

## INTRODUCTION

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# Adding New Stories to the History of Composition and Rhetoric

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History is always written from probabilistic, and therefore rhetorical, points of view. All it can do is tell us stories. . . .

—ROBERT J. CONNORS, “DREAMS AND PLAY:  
HISTORICAL METHOD AND METHODOLOGY”

**T**wo decades ago, Robert J. Connors encouraged scholars to enter the archives and find the stories of composition and rhetoric waiting to be told. Connors emphasized the importance of producing many different narratives because “all received wisdom is partial, incomplete. It must be examined again and again, not merely accepted. That, finally, is why there are, and why we need, multiple histories. There can never be any history so magisterial that it precludes the need for other histories” (“Dreams and Play” 34). Since Connors offered this observation, archival scholars have told stories about composition and rhetoric in elite colleges and universities (Adams; Connors 1997; Crowley; Ritter; Varnum). Feminist rhetoricians have charted the persuasive pursuits of women and African Americans (Bordelon; Buchanan; Hollis; Logan; Ritter; Royster). Researchers have investigated what textbooks can teach us about early composition practices (Carr, Carr, and Schultz; Miller; Varnum), compiled local histories of composition and rhetoric (Donahue and Moon; Enoch; Gold), and uncovered early examples of writing program administration (L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo). This scholarship has productively complicated our understanding of the development of the discipline, registered the participation of diverse women and men, and revealed the need for more work that challenges received wisdom.

The contributors to *In the Archives of Composition* aim to fill a gap in the current

scholarship by exploring composition and rhetoric in the educational institutions that employed the majority of teachers and trained the majority of students from 1839 to 1969 in the United States. The chapters of this anthology depict the experiences of ordinary writing students in overlooked institutions; magnify the work of important, yet little-known pedagogues; and draw connections between secondary and postsecondary contexts. As Lucille M. Schultz suggests, “composition instruction as we know it had its beginnings” in the public schools, where most Americans studied (6). Schultz admonishes histories of the field that marginalize “school-based writing instruction” (7), suggesting—alongside Kelly Ritter, Jessica Enoch, David Gold, and others—that we begin to investigate “the still-unexplored” archives of composition (8). The eleven chapters in this volume respond to Schultz’s challenge. Ranging from a study of the rhetorical activities of turn-of-the-century high school students to an analysis of a female professor’s progressive instruction at an early-twentieth-century teacher-training institution to an assessment of Project English in the 1960s, the essays in *In The Archives of Composition* offer new local perspectives on pedagogy and practice.

In compiling this collection, we are mindful of David Gold’s suggestion in *Rhetoric at the Margins* that all history is local (ix) and of Gretchen Flesher Moon’s assertion that local histories “challenge the dominant narrative of composition history, located in primarily elite research institutions, disrupting its apparent simplicity as the myth of origin and proposing alongside it a complicated and discontinuous array of alternative histories” (12). The works in Patricia Donahue and Moon’s *Local Histories* provide varied historical viewpoints, helping us understand how early writing faculty “at different times, in different places, have developed pedagogies, built curricula and programs, and contributed to the emergence of a discipline” (2–3). We continue this project by exposing new archives of composition and rhetoric, challenging disciplinary beliefs, revising research methods, and questioning assumptions that the field has evolved uniformly. In this way, the authors whose work is included here expand the institutional contexts where we may construct our disciplinary histories and uncover “how much composition in the present time is influenced by the students and teachers, and other stakeholders, of its past” (Ritter 3).

Early research in the field produced stories of composition and rhetoric at prestigious private institutions such as Harvard University and Yale University, where prominent male professors tutored upper-class white male students preparing for careers in business, law, medicine, politics, and the ministry. Thus, the teaching and practice of composition and rhetoric at these universities reflected

the agendas of their instructors and pupils. When the narratives of composition at elite universities are juxtaposed with other stories, however, they reveal how composition and rhetoric was valued and practiced differently within different educational contexts: historically black colleges and universities (Blackmon; Gold), women's colleges (Gold; Ritter; Mastrangelo), and normal schools (Fitzgerald; Gold; Gray; Lindblom and Dunn; Lindblom, Banks, and Quay; Rothermel 2007; Skinnell). These histories tell the story of institutions that relied on more diverse instructors and catered to a wider range of students than the Ivy League schools.

