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Tracing the past and outlining the future: The James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal as a genre system

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Tracing the Past and Outlining the Future: The *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal*
as a Genre System

An Honors Program Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

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Introduction

I serve on the Editorial Board of the *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal (JMURJ)*, an online journal at James Madison University (JMU). I work on the Editing team, where I collaborate with fellow board members, student authors, and faculty reviewers using a variety of documents such as screening criteria, manuscripts, or reviewer feedback. Everything that happens in *JMURJ* starts with some form of writing: whether it is a text-based or multimedia submission that we screen using the Screening Criteria document, a call for submissions that is designed and edited before Marketing distributes it, or feedback from a faculty reviewer, an underlying generic basis allows the publication process to advance. For that reason, I've taken a genre approach to analyzing the ways in which the texts we use in *JMURJ* organize and reflect the journal's communicative process and development. By drawing upon genre theorist Charles Bazerman's notion of genre systems, I will explore how the genres used in daily Editorial Board operations interact and, further, how board members employ generic texts to structure their interactions and to effect the publication process.

A genre of particular interest is the Screening Criteria document used by the Editorial Board during the initial screening process. This document initiates several different processes and more than any other document, it expresses the *JMURJ* mission statement to internal and external audiences. Since I've joined the Editorial Board, I've helped transform the Screening Criteria from a column of yes/no questions into a series of questions categorized by the fundamental parts of research writing (methodology, accessibility, organization, and source usage and credibility). These questions are intended to encourage careful, critical reading and assessment of the manuscripts we receive. The Screening Criteria is relevant to the entire *JMURJ* process in that it initiates and informs the Editorial Board's work. I will focus on the screening document specifically as a charter document, that is a central organizing and defining document.

I am inescapably woven into this narrative. The details I draw upon for analysis are from my own reflections and experiences, and much of the background information on how the journal works and how the board members interact comes from my own involvement. The work of writing this thesis will undoubtedly inform my work and my actions and observations within the classroom. My past and ongoing involvement with the *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal* is what makes my thesis possible.

Purpose

Through my analysis of *JMURJ* as a genre system and my examination of the Screening Criteria document as a central point of communication and meaning, I will explain the value of such genre analyses and how certain texts embody an organization's purpose and organize its communicative activities. As genre theorists Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin suggest, "Understanding the genres of written communication in one's field is [...] essential to professional success" ("Rethinking Genre"). I hope to show how an understanding of the way genres function in an organizational context provides valuable insight into the process of carrying out a purpose. Understanding the importance of written genres to this process allows one to better understand how genres organize communicative activity, and as Berkenkotter and Huckin suggest, leads to professional (or in this case, academic) success.

After exploring the existing work on charter documents and genre systems, I will explore *JMURJ* using genre theorists Jo Anne Yates and Wanda Orlikowski's communicative framework to show how genres communicate purpose, structure expectations, and inform locational meanings. I will then focus on the Screening Criteria document, exploring its revision history using Christa Teston and Lucille McCarthy's framework for a charter document as context for those changes. I hope to show how the development of a charter document like the Screening Criteria document parallels the growth of a genre system like *JMURJ*.

A Brief History of *JMURJ*

JMURJ is a student-run, multidisciplinary undergraduate research journal at James Madison University (JMU). Noticing the fragmented nature of undergraduate research at JMU, students Casey Boutwell and Laurence Lewis sought to remedy this divide by creating a space where the various disciplines at JMU could communicate about their research. In 2007, Boutwell and Lewis founded the *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal (JMURJ)* with the intention to “empower students” and “create a community of ambitious, open-minded student-researchers.” By establishing *JMURJ*, Boutwell and Lewis hoped to begin cross-disciplinary conversations and foster campus-wide collaboration (“Creating *JMURJ*”). In the spring semester of 2009, after developing a model of a multidisciplinary, student-run undergraduate journal,, the first issue of *JMURJ* was published.

As challenging as starting an undergraduate research journal proved to be, keeping up the initial momentum proved harder—by spring of the next year, *JMURJ* was put on hold until Spring 2013 when the JMU Honors Program revived the journal. The journal underwent substantial transformation in look and scope as the new Editorial Board of Honors students researched similar undergraduate journals in order to define *JMURJ*'s mission, establish a formalized review process, and develop a campuswide network of contacts (“History”). In Spring 2014, the Editorial Board published Volume 1, and in Fall 2015 the journal's mission statement was revised to be more inclusive of diverse forms of research. The mission statement now reads, “To promote, publish, and share the excellent research and scholarship by undergraduate students.” The Board has also worked to ensure the journal's continuity by meeting with administrators across campus to discuss funding and support and by publishing Volume 2 to sustain the momentum after Volume 1.

Since then, *JMURJ* has continued its efforts to promote, publish, and share undergraduate work. The post-2013 journal is hosted on Scholarly Commons, a university-endorsed publishing platform that shares scholarship from JMU with the international scholarly community.

***JMURJ* Publication Process: A Synopsis**

JMURJ receives text-based and multimedia submissions via email. Submissions are stripped of identifying information, coded, and assigned one of several screening teams made up of Editorial Board members. The screening team is tasked with assessing the manuscript using the *JMURJ* Screening Criteria. The Screening Criteria document allows Board members to evaluate analytical elements of the submission (such as methodology, organization and cohesion, accessibility), and other issues such as grammar and mechanics, length, authorship, and content permissions (see Figure 1, page 7 and 8).

During Board meetings, screening groups discuss the manuscript(s) they reviewed and either accept the manuscript for faculty review or return it to the author to revise and resubmit. In the latter case, the author(s) receives a copy of the screening criteria with highlighted areas for improvement and specific suggestions made by the Board. If the student chooses to revise and resubmit the manuscript, the entire process is repeated until the student author decides against resubmitting the manuscript or the manuscript is accepted. Accepted manuscripts are sent to two faculty reviewers from the manuscript's discipline for expert evaluation. Faculty reviewers receive a different set of criteria along with the manuscript and instructions for completing their reviews. Faculty reviewers are asked to make a recommendation to the Editorial Board to accept or reject the manuscript, or to ask the author(s) to revise and resubmit their work. Faculty reviewers are also asked to provide comments or suggestions for revision within the manuscript itself and for a separate document detailing the reasons for their recommendation.

Depending on the recommendation of the faculty reviewers and the decision by the Editorial Board, the manuscript may take one of several different paths. If the faculty reviewers recommend that the manuscript be rejected, their feedback is compiled by Editorial Board members on the Editing team (one of three *JMURJ* teams) and returned to the student author—in many cases, rejections are still phrased as a revise and resubmit to encourage the student rather than flatly reject them. If faculty reviewers recommend that the manuscript be accepted, it will undergo a series of revisions wherein the

author incorporates the suggestions of both faculty reviewers and editing team members. After the paper is revised and copyedited, the Editing team hands it over to the Design team, where it is formatted according to *JMURJ* style guidelines. The Marketing team is responsible for publicizing the new articles and volumes and for publishing the finished articles on Scholarly Commons.

