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Integrating Multimodal Composition Techniques in First-Year Writing Courses: Theory and Praxis

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

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Abstract

The body of this thesis seeks to explore the costs and benefits of instituting a multimodal composition pedagogy within first-year writing. Contested definitions of multimodality and multimedia provide a background for delving into the printed-word dominated discourse, where image, sound, and animation are all placed in a subordinate position relative to that of the written word. Within, many theories of multimodality and composition pedagogy are placed in contrast with one another in an attempt to discern connections in the body of already published theoretical material.

The primary method of data collection for this document involved the investigation of secondary sources already available within the realm of rhetoric and composition scholarship. Primary journals consulted include *Computers and Composition*, *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, and *Kairos*, along with numerous books covering the topic of multimodal curricula development.

In all, the primary findings of this thesis find that there is an increasing need to consider the incorporation of multimodal elements within first-year writing courses. In order to promote the goal of knowledge transfer between students' experiences in first-year writing and other courses, the materials taught must be relevant to the cultural communication norms of the current day. In particular, a new focus must center on the development of multiliteracies within first-year writing, in order to assist students gain the theoretical knowledge and practical skills that will best suit their future endeavors.

As assessment and course development remain two of the largest obstacles in allowing for multimodal composition, special attention must be paid to these areas. Concrete guides, along with practical assessment rubrics are currently available, but these

works largely remain in the minority alongside theoretical considerations of how multimodality might be incorporated within the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

The field of rhetoric and composition is inherently self-reflective. In studying the processes behind composition, we must constantly explore and question our backgrounds as composers of knowledge. Pedagogically, our approaches are often diverse, yet we almost universally recognize the important role composition possesses in helping to form an identity and shape our beliefs, often stressing the idea of *finding* a voice. Through composing we shape ourselves as much as we shape the world around us, drawing narrative and knowledge into cohesive texts that both carry ideas outward and simultaneously influence the composer. Indeed, as notions of composing change, so change the conventions of identity and authorship that have evolved alongside theory. By reshaping our modes of expression, we reshape ways of thinking and perceiving the world.

As rhetoric becomes increasingly involved with the use of new media and multiple modalities, we must look at our concepts surrounding literacy. Namely, we must ask, what constitutes literacy, and should it be confined to the single modality of the written word? Traditionally, literacy has referred to the ability of a person to handle alphabetic language skills, but now, as computer-mediated composing grows ever-increasingly more common, other forms of literacy, such as aural, visual, and gestural take on greater significance. Through this lens of literacy acquisition, we can begin to understand why it is that composition must change and grow to accommodate far more than the printed word. The historical path of rhetoric and composition is moving toward a future of multiliteracy awareness, and as such, the very concept of composing has become contested.

Histories and Futures of Composing

For the past two centuries, academic discourse has been mostly limited to the mode of the printed word. Our most privileged knowledge has traditionally been presented in the form of books and academic journals, while the realm of image, sound, and gesture is limited within the broader spectrum of popular culture. Yet the ways we compose are in a constant state of flux, and the banner of multimodal composition has been flown in order to reinvigorate conversations on how we form and shape knowledge. Multimodal composition is not a new concept, nor has it appeared in a vacuum. The theorists who have predicted a shift of modalities away from the printed word are numerous, and a review of the work produced over the past two decades is filled with descriptions of how to reshape and reform the composition class, and ways of combating the issues that inevitably arise when making such drastic changes.

Now, more than ever, we face the issue of what we hope to teach our students. Do we focus on one modality, the written word, and continue along a path of introducing young minds to the conventions of academic discourse? Or do we acknowledge that the very nature of the discourse community is shifting with the technologies and opportunities being provided to us? Rather than utterly reforming composition and eschewing our historical place within the academy, bridges must be built combining the principles of rhetoric with the new media of the coming decades. Gradually we must accept that the methods of expression that fueled our academic and creative pursuits will diverge from what we have traditionally defined as composition.

And yet, what will be the shape of this new image of composition and who will define its boundaries? Multiliteracies, multimodality, new media, interdisciplinarity,

technological literacy, and countless other terms have been introduced into the academic sphere, describing similar and connected concepts that span communication studies, composition, and semiotics. It is a position with which we are already familiar, as composition has always occupied a strange space within the academy, hidden under the umbrella of English, or standing alone, balancing the weights and pressures of intertwining fields, each struggling to stake out disciplinary territory. And so now, as the printed word begins to lose its dominance over communication practices, we must ask ourselves: what do we hope our students will learn?

By expanding notions of composition, we step beyond the semiotic mode of the printed word, exploring other methods of expression that at once provide new opportunities and new perils. While the image and visual rhetoric has received a great amount of renewed interest, it is important that we also give proper attention to our full range of senses in order to escape the current paradigmatic view of composition studies. Unconsciously, the prestige granted the written word has shaped our very definition of knowledge creation, and the image has been relegated to the domain of marketing, children's books and the “low class” of society, rather than our scholarly texts. Sound has also been overlooked as merely a byproduct of speech communications, and yet we constantly refer to finding our voices as writers and composers. Rather than segregate ourselves into a fixed set of beliefs or assumptions about the process of composing, we must allow ourselves to explore the full range of communication.

Already, our students are exploring these boundaries, creating complex multimodal documents that blend image, word, sound, and animation into arguments that defy classification. YouTube videos, multimedia presentations, Flash creations, hypertext

documents, and computer coding have all provided windows of expression that were not widely accessible as recently as ten years ago. The tools needed to breach the divide of image and word surround us, and they cannot be ignored any longer. With new tools and new media come new ways of perceiving and making meaning, and processes such as remix change what it means to be an author. The notion of the author is changing as we become producers and consumers of knowledge, and one look at the digital landscape reveals compositions that defy simple assimilation into traditional genres.

New Media or Digital Media?

Yet to proclaim multimodal composition as a purely technological result is disingenuous. While the digital tools at our disposal augment our views of composition, multimodal communication extends beyond the digital frontier. As Judith Wootten, former chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, suggests, we must not allow technology to be explored for the sake of technology: always searching for the new in order to claim new boundaries within the academic institution (240-41). Multimodality is certainly a new frontier, one that many disciplines are seeking to claim, but the very nature of multimodality defies constraint within a single discipline.

Interdisciplinarity, a long sought (and sometimes perceived as over-idealistic) goal, becomes even more crucial as the theories to understand multimodality come from drastically separate backgrounds. In order to understand the importance of the visual, we must look beyond typical composition studies. The same can be said of sound and animation, as we seek guidance in the larger field of communication studies. Hypertext theory and coding become crucial in understanding the ways in which documents can be

layered architecturally, changing meanings depending upon the actions and choices of the audience.

