History Becomes Connectivity: A Data Network for WAC/WID Practices (Now and Then)

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Introduction

For most involved in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), history is an act of chronological recovery, recounted in general narratives of events, ideas, and practices (Anson & Lyles, 2011; Bazerman & Russell, 1992; McLeod & Soven, 2006; Russell, 2002;), and, more recently, in local or micro-histories (McComiskey, 2016). Traditional archival structure and finding aids lend themselves to a linear application of research, complicating the work of a researcher looking to investigate between and beyond traditionally curated archival collections. This is of particular significance for the WAC practitioner whose day-to-day responsibilities and practice defy programmatic and institutional silos and, by extension, require an archival practice that will embrace similar restrictive-defying patterns of organization.

This article will articulate new archival theory and practice that we are developing at the National Archives of Composition and Rhetoric (NACR), based at the University of Rhode Island. In this article, we look to rearticulate, recover, and rebalance the history of WAC, and discuss the implication of digital tools for a WAC researcher, suggesting methods like folksonomy hashtags[1] (Morton-Aiken, 2016) to establish mechanisms that embed rhetorical connectivity, enabling users to move between collections and record that positionality for the researchers who follow. This networked approach also supports three views of history: archives as what happened (praxis), archives of patterns and traces (recursion), and archives of potential (re-ordering).

Rearticulating WAC History

In our methodological imaginations, chronological and historical work starts with reference searches and archival finding aids (Warnick, 2010), followed by searches through heavy boxes of dusty records that yield answers, or at least ending points. This image persists, especially in archival scholarship, despite the growth of digital techniques and searchable databases, such as the National Census of Writing, that can function as dynamic resource hubs, allowing the past to be tracked against the present (Holmes, 2015). Offering a view of history that is more than an attempt at an objective account of "what happened," new archival research praxis speaks more directly to the desire for an understanding of causality or of origins: "After all, each of us wants history and our view of that history to contribute to the positive value of our daily life. When history does not meet this requirement, we historiographers set to work, revisiting the archives, scouting out new ones, rewriting, and often overturning history" (Glenn & Enoch, 2010, p. 11), and setting out to forge new pathways and record more nuanced understandings of what did/could happen.

Regardless, histories of all sorts, even revisionist ones, depend on what archives

include and what they exclude (Wells, 2002). Even more, we argue, these histories depend on the relative ease of access that an archive provides, and the techniques that it offers for identifying relationships between documents separated in time and place or without readily apparent ties. Before technology offered another solution, of course, a solitary researcher could successfully identify patterns and links in traditional, if limited, ways: by observing similarities among documents, by taking detailed notes that identify patterns, or by drawing on the ideas of other researchers (see Warnick, 2010, for an account of traditional search techniques). These patterns and links would manifest in scholarly or other recognized discourse, but only the final version of the interpretation would remain, while the messy building blocks of that interpretation would presumably be locked away in a file cabinet, hidden from those who might have benefited from seeing the raw points of connectivity between artifacts.

Emerging digital techniques, however, allow researchers to locate and sift through varied, seemingly incongruous documents and practices, even minor ones, identifying parallel developments outside linear narratives, along with alternate histories and alternate understandings. They enable retrieval of ideas and practices lost or ignored by overcoming the silos that traditional archival practice imposes, building bridges that allow more organic research paths. They can highlight surprising relationships through the use of "folksonomies," user-generated tagging, in particular (see Nicotra, 2009; Vander Wal, 2007). In many cases, they can enable access to a wider range of resources than do traditional archival visits or finding tools because new digital tools create multiple points of access within and between collections. Rather than forcing the researcher to follow the limited pathways of the traditional archival taxonomy that present artifacts as static and complete, digital technologies enable artifacts to be dynamically embedded within ecologies that reveal applications indicative of discourse of the past, present, and future.

