EDITOR'S NOTE

(āk-nōlˈi j-mənt) n.

It's true. My time is up. This is my last issue as editor of Composition Studies. Six years and 1500+ pages are now bound together, in my head if nowhere else. It's time to admit, to answer, to thank—to acknowledge.

1. The act of admitting or owning to something

Editing makes me uncomfortable. At best, perhaps, it is what Gareth Morgan has called a “variety decreasing process.” At worst, wrapped up as it is with submission, compliance, constraint, and rejection, editing is a trope for all activity at the center of dominant-culture maintenance—from parenting to war. One edits, in some sense, to preserve, and the confidence necessary to act, as Nietzsche reminds us, is predicated on forgetting the range of what one doesn’t know. There is an old cartoon that defines the noun editor with the image of a guillotine. As far as I know, no lives were lost as a result of my choices; I can’t be as sure about ideas, spirit, confidence, trust. I regret having said “no.” Most of all, I regret those times I said no too slowly.

2. Recognition of another's existence, validity, authority, or right

To edit is also to validate, to author-ize. I entered this position wishing to sustain the tradition of CS as an outlet for emergent scholar-teachers, and engaging in correspondence with motivated young writers—particularly graduate students—has been my greatest reward. The role of a journal editor in rhetoric and composition has changed with the recent explosion of book publication, perhaps more than we’re yet aware; however, the unsolicited, blind-review journal submission is still the first, best route to recognition for the less well-connected. I’m pleased to be handing the journal off to two fine co-editors, Ann George and Carrie Leverenz; may their interactions with young authors be as rich and rewarding as mine have been.

3. An answer or response in return for something done

I took this position with a desire to keep learning about composing. I have been taught well by manuscript authors and referees, book reviewers and other editors. Benefits have accrued. I hope to repay the generosity I’ve been shown by staying active, by continuing to figure myself as learner, by giving as has been given to me.
4. An expression of thanks

First of all, my thanks to past editors of *FEN/Composition Studies* for making my opportunity possible through their careful stewardship—Gary Tate, Robert Mayberry, and Christina Murphy. Thanks as well to my former department chair, Jerry Mulderig, whose faith in my potential made sense to Michael Mezey, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at DePaul; Dean Mezey created space and time. Special thanks to those Jim Raymond once called “extensions of the editor’s subjectivity,” the unpaid manuscript reviewers who, with no more compensation than a vita line, gave unselfishly of their time and expertise; and to each and every individual subscriber—the lifeblood of an independent journal; and to those senior colleagues in the field who generously offered advice and support along the way. Most of all, though, my sincere thanks to those who worked closest to the fire, where the chance of getting burned was greatest. I have had the pleasure of working with some very bright and talented graduate and undergraduate assistants; three of them made substantial contributions to the evolution of product and procedure, and deserve special mention: Nellie Greely, Theresa Lesh, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon.

5. A formal declaration made to authoritative witnesses

I am pleased to be able to include in my final issue two pieces that strongly resonate with my own goals as I anticipate investing more time in the classroom and the structure of my home institution. Most of us who teach college writing will work with an increasingly diverse student body; as Janet Bean et al. make clear in “Should We Invite Students to Speak in Home Languages,” the institutionalized project of editing students for suitability in dominant-culture institutions, which is certain to hang on tenaciously, ought to move forward with greater attention to the discourses our students bring to us, and with greater self-awareness on our part of what follows from not acknowledging them. The evolution of rhetoric and composition as a scholarly discipline has moved far afield from training first-year students in academic conventions; the manifest artificiality of that enterprise has been fully illuminated in our scholarship. As theorists, administrators, and curriculum planners we are asking, “Where do we go from here?” In this issue’s lead article, “Changing the Question: Should Writing Be Studied?,” John Trimbur imagines a future made possible by our scholarship but firmly connected to the field’s pedagogical roots. As I leave the editorship of *CS* in very capable hands, I look forward to reading, writing, and acting in the spacious gap between first-year writing and doctoral studies. I hope to see you there.

*Peter Vandenbergh
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