It's true that text has always been interactive, seeking to foster communication and a re-articulation of ideas between an author and an audience. Yet the methods of interaction are more direct and far-reaching than ever before. Collaboration has redefined the role of the author, so how can we make sense of all these new implications for composition? Where is our focal point of understanding? I argue that no longer can we simplify our roles to that of instructing the printed word. Rather, we must view ourselves in terms of the larger process of composing meaning. The rhetorical appeals of pathos, ethos, and logos still remain important, but the ways of enacting each of these principles has forever changed. Ethos can now be found in the personal biographies and digital presentations often posted online. Logos can be drawn through causal links between resources that tie together the research and concepts of other authors. And pathos can be invoked via a full range of images and sounds. The human voice, most potent instrument of all, can reach a drastically different audience and create a wholly separate feel than the written word alone.

Scope of the Thesis

The research collected here does not attempt to make a grand proposal towards reconfiguring composition as it is most commonly seen in the university system. In fact, the diverse nature of composition within the academy defies simple revisionism, as there is no one standard place for composition within the curriculum. Rather, this thesis aims to search the very boundaries of the practice, where new modalities are already being explored and incorporated within academic programs. What can we learn from these

practices about the process of meaning making, and how can we best harness the lessons to better serve ourselves and those we teach? Those questions are at the heart of this discussion, and after exploring the perspectives already planted within the ripe soil of the discourse community, I will provide examples and connections to multimodal documents that, like the nature of rhetoric and composition, are self-reflective and foster a concept of "voice" that both becomes literal and figurative for the student.

The goal of this thesis is to explore the place of multimodality within composition and see how they reflect our more traditional values while opening new avenues of communication. I wish to look at the intrinsic arguments and goals of a multimodal education, including the obstacles faced by instructors and students. By connecting the theoretical framework of nearly two decades of research, we might perhaps draw the connections that form a new vision of composition that might be further developed within the contemporary composition classroom.

Our notions of writing and reading are changing as rapidly as the technologies we use change. Whereas once the word processor changed the nature of composition, the tools we use very much shape the abilities we possess when reconfiguring our image of writing as a process and a product. When we compose texts, we must learn to write in terms of images and sounds, imbuing our compositions with a full range of emotions and logical reasoning, simultaneously casting off the sole dominance of the printed word. Only in this way will we be able to unlock the full potential of artistic and academic expression capable of being harnessed through new media.

The written text portion of this thesis will strive to synthesize and digest the most important articles and perspectives currently published on multimodal composition. The

documents in question are primarily static resources, typical of the academic publishing mechanism of journal articles and physical books. The digital portion of this document will further analyze and provide connections between digital scholarly resources that have been published in forums such as *Computers and Composition Online* and *Kairos* in order to better illustrate the power of multimodal documents. The digital portion will also provide examples of potential exercises for use in first-year composition classes and the theoretical reasoning behind them.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following section of this thesis will strive to form connections between research and practice and continue the conversation currently ongoing within rhetoric and composition concerning how digital rhetoric and new technologies can be combined with classical notions of meaning-making, not to eschew the past, but rather to augment the future of writing and composing as a discipline.

Multimodality

The first step in exploring multimodality within composition as a discipline must be to gather an adequate definition of what it means to be multimodal. After years of research into the topic, one might assume that the definition would be somewhat straightforward, yet there is still a wide range of disagreement between scholars who strive to put a solid foundation beneath multimodal texts. In fact, the terminology in place is a fluid construct, often differing between disciplines or purposes and yet holding the same inherent meaning.

Definitions of Multimodality

Today, the terms multimodal and multimedia are used quite synonymously, though the exact definitions of each term carries a slightly different meaning. While multimodal describes the process behind the creation of text that might embrace different semiotic modes of meaning making, multimedia tends to describe the finished product created. Yet, in both academic discourse and the professional career field, both terms can typically be used interchangeably. Claire Lauer, of Arizona State University, breaks this division down further, going into detail about the modes as a way of understanding

information, such as through words, sounds, images, animation, and color. Media, rather, is the specific method of distribution in place behind a mode, such as books, radio, television, computer screen, canvas, or human voice (Lauer 228-29). So, why has the discourse community embraced both sets of terminology?

Academic courses more suited to exploring multimodality as a concept rarely use the term multimodal, opting instead for multimedia. Lauer contends that this is in part due to the familiarity of the public with the term multimedia. While the academic publishing community might benefit from using the more specific concept of multimodality, students entering into the field initially would be more familiar with multimedia (232-33). However, there does appear to be a drawback to the usage of both terms interchangeably. Multimedia almost exclusively refers to pieces of digital media, or computer-mediated works, while multimodality includes a wide variety of documents that are not created specifically for the computer screen.

Judith Wootten further calls out the importance of distinguishing between multimodality and computer-mediated works. In particular, she warns her audience in her CCCC's Chair address to beware the “allure of the new... 'the new' is a renaming, a re-focusing. For instance, 'visual literacy' has also been around in the study and teaching of professional or technical writing, where the design of the message is part of the content” (239). In essence, she charges us to remain alert to the developments of other fields and avoid filling the discipline of composition with meaningless terminology that always looks to the future rather than toward conventions already in place within composition.

Wootten also asks, “what about literacy hasn't been multimodal?”(241). However, while she rallies against a utopian view of multimodality in favor of a more holistic

perspective, it bears mentioning that the multimodality of current texts is still a buried concept, in need of exploration. Anne Wysocki claims that so-called "'new media texts' [should be] those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who then highlight the materiality" (*Writing New Media* 15). By definition, it is an awareness of the multimodality of texts that will allow writers to best compose those texts by taking advantage of conscious knowledge of how semiotic modes and concrete media serve to shape the meaning inherent in a text. She further emphasizes that "new media texts do not have to be digital; instead, any text that has been designed so that its materiality is not effaced can count as new media" (15).

Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia Selfe further move toward a definition of multimodality by looking back at the history of student writing, one where "the texts that students have produced in response to composition assignments have remained essentially the same for the past 150 years...primarily [consisting] of words on a page, arranged into paragraphs" (1). For these scholars, multimodal texts are "texts that incorporate words, images, video, and sound," and each feel that it is a challenging, yet crucial task to ensure that students have the knowledge to create texts that allow them to weave each of these modes into a coherent document (Takayoshi and Selfe 2-3).

