FOREWORD

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As I progress in writing center work, I have become more attuned to the ways in which that work is delimited by structural systems and network forces. Trying to see how these systems bend the arc of our work is akin to making out something just at the edge of your vision: when you look head-on, they vanish; they only make themselves known in the periphery.

Part of deploying systems and network theories as frameworks for understanding our work means being willing to examine what lies peripherally just out of sight. This level of work might be unsettling for some because it basically means examining elements and factors that lie outside our control—I mean that both locally in terms of institutional context and as a field in terms of what we in writing centers, writing programs, and other areas of writing studies are willing and able to engage with.

Yet, I personally find theories around systems and networks to be oddly comforting. They help me to articulate more concretely the issues I face when working with students, faculty, staff, and administration at various institutions. These theories help me to visualize students from diverse backgrounds and not rely on whatever imaginary ideal version of a student I might want to cling to as I engage in this work. And being more aware of the systems at play wherever I'm at helps me to be proactive when it comes to supporting students rather than reactive. I think this last piece is where this collection is most powerful as I and each of my fellow contributors has strived to provide strategies and recommendations to better see and navigate these invisible networks.

This collection, at this time, is highly kairotic. Never before has the field had to contend so explicitly with systems and networks than we have during the pandemic, especially those material networks of various technologies and technological platforms that mediate much of our work. In the introduction to this collection, Genesea and Aurora highlight how the lens of networks and systems theories allows us to see technology as an ecological framework, one that can support or thwart an institution's larger efforts. From a network perspective, technology becomes an agent that can be influenced rather than an immutable force beyond our control.

While you can find more detailed information about the chapters in the introduction, I'd be remiss without celebrating my wonderful co-contributors who

continued the process of writing and revising even in the face of a global pandemic, the editors who remained hopeful and optimistic during unprecedented times, and you, dear reader, as you read through this collection, the product of pandemic times.

I first began my work with networks and systems around the same time that Aurora and Genesea sent out the CFP. The (literal and metaphorical) borders of my writing center at that time were becoming clearer and clearer to me, but I didn't have the language to articulate how and why I felt encroached upon by exterior forces. You may be reading this collection because you have similar concerns with how your work is being shaped or with how your work is being delimited—and with how to resist these invisible systems and networks in productive ways. This collection is for you.

Because of the breadth of areas covered, anyone in rhetoric and composition should be able to find a chapter that speaks either to their experience or provides a strategy that can be implemented or modified for different contexts. As much as the individual chapters may be working with the theoretical concepts of systems and networks, the collection as a whole exists at the junction of theory and practice and can be an invaluable resource no matter where you are in the work or at what level you're performing this work.

Thank you for reading.