New archival techniques can help us realize that history is not only behind us but before us as well, especially in the ways our historical memories provide images on which we build new practices and concepts, sometimes by continuation, other times by contradiction or alteration. As we look forward, however, the most powerful influence may be our image of the present, of "What's going on now?" or the history around us. Such images, which become historical as soon as we form them, are often the basis for projections of new programs and pedagogies. In general, the richer our image of the present, the more effective we are in creating the future. Current digital techniques, especially networks, allow us quicker and clearer access to the varied, uneven, contradictory, yet rich and exciting domain of WAC in ways that even summaries of current developments often do not. The history around us is often hard to glimpse because we may not have ready access to recent practices and concepts (see Holmes, 2015, for an account of how contemporary survey research can form a digital archive).

Until the past decade, archival theory and practice have been dominated by assumptions designed to preserve the linear records of institutions and of social or artistic phenomena within centralized repositories, such as official archives, museums, or local collections. For example, the original organization of the National Archives of Composition and Rhetoric followed patterns of donation, with an archive (collection) named after each donor. The Lynn Z. Bloom Collection preserves the system of folders with labels assigned by Lynn Bloom, leading to a collection with its own principles of coherence yet without links to contemporaneous and internally organized collections by Toby Fulwiler, Susan McLeod,

Elaine Maimon, and Art Young (Figure 1). Current archival practice asks that records and artifacts be preserved in the order given to them by the originating institution or donor (Millar, 2010), which frequently leads to an imposed chronological bias even when the original arrangement is not linear, as in the case of Morris and Rose's (2010) choice of organization in constructing the finding aid for James Berlin's papers. Though this practice suited the technology available during its development, archival theory itself now feels outdated when faced with twenty-first century technological options and modern scholarly practice, particularly in the field of WAC studies.

Figure 1. The linear information infrastructure used in traditional archival theory. In this model, collections are restricted to their provenance and are not accessible through any other point of connection.

Digital archival techniques currently being developed do not require linear, chronological arrangements to enable access to records or to provide coherence to a collection. Tagging schemes and keywords offer multiple ways for archivists and users to organize and retrieve records and to analyze relationships among them. Consequently, they are not biased towards linear analysis or interpretation unless one wishes them to be. Instead, digital techniques enable the arrangement and rearrangement of data to highlight synchronous events, asynchronous practices, recursive patterns, alternate relationships, and multiple frames of understanding or data arrangement. They also offer ways for users to record their evolving disciplinary perspectives, personal insights, supplemental (personal) data, or newly discovered links. This added archival record can thus function as a meta-history, recording the development of interpretation alongside the source materials. We suggest the term "networked archive" for this new set of possibilities.

