Preface

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This book grew out of the challenges of starting and sustaining a Professional and Technical Writing program at the state college where Alex Reid and I were hired (nearby, co-editor Anthony Di Renzo began his program at Ithaca College in New York a few years before us). We found ourselves building our program at the intersection of several academic and semi-academic discourses—rhetoric, English, new media, business, publishing, composition and others. We had plenty of theory from these fields and personal experience as students, teachers, writers, and freelancers. Yet as we established our identity as a major, we found that our interactions with other departments (especially English), our entanglement with the long-standing academic tensions between "liberal" and "vocational" education, the demands of staying abreast of new technology, the way our resources and students were distributed across many disciplines—all these pressures and others combined in unexpected ways, presenting us with a bit of a paradox in that we were compelled to make sense of the whole while we struggled with the day-to-day work of running a new program; simultaneously, most day-to-day decisions depended on a sense of our whole—our mission, rhythms, audiences, and strengths. Seen from a purely analytical perspective, what we were trying to do seemed impossible.

But of course it wasn't impossible. Our experience beginning a PTW program at the State University of New York at Cortland was typical in many ways. The undergraduate program we were hired to bring to fruition, like many others, was simply hard to define, lacking a deep sense of tradition that English and even rhetoric programs often enjoy. Our program was defined more by what it was not than what it was: not literature, not journalism, not composition. Despite this, the program grew, in part because we were able to invent an attractive curriculum, and our success introduced a new problem in that we were quickly understaffed: we had only three Professional and Technical Writing faculty in an English department of 50-odd full-time and part-time faculty. The demands on the three of us, all in new jobs, were sometimes intimidating. Actually, they were often overwhelming, as several authors in this volume have also experienced in their own schools. In front, we met the challenge of teaching new classes. At our back was an avalanche of paperwork. Struggling to keep moving forward, we found ourselves grasping for information and models. Like any academic in a new situation, we depended on our research skills first, and started reading.[1] The WPA (Writing Program Administrator) listerv (http://lists.asu.edu/archives/

wpa-l.html) gave us valuable clues to how writing programs run on a day-to-day basis, though its focus is of course more on Freshman English. National conferences, especially ATTW (Association of Teachers of Technical Writing) and CPTSC (Council on Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication), provided invaluable information about internships, key courses, recent theory—and at these conferences we found something the readings did not provide: warm, anecdotal, human stories. I sought first-person narrative accounts that presented the PTW administrator's logic and commitments, a constructive, sustained, intelligent set of discussions in relation to which we could shape our own history. To complete and understand our own program, we needed reflective stories that demonstrated and reflected on the process of making key, high-stakes decisions in the unfamiliar situation of running a professional writing program.

This narrative gap is what prompted my colleague Alex Reid and me to put out a call for papers that would, we hoped, assemble a community of narratives. Alex and I asked that PTW curriculum designers discuss how they composed and revised their PTW sites. We emphasized that we were looking for case studies in first person that revealed how designers made sense of and organized their particular location—in other words, how they historicized their work. Their stories would reveal the praxis of those in PTW programs working simultaneously as both teachers and administrators, often from the margins of English, Engineering, Composition/Rhetoric, and on the line between the liberal arts and professional schools. The focus was not to be pedagogical, but architectural, with an emphasis on design problems.

In its final form, each of the essays was to examine the complexities of developing, sustaining, or simply proposing non-literature curricula, from entire programs to individual classes. The authors were generally new assistant professors when these essays were written, and their contributions reflect an acute sensitivity to the practical contexts within which they worked—the political, historical, and financial realities—as well as a sense of vitality, a sense that something untested and unique could emerge and succeed at their respective locations. In the best pragmatic tradition, these essays explain how to both picture and perform a task, in this case the task of developing communities and curricula in PTW, with the belief that other designers might benefit from their narratives.