***JMURJ* Screening Criteria**

The *JMURJ* Editorial Board uses the following criteria to ensure that all *JMURJ* submissions are oriented toward research and scholarship and accessible to an academic audience before asking faculty experts to review them.

We have indicated below where we have questions or have identified opportunities for revision in your submission and have offered specific suggestions. Authors who attend to these suggestions may resubmit their work for further review by the *JMURJ* Editorial Board.

<p>Authorship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did a JMU undergraduate student or team of JMU undergraduate students create the submission? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If NO, reject.</p>
<p>Permissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If human subjects were used in the project, does the student have the approval of the Institutional Review Board? ● If the project contains copyrighted material, is it properly cited, paid for, and/or used with the permission of the owner? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If NO, reject or return to author.</p>
<p>Length</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the submission is primarily text-based, is it 2,000–6,000 words (excluding any abstract, notes, and the Works Cited/References/Bibliography page)? ● If the submission is not primarily text-based, can it be viewed, heard, or otherwise appreciated in a reasonable time? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If NO, reject or return to author.</p>
<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whether the submission is primarily text-based or not, does the submission—or a component of the submission—foreground the research involved? ● If the submission is more scholarship-oriented, is the approach to the scholarship evident, appropriate, and credible? ● Does the scope of the research match the purpose of the work? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If NO, reject or return to author.</p>

<p>Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the content presented in a way that readers from a diverse academic university audience can understand? • Considering the multidisciplinary audience, does the submission as a whole avoid or limit unnecessarily complex or difficult discipline-specific language?
<p>Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it clear that there is a purpose that leads to a discovery or that there is an application of knowledge? • Is it clear that the submission engages appropriate primary and/or secondary sources that inform its purpose? • Does the submission discuss, apply, and/or analyze the source material, or does it seem to be simply presented?
<p>Organization & Cohesion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it clear that the sections are relevant and do they seem to flow? • Is it clear that the organization effectively supports the purpose and presentation of the submission? • Is it clear that there is a conclusion that convincingly presents the evidence and argument or provides a framework for additional research or further scholarly work?
<p>Readability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the submission consistently display a mature command of language through vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and punctuation? • Are there consistent mechanical errors that are significant obstacles for comprehension or readability? • Can the audience easily read and understand the figures, tables, and images?

Figure 1. The version of the Screening Criteria document in use as of Spring 2016.

Methodology

Genres are essential to and informative for communication; the existence of genres such as the project proposal, the technical report, and the executive summary help channel knowledge into useful formats for different purposes. Genres help embed knowledge and purpose into textual (or visual or audible, though I won't explore those formats in this study) objects that can then be exchanged to communicate understanding and needs with others. Anyone can benefit from an understanding of the interactions between and among genres because they reveal what has been done, and how, and what needs to be done next. Genres are created in response to situational demands, and patterns of genre usage develop as situations recur. Such patterns are the basis of what genre theorists refer to as genre systems. In the following section I will trace the chain of ideas in genre theory that lead to genre systems in order to provide readers with a fuller picture of the theoretical background that my work fits into and how the ideas in my work are related. Rather than a traditional literature review or methodology, the following section represents a summary of the theoretical conversations surrounding my work on genre systems, though I will present it in the context of *JMURJ*.

While there is much to be learned from studying genre systems, it is also important to understand the power of individual genres within that system, such as the Screening Criteria document in the *JMURJ* genre system. Genres help their users orient themselves within a situation by providing instruction or information relevant to the purpose at hand. Genres are also dynamic, taking on new meanings or forms as they evolve along with the social context they are used in. Genre theorist Christa Teston discusses genres as charter documents, or documents which point out relationships, shape understanding, relate to specific contexts, and make room for further discussion ("A Grounded Investigation"). Charter documents like the *JMURJ* Screening Criteria document knit together the complex communicative intentions and interactions within an organization.

Genres as Charter Documents

Charles Bazerman, previously mentioned for his theory of genre systems, makes interesting claims about how individual genres work within an organization. In his article “The Production of Information for Genred Activity Spaces,” Bazerman takes an activity-based view of texts to discuss how genres provide a communicative orientation for readers who draw upon familiar elements within the text to form their understanding of the genre’s intentions. He notes how “text genres provide means of recognizing social relations, obligations, and interactions embodied within communications,” and how the work facilitated by different genres introduces the need for various related genres that expand the information available to the communicative network at hand (456). Genres often require revision in order to efficiently meet their purpose, and “to make those improvements requires an analysis of the connections among genres, the knowledge produced for and displayed within genres, and the uses intended for and the enacted uses of the knowledge” (457). This observation underlines an important connection between individual genres and genre systems, especially for *JMURJ*. As individual genres and their related purposes evolve, so too does the genre system.

Genre theorists Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin argue for genres to be understood as representative of the social situation of an organization. They assert that “genres are inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to the conditions of use,” and further that genre knowledge (or the ability to classify genres) should always be contextualized within a social situation (477). Berkenkotter and Huckin present the concept of dynamism as part of their larger theoretical framework. Dynamism is especially relevant to this discussion as a genre is dynamic insofar as its form and content evolve based on its role within its situated understanding. An example of dynamism in response to situated understanding is the revision of the Screening Criteria document to include multimedia submissions and scholarship. After gaining a better understanding of the research culture at JMU (which includes a wide variety of multimedia works and scholarly products), *JMURJ* Editors recognized the need to adapt the existing Screening Criteria genre to accommodate new forms of research

such as audio and video submissions, reflective analytical works, or other non-traditional submissions. In other words, the Screening Criteria document had to evolve alongside the Editorial Board's situated understanding of undergraduate research at JMU.

Berkenkotter and Huckin add that "Genres, therefore, are always sites of contention between stability and change" (481), a sentiment Patricia Dunmire echoes in her discussion of *kairos* and exigence as temporal rhetorical concepts which exert pressure and place constraints on genre development ("Genre as Temporally Situated"). Asserting that genres are used and sometimes adapted in order to deal with temporal and rhetorical demands, Dunmire uses a case study of Nurse Practitioner and patient interactions to show how rhetors use genres to manage their time effectively. Working within the confines of 15-minute appointment blocks, nurses assume authority over generic priorities and the patient conversation by modifying their appointment genre to suit the situation. Given that one's rhetorical situation is subject to change at any moment, whether due to *kairos*, exigence, or other factors, the question arises: how can genre be symbolic of a discourse community if a community's norms are always changing?

Catherine Schryer recognizes this difficulty in using genre theory to study discourse communities in order to stabilize generic elements against ever-changing methods of communication ("Records as Genre"). If the way we communicate is constantly changing, the genre must also be adapted—yet how are we to make meaningful observations about the role of a genre in a discourse community if it always changes? Brushing aside these worries, Schryer claims that genres help us examine the evolving discourse practices in particular groups, and "thus genres can be described as stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough sites of social and ideological action" (208). This view of genre encompasses past and present versions along a genre's editing arc and allows for conclusions to be drawn not only from the present version, but from the document's revision history. I will use Schryer's ideas to show how past and present versions of the Screening Criteria document represent ideological evolution of the Editorial Board.