Thus, a challenging focus of multimodal education does involve embracing a broader definition of the term. Rather than focus on a correct or incorrect model of multimodality, the prevailing literature suggests that students must be exposed to the theoretical underpinnings of a diverse group of genres and modes and be allowed to experiment from that point onward. This fluid understanding of multimodality serves as

one of the strongest impediments facing the pedagogical movement, as it seems there can be few standards enforced in regard to the shape of multimodality.

The implications of multimodal communication stretch far beyond the discipline of rhetoric and composition. With the incorporation of such varied technologies and media, we must take into account theories developed by our sister disciplines. Mass communication, design, and speech communication studies all have vast stores of information to offer. As we move towards a convergence of media, we should remain aware of the sometimes-overlapping areas of study between our fields. Much like the texts we create, there may soon be a call to blend together these disciplines in the hopes of consolidating our knowledge of this new area of interaction.

The ethnographic research of individuals such as Anne Beaufort delves into the nature of the divide between composition, rhetoric, and communication studies. By looking at the professional organizations surrounding these three fields, she notes that many of the discussions occurring concern the same general topics. Often the papers presented at the three major conferences – the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the Rhetoric Society of America (RSA), and the National Communication Association (NCA) – mirror one another, and professional scholars hold membership in each professional group (Beaufort 230-33).

In particular, the concept of multimodal composition has found homes within each of these settings, as scholars try to assemble a working model for instructing students in digital literacies. Yet with a house so firmly divided as this, the approaches may sometimes overlap one another without knowledge. And while a trend toward interdisciplinary work is noticeable, the barriers between each field still remain fairly

inflexible. Researchers are isolated from one another by the lack of a common terminology and theoretical framework. As we investigate the ways in which multimodal literacy affects the needs of our students, we should also look into the ways in which it affects the shape of our academic disciplines.

The scholars who often seek to explore the boundaries of literacy and modality bridge the disciplines, drawing from knowledge in more than one defined academic discipline. Similarly, the scope of the research and praxis must adopt strategies from across academic borders, in those contact zones where multimodality must necessarily converge. While rhetoric and composition concerns more than the transmittance of information, the practices of using media to explore and create meaning certainly connects to broader issues in communication studies, and by sharing knowledge between these two disciplines, we can only enrich the conversation surrounding multimodality.

Multiliteracies and Multimodality

The approaches to defining new media and the literacies required to create such texts are astoundingly different. For example, the term multimodality was birthed by a collaboration of scholars writing as the New London Group. Their seminal work focused on creating a pedagogical framework that emphasized awareness of multiple literacies extending beyond the printed word. Their work serves as a far broader call for education reform that focuses on analyzing the nature of the Post-Fordist work economy and the need for digital literacies and skills traditionally eschewed by academia. Their goal, broadly stated was “to ensure that students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life” (60).

The ramifications of their conclusions on composition as a discipline are immediate, finding that concepts of literacy must "now account for the burgeoning variety of text forms...such as visual images and their relationship to the written word" (61). In short, we stand at a turning point in our conception of literacy. A Kuhnian paradigm shift confronts us as we must "rethink what we are teaching, and, in particular, what new learning needs literacy pedagogy might now address" (61). Traditional literacy typically involved a concept of correctness based upon structure and accepted grammars within written text that the New London Group considered an authoritarian view of literacy, with students being shaped into the molds of their instructors who indoctrinated them in a single mode of expression: the printed word.

In contrast, multimodality allows for a varied and ever-changing canvas of compositions, and the rapidly shifting technologies and conventions associated with multimodal composition show that there can rarely be a defined set of standards in place for what is meant by a successful multimodal text. In defining their view of multiliteracies, the New London Group calls for a knowledge of code switching: where authors move between the registers of the written word, visual meanings and dialects. Once, the education system was designed to prepare students for disciplined industrial workspaces, but now that role has reversed, and instead of creating a homogenous individual, schools must foster an awareness of the different subjectivities that exist among all of us (60-61).

Stuart Selber also writes on the need for continued development of multiliteracies within composition, particularly among faculty. He stresses, in slight conflict with Wootten, that this idea of multiliteracy must necessarily focus on computers and digital

technology, as “computers are indeed a fact of life in educational settings, yet too few teachers today are prepared to organize learning environments that integrate technology meaningfully” (1). Thus, while one might find the resources at hand to successfully blend computer literacy with the overarching sense of literacy encompassed by composition, few instructors still understand the process of accomplishing this task.

Selber also delves into the nature of academic study and the role of the university in relation to the student. He notes, much as The New London Group did, that “some feel the primary role of schools is to socialize students into the existing ideological order, while others believe that schools should teach various forms of resistance to power and authority” (7). This fundamental difference between purposes seems to encapsulate much of the desire to switch to a pedagogy of multiliteracies in order to better assist students in amply and creatively using the new tools that surround them.

Rather than settling on one form of computer literacy, Selber breaks the contents of his book into three main sections, each devoted to describing a separate form of computer literacy that he sees as critical. Functional literacy, or the ability to operate computers and technology as a series of tools, is the most simplistic in nature, arguing that students must be trained to effectively use the devices at their disposal. Critical literacy goes deeper, asking students “to recognize and question the politics of computers” (175). This form of literacy looks at dominant forms and ideas within computer literacy and seeks to understand how such interpretations shape the nature of computer-mediated texts. Finally, and most comprehensively, Selber describes rhetorical literacy, which asks students to finally understand their role as producers of content and producers of technology and encourages them to understand the hypertextual nature of

digital content as a separate genre. Together, these three forms of literacy serve as what Selber believes to be a way of instilling a fully-founded and comprehensive multiliteracy awareness.

Key to the process of multiliteracy awareness seems to be the remediation of the print. Rather than simply discard the printed word as a semiotic site of meaning making, many scholars note the ways in which the printed word has been refashioned and incorporated within online digital works. Jay Bolter, most renowned for theories of remediation, tackles many of these concepts, looking at the ways in which computers and hypertext have allowed authors to seamlessly blend together the word with the image, audio, and animation. He takes a view of writing as technology, exploring the material nature that writing currently – yet almost invisibly – possesses and how materiality begins to matter in terms of new media (Bolter 14-19).

Again, the skills Bolter identifies as crucial to this new understanding of composition and writing call for knowledge not often associated with composition. Yet, he explores the nature of including media-rich documents and how the relationship between producer and consumer changes the very nature of authorship.

Image within Multimodality

As Wootten noted, before the current trend towards multimodality and new media texts, the field of composition was overwhelmed by interest in the realm of visual rhetoric and the interplay between picture and words. Yet, rather than serving as a separate example of composition pedagogy, ideas of visual rhetoric are of key importance when considering how multimodality functions. In order to create the sort of texts described by Wysocki,

compositionists must be aware of the different conventions in place between semiotic modes of meaning making, and that the history of image within composition is a very long narrative.

