CHAPTER 14

PREPARING FOR THE RHETORICITY OF OWI

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This chapter, directed to both instructors and students, addresses OWI as a digital rhetoric with all of the political and ideological dimensions of a rhetoric. As instructors and students prepare for OWI, they need to look beyond the functionality of the technologies used to teach the class and learn how to read them rhetorically. For instructors and students, digital rhetoric is applied in the production of instructional communication (i.e., the strategies these individuals use to communicate about policies and course content through the mediating technologies) and course content (i.e., what students are learning to produce in OWI classes). This chapter addresses the rhetorical features that OWI instructors should be aware of and how they can reasonably impart this awareness upon their students, particularly in light of OWI Principles 1 and 2.

To describe the practices of teaching and learning in OWI as applications of digital rhetoric would hardly be provocative to many stakeholders and observers of these courses. However, I argue that the uncontroversial nature of this description correlates with the way the term *digital rhetoric* typically is applied to any practice using digital tools, such as the computers and—increasingly—mobile devices (see Chapter 16) commonly used to mediate OWI. While such an application of this term acknowledges that all communication can be rhetorically construed, it often de-emphasizes the potentially persuasive and ideological nature of this communication. In other words, *rhetoric* almost becomes synonymous with use in these situations. But digital rhetoric—or *applied rhetoric* using digital technologies as it often is connoted in this chapter—should signify how an interlocutor considers to use digital tools when choosing the best available means of persuasion (to draw upon the Aristotelian definition) and how to use their affordances. Or, even in the absence of digital technologies, the interlocutor considers how digital tools can still influence one's means to be persuasive.

Indeed, OWCs—to include FYW—should be perceived and taught as applied rhetoric courses that use digital technology to mediate interaction between instructors and students.

Others who have examined the rhetorical nature of digital communication echoed the sentiments of this definition. James P. Zappen (2005), rather than define digital rhetoric, acknowledged that it is "an amalgam of more-or-less discrete components rather than a complete and integrated theory in its own right. These discrete components nonetheless provide at least a partial outline for such a theory, which has potential to contribute to the larger body of rhetorical theory and criticism and the rhetoric of science and technology in particular" (p. 323). To understand digital rhetoric is to understand the relationship between many different technologies and the myriad of ways that arguments get made. Because there are so many different ways that these components can be put together to create both effective and ineffective arguments, it becomes difficult to identify what exactly digital rhetoric is. Furthermore, the technological components have expanded writers' capabilities to communicate multimodally, and thus argue in new ways (see Chapter 15). As a result, the emphasis of digital rhetoric seems to be shifting toward an emphasis on the digital writing tools that afford the capability to compose multimodally. In a special issue of *Computers & Composition* entitled "Digital Rhetoric, Digital Literacy, Computers and Composition," guest editor Carolyn Handa (2001) also did not define digital rhetoric, but she argued, "incorporating digital elements into writing—especially in the form of Web pages and multimedia projects—demands that we draw on our knowledge of rhetoric perhaps even more than our knowledge of HTML, design issues, or graphics software. Images and sounds are rhetorical" (p. 2). For Handa, the technology is less important than both the message and the deliberate strategies one adopts to compose said message. However, recognizing the rapid rise of technologies that somewhat easily allow writers to incorporate visuals and sounds into their text, Handa emphasized that writers cannot lose sight of these elements' rhetorical nature. In short, "digital rhetoric" is not just about the *use* of digital communicative technologies.

In instructional contexts, the art of persuasion is prevalent, not just in the work students do in their writing courses but in their everyday interactions. Both instructors and students are constantly persuading each other. Among the many arguments that instructors make, they typically want to convince students that the subject matter is important, that their version of the subject matter is more accurate than competing theories, and that they are using the best approaches to help students understand the subject matter. Students, likewise, want to persuade instructors; they mostly argue for their capabilities to retain and apply what they have learned with hopes of leveraging this argument for a

favorable assessment and/or recommendation. Moreover, if writing instruction is understood to be the teaching of applied rhetoric, the students, whether they understand it or not, are learning how to make such arguments in the courses they take. James Berlin (1982) wanted writing studies to accept that, "[i]n teaching writing, we are not simply offering training in useful technical skill that is meant as a simple complement to the more important studies of other areas. We are teaching a way of experiencing the world, a way of ordering and making sense of it" (p. 776). Writing instructors are teaching students how to interact with the world around them using various semiotic systems—how they are shaped by others' use of these semiotics and how they can shape others.

In the context of OWI, especially in fully online OWCs, the means by which instructors and students make arguments mostly is mediated by digital technologies and delivered through writing, even though the multimodal nature of many Web technologies does expand one's repertoires for making these arguments. Whether instructors and students choose to communicate textually with linguistic symbols or through other modalities, the actual technologies they use to communicate impacts the ways they can and do communicate. These contextual conditions positions the first two principles of *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI*'s (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) as crucial guidelines for what instructors do in their courses. OWI Principle 1 reminds course designers to consider who will be taught and OWI Principle 2 reminds them about what needs to be taught. While administrators and instructors should clearly want OWCs to be accessible to all students, deciding the role the technology will play in the course is less straightforward and has to be context-dependent. OWI Effective Practice 7.2 stated that those who teach OWI should be hired for their expertise in writing because *they are teaching a writing course* (p. 18). However, when most writing in our contemporary age is composed and delivered with digital technologies, can instruction ignore the material conditions of our writing practices? This is not an easy question to answer, especially when an OWI technology's role often depends upon local institutional and programmatic resources, including, but not limited to what technologies are available, the OWI faculty's competencies with various digital technologies, and the knowledge of the rhetorical connections between writing and writing technologies.

Each of these technologies has affordances, or programmer-designed capabilities, that prescribe how the user *should* use it (see Chapter 11). The problem is that these programmer-designed features become transparent to many users—instructors and students alike—who naturalize them as inherent parts of the technology rather than the product of other people's decisions—an individual or an organization with ideological worldviews (Stone, 2001). Specifically the

influences on designers and users range from Hollywood to the mass media to government agencies to educational institutions (Selber, 2004, p. 150). Unfortunately, many instructors and students are unaware how the rhetorical decisions of the corporations, teams, and individuals who write and design their digital technologies shape the ways they can communicate and, therefore, construct arguments. It is only when they experience a cryptic error message meant to be deciphered by "computer experts" that they become hyper-aware of these decisions that others have made (Selber, 2004). Arguably, the digitally mediated interaction between OWI participants, predominantly writing, is high stakes and has consequences to both the students' well-being (e.g., the ways that success in class can be leveraged for institutional and/or career success) and instructors' well-being (e.g., the ways that instructional success can be leveraged for job security, promotion, and/or financial reward). Making these arguments sometimes becomes more complicated for instructors and students who have physical or learning disabilities, who have a non-native command of English, who can only access technologies for OWI during certain times and at certain places, or whose technologies' limited capabilities provides diminished access to the OWC. Even those who rarely or never experience these issues should understand that individuals with these challenges will comprise a segment of their audience. Therefore, instructors and students alike can benefit from developing an awareness of the digital technology's influence on their communication. The question becomes where and when in the program and course design do the stakeholders incorporate this metacognition? To cover the widest swath of OWI participants, the teaching of digital rhetoric should start with instructor preparation because they, in turn, have the opportunity to impart this wisdom on their students.