Continuing with this idea of genres as stabilized-enough sites for conversation and collaboration, Christa Teston discusses how medical professionals use Standard of Care documents during Tumor Board meetings (when oncologists, surgeons, pathologists, radiologists, and other cancer-related medical professionals meet to discuss particular cases and share expertise) to ground their collaboration (“A Grounded Investigation”). Teston uses the idea of a charter document to situate her exploration of Standard of Care documents. Standard of Care documents exist for every known type of cancer, and outline treatment guidelines in an attempt to standardize cancer treatment on a national level. Teston bases her study on the work by genre researcher Lucille McCarthy, who in 1991 introduced the metaphorical charter document as an organizing framework within a social or political group in a study of the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

McCarthy and Teston define charter documents as having four specific functions: to highlight certain rules and relationships, to direct users toward a certain way of understanding, to stabilize specific realities, and to provide avenues for further discussion (322). In the face of the rapidly changing medical field, the Standard of Care document provides a stabilized basis for discussion and collaboration. I suggest that the Screening Criteria document plays an important role as a charter document for *JMURJ*, but also as the central document in the *JMURJ* genre system that is responsible for coordinating most of the essential communicative activities. Through the use of the Screening Criteria document, *JMURJ* Editors are able to effectively collaborate and communicate their purpose, intentions, and requests, and in doing so, they fulfill the journal’s main purpose of publishing undergraduate research.

Genre Systems

All organizations (arguably) have a purpose, and whether it manifests as a tangible product or not, all organizations have a process which leads to the realization of that purpose. While communication is a key part of this process, an often-overlooked facet of communication is the genres through which it occurs. Genre theorists Karlyn Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson claim, “the rhetorical forms that establish genres are stylistic and substantive responses to perceived situational demands” (19).

Essentially, genres are created to address an organization’s needs. From their creation to the textual elements of the genre itself (e.g., a form to be completed or instructions to be followed), genres are tangible responses to events. Thinking of genres first as formed in response to rhetorical situations and therefore embedded with social meaning and second as material representations of the situational demands, Bazerman’s introduction of the concept of genre systems gives insight into how genres assist organizational production. Bazerman provides a useful definition for genre systems as:

a system of a complex societal machine in which genres form important levers...the genres in which we participate... create consequential social action. This machine, however, does not drive us and turn us into cogs... because the genres allow us to create highly consequential meanings in highly articulated and developed systems. (79)

It is the invisible communicative intentions that are materialized through generic interactions that allow organizations to make progress or to achieve their purpose.

A familiar starting point of genre analysis for many genre theorists and students of writing is the rhetorical situation. In 1968, rhetorician Lloyd Bitzer famously defined rhetorical situation as “a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which... can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence” (6). In opposition to most rhetorical theorists at the time, Bitzer held that rhetorical discourse results from a

rhetorical situation and that the situation imposes compositional boundaries on the rhetorical response it elicits.

“So controlling is the situation that we should consider it the very ground of rhetorical activity,” claims Bitzer (5). The constituents of any rhetorical situation are the exigence, the audience, and the constraints. Bitzer defines exigence as “an imperfection marked by urgency,” or an issue that must be somehow addressed (6). The rhetorical audience is made up of “those persons that are capable of being influenced by a discourse and of being mediators of change,” or those to whom the rhetorical discourse is relevant (7). Lastly, the constraints include tangible and intangible elements of the situation (“persons, events, objects...beliefs, attitudes, traditions”) which Bitzer believes have the most power to shape the rhetorical discourse (8). Bitzer argues that situations create rhetoric, a compelling idea in the context of *JMURJ* when added to the idea of the dynamic nature of genres. It will be discussed in more detail in the following analysis section, though it should be noted here that the Screening Criteria document in its current form and use is the direct result of situations which required rhetorical responses.

Theorist Anne Freadman picked up on Bitzer’s understanding of rhetorical situations with her concept of uptake, or how the understanding of a situation—or to use Freadman’s own analogy, an understanding of the rules of tennis—allows for the intake and transformation of information into something that furthers the discourse (or tennis game). In her essay “Anyone for Tennis?”, Freadman discusses a tennis match as the exchange of meaningful shots that each player interprets and returns with their own meanings attached. Each move is made in response to the move before it, and subsequently reshapes the course of the match. Throughout the game, each player’s actions are constantly shaped by the rules of the game, the players’ understandings of their own skill and their opponent’s, and the shots they receive. Their actions are implicitly guided by an understanding of the rhetorical situation of a tennis match, not merely by the sight of a yellow tennis ball approaching their side of the court.

Freadman's discussion of the rhetorical understanding of a tennis match helps illustrate how background understandings of the rhetorical situation and the diverse rhetorical situations of discourse participants inform the responses to perceived demands. Rather than pointing to objective phenomena in an effort to identify a rhetorical situation, it is better to think of the rhetorical situation as how people respond to events, moderated by their sense of urgency toward and motives about the event and the beliefs or external influences that shape the behavior and reactions to such events. Much like a tennis game, the communications that take place between those in *JMURJ* and those outside of it are shaped by an understanding of the larger social and historical context of the journal.

In his analysis of rhetorical situations, Bitzer writes that "Due to either the nature of things or convention, or both, some situations recur... The situation recurs and... a form of discourse is not only established but comes to have a power of its own—the tradition itself tends to function as a constraint upon any new response in the form" (13). This "tradition" and recurrent situations are an important aspect of genre study, as it is through these repeated experiences that we come to recognize similar responses. Genre theorist Carolyn Miller continues this notion of tradition by discussing how when we use genres to respond to recurrent situations, genres take on typified meanings and therefore predetermined connotations for their use. Thinking in terms of genre often draws upon preconceived notions for the written tone and style of a document as well as the visual design, material form, and intended use. For example, one likely considers the office memo as the appropriate way to alert office-wide staff of changes to a company policy, or the meeting minutes as the appropriate form in which to take notes during office meetings. Miller addresses such typified genre expectations as responses to recurrent rhetorical situations, proposing that the recurrence of situations in a communicative environment (like the office) is what allows for the development of typified responses rooted in familiarity with the situational demands.