Image versus Word

Diana George presents a case of image versus the written word, in essence arguing that we limit ourselves and our assignments as a result of current perceptions of image within composing. The idea of visual argumentation is in flux, with some opponents arguing that images prove an inferior medium of meaning making. Rather, the written word is still privileged, but George presents a number of assignments in her class that defy this notion. She has her students construct a visual argument based upon African history, blending a cultural element into the multimodal environment as well.

George also argues for the relevancy of visual literacy, as some would like to explain visual elements as a way of "adding relevance or interest to a required course" (13). Rather than serving as a blind requirement, these courses truly represent a way of integrating useful knowledge and skills into a changing communication environment. Examples of the kinds of documents prepared for this class include a redesign of the Congo flag and a map of African populations that shows distribution.

George states that we need to move "beyond a basic and somewhat vague call for attention to 'visual literacy' in the writing class" (15). To those who would describe the visual as a simplified method of semiotic meaning making, she discusses the complexity inherent in creating an image that depicts something rather than simply telling us through words. Also, our culture has become exponentially more visually oriented as colorful magazines, advertisements, television shows, movies, and Internet media continually

surround us. Clearly these methods of expression are relevant to our current population and deserve appropriate attention.

In the history of visual literacy, oftentimes image was subservient to word. In the earliest examples of textbooks that used visual cues, the images were merely used to foster thought formed in the genre of the essay. Never were students asked to directly analyze the construction of the images or to design their own; rather it was just a tool for acquiring a topic for writing. She also touches upon comics, seizing on the idea in culture that images are associated with childishness. Rarely will you find images in a professional academic journal, but rather in magazines, children's books, and comics, all seen as juvenile forms of communicative expression (George 15-17).

Again, most of the statements concerning image in pedagogy refer to fueling an ability to write better, not to design better. However, George references John Berger's text Ways of Seeing, which argues that sight comes first. Before we develop our capability for language, we interact with the world through our sight and later develop the connections between what we see and the words we use. As such, the visual is a more pure form of expression and closer to reality, whereas linguistic expression places another divide between "reality" and the audience.

As such, multimodal awareness becomes an ability to recognize some of these material conditions and cultural perspectives. The choices then become conscious in terms of what visual or textual elements to include. The media becomes as important as the mode, as the materiality has much to say about the final product. An academic paper written in crayon might possess the same information as other prestigious works, but the nature of its medium would relegate it to something less than professional or authorial.

The traditional English department focuses on a particular literary canon, and as such, privileges written text. Even today, perspectives connecting literature to good writing still abound, despite the fact that we've uncovered so very many methods of meaning making that delve beyond the realm of the word. This is a case where teachers are learning from students, noting the creative ways that individuals are making use of the visual realm, often in surprising ways.

"The history I have outlined clearly links words to high culture and the visual to low, words to production and images to consumption" (George 31). But until recently, it was true that many of the tools necessary for multimodal expression were lacking. Resources often shape the ways in which we teach and what we can teach, but with the burgeoning digital frontier, those boundaries have been successfully removed. Whatever the case, we must understand that verbal/visual relationships are complex.

Ron Fortune further analyzes the divide between word and image, noting how often we separate these two semiotic tools. He questions the relationship between the two, with classical writing instruction arguing that pictures are to be described by words. He also fights with the notion that image is the successor of word entirely as we move into a new method of discussion through multimodal discourse. Fortune opens with a description of a student who makes the statement that "he did not think 'using pictures' was acceptable in a writing course," framing the idea that word and image must be separate and drawing attention to the fact that we rarely provide adequate instruction on how to incorporate such features (49).

Fortune discusses the changing nature of social communication related to the influx of new technologies that enhance or change the nature of meaning making. He

argues “the visual as a semiotic system…is emerging from an extended period of relative neglect” (50). This is an interesting statement, as while image has been neglected within composition studies, visual rhetoric has been a key element of pedagogical movements for decades. Fortune references Gunther Kress and the idea that we might soon become more comfortable with depiction rather than the vagueness of the word.

Often we tend to view semiotic systems as alternatives to one another. They compete and in the end a victor or dominant form is selected. However, Fortune draws attention to the idea that rather than alternatives, blending semiotic systems can provide new strengths and benefits. But in order to reach such a place of acceptance, we must move past this metaphor of conflict inherent between the word and image, or among sound, image, word, and animation.

Gunther Kress looks at image as illustration, as opposed to image as a semiotic tool of meaning making. In this vision, it becomes subordinate to the text, merely illustrating the principles of what is stated through words. Kress implies this sort of thinking makes the implicit argument that “everything that can be said can only be said in language” (Hawisher 72). This seems particularly appropriate in the guise of scientific and formal writing, which traditionally remove the scientist as an actor. Even in typical texts, images have become more important, able to express information that is clouded by text alone. Spatial relationships become visible rather than referenced.

Visual Rhetoric, Visual Literacy

The concept of visual rhetoric has become increasingly common within textbooks of composition studies. But, “visual rhetoric, or visual strategies used for meaning and persuasion...has been amplified by the visual and interactive nature of native hypertext

and multimedia writing" (Hocks 629). In order to begin using visual elements within composition students must first become aware of these strategies for conveying meaning through image and the ways in which image is better suited to some kinds of information. Hocks suggests that "we can begin by teaching them to 'read' critically assumptions about gender, age, nationality, or other identity categories" (630) from artifacts such as websites, growing an awareness of the ways in which we selectively use images to create personal meaning.

Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola further illustrate the importance of the visual in composition by looking again at the way concepts of literacy have shaded our view of composition as a process. These authors begin by unpacking the term literacy, or rather by noting how it tends to obscure meaning by representing an entire host of different meanings and contexts. Currently there is a focus on modified literacy and what that means for knowledge making. They fight against the notion of literacy as something that inevitably improves the conditions of ones life. Rather, literacy and print literacy or technological literacy do not provide the "only" method towards success. It suggests that there might be "an easy cure for economic and social and political pain, that only a lack of literacy keeps people poor or oppressed," (*Writing New Media* 355) ignoring the other social contexts in place behind these systems and circumstances. Again, they touch on the bridges between image and word, focusing on the fact that print cultures often looked down on cultures that used other forms of representation to record their historical texts.

There is also a wide belief that we cannot exist as "selves" without books or texts. Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola begin to look at what it means to prioritize space over time. In other words, books provide a very temporal perspective and imply a transmitting or

passing along that occurs over time. A spatial view, however, looks at how we can view information simultaneously, moving away from history and origins and to a place where we simply move *through* knowledge.