To build upon the work of the three previous chapters in this section (see Chapters 11, 12, & 13), especially those that focus on instructor preparation, I position teacher preparation, and by extension student preparation, as primarily a response to *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI*'s first two principles, respectively OWI Principle 2 about designing curricula that emphasizes that OWCs are *primarily* about learning how to write rather than learning how to use the technology and OWI Principle 1 about making OWCs accessible and inclusive. Discussing Principle 2 before Principle 1 does not deprioritize issues of inclusivity and accessibility; instead it helps to frame these access concerns as practical and rhetorical issues about connecting with one's audience. Using an Aristotelian foundation for writing instruction, I juxtapose the institutional realities that many writing programs face with the ideals the field advocates as a way to address what we should be preparing faculty and students for before and during the OWI course. Stuart Selber's (2004) theories of multiliteracy, especially his treatment of the concepts *functional literacy*

and *rhetorical literacy*, provide useful vocabulary for discussing and contextually prioritizing the lessons that need to be learned to make OWI successful and the lessons that educators want instructors and students to learn in order to foster an outcome of rhetorically aware students and citizens. In the second part of the chapter, I highlight the principles in the OWI Statement that help to justify developing a rhetorical understanding of the technology among the OWI faculty and students, as well as exemplifying possible practices for developing these understandings.

FUNCTIONAL AWARENESS VERSUS RHETORICAL AWARENESS

*A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI*s (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) second principle stated that "an online writing course should focus on writing and not on technology orientation or teaching students how to use learning and other technologies" (p. 11). As Beth L. Hewett acknowledges in Chapter 1, this principle is a strained union between two schools of thought. One school of thought prioritizes protecting both instructors and students. These advocates acknowledge the OWI should be more about "writing" than about being "online" and mediated through computer technologies. As a result, the curricular goals should be teaching students how to "invent the university" (Bartholomae, 1985) in the introductory (FYW) writing courses and teaching them how to communicate within their discipline's discourse in more advanced and writing-intensive disciplinary courses. Therefore, WPAs, when recruiting from a pool of highly qualified writing instructors (OWI Principle 7, Effective Practice 7.2), should not expect these instructors also to be digital technology experts. Rather these instructors should be taught how to use the computer technologies they need to competently manage the course and fulfill their institution's guidelines for writing instruction. The students, similarly, should be expected to learn the conventions of various discourse communities rather than how to use an array of applications, many they may never use again. Furthermore, students should not be asked to make potentially burdensome financial or time expenditures related to technology to participate in their writing courses.

The other school of thought contends that writing instruction is the teaching of applied rhetoric. Therefore, the instructor is responsible for extensively teaching students the available means of persuasion. Included among these means is the canon of delivery, so increasing both the writing students' repertoire of delivery modes, or writing technologies, and expanding their understanding of these writing tools' affordances increases the available means for them.[1] A writer

with a vast array of rhetorical strategies can best approximate their audiences' expectations, and, arguably, have a greater chance of being successfully persuasive. Students in these types of classes, as a result, are prepared in their writing courses how to respond to different types of rhetorical situations rather than having finite amount of prescribed strategies.

Although scholars, instructors, and administrators who subscribe to these schools of thought can become very entrenched in their positions, the schools of thought, of course, are not mutually exclusive and can overlap in practice in many ways. Writing programs can design courses that teach students how to meet the expectations of their discourse communities through the writing and pre-writing that they do with various digital technologies. Also, some scholars maintain that instructors can use some multimodal composing technologies as a scaffold for teaching students rhetorical strategies they can use to participate in academic and disciplinary discourse communities, especially when working with multilingual writers (DePew, 2011; DePew & Miller-Cochran, 2010).

Resources, especially when limited, often prevent these positions from being reconciled. While some institutions can keep pace with the latest hardware and software innovations, other institutions do not have a lot of technology, have old and/or poorly maintained hardware and software, and/or experience incompatibility between the hardware and software. Some of these issues can be addressed with free software, but only if the applications are compatible with the computers and the institution will allow these applications to be placed on their computers. There is also the question as to whether among an institution's resources are faculty who have been appropriately prepared to use the technology and then to teach students how to compose with an expanded repertoire of writing technologies (see OWI Principle 7). Institutions also must negotiate how to address instructor preparation with the technology. Some institutions have robust IT departments, but they may cater to "sage-on-the-stage" paradigms that are discouraged for writing courses (DePew & Lettner-Rust, 2009, p. 180) or they may be focused strictly on the LMS that may or may not be appropriate for OWI. Other institutions will customize this technology preparation within the writing program. But even if instructors are learning how to operate various applications to teach OWCs, they may not be learning how to think about the rhetorical implication of these writing technologies—an issue that can be exacerbated when technologies, like the present generation of LMSs, provide little contextual information for blind users who cannot adequately access the technology to understand its rhetorical nature. Anecdotally, there are many institutions that offer OWI populated with faculty who think about the technology much more functionally than rhetorically. If the administrators and the OWI faculty do not value a rhetorical knowledge, then it cannot be impart-

ed upon the students. And this state of writing pedagogy, arguably, precipitates from institutional attitudes that writing itself is a functional rather than a rhetorical technology.

While most would perceive that advantages of expertise and resources would favor four-year institutions over two-year institutions and private institutions over public institutions, the realities are sometimes different. These issues that institutions with very limited resources face are not just challenges for various types of hybrid OWCs that help provide student access to OWI (see Chapter 2), but in the fully online OWC these issues can limit how instructors learn how to teach and how they can mediate their course. So, due to these limited resources, two positions that seemingly can reach a compromise often remain contested. The student body also needs to be considered. Just as some campuses have more students who have developed adept literate practices, others have significant student populations who struggle with various aspects of reading and writing; the same can be said about students and their technology skills. And the students who excel or struggle with their literate behaviors are not necessarily the same ones who excel or struggle with the technology. Furthermore, the resources to help these disparate students at different campuses are rarely equal. *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* has been written to create the most effective literacy learning conditions for all students taking an OWC, whether they are honors students at a well-funded, well-regarded, research-rich, four-year institution or developmental writers at an underfunded, provincially known, single-building community college. Since these clearly are different contexts, individual institutions have to work within their given parameters to create the most effective experiences for all students. In other words, student populations also have to be an important indicator of the appropriateness of an "ideal" digital rhetoric approach.

