Introduction to Volume 17, Issue 1/2

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A lot has happened since December 2019, when the last issue of *ATD* came out. COVID-19 moved from a relatively contained, novel coronavirus to a pandemic, forcing quarantines, major changes to the educational system, economic contraction, and unprecedented unemployment. Many of us spent mid-March restructuring face-to-face classes to pivot to online instruction, as colleges and universities sent students and staff home. Some among us were undoubtedly well positioned to pivot, having taught in online and/or blended learning modalities for decades; others teaching at institutions whose value propositions include the in-class and seminar discussion experience really had to scramble. Families hit hard by the COVID-induced recession are finding it difficult to continue with or to pursue a college education. In the US, COVID has hit communities of color especially hard, revealing to many the racial disparities in healthcare, housing, and work flexibility. Recent video footage of the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks – and the police killing of Breonna Taylor in her home – have focused many Whites' attention on what has long been known by Blacks and other persons of color: Racism in the US is pervasive and deeply ingrained.

This moment calls for reflection – and action. What can we do? What will we do? This cannot be just another moment, like the weeks following the shooting of Trayvon Martin, or Tamir Rice, or Michael Brown. On the WPA-L, the WAC-L, discussion boards, and other venues, writing studies faculty are seeking and sharing ideas as they re-think and re-work syllabi. I read what gets posted with interest and reflect on changes to my own practices – as a department chair, as a WPA, and as an educator. Locally, and in summer, my colleagues across the academic disciplines, our administration, and our students are engaged in campus-wide discussions about anti-racism and the broader campus climate. My campus is not alone in engaging in what for us is much-overdue work, and the work is not only happening on campuses. School boards, town councils, police departments, state legislators and executives, and the federal government are considering (and beginning to enact) what may become meaningful changes. It is too early to know if the US is truly at an inflection point, but it is difficult not to feel that something is different this time.

Even as we reflect on racism and work toward anti-racist practices in our institutions (and, for many of us, in our actions), urgent planning for an uncertain Fall 2020 term occupies whole sections of our limited intellectual, creative, and emotional energy. There's no clear national model, or even clear state-level alignment in many places. Right now, plans are all over the map: fully online, hybrid classes, regular classes with social distancing protocols, and more. Even the most articulated plans for Fall seem precarious. Where I sit in Maine, we are fortunate (today) to have bent the curve and are experiencing very low infection rates. Others in the US and across the globe are not so lucky, and my own state's infection situation remains tenuous, as bars, restaurants, and hotels reopen and our tourist season heats up. Colleges and universities in Maine have mostly announced plans to have students on campus in Fall. These plans could easily be undone by a spike in cases over the coming weeks.

We are excited to publish this issue of *Across the Disciplines* and are confident you will find the articles significant, both for the conceptual work they undertake and for the practical applications they make available to those of us involved in WAC/WID work. Three articles involve explicit theorization: Cameron Bushnell (2020) theorizes an anti-racist project for WAC; Chris Basgier and Amber Simpson (2020) explore possible threshold concepts for the *teaching* of writing; and Crystal Fodrey and Meg Mikovits (2020) articulate a theory of multimodal WAC faculty development. Two contributions invite readers to think about the challenges of writing transfer from composition to writing in the disciplines, a significant area of interest in our field: Erin Zimmerman (2020) examines differences in the ways composition textbooks and science textbooks treat visual communication; Fodrey and Mikovits invite thinking about transfer between First Year Writing Seminars and writing enriched courses in the disciplines, with a focus on multimodal compositions. Given that so much of WAC/WID work involves faculty development, it comes as no surprise that all four articles in this issue offer insights that might be productively applied in workshops.

