
Reviewed by Julie Kearney, Penn State Harrisburg

At the end of each semester, as my students complain about the amount of work required to create an electronic portfolio, and my English colleagues look down with an expression of mistrust at the collection of CDs dropped off outside my office, I sometimes wonder if the effort to research, to learn, and to teach the complexities of online writing is really worth it. Inman and Hewett’s Technology and English Studies convinces me that it is. The mix of contributors covers a wide range of professional careers and scholarly interests, but what each has in common is that in spite of either institutional resistance, difficult personal circumstances, a continuing search for legitimacy, or professional development requirements, they have forged highly successful non-traditional career paths which combine English studies and technology.

The editors preface their book by first defining the terms “technology,” “English studies,” and “professional paths,” concluding that while each of the three terms might be considered controversial, their powerful synergy is demonstrated by the experiences of the book’s contributors. Following the preface the book is divided into four sections: “The Past as Future;” “Searching the Academy;” “Pushing Boundaries;” and “Forging Beyond.” Each of the sixteen chapters contained within this framework reveal personal, and often poignant, narratives which emphasize the rewards of pursuing innovative professional paths.

“The Past as Future” includes chapters by Eric S. Rabkin, Wendy Morgan, Nelson Hilton, and John F. Barber, and explores ways in which their personal experiences have shaped their interests and professional paths. Rabkin, for example, interweaves the story of his immigrant roots and his experiences with students with his perception of a computer as a tool; a tool which enables him to communicate with and teach people, and eventually helps him find panel inscriptions at Ellis Island recording his great-grandparent’s arrival. Rabkin’s reflections emphasize the computer’s ability to humanize and democratize. Nelson, too, uses her experience with family—a mother and father team of statisticians—to explain the intersections of her literary and computing scholarship. In the next chapter, Morgan cleverly presents a “textual hypertext” for readers to follow documenting the relationship between classical studies and technology, while simultaneously chronicling the difficult balance between scholarship and the responsibilities of mother and wife. Continuing the reflective nature of this section, Barber recounts his life-long experiences.
with reading and writing, teaching, and technology, concluding that it was the eclectic nature of his interests (cross-country skiing, freelance writing, community college teaching, computer mediated classrooms) that led to his ultimate professional successes.

Just as section 1 focuses on experiences, section 2, “Searching the Academy,” emphasizes the notion of faith in oneself and one’s research in somewhat hostile environments. Joanna Castner, in chapter 5, believed she could help to forge the new “consubstantial space” carved out at the intersections of language studies, minorities studies, and technology. Basing her narrative on Burke’s notion of con-substantiality as compensating for humanity’s inherent divisions, Castner describes the “cultures of possibilities” she has discovered within these intersections. In chapter 6, Douglas Eyman uses a creative metaphorical organization of a labyrinth to describe his faith in forging support through professional networks. Beginning his narrative with an account of his childhood experiences with computer labyrinth games, Eyman guides the reader through his professional labyrinth, beginning with his position on the periphery as a graduate student at an institution unsupportive of technology and English research. He then journeys into virtual and real communities of supportive professionals, eventually joining the staff of *Kairos*. His advice: “Never lose sight of your passions” (89). Keith Dorwick’s focus on the theme of faith is revealed by his immediate reference to Ash Wednesday—the day he begins writing the chapter—and his report of the connections between technology and spirituality. Dorwick richly interlaces threads of a narrative describing his diagnosis with HIV, the need for a dependable job and health insurance but the desire to teach and research, and the wrenching struggle that finally placed him in a tenure track position. His epiphany—“Follow the heart and not the market” (102). The final chapter in this section by Dene Grigar also offers words of wisdom stemming from reflective faith: “[T]he life worth living is one not compromised of a preplanned path laid out from Point A to Point B, but rather one made of many different roads twisting and turning” (114). Grigar reaches this conclusion following her serendipitous journey from producing wine and food catalogues, teaching troubled adolescents, teaching computer-mediated composition, writing a dissertation on the *Odyssey* using technology based research methods, to eventually becoming a successful writer and researcher in hypertextual environments.

“Pushing Boundaries” is a particularly apt title for the third section of the book, which includes narratives from diverse professionals who, either literally or metaphorically, do just that. Pamela B. Childers, Jude Edminster, John M. Slatin, and Mark Warschauer each contribute personal narratives contemplating the need to take risks. Childers, a secondary education teacher, provides numerous examples of her own risk-taking as she ventured into re-
gions beyond the comfort of the traditional high school curriculum. The experience was not without some negative costs for, as she relates, while she encountered new professional allies in the realm of English and technology (including Cynthia Selfe and Art Young) she also sometimes encountered resentment and anger from her immediate peers. The benefits for her students, though, and ultimately for her own professional success, were well worth the risks. The same is true for Edminster, who forged new ground in her research on electronic dissertations, despite her own initial discomfort with computers and resistance from the academy. Slatin, a specialist in 20th century American poetry, also became an expert in assistive technology, initially through a need brought on by his own blindness caused by retinitis pigmentosa at age 20. He took risks with new software and hardware, at first to help himself, but eventually to help many persons living with disabilities. His hardest challenge, though, does not involve the hardware or the software; it involves altering preconceived notions about people with disabilities and their role in the university and society at large. The fact that more and more people are becoming interested in his work with accessible web pages demonstrates that the risks he took were worth taking. Warschauer, author of the last chapter in this section, is the contributor who crosses geographical boundaries, those between the U.S. and Egypt. Charged with improving English language teaching, Warschauer is challenged by the political, cultural, and technological differences between the two nations. His experiences proved to be a wonderful learning opportunity in international relations, and he finishes his chapter with a substantial list of recommendations for future projects.

