CHAPTER 15

TEACHING MULTIMODAL ASSIGNMENTS IN OWI CONTEXTS

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This chapter provides effective practices for instructors who want to transform alphabetic text-centric assignments into multimodal ones in OWI contexts. By focusing on needs assessments, assignment options, tools selection, and assessment, the chapter advocates a shift from migrating and adapting onsite writing instruction to instead transforming it through a broadened definition of writing as multimodal composing that enables students to produce content as twenty-first century learners and citizens.

Keywords: access, assessment, ePortfolios, learning management systems, multiliteracies, multimodality, New Media, professional development, visual rhetoric

The 2013 film *The Internship* featured Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson as two recently unemployed salespeople, downsized as a result of changing marketing and purchasing trends that have migrated from face-to-face and door-to-door to the online marketplace of point, click, and purchase. As part of their efforts to retool, they sought a coveted internship at Google and participated in a pre-interview at a local library computer with Web-cam access. The site of two middle-aged men hovering over Webcam technology to which they had not had access as users is endemic to the movie's theme. Technology has changed the rules of interpersonal engagement in all contexts, including the classroom, as many students (regardless of the millennial stereotype) and instructors are not any more prepared than the characters in the film. Just as the protagonists are accustomed to a face-to-face as opposed to video chat interview, we are accustomed in writing classrooms to a primarily alphabetic as opposed to a multimodal text.

Nevertheless, *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013) offered OWI Principle 3 as, "Appropriate composition teaching/learning strategies should be developed for the unique features of the online instructional environment" (p. 12). The ra-

tionale accompanying this principle noted that "some changes in traditional composition pedagogy are necessary for teaching writing in the OWI setting, an environment that is by nature text-centric and reading-heavy and that requires intensive written communication" (p. 12). Yet, as the larger writing studies discipline challenges the operational definition of "writing" in light of a Web 2.0 era of digital literacy and composing processes, June Griffin and Deborah Minter (2013) contended that "the proliferation of online classrooms raises the field's stake in emerging technologies not only for the impact of those technologies on course design and students' literacies, but also for their capacity to help us see more clearly changes on the horizon for our profession and to mine those changes for opportunities to improve student learning" (p. 145). Thus, they appropriately aligned themselves with Cynthia Selfe's (2009) longstanding call to "pay attention" and how that call "is now extricably linked to literacy and literacy education in this country" (quoted at p. 141). Certainly, technology has been an impetus for constant change, and in the context of online writing pedagogies, this change has impacted not only the spaces in which we teach writing as process but also the increasingly diverse students we serve. Despite the emphasis on the range of new media literacy practices and the tools and technologies that enable those practices, what we teach in the writing classroom, both hybrid and fully online, has remained unchanged: we teach alphabetic writing meant to be produced and consumed on an 8.5 x 11 piece of paper, accessed onscreen or in-hand.

There are a number of factors that contribute to this ongoing privileging of the alphabetic, including a typical emphasis on print-based learning outcomes within higher education writing programs that favor the production of the academic essay and are aligned with larger university general education outcomes, as well as a lack of training and faculty development for the ever-growing contingent of adjunct faculty and graduate students who typically teach undergraduate writing courses. This lack of training and professional development also impacts full-time non-tenure track faculty for whom professional development is not a guarantee and, given the academic labor of teaching writing fulltime, does not always allow for maintaining currency in the field as it evolves its understanding of writing to include a more inclusive, integrated range of modalities and media (see, for example, Chapters 7, 8, 11, 12, & 14). Sometimes these issues are generational; for instance, the composition director at my own institution, Bowling Green State University, recently confessed concern about the lack of interest on the part of some faculty to integrate more visual rhetoric into the curriculum while graduate students, because of their recent training and often generational status as millennials, are eager to integrate technologies that exceed the readiness of the curriculum and the training available. Thus, despite our field's ongoing

multimodal turn in twenty-first century composing theories, if we do not heed that call to pay attention to both the possibilities and the constraints as we develop online writing curriculum, the identities students develop in such virtual writing spaces will continue to be as alphabetic as ever.