This volume expands the historical narrative by addressing composition and rhetoric in high schools and extends the current scholarship on normal schools. Our dual focus has historical precedent: high schools and normal schools developed in tandem during the nineteenth century, and some urban high schools had their own normal departments. In 1900, for example, 46.3 percent of female high school seniors in St. Louis were enrolled in the normal course of study (Tyack and Hansot 187). High schools and normal schools also shared important similarities. Significantly, historical commentators and contemporary historians refer to both of these educational institutions as “the people’s college,” a phrase that suggests both their egalitarian nature and the diversity of their students (Herbst 5; Ueda 100). Normal schools served students who wanted to enter one of the few professions open to women and African Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. High schools prepared students who aspired to higher education as well as those who would enter the workforce or marry after graduation. Although some normal schools and high schools were racially segregated, they convened young people of different genders, classes, ethnicities, and religions who created more heterogeneous student bodies than would be found in four-year colleges and universities. With their diverse enrollments and varied approaches to composition curricula, normal schools and high schools provide a compelling historical contrast to the writing instruction at more elite research universities.

A great number of Americans learned to write and argue in high schools and normal schools during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. About 10 percent of United States citizens aged fourteen to seventeen years old were enrolled in secondary schools in 1900; by 1910, it had reached 20 percent; and by 1920, it was about 30 percent. In 1900, 2.3 percent of those aged eighteen to twenty-four attended normal schools, four-year colleges, and universities, increasing to 2.8 percent in 1910 and 4.7 percent in 1920 (Snyder 27, 76). Using available

figures, we estimate that one in three college students were enrolled in normal schools in 1900, while 26 percent attended normal schools in 1910 (Ogren 58).

Despite the fact that secondary schools trained the majority of students to write, high schools have received scant scholarly attention. Schultz notes that “the history of writing instruction in the schools is an important and undervalued site in the overall history of writing instruction” (4). She contends that secondary schools serve as “the site where what we think of as personal or experience-based writing began; it is a site where the democratization of writing was institutionalized; it is a site where some of our contemporary composition practices were pre-figured” (4). Given these possibilities, investigation of composition and rhetoric in high schools is warranted.

While the first two sections of this collection address high school and normal school writing instruction respectively, the last three chapters in this volume demonstrate what we may learn by studying educational movements that bridge the gap between secondary and postsecondary settings. As twenty-first-century compositionists consider the high school–college connection, scholars would do well to look to the past for perspective on the present. Recent anthologies amplify the voices of composition students and teachers in secondary schools and colleges, encouraging dialogue and collaboration (Sullivan and Tinberg; Thompson), yet these contemporary conversations seldom historicize issues that have been debated for more than a century. We ask the same questions today that students and educators asked in the late nineteenth century: What is college English? Why are many first-year students underprepared for college-level composition and rhetoric? How can we make instruction relevant to the present and future needs of students? Becoming aware of how high school and normal school educators of the past have responded to these questions may offer insights into how we might answer them today.

The essays in this collection span 130 years of United States history, a period of remarkable cultural, social, and political change. When women began to study writing and rhetoric at Lexington Academy in 1839, the subject of Melissa Ianetta’s chapter, the country had a relatively homogeneous population of 22.5 million people and was an internationally isolated agrarian society (Jones et al. 2006, 322). By 1969, the time of Jane Greer’s chapter on a high school girl’s diary, the United States counted 203 million diverse citizens congregated in the urban areas of a globally prominent industrialized nation (US Census). Between 1839 and the 1969, the United States fought the Civil War, abolished slavery, granted African Americans and women the right to vote, embraced capitalism, conducted imperialistic military actions across the world, admitted and excluded millions

of immigrants, and engaged in two world wars and the Cold War. Women, homosexuals, African Americans, Native Americans, and farm and factory workers campaigned for equal rights and equal opportunities. People who traveled by foot, horse, and wagon in 1839 drove cars, rode in trains, and flew in planes by 1969. The size of families went down and the divorce rate went up. People who communicated by letter in 1839 made long-distance telephone calls in 1969; the periodical press boomed; and radio and television influenced our assumptions and consumption. As this sweeping summary suggests, life changed dramatically—and not always for the better—for people in the United States from 1839 to 1969.