"The connotations of literacy…suggest a process of mechanical and passive individual reception: the book gives us who we are…" (*Writing New Media* 365). Books dictate our identities whereas new visions of literacy could liberate us from this concept. Rather than being made by texts, do we then make ourselves based upon the information we gather and shape? This really fits with remix culture, looking at how information is reshaped and changed by each of us, learning to understand this consciously instead of trying to indoctrinate others into a dominant system of belief. Without the book dictating identity we are free to create ourselves and realize our role in manipulating information.

Aural Literacies and the Figurative Use of Voice

While there has been an abundance of research into the ways in which we are influenced by visual rhetoric, significantly less discussion has taken place surrounding the importance of aural literacy within multimodality. As Cynthia Selfe discusses, there has been a great deal of emphasis on the similarities between written and spoken communication, but many of the explicit contexts in which notions of voice are applied to composition remain metaphorical. The voice we speak of too often is not the vocal processes of speech, but rather a characteristic tone that we attribute to a piece of writing. In fact, this notion of voice is greatly emphasized in some perspectives on composition theory, such as Expressivist pedagogy.

But, as Selfe notes, the aural is important to us and our students, as they continue to experiment with new technologies surrounding sound creation and mixing. It is now possible to use audio editing software to place music to videos and create entirely new compositions by reusing samples from other pieces of media. And with low-bridge software, it has become even easier for students to access the tools to accomplish these tasks. Again, as video and self-reflection become more prominent, individual voices and the way in which we make use of the physical voice become more apparent.

Much like visual rhetoric, the deemphasized role of aurality is not a perspective that has been held since antiquity. The burgeoning dominance of print literacy, as discussed earlier, replaced a form of education that held itself more concerned with a student's ability to speak effectively and persuasively. In fact, this oratorical education "was linked to…practices of privileged families in the colonies who considered facility in oral…encounters to be the hallmark of an educated class" (Selfe 620). In fact, the original rhetorical approach to education, stressed in ways such as the progymnasmata, placed much emphasis on recitation of knowledge as a practice of learning. Yet, due to the increasing emphasis on specialization and the analysis and production of textual artifacts, aurality quickly became overtaken by our current print literacy practices.

Yet, the metaphorical applications of aurality still remained, as voice, tone, and rhythm remained a legacy of this earlier focus. In particular, voice became a proper vehicle for discussing "the discursive practices…of long-ignored groups – blacks, Latinos/as, Native Americans, [and] women" (627). Yet, these conversations remained in print, as most of the body of research was presented in a written form. Even in the places where aurality still remained of key importance, such as in conference presentations and

class lectures, much of the practices were still connected to a written text, as opposed to a composition specifically intended to be communicated by mechanism of the human voice.

The realm of sound, such as music and mass media "was considered part of popular culture…[dismissed]…as part of the 'philistine culture' outside the walls of the university" (Selfe 631). Much as images were seen as merely an augmentation to text, sound was viewed as a less appropriate mechanism for educated, formal conversations. Certainly, the view held that it could not be used as a main vehicle for meaning-making within academia. As appears to be the trend concerning alternative modalities, aurality was considered purely in relation to print-literacy and not in accordance with its own strengths for expression.

Yet, as the landscape of composition practices shifts away from a sole reliance upon the printed word, it is crucial to "draw on a range of composing modalities – among them, images…animations, sound, and color…The identities that individuals are forging through such hybrid communicative practices…are key factors in composing the cultural and communicative codes that will characterize coming decades" (Selfe 642). In short, Selfe calls for a reconsideration of the aural mode, emphasizing that we cannot afford to ignore any of the various modalities that have made their way into the cultural landscape of composition practices.

Incorporating Concepts of Classic Rhetoric

Interaction has been touted as one of the most important concepts implied by multimodal communication. As opposed to a standard physical text, hypertexts allow for the user to

choose a path of navigation through the material. Yet is interactivity a truly new innovation within the realm of composition studies? Some would hail the Internet as a revolutionary technology that has greatly influenced the way in which we communicate inter-personally. But interaction has always figured prominently in the creation of any organized text.

Any classical rhetorical text takes on the perspective that one must be aware of an audience when composing. This awareness is at the heart of communication and a fundamental aspect to take into account. While the lines of interaction might have been less direct in pre-digital society, there was always an author and an audience. A text did not exist in a vacuum, and in some cases (such as public speeches), interaction was a prime component. So what is it that makes this new form of Interactivity so much more attractive and glamorous? Why might it deserve to be made a new canon of rhetorical discussion?

As Scenters-Zapico and Cos explain, “As we are challenged by technology, we are asked to shape our ideas in multiliterate fashions, sensitive to the demands that our various multimedia components are going to evoke in their viewers” (64). It is no longer enough to be familiar with the five traditional canons of rhetoric. Authors must now call upon a greater understanding of the methods of delivery to ensure their material is suited to its audience. With the increasing integration of technology into cultural society, authors must “be able to invent, arrange, stylize, and deliver their projects through a whole host of rhetorical means” (65). Interaction with the text must be accounted for, rather than viewed as an extraneous quality.

The way we read multimodal compositions differs remarkably from the ways audiences have read traditional texts in the past. Writers of digital texts must "attend to the possibilities and limitations of the spaces in which they publish and distribute their work" (DigiRhet.org 239). In this sense, interaction does become a prominent feature of online, networked communications and deserves the additional attention granted by Scenters-Zapico and Cos. The range of communication present today often reaches out to unexpected audiences, creating unpredicted results. The audience itself has begun to evolve into an active collaborative partner with the authors of text, becoming part of what Scenters-Zapico and Cos refer to as an "authorial collective" (67).

With blogs, wikis, and other elements of the Web 2.0, collaboration has become the norm. Authorship finds itself relegated to the masses who come together to create and share ideas and information. Yet certain individuals warn, "what is in short supply is reasoned, informed analysis" (Keen 85). There is a clear divide where our students may be capable of downloading and analyzing complex, multimodal texts, yet they may be unable to replicate those texts in order to participate within the medium. (DigiRhet.org 236). As instructors we will need to be able to properly instruct students of rhetoric and composition to address the evolving nature of audiences by taking into account increased participation.