I have noted elsewhere (Blair, 2007) that this text-centricity also is due to the spaces in which OWI typically occurs (i.e., LMSs). As Scott Warnock (2009) recommended to new online instructors, "In your initial efforts to teach an OWcourse, simplify things by using your campus CMS [aka LMS], and learn only the tools you will need" (p. 23). Although Warnock appropriately and effectively encouraged important experimentation with a range of tools such as blogs, Wikis, and SecondLife and acknowledged the potential for audiovisual tools and alternatives to text-based assessment, the underlying assumption of the "hows" and "whys" of his book *Teaching Writing Online* is that these tools enhance alphabetic writing processes. Warnock overviewed the ability of various tools to foster a more dialogic approach to writing, emphasizing tools that foster peer review, student-centered interaction, and personalized interactions between students and teachers. Thus, another useful guideline Warnock included among his eighteen guidelines was, "Initially, you want to think migration, not transformation, when teaching online. Think about what you do well, and then think about how you use various resources to translate those skills to the OWcourse" (p. xvii.). For novice teachers of online writing, this advice undoubtedly is sound, particularly because of the need to align any use of technology with larger curricular objectives at both the program and course level. But the emphasis on *migration* as opposed to *transformation* has the potential to create an inadvertent gap between larger theoretical discussions of multimodal composing and practical implementation of multimodal composing pedagogies in hybrid and online writing classrooms, a gap described in Chapter 14. Indeed, these apparently opposing needs reveal why the CCCC OWI Committee wrote both OWI Principle 3 (outlined earlier; pp. 12-14) and OWI Principle 4 (regarding migrating and adapting appropriate contemporary composition pedagogy to OWI; pp. 14-15), which are, as Hewett indicated in Chapter 1, yin and yang principles.

Undoubtedly, there exist numerous challenges to integrating multimodal production into fully online OWCs—perhaps more so than in hybrid OWCs—and the ability to "transform" the curriculum. Such challenges include:

1. the ideological presumption that writing remains a "text-based" process, and thus OWI may not align with the field's emphasis on literate practices (see Chapters 14 & 16);
2. the limited/inconsistent access to digital composing tools for both students and teachers (see Chapters 1, 8, 9, 10 & 16);
3. the ableistic nature of some of the multimodal technologies and their

denial of bodily and neural diversity among users (see Chapter 8);

4. the lack of faculty training for multimodal curriculum development (see Chapters 11, 12, & 16); and

5. the course design logistics within LMSs that have few internal options for multimodal composing (see Chapters 8 & 14).

Given these challenges, my particular focus is upon the whats, hows, and whys of transforming OWI from a text-centric composing space for our students to one that integrates multimodal elements for students and instructors in as viable, accessible, and introductory a way as possible. This focus meshes with 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. 11). Thus, I include a series of effective practices for new and more experienced OWI teachers, as well as for administrators who develop OWI initiatives in both hybrid and fully online contexts. These practices focus on needs assessment, assignment design, and assessment processes that foster multimodality in progressive ways that begin to bridge the gap between migration and transformation, ultimately helping instructors ground multimodal composing in rhetorical contexts and positively impacting the evolving identities that online students must develop as twenty-first century composers.

THE TENSION BETWEEN OWI AND MULTIMODAL COMPOSING

Just as Warnock (2009) provided useful advice to new OWI instructors for migrating existing composition curricula, contributors to Selfe's (2007) collection *Multimodal Composition* provided similar practical strategies for transforming that same curricula, calling for writing teachers to acknowledge "multiple semiotic channels" and agree that "literacy pedagogies must account for the multiplicity of texts allowed and encouraged by digital technologies" (Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007, p. 2). For Takayoshi and Selfe, the multimodal turn is more than moving students away from composing practices that are all too similar to those of their parents and grandparents. They align themselves—as most multimodal theorists do—with the New London Group's 1996 "Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," in which literacy is not only technological but cultural, material, and political. In this way, the writing studies field needs to rethink its goal of migrating writing to instead transforming our understanding of writing as multimodal composing that better prepares undergraduates to communicate successfully within professional and social contexts outside the academy.

The distinction between "writing" versus "composing" frequently is positioned as an either/or argument—that in privileging one over the other, we do a

disservice to students *either* in not sufficiently introducing them to more traditional print-based discourse crucial to their academic success *or* in not bridging the gap between how students use technologies to compose outside the classroom and how we use (or do not use) those same technologies. As Selfe (2009) powerfully argued:

> My argument is not *either/or* but *both/and*. I am not arguing against writing, the value we place on writing, or an understanding of what writing—and print—contribute to the human condition that is vitally important... . I do want to argue that teachers of composition need to pay attention to, and come to value, the multiple ways in which students compose and communicate meaning. (p. 642)

Similarly, I am not recommending the elimination of alphabetic texts in OWI; rather, I embrace Jay David Bolter's (2001) longstanding position that digital text does not signal "the end of print; it is instead the remediation of print" (p. 46). This remediated process stresses print as one modality among many, and as I shall stress in the OWI effective practices section of this chapter, the relationship among these modalities must be flexible, to address the existing skill sets of both students and instructors as well as the access issues and learning styles our students may bring to OWI per OWI Principle 1: "Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible" (p. 7).