How, then, might one go about constructing a networked archive for WAC (or for writing studies in general)? The structure and techniques being developed by the National Archives of Composition and Rhetoric (NACR) provide some guidance. The NACR includes collections that span the development of WAC (and writing studies) movements from practitioners, historians, and theorists, including Susan McLeod, Wayne Booth, Richard Beal, Lisa Ede, Sharon Crowley, Ken Bruffee, Pat Bizzell, Toby Fulwiler, and others. Totaling over 350 boxes of letters, syllabi, student papers, and program materials, these collections represent the range of activity in the field. Many of the documents were originally filed simply as papers or correspondence, yet embedded within them is more information about WAC practices and origins than might first appear in a traditional catalog or finding aid. Traditional archival theory and practice allow only for the archivist (and the collection record) to exert "intellectual control" over holdings by isolating them from other artifacts or collections in order to preserve *respect des fonds* (provenance, the circumstances surrounding the collection) and *respect pour l'ordre primitif* (the original order of the collection) (Kirsch and Rohan, 2008; Millar, 2010). Advising scholars to turn to the archival librarian for valuable hints about a collection's content (Tirabassi, 2010) is a useful tactic, though clearly haphazard and situation dependent.
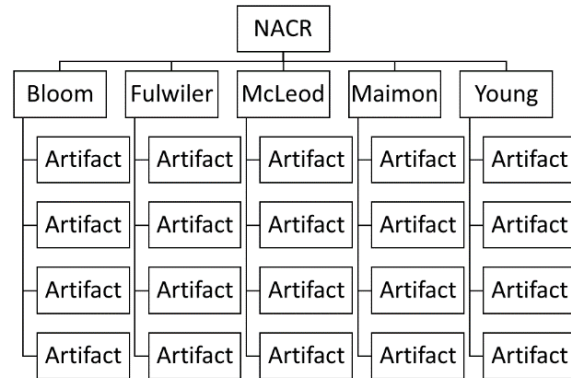
The NACR is challenging these restrictions with a methodology called relational architecture (Morton-Aiken, 2016), which allows archives, and digital archives in particular, to overcome the limitations of a traditional archival hierarchy and move to a networked model of access able to meet the needs of the researcher challenging linear understandings of artifacts and practices. Relational architecture calls for information infrastructures to be anchored by a point of origin, such as the provenance of an artifact (the name of the contributing scholar, e.g., Lynn Z. Bloom and the Bloom Collection, or institution, e.g., Little, Brown College Division and the Little, Brown Collection), but continually augmented by evolving tags and links between resources whose relationships are identified by contributing users. The resulting dynamic network is one in which researchers are better able to investigate, trace, and challenge the praxis, recursion, and re-ordering of WAC and other histories at work in the archives (see Figure 2). This interaction with the archives—effectively *writing* the archives—supports a practice of critical thinking that examines the rhetorical forces of the infrastructures at work that are arguably as significant as the artifacts

Figure 2. This is the networked information infrastructure used in relational architecture. In this model, the same collections illustrated in Figure 1 are augmented to represent both their provenance as well as points of connection generated by folksonomy hashtags. (The collection names have been omitted to make the graphic easier to view.)

themselves. Like the critical thinking that students are encouraged to demonstrate in their writing, critical thinking in the writing of the archives (and, by extension, the written dissemination of the resulting research) signifies a more robust mastery of the elements that inform a discourse community. Uncritical acceptance of common archival procedures needs to give way to critical examination; procedures are choices, not immutable, and can be replaced with others that may offer alternate insights.
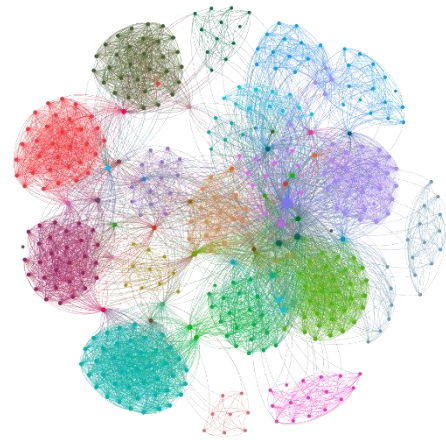
Recovering WAC History
A somewhat different kind of inquiry into local histories of WAC and into the uneven progress of change might begin with a look at the McLeod Collection in the NACR, which contains results of a survey, and associated documents, undertaken by Susan McLeod as a preparation for a report published in 1988 as the "National Survey of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs" (NSWACP) (McLeod & Shirley, 1988). Entries in the report are compressed and coded according to kind of institution, number of students, source of funding, length of program in years, components of program, and curricular elements (see Table 1). Valuable though this information is (and was at the time), it is much less informative than the filled-in surveys themselves or the supporting materials respondents included with the returned questionnaires. Folders for some states, like Texas or Washington, contain a large number of completed questionnaires revealing programs at all stages of development and sophistication. This alone provides witness to the uneven nature of change, even with a development as widespread as WAC. A look at the folder for Rhode Island (of particular interest to us) reveals no record of active programs except at Brown

University and Rhode Island College. The Rhode Island College report is cursory. The record for Brown is varied and rich in detail, containing evidence of program design, public relations, and correspondence, along with unpublished papers, attesting to the program's groundbreaking reputation (McLeod, 1987–1988) and offering an understanding of the many ideas, practices, personalities, and institutional contexts that might go into a microhistory of the relationships necessary for academic and intellectual change, bearing lessons for future work in the discipline.