Due to all of these factors, the space to create this compromise often feels as big as the eye of a needle—a narrow space in which administrators and instructors invested in OWI have to negotiate between designing practices that are most pedagogically sound for an applied rhetoric course and designing practices based upon the resources, knowledge, and culture that comprise their institutional realities. In many instances, it is difficult to thread this needle, and institutions often do the best they can to offer sound writing instruction with the realities that their institutions offer. When all-types of higher educational institutions—four-year, two-year, public, private, and for-profit institutions—are considered, a functional approach to writing and digital technologies appears to dominate the OWI landscape. Therefore, to provide a different, and maybe unfamiliar, perspective, this chapter primarily advocates for strategies to design OWI as applied rhetoric courses using digital technologies.

Selber's (2004) descriptions of functional and rhetorical approaches to technologies help to explain the functional/rhetorical tension that is inherent in *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI*'s (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) second principle. In *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*, Selber (2004) challenged his audience to understand that technological education entails more than learning the tools' operational functions. Supporting Neil Postman's (1995) argument that teaching technologies is a humanities-based endeavor, Selber (2004) warned that "simply understanding the mechanics of computing, particularly in decontextualized ways, will not prepare students and teachers for the challenges of literacy in the twenty-first century" (p. 2). He stated that although this mechanical approach to teaching technology will foster "some extremely useful skills" within these students, he believed they "will have a much more difficult time thinking critically, contextually, and historically about the ways that computer technologies are developed and used within our culture, and how such use, in turn, intersects with writing and communication practices in the classroom" (p. 9). And one also can include contexts outside of the classroom. The situation Selber described is exacerbated in the OWC context because whether the course is hybrid or fully online (see Chapter 2), the students not only have to interact with the digital technologies, but they *must* interact with other people—especially those who have authority over them—through the technologies. Therefore, through this critical, contextual, and historical analysis of one's digital writing tools, writers may begin to understand how they can adapt the tools for their own purposes, which in the OWC can have immediate communicative consequences.

To paraphrase Selber, those who subscribe to the perspective that technologies are simply instruments also tend to fully embrace them as panaceas or reject them as a social cancer. These digital technologies, according to Selber, are much more complex than overblown pronouncement of their potential. The "hype," whether supporting or vilifying these tools, ignores that "computer technologies are aligned with competitive and oppressive formations that tend to shore up rather than address existing social inequalities" (p. 12). The stakeholders, too immersed in the commonplaces about technology, rarely are prompted to challenge these ubiquitous arguments. But, as Andrew Feenberg (1991) taught, the digital technologies are never neutral. And despite the "kumbaya rhetoric" of global equality that digital corporations use to sell their wares, at the end of the day these companies need to turn a profit, so they design their hardware and write their applications to appeal to hegemonic values and aesthetics (Selfe & Selfe, 1994; Stone, 2001). Therefore, any adoption of these products by higher education institutions to mediate online instruction—often through long-term contracts perceived to be lucrative investments—positions instructors as agents

of these inequalities. For example, instructors at my institution were asked to participate in a pilot of three different LMSs. Two were corporate products and one was freeware, and my institution's IT department, based upon a confluence of factors, chose to retain the ubiquitous LMS program it had already been using. Despite this decision, the institution responsibly gave the instructors from across the curriculum an opportunity to test the different programs with their respective courses and decide which was the most effective product for their curricular goals. But many institutions, based upon my conversations with peers in field, do not solicit this type of feedback and choose programs for their instructors respective of how conducive they are for writing instruction.

Even though some instructors will use or supplement instruction with other digital applications, instructors and students—in some instructional contexts—can make choices about how they use these technologies. For example, given the choice, should an instructor ask students to build a blog with the institutional LMS or using another online program? From one perspective, using an LMS complies with *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI*'s Effective Practice 10.7: "In most cases, teachers should make use of the institutionally approved software and/or LMS on which students are prepared for the OWC" (p. 22). The CCCC OWI Committee privileged colleges' and universities' LMS because these programs, built into the institutional infrastructure, often are widely employed and supported by IT in their contexts, which, therefore, reifies their presence and accessibility. In effect, when the institution's LMS is used, the playing field is level for all students—except those for whom access to the LMS has not been provided adequately—a critical issue that always needs attention, as Chapter 8 details. Examined from another perspective, the CCCC OWI Committee also recognized that LMSs, for some students and instructors, can limit inclusivity and accessibility insofar as they may be poorly designed. My students have described our campus' LMS as not being as intuitive as popular program's interfaces, and my peers complain about its inefficiency. Indeed, writing instructors often realize quickly that the LMS was not developed with writing instruction in mind. Furthermore, because other blogging programs exist outside the LMS, the instructor for many good pedagogical reasons (as suggested by Effective Practice 7.2), may prefer these programs because they afford students the potential of a real audience for their writing.

The CCCC OWI Committee also understood that some "composition teachers may desire to bring additional, often free, software into the OWC," but if they choose to do this, "they should: (1) have a clear pedagogical rationale for doing so; (2) have appropriate permission to do so; (3) make sure that it is accessible to all students; and (4) prepare students adequately for the change and/or addition to the LMS" (pp. 22-23). OWI instructors, and in some cases their

WPAs, have to balance many challenges to make difficult decisions. In the case of choosing between the LMS and an outside software, should the instructor create a course in which all course features are contained within a LMS, a single and presumably familiar program? Or should OWI instructors also incorporate programs with affordances that differently support their pedagogical goals (e.g., using outside software that is not password-protected like an LMS and allows writers to push their works to outside, more "real" audiences) and choose the non-LMS program? These stakeholders also have to weigh other considerations. With both programs, students concede ownership of their texts to the institution or corporation. Does the instructor or do the students know the implications of this often unspoken requirement? Also, do these stakeholders consider the pedagogical and ethical implications of the privacy the LMS affords versus the access to outside audiences that outside software affords? And do the instructors understand how making these decisions disadvantages some students and privileges others? Answering these questions and making these decisions are not easy, but that is exactly why administrators and instructors need to understand the implications of these issues and be involved in the decision-making process for selecting OWI technologies.

These arguments often go unchallenged in courses that teach students how to use these technologies. Citing Don Byrd and Derek Owens (1998), Selber (2004) emphasized how the technologies' potential for generating hybrid forms often goes unrealized; instead, the technologies often are used to reify entrenched ideological positions (pp. 137-138). Considering that most higher education computer literacy requirements are "monolithic and one-dimensional" and ignore "the fact that computer technologies are embedded in a wide range of constitutive contexts, as well as entangled in value systems" (p. 22), it is understandable that students simply accept these commonplaces as truth. In other words, when institutions present digital technologies to students, they also need to provide students with heuristics, yet these questions need to move beyond "How do I use this technology?" to "What does this technology want me to do?" and "Why?" Selber contended that "critique is certainly one crucial aspect of any computer literacy program, for it encourages a cultural awareness of power structures. But students must also be able to use computers effectively as well as participate in the construction and reconstruction of technological systems" (p. 7). This is the pivot point where function and rhetoric merge. By understanding how an application's affordances reifies certain social values, such as the hierarchical structure of most meeting software or the playful applications in social media, the users, whether instructors or students, can understand who the application designer thinks they are or who they want them to be. Only with this knowledge can users then accept the affordances on their own terms or

appropriate the affordances for their own purposes.