For those readers interested in extending their knowledge of English studies and technology to careers beyond the traditional academic setting, the last section, “Forging Beyond,” includes a wealth of practical advice. James Elmborg, a student of literature who became disenchanted with the dissertation process went on to garner a large technology grant and is now a professor in information studies. His advice is to “ignore artificial boundaries” and “embrace change” (187). Similarly, Diane Greco, a student who was once told her paper sounded too much like a “think piece,” found herself living the double life of an academic student and intern with the hypertext publisher Eastgate Systems and provides a list of “lessons learned” from her hypertext freelance career. Beth L. Hewett’s describes herself as an academic who is employed by the private company Smarthinking, Inc. (an online student resource), and she provides concrete advice on shaping a career in the private sector. The last chapter, written by internationally-renowned digital artist Mark Amerika, provides a synopsis of the interviews he has given imparting his unique perspective on life as a “Technomad.”

*Technology and English Studies* is not a typical collection of composition scholarship. Its collection of personal narratives based on serendipitous
journeys is, however, rich in practical suggestions for any scholar, practitioner, or researcher interested in combining technology and English studies. Apart from practical applications, though, the book helps to legitimize and celebrate an often-misunderstood and unappreciated area of research. Students and scholars of rhetoric and composition, linguistics, English education, ESL, creative writing, literary studies, and of course, computers and writing, will find this book a valuable and enjoyable developmental resource.

Middletown, PA

Punishing Schools: Fear and Citizenship in American Public Education

Reviewed by Timothy Barnett, Northeastern Illinois University

Punishing Schools: Fear and Citizenship in American Public Education describes punishment as a powerful, systemic force in education that stems from a culture of fear and operates on multiple levels: From the bureaucrats who “punish” schools and students by drastically underfunding public education to the schools themselves who punish students by criminalizing youth and difference and establishing prison-like facilities for wealthy and poor alike. This study of two Ohio high schools—one a wealthy, mostly white suburban school and the other a poor, predominantly Black inner-city school—will primarily interest those who view education as a critical tool for democracy since the book argues convincingly that opportunities for progressive education are increasingly compromised by powerful state and corporate interests. It should also appeal to the growing numbers concerned with our country’s efforts to balance civil rights and public safety.

Compositionists will also find this book significant because many of us view literacy as central to democratic education and because Lyons’s and Drew’s focus on the precarious role of public schools is suggestive of the place writing programs often find themselves. Like the schools Lyons and Drew describe, composition programs are under surveillance by the university, public, and state (who simultaneously require, seek to control, and demean literacy instruction), as they also represent these groups, disciplining students so that they fit in, linguistically, with societal norms. We are the punished and the punishers, even as we espouse liberatory goals, and Punishing Schools highlights significant parallels between public schools as depicted by Lyons and
Drew and composition—arguably the most public and contested educational subject of all.

_Punishing Schools_ consists of six chapters, with chapters 1 and 6 detailing the book’s often compelling argument. Chapter 2 describes the conflicts present in “Suburbia High School” (SHS), a state of the art institution with upper class white students and high tech surveillance techniques, while chapter 3 focuses on the movie _Pleasantville_ as the authors suggest the multiple ways popular culture contributes to the demonization of youth and difference and helps construct identity at schools such as SHS. Chapter 4 documents the politics and history behind Ohio’s troubled urban schools, and chapter 5 offers a close study of “Urban High,” an inner-city school whose plight as a “school without a neighborhood” exemplifies the difficulties of urban education and the abandonment of urban communities.

The book succeeds on many levels but also reminds us just how difficult it is to comprehensively analyze something as complex as public education. In particular I appreciate Lyons’s and Drew’s overall argument that the state punishes schools—both “good” and “bad”—as a way of deflecting attention from the fact that it is not investing in education. Schools pass on this punishment to students, feeding off of a culture of fear and conflict stemming from exaggerated images of dangerous youth preying on each other and on society. Because of this culture of fear, Lyons and Drew argue, middle class administrators, parents, and teachers focus on students rather than the state as the “problem,” and, even more, focus on those who are already marginalized—inner city youth of color—as their primary fear. For their part, inner city communities have been virtually abandoned by the state and, left to fend for themselves as a result of white and capital flight, have few resources to fight the legal, political, and cultural battles necessary to make real change. Ultimately, Lyons and Drew suggest that because our educational critiques depend on misplaced fears of youth and racial difference rather than a comprehensive critique of the state, regressive goals for education—which use strategies of discipline to conserve and expand existing nodes of power—are prevailing over democratic ones.

_Punishing Schools_, then, provides a compelling theoretical argument that is complemented and supported by rich empirical detail and thoughtful analysis of many issues central to education in a post-Columbine, post-9/11 world. For example, Lyons and Drew provide multi-layered observations of Suburbia and Urban High Schools, which demonstrate how particular kinds of fears and hostility are directed at white suburban as well as Black urban youth. In conjunction with these analyses, the authors also follow Henry Giroux and others by suggesting the need to look at cultural texts, such as films, as instruments of pedagogy that “teach” all of us how to fit into a culture intent on