To frame the scholarship in *In the Archives of Composition*, we next briefly review the history of high schools and normal schools in the United States and the trajectory of composition and rhetoric in these institutions. We then provide overviews of the chapters in this collection, and we conclude by offering observations from our contributors about their archival research motivations and strategies.

## The Rise of Public Education in the United States

### *High Schools*

While the first “free” public high schools opened in the Northeast during the 1820s, secondary schools “came into their own” after 1876, according to education historian Lawrence A. Cremin. By the late 1880s, enrollments in public high schools began to exceed those of private secondary schools (Cremin 546). Moreover, as historian Jane H. Hunter suggests, the development of public high schools was spurred by “the same Jacksonian, democratic principles which promoted elementary, common schools” (174). This democratic sentiment is evident in the literature of the time as well: an 1853 editorial for *The Teacher and Western Educational Magazine* observes that the public schools were “at war with the aristocratic principle. . . . The rich and poor stand upon the same platform, they sit in the same seat” (J. D. L. 161–62).

As the century progressed, several historical trends encouraged the expansion of the public high school across the country: the commercial and industrial revolutions, urban growth, and immigration. Historian William J. Reese contends that all of these factors “rendered familiar strategies for personal mobility and family security obsolete. In response, political activists and school reformers redefined the educational experiences of a minority of young men and women” (*The Origins of the American High School* xiii–xiv). Politicians argued that public

schools could help solve the social problems of the growing nation, Reese notes, and reformers “hoped to instill the values of ambition, hard work, delayed gratification, and earnestness in youth,” training them “to become sober, law-abiding, and respectable adults” (57).

Many of the early proponents of public secondary education favored single-sex schools, and some cities supported separate institutions for girls and boys. By the late nineteenth century, however, sentiment had shifted as educators and taxpayers realized that separate schools were financially untenable. Furthermore, advocates of women’s education supported mixed schools for the greater equal opportunities that they provided girls. In 1900, only twelve cities out of 628 reported that they had single-sex high schools (Tyack and Hansot 114–16). Differences in record-keeping and definitions of high school programs make it difficult to determine the exact number of secondary schools in the United States during the nineteenth century. For example, one researcher estimated that there were 2,000 high schools nationwide in 1880, while another asserted that there were 800 that year if only schools that offered a two- to four-year curriculum were counted (Reese 209).

The spread of secondary education also generated disagreement about the kind of instruction that these institutions should offer. Initially, many high schools emphasized academic subjects. In 1900, for example, 56 percent of girls and 47 percent of boys studied Latin in high schools nationwide; 56 percent of girls and 57 percent of boys studied algebra; 43 percent of girls and 41 percent of boys studied literature; and 39 percent of girls and 38 percent of boys studied rhetoric (Tyack and Hansot 137). Yet historians David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot note that early in the twentieth century, urban high schools acknowledged that most students were not college bound and also offered business training. Students could supplement their academic coursework with classes in bookkeeping, penmanship, and commercial arithmetic and geography to enhance their preparation for work rather than higher education (212). By 1890, more than a quarter of students enrolled in all public and private secondary schools attended private commercial schools, a statistic that gave added impetus to business instruction in public high schools (212).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, there was a call for vocational training and different programs of study from both parents and Progressive Era reformers who believed that schools should accommodate the abilities, interests, and future prospects of diverse students. These advocates of differentiated education devised intelligence tests and methods for determining vocational aptitude—strategies that often reflected the ethnocentrism of their proponents

and tended to reproduce the social class of students. In other words, upper-class students were advised to enroll in academic programs and working-class students were steered toward vocational education (Tyack and Hansot 168–69). The consequences for writing instruction have not been fully charted, but it is safe to say that academic programs emphasized literature, literary analysis, and creative writing while business and trade programs focused on teaching students to produce the kinds of texts required in the workplace, such as reports, letters, and statistical summaries. Katherine H. Adams suggests that “by 1910, high schools had begun to respond to the expanse of trade and manufacturing by instituting commercial programs combining instruction in typewriting and stenography with business math and accounting, advertising and salesmanship, and business English” (127).