Radical perspectives put forth have de-stressed the power of the author entirely. In such a climate, the ultimate meaning of a text may originate from the audience's interpretation rather than the goals of the author. Yet this increased participation may show signs of being an evolution of the field rather than a revolutionary change. Interaction between audience and author has always been a prominent component of

rhetorical studies, and composition classes have long stressed the benefits of targeting one's content to a specific group. Interactivity is surely of increasing important, yet it may be that only the scope has changed. The highly interactive nature of multimodal content stresses the points of interaction between text producers and text consumers, but it may not change the very nature of that relationship. Still, the scope is an important consideration to keep in mind. We must ask ourselves, do we prepare our students adequately to take part in discourse through this medium, and are the theories we teach applicable beyond the classroom?

There is a substantial proportion of rhetoric theorists who "would argue all writing is computer mediated; all writing is digital" (DigiRhet.org 240). Rather than view composition as the creation of static, text-based documents, writing today has begun to encompass an understanding of the interplay between words, images, sounds, and videos. At our disposal are a number of tools that already provide access to all these forms of media (DigiRhet.org 240-41). Our students occupy this realm already, delving into multimodal content throughout their daily lives, making sense of disparate sources and unconsciously navigating an increasingly complex realm of information.

Yet the preparation currently provided within the scope of our coursework seems trivialized at best. Currently we still limit student assignments to the realm of traditional print even as assignments migrate online (Hawisher 58). Despite encouraging the use of multimedia presentation software such as PowerPoint, the creations developed often serve as "digital mirrors for print text" (58). The online texts we incorporate into classes, such as blogs, fail to evoke any true collaboration, instead turning into a digital drop box where traditional responses might be collected and displayed.

Hawisher and Selfe comment that we must take into aware the needs and perspectives of our students whom, having been "raised on visual media [,] find school increasingly irrelevant" (57). Clearly, when we aim for knowledge transfer beyond the composition classroom, we may be falling short in our expectations by failing to meet the needs of the student base. Computers and composition has been a rapidly growing area of academic exploration, and the concepts of digital writers and digital writing signify a necessity for revision within our pedagogical framework.

Teaching this new form of writing goes beyond a simplistic revision of structure. The assignments of some compositionists are reaching outward into uncharted territories, asking students to remix varied multimedia content in order to create a new message. This form of collaborative creation calls for new understandings of intellectual property, plagiarism, and fair use laws (Dubisar 78). Simple print literacy is not enough to satisfy the needs of students, who will be entering into an increasingly complex multimediated landscape of communication.

A critical question that must be addressed is, "how do reading and writing practices change in digital environments?" (DigiRhet.org 231). As hinted earlier, the interactive nature of multimodal text requires new understandings of audience interaction, but some of the further effects have greater implications. Issues of "multimedia literacies, new media, [and] digital technologies" affect more than the individuals present within the field of rhetoric and composition. Online academic databases and search engines have changed the way we conduct research and the way we produce texts. The tools of multimediated composition surround us, with cell phones and gadgets to capture audio, video and quickly move that content to other digital texts

(DigiRhet.org 240). Never before has there been such an opportunity for writers and communicators, empowered by technology to create documents unlike any seen within a composition classroom previously.

THE SWITCH TO A MULTIMODAL PERSPECTIVE OF COMPOSITION

Gunther Kress, a key collaborator of the New London Group, which initially drafted concepts such as multiliteracies, investigates what it means to switch to a new conceptual model of communication that uses more than the mode of the printed text. This is in response the outcry that multimodality takes away from the composition curricula by distressing the written word and therefore providing students with a great disservice in terms of writing. However, Kress argues that “communication is always and inevitably multimodal,” and the dominant forms of communication are decided culturally, and as such, are subject to change (5), simultaneously answering Wootten's questions about the inherent multimodality of text, while stressing the need for an even more detailed awareness of the materiality of multimodal documents.

According to Kress, we are in the midst of a revolution of communication. The centrality of writing to communication has long been a convention that did not warrant critical thought or defense. But now, as we attribute the image more significance, even the medium of dissemination (the page versus the screen) has come into question. Both of these features have shaped the way we envision communication, and as the landscape surrounding communication rapidly shifts, we are left to create new rationale for a multimodal approach (6).

Kress does mention the increasing role of the reader in this process. Whereas they had once been assumed to simply follow the prescribed pat of the author, the linearity of texts is now less solid. The only role they had was to fill the “relatively empty” (8) words on the page. They were mere interpreters of the text, rather than additional shapers of meaning. Whereas the book has only one entry point into the content, traditionally

prescribed by our cultural assumptions of reading, new media texts have various entry points targeted at separate individuals. Rather than perceive our audience as a homogenous population, there is recognition that we must account for vastly separate persons and audience backgrounds.

Multimodality is inherently focused on the materiality of its resources. In this sense, the printed word can still be part of a multimodal text, but renewed interest has been placed on the material nature of text. Kress mentions speech as well, emphasizing its focus on the material of sound. It works in that realm, focusing on breath, volume, alliteration, and other qualities that might not be explicitly revealed through the written word. Indeed, the considerations of composing such a text are quite different.

From here, Kress investigates the additional strengths of the image versus word, acknowledging that they both function in such different ways as to defy a direct better-than/worse-than relationship. Unlike the written word, which presents information in a linear format with readers progressing through sentences in time, the entire nature of a visual article is present upon first seeing the piece. All of the elements are in place, waiting for a holistic interpretation, and concepts such as placement become a great deal more important.

"In multimodal texts, words may be central or [they] may not" (17). Kress discusses how previously unassailable genres have now come into question and the inherent dominance of the printed word is now no longer blindly accepted. In the end, Kress comes away with more questions than answers, striving to find what is lost by this transition. He does not bastardize the printed word as much as he brings up questions of innovation and creativity. Do any of us have the right to proclaim that image as depiction

is an inherently better method of communication? No, I rather think he comes to the stance that there must be a balance and we must learn how to wield both these methods of meaning-making if we are to embrace a multimodal communication system.

Kathleen Yancey also looks at the way in which we have already embraced unconscious change in regard to current media. She draws some interesting connections about the linguistic mode and its roots with speech. She actually begins with a fascinating look at the genre of the book, particularly novels, which were shaped in part by their media at first. Novels, once published as serials, were fairly interactive with their audiences, as the chapters were published over a period time and feedback and thoughts could be ascertained. The influence of public demand led to interesting developments.

Now, the printed text is facing a similar change, as we continue to deal with linguistic constructions, but face the medium of the computer screen. The screen, and the interactivity inherent in digital communication have had a profound effect on the methods of communication, and Yancey notes that much of the writing done by students happens outside of school and in forms that might not be traditionally recognized by the academy.

