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There Is Something to Be Said for Asynchronicity

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During my virtual time "attending" the 2022 CCCC Convention from my tiny but cluttered at-home desk, I learned a new term. Actually, I learned two, but one of them resonated with me when I read it again in my Documentarian notes, which are in the form of survey responses and materials from presentations I had engaged with and saved during my fully asynchronous conference experience.

I read that new term again and was immediately struck by it as I re-attended my 2022 CCCC conference in these ways alongside the July call for our "Documentarian Tales." And I am re-attending the conference again now as I recall—while sitting in the same small spot—the sessions I interacted with, the Twitter exchanges I took part in, and the takeaways I am still taking away as I type.

The new term was *crip time*, and—pun intended—I left myself a cryptic note in my first postconference-day survey about having encountered the phrase for the first time in relation to writing: "crip time—I gained a deeper understanding of the term, which I had never thought of in relation to time or writing."

Apparently, I did not have "the time" (pun intended again!) that Thursday night, though, to delve more deeply into what the term encompasses or how I was conceptualizing it in relation to my writing practices as a writer and researcher and teacher of writing.

Fast-forward to the present Thursday, nearly five months later, and I find myself eagerly conducting academic searches for *crip time*, searches that quickly led me to Tara Wood's article, "Cripping Time in the College Composition Classroom." Thanks to my lousy Documentarian note-taking, likely due to a lack of *time* in the intersections of my personal and professional lives, I can't say with certainty that I encountered Wood herself presenting about crip time directly at this year's CCCC conference. But I do feel fairly comfortable in saying that from whomever and however I encountered *crip time* in March, it was influenced by Wood's piece.

And as I have been working up to writing this Tale, and as I write it even now, I fear—no, actually, I know—that I am oversimplifying and

even co-opting *crip time* for my own personal narrative purposes. Yet, as I started to read "Cripping Time in the College Composition Classroom," I found myself putting Wood's words into conversation with my Documentarian role and with my experience of attending the 2022 conference virtually and, as I mentioned initially, entirely asynchronously. I feel an intriguing sense of connection and meaning in the fact that along with *crip time*, the new terms I highlighted in my notes as learning and the conference presentation materials made and shared by others I saved for future learning and use centered around time: finding it, expanding it, and even redefining our relationship to it.

Initially, my intentions when saving Ashley Barry's 2022 CCCC slideshow presentation, "Inequities in Digital Literacies and Innovations in Writing Pedagogies During COVID-19 Learning," had little to do with the ways she draws on the construct of "kairotic spaces" in relationship to participation, "presentness," and social interaction. I saved a PDF of her slides because I am teaching a digital literacies master's course this fall 2022 semester and so was searching for readings that tie into our current COVID-19 era. However, the need to unpack *time* is what stands out to me now as I reengage with Barry's work.

As Barry emphasized in her 2022 CCCC presentation, Margaret Price defines kairotic spaces as "the less formal, often unnoticed areas of academe where knowledge is produced and power is exchanged" (60). Price goes on to talk about conferences more specifically in relation to these sorts of spaces: "Conferences are rife with kairotic spaces, including the Q&A sessions after panels, impromptu elevator encounters with colleagues, and gatherings at restaurants and bars on the periphery of formal conference events" (60). And while certainly nothing can match the intellectual spontaneity and camaraderie of clinking glasses and exchanging ideas directly with a colleague, old academic friend, or new professional connection in person in a conference arena, I also can't help but feel that the path I traveled during the 2022 Cs through to the present is an important form of networking as I continue to delve more deeply into other scholars' research and lift it up as I engage in my own learning.

This is precisely what I was doing as well when I took to social media during the 2022 CCCC conference to see how others might be navigating and experiencing it: the "real-time unfolding of events" that is central to Price's construct of kairotic spaces as well and as drawn out by Barry in her CCCC presentation. In fact, it was this

sort of asynchronous searching and connecting across ideas and experiences that I noted in response to the "What was most fulfilling and/or rewarding in your virtual conference interactions today?" question on my Thursday evening survey: "seeing the conference come alive on social media." I also couched these Twitter connections about "critical ignorance"—the other new term for me—as "social networking around the conference."