Therefore, a complete rhetorical education of computer technologies entails the operational functions, an understanding of the technology as an artifact of power dynamics, and the opportunity to conceptualize new ways to design these technologies—arguably an act of empowerment. To this end, Selber proposed a multiliteracy education that covers functional, critical, and rhetorical literacies. One of the ways that Selber defined these literacies is through how each respectively positions the individual: "students as users of technologies, students as questioners of technology, and students as producers of technology" (p. 25). Although the students' agencies seem to increase favorably as one moves from functional literacy through critical literacy to rhetorical literacy, Selber clearly argued that there is no hierarchy among these different computer literacies and students need to be competent in all three (p. 24).

Selber (2004) came closest to defining rhetorical literacy when he said, "Rhetorical literacy concerns the design and evaluation of online environments; thus students who are rhetorically literate can effect change in technological systems. Students should not just be effective users of computers, nor should they be just informed questioners" (p. 182). *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI*s (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) OWI Principle 2 warned administrators and instructors about designing "writing courses" that focus on functional literacy to the exclusion of writing, that require OWI teachers to become technology specialists, or that focus the course curriculum on teaching how to compose with an array of writing technologies rather than how to effectively communicate within various discourse communities, especially those valued in the academy. Yet, a rhetorical literacy corresponds with this principle by teaching students how to use and adapt the technologies most effectively to produce desired texts. To help his audience understand rhetorical literacy, Selber (2004) established its parameters. Where functional literacy aims at effective practice and critical literacy aims at informed critique, rhetorical literacy aims at reflective praxis or a "thoughtful integration" between the two former literacies (pp. 25, 145). Additionally, Selber presented four other terms—persuasion, deliberation, reflection, social action—that round out the rhetorical literacies' parameters. As one uses these concepts to sketch an outline for what rhetorical literacy can be, it becomes apparent that rhetorically literate students see the devices' and applications' interfaces as not only texts produced by ideological bodies that need to be read and negotiated, but such interfaces also are potential entry points for users to become social actors in the design and use of interfaces. For example, Selber explained that hypertext was supposed to empower its readers by giving them choices about how they will read a text. Yet, despite the affordances that allow readers to choose their own path through a site, or, for that

matter, compose multiple paths through a site, the metaphor of the linear text still guides most production and reception practices. Selber advocated teaching students how to read the metaphor that guide one's practices paying attention to both the "presences" and the "absences" (pp. 179-182).

An example of the praxis Selber advocated can be found in the "Tech" section of *Time* magazine from August 2013. Elinia Dockterman (2013) described the different ways that mobile technology users in specific contexts are "appjacking," or finding "presences" to repurpose applications for local and potentially unintended purposes. Examples Dockterman included were using Instagram to sell sheep in Kuwait, using LinkedIn for promoting prostitution, and employing Vine to create six-second video résumés (p. 16). While these activities range from the illegal to the practical, they demonstrate what a user can do if they understand what a digital technology allows them to do (critical), knows how to do it (functional), and adapts the digital technology for the argument (i.e., "Buy my product," "Hire me") the users wants to make (rhetorical). These users essentially have "hacked" these applications by reading their affordances and successfully adopting them for purposes that programmers may not have originally intended.

To adapt this type of learning to the writing classroom does not mean that the instructor is forgoing the teaching of linguistic-based writing to have students play with social media sites and mobile phone apps. Instead, particularly when this type of exploration is part-and-parcel of the writing course objectives, such adaptation means that instructors are designing writing pedagogies that allow students to choose the purposes for their own texts and they are helping their students choose the best available means (i.e., digital technologies) to achieve that purpose. While, I am not arguing that OWC instructors should be teaching their students how to be hackers, I believe instructors—because students have to use digital technologies to communicate with their instructors and the institution—need to learn how to teach students how to use the sanctioned technologies of the course to compose successful arguments, which may take varied forms. With many students taking courses online, there is a good chance that the strategies they learn for making arguments to their instructors will not just be applied to the general education writing course; ideally they will also be used for courses in the students' major or certificate programs, as well as contexts outside the academy.

Advocating that instructors learn how the technological tools' design influences a writer's composition would seem to contradict the OWI Principle 2—"an online writing course should focus on writing and not on technology orientation or teaching students how to use learning and other technologies" (p. 13). This principle, however, was written to guide instructors away from using

their own and the students' resources, particularly time (and possibly money), just to teach students how to use the technologies that they need to participate in the class or to provide a plethora of outside technologies that reflect teachers' preferences over the LMS. In the latter case particularly, teachers risk a relatively leveled playing field through common and presumably accessible LMS technology for additional technologies that can be unnecessary in an OWC, as addressed in OWI Principle 1. In other words, the instructor should not need to begin a course with a unit about how to use the campus' LMS or ask students to use outside technologies that an LMS would address unless a similar technology's affordances facilitate an instructor's pedagogical goals to teach specific rhetorical applications (see earlier discussion about LMS blogs versus non-LMS blogs). OWI Principle 10 placed that responsibility of basic LMS student-preparation on the institution's IT unit even though the same principle indicated that OWI instructors should reify and repeat LMS skills and strategies relevant to using it for *writing* and *learning to write* in the course.

Instead, OWI Principle 2 made clear that the course should remain focused on writing instruction—of which rhetorical understanding certainly is key. The rationale for OWI Principle 2 (further explained in Chapter 1) also stated, "Unlike a digital rhetoric course, an OWC is not considered to be a place for stretching technological skills as much as for becoming stronger writers in various selected genres" (p. 11). A digital rhetoric course, narrowly defined, often teaches students a wide array of writing technologies (e.g., Web authoring, image editing, video editing) with a focus on how each technology taught can help students make the arguments they are composing or will compose for a specific purpose. For example, in such a course, one might want to teach students how to code a Web page so that they have more control over the outcome's design than if they chose to use a pre-designed template. But an applied rhetoric course, such as FYW, that is mediated by digital technologies (i.e., OWI), takes advantage of the course's material conditions, whether fully online or hybrid, to teach students real lessons about writing with digital technologies. Unlike the narrowly defined digital rhetoric course, learning methods of digital delivery is secondary to learning how to negotiate one's purpose with one's target audience.

OWI Principle 2 did not indicate, however, that instructors and students should not develop a meta-awareness of the ways that writing technologies influence the messages they compose. If all writing courses are applied rhetoric courses, then teaching digital rhetoric, more broadly defined as a way to get students to think about how writing technologies influence the message they compose—for both course assignments and course communication—is appropriate in online writing-focused courses. In such OWCs, allowing students to use templates is a suitable pedagogical method; however, instructors also may

fold into their lessons a critical reading of these templates, urging students to analyze what these prescribed designs allow and do not allow them to compose. Likewise students can be taught to speculate why they think such templates were designed in particular ways and who the designers think their audiences are.