Again, Kress answers some of the need for a new framework by contenting that we can no longer afford to treat education as a way of shaping students in our image. Times are changing too rapidly along with technologies and accepted forms of communication. Rather, we must prepare our students for this changing landscape, and escape from the vision of composition as being solely focused on the printed text. It is no longer suitable for the changes taking shape in the world: “Written language is being displaced from its hitherto unchallenged central position in the semiotic landscape, and that the visual is taking over many of the functions of written language” (Hawisher 68).

What does it mean to read something and in turn to use it? Kress questions this about books, stressing that the book once held a fully realized account of the world that would have been approached in a very temporal manner, read from front to back. Now, he argues, books are resource kits, used rather than read. They have become tools rather than the location for pure knowledge alone. So, essentially Kress is again focusing on the benefits of each type of modality. Visual representation carries some benefits in terms of the way it presents images simultaneously, rather than in a temporal fashion.

"Speech-based cultures, oriented to the world through the deep logic of speech, are thus likely to be distinctly different from image-based cultures" (Hawisher 81). In this way, we are currently shifting into a new mode of perception, along with a new mode of composition. The way students interact with the world could fundamentally change in part the way they interact within it. Are we beginning to engage in different ways with the world in part due to this prominence of communication technologies? Shifting to a visual culture rather than a verbal culture?

Multimodal texts need theories that deal with integration of the various modes in texts, both in terms of production and consumption (83). Kress suggests we have viewed meaning making as a static process that we use, rather than a shifting landscape of possibilities. Ron Fortune reminds us that "semiotic modes and the means of representing them are not culturally, politically, or socially neutral" (53). This is an important claim, explicitly noting that there are decisions to be made that affect the culturally dominant modes of meaning making. We need to be conscious of these choices and the climate of our culture when investigating any of the perceived benefits or roles of these separate

semiotic modes. Fortune also notes that these lessons extend beyond composition and into the fields of communication, visual arts, and textuality in general.

Incorporating Multimodality into Composition

With every pedagogical movement, new territory is discovered in the realm of composition, and as a result the field often changes dramatically. After shedding the bonds of traditional writing practice in the 1960s, a long stretch of theories have risen to prominence and faded in the wake of new research. From Process pedagogy to Expressivism, there is a constant drive to explore the way in which we perceive writing and communication. Yet the obstacles facing rhetoric and composition as a discipline are varied and multiple. Still struggling to find its place within the university, writing studies are often viewed as the outliers, shunned and isolated from the umbrella of English Literature. Or in individualized programs, they are seen as primarily a general education requirement, designed to introduce students to the nature of academic writing.

Proponents and opponents of first year writing courses battled for years, debating the merits of a course designed only to teach a kind of stilted language, such as "Engfish," or providing skills that are too generalized to be of use. Indeed, much thought has been given to the shape of composition studies, posturing for Writing in the Disciplines or Writing Across the Curriculum. And yet we still find that not much has changed in regard to composition's place within the structure of higher education. Often belittled and overlooked, what are the benefits of providing such a course to students? Yet, what does it say that composition still rates as one of the few remaining required

courses at many institutions? Why should we privilege it in such a way if the benefits are sometimes unclear?

Again, we face another period of change as the methods of communication grow and evolve. The nature of current communication often seems to exceed the boundaries of what is traditionally considered composition. While students are still required to engage in the academic discourse community of the researched paper, the methods of transmitting information beyond academia have fragmented and splintered across a wide variety of platforms and technologies. Theorists such as Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher have long-since begun arguing for the incorporation of new technologies into the classroom, in order to improve the relevance of such a course.

Interactivity has also affected discourse in profound ways, with Scenters-Zapico going so far to say that Interactivity ought to be made a new Canon of rhetorical theory. The ways in which we share and incorporate information in our lives has become so varied that in order to become effective communicators, some knowledge of these technologies is required for proficiency. Advocates of multimodal composition stress the benefits of such a pedagogical approach by looking at the nature of knowledge transfer within courses. How much knowledge gained in a traditional composition class is carried over into life outside of that class and more importantly, outside the university?

Yet, to guard against undiluted idealism, it must be said that focusing on multimodal composition and digital rhetorics are not a cure-all solution. Viewed as a service course, composition has a strong stigma to overcome, and while it has come a long way since the advent of modern composition theory, there are still many debates to settle, including some that have raged for decades. Incorporating a technological element

and the broad-theory required for a multimodal composition course poses its own risks and challenges associated with teaching students. However, the benefits of beginning such a transformation throughout the university system may prove more beneficial than originally conceived.

Experiments are already underway within the composition classroom, asking students to create a new form of texts. Blending some of the older forms, such projects stress an understanding of traditional assignments, such as the personal narrative, while incorporating new elements to enhance knowledge of operating with digital technologies.

Hawisher and Selfe have much to say in the way of multimedia literacy narratives. In their research, they investigated the form of the literacy narrative, asking students to examine their own process of becoming familiarized with language. But they asked them to do so in a way that incorporated video and textual sources. The students were asked to record video segments of their narratives in order to discover "new methods of multimodal digital research and teaching that allow for the increasingly rich representation of language and literacy practices in digital and non-digital environments" (Hawisher 56).

In this way, their experimental course design resulted in many benefits for both students and instructors. The students within this course inevitably discovered a great deal about their own writing processes and how they had developed throughout the course of their lives. Yet, they also were given a window into the way in which digital technologies have influenced their methods of discourse. By focusing explicitly on those points of text creation, the students were able to gain insight into the ways in which they

have been influenced by technology and how they have begun to understand concepts of multimodal literacies.

The instructors of the course also gained insight into the way such technologies are used among students. They also learned how technologies allowed for increasingly globalized communication, focusing on the narratives of foreign students, tracking how they interacted with family and communities separate from those surrounding them academically. Again, this hails back to the idea presented by Scenters-Zapico and Cos that we are capable of reaching much broader audiences as a result of interactive technologies.

Daniel Anderson provides a detailed look at how instructors might begin incorporating multimodality within the composition classroom, centering on "low-bridge" assignments to introduce students to concepts of multiliteracies. In essence, students would work with technologies that are easily accessible through either open-source initiatives or through pre-installed corporate software, such as Microsoft MovieMaker. In this, Anderson identifies that students tend to fare better and learn more when dealing with tasks that are just slightly outside their comfort range, yet not inaccessible. He feels that low-bridge assignments can help students access their creativity in composing documents that we might not necessarily recognize at first.

He focuses on the idea that new literacies focus on "juxtaposition, parody, or pastiche and build upon student interests. These remix modes can overcome the boredom and 'exhaustion in most writing assignments'" (46). Again, it revolves around making the material relevant to student lives. Print-text literacy is still important, but we must build upon the interests fueling creativity and design in the future, and these kinds of

techniques connect student engagement with critical theory. Essentially, we're trying to escape pure alphabetic literacy.