Bazerman adds, "By using these typified texts we are able to advance our own interests and shape our meanings in relation to complex social systems, and we are able to grant value and consequence to the statements of others" (79). In understanding the rhetorical motives of those we communicate with, we are

able to respond appropriately and productively. Even if recurrent situations present themselves to us with different elements, such as an unexpected request, an unfamiliar tone, or an uncommon format, we may still be able to draw upon past experience in order to carry out the requirements of the rhetorical situation. Miller argues that recurrent situations are never exactly the same, but our experiences with them allow us to develop a “stock of knowledge [that] is useful only in so far as it can be brought to bear upon new experience: the new is made familiar through the recognition of relevant similarities; those similarities become constituted as a type” (29). She goes on to claim that when new typified genres prove themselves useful, they become part of the standard routine (29). Taking a more community- or group-based approach to genre study, Bazerman reflects on Miller’s approach to genre theory, which:

has been concerned with the development of single types of texts through repeated use in situations perceived as similar. That is, over a period of time individuals perceive homologies in circumstances that encourage them to see these as occasions for similar kinds of utterances. These typified utterances, often developing standardized formal features, appear as ready solutions to similar appearing problems. (82)

Bazerman builds upon Miller’s work and presents the concept of genre systems, or the interactions between genres and the associated understanding of the rhetors behind such responses. Miller’s typified stock of knowledge informs and makes possible any such genre system; Bazerman agrees: “Only a limited range of genres may appropriately follow upon another in particular settings, because the success conditions of the actions of each require various states of affairs to exist” (98). The more one participates in the genre system, the deeper and richer the stock of knowledge one develops: “over a period of time individuals perceive homologies in circumstances that encourage them to see these as occasions for similar kinds of utterances” (82). We can see that the more one participates in a genre system, the more intricately familiar one becomes with the types and meaning of genres that are typically used in that system. This familiarity with tradition helps to reinforce the process, and is largely responsible for the organization’s productivity.

Miller contends that “Successful communication would require that the participants share common types” (29). Bazerman offers a similar idea, namely that “In each case to achieve our ends we must successfully hold up our ends of the generic exchanges. That is we must successfully identify the generic utterance appropriate for our needs at each point and successfully fulfill the conditions that will constitute the perfected act” (98). These ideas introduce the importance of the communicative aspect of genre—while individual genres are useful insofar as they shed light on standard practices and values, such as how the information and use of the internal screening document is highly indicative of the qualities *JMURJ* seeks in a submission, the interactions surrounding these genres provides larger-scale insights. It is useful to look not just at how genres interact, but how genre users employ generic texts to structure their interactions and to make things happen.

In their article “Genre Systems: Chronos and Kairos in Communicative Interaction,” genre theorists JoAnne Yates and Wanda Orlikowski acknowledge the importance of understanding individual genres and suggest, like Bazerman, that genres have socially constructed purposes that are situated within the organizational context that the genre exists. By

Building on Bazerman’s notion of genre system as a series of genres comprising a social activity and enacted by all parties involved, we examine how genre systems serve as organizing structures within a community, providing expectations for the purpose, content, form, participants, time, and place of coordinated social interaction. (“Chronos and Kairos” 104)

Yates and Orlikowski seek to understand how genre systems organize communities by applying a set of six structural aspects of communication (namely, why, what, how, who, when, and where) to the theoretical example of a peer-reviewed undergraduate journal. By sorting communicative activities into these six categories and analyzing them through the lens of genre use and interaction, Yates and Orlikowski have developed a useful framework for pointing out the ways in which genres play an implicit

or explicit role in our daily activities. Such a framework grants larger importance to genres by allowing them to be explored in the context of organizational communication rather than simply a linear sequence of document exchange.

Yates and Orlikowski also discuss genre systems in a similar article titled “Genre Systems: Structuring Interaction Through Communicative Norms,” wherein they examine the ability of genre systems to organize collaborative work in the pseudonymous Mox Corporation. Both articles conclude that genre systems are highly effective means for collaboration, as they implicitly and explicitly structure group expectations for responsibilities and communication. Yates and Orlikowski provide an important and useful framework for studying genre systems through their application of the six communicative aspects. This study will continue to build upon their example from “Genre Systems: Chronos and Kairos” by applying three of these structural aspects (why, what, and where) and analyzing them in practice in *JMURJ*. An analysis of these three aspects provides the clearest and most useful insight into the *JMURJ* genre system.

Why: Genre as Socially Recognized Purpose

Yates and Orlikowski write, “the genre system provides expectations about its socially recognized purpose and those of the genres that compose it” (“Chronos and Kairos” 106). The socially recognized purpose of the genre system is most important for understanding the genre system as it explains how an organization’s purpose informs each part of its process.

JMURJ’s mission is to promote, publish, and share the excellent research and scholarship by undergraduate students across James Madison University. In defining this purpose, the Editorial Board establishes expectations—the stated purpose necessitates standards of what is and what is not “excellent” research and scholarship as well as sets up expectations regarding quality for the audience. Another purpose that is perhaps implicitly obvious yet important to note is the notion that in order to be considered a research journal of the stated purpose, *JMURJ* needs to actually publish student work. These purposes

and goals help set the genre system in motion as the various constituent genres are used to carry out the mission of promoting, publishing, and sharing excellent undergraduate research.

While there are a variety of genres involved in the undergraduate research publication process, one of the most interesting and most relevant to the *why* of the journal is the Screening Criteria document that *JMURJ* Editors use to assess submissions we receive. The Screening Criteria document defines *JMURJ* by creating standards and prompting action that sustains the genre system of the journal.

The Screening Criteria helps make sense of the journal's purpose both internally, as Editorial Board members become familiar with the values and standards through using the document, and externally as student authors are able to understand what the journal values and how their submission could be revised to meet those values. It facilitates conversations within the classroom during screening time and allows Editors to engage in conversation with student authors. The Screening Criteria document's purpose informs its use, allowing Editors to clearly direct student authors toward the desired revisions or next steps. The Screening Criteria document is a material representation of the journal's social purpose, our values, and our mission, and its evolution traces the development of each of these organizing principles.

What: Structuring Expectations

According to Yates and Orlikowski, "A genre system also provides expectations about the content of the whole genre system as well as the content of its constituent genres. The genre system... provides expectations about which genres typically appear and in what possible sequences" ("Structuring Interaction" 16). Thinking of the peer-reviewed journal example that Yates and Orlikowski explore, several such generic expectations include the initial manuscript submission, the acceptance or rejection notification, and the faculty review request. This dimension should be thought of as the expectations that drive the process forward by setting up a sequence of events. Rather than simply "what," this dimension should be thought of as "what's next."

The “what” dimension structures expectations about which genres make up the entire genre system and what content should be included in each genre. The genre system establishes a chain of events for the organization’s process to follow, yet this process should not be thought of as a strictly linear sequence, particularly in a genre system like *JMURJ*. As Yates and Orlikowski point out, the journal review genre system provides expectations for both standard and non-standard circumstances. For *JMURJ*, each submission follows the same sequence up to a certain point as all submissions are received via the manuscript submission process and then assessed using the screening criteria. After being screened, submissions enter a sometimes recursive loop of revision and resubmission—even when submissions are returned from faculty reviewers with the suggestion to revise and resubmit, the genre system provides expectations about which steps to take next in order to keep the process moving. For every communicative decision the Editorial Board makes, there is some sort of generic text that editors employ to carry out that purpose.