While some might argue that the writing classroom should be more focused on linguistic productions than cultural readings of the world or of digital technology, I argue that the instructors and students can learn to be better producers of texts when they, like the technology designers, have a better understanding of their audience. Instructors and students often produce texts for homogeneous audiences assuming that those with whom they are communicating have an idealized standard of linguistic and technological access to the texts they produce (e.g., assignments sheets, assignments submitted, communication between the instructor or students). This resonates with Paul Matsuda's (2006) myth of linguistic homogeneity that Susan Miller Cochran describes in Chapter 9. Therefore, by prompting instructors and students to anticipate different audiences with diverse needs, it becomes an imperative that they understand how the technologies they use also impact their audiences' access to and understanding of their texts.

A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI's (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) OWI Principle 1 addressed this imperative. This overarching principle—"Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible" (p. 7)—exemplified the need for OWI instructors' work to be grounded in digital rhetoric; this principle reminds them that they have to consider all audiences while communicating through digital technologies. More specifically the principle's rationale argued that issues of inclusivity and accessibility should "supersede[s] and connect[s] to every principle" in *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI*, which makes disability, linguistic, and socioeconomic difference primary considerations when courses are designed and delivered (p. 7). The CCCC OWI Committee rationalized that "addressing the accessibility needs of the least confident readers increases the potential to reach all types of learners" (p. 7). As with the onsite, face-to-face classroom, the presence of these diverse student audiences means that the instructor cannot simply prepare for a homogeneous audience that one can expect will experience the course the same way: "given [OWI's] inherent connection to technology; patterns of exclusion have too often resulted from an uncritical adoption of digital technology and an indifference to how it could be used by persons with various disabilities and learning challenges" (p. 8). Instead, instructors have to think about the impact their strategies for communicating with students, especially the technologies that they choose, has on these diverse student populations. Because this principle guides all of *A Position State-*

ment of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI principles and example effective practices, it demonstrates the importance of reaching a wide student audience. While each OWI course will have general pedagogical goals, "OWI teachers should determine their uses of modality and media based not only on [these] goals but also on their students' likely strengths and access" (p. 9). However, to connect to this audience, the OWI instructor needs to know (1) how students expect to experience the texts they produce, (2) what technologies they, as faculty, have access to when communicating with and teaching this audience, and (3) how they best can use the technologies to meet their audiences' needs. Again, instructors who develop strategies for implementing these practices are better positioned to teach them to their students.

Students, likewise, have to consider similar heuristics when communicating with instructors, other students, and audiences beyond the classroom. These strategies should be adopted both when communicating with the diverse student body of the class en masse and when interacting with diverse individuals on a one-to-one basis. In an OWC designed to promote interaction among the students, they not only will have to learn effective strategies for communicating with each other; many also will need to learn how to use the same or similar technologies effectively to communicate with people with whom they work (and, we should not overlook, *play*) outside of the academic context. Many homogeneous and diverse FYW students, based upon the assumptions I have heard them articulate about their peers, believe that the student audiences they write for are just like them. It is only when students are physically marked by their disability, such as with blindness or limited motor skills, that their peers tend to acknowledge and try to accommodate their different audiences. Indeed, students tend to be less aware or sympathetic about linguistic diversity and often do not consider how "invisible" disabilities (e.g., dyslexia, Asperger's Disorder), multilingual issues, and socioeconomic problems might affect their audiences. Although these can be difficult and touchy conversations to have with students—particularly online where asynchronous text or audio/video might lead teachers to feel like they are lecturing students rather than talking with them—the instructor can design research and writing assignments that ask students to understand issues of access and inclusivity in the class or in other writing contexts as a way to raise their consciousness regarding how the technologies help or hinder with the ways they digitally communicate with others (see the appendix to this chapter for more details about such an assignment).

INSTRUCTOR PREPARATION

Instructors clearly need to take the lead in understanding the rhetorical na-

ture of writing technologies in order to use their knowledge to teach students to develop such awareness. Therefore, faculty preparation is a writing program's best opportunity for inserting elements of digital rhetoric into the OWI curriculum. Faculty preparation for writing instruction, in its many forms (e.g., pre-semester orientations, in-service meetings and workshops, and graduate coursework), often occupies the more practical side of the theory/practice continuum. Due to limited resources and time, those who lead and design instructor preparation must decide which strategies and what knowledge instructors most need to soundly teach students strategies for effective written communication as well as how to manage a classroom environment. As I can attest from my conversations with professors and administrators who prepare writing faculty, they—given the limited time, and sometimes new instructor's inexperience—(sometimes) choose to emphasize helping the instructors get through the daily business even though they strongly believe that all instructors teaching their own courses should learn how to theorize the curriculum and policies they design or have assigned to them. In-service instructors are begging for this level of help in order to get through the next class session. Similarly, for OWI courses, those who prepare the faculty, in addition to teaching faculty how to impart the curriculum and manage the course, have to ready these instructors for the digital technologies that will mediate all of this work (see Chapters 11 & 12). To answer why instructors and, by extension, students are not learning a rhetorical digital literacy, the answer emerges primarily from the decisions WPAs and others who prepare faculty make regarding expending resources, especially time (see Chapters 6 & 7, for example). Unfortunately often, when resources are limited, teaching instructors about the rhetorical theories that inform their literacy education practices seems extra-curricular. Yet, if administrators would emphasize that any writing course is an applied rhetoric course, then those WPAs who prepare OWI instructors to teach writing and the instructors who teach the student strategies for effective writing can fold these practices into preparation and curricular design that anticipate the rhetorical nature of writing technologies. Several principles from *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) justify this preparation.

OWI Principle 7 specifically considered instructor and administrator preparation; it stated, "Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) for OWI programs and their online writing teachers should receive appropriate OWI-focused training, professional development, and assessment for evaluation and promotion purposes" (p. 17). As previously mentioned, when most OWI training, especially preparation in technology management, is handled outside the writing program, instructors often receive only a functional knowledge of the technology, usually with an emphasis on how to distribute knowledge to the students. A

writing program that prepares its own faculty—or supplements the preparation of its faculty—can teach them how to use the technologies in ways that best support the field's preferred practices for writing instruction. Therefore, a WPA or assistant WPA who is well-versed in OWI and digital rhetoric can provide OWI teachers with effective strategies for using the technology to make the arguments that instructors are most concerned about.

While it is important for those who administrate writing programs to be immersed in all of the mediated practices that they ask their faculty to practice, this preparation arguably is more necessary for the writing instructors who interact with the students on a regular basis. From the design of the course to the final assignment's assessment (or possibly through addressing a grading grievance), the instructor is constantly communicating with the students in terms of articulating curricula, establishing and managing policies, and providing feedback. Because of this work and the subject matter of the writing course, the instructor needs to be both a skilled rhetor and rhetorician. OWI Principle 7 also advocated that OWI instructors be chosen from a pool of experienced writing instructors who already have demonstrated capabilities to teach a soundly designed writing course (p. 18). Writing instructors, as teachers of applied rhetoric, should be familiar with the potential argumentative nature of communication. Therefore, OWI instructors should be drawn from a pool of teachers already familiar with teaching argumentation. When the technologies that mediate OWI are added to the rhetorical strategies already taught, these instructors who are well-versed in applying rhetoric and teaching the application of rhetoric will have a stronger foundation for strategizing and applying how these OWI technologies can be used best to produce desired results with their communication, including effectively teaching students argumentation.