Table 1 *Traditional Index of the McLeod Collection*

Box.Folder. Document	Contents
1.1	Rhode Island
1.1.1	Tori Haring-Smith, draft article, "What's Wrong with Writing Across the Curriculum?" (1985). NOTE: This is a DRAFT of an article based upon an invited lecture that I delivered at Carnegie-Mellon University October 3, 1985.
1.1.2	Tori Haring-Smith, article MS, "Brown University Writing Fellows Program" (n.d.) NOTE: This article will appear in *New Methods for College Writing Programs: Theories into Practice* (New York: MLA. 1987).
1.1.3	Copy of NSWACP questionnaire for Brown University with detailed responses by Tori Haring-Smith (1988).
1.1.4	Packet, "The Rose Writing/Rhetoric Follows Program" (July, 1988).
1.1.5	Copy of speech/draft article, "Is. Tutoring Collaborative" (n.d.)
1.1.6	Copy of NSWACP questionnaire for Rhode Island College with detailed Responses by Mary McGann (n.d.)

The following hashtags provide links to other documents, and in doing so they suggest ways to follow the branching lines (sometime faint) of intellectual change: WAC programs (1988), WAC practices, collaborative learning, writing fellows, peer tutoring, Tori Haring-Smith, NSWACP (National Survey of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs), and subsets of NSWACP questionnaires: state, kind of institution, and individuals providing responses to the survey. Coded responses to questions in the survey were published in McLeod and Shirley (1988). The NACR enables users to make electronic comments on documents in the collection, and to suggest further hashtags.

Despite our frequent efforts to give clear and unified accounts of disciplinary, pedagogical, and social change, networked archives remind us of the often sporadic, uneven, localized nature of change. Other folders in the MacLeod Collection, accessible through the index and hashtags, reveal absence of change or limited, even stunted programs. Digital tools like a networked archive enable us to overcome these limitations, even to bring value to them when we are able to illuminate the gaps in access, progress, or support.

Rebalancing WAC History

To look at some of the possible outcomes of these structures and techniques, we would like to describe work a researcher might do with the WAC archives in the NACR and with other archives that might be networked with those in it. For example, when we attempt to identify stories about the growth of WAC or to create chronological histories, either in written form or as part of an historical imaginary we use to guide our understanding, we tend to focus on major events, texts, and personalities. Readily accessible yet little-consulted archives, however, give us a broader understanding of the varied and quite diverse activities contributing to changes in practice. For example, one might initially credit Elaine Maimon and her colleagues at Beaver College as primary figures in the Writing Across the Curriculum movement of the 1980s by drawing on Maimon's (1982) own account:

> In 1975, the Carleton program inspired Beaver College (Glenside, Pennsylvania) to begin similar discussions about Writing Across the Disciplines. First, on our own, then with the help of a generous grant from The National Endowment for the Humanities in 1977, Beaver College made it possible for the entire faculty to participate in workshops and seminars with scholars prominent in rhetoric and composition. (p. 68)

Even this brief account virtually disappears in later ones that focus on academic origins and developments (Tillotson, 2017). In Maimon's own documents, however, the significant role of the federal government becomes clear, both through grants and Maimon's efforts to develop public support. The NACR's detailed index and tags suggest a much larger role for the government and her publicity efforts, including congressional testimony (see Table 2).