Chris Basgier and Amber Simpson (2020), in "Reflecting on the Past, Reconstructing the Future: Faculty Members' Threshold Concepts for Teaching Writing in the Disciplines," analyze data from faculty at Auburn University and propose a preliminary set of threshold concepts for the *teaching of writing* in the disciplines. By shifting from what in writing studies has primarily been a focus on threshold concepts for writing to a focus on the teaching of writing, they invite WAC/WID scholars and administrators to consider the challenges that faculty outside our field encounter as they attempt to embrace WID pedagogies. Their methodology (a phenomenographical approach) surfaces three kinds of narratives – roadblock, detour, and journey – which they connect to the pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal stages of threshold concept acquisition. These traffic metaphors will undoubtedly prove helpful to WAC/WID administrators when engaged in faculty development. More significantly for WID faculty development and the study of threshold concepts, Basgier and Simpson identify three particular threshold concepts for the teaching of writing. The first concept is one they label a metaconcept: effective writing pedagogy involves iterative, multifaceted change. The second threshold concept, students' development as writers can be supported through scaffolded intervention, is almost certainly a commonplace within writing studies. But Basgier and Simpson show that an embrace of the concept marks the shift from pre-liminal (roadblock) thinking about the limited efficacy of writing instruction to post-liminal (journey) practices typically associated with productive writing pedagogies in WAC and WID contexts. The third threshold concept is that genres can be taught as actions, not (just) forms. Where WID faculty often expect students to write within a particular disciplinary genre or form, the authors found liminal and post-liminal faculty narratives shifted from a focus on form to an emphasis on the ways that a particular genre enacted disciplinarity. These three concepts emerging from Basgier and Simpson's study are unlikely to be new to most *ATD* readers, as the authors note, but this actually suggests they have identified several key components of our community of practice.

Cameron Bushnell's (2020) contribution to the issue, "Designing a Racial Project for WAC: International Teaching Assistants and Translational Consciousness," argues that WAC administrators and faculty at universities employing international teaching assistants (ITAs) should value ITAs' positionality, encourage them to embrace it in their writing, and support their involvement in WAC work. WAC is inextricably connected to language and writing, which in the US context too often reduces to Standard English and its attendant cultural and racial biases. Drawing from her experiences establishing a graduate student WAC fellows development program at Clemson University, Bushnell challenges what she describes as a common perception that ITAs are likely poor candidates to teach writing-infused content courses because they might struggle with their own writing. She considers ways that connecting WAC with ITAs might involve such programs in anti-racist work and proposes translation as a "method" WAC programs might take up in work with ITAs.

Drawing from translation studies, writing studies, Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (2015) racial formation theory, and current theories of code-meshing (Young, Barrett, Young-Rivera, & Lovejoy, 2014), translingualism (Canagarajah, 2013), and translanguaging (Wei, 2018), Bushnell proposes a way of thinking about what ITAs might bring that she calls *translational consciousness.* Translational consciousness seeks to "preserve distinctions between languages, suggesting that knowing how a language operates, in what contexts a language has power, and how it exercises power in a particular situation is critical to wielding language effectively" (Bushnell, 2020, p. 31). For Bushnell, WAC programs should encourage ITAs to cultivate translational consciousness and to bring what that consciousness reveals to bear on both their writing and their teaching. Where many undergraduates in the US might expect transparent communication and blame ITAs and language difference for difficulties in learning, Bushnell argues that ITAs have the potential to disrupt the racialized teaching situation by calling attention to the complex work of translation and establish more culturally and racially aware classrooms.

Crystal Fodrey and Meg Mikovits (2020), in "Theorizing WAC Faculty Development in Multimodal Project Design," offer actionable guidance to WAC/WID and writing program administrators interested in encouraging multimodal projects across disciplines. They explore the ways their First Year Writing Seminar (FYWS), which is taught by faculty across the disciplines, and WAC programs' emphasis on writing transfer and meta-awareness of genre differences has informed their approach to an initiative that encourages multimodal writing projects in (and beyond) FYWS classes. Fodrey and Mikovitz, in theorizing their efforts, draw from recent literature on writing transfer, components of meaningful writing projects (Eodice, Geller, & Lerner, 2016), Anne Beaufort's (2007) overlapping knowledge domains – subject matter, discourse community, genre, rhetorical, and writing process – and, of course, multimodal composition. They describe the structure and focus for a WAC workshop intended to help faculty imagine and develop meaningful multimodal projects integrated into courses in their disciplines. Readers looking to offer a multimodal writing workshop for WAC faculty at their institution will likely find the "Multimodal Project Design Guide" in the appendix of particular interest. Also important in Fodrey and Mikovits' conceptualization of the multimodal WAC workshop is their reflection on concepts that posed difficulties for faculty and ideas for addressing them. Perhaps not surprisingly, faculty had little difficulty recognizing that subject matter knowledge needed to be linked to learning outcomes in the multimodal projects. Faculty also quickly acknowledged the importance of writing process knowledge, though Fodrey and Mikovits report that faculty had some initial difficulty scaffolding their multimodal writing projects. More troublesome for faculty were discourse community, rhetorical, and genre knowledge, particularly in the context of multimodal project design.