Again, WPAs may argue that developing instructors' rhetorical literacy during OWI faculty preparation is superfluous in light of the instructors' concerns about managing the technology and the day-to-day practices of the OWC. As with a WAC workshop, prompting new OWI instructors to write and reflect *briefly* on their future practices during faculty preparation can frame how they think about the functional elements they learn about their campus' OWI technologies. Instructors new to OWI always should start with the question, "What are your curricular goals for your writing course?" so that they are reminded that the teaching of writing supersedes the teaching of the technology. This is a question that can and should be addressed even if the program asks or requires faculty to teach a prescribed syllabus for the course. Other questions that might be posed throughout the faculty preparation process include:

- Why have you chosen to teach OWI?
- What are your expectations for what the technology can do for you in

teaching your writing course?

- What excites you about teaching with these technologies?
- What are your concerns about the technologies you are expected to use?
- Are any of these technologies unsuitable for your anticipated student audience given issues of access or inclusivity?
- What are your questions and concerns about the assistive and adaptive technologies your students with disabilities might use?
- What do you expect the technology to do for you in this course? Or, what would the ideal technology be able to do for you?
- What do you want these technologies to allow you to do that they currently do not?
- What worries you about potential technology problems? How will you address any technology challenges that you have?

These are not questions that instructors have to spend a lot of time responding to. But giving them five to ten minutes to write about these OWI issues offers the instructors a critical and rhetorical frame for thinking about the technological functions they are learning. Furthermore, as Selber (2004) argued, functional literacy cannot be separated from critical and rhetorical literacy. Therefore, administrators, WPAs or other staff preparing the faculty for OWI have the opportunity to develop many instructors' understanding of what OWI-relevant applications can do. This development certainly includes addressing issues of access and inclusivity to open and maintain avenues of communication to one's entire student audience.

First, it is useful to teach instructors that interfaces are rhetorical texts. Scholarly articles like those by Cynthia Selfe and Richard Selfe (1994) and Tim McGee and Patricia Ericsson (2002) detailed how users can read these texts rhetorically. Moreover, many people, writing instructors included, only know the most basic functions of an application like Microsoft Word. Thus, for example, by teaching the faculty about the comment function in Microsoft Word, an OWI teacher, by virtue of knowing the possibilities of the application, may choose to use this relatively efficient and nonintrusive commenting approach rather than inserting bracketed or multicolored comments into the student's text (keeping readability to various student populations in mind, of course). Or, to go one step further, OWI faculty could be taught how to use a freeware application to provide audio/video comments on students' papers, a strategy that some students have said they preferred over written comments alone (Vincelette, 2013; Vincelette & Bostic, 2013). Bearing in mind and attending to the access problems outlined in Chapters 8, 9, and 10, such additional software uses may increase access by blind students; multilingual writers who have grown accustomed to the instructors' accent; and overcommitted students, who because of having to balance

family, work, and education, can now take advantage of watching these videos on various mobile devices during their bus commute to or from work. While I can see the first two commenting methods being taught in faculty preparation for OWI, the third option probably would not make many faculty preparation schedules. But the video option does give the instructors another method for a specific type of communication with their students. By expanding OWI faculty understanding of a feedback applications' functionality, for example, they receive different opportunities to decide the most effective ways to make arguments about revision (e.g., "These are the issues you will want to address with your writing") to the student audience in their OWI class. Ultimately, the goal is not to make instructors "power users" of the digital technologies; instead, it is to increase their competency with OWI-relevant applications and functions so that they have reasonable accessible options when they are choosing the most effective ways to communicate with their students in a given situation. Then, ideally, OWI teachers can use this knowledge responsibly to help students develop the same meta-awareness of the technology.

By incorporating digital rhetoric into instructor preparation, writing programs can use the completion of the OWI Principle 7 to fulfill OWI Principle 12: "Institutions should foster teacher satisfaction in online writing courses as rigorously as they do for student and programmatic success" (p. 24). Implementing OWI Principle 12 helps to justify why digital rhetoric should be part of instructor preparation. In the rationale for this OWI principle, the CCCC OWI Committee (2013) wrote, "Teacher satisfaction is dependent on a number of affective factors, including being personally suited to teaching online and being comfortable communicating with students using digital/electronic means" (p. 24). By preparing instructors to go beyond teaching the technological nuts and bolts of the digital tools they use and to critically examine the technologies in order to consider the best means of adopting them for their own rhetorical purposes, instructors receive the means to adapt their teaching as their rhetorical situations shift kairotically. These shifts inevitably happen. They can happen in the space of a fifty-minute hybrid class when an application suddenly will not launch, or they can happen as the student body changes from class to class and semester to semester. Certainly, they happen when technology producers design new (and not necessarily better) applications or when new versions of existing applications suddenly become inaccessible to certain groups of students.

Preparing OWI instructors for their work as digital rhetoricians also responds to OWI Principle 12's rationale that instructors should be taught "relative advantages and disadvantages of teaching an OWC in their institution" (p. 24). While these discussions should include such factors as institutional policies and compensation, they also need to address the rewards and challenges of teaching

OWCs. One of the rewards that also is quite challenging is that instructors put themselves in a position to learn how to use new writing and communication technologies that they may not otherwise have used. In teacher training, this reward can be extended to include not only a functional knowledge of these technologies, but also a rhetorical understanding of them. With this preparation, instructors should learn specific "pedagogical factors as understanding how communication in the OWC environment differs and learning the benefits and challenges of the asynchronous and the synchronous modalities" (p. 24). Learning the course environment (see Chapter 2), affordances of modalities (see Chapter 3), and various media made available to all students enables OWI teachers to choose the best ones to make arguments to their students (as with the comment example), and by extension to their administrators about their OWCs and their own competency as instructors. *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) emphasized that "teaching writing online involves focused teacher responses that are crafted to specific student compositions" (p. 25). Unlike other courses in which automated feedback, such as instantaneous grades provided by the click of a mouse after taking a LMS-mediated quiz or an exam graded by an optical scanner, is an acceptable disciplinary pedagogical strategy, sound writing instruction requires the instructor to provide individual and individualized feedback to the writing and discussion board or other communications. Although automated messages can be, and have been, composed anticipating general rhetorical situations, individualized interaction requires responses crafted to specific rhetorical situations. Moreover, developing strategies for reading and working with the technologies' affordances helps OWI instructors not only to efficiently and effectively interact with students, but it also helps them to teach their students these same strategies for their own online mediation.

STUDENT PREPARATION

Just as this rhetorical meta-knowledge about the technology helps OWI teachers to make arguments to students, students who learn to understand the technology they use as a rhetorical tool can develop effective communicative strategies for the OWI course and beyond. As with the faculty, the purpose of teaching students the rhetorical reading of digital tools is not to turn them into power users but to make them more aware of the potential outcomes for the rhetorical choices they make and potentially can make, especially regarding the technologies they use to write. Furthermore, the focus for this instruction should be on technologies relevant to the OWC, both in terms of how the students' compose their assignments and how they communicate with their in-

structor and peers. Several of the principles in *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) help to rationalize this instructional practice.