Anderson provides an example of a digital playlist assignment and shows the processes involved in creating these assignments are similar to composing an essay, but different in execution. The same critical skills are brought to bear in terms of analysis and construction, but a different mode of literacy is used for the final product. In short, we combine ancient rhetorics and principles with modern technology and media. He also has an explanation of a visual collage assignment with different approaches, along with a video collage presentation. Each of these projects highlights some traditional reasoning skills while emphasizing a new multimodal output. And he reports that many students engage more in these assignments and might find more points of knowledge transfer after leaving the class. It is a fusion of new modes and ethos, pathos, and logos. This somewhat also connects to Expressivist ideals and authorial voice, arguing students may find their voice through new media assignments.

Studies, such as the 2006 survey conducted by Anderson, Atkins, Ball, Homicz, Selfe, and Selfe, also serve to illustrate the need for further investigation of multimodality within the classroom. This survey, composed primarily of readership of the College Composition and Communication journal and authorial connections, serves to explore how multimodality has already been integrated within the classroom. Yet, the limited scope of the survey population admittedly has some hindering effects on the research. However, it does identify that there is a need for professional training in many of these technologies. And much of the curriculum depends upon the available resources at a university.

Graupner, Nickoson-Massey, and Blair tackle multimodality from a different perspective, and while it does not directly relate to first-year composition students, it does point out a need for educating the individuals who will most often teach such courses within the academy. Rather than advocating for change within an undergraduate curriculum, these three authors come together to argue for the development of multimodal expression skills for graduate students as an integral part of their study. They begin by discussing the traditional view of doctoral studies, seeking to produce highly specialized students who were interested in research and landing a tenure-track position. However, much like many of the civic proponents of rhetoric argue, the atmosphere of the university is changing as we strive for more interaction within our specific communities.

The authors do tend to immediately associate multimodality with digital texts, though, which may ignore some views that even traditional texts have elements of multimodality. Their research becomes more of an exploration of technological literacy, and efforts to ensure that future instructors are fluent in the means of media production by understanding digital technologies. Whereas most students gain technological education in one or two courses, there is a movement to further incorporate these multimodal views into other courses. Much of it revolves around the idea of remaining competitive in attracting candidates and providing them with the skills to be successful as instructors in a digitally-mediated composing environment.

Along with much of the theoretical basis behind the integration of multimodality within first-year composition courses, many resources have been published in an attempt to provide instructors with resources that illustrate examples of multimodal texts. Often,

primary concerns among instructors have revolved around a lack of awareness on behalf of the course instructor. One such resource, Multimodal Composition edited by Cynthia Selfe, collected resources and assignments from numerous authors in an attempt to showcase different projects that could be assigned, the technology required, and how the assignments still cover and augment more traditional notions of the composition classroom. Bronwyn Williams offers reasoning for including multimodal texts within the first-year composition classroom, acknowledging the pitfalls of multimodal instruction, citing the fact that often terms such as multiliteracies were “on everyone's' lips, but nothing much had changed in the pedagogy, presentations, or research” (Takayoshi xii).

In essence, the book provides numerous methodologies for expanding beyond alphabetic literacy and composition practices, inviting the authors to explain how students can benefit from such work. It also concerns the practical matters behind these practices, such as how students can collaborate on the projects or save the materials. One such important consideration, that of assessment, is handled by Sonya Borton and Brian Huot. These authors stress the incorporation of instructive evaluation or instructive assessment, techniques “that help students learn to assess texts rhetorically – their own texts and the texts of others, as they compose and after they do so” (Takayoshi 100).

In this method, rhetorical knowledge is again emphasized, as students must be able to work alongside instructors to set benchmarks and then strive to reach those accomplishments (Takayoshi 100-102). The instructor and student, then, work closely to determine the methods of assessment and build upon a rhetorical foundation that allows for a proper evaluation of materials that defy tradition methods of assessing and evaluating print-text documents.

Similarly, Richard Selfe looks at how traditional techniques within composition need further updating to remain relevant to new forms of writing. In regards to revision, students must be aware of the conventions involved with editing audio and visual elements, which in turn requires knowledge of the software required to accomplish such tasks. Knowledge of such software again requires that students be provided with the resources, such as computer workstations, on which such work can be accomplished. As such, the framework and resources required for successfully incorporating these elements into composition are vast, yet the benefits are numerous.

Lester Faigley makes some interesting connections regarding the digital landscape present within the act of composition. He does this by looking back at the history of change and noting how drastically writing was changed by the creation and widespread distribution of personal computers. While this is often noted but rarely emphasized, the nature of creating printed texts changed immensely thanks in part to the ability to quickly edit and revise work through word processors, a task which would have required entire rewrites at one point. In this way, the methods of composition changed, placing an emphasis on fluidity; drafts became less discrete entities and more a document in process, where text and meanings could be shaped and reshaped as rapidly as the computer could shift, modify, delete, or move words.

Thus, already technology has had a powerful effect on the nature of composing as a discipline, and further advents put even more power in the hands of students. Now it becomes apparent that faculty must race to keep abreast with their students in order to understand and guide young compositionists in understanding the skills and awareness

required to successfully build new media documents that still contain rhetorically-sound tactics.

THE CALL FOR MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATIONS

Without justification, there is no reason to consider undertaking such a course of action within composition studies. But, the site of communication studies is increasingly embracing the digital. Some of these technologies have been apparent for a while. Courses of study already go into great depth exploring the unique opportunities provided by television as a method of information distribution. Yet until recently, the production of such content was limited to experts, and points of distribution were fairly centralized.

Constructs such as the Internet have changed that perception, allowing individuals to author their own multimedia content on the web and share that with an enormous audience. As Roland Barthes suggested, the line between author and audience is becoming increasingly blurred as we begin to both produce and consume the texts that surround us. These points of distribution have caused a great amount of confusion in various fields as we have struggled to define how they operate. New ways of reading have evolved from exposure to such large amounts of content. Hypertexts have changed the way we view documents and move from one document to another.

Classical elements still exist in this new framework, yet they must be modified to fit the new forms. Time has demonstrated that we cannot simply embrace old theories in relation to new technologies, and the results of new media have changed the shape of social interaction.

Moving Toward the Multimodal

The remainder of this thesis, that of practical application and examples of multimodality cannot necessarily be explored best through a print-centric document such as this paper.

For that reason, I invite you to move into the digital portion of this project, available at: http://www.writ-rhet.com/. There, examples of multimodality can be exhibited and inform the content in a way that is not possible through a static document.

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