Table 2 *Traditional Index of the Maimon Collection*

Box.Folder	Contents
1.15	NEH Application (1979) [Entire application including cover sheet; highly detailed budget; detailed reports from evaluation visits by James Kinneavy (1979), Maxine Hairston (1979), and Janet Emig (1978); letters of support from Joseph Trimmer, Frederick Crews, Catherine Lamb, E.D. Hirsch, Edward Corbett, and some ten others representing institutions as diverse as Spelman College, Memphis State, Albion College, and the University of Pennsylvania (most recounting personal attendance at seminars or visits from Elaine Maimon); packet of materials, including syllabi from Beaver College program.] Portion of James Kinneavy's letter about evaluation visit (1979): The experience at Beaver and similar experiences elsewhere strongly suggests that universities and colleges still have a basic intellectual and semiotic substratum underlying the various disciplines and departments. Once the initial vocabulary differences are surmounted, it is clear that fundamental conceptual problems are faced in nearly all departments in strikingly similar ways. This by-product of the Beaver experience may actually be more important than the actual writing skill improvement, posed presumably as the major objective of the program. In other words, the surface fragmentation of the university which many perceive is not nearly so serious as some have envisaged it to be.

1.15	Turning to the writing program specifically, I would like to make very explicit my high admiration for the program. Indeed, as a way of teaching students to write, the type of program exemplified by Beaver's may very well be theoretically and practically the best kind of writing program. It unifies the faculty conceptually and symbolically; it admirably integrates matter and form in the writing experience; it maintains the motivation and stimulation coming from the student's individual interests but insists on group standards both in mechanics and in argument and organization. Departmentally it unifies the campus through the English department, but respects the content autonomy of each discipline.
1.16	Grant application FIPSE (1981)
1.17	Grant application NEH Dissemination Program (1980)
1.18	NEH Dissemination Grant (1980) ["Let me quote Professor Robert Sandels, Chairman of the History Department at Quinnipiac College in Hamden, Connecticut: 'We could profit immeasurably by participation in such a program as Beaver proposes. We do not need a development grant to get writing underway but we do need help. What the Beaver College proposal offers is an economical way to share their techniques with institutions who need guidance for critical personnel at a critical point in their own development of writing. It puts faculty in the position of learning, it asks for continuing instructional commitment, and offers follow-up contact, and site visits. It is the next logical step to broaden the national effect of Beaver's leadership.'"]
1.20	NEH Annual Report (1981) [Includes detailed evaluation of Summer Institute for the Teaching of Writing by Elaine Maimon (1980-81); plans for 1981-1982; detailed budget; detailed material for Summer Institute activities, information about requests for Institute application; and evaluative statements and letters from participants.]
1.44	Testimony, US House of Representatives (April 12, 1984) ["As a result of several helpful conversations with NEH staff, Beaver College submitted a proposal for one of the first programs to engage the whole faculty in connecting writing with learning. We wanted to do some things which sound simple but which we could not have done without NEH support. Beaver's budget was then (and is still) balanced but lean, and we have no endowment. We had no funds to invite scholars in the fields of rhetoric and linguistics to our campus so that scholars in various fields could transcend their disciplinary differences through studying theories of language. With $2500 in seed money from a local foundation, Dolfinger-McMahon, we conducted a workshop led by Harriet Sheridan, who is now dean at Brown University, and read Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as our primary text. The workshop energized the faculty as few experiences had done before. Without the support of NEH we would not have been able to build on this experience."]

Watching these relationships emerge from the record, we might rightly go beyond viewing WAC as an academic enterprise with some public outcomes to looking for hitherto ignored relationships highlighting governmental or civic influences in academic practices—or the roles of publicity. In short, increased access to archival materials can give us a picture of a varied field of activities, some more or less concurrent, many arranged in no particular order, covering a variety of genres and occasions. According to records in the NACR, for instance, Maimon wrote a proposal on March 27, 1980 to the University of Maryland. Titled "Writing and Thinking the Academic Disciplines," the eight-page document lays out an