The genre system also provides expectations about the content of each genre it enacts to continue the process, which I’ve categorized as formal and informal. In the context of this study, formal genres include those that have the same form and use across every submission, such as the Screening Criteria document and the review criteria that guide faculty reviewers in completing faculty reviews. Informal genres are those that are the same in purpose and usually in basic linguistic structure, but that can be manipulated to fit the context of the situation, such as the initial email seeking a review from a faculty reviewer or the screening results being sent to a student author. Many of the expectations for content of individual genres stem from understanding the purpose of the journal. When Editorial Board members communicate with students on behalf of the journal, our goal is often to provide positive, helpful feedback in order to increase the chances that the student will revise the submission to an appropriate level for the journal. With faculty reviewers, our goal is usually to direct their attention to specific concerns or to extract the most relevant information in order to either provide students with constructive feedback or to

begin the process of editing a submission deemed worthy of publication. The expectations surrounding generic content stem directly from the purpose of the journal.

Where: Complex Locational Expectations

Yates and Orlikowski write, “a genre system provides location and place expectations for the entire genre system and its specific genres” (“Chronos and Kairos” 17). Location carries complex meanings for *JMURJ* in various contexts: as an online journal, as an organization in the larger scheme of the university, as a bridge between academic disciplines, and in the physical space where *JMURJ* can be said to take place. Given *JMURJ*'s goal of being an interdisciplinary hub of academic collaboration, its current ties with the Honors Program and the Office of Research and Scholarship, and its unintentional association with the School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication, there are many facets to the question of where *JMURJ* is located, physically and abstractly speaking.

Organizational ownership and affiliation are tightly associated with location, and this makes matters complicated when it comes to a location for *JMURJ*. Occasionally the Editorial Board receives requests for its mailing address, indicating that the genre system of an undergraduate journal (i.e., an organization on campus) perhaps carries with it a designated location—but currently, there is no established office space for the journal. Most of the *JMURJ* Editors' work has involved establishing a process and product to prove that the journal is a valuable and productive organization on campus. It has involved legitimizing the journal to various administrators through face-to-face meetings and regular updates, and a concentrated marketing effort to raise student awareness of the journal and generate student interest in submitting their work. It has involved keeping the momentum going since the publication of Volume 1 in order to make *JMURJ* a sustainable entity that will continue to act as a resource for JMU undergraduates. Securing an official office space still requires a variety of institutional permissions and events, but establishing the sustainability of *JMURJ* has been and continues to be an

essential step to obtaining a permanent location. However, building the foundation of the journal has required some organizational ties be made, and establishing a permanent location will inevitably create further organizational ties and locational associations.

An organization like *JMURJ*, which seeks not only to bridge the wide variety of research-related organizations on campus but to connect them with JMU's academic research community at large, requires the support of the university. Currently, *JMURJ* is affiliated with the JMU Honors Program, though it does not publish exclusively Honors student work and does not operate out of Hillcrest House, where the Honors Program resides. *JMURJ* is financially supported by the JMU Office of Research and Scholarship, but it does not operate out of the same building. The faculty advisors to *JMURJ* are currently both WRTC professors, and there are many WRTC students on the Editorial Board, and Board meetings take place in Harrison Hall (which is where WRTC is housed) but *JMURJ* is not in any way affiliated specifically with the WRTC program.

Each of these ties creates associations regarding the ownership and affiliation of the journal, and expectations regarding what kinds of submissions the journal accepts, what kind of research and scholarship it publishes, or who can be involved with the Editorial Board. To a JMU student, different areas of campus are associated with different disciplines. The Showker Hall and Godwin area is linked to the College of Business, while east campus is associated with the hard sciences. Memorial Hall is home to the education programs, the Forbes Center to the visual and performing arts, and the Quad maintains a wider association with the College of Arts and Letters (CAL). While these are generalizations, it is fair to assume that *JMURJ* would obtain some disciplinary association no matter where it took place. These associations make our mission of being interdisciplinary difficult.

The purpose, product, and location of *JMURJ* are all important organizing concepts both for those within the Editorial Board and those outside of it. Though the remaining three dimensions (who, when, and how) have not been discussed in this study, they are still worth noting in their ability to implicitly

organize the relationships between those involved in the *JMURJ* genre system and help members know what to expect. They define roles, give structure to content, provide instruction, indicate timeframes, and point toward next steps. Through all six of these dimensions, the journal is able to fulfill its purpose.

Having discussed how the journal's communicative activities center around carrying out its purpose, I will now focus on how one document in particular, the Screening Criteria document, helps the journal articulate its purpose internally and to those outside of the genre system. Though perhaps not central in every one of Yates and Orlikowski's six communicative dimensions, the Screening Criteria document certainly plays a central role in the journal's activities. It embodies the journal's purpose and standards and at the same time sets in motion the purpose we hope to carry out with each submission we receive. This document is worth examining more closely due to its ongoing revision history (which parallels the Editorial Board's journey to carry out its mission) and to its relationship to the journal's purpose.

Screening Criteria as a Charter Document: Analysis

Following Teston's model of examining the use of Standard of Care documents during Tumor Board meetings, I will now examine the use of the Screening Criteria during *JMURJ* Editorial Board meetings. Though the Screening Criteria document has been and continues to be revised, it has consistently met Teston's criteria for a charter document. In this discussion, I will be basing my remarks on the most current version of the Screening Criteria, available below.

***JMURJ* Screening Criteria**

The *JMURJ* Editorial Board uses the following criteria to ensure that all *JMURJ* submissions are oriented toward research and scholarship and accessible to an academic audience before asking faculty experts to review them.

We have indicated below where we have questions or have identified opportunities for revision in your submission and have offered specific suggestions. Authors who attend to these suggestions may resubmit their work for further review by the *JMURJ* Editorial Board.

<p>Authorship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did a JMU undergraduate student or team of JMU undergraduate students create the submission? 	<p>If NO, reject.</p>
<p>Permissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If human subjects were used in the project, does the student have the approval of the Institutional Review Board? ● If the project contains copyrighted material, is it properly cited, paid for, and/or used with the permission of the owner? 	<p>If NO, reject or return to author.</p>
<p>Length</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the submission is primarily text-based, is it 2,000–6,000 words (excluding any abstract, notes, and the Works Cited/References/Bibliography page)? ● If the submission is not primarily text-based, can it be viewed, heard, or otherwise appreciated in a reasonable time? 	<p>If NO, reject or return to author.</p>
<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whether the submission is primarily text-based or not, does the submission—or a component of the submission—foreground the research involved? ● If the submission is more scholarship-oriented, is the approach to the scholarship evident, appropriate, and credible? ● Does the scope of the research match the purpose of the work? 	<p>If NO, reject or return to author.</p>

<p>Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the content presented in a way that readers from a diverse academic university audience can understand? • Considering the multidisciplinary audience, does the submission as a whole avoid or limit unnecessarily complex or difficult discipline-specific language?
<p>Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it clear that there is a purpose that leads to a discovery or that there is an application of knowledge? • Is it clear that the submission engages appropriate primary and/or secondary sources that inform its purpose? • Does the submission discuss, apply, and/or analyze the source material, or does it seem to be simply presented?
<p>Organization & Cohesion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it clear that the sections are relevant and do they seem to flow? • Is it clear that the organization effectively supports the purpose and presentation of the submission? • Is it clear that there is a conclusion that convincingly presents the evidence and argument or provides a framework for additional research or further scholarly work?
<p>Readability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the submission consistently display a mature command of language through vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and punctuation? • Are there consistent mechanical errors that are significant obstacles for comprehension or readability? • Can the audience easily read and understand the figures, tables, and images?