OWI Principle 10 stated, "Students should be prepared by the institution and their teachers for the unique technological and pedagogical components of OWI" (p. 21). Students in OWI courses inevitably become practitioners of digital rhetoric because of the assignments they submit and the ways they communicate with their instructors and peers, but their practice can be (more) purposeful and consciously developed if they receive adequate preparation. Although contemporary students often are assumed to be "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), or individuals of a generation that has developed an adeptness with the technology because of a perceived constant exposure to it and use of it, real users have proven that there are individuals of this generation who struggle to use these technologies and need assistance from the institution and instructors to learn how to use the technologies that mediate and manage the course (Hewett, 2015a; also see Chapters 8 & 10). Moreover, even for the so-called "digital natives," the rationale for OWI Principle 10 explained that "the kind of online communicating that tech-savvy students do in their personal lives often is fast, frequent, and informal, which typically is not the kind of communicating they will need to do regularly to be successful in OWCs" (p. 22). OWI teachers are positioned ideally to design writing assignments that teach students composing strategies that effectively use technologies to meet situational ends. During this process, OWI teachers also need to teach students how to write and use the applications typically used in OWI (e.g., email, word-processing shortcuts, and blogs). Although some students may have had experience with these technologies in the past, few will have used them for academic writing (Hewett, 2010, 2015a, 2015b). Hence, many students will not only need to learn how to use new technologies, but they also will need to learn new expectations (i.e., academic) for what they produce using already familiar technologies.

While the institution primarily should be responsible for preparing students to use technologies commonly employed in its courses, OWI Principle 10 also advocated that individual instructors "support and/or repeat elements of that training in the OWC to assist with student success" in that specific writing class. In short, instructors should familiarize students with the ways that they will be using the technologies for writing instruction. To this end, "appropriate OWI preparation should begin with interface familiarization and experiential exercises that make clear the public (i.e., communication to/from the teacher and among all students in the course) and private (i.e., communication between the teacher and individual student) spaces" (p. 22). Such communications provide an exigency for instructors to help students examine how these interfaces can

influence their real communications with real audiences, such as the instructor and peer students. These are useful lessons that students may not receive from writing assignments alone because the writing contexts are real.

This understanding of how to communicate effectively with peers is crucial for building community among the students—an important feature of OWI. OWI Principle 11 stated, "Online writing teachers and their institutions should develop personalized and interpersonal online communities to foster student success" (p. 23). This principle mirrored the most effective social constructivist practices already endorsed for the onsite, face-to-face classroom. Communities are not an outcome that instructors simply can create by using a specific digital technology or adopting a specific pedagogical practice. Instead, creating community is a rhetorical act deliberately attempted (DePew, Spangler, & Spiegel, 2013). In the onsite classroom, this process requires the instructor to convince students that working together has benefits that are worth their time and effort. Similarly, students need to compose arguments to their peers demonstrating that they agree with the instructor's belief that working together will benefit all involved; to support this argument, they also have to convince their peers that working with them is worthwhile. Unless students are taking a hybrid OWC (see Chapter 2), these arguments can be made only through the digital technologies, and having a metacognitive approach to do this communication can help instructors and students make such arguments.

Essentially, the last three effective practices for OWI Principle 11 support the "hows" and "whys" of both instructors and students needing to understand their digital tools' rhetorical nature. The first of these, Example Practice 11.5, recommended that instructors design informal writing assignments that "elicit meaningful responses among class participants" (p. 24). Thus the instructor's focus should be more on the type of writing that will achieve these goals, not the technology the class participants will use. The type of writing and the media cannot be mutually exclusive decisions, but if the instructor's primary goal is for the students to engage the class content and in doing so to engage each other, then the instructor needs to use writing genres that allow students to make the necessary arguments to each other and the instructor. Although this decision belongs to instructors, they can make their decisions transparent to their students helping them understand why particular genres and the digital technologies that support them are most conducive for the desired rhetorical outcomes.

With Effective Practice 11.6, *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) recommended that instructors use the course mediating technologies to collect anonymous and secure feedback about the course at regular intervals. Although this type of course feedback has been a typical practice in many onsite and online classrooms alike,

for the OWC, evaluations can become an especially important teaching moment (Hewett, 2010, 2015b). As OWI teachers ask students to compose arguments that can produce real consequences for the course, they can highlight how various features of their digital tools used to elicit feedback—especially those that foster anonymity but maybe also the interface (i.e., radio buttons or pull-down menus for closed-ended questions or text boxes for open-ended questions)—encourage certain types of feedback from the students and might influence how they create arguments.

Similarly, Effective Practice 11.7 argued, "Teachers should develop forums, threads, and assessments in which students can have open discussions, either with or without teacher involvement, about course dynamics" (p. 24). More specifically:

> If students are given opportunities to express their experiences and to vent their frustrations, perhaps in threads like "Lounge" or "Comments about our learning platform" or in an anonymous midterm course evaluation, that might engender a greater willingness to persevere in a new or different learning setting. Additionally, such communications enable OWI teachers to make adjustments and provide feedback to their administrators. (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013, p. 24)

As with the formal feedback, this practice offers students an opportunity to affect genuine change through a given digital writing tool used to argue how the course can best serve one's own needs. When coupled with anonymous formal feedback, students are given rhetorical choices about the best delivery methods for their praise and/or grievances. They can consider which digital option might produce the most significant impact while also providing the best personal security. Given these different opportunities to engage in discussions about the course's infrastructure, the strategies OWI teachers develop for students to assert agency in the OWC arguably can transfer to contexts beyond that writing course.

A common concern about teaching technology in the writing course is that these lessons take time away from the teaching of writing, often defined as the teaching of grammar and rhetorical techniques that masquerade as genres (e.g., narrative essay, persuasive essay, definition essay, compare/contrast essay). But the challenge for instructors should be to consider how they can design assignments and activities that fold lessons about the technology into the students' understanding of applied rhetoric. This focus means that as OWI instructors teach students how to compose linguistic or multimodal texts (see Chapter 15), they are raising the students' awareness of how the technology influences the texts

they want to compose. This lesson is not a separate or extra-curricular topic; instead, it helps to make the rhetorical lessons of writing instruction conscious and metacognitive, especially in the context of OWI where each digitally composed interaction can have implications.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As WPAs who prepare OWI instructors, as OWI instructors who design and implement their courses, or as OWI students who are learning how to negotiate their education through increasing ubiquitous digital tools, it is useful to reflect upon Selber's (2004) wisdom: "Not only are teachers obligated to prepare students responsibly for a digital age in which the most rewarding jobs will require multiple literacies, but students will be citizens and parents as well as employees, and in these roles they will also need to think in expanded ways about computer use" (p. 4). OWI, by its very nature, creates a situation in which instructors can teach students skills and strategies they will need for various roles they will occupy throughout their lives. Nonetheless, when the technology is not taught at all, this opportunity is missed. When the technology is just taught operationally, this opportunity is missed. When the teaching of the technology is completely separated from the teaching of applied rhetoric, this opportunity is missed. When writing is taught without acknowledging the material conditions of writing, this opportunity is missed.