approach for University of Maryland based on the curriculum already at work in Maimon's Beaver College (now Arcadia University). Traditional archival method would place the document within the Maimon Collection with a name like "Maimon Proposal." It might also be marked with a few keywords such as *letter, memo,* or *curriculum,* but those markers are all part of the traditional, hierarchical, linear, and somewhat uninformative descriptions of an artifact. The Maimon collection, however, might well be linked to inquiries into an important but underdeveloped discussion of the roles, past and potential, of public institutions in writing and writing instruction as well as to an inquiry into the dissemination of ideas and practices, among other uses. Though a logical next step might be to pull out the key institutions or figures named in the text (such as Yale, Bruffee, and Kinneavy), these descriptors are still within the text and do not provide a fresh understanding of its links within WAC history. Applying relational architecture to the database uncovers connections that become part of a non-linear ecology. This, in turn, enables researchers to do more than simply chronicle events by linking ideas and practices across place, time, or genesis. Combined with folksonomy hashtags—a specific application of user-generated keywords that create self-contained nodes of discourse—researchers can piece together previously isolated artifacts to create a richer understanding of an artifact at the time of creation as well as a vision of its recursive potential: its insertion into future practices. If one were to follow the hashtag links being developed through the NACR index, he or she might be able to construct new understanding of the patterns linking Maimon's activities to those of Toby Fulwiler or Art Young as well as to documents and accounts in local archives, which might, we hope, eventually, be linked to the NACR.

Even if we simply pull out the links listed in this article and apply them to the Maimon collection, readers can see the new arrangement of connectivity attached by relational architecture (see Figure 3). That is to say, by adding mechanisms that allow artifacts to enter into discourse with one another beyond the traditional archival theory binary, we create new ways of knowing as well as unlimited ways of making new knowledge in both traditional-chronological and disruptive-networked archival praxis.