Even as I attempt to bridge the gap between migration and transformation, however, it is equally crucial to interrogate some assumptions we may hold about students as multimodal composers, the most common being our students' generational status as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001). As many of us who have taught OWCs have discovered, our students can be anything but typical in such environments: working adults, military personnel, transfer and international students, and even high school age students enrolled in post-secondary programs. Such diversity calls into question the presumption of equal access (see OWI Principle 1 and Chapters 8 & 10). For example, consider the current controversy surrounding the shift of the General Education Development (GED) from a paper-based to online process as a result of the profit-bearing partnership between The American Council on Education and Pearson Vue (Tran, 2013), leading to concerns about the affordability of the exam and the concerns about the lack of computing skills among the unemployed, the working poor, and the incarcerated. Similar presumptions of access to and comfort with the array of tools needed to compose in multimodal form can be a false one that rather than empower online learners actually may disenfranchise them, as in the case of the GED. Indeed, such presumptions often ignore issues of age and socioeconomic status, given that

just as Takayoshi and Selfe (2007) may lament writing curricula that promotes the pedagogies of our parents, the reality is that students the age of our parents are, of course, more and more common, particularly in online learning environments. This concern inevitably resonates with OWI Principle 1 (pp. 7-11).

Because of these tensions, it is not enough to reconsider our definition of *writing* but also our definition of *multimodality*, understanding that, just as with text-based assignments, it is important to integrate genres and modes in progressively complex ways. And just as a typical FYW course would not automatically begin with the extended research paper assignment, multimodal assignments should begin where both students and teacher are regarding their composing expertise, allowing a point of entry that fosters early success and develops skills and aptitudes over time. Such a process also should account for a definition of multimodality that is not purely digital, recognizing the many print-based genres that have multimodal components, from scrapbooks to posters to zines. Equally important is that our understanding of multimodality should acknowledge the redefinition of "literacy" as the more nuanced "multiliteracies" that Stuart Selber (2004) outlined as (1) functional, which views computers as tools and students as users of technology; (2) critical, which views computers as cultural artifacts and students as questioners of technology; and (3) rhetorical, which views computers as hypertextual media (i.e., multimodality) and as students as producers of technology (p. 25; see Chapter 14). Thus, a multiliteracies framework has just as much potential to foster critical thinking, reading, and composing as our traditional text-based writing processes.

My goal in outlining a range of effective practices for integrating, producing, and assessing multimodal assignments is to bridge the gap not only between migration and transformation of OWI content but also between the either/or, both/and positions in order to emphasize a twenty-first century model of online writing. The goal in doing so is to acknowledges, as Selfe concluded(2009), "*all available means of persuasion*, all available dimensions, all available approaches, not simply those limited to the two dimensional space of the printed page" (p. 645).

OWI EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION

Needs Assessments

OWI Principle 1 included a range of effective practices that address access issues by making OWI a more multimodal process, specifically OWI Effective Practice 1.9, "Teachers must become acquainted with multimodal means for distributing and assessing learning materials" (p. 10), and OWI Effective Prac-

tice 1.10, "OWI teachers should offer instructional materials in more than one medium" (p. 10). Undoubtedly, these practices help to ensure equitable access for students with a range of abilities and learning preferences. The greatest challenge to integrating multimodal assignments in the OWC is the lack of consistent access to hardware and software that afford students the opportunity to not just consume digital material but produce it themselves, something frequently tied to fully online students' place bound status as well as their inevitable differences in sensory ability and socioeconomic status.

For these reasons, it is important to conduct needs assessments prior to the start of a class. Needs assessments are not new to online curricula; standard practice at both the postsecondary institution and course level encourages feedback prior to the start of an online program about the types of technology students to which student have access and the types of skills students possess, from the ability to upload an attachment to the ability to edit digital images or record audio (see Chapter 13 for other student assessment advice). Such assessments are consistent with OWI principle 1 and the need to ask students "to confirm that they have the required technology at the beginning of an online course ... and advise students regarding how to meet course requirements through, for example, institutional computing equipment" (p. 9). This guideline is particularly significant in light of the high-end digital tools that simply cost more than the average student can afford, a consideration that aligns with OWI Effective Practice 1.3 (p. 9) and that calls for instructors to familiarize themselves with both free and open-source alternatives to proprietary, institutionally supported software applications. Admittedly, the time and effort required for such work is both an academic labor and a professional development issue, particularly in institutional settings where there is not a training program for new and continuing OWI teachers across the disciplines.

Another important assessment involves students' learning styles. According to Neil Fleming and David Baume (2006),

> Much education is either mono- or at the most bi-modal.
> Teaching often reflects the teacher's preferred teaching style
> rather than the students' preferred learning styles. Managed or
> Virtual Learning Environments may not change that as much
> as we hoped—they simply implement old teaching styles in
> new technologies. (p. 6)

Fleming's research has included the development of VARK, a learning styles questionnaire that allows students to self-assess their preferences for visual, aural, read-write, or kinesthetic approaches to academic tasks. While this issue resonates with OWI Principle 1 and the need to develop and deliver course

content in multiple modalities and with varied media, acknowledging students' learning styles also connects to their communication strengths as well. Within the context of an OWC, it is clearly important to focus on writing genres that ensure success in both academic and non-academic venues, thus mandating that instructors balance more text-centric assignments with those that allow a broader range of modalities with which students are familiar.