Administrators and instructors can seize these opportunities by using the inherent features of OWI—online communication and writing instruction—to teach OWI students how to be effective digital rhetoricians, not necessarily master programmers, but people who can potentially shape their world with the digital writing tools at their disposal. The OWI principles in *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) recognized this exigency.

The following recommendations can assist WPAs and OWI teachers in preparing students for the rhetoricity of OWI technologies:

- OWI courses should be perceived and taught as applied rhetoric courses that use digital technology to mediate interaction between instructors and students. Therefore, the course's material conditions give instructors and students opportunities to practice what they are learning.
- As an applied rhetoric course, audience is a primary concern in the OWC, and instructors and students should make concerted efforts to make their course communication accessible to all audiences. Therefore, these digital writers need to be taught how to address the communicative needs of students with disabilities, multilingual students, and other students who

cannot easily access a course through digital technologies.

- Instructors should pose any real challenges that the technology creates as a real rhetorical problem and teachable moment.
- WPAs and others who prepare OWI faculty need to teach instructors how to be functionally, critically, and rhetorically literate with the courses' technologies, as well as how to teach any digital technologies that students will use to compose assignments.
- Instructors need to teach students how to be functionally, critically, and rhetorically literate with the courses' technologies, as well as any digital technologies students will use to compose assignments. To this end, instructors might use the example lessons found in Appendix 14.A directly following this chapter.

NOTES

1. I want to acknowledge the works of Paul Prior et al. (2007) and James Porter (2009), both of whom argued that the ways people communicate today (and, in the case of Prior et al., even in Ancient Greece) are too complex for an oversimplified understanding of the canon of "delivery."

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APPENDIX: SAMPLE LESSONS

OWI teachers can introduce students to rhetorical literacy as they teach about audience. For example, in the first few weeks of the course, students can be assigned a short assignment with the purpose of learning about their peers as audience for the course. Assigned to groups of three to four, students would begin by composing a 500-750 word literacy narrative that they post in a group discussion board or on a blog. Each student in a group would read these narratives, paying attention to how the author self-identifies as a writer and a reader. Using this information to work together, the group would collaboratively compose a survey to distribute to the rest of the class about their reading and writing practices; students could be asked to use such tools as a discussion board, a Wiki, or digitally shared document that enables real-time co-writing depending on whole-class accessibility. After students collect data from their survey, they would collaboratively compose an essay, memo, or report about the audience needs that students should consider when writing to the class. The collective knowledge created by the students' research and writing is intended to help them throughout the course to select which technologies to use and which functions on those technologies to use when writing to others in the class. From these data, students may learn that a few of their peers are dyslexic or do most of their technological work on their cell phone (per Chapter 16), which—with the OWI teacher's assistance—should prompt them to consider how to communicate most effectively with these audiences. While this example assignment gives students an opportunity to wrestle productively with digital rhetoric issues, it also entails many of the lessons that educators want students to learn in writing classes (i.e., audience awareness, collaborative writing, research skills, and such genres as memos and reports). By collecting these data themselves, students learn to make sound decisions about how to communicate with their peers based upon data rather than assumptions; such an assignment also makes the lessons about digital rhetoric and audience accommodation a concrete reality rather

than a seemingly liberal abstraction supported by the instructor.

Likewise, instructors can use the applications commonly found on the LMS as a text they ask students to learn how to read rhetorically. The goal of this activity is to teach students how to understand what an application demands of users and what it prevents or obscures from users based upon the application's interface design. In other words, students learn to examine how writing technologies shape what the writer can or cannot do. Essentially, the instructor would prompt students to analyze three different texts using text-specific modifications to the following heuristics:

- What is the argument the text's author makes? What does the author want the audience to do or think after engaging with the text?
- What evidence does the author use to support this argument? Or, what leads you to the conclusion that such is the argument?
- How did you respond to this text? Why?
- Who do you think the target audience is for this text? Do you think the text effectively connects with that audience? Why or why not? Is the author excluding certain members of this intended audience by overlooking their needs?
- How do you think other audiences will respond to this text? Why? Name one of these different audiences.
- What is your opinion of the author(s) based upon this text? Why?
- How would you design this text differently? Would you use the same or different media? What features would you redesign and why?

OWI teachers can begin this lesson with the first text, an editorial from a local news organization. Regardless of whether it is available online, the instructor needs to provide students with either a hardcopy text or an accessible PDF of the hardcopy text. In this case, a hyperlink will not do. For example, in a hybrid OWC in which the instructor has face-to-face time with the students, the instructor can provide a hardcopy of the editorial; in either the fully online or hybrid OWC, the instructor can use the LMS or email to send students a PDF of the text and ask them to print it because they will need to work from hardcopy. Given the selected genre, the editorial argument should be overt and relatively easy to identify. The difficult task will be getting the students to think about the text's interface because most people take paper and ink media for granted and do not necessarily think of it *as* an interface.

The second text would be a commercial website, such as Amazon.com (or if one wants to gender the assignment, ESPN.com or Forever21.com); the students should be provided a link to that website. While the argument "Buy our products/services!" is pretty overt on any of these sites, they are not presented

in ways that many students, especially in the early sequence of writing courses, think about an argument. Thus, such sites help to develop students' understanding of what an argument is and how it can be presented. Unlike the editorial, the students would engage the website through something that they recognize as an "interface" and one that the students, once they identify the argument, will believe should be user-friendly and easy to navigate. However, it is at the places where these texts are not easy to use that students may begin to see design decisions. For example, how easy is it to access items on clearance sale versus featured items? Or, how easy or possible is it to find the statistics for a female athlete versus a male athlete in the same sport?

Finally, the instructor should ask the students to read the institution's LMS relative to how their own course is presented. The analysis of the editorial as an interface and the commercial website as an argument should have prepared students to see the LMS itself as an argumentative text and to consider whether and how the interface design supports the argument it appears to make. Through this exercise of analyzing the LMS, the students may become more critical consumers of the applications they will need to use to make arguments in their OWC. Moreover, the students would be provided with strategies to become rhetorically literate with the LMS and to use their understanding of the LMS as text/tool to fulfill their desired purposes as writers throughout the course of the semester, and into future courses. Combined with the previously described assignment in this section regarding learning about their class' student audience, students could be empowered. They can synthesize their understanding of the LMS's argumentative potential with what they know about their peer audience and then use this knowledge through their writing to persuade their peers—the outcome can be mutually beneficial.

If writing courses are applied rhetoric courses, then these applications of rhetorical awareness comply with programmatic outcomes. Such exercises can be a series of stand-alone activities or they can be scaffolded in support of the students' later analysis of an individually chosen interface.