of historiographic methods” (12), using examples of Glenn’s work on classical women and Enoch’s on female teachers and their African American, Native American, and Chicano/a students. The lack of available information they encountered forced each of them to consider different ways to obtain the information they needed. Lynée Lewis Gaillet’s essay, “Archival Survival: Navigating Historical Research,” compares the work of the researcher to that of girl detective Nancy Drew – an analogy Gaillet develops as she sets out a practical guide for those conducting archival research, navigating through what can be a mysterious quest for information. She suggests, for example, that researchers visit local collections in order to become familiar with the process, and she offers advice on applying for grants, and shares ways to navigate through the archival maze. At the same time she raises provocative questions about the researcher’s construction of her or his ethos. Additionally, Gaillet offers advice about how to evaluate findings in order for researchers to be “effective, scholarly storytellers” (29).

In part 2, "Accessing the Archives," Sammie L. Morris and Shirley K. Rose's "Invisible Hands: Recognizing Archivists' Work to Make Records Accessible" grants the reader an entrée into the work that archivists carry out before we as researchers even see the documents in a collection. Under Morris's guidance, Rose processed the academic papers of James Berlin, documents ranging from 1978 to 1994. The authors reveal issues that we as researchers may have given little consideration such as the collection's provenance and its original order. They also raise issues about the hand of the archivist in altering original materials. For example, Rose (after consulting with Morris) removed the rusting spiral from one of Berlin's notebooks and the cardboard backings from notepads in order to preserve the pages. In "Viewing the Archives: The Hidden and the Digital," Alexis E. Ramsey raises timely questions concerning the allocation of limited funds, how those funds are spent, and the ways in which those financial decisions impact scholars, noting especially the problem for researchers who cannot access collections that are hidden or underprocessed due to lack of funding. Moreover, and especially important in our digitalized culture, Ramsey considers the benefits and drawbacks of technology and archival research, and raises fascinating questions about what we lose by using only digitized documents and images. Although a dress might look beautiful on screen, for example, if we cannot "hear how the fabric sounds as it moves, or smell the fabric, or cannot observe the rips, stains, or stitching up close" it loses its "uniqueness" (85).

In part 3, several of the essays raise questions of ethics and the objectivity/subjectivity we must account for in our work. Katherine E. Tirabassi begins her essay "Journeying into the Archives: Exploring the Pragmatics of Archival Research" by describing a typical day of her dissertation research, noting both the random and organic natures of the process. By recording her observations of the process itself, Tirabassi determined four research principles: selectivity, cross-referencing, categorization, and closure, that influenced her "evolving understanding of the archives" (171), and that are valuable for planning and organizing new projects. Liz Rohan, in "The Personal as Method and Place as Archives: A Synthesis," calls to our attention the ethical dilemmas involved in researching and writing about the late nineteenth/early twentieth-century missionary, Janette Miller, whom at times she "neither understood nor respected" (232). With the help of photographs and maps Rohan utilizes the city of Detroit as her archive as she travels its streets searching for and finding the neighborhood where Miller lived.

Part 4, "Creating the Archive as Research Process," contains three essays that explore the relationship between using the archives and creating an archive of one's own. The last essay, "Autobiography of an Archivist" by Nan Johnson, beautifully illustrates the connections between researcher and archivist. Johnson recounts her ongoing experiences searching for, collecting,

and organizing material related to rhetoric and gender in nineteenth-century North America as she assembles her own archive. As she looks for the correlation among the various categories of texts she collected, she experiences a revelation when she arranges them into a wheel pattern and realizes that there is no center. We share her excitement as she identifies what that hub should be, and using her “Archival Wheel” sees the collections in her archives “with new eyes” (296).

Working in the Archives would be an excellent text for graduate and undergraduate classes in bibliographic or archival research, providing them with a solid foundation from which to begin their work. Additionally, because it offers new ways to think about theory and process, all scholars who plan to conduct archival research will benefit from the essays in the text.

The editors have selected essays that highlight the sense of community that archivists develop despite the solitary nature of their work, and the book demonstrates the value of collaboration in this area; not only is it edited by four prominent archival scholars, but several of the essays are co-written. Their decision to include personal memoirs creates a sense of familiarity and collegiality as though one were working with a mentor, encouraging those of us who might become overwhelmed with the amount of material available or bemoan the lack of resources relevant to our projects. Starting archival research is akin to beginning a journey for which some of us have a definite destination in mind and others look forward to what they might find along the way. This collection helps guide the researcher through this exciting territory.

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