Figure 2. The version of the Screening Criteria document in use as of Spring 2016.

The Screening Criteria highlights rules and relationships both implicitly and explicitly—for example, the paragraphs below the title of the document outline the relationship between the submission and its author and the Editorial Board, mentioning both how the document is used internally and how the author should interpret and respond to it. The top half of the table contains two columns (a holdover from previous versions) that direct screeners to reject or return the submission to the author if it fails to meet specific authorship, permissions, length, and content criteria. These “rules” help screeners to quickly move through the screening process and help define the relationship to the student author whose work is rejected. Writers can easily see where their submission did not meet the Screening Criteria standards, and understand whether they can revise or whether no further action can be taken.

The Screening Criteria directs both *JMURJ* users and non-*JMURJ* users toward specific ways of understanding. The Editorial Board often has conversations about the definition of research, most recently resulting in the addition of the concept of “scholarship” to the Screening Criteria. The language of the Screening Criteria’s evaluative questions is intended to encourage Editorial Board members to understand each piece from a broad, non-discipline-specific standpoint, taking into account the basic tenets of research (using credible sources, analyzing source material, presenting information in a logical, well-reasoned way) and the different conventions of each discipline. What research means to the hard sciences is different from research in the liberal arts, both of which are vastly different from business research or research from the vocal and performing arts, and this list does not include the concept of scholarship, which requires the traditional research process but often results in something that looks quite different from the traditional research paper. While the Screening Criteria document’s language should point users to specific understandings, it promotes one such understanding in particular: that of a general academic audience. In doing so, *JMURJ* Editors try to overcome interdisciplinary understandings and differences in an effort to be inclusive.

The language in the Screening Criteria is also intended to make *JMURJ* Editorial Board decisions more transparent and help non-*JMURJ* users understand why their submission may have been returned to

them for further work. By isolating different components of a submission into identifiable sections such as Organization & Cohesion, Methodology, and Readability, and including questions that draw on what goes into journal-ready research or scholarship, the Editorial Board can shape the student author's understanding of their submission's relationship to *JMURJ*. If a student is told that their submission was returned because of methodological flaws, the Screening Criteria language should help them understand what level their work should be at and how they might improve their work to reach that level.

Teston argues that charter documents “stabilize specific realities,” or help define a genre user's purpose. An example of this occurs frequently in *JMURJ* Editorial Board meetings. The Screening Criteria is often used to highlight certain areas for students to revise, but occasionally Editorial Board members draw upon the document as a whole to function as a tiebreaker. For example, when my screening group reads a submission that seems to meet every criterion except for one or two, the group is usually split on whether to pass the submission on to Faculty Reviewers or to return it to the author for further work. We usually make our decision by connecting one of the bullet points with the rest of the submission—i.e., does the issue prevent the strengths of the work from shining through, or is it a background issue that can be addressed later? The Screening Criteria stabilizes the reality of the work we do in screening groups by helping us make the decisions required of us.

Lastly, the Screening Criteria document provides avenues for further discussion in its fundamental purpose: for the Editorial Board to communicate with the student author how the submission would benefit from revision. The last line of the informative paragraph above the table reads, “Authors who attend to these suggestions may resubmit their work for further review by the *JMURJ* Editorial Board,” purposefully opening and directing the door for future discussion should the author revise and resubmit. As has occurred many times already, the document's dynamic nature always leaves open for discussion the inclusion of different submission types, the concept of scholarship, or other new developments that we encounter along the way.

Revision of the Screening Criteria: A Dynamic Charter Document

The Screening Criteria functions as a charter document for *JMURJ* by shaping and informing the discussions that help the journal perform its purpose of publishing excellent undergraduate research and scholarly work. As Bazerman, Berkenkotter and Huckin, and Dunmire's work on genre has revealed, genres play an important role within organizations and are subject to change in response to developments within the organization. In the case of charter documents like the Standard of Care or Screening Criteria documents, genres can sometimes be absolutely central to organizational operations. Interestingly, despite their evolving to fit the new situational demands, it is through this evolution that genres are able to provide stability and meaning for their users. The relationships between past and present versions of a genre are representative of an organization's communicative history, embodied in one document.

An example of embodied history in *JMURJ* is the revision of the Screening Document. When I joined the *JMURJ* Editorial Board in Fall 2014, the Screening Document was vastly different in both form and purpose than it is today. Recalling the importance of an organization's purpose in carrying out its goals, a gap existed between the journal's stated mission and its actual process. Prior to Fall 2014, submissions that were screened and rejected by the Editorial Board were simply returned to the author(s) with no feedback and a simple note explaining that the submission did not in its current form meet the journal's standards. No guidance was given as to how the authors might improve their submissions; student authors were simply told, "this submission is not acceptable for publication" instead of "this submission is not acceptable for publication yet, and here's why." These decisions were made using the version of the *JMURJ* Screening Criteria shown in Figure 3.

JMURJ Screening Criteria

Did an undergraduate student(s) author the submission?	If NO , reject.
Is the word length between 2000-6000 words?	If NO , reject.
Is the submission fiction or creative writing?	If YES , reject.

Does the submission constitute as research? i.e. Is it an empirical or interpretive work that is based on evidence? Is there a discovery or application of knowledge?	If NO , reject.
Does the submission meet the standards of university writing? i.e. Does the submission demonstrate clarity and uniformity of convention at the sentence level? Is this piece cohesive?	If NO , is the submission revisable? - If YES , send back to author. If NO , reject.
Is the submission accessible to a general academic audience? i.e. Would you be able to summarize this article?	If NO , is the submission revisable? - If YES , send back to author. If NO , reject.
Does the submission include a works cited or bibliography?	If NO , send back to the author. **

Figure 3. This is the original screening criteria document. At the bottom of the document was the sentence “For JMURJ internal use only.” Figure 3 is referred to as version 1.

Several features to note about this version of the Screening Criteria are the yes/no options in the right-hand column and the vague language of the questions written in the left-hand column. The language in the right-hand column provides insight to how the journal functioned at the time, mainly through the inclusion of the word “reject” and the narrow confines of the yes/no format. Such absolute terminology leaves little room for discussion or pointing out where a manuscript may have strengths and weaknesses. The focus of the left-hand column’s questions are either structural, such as including a works cited page or being correctly written, or seemingly open to interpretation, or too heavily reliant on the screener’s own knowledge, such as “Would you be able to summarize this article?” and “Does the submission constitute as research?” This version was only used for internal screening discussions, and the results were relayed to the author as an acceptance or flat rejection.