One of the most heated discussions of academic versus vocational training was waged in the African American community. Historian James D. Anderson maintains that African American educators began to criticize the emphasis on industrial education for students of color in the 1870s, arguing that it mainly served white interests to limit the studies and pursuits of African Americans (33). This debate intensified in the early twentieth century when African American educator and activist W. E. B. Du Bois challenged Booker T. Washington, the noted proponent of industrial education for African Americans and founder of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. Du Bois contended that African Americans should be encouraged to aspire to become professionals while Washington maintained that most young African Americans should concentrate on acquiring practical skills that could lead to profitable work (Washington, Du Bois, et al.).

The advent and expansion of public high schools during the nineteenth century influenced composition and rhetoric studies in myriad ways. With the rise of the public high school following the Civil War, many more students were able to pursue secondary education. In turn, teachers of composition and rhetoric revised pedagogies and theories that had been geared to the elite adolescents who attended antebellum academies and seminaries. High school composition teachers worked to provide their students with both vocational and academic preparation, and in doing so these teachers championed a diverse range of curricular and extracurricular approaches to teaching academic analysis, business writing, creative writing, and journalism. High school curricula provided students with mastery over new communication technologies including typewriters, dictation machines, copy presses, mimeographs, telephones, and radio. Our research indicates that high school teachers also encouraged their students to take advantage of the

new discursive opportunities offered by school publications. In both curricular and extracurricular spaces, high school students gained an advanced rhetorical education designed to prepare them for communication in academic, civic, and workplace settings.

While composition pedagogies expanded to meet the changing needs of students during this time, theorists and publishers began in the late nineteenth century to issue composition-rhetoric textbooks that attempted to standardize high school composition instruction. Many of these composition textbooks advanced a conservative, rule-based, and formulaic writing curriculum. Nevertheless, this conservative curriculum may have been balanced by the more progressive and experimental curricular approaches that were regularly promoted by regional English education associations and journals of the time. These journals introduced teachers to the projects method and to cooperative approaches to composition instruction, and they provided a forum for classroom research studies that examined new methods and materials for teaching composition (Ostergaard 132). Moreover, while current-traditional methods shaped much textbook composition curricula during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many high schools also introduced student publications that trained pupils to write for public audiences, as Henrietta demonstrates in her chapter about Central High School. These new discursive venues encouraged students to write about their school communities as well as the world beyond their campuses, propelling the teaching of journalism in high schools and the organization of national student journalism organizations.

The evolution of the public high school during the first half of the twentieth century was marked by increasing enrollments and continuing disagreement about curriculum. As already noted, in 1920, about 30 percent of young people attended high school, rising to 70 percent in 1940 and 90 percent in 1970 (Snyder 27). This surge was propelled by the increasing number of secondary schools that offered more students access to advanced education and shifting labor markets that offered fewer jobs for adolescents (Reese 214; Rury 162). Once an educational option available only to elite youth in the nineteenth century, high school became common in the twentieth century. The remarkable expansion of the high school student body caused further consternation about what and how these students should be taught. While critics lamented what they perceived to be falling academic standards, social-efficiency specialists and child-centered reformers criticized schools and parents who insisted that all students should take traditional courses. Among the most adamant proponents of academic education were African American parents in the South, who may have been troubled by

white educators' advocacy of vocational education for African American children (Reese 201–11).

Rising resistance to separate and unequal education for African American students and Cold War anxiety about the allegedly inferior educational system of the United States are other milestones of twentieth-century high school history. During the 1930s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People began to challenge racial segregation in education through judicial venues (Loupe 21). In 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled that formal segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, Southern political leaders vowed to fight the ruling and some communities took drastic action, as Candace Epps-Robertson discusses in her chapter about the closing of public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia. The Cold War and the launching of the first satellite by the Soviet Union in 1957 created new demands for curricular reform to ensure that the United States remained competitive. One such reform, Project English, which Curtis Mason discusses in his chapter, emphasized the importance of scaffolding reading and writing instruction in the schools.