We experimented in this volume. Our always-supportive publisher Mike Palmquist encouraged us to go ahead with a form of peer review that helped us make the entire process as useful as possible to the authors and you, the book's audience. After outside readers gave the thumbs up to the book proposal, we solicited the essays. Alex Reid and I wrote responses to each essay we accepted and mailed our comments back to the author. Simultaneously, each essay was mailed to another contributor in the book for further response and com-

ments. The results were strongly positive. Invested in the volume, peers generally commented critically and generously on one another's work and appreciated the additional feedback they received while revising. Doing so also helped contributors minimize overlap with other essays and gain a better picture of the volume as a whole. Conscious that many of our contributors are new to the field, we also invited several well-known figures in the field to read a grouping of essays and write "Post-Script" pieces based on their experience as program designers. Michael Dubinsky and Carol Lipson, experienced members of the field, graciously agreed to reflect on their careers in a way that gives context to the essays collected here.

Many of the articles collected here address what Robert Connors calls the "two-culture split" between the art and science of writing. That is, many of us struggle with practical answers to a question asked in various ways: are we to encourage insight or technique, liberal or vocational education, good citizens or good workers? This question is of course addressed by our theory, but has to be confronted also in even the most bureaucratic decisions about program requirements, a semester's course offerings, or even class sizes. This tension is also present every time a PTW faculty member sits down to write for publication. What balance does one provide for the reader between theoretical speculation and practical orientation? To put it another way, when we write for our colleagues in PTW, are we to provide interesting questions or interesting answers, the problematics of a course of inquiry or the results of a course of action?

The chapters here provide both, taking a stance that bridges the two cultures and often explicitly addresses the tensions between them. Faculty under the gun to organize a program do not have the luxury of waiting for the conclusion of big-picture arguments about the history, nature, and status of the field; likewise, short-term best-guess decisions won't sustain a program for very many semesters. Bringing together problem posing and problem solving is exactly what a program designer must do in order to begin and sustain his or her PTW program. This both/and thinking has direct application to the students' learning. The PTW programs here refuse to choose between teaching students to reflect or teaching them the skills to "succeed" – with "success" a term that teachers tend to think about even more critically than their students.

The 16 essays of *Design Discourse* are arranged in five sections. The first four chapters are grouped together under the heading of "Composing." Anthony Di Renzo's "The Great Instauration" addresses the practical and rhetorical challenges of setting up a PTW program in the humanities, addressing the chronic tension between liberal and practical arts. Drawing from Francis Bacon's Advancement of Learning in the opening essay, Di Renzo provides a theoretical and ethical framework in which "technical" subjects can serve as sites for the development and improvement of "social good." Di Renzo (like Bacon) appreciates

the practical uses of knowledge, and eloquently turns Bacon's insights to pragmatic advice for those facing the challenge of beginning and beyond. Turning then to the concerns at a specific site, collaboratively written "Starts, False Starts, and Getting Started: (Mis)understanding the Naming of a Professional Writing Minor" (Michael Knievel, Kelly Belanger, Colin Keeney, Julianne Couch, and Christine Stebbins) historicizes the process of naming their minor as it unfolds at their particular institution over several decades. By tracing the various implications of their program's name, they present a nuanced study of how various stakeholders choose to interpret—and misinterpret—their program. They present the process of naming as an inquiry, guided by a set of ethical and practical questions, into their identity and audience: "are these expectations [raised by the program's name] at odds with each other? Which expectations can realistically be met given resources like faculty, funding, and goodwill?"

Two other articles in this first section discuss the process of designing in PTW in the face of serious challenges. As W. Gary Griswold puts it in "Composing a Proposal for a Professional / Technical Writing Program," writing the RFP (Request For Proposals or grant) for his program was a matter of "one week and five pages." A case study of the under-represented (and over-feared) process of submitting a grant application, Griswold's essay includes the original request for proposals and his response.

Completing this section, Brent Henze, Wendy Sharer and Janice Tovey's piece on "Disciplinary Identities: Professional Writing, Rhetorical Studies, and Rethinking 'English'" narrates their attempt to establish their proposed program in Rhetorical Studies and Professional Writing. The proposal itself was not well received. As they put it, they had inadvertently "thrown open the floodgates of disagreement about what a degree in 'English' means." Their candid narrative examines with equanimity not only the choices they made, but also what they might have done differently, making it useful to program designers who similarly have to traverse disputed academic territory.