Erin Zimmerman (2020), in "Locating Visual Communication across Disciplines: How Visual Instruction in Composition Textbooks differs from that in Science-writing Textbooks," considers the ways that disciplines teach visual communication by examining the approaches composition and natural sciences textbooks take as they instruct students in the use of visuals. Her methodology compares textbooks developed for use in composition courses with those developed for the sciences to identify the most common visual communication terms and typical instructional emphases. In her examination of 60 textbooks, Zimmerman surfaces eight common themes across the texts: purposes visuals serve; visuals and written text work together; visuals stand alone; visual design and creation; writers might start with visuals; ethical use of visuals; analysis of visuals; and reading visuals. She then considers how frequently textbooks in each field treat those themes, the ways they approach the themes, and the places where divergent emphases suggest important differences in the ways that visuals are taught in composition and in the natural sciences. Zimmerman's study raises important questions for the transfer of visual communication as taught in composition courses to the practices employed in the natural sciences (and elsewhere) and invites our field to consider more carefully the

ways that visuals work in a variety of disciplines, in our textbooks, in our composition courses, and in our WAC work.

A lot *has* happened since last December, when *ATD* published its final issue with Michael Pemberton as editor. Many may not know that Michael was the founding editor of the journal, and he launched it as a merger of two earlier peer-reviewed journals in the field, *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines* and *Academic.Writing*, one of which he had co-edited. His sixteen years at the helm of *ATD* have shaped both the journal and the field itself. I have had the good fortune to have been able to work with Michael over many of those years. Michael Pemberton remains with *ATD* as consulting editor, a role that will help us maintain a strong relationship between *ATD* the journal and book series he edits, *Across the Disciplines Books*. Behind the scenes at *ATD*, Julia Voss has taken on the role of associate editor, and Paul Cook continues as book reviews editor. Our undergraduate intern this spring, Sinéad Scott, graduated in May and looks to pursue a career in professional communication.

Beyond the articles and the leadership transition, beginning with Volume 17 *ATD* will capitalize Black and White when referring to members of a racial or ethnic group. We recognize the debate over the capitalization of Black and, especially, of White, and we invite readers to educate themselves about that debate.[1] Additionally, I am pleased to report that Volume 17 marks the beginning of *ATD*'s use of Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs). *ATD* is the first publication in the WAC Clearinghouse to assign DOIs. Working with Mike Palmquist and others in the Clearinghouse, we expect to assign DOIs to articles in the *ATD* archive over the coming year. As this is a major initiative coming out of the WAC Clearinghouse publishers, other journals associated with the Clearinghouse will likely move in this direction over time.

Looking ahead, we have a number of irons in the fire at *ATD*. We are actively working on a special issue on archival research across the disciplines. This issue, guest edited by Gesa Kirsch, Caitlin Burns, Dakoda P. Smith, and Romeo Garcia, is currently set to appear as a double issue early next year. Paul Cook continues to work with a number of authors preparing reviews of recent books in the field, and we have a range of very interesting articles currently at different points in the review and approval pipeline. In partnership with Mike Palmquist and the organizers of the 2020 International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference (IWACC), early this year we began considering the possibility that *ATD* might develop a special issue from a range of articles presented at the conference. After considering several thematic candidates, we settled on the idea of an issue on WAC/WID and STEM. Though the IWACC has been postponed until 2021, we are moving forward and will soon issue a call for proposals for a STEM special issue, "STEM and WAC/WID: Co-Navigating Our Shifting Currents," with Erin Beaver, Brian Hendrickson, and Justin Nicholes as guest editors. In addition to postponing the IWACC, COVID forced the cancellation of the Conference on College Composition and Communication and the postponement of the Writing Program Administrators Conference. I encourage those among us who developed papers for one or more of these conferences to consider sending them to *ATD* for review and possible publication.

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Notes

[1] Readers unfamiliar with reasons for this usage might consult Ann Thúy Nguyễn and Maya Pendleton's (2020) "Recognizing Race in Language: Why We Capitalize 'Black' and 'White'" or Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2020) "The Case for Capitalizing the B in Black," two texts that take seriously the debate over capitalizing Black (and White) and present the complexity of a range of viewpoints. This decision hardly puts ATD on the front lines of anti-racist work, as the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (2020) updates it style to recommend the capitalization of Black and White when referring to racial or ethnic groups.

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