Regardless of that familiarity, students often come to OWI with even more traditional expectations than their instructors: writing equals print essays; writing equals grammar. Thus, another aspect of needs assessment includes determining the expectations students have about the course, about what they will be learning, and about their own motivation to be successful. For writing instructors, some of the initial icebreaking activities used within face-to-face writing courses, such as asking students to share their definitions and attitudes about writing, and what tools they use to "write," are critical in an OWI environment. Students may not see the texting, Facebooking, Tweeting, Instagraming, and YouTubing (many of these tasks have become action verbs in the larger Web 2.0 culture) they do as a form of either writing or multimodal composing, but helping them to see the way technology transforms our collective definitions and assumptions of what a writing course is supposed to be is as crucial to their success as to the instructor's.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

One key to success in multimodal assignment construction is to allow organic opportunities for multimodal composing—that is, to not integrate new media technology for its own sake but because the development of a visual argument or an audio essay represents a rhetorically appropriate response to the assignment context. As the following assignment options suggest, these genres are not necessarily new to OWI but may involve transforming an alphabetic-only option to one that provides students the opportunity to meaningfully assemble digital artifacts to compose a multimodal response for a specific purpose and audience. In the spirit of a both/and model, as opposed to either/or, OWI teachers could develop such representative activities to mesh with existing assignment contexts, or even to introduce multimodal elements as part of particular stages of the writing process, from invention to showcase, ensuring that they can maintain alignment of these assignments with existing rhetorical learning outcomes.

Literacy Narratives

Asking students to reflect on their reading and writing practices has become a standard genre in undergraduate writing course, and it often has involved

discussions of various writing technologies that students use to communicate. In OWI, such a literacy narrative is an equally significant task, particularly at the beginning of the term when students need opportunities to self-assess their comfort level and its impact on their success in the course. Such narratives can serve multiple purposes. On one hand, they offer that critical opportunity for reflection on growth as writers and composers and ground their access in cultural and material conditions that may include such issues as age, gender, and class. On the other hand, the literacy narrative offers a significant opportunity for multimodal composing in that instructors, even if using a word-processing tool such as Microsoft Word, can encourage the inclusion of images—located online or created by students themselves through a basic cell phone camera—that relate to textual content. Another important aspect of this assignment is its ability to serve as a representation of progress throughout the course, with students' updating the document and enhancing its design and development over time, even shifting from a basic tool to a more advanced one as their skills grow.

Visual Arguments

Given the multimodal possibilities of the literacy narrative assignment, it is clear that this particular genre has the potential to be represented visually. Students encounter visual arguments on a daily basis: on billboards, online, and perhaps without realizing it, they both create and circulate these images through an array of Web 2.0 genres that we did not have names for just a few years ago, including memes, tag clouds, comics, and the remediation of infographics in social media. Because of this proliferation of visual rhetorical culture, OWI teachers have ample opportunity to engage students in analysis of these visuals as arguments and, in many cases, as parody and social commentary. This analysis should move inevitably from consumption to production, and while it is not necessary for the instructor to teach students to use the range of tools designed to construct a visual argument, students should be allowed to select a tool that suits that audience and purpose for their visual themes. For instance, memes and comics may resonate more with some audiences than others, though such literacy practices are indeed prevalent, as most recently represented in Jonathan Alexander's and Elizabeth Losh's (2013) composition textbook *Understanding Rhetoric: A Graphic Guide to Writing (2013)*. Similar to the literacy narrative assignment, students are equally able to create a visual argument with an image pasted into a word-processed document, rather than to be expected to use such higher end and expensive tools as Adobe Photoshop.

Storyboards

Students and teachers are accustomed to the concept of outlining as an

organizational plan for an alphabetic essay. While common invention strategies also may include more visual elements such as clustering, storyboarding is a standard process for both print and digital media projects where composers are aligning image, text, and other modes to craft a persuasive message. The beauty of storyboarding is that it applies across genres, from websites to photo and video essays, allowing students to consider where elements will be placed and how they will work together rhetorically. In addition to serving as a pre-writing or invention activity, such an activity is itself a form of multimodal composing that need not be digital, thus allowing students to reflect upon the relationship among modes.

Digital Demos

It is virtually impossible for an instructor or a student to be aware of the wide range of applications that enable multimodal composing. One way to encourage students to view themselves as co-equal participants in the course and collaborative knowledge-makers is to share the labor of developing technological expertise. Assigning students either individually or collaboratively to develop a brief demonstration (if hybrid) that includes an online handout has the potential not only to teach a particular tool's multimodal function but also, in designing the handout, doing so allows teachers to balance alphabetic and multimodal texts as students develop a viable set of instructions for completing the task. For instance, an initial multimodal strategy that is common to the instructional genre is a screen capture, an easy task on both Mac and PC platforms, that could then be pasted into a basic word-processed document to be augmented with the use of, in the case of Microsoft Office, word art that includes arrows and other useful directional features. What makes this activity so useful to the course is the ability to collectively develop an archive of multimodal composing tips that students can refer to as they create upcoming projects and take with them as they move forward to other courses in the curriculum.