This brief history of the public high school suggests the significant changes in this educational institution from its idealistic inception in the 1820s to its complex conception in the 1960s. Often regarded as a solution to the cultural, economic, and social problems of the United States, high schools were affected by different and sometimes dueling agendas for decades. Parents, educators, and politicians debated curriculum, with some people arguing that students should be prepared for vocations rather than higher education. By the late nineteenth century, demographics propelled the development of testing and tracking students into designated courses of study that tended to serve racial and socio-economic class ideologies rather than the needs and aspirations of young people and their communities. The remarkable rise of high school enrollment from 1920 to 1970, the campaign to ensure equal education for all students, and Cold War anxiety that led to curricular reform are important historical trends of the twentieth century.

All of these trends affected the teaching and practice of composition and rhetoric in public high schools. The surge of students and introduction of differentiated curriculum inspired teachers to revise their messages and their methods, incorporating instruction in new technologies and taking advantage of new forums, such as school-sponsored publications. Despite the move to standardize composition instruction and emphasize style over substance, there is evidence that teachers and students still taught and learned rhetorical strategies. This evidence challenges conventional wisdom that current-traditional

approaches unequivocally dominated the high school writing classroom in the twentieth century.

### *Normal Schools*

A decade after the first high schools opened, the first teacher-training or “normal” schools in the United States were founded in the late 1830s to meet the educational needs of a growing nation. Christine A. Ogren suggests that prior to 1830, teacher education in the United States was primarily an “unintended” outcome of higher education; students educated at colleges and universities might eventually find work as teachers in the schools, but their postsecondary institutions never trained them to teach (16). Ogren quotes one historian who suggested that during this time, teacher training was “incidental, unorganized, and unrecognized by the State and even unnoticed for a time by the academy officials themselves” (16). While teacher-training institutions did not exist in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the nation’s first public schools, called “common schools,” were established during this time in an attempt to unify the country (Herbst 18) by inculcating a shared language, as well as shared faith, values, and “standards of behavior” (19). Normal school historian Jurgen Herbst suggests that early educational reformers feared that in the absence of a common school system, the United States would be unable to achieve “a common country and a united people,” and they placed their hope for the “stability and permanence of the nation” in the creation of a public school system (21). With the establishment of common schools and a nationwide push for compulsory education in the elementary grades came the eventual demand for a workforce of trained, professional teachers. As school reformers began to acknowledge the need for institutions that would be intentionally and explicitly designed to train this professional workforce, new courses of study, separate university departments, and eventually new schools and colleges emerged (Ogren 16). These new schools were modeled on the German teacher seminary and the French *école normale* (1) or normal school, and their creation and continued funding were eventually supported by the states.

The first state normal school in the country opened in 1839 in Lexington, Massachusetts (Ogren 1). The normal school movement spread quickly from there, with thirty-nine additional schools established by 1870 (1), and by the turn of the century, there were more than 100 institutions dedicated to teacher education (Larabee 293). The development of new normal institutions and the increased demand for trained teachers combined to open new educational opportunities for poor and working-class students, women, and racial minorities.

Students who could not afford to pay tuition were often permitted to attend their state's normal school for free under the condition that they would teach in that state's schools for a period of time after graduation. Thus, normal schools came to represent a more diverse cross-section of the U.S. population during this time than the majority of regional and state public colleges. One student at the Illinois State Normal University claimed that her normal university "was a school of the people existing for and representing the masses and not the classes" (Ogren 55). Herbst further suggests that "[t]he students, parents, and legislators saw the normal schools and later the teachers colleges as true community colleges or people's colleges. These institutions carried the torch of democracy into the hinterland. The normal schools and teachers colleges, far more so than the centrally located state universities, took higher education to where the people lived and worked" (Herbst 6). Normal school administrators also recognized the need to create admission policies that reflected the credentials of their mostly regional applicants. From the 1870s to the early twentieth century, normal schools nationwide did not require prospective students to have high school diplomas until secondary school education was available to most residents of the state (Ogren 77). In 1894, for example, secondary education was sufficiently widespread in Massachusetts for that state to begin requiring high school graduation or the equivalent for admission to its normal schools. The scarcity of public secondary schools in the South, on the other hand, led states such as Kentucky to allow students who had not finished high school to enroll in normal schools until the mid-1900s (77).