"Revising," the second section of *Design Discourse* presents strategies for sustaining PTW programs. In "Smart Growth of Professional Writing Programs: Controlling Sprawl in Departmental Landscapes," Diana Ashe & Colleen A. Reilly develop an extended metaphor that draws on "systems thinking" from ecotheory and "smart growth" from city planning, using these schools of thought to guide their program's development. Their model promotes interdependence, change, and diversification as key principles that shape "sustainable and resilient programs." Presenting their attempt to strike a balance between specialization or succumbing to "the academic equivalent of urban sprawl," Ashe and Reilly's essay shows how a program can be both dynamic and principled as it develops an identity over time and in concert with various academic commu-

nities. My own essay studies change in our undergraduate PTW program in a small New York college. I draw from genre theory, which argues that established types of written texts, though they may appear "frozen" or inert, are in fact powerful and dynamic forces shaping a community. Yet I began the program with a fairly naïve understanding of how the curriculum-as-genre, as a published document, would function. I describe learning to work with that curriculum as an "enabling constraint," one that pushed us to evolve while also restraining our growth. Change is also the theme of Jonathan Pitts' "Composing and Revising the Professional Writing Program at Ohio Northern University: A Case Study. Charged with developing, sustaining, and creating coherence for his nascent major, Pitts shows how he deliberately planned for change without sacrificing coherence. His chapter includes the specific course offerings in his program and a vivid narrative of his experiences; it concludes with snapshot essays of several graduates from his program. In "Foundations for Teaching Technical Writing," Sherry Burgus Little explains that the "design and development" of certificate programs "crystallizes" the pervasive and long-standing debate over the ends of education (283). They inevitably raise questions about what sorts of knowledge is essential for students to do their work as PTW professionals.

The chapters in the third section of this book, "Minors, Certificates, Engineering," certainly confirm Little's insight. Though smaller than four-year undergraduate programs, these more concentrated sites introduce significant arguments to this volume, posing special problems for the program administrator. First in this section, Jim Nugent's essay "Certificate Programs in Technical Writing: Through Sophistic Eyes," the result of a survey of 62 certificate-granting sites, finds contemporary programs value "situated and contingent" knowledge that is both flexible, reflective, and socially engaged. Carla Kungl and S. Dev Hathaway present an adroit response to the pressure to professionalize in "Shippensburg University's Technical/Professional Communications Minor: A Multidisciplinary Approach." Recognizing the pressures on academic institutions to develop a "practical" writing degree, but lacking the resources or students to sustain a full-fledged program, they show how an interdisciplinary minor can gain a foothold. Their essay reveals how they juggle competing educational goals in their college, creating a "career-enhancing program for students while maintaining a meaningful liberal arts backdrop." Similarly, Jude Edminster and Andrew Mara in "Reinventing Audience through Distance" discuss the development of a program tailored to their situation, one with a large number of international students yet lacking local high-technology jobs. Their creative solution is to create a graduate certificate program that meshes with the graduate programs in Scientific and Technical Communication at Bowling Green State University. Rather than trying to prepare students for every specific technical task, these faculty

teach their students to make decisions situationally. They draw from Thomas Kent and post-colonialist theory to articulate their approach, one in which students learn to "participate in meaning-making and to recognize their role in meaning-making."

The relationship between the humanities and the sciences is developed in Anne Parker's reflective essay, "Introducing a Technical Communication Course Into a Canadian School of Engineering: A Case Study of the Professional and Academic Contexts." There, she discusses developing a coherent and persuasive model for teaching writing that draws on the habits of thought internalized by engineering. Holding a position on the faculty in the Engineering school, she presents working as an "insider" to effect change there. Her chapter tacitly traces strategies for dealing with a complex and gendered institutional context. She also gives a helpful and detailed discussion of how to keep various elements of her course vital and interactive: her team, the collaborative process, and product. Also concerned with Engineering, Michael Ballentine of Case Western University shows us a successful approach for developing a writing pedagogy for engineers at his university. Dealing both with the graduate practicum course and the particular course for engineers that it prepares teachers for (over 350 students take it each year!), his "English and Engineering, Pedagogy and Politics" discusses the political and practical negotiations necessary to embed successfully an engineering program into an English department.