Audio Essays

Perhaps the greatest technology we have at our disposal is the technology of the human voice, whether it be in the form of a personal narrative or an interview. On one level, audio essays are manageable migrations of alphabetic content into digital form with the most basic preparation being the text/ script itself; certainly, a necessary part of the audio process is the emphasis on accessibility through including alphabetic transcripts. An important preparatory activity is to have students review some of the powerful audio commentary available online, including "This I Believe" [thisibelieve.org] and other related commentary from sites like the National Public Radio, also known as NPR.

Such essays often are brief, engage the personal, and stress the powerful role of narrative and storytelling in the larger culture. There are both high-end proprietary and low-end inexpensive tools that make the audio recording process more accessible to students (i.e., including the use of smartphones apps or free Web-based or other sound-editing tools). As students' skills advance, they potentially can layer in music and other sound effects similar to professional podcasts to create a range of genres: arguments, debates, reviews, and interviews. Despite the writing studies discipline's historical shift from teaching speech to teaching writing, an emphasis on aural composing helps to ground the writing curriculum within a rhetorical tradition that has emphasized the connection between oratorical education and civic rhetoric. Indeed, instructors should offer these media as options to students but also give them comparable credit in assessment, particularly since not all students will be equally competent at employing certain media. Moreover, Ann-Marie Pedersen and Carolyn Skinner (2007) acknowledged the challenges of developing audio (and video) assignments in distance learning settings where students may not have opportunities to advance their skills; for that reason, they advocate collaboration in ways that allow students to pool their knowledge and encourage instructors to pre-assess student expertise before forming group project teams.

Research Exhibitions/Virtual Poster Sessions

Admittedly, when we think of student presentations, the focus tends to be on the use of slideware tools like Microsoft PowerPoint, which, despite being a robust tool that fosters multimodal composing, conjures up all too many template-driven bulleted lists of alphabetic text. As a result, students often view such presentations as the mere copying and pasting of information, rather than taking advantage of its affordances to shape and align visual and textual information to communicate effectively and rhetorically to virtual and onsite, face-to-face audiences. Fostering more rhetorically aware presentations also involves reconsidering how we label such genres; as the field evolves its definition of writing, we have borrowed language and formats from other disciplines, including concepts of the exhibit (from art and museum studies, for example) and poster sessions, that while common to social and physical science disciplines are less typical within the humanities. Regardless of what we label them, these projects represent significant forms of professionalization for students and an opportunity to share the results of their efforts in public ways that often align with university-level emphases on "undergraduate research." Depending on where these projects are housed and the tools used to create them, an exhibition and interactive commenting space can evolve in the LMS or other instructional space (e.g., blog, Wiki, Google drive, and the like).

Multimodal Writing Journal

One of the major problems with many LMSs is that the students have very little control over ownership of the real estate; that is, there are few spaces that are their own to customize in terms of format and to populate in terms of content (or even to keep in months or years after the course). Their role is that of consumer rather than that of producer. Using a blog, for example, can allow students to practice integrating visual images, links, videos and other resources into their responses to course readings and writing tasks. Thus—once access concerns have been identified and addressed—the multimodal journal has as much potential to serve as an invention or prewriting tool as its more alphabetic counterpart, particularly if similar to providing guidance for discussion or chat forum posts in OWI, expectations are clarified with regard to the relationship between and amount of both textual and multimodal content. Although a separate part from the course/LMS, instructors can provide links to the journals in the event the spaces are meant to be shared with other students for commentary and potential collaboration. Overall, the key for instructors is to be flexible to the students' preferences and access needs regarding the tools that would enable this activity to be successful.

Certainly, as Rochelle Rodrigo's Chapter 16 suggests, the plethora of mobile and tablet devices students use make it impossible to address all the possibilities for multimodal composing given the numerous apps, free Web 2.0 tools, and proprietary software available for both hybrid and fully online courses. But success in integrating multimodal assignments is enabled through the recognition that the curriculum must allow for composing flexibility, not requiring that students use a particular tool unless is it genuinely available and accessible to all. Inevitably, we also must recognize that our students, because of differences in access, may not be interacting with the course content in the same way: some using smartphones, some using tablets, some using desktops, and the like. Likewise, for many, this access is possible through the mediation of screen readers, Braille displays, voice input systems, and other assistive devices. Despite this potential, it also is important that, depending on the nature of the assignment and on both instructor/student comfort and access, it is just as possible to compose multimodally with ubiquitous word-processing and slideware applications. While I do not focus on these specific applications within this chapter, helping students to move beyond the more traditional alphabetic uses of these applications is a progressive first step in (1) integrating visual and other modalities into their composing processes and (2) understanding that text is one modality among several that may not be the optimal choice based on an assignment's rhetorical context. Although my breakdown of assignments and

activities discusses multimodal composing in discrete terms (e.g., image editing, audio), it is important to remember that many of these assignment genres enable more complex integration of the aural, visual, and verbal. This integration has strong implications for accessibility, particularly because of the need to provide multiple versions of texts for differently-abled users, such as a textual transcript for an audio essay or either transcripts or screen captions for video. This multiple versioning is just one way multimodal composing can be as accessible as its print, alphabetic, text-only counterpart.