Conclusion
What we are proposing, therefore, is a networked vision of WAC's present and recent past, made possible by recent developments in digital archival and analytical techniques. We wish to encourage recursive uses of history bringing the prior to bear on the present and possibly reinserting it into current practice. We also seek a way to record the evolving ways the discipline of writing studies values and reevaluates its practices and history. At the same time, we see this work as an extension of other work in writing studies, including mapping (Graban, 2013), archival invention (Biesecker, 2006; Ramsey-Tobienne, 2012), folksonomies (Nicotra, 2009), technology (Davidson, 2008; Solberg, 2010), access (Tirabassi, 2012), and feminism (Glenn and Enoch, 2010; Kirsch and Royster, 2010). Modern technology grafted onto existing archival theory will enable a practice that maps between and across disciplines and collections, facilitates traces in the space between official discourses, and includes and empowers marginalized contributors often silenced by more conventional approaches. Networked approaches like relational architecture grapple with challenges of access in particular—access to collections, access between collections, and access to knowledges. Methods like folksonomy hashtags augment and illuminate the rhetorical forces at work in the archives, enabling a flexibility and responsiveness better
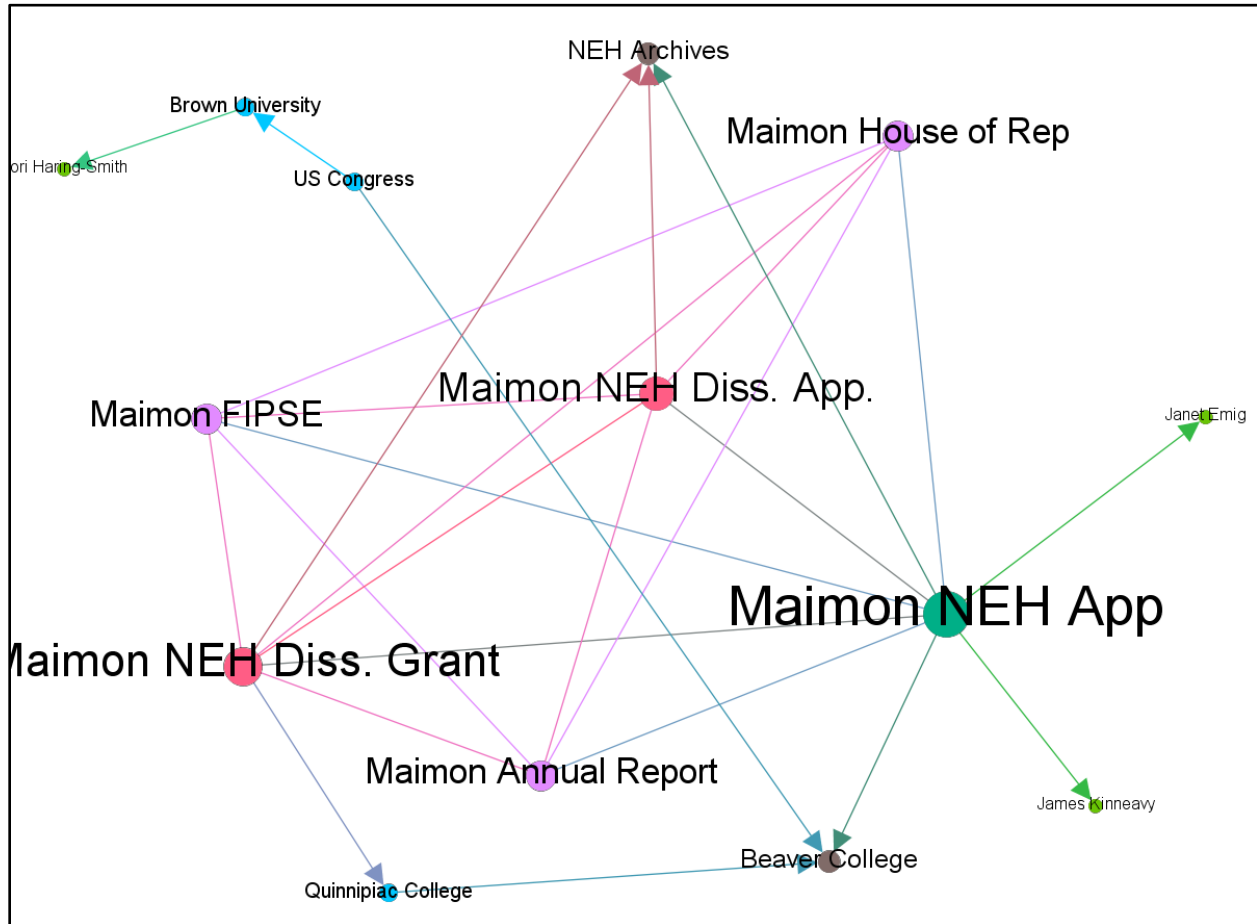
Figure 3. This is an illustration of the new networked information infrastructure offered by relational architecture applied to the Maimon Collection.

suited to match the practice and praxis of the WAC teacher, scholar, and researcher.

Where might this work lead in the hands of scholars and practitioners, both within WAC and beyond? It could be used to help build connections among the numerous emerging archives in writing studies as well as within them. It could be used to create, instead of flat representations, complex maps and understandings of disciplinary development. It could be used as a mechanism to engage more critically with historical and habitual ways of knowing and doing in disciplines and other rhetorical ecologies. And it may reveal connections among programs, schools of thought, practices, people, and continuities that we have previously been unable to see, but need to take into account historically and in the future.

Note

[1]Morton-Aiken (2017) developed the method of "folksonomy hashtags" as part of her research creating the relational architecture methodology. The method combines two existing meaning-making elements with the "folksonomy," the multi-user generated tag originally coined by Vander Wal (2007) but applied more specifically to rhetoric and composition by Jodie Nicotra (2009), with hashtags deployed in a Twitter-like capacity (where users attach a relevant concept or keyword to a 140-character message). Morton-

Aiken uses the folksonomy hashtags contributed by archival researchers to generate the hypertext framework that supports the resulting and continuously evolving networked information infrastructure that she theorizes with relational architecture.

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