These movements across and between the CCCC online conference platform and the Twitter app, all asynchronous, were driven by my own research interests in writing; my desires to learn as an educator and to share that learning with my students, many of whom are practicing writing teachers; and my hope of cultivating a meaningful conference experience out of limited resources (namely time and childcare as an early-career assistant professor). Especially given that my aims for attendance, as described in my Saturday evening Documentarian survey responses, were to "find something useful personally and for curriculum," I am inclined to truly consider my actions and experiences networking and forming academic connections. I *did* find timely discussions of topics relevant to my own areas of emphasis as a teacher and researcher and to my students' roles in classrooms as learners and educators themselves. I saved slideshows, looked up presentation creators and colleagues, and joined in Twitter conversations about a conference I *did* attend, albeit without in-person interaction. Is this not still "real-time unfolding of events," particularly as they continue to unfold and contribute toward my learning and growth?

As I summed it up in my post-week reflection survey, I finished out my conference attendance and the duties of my Documentarian role, "wanting to engage more but feeling excited about what I was able to find" as well as, notably, "appreciating the chance to document my own journey even if it doesn't look 'typical.'" The opportunity to do just that is precisely what the Documentarian position has afforded me and is what the asynchronous allows: I would argue it is the asynchronous that positions us all to be our own Documentarians. What if we all attempted to capture and return to our own experiential learning during and after conferences? What are ways to move forward with the asynchronous as a purposeful component of an "in-person" conference? What if, as CCCC has appropriately (given the writing emphasis!) but still innovatively done for its Documentarians, conferences capitalized on the reflexive and knowledge-sharing potential of writing

and provided structures for all attendees to engage in reflection and connection asynchronously?

The "after" part of asynchronous engagement, whether that engagement is through Twitter threads, curating resources created by others, or personal reflection, is especially glaring for me as I sit with and work through my documented asynchronous experiences. I can and should connect with Barry and Wood and the Tweeters who inspired me during the conference—or, at the very least, I should try to connect with them. I have found myself feeling similarly after in-person conference attendance in the past as a junior scholar less certain of my place in the field and less comfortable in on-the-fly conversations about terms, practices, and experiences that are not my own and that may be entirely new to me but that clearly are loaded with meaning and potential relevance (like crip time). To and for me, such conversations require a level of care, of fore- and afterthought that necessitates marination before response, and asynchronous connections "after the fact" certainly more than allow that. And, at least in some ways, they seem to align with Wood's words about what crip time both requires and allows: the recognition "that people will arrive at various intervals" (264).

Much like classrooms, we often conceptualize conferences as immediate and bounded in terms of participation: "expected to arrive on time, absorb information at a particular speed, and perform spontaneously in restricted time frames" (Wood 264); presentations begin and end at precise times with slots for questions and discussion, and then often presenters and audience members entirely disperse. I frequently do not make direct contact with those who intrigue or inspire (or even trouble) my thoughts and perspectives even when we sit in the same rooms. Through my asynchronous attendance, I felt less pressure to "perform" networking, and a positive impact is that I have had and continue to have a conference experience that is much extended, that has given me time to revisit and reconsider anew ideas that were already new.

And, much like with in-person conferences, it is now up to me to turn that inward potential into a catalyst for outward connection.

Opportunities to serve as Documentarian created by conferences; options for asynchronous reflection and connection emphasized throughout conference experiences (perhaps including during presentations themselves!); and personal commitments to recalling, reconsidering, and reaching out from conference attendance experiences

across contexts can contribute to less exclusive understandings of participation and provide meaningful opportunities for connection with self and others. After all, the person is still behind the asynchronous, even, as I have tried to argue, in more extended ways than a traditional understanding of only the "in-person" conference affords. I encourage all scholars to (re)consider the potential of the asynchronous and to wonder about purposeful ways to move forward with it alongside or as a component of in-person conferencing, coursework, and academic learning and connecting.

There is something to be said for asynchronicity. There are contradictions, to be sure, as in when I wrote in that same Thursday evening survey both that "I did not interact with anyone" and that it was particularly memorable and rewarding to have seen the conference "come alive on social media": the isolated and socialized asynchronous consumption and creation of content simultaneously.

But really isn't all learning, in particular that which is most valuable and enduring, asynchronous? Even when we build new knowledge and practice together in the moment in a shared physical space, we hopefully take that learning with us to separate spaces and times and make distinct and new meaning and practices from it.

And so I ask you in closing to ponder this prompt in relation to your 2022 CCCC conference attendance and other forms of professional networking and connecting as well as in relation to your own learning, teaching, and research: What are the potentials of asynchronous forms of engagement, and what might the benefits even be?

WORKS CITED

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