Writing Analytics: Sustaining Programs of Research

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Welcome to Volume 8 of *The Journal of Writing Analytics*.

This issue continues the new phase of the journal begin in 2024 by Susan Lang, now Editor Emeritus, of our journal. The editorial team now works under a rolling publication schedule to provide a shorter time to publication for authors and thus enable research to emerge in as quickly as possible. Thanks to Susan and Mike Palmquist, our publisher at the WAC Clearinghouse, we are now indexed at Scopus, the premiere scientific abstract and citation database. And so it is that we begin our introduction to Volume 8 with gratitude to the Editorial Teams and Boards of Reviewers who have sustained the journal.

1.0 Structures and Processes

The present team has worked under the theme of sustainability in bringing forward Volume 8 and planning for Volume 9. In that we now work under principles of concurrence, our goals are to create structures and maintain processes that will allow the journal to support innovative, flourishing programs of research.

To that end, Norbert, Alaina, Duncan, and Dave drafted bylaws and submitted them to the Editorial Team on October 24, 2025. We received edits and revisions, and, on November 10, finalized the bylaws with a unanimous vote of the team. As readers will see when they review the bylaws, the journal now has an articulated organizational structure, mission, procedure for electing editors-in-chief, publication calendar, statement of editorial processes, and schedule for bylaws review.

This structure has provided foundation for the process of searching for new editors-in-chief and conference editors. On December 1, Norbert and Alaina issued a call for applications for both positions by January 1, 2025. As Norbert enters retirement from the profession, it becomes critically important to identify leaders of the journal and conference—interdependent, complementary undertakings—who will ensure that our community remains a forum for academic discourse, research, and multidisciplinary collaboration in writing analytics.

As well, we have launched a new genre for submissions: Writing Analytics in the Classroom. These submissions will advance writing analytics in directions that will supporting teaching and learning. Published manuscripts will focus on the integration of tools, data, and insights into instructional design and classroom practice. Of special interest will be manuscripts that translate analytic findings into classroom and workplace strategies for educators and students.

Pedagogical articles focus on classroom or workplace implementation of writing analytics and its impact on students and learners in non-academic settings. Written by teacher-researchers, these articles will employ all forms case study methods and welcome small samples. While writing analytics focused on learners can surely be Research Articles, this new genre emphasizes the need for new instructional applications for learners. Emphasis on instructional design, teaching strategies, and student experiences are hallmarks of this genre, consistent with traditions of teacher research.

The introduction of Writing Analytics in the Classroom is intended to provide flexibility as we encourage writing analytics innovations in classrooms. While a distinct pedagogy for writing analytics does not yet exist, it is our hope that this new genre will lead, in time, to that.

2.0 The Eleventh International Writing Analytics Conference

On March 7-8, 2025, the University of South Florida, Tampa, hosted our 2025 conference. The conference theme—Writing Analytics and Generative Artificial Intelligence—invited participants to present on four themes:

- **Definitions:** How is AI best defined and distinguished as a generative technology? What role does writing analytics play in the advancement of AI to support student learning?

- **Taxonomies**: How may AI taxonomies be developed that address varied dimensions of writing processes, feedback, and motivation? What existing taxonomies exist in writing analytics that may be used to advance AI taxonomies?

- **Pedagogies**: How may present pedagogies be used in develop AI for writing

instruction and feedback? What roles do advanced teaching and assessment pedagogies, such as ePortfolios, play in such development?

- **Institutional Responses**: What are the international responses to AI, and what may we learn from these responses? What institutional responses allow us to develop a series of best practices for using AI in writing classrooms? What ethical frameworks best support our institutional responses and pedagogies?

The keynote address was given by Mike Palmquist, and workshops were given by Danielle Zawodny Wetzel (Carnegie Mellon University), Michael Laudenbach (New Jersey Institute of Technology), Ben Markey (Carnegie Mellon University, and David Eubanks (Furman University).

The conference experimented with inviting each participant and team to present in a common conference room with brief presentations and subsequent extended discussions. It is our hope that this new intensive design format will be used in future conferences to promote sharing of knowledge, encourage collaboration, and launch new programs of research.

3.0 Volume 8—So Far

As of the week of December 14, 2025, three research articles, an innovations article, and a research report have been published.

3.1 Research Articles

"Tracking Citation Practices Across Disciplines: A SourceMapper Analysis of MICUSP, is a study by Megan Kane, recipient of the 2025–2026 WAC Clearinghouse Associate Publishers New Scholar Fellow, a role in which she also serves as the 2025-2026 Assistant Editor of our journal. An extension of the work of Sandra Jamieson (2013) and her colleagues in The Citation Project, the research reports the development and validation of three machine-classification models (a TF–IDF classification model and two embeddings-based models, SciBERT and Qwen3) for analyzing citation rhetorics in student writing at scale. Using a sample of Biology and English papers from the Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers (MICUSP) as a test case, Kane identified discipline-consistent contrasts: English papers cited more primary sources, were substantially more citation-dense, and relied more heavily on transforming moves (paraphrasing, synthesis, recontextualization), while Biology papers cited more secondary sources, contained fewer citations overall, and more often used reporting functions (conveying information from a source with little modification, often by summarizing or restating). While the study demonstrates that machine classification is a viable method for examining citation functions at scale, the strong performance of the SciBERT classifier provides evidence that rhetorical citation functions in student writing can be identified accurately and reliably through automated methods. In terms of pedagogical implications, Kane proposes that in Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines contexts, automated analysis of citation practices can help students comparatively understand rhetorical function across courses in the humanities and the sciences, where citation norms and rhetorical functions often differ. By analyzing model texts or incorporating these tools as a revision step, instructors can use render disciplinary citation patterns more visible and to guide students in reflecting on their own practices.