The second version of the Screening Criteria, shown in Figure 4, was still used only for internal discussions, but the revisions were geared toward making the evaluative questions into more specific guidelines for assessing different components of the submission and for facilitating group discussions. Though the language of the left-hand column seems to be evolving more closely toward matching the journal’s purpose by prompting a more critical evaluation of the submission at hand, the right-hand column still confined the Editorial Board to the narrow accept/reject options. While version 2 seems to open the door for more constructive conversations about the quality of the manuscript as opposed to its structure, the lack of flexibility in the right-hand column limited the journal’s ability to help students in their research efforts.

<p>Thesis, Support, Conclusion</p> <p>Is the thesis clear and understandable?</p> <p>Is the thesis adequately supported?</p> <p>Is there a concrete conclusion?</p>	<p>If NO, reject.</p>
<p>Research</p> <p>Does the submission constitute as research?</p> <p>Is it an empirical or interpretive work that is based on evidence?</p> <p>Is there a discovery or an application of knowledge?</p>	<p>If NO, reject.</p>
<p>Organization</p> <p>Does the submission meet the standards of formal and concise university writing?</p> <p>Is the submission well organized, structured, and cohesive?</p> <p>Does the presentation of support lead to the author's conclusion?</p>	<p>If NO, is the submission revisable?</p> <p>-</p> <p>If YES, send back to author.</p> <p>If NO, reject.</p>
<p>Originality and Relevance</p> <p>Is the research original in scope?</p> <p>Are the author's conclusions important to the field of study?</p> <p>Does the author build upon related research in the field of study?</p>	<p>If NO, reject.</p>
<p>Sources</p> <p>Does the submission include a works cited or bibliography?</p> <p>Are the sources credible?</p> <p>Are images correctly integrated?</p>	<p>If NO, send back to the author.</p> <p>**</p>

Figure 4. This is the revised portion of the Screening Criteria, referred to as version 2.

The biggest revision to the Screening Criteria document occurred early in Fall 2014, my first semester on the Editorial Board. Several authors had requested more feedback after their submissions were rejected. These requests prompted the Editorial Board to revise the Screening Criteria document to be a tool for internal *JMURJ* use in addition to a rubric for authors whose submissions were rejected. Eventually the new Screening Criteria would be made available on the *JMURJ* website so any potential submitter would know exactly how their submission would be screened. Each Board member was told to select three categories of the Screening Criteria (version 2) and to respond to the following questions: What does it mean? How could it be said better? What's missing and how could it be said? At the next Editorial Board meeting, we discussed the changes and narrowed down our choices for language and organization. The result is shown in 4.1 and 4.2.

The most important form-related changes made in version 3 include the removal of the yes/no column for the bottom half of the document, the inclusion of the paragraph below the title, and changes to language/rearrangement of categories. These changes in form related to the change in use, the most important point in the Screening Criteria revision history. The Screening Criteria was now used to screen submissions, but upon rejecting submissions, a Screening Criteria document would be returned to the student author with highlighted areas for improvement. In addition, the "reject" option was dropped from *JMURJ* vocabulary to be replaced by "revise and resubmit." This change was intended to be more encouraging to students while also alerting them to the standards of journal-worthy scholarship and the demands of professional publication. Revising the use of the Screening Criteria document has opened a direct line of communication between the *JMURJ* Editorial Board and the students whose work we seek to publish.

Since version 3, the screening document has been revised several times, though not to the extent that it was between versions 2 and 3. One important change has been the addition of language to encompass the concept of scholarship, in part to include multimedia submissions but also to capture the wide variety of genres produced by different disciplines in the name of research but which might fall

under the more inclusive term scholarship. *JMURJ* has received submissions that challenged the typical research framework, like rhetorical analyses of speeches or political campaigns, art history criticism, proposals without completed studies, literature reviews, music pedagogy analyses, documentary-style video submissions, and many more.¹

In order to prevent these genres from being rejected as they might have been under previous versions of the Screening Criteria, the newest version includes evaluative questions written specifically for such works. In fact, many recent Screening Criteria changes have been made in order to accommodate the new kinds of submissions we are receiving. Another important section that has been added since version 3 is the Permissions section. With the submission of multimedia or completed studies, *JMURJ* has had to consider copyright and Institutional Review Board (IRB) issues. The Permissions section was added to the top half of the most recent version, shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2, and if the submission did not accurately cite the copyrighted material or get IRB approval for a study involving human subjects, the submission is automatically rejected.

Additional revisions have been made, and likely will continue to be made, in an effort to develop language that can be better used to screen submissions and to communicate with student authors. Several such discussions have already taken place since the completion of version 4 over the phrases “scope of the work” in the Content section, “discovery of knowledge or an application of knowledge” in the Methodology section, and the word “flow” in the Organization & Cohesion sections. Prompted by the introduction of new Editorial Board members, these discussions demonstrate Berkenkotter and Huckin’s notion of dynamism as the Screening Criteria is constantly revised to suit its purpose and to fit the social context, in particular the submissions that are difficult to evaluate by traditional standards. In addition, this dynamic nature helps to explain how the Screening Criteria, despite the vast differences between version 1 and version 4, has remained a useful tool in responding to the various rhetorical situations the

¹ By a typical research framework I refer to the standard research paper which includes some form of introduction/abstract, background information or methodology, a hypothesis, results, and a discussion.

journal faces. The stabilized-for-now purpose of the document, despite its various changes in form, shows its value as a midway point between stability and change.

JMURJ Editorial Board Screening Criteria

The *JMURJ* Editorial Board screens all *JMURJ* submissions to ensure that they are appropriately research-oriented and appropriately accessible before passing them along to our team of faculty reviewers. If the Editorial Board identifies opportunities for revision in a submission during this initial screening, we will highlight them below. Authors who incorporate these suggestions may submit their work for reconsideration.

<p>Authorship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did a JMU undergraduate student or team of JMU undergraduate students create the submission? 	<p>If NO, return to author.</p>
<p>Length</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the submission is primarily text-based, is it 2,000 - 6,000 words (excluding any abstract, notes, and the Works Cited/References/Bibliography page)? ● If the submission is not primarily text-based, can it be viewed, heard, or otherwise appreciated in a reasonable time? 	<p>If NO, return to author.</p>
<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whether the submission is primarily text-based or not, does the submission - or a component of the submission - foreground the research involved? ● Is it clear that the extent of the research matches the scope of the paper? 	<p>If NO, return to author.</p>

Figure 4.1. The Screening Criteria after its first complete revision. Referred to in text as version 3.

Accessibility

- Is the research presented in a way that readers from a diverse academic audience can understand?
- Considering the multidisciplinary audience, does the submission as a whole avoid or limit unnecessarily complex or difficult discipline-specific language?

Methodology

- Is it clear that there is a purpose that leads to a discovery or an application of knowledge?
- Is it clear that the purpose engages appropriate primary and secondary research?
- Does the submission discuss, apply, and/or analyze the source material, or does it seem to be simply presented?

Organization & Cohesion

- Is it clear that the sections are relevant and do they seem to flow?
- Is it clear that the organization effectively supports the purpose and presentation of the submission?
- Is it clear that there a conclusion that convincingly presents the evidence and argument or provides a framework for additional research?