The penultimate section of the book, "Futures," is composed of two forward-thinking essays: "The Third Way: PTW and the Liberal Arts in the New Knowledge Society" by Anthony Di Renzo and "The Write Brain: Professional Writing in the Post-Knowledge Economy" by Alex Reid. Di Renzo's essay argues that PTW programs are a much-needed bridge for educational institutions torn between traditional liberal arts educational values and new pre-professional imperatives. PTW can provide an urgently needed social service by graduating rhetors with the know-how and eloquence to communicate between the various professions and disciplines, adept at responding to the demands of the new knowledge economy. Di Renzo's essay is essentially promoting a new image of what an "educated person" might look like, free of an affected disdain for worldly affairs or for intellectual play, and he argues persuasively that PTW programs are an apt site in which to begin education's "third way."

Likewise, Alex Reid's piece entitled "The Write Brain: Professional Writing in a Post-Knowledge Economy" confirms the centrality of technology for all PTW programs, placing it at the intersection of human and technical concerns. That is, Reid advocates for developing technical educational programs that draw from a vast range of intellectual and creative skills. He argues that several influences compel PTW programs to re-think their programs: the "knowledge econ-

omy" that has gone "offshore"; the consequent need for writers with rhetorical and critical skills; the rise of new Web 2.0 technologies which demand we teach students how to think "in" new media; the linked demands that Web 2.0 puts on us as faculty to teach and use such media to build knowledge webs and the like (Reid mentions wikis, blogs, and podcasts along with del.icio.us and flickr.com). His is not a repudiation of the humanistic, rhetorical tradition, but a reinscription of it (or "remediation" as Jay David Bolter might have it), accomplished in new media. Reid gives us a conceptual and pragmatic sketch of how these sea changes can and will affect our working lives in PTW programs.

Finally, in "Post Scripts" we have reflections from two experienced program designers, Carol Lipson of Syracuse University and Jim Dubinsky of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Dubinsky's "A Techné for Citizens: Service-Learning, Conversation, and Community" reflects on the decade-long process of creating an undergraduate PTW curriculum that is both practical and reflective, rewarding not only for the student but also for the student's community. He lays out the choices, both theoretical and practical, of designing a program that supports constructive civic action. The goal here is setting up students who can work with others on common problems, a harmony he likens to a form of reverence. Developing detailed and workable solutions to common problems is both a humanistic and technical commitment in Dubinsky's program, articulated clearly in this helpful reflective essay. Whereas Jim Dubinsky's essay addresses the process of getting up to interstate speed, Carol Lipson's reflective essay "Models of Professional Writing/Technical Writing Administration: Reflections of a Serial Administrator at Syracuse University" traces her journey through several different incarnations of professional and technical writing, stretching nearly three decades, at Syracuse University in New York. Her experience clearly contrasts two paradigms. In the first, program leaders are segregated and pursue somewhat independent paths in a clearly defined hierarchy; in the second, the leaders of various initiatives are (ideally) peers who share a complex and intertwined set of partially overlapping agendas. Hierarchy is less explicit, if not absent. Lipson's essay is candid about the complex institutional and administrative challenges that faced her as a PTW program designer, and gives a trajectory of her academic career which new PTW leaders will find useful and interesting.

We believe new program designers engaged in the process of sowing and cultivating their own programs will find in this volume's narratives something parallel to a reflective community, one that can help them develop their own program's identity, habits, and goals. We believe PTW programs can and do function at the intersection of the practical and the abstract, the human and the technical. It is our hope that the essays reveal these binaries working dialectically for the better.

NOTES

[1] We found the following texts particularly helpful: Katherine Adams' *A History of Professional Writing Instruction in American Colleges: Years of Acceptance, Growth, and Doubt* (Southern Methodist U.P., 1993); Teresa C. Kynell and Michael Moran's collection *Three Keys to the Past: The History of Technical Communication* (ATTW, 1999); *New Essays in Technical and Scientific Communication: Research, Theory, and Practice,* edited by Paul Anderson, R. John Brockman, and Carolyn Miller (Baywood, 1983); Katherine Staples and Cezar Ornatowski's *Foundations for Teaching Technical Communication: Theory, Practice, and Program Design* (ATTW, 1998); *Coming of Age: The Advanced Writing Curriculum,* edited by Linda K. Shamoon, Rebecca Moore Howard, Sandra Jamieson and Robert A. Schwegler (Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 2000).

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