International research team Roger Yallop, Djuddah A.J. Leijen, and Susan M. Lang investigate the usefulness of cover letters used within doctoral writing groups. In "Cover Letters as a Tool to Elicit Peer Feedback Within Doctoral Writing Groups," the researchers extend prior research (Yallop &

Leijen, 2021) to identify targeted rhetorical features of a Desirable Cover Letter (DCL) Model. Using a mixed-methods design to analyze 46 cover letters—along with their associated peer feedback, student reflections, and expert practitioner ratings—the authors find that the cover letters promote cognitive and teaching presence, elicit more targeted and useful feedback, and support doctoral students in asserting rhetorical control over their writing process. The research method in the study is a model for empirical research in it use of grounded theory to code143 peer feedback comments for specificity, globality, and alignment; employ expert rating of cover letter effectiveness and thematic analysis of expert discussions and student reflections; and examined the rhetorical structure of 17 effective cover letters. Appendix C of the study—a code book for traits in feedback and cover letter comments—will be useful to researchers seeking examples of reliable coding procedures. In terms of classroom use, the authors conclude that the DCL model has potential pedagogical value for supporting student feedback and writing processes across diverse teaching and sociocultural contexts. In essence, DCL Model offers a transferable framework for integrating actionable peer feedback practices into doctoral and multilingual writing instruction.

Tom Slagle investigates the ways that Engagement Theory—with its focus on linguistic resources by which writers adopt a stance towards to the value positions being referenced by the text and its readers (Martin & White, 2005) —in order to analyze undergraduate writers' use of linguistic resources valued in academic argumentation. In "Developing Writers' Engagement in Academic Genres: Insights from Linguistically Informed Instruction," Slagle draws on Engagement Theory in a case corpus case study. Totalling 90 samples, he designs two specialized corpora of writing by students placed into developmental first-year writing courses: one corpus of writing samples by students who received the linguistically informed instruction and another corpus including writing from students who received conventional rhetorical instruction without an explicit linguistic focus. Drawing engagement theory and using corpus analysis software, the author analyzed students' use of interpersonal linguistic resources, particularly those that manage dialogic space, and applied non-parametric analysis to examine whether differences between the corpora were statistically significant. As Slagle reports, students who received linguistically informed instruction were more likely to construct a novice academic persona by using language in academically valued ways. Specifically, these students used contrastive connectives to execute concede-counter moves. They also relied less on self-mentions and intensifying language, while favoring reporting verbs in an academic register and hedging strategies that conveyed greater rhetorical awareness of academic conventions. These findings suggest that explicit, linguistically informed instruction supports cultivation of openness, metacognition, and rhetorical awareness in student writing.

3.2 Innovations in Analytics

Articles in this genre focus on new forms of analytics related to research, teaching, and student learning. Enter The Forge—a browser-based, faculty-led open source project word processor and learning management system hosted by LibreTexts—designed to facilitate writing analytics research focused on student composing time and effort. In "Effort is All You Need: The Possibilities of Writing Analytics," Raymond Oenbring continues to demonstrate his belief that writing instructors must be actively engaged in the development of writing technologies if they are to have standing in the design and use of these technologies (Oenbring, 2022). In the present study, he demonstrates The Forge's various visualizations of student writing processes, as well as effort and revision scores. As Oenbring observes in his demonstration of the tool, The Forge allows instructors to develop profiles of student writing processes, understand the role that time-coded phenomena such as draft deadlines play in the composition process, explore the differing strategies and processes students use to compose different types of assignments, assessing the effects of various pedagogical

strategies and interventions, and understanding the ways students use generative AI writing tools. When applied across writing programs, the author proposes, such tools hold the potential to provide rich empirical information about students' writing processes.

3.3 Program Report

S. Morgan Gresham, Alaina Tackitt, Danielle Wetzel, Jessica Nastal, and Brian Gogan report on "The Inaugural Writing Analytics Special Interest Group at the 2025 Conference on College Composition and Communication Annual Convention." Held on April 11, 2025, the program listing advertised the first meeting of its kind:

> "This special interest group explores writing analytics—a discussion space for researchers, WPAs, and developers at the intersection of large language models, big-data research, software, and ethical implications. As writing programs increasingly rely on data-driven research, we offer mentoring and networking about data, writing analytics, programmatic approaches to data, and related issues of fairness and justice."