Readability

- Does the submission consistently display a mature command of language through vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and punctuation?
- Are there consistent mechanical errors that are significant obstacles for comprehension or readability?
- Can the audience easily read and understand the figures, tables, and images?

Figure 4.2. The Screening Criteria after its first complete revision. Referred to in text as version 3.

***JMURJ* Screening Criteria**

The *JMURJ* Editorial Board uses the following criteria to ensure that all *JMURJ* submissions are oriented toward research and scholarship and accessible to an academic audience before asking faculty experts to review them.

We have indicated below where we have questions or have identified opportunities for revision in your submission and have offered specific suggestions. Authors who attend to these suggestions may resubmit their work for further review by the *JMURJ* Editorial Board.

<p>Authorship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did a JMU undergraduate student or team of JMU undergraduate students create the submission? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If NO, reject.</p>
<p>Permissions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If human subjects were used in the project, does the student have the approval of the Institutional Review Board? ● If the project contains copyrighted material, is it properly cited, paid for, and/or used with the permission of the owner? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If NO, reject or return to author.</p>
<p>Length</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the submission is primarily text-based, is it 2,000–6,000 words (excluding any abstract, notes, and the Works Cited/References/Bibliography page)? ● If the submission is not primarily text-based, can it be viewed, heard, or otherwise appreciated in a reasonable time? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If NO, reject or return to author.</p>
<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whether the submission is primarily text-based or not, does the submission—or a component of the submission—foreground the research involved? ● If the submission is more scholarship-oriented, is the approach to the scholarship evident, appropriate, and credible? ● Does the scope of the research match the purpose of the work? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If NO, reject or return to author.</p>

Figure 5.1. The top half of the most recent Screening Criteria document as of Spring 2016. Referred to holistically as version 4.

Accessibility

- Is the content presented in a way that readers from a diverse academic university audience can understand?
- Considering the multidisciplinary audience, does the submission as a whole avoid or limit unnecessarily complex or difficult discipline-specific language?

Methodology

- Is it clear that there is a purpose that leads to a discovery or that there is an application of knowledge?
- Is it clear that the submission engages appropriate primary and/or secondary sources that inform its purpose?
- Does the submission discuss, apply, and/or analyze the source material, or does it seem to be simply presented?

Organization & Cohesion

- Is it clear that the sections are relevant and do they seem to flow?
- Is it clear that the organization effectively supports the purpose and presentation of the submission?
- Is it clear that there is a conclusion that convincingly presents the evidence and argument or provides a framework for additional research or further scholarly work?

Readability

- Does the submission consistently display a mature command of language through vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and punctuation?
- Are there consistent mechanical errors that are significant obstacles for comprehension or readability?
- Can the audience easily read and understand the figures, tables, and images?

Figure 5.2. The bottom half of the most recent Screening Criteria document as of Spring 2016. Referred to holistically as version 4.

Having been present for the transition between simple yes/no responses to submissions and the new detailed yes/revise and resubmit responses, I can attest to both the success of using the Screening Criteria document to create conversations with student authors and to the importance of this change in our screening process to the overall coherence of the journal. Having in place a screening document and a procedure for using it helps to actualize the purpose of the journal. Using the Screening Criteria document this way is especially helpful when it comes to bringing new Editorial Board members into the screening process. Identifying areas for improvement helps new members become familiar with the process of evaluating interdisciplinary work by searching for common strengths and acknowledging discipline-specific differences. Interacting with the revised screening document by relating it to the screening results and returning it to the author helps new Editors to understand the standards of the journal and the mission. Returning these suggestions to student authors helps new members to understand that an important goal of the journal is to encourage student authors in their research efforts. In other words, *JMURJ* is not just a repository for excellent undergraduate work, but a resource that helps prepare JMU students for the expectations and demands of research publication in the professional field. The process by which *JMURJ* operates is reflective of that purpose.

Conclusion

As Charles Bazerman suggests, genre analysis of the individual yet connected genres within a genre system helps show how certain texts embody an organization's purpose and organize its communicative activities. Analyzing the development of particular genres across time, such as the creation of new genres or the merging of existing ones, provides insight into how well the organization carries out, and to some extent understands, its purpose textually. However, considering genres against the larger backdrop of an organization's communicative activity as a whole is more revealing of the extent to which we rely on texts to carry out our daily activities. Such analysis demonstrates the importance of genres and of revising them in time with organizational development, as I have tried to demonstrate through an analysis of the *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal* and an exploration of the journal's dynamic charter document, the Screening Criteria.

Understanding how genres work is useful because they are recognizable and instructional for most people. Through participation, we become familiar with textual structures and learn how to use them. Genres are created in response to situational demands, and therefore they are almost always intricately linked with carrying out an organization's purpose. As Bazerman's analogy of a genre system as a societal machine explains, genres are the levers we use to create social action and to develop intricate meanings, which we then communicate. The interactions between these genres form a genre system, which we gain familiarity with by perceiving recurrent rhetorical situations and selecting the proper genre through which to respond. Carolyn Miller's notion of the stock of knowledge we build up through repeated recurrent situations allows us to perpetuate the genre system and to react to new developments using our background knowledge.

Examining genres in the larger communicative context, as Yates and Orlikowski do through their use of six communicative dimensions (why, what, who, how, when, and where), reveals the extent to which we rely on genres for organizational communication, not only physically to exchange information

but implicitly. In other words, as we internalize the standard sequence of events, we come to have certain expectations and understandings rooted in our experience with genres. For example, many parts of the *JMURJ* publication process are difficult to pinpoint within timeframes or in exact order because much of the understanding of that process comes from expectations experienced Editorial Board members develop through interacting with the genre system.

Particularly in a genre system like *JMURJ*, which is a relatively young organization, it might seem difficult to draw conclusions regarding communicative activities due to the dynamic nature of the organizational process. Berkenkotter and Huckin note that genres are dynamic and socially situated, and Dunmire and Teston note the difficulty of analyzing discourse communities that are often in flux. Here we can turn to Catherine Schryer's description of genres as stabilized-enough sites of meaning that help us to analyze systems that develop quickly. Genres embody the past and present of an organization. By analyzing *JMURJ* as a genre system and exploring the revision of the Screening Criteria document as a dynamic and central genre to this system, I've shown that the Screening Criteria document orients the Editorial Board's daily activities, introduces new members to the purpose and goals of the journal, and helps communicate our values to those outside of the Editorial Board. The Screening Criteria has evolved alongside the journal's communicative process, going from a simple rubric for internal use only to a flexible set of criteria that are used to communicate with those outside of the genre system. It grants its internal users authority over submissions, structures relationships between the Editorial Board and those outside of it, and communicates expectations of the quality and content *JMURJ* hopes to see in each submission. The Screening Criteria document grounds the journal's daily operations and provides stability across new semesters, school years, and Editorial Boards. In addition to tracing the past, the Screening Criteria ensures that there will be a future for the *James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal*.

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