In addition to welcoming students from different economic and educational backgrounds, many normal schools were established as coeducational institutions. Female students and faculty at the normal schools may have been afforded greater opportunity than their contemporaries at the newly coeducational land grant and elite universities. By the turn of the century, female faculty were in the majority (58 percent) at state normal schools, but represented only a minority (17 percent) of the faculty at state colleges and universities (Ogren 90). Female students were also in the majority at the normal schools where they often took the same classes as men, competed with male classmates for high-ranking positions in debate societies, edited school publications, read graduation addresses, and participated in organized sports (5).

The first segregated African American normal schools were established in 1880, but some state normal schools began enrolling African American students as early as the 1870s. Desegregation at a state normal school was first accomplished by Illinois State Normal University President Richard Edwards in 1871. That year, Edwards wrote to his Board of Education to inform them of the applications of

several African American students to the university. Historian Helen Marshall writes that Edwards was in favor of admitting these students; thus, he sought support from the board (132). The matter was referred to the Committee on Officers and Teachers, which responded that same day, arguing that “in our opinion, neither the Board nor the Faculty of the University has any right to recognize distinctions of race or color in determining who shall or who shall not be admitted to the several departments of the University, the equal rights of all the youth of the state to participate in the benefits of our system of public education, of which the Normal University is a part, being, as we think, fully established and guaranteed by the organic laws of the state” (*Proceedings* 10; Marshall 132). The report was adopted by the board without further discussion, and while Marshall notes that the board’s decision was “quite in accord with Edwards’ own principles,” she hastens to add that some students protested the admission of African American students and left the Illinois State Normal University as a result (132–33). Nevertheless, this decision illustrates the spirit of democratic inclusion that permeated the normal school movement of the time. According to Ogren, other normal schools throughout the country began accepting African American students shortly thereafter; although, as Elaine Hays’s chapter illustrates, segregated normal schools were still common during this time, particularly in the South.

Kathryn Fitzgerald suggests that the normal school’s inclusive approach represents a significant difference “from the more elite schools where composition has typically been studied” (229), and Ogren argues that the normal schools “hardly differentiated among who could pursue various academic subjects, which helped to establish a foundation for lively intellectual life at these institutions. The faculty and curricular requirements not only suggested that all types of students were capable academically, but also ensured that all students shared an understanding of core subject matter. Normalites thus learned a common academic language, which would allow them to engage together in intellectual exploration” (Ogren 90). While it is difficult to determine the extent to which African American students were integrated into the extracurricular and social life of normal schools, Ogren’s analysis seems to suggest that all students shared an equal academic footing at these institutions, and that academics may have served as a common experience for normal school students despite differences of race, gender, and class among them.

Much of the normal schools’ democratic and egalitarian mission changed in the early decades of the twentieth century as some institutions began to offer bachelor’s degrees, to award diplomas rather than certificates, and to “consciously emulate collegiate institutions” (Ogren 90, 202). Ogren observes that while the

curricula at these schools became more advanced, diverse, and specialized, other normal schools around the country dropped their academic curricula altogether to focus more squarely on teacher training, industrial arts, and home economics—a move that limited the normalites' upward mobility and that often “mandated the separation of male and female students” within the curriculum (204). By the 1930s, most normal schools had made the transition to teachers colleges or to regional state colleges and universities. The few remaining normal schools competed for students and tried to preserve their teacher-training missions, which were challenged by newly established schools of education at the more powerful state universities. Lewiston State Normal College in Lewiston, Idaho was the last normal school to transition to a college, changing its name to Lewis-Clark State College in 1971.

For more than a century, normal institutions trained the nation's teachers using a course of study that provided students with a more professional focus on classroom practices and with the academic, liberal arts curriculum that these aspiring pedagogues needed to teach a range of subjects in the public schools. The composition curricula at these schools provides an informative co-narrative to the history of writing instruction at elite universities and a compelling glimpse into the theories and practices that helped to shape a century of high school writing instruction in this country. Indeed, normal school historians such as Kenneth Lindblom and Patricia Dunn, Kathryn Fitzgerald, David Gold, Patrice K. Gray, and Beth