As the report authors report, the SIG for Writing Analytics was designed to forge connections among a multidisciplinary community of scholars interested in the pursuit of writing analytics, to connect the emerging suite of research methods that is writing analytics to ongoing conversations about research methods, and to encourage networking mentorship related to collecting and analyzing data, developing programmatic approaches, applying what we learn in the classroom, and engaging with a range of emerging topics in Writing Studies. Looking to the future, three of the authors will present at the 2026 CCCC convention on a panel entitled "Writing Analytics and the Writing Classroom: Referencing, Reflecting, and Reviewing."

3.4 Forthcoming Work

Presently in production, the following will also be part of Volume 8:

"Tracing Impact of Writing Center Tutoring on Graduate Dissertation Writing," by Kristin I. Terrill. This research article reports on a study conducted at a graduate writing center to examine how tutors engage with dissertation writers and identify indicators of uptake in doctoral dissertation writing. Terrill reports four case studies, each centered on three writing consultations. Findings show that doctoral students' revisions following writing center consultations substantively addressed issues discussed with the tutor—and resulted in improvements to writing quality. Specific practices employed by writing tutors are reported; notably, both scaffolding and instructive practices were linked to improvements in subsequent drafts. This study exemplifies the use of writing analytics for qualitative analysis of individual texts, resulting in evidence of the impact of tutoring as a writing intervention for graduate-level writers.

"Session Notes as Writing Analytics: Measuring Process- and Product-Focused Feedback across Writing Centers," by Emily Dux Speltz. This research study builds on prior work in our journal (Giaimo et al., 2018). The present study introduces a thematic codebook for classifying process- and product-focused feedback across session notes from more than sixty writing centers in North America and Europe. Using thematic analysis, twelve feedback themes emerged—five process-focused and seven product-focused. Product-oriented feedback appeared more frequently overall, although many sessions reflected an integration of process and product concerns. The findings illustrate how session notes function as scalable analytics artifacts for unobtrusively examining the inner workings of writing support. The study argues that this approach advances evidence of fairness, validity, and replicability in writing analytics by showing how routine instructional

documentation can serve as a scalable, ethical, and methodologically rigorous foundation for data-driven research and practice. The study concludes with implications for writing-center practice and future analytics work.

"Reminiscences: Reflections on the Life of Robert J. Mislevy," edited by Maria Elena Oliveri, Eric Tucker, Sheryl Gómez, David Slomp, and Norbert Elliot. This memorial project offers reflections following the sudden passing of our dear colleague Robert J. Mislevy (June 28, 1950-May 22, 2025), this collection gathers the evidence traces of a life defined by brilliance and kindness. The authors of each remembrance together made this volume possible, and we are grateful for each inspiring and heartfelt contribution. Beyond honoring Bob's memory, this collaboration documents progress of a wider and varied campaign to document his scholarship and launch new research programs that build upon his foundational ideas. From psychometric innovation to Bayesian reasoning, from Evidence-Centered Design to sociocognitive foundations of educational measurement, the work continues through the community he inspired. We offer these reminiscences as both a celebration of the past and a foundation for the future of educational measurement. We invite you to read these reflections as both a memorial and the first chapter in the research programs inspired by his intellectual journey.

4.0 Volume 9 (2026)—In Progress

Inspired by the theme of the 2025 conference, the editors commissioned the journal's first White Paper: "Generative Artificial Intelligence, Writing Placement, and Principled Decision-making in Post-Secondary Contexts," by Christie Toth, Jessica Nastal, Tiffany Buckingham Barney, Kris Messer, and Jason Godfrey. This white paper documents the thinking of one small constellation of colleagues coming together to articulate principles and practices they hope can help guide decision-making that occurs when colleagues at a range of institution types encounter—with varying degrees of volition and enthusiasm—the prospect of incorporating GAI into writing placement. Our positions reflect our individual and collective lived experiences, beliefs, and institutional positions, as well as the many thoughtful resources, suggestions, and critiques our peer reviewers volunteered. We offer the resulting white paper as a way to make sense of our current moment together and as a way to make meaning together going forward. Topics include: the sandscape of generative artificial intelligence, writing placement, and principled decision-making; principles to guide decision-making; GAI, writing analytics, and writing assessment; elements of a theory of writing placement and GA; and possible uses of GAI in writing placement. Written for communities of literacy program coordinators (i.e. writing program administrators and others with coordination roles in postsecondary literacy programs) who are considering incorporating Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) into U.S. writing placement processes, the White Paper will appear in early 2026.

5.0. Thanks to our Board of Reviewers

We conclude this introduction to Volume 8 with special thanks to our Board of Reviewers.

Because the journal uses a policy of desk rejection of manuscripts not fully developed or not directly related to the mission of the journal, reviewers know that the editors are committed to publishing the studies under review. As manuscripts are reviewed twice—and often three times by Board members—detailed advice is provided on how to strengthen work that is already well considered. Our board members are significant indeed, and we are thankful for their highly focused critical review.

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