ASSESSMENT

The concerns about integrating multimodal composing projects into onsite and OWCs are similar. Although instructors may have experience offering online feedback in the form of email response, textual comments in word-processed and PDF files, or even audio comments through a digital voice recorder or audio, these same instructors typically have limited experience evaluating the multimodal deliverables and production processes of their own students. A common perspective is that the very same assessment criteria instructors use to assess alphabetic texts can be applied to multimodal projects, given the emphasis of those criteria on standard rhetorical concerns that apply across modalities: purpose, audience, development, organization, style and editing. In "Evaluating Academic Hypertexts," Anne Herrington and Charles Moran (2002) documented the elements of assessment that remain consistent between print and online texts, including "Focus and Central Claim," "Evidence of Constructive Thinking," and "Organization/Coherence" (p. 249). Herrington and Moran advised that teachers new to hypertext and mixed media genres review as many samples as possible, and as they reflect on their initial efforts:

> Reading hypertext with non-hypertext in mind not only
> serves to familiarize you with the various ... genres and
> approaches to composing ... it also helps to bring into relief
> our expectations for ... academic writing and some of the
> conventions and evaluation criteria we take for granted. We
> believe such self-reflection is valuable for any teacher. For us,
> it prompted critical examination of the ways of thinking and
> shaping of information that we value and ... the conventions
> for composing which we value. (p. 253).

Understanding what we value in terms of assessment, as Bob Broad (2003) has articulated, involves a process "by which instructors and administrators in writing programs discover, negotiate, and publicize the rhetorical values they

employ when they judge student writing" (p. 14) for internal and external stake-holders. Contemporary discussions of multimodal assessment have stressed the need to share and shape those values with input from students themselves. Sonya Borton and Brian Huot (2007) urged teachers to view assessment as a way of teaching production and design to go beyond the functional skills and technical affordances of various media tools and genres. They advised teachers to col-laborate with students in developing formative assessment criteria that ensures multimodal projects are grounded in processes; they further suggested including rubrics that allow students to assess their own texts and make rhetorical deci-sions about when, why, and how to compose in various modalities. By doing this assessment work together, multimodal composing becomes a sustainable process, not something done for a singular class or a more teacher-centered au-dience; rather, it involves an ongoing set of critical and rhetorical literacies for students to deploy throughout their academic and professional careers. The fol-lowing assessment strategies are designed to help students make those choices.

Multimodal "Norming"

Although neither teachers nor students have extensive experience evaluating multimodal compositions, there are some aspects of design that can be intuitive even for novice composers. For example, students often can assess levels of acces-sibility and readability on a basic slideware presentation, whether color schemes or font sizes are more or less readable on a website, or whether visuals are aligned appropriately in both design and theme with their textual counterparts. One strategy for tapping these intuitive assessment criteria is to ask students to find websites, slideshows, and other multimodal genres that they find rhetorically appealing in terms of organization, design, and creativity and to share those models electronically with other members of the class. As the class reviews these artifacts, the instructor can facilitate interactive discussion about why the stu-dents view these examples as effective, generating shared criteria.

The "Ugly" Composition

Such multimodal design experts as Kristin Arola (2010) have stressed that despite the "death" of the personal homepage coded and designed in HTML, "in a Web 2.0 world, composition teachers need to engage, along with our students, the work of design" (p. 4) to understand its affordances in fostering students' writerly identities. And scholars such as James Inman (2004) and Dánielle De-Voss (2013) have focused on multimodal design don'ts as a way to teach multi-modal design do's. Having students collaboratively engage in an ugly slideware design contest, as DeVoss has done in a number of her visual rhetoric courses, can teach students a great deal about document design elements in making vi-

sual presentations more rhetorically aware. These elements include typography, color-scheme, and overall consistency, as well as the relationship among image, text, color, and audio. Inman (2004) developed similar activities with websites, using the activity to not only enhance students' understanding of design but also to enhance their recognition that professional-quality design presumes access to both tools and expertise (p. 216) and can equalize skills among students who have had such access and those who have not. In addition, the emphasis on design do's would offer an opportunity to emphasize accessible design strategies, such as ALT Tags on Web-based images and the need for textual descriptions of visual content in the content of the site.

Collaborative Rubric Development

Despite the potential of intuitive knowledge to guide initial discussions of multimodal assessment, OWI teachers should be prepared to work with students to shape these conversations into detailed discussions of criteria to be formalized in rubric form, ideally for each multimodal assignment given the differing technical affordances and skills required for composing with video, audio, or Web-design tools. As many of us who have developed multimodal assignments can attest, rubrics and other forms of assessment must include a strong balance between product and process. This balance may include completion of invention activities such as storyboards, participation in peer review activities, self-assessments and other forms of progress reporting, Above all, the rubric should function as a form of "instructive evaluation" that establishes a relationship between the use of technology to compose in a particular medium and, according to Borton and Huot (2007), "a course's specific instructional goals and a contextual understanding of other rhetorical constraints and possibilities having to do with purpose, audience, content, genre, circulation, and organization, as well" (p. 103).

Peer Studio Review

Often, our discussion of peer review presumes assessment of print-based products, even in fully online settings. While we may use free digital collaboration tools or small-group discussion forums in the LMS, formative multimodal assessment calls for a broader range of feedback options, ideally customized to each type of assignment genre, whether it is a website or a video essay. A common approach for multimodal assignments is the studio review, once again relying upon interdisciplinary language about production and assessment that involves the presentation and review by a larger group. Because students have less familiarity responding to multimodal texts, a good strategy is to have them respond to sample genres prior to such a studio review. Because not all students

may have the same level of access or comfort with a particular technology, it is important to design activities that allow all students to participate regardless of how complete their projects are. In my own hybrid courses, I often have provided in-class studio time to first work on aspects of the project prior to a formal studio review; when it is time for review, students call up work on the screen and craft a series of questions for fellow classmates to address about the project as the group migrates around to different student stations. Assessment then becomes a co-equal process, with both students and instructor providing frequently consistent advice about next steps for revision, based on shared assessment criteria. Such a studio review process may not be as logistically viable in a fully online asynchronous course; nevertheless, it is possible to assign students to peer review based on similarities in genre, or relative strengths in certain aspects of composing process, including alphabetic skills, to ensure a rich review of the various modalities at work in a single artifact.

Revision Plans

Given the substantial amount of feedback students could receive during a studio review as described above, the need for synthesis and summary helps to prioritize next steps in the revision process. As Kara Poe Alexander (2007) has suggested, the revision process for multimodal texts is far more complex than the standard alphabetic essay. Regardless of the useful content and format suggestions students receive, the normative timeframes for multimodal assignments do not always allow for complete overhaul of work. Therefore, having students create a revision plan summary of the general feedback received, decisions on what to prioritize, and a general timeline for completion can serve as a useful self-assessment strategy for both individual and group projects. Additionally, it helps to have students share these plans publicly in a discussion forum or other course space (indeed, I have even used social media-based groups for this purpose), as very often, the types of feedback and necessary revisions can help other students to see that they are not alone in their multimodal composing challenges and also to get additional strategies for enhancing their own work.

Student Conferences

Not unlike student discussion board posts where it would be unrealistic—and not necessarily student-centered—to expect an instructor to respond to each and every post in every thread throughout the term, it may not be as possible to respond to every multimodal artifact each student produces in a studio review environment. For that reason, ensuring one-to-one interaction is crucial in order to clarify instructor expectations and alleviate students' concerns that they are making progress toward achieving assignment outcomes. The importance of in-

structor-student interaction on multimodal work in progress mandates the flexibility on the instructor's part to communicate in whatever modality or media are most accessible for individual students. While in hybrid OWCs, this communication strategy may include face-to-face and even telephone conferences, in fully online formats, the possibilities are bountiful depending on access and comfort level. Free video conferencing software can expedite the conferencing process, although access might make text-based chat forums a more viable alternative. Undoubtedly, student conferences are a significant part of an instructors' academic labor; some ways to consolidate efforts may include group conferences organized around genre or other aspects of the composing process.

Electronic Portfolios

Undoubtedly, electronic portfolios, or ePortfolios, have the potential to play a vital role in the multimodal composing process in their ability to serve similar functions to their paper-based counterparts of development over time, self-reflection, self-assessment of progress, and summative showcase of rhetorical accomplishments. An ePortfolio, as Kathleen Yancey (2004) has suggested, helps to "remediate" the self, allowing the student designer to use multimodal literacies to construct a relationship between technology and identity. For Darren Cambridge (2010), "fully embracing them requires finding ways to make ePortfolios simultaneously serve individual self-actualization and institutional transformation. Excellence in lifelong learning and assessment are inextricably linked" (p. 11). Cambridge's latter point makes ePortfolios a strong assessment option for multimodal composing, connecting to Borton and Huot's (2007) emphasis on instructive assessment. Of course, ePortfolios can be an "easier said than done" strategy for a lone instructor, and ideally any portfolio initiative for hybrid and fully online OWC will represent a programmatic collaboration among the WPA and the instructors. With careful planning, however, instructors and programs can develop an ePortfolio space even within common LMSs, as Christine Tulley (2013) documented, although Tulley conceded that these systems are likely to be augmented with other open source and Web 2.0 tools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the conclusion of *The Internship*, the film I used to introduce this chapter, there existed both a predictable happy ending common to the comedy genre and an important message. The two middle-age protagonists helped their team and themselves to land the coveted future job at Google, not only as a result of their emerging tech savvy but also as a result of their strong communication and rhetorical skills that made them good salespeople in the first place. The

message is not one of either/or but both/and, and as we look to transform our understanding of writing, we must maintain an understanding of our goal of equipping students with all available means of persuasion in our OWCs and their communicative lives beyond them.

Much of this chapter has focused on the whats and the hows of integrating multimodality into the online curriculum. But like Warnock's (2009) powerful emphasis on the whys of OWI, it is equally important to consider, in this case, the whys of multimodal composing. Moving beyond a functional view of multimodal literacy not only aligns technology with rhetoric to foster a critical citizenry that communicate in a range of media, but in the case of OWI, also allows students to deploy multimodal genres to critically and rhetorically explore identity and the role that various tools play in shaping and representing that identity through a broadened definition of writing.

Even as I recognize the whys of multimodal composing, in the spirit of both/and, I concede it is not always possible for programs, instructors, and students to make every assignment multimodal. What I hope I have provided in this chapter are starting points and options given the access needs, specific curriculum, instructor expertise, student population, and delivery options unique to readers' individual OWI contexts. Similar to Warnock's advice, I would begin with the tools you need and what you can do well. That may mean transforming one single alphabetic assignment to a visual argument instead, or including a virtual poster session as part of a collaborative research project. It does not mean making each and every assignment a high-end technological endeavor for students and instructors, but it may mean making assignments flexible enough so that students have technological and rhetorical choices. Future success for OWI teachers also involves establishing a professional development plan in which they outline multimodal composing goals for their students, determining what education and training is needed on their end to achieve those goals, and seeking out those resources both on and off campus and both onsite and online. This need not be an isolated process, however. Dickie Selfe (2007) has advocated "communities of practice" to ensure that such multimodal initiatives are sustainable over time and across the writing curriculum and that include instructional support specialists for instructors and students.

In attempting to address Griffin and Minter's (2013) important call to pay attention to the material and ideological conditions of OWI, I have addressed the possibilities and constraints of integrating multimodal assignments, selecting tools and resources, and assessing student success. These efforts are aligned with Selfe's (2009) point that:

> Composition classrooms can provide a context not only for
> *talking about* different literacies, but also *practicing* different

literacies, learning to create texts that combine a range of mo-
dalities as communicative resources: exploring their affordanc-
es, the special capabilities they offer to authors; identifying
what audiences expect of texts that deploy different modalities
and how they respond to such texts. (p. 643)

Several of the OWI principles stress the ongoing need for instructors and
tutors to communicate with students across modalities and to use digital tools in
developing content for students to consume—clearly transformative processes.
Granted, no one text, regardless of modality, is accessible to all, and instructors
should consider the ways that students can produce multiple versions of texts
(e.g., audio transcripts, video captions, rich description of images, and the like)
to enable critical awareness of audience access needs. Thus, my goal in this chap-
ter has been to suggest representative multimodal writing contexts that enable
students to produce content as twenty-first century composers and to experi-
ment with multiple modes as much as possible to provide access to as many users
as possible. To this end, OWI teachers, in collaboration with WPAs and other
university stakeholders have a vital advocacy role to play to transform learning
outcomes in OWI and face-to-face writing instruction that continue to privilege
alphabetic textual production as the singular mode of rhetorical effectiveness.

A summary of recommendations toward these goals include:

- Integrate multimodal assignments at a pace where you and your students
  seem most ready to begin. For example, piloting a visual essay in a partic-
  ular course will help you determine existing challenges and future skills
  required the next time around.
- Align multimodal assignment genres with rhetorical outcomes of pur-
  pose, audience, development, organization, and style; help students un-
  derstand why an audio essay, for instance, is a more viable choice with
  some audiences (and for some rhetors).
- Make assignments flexible enough that students could complete multi-
  modal composing tasks using a range of tools to which they may have
  more consistent access than the ones you initially suggest.
- Develop flexible assessment processes, understanding that because of
  the learning curve involved, students' initial multimodal efforts may be
  messy and may not represent the ideal response you had in mind.
- Provide as many resources, websites, campus IT services, and other forms
  of documentation and training to students who will be completing these
  assignments independently and from a distance.
- Include opportunities for student self-assessment of their progress, as
  such opportunities that not only help them to reflect on their growth

in aptitude and attitude but that also help instructors to understand the assignment difficulties and any resulting need for modifications.

- Begin your own professional development plan for integrating multimodality. What do you need to know to effectively align the technological and the rhetorical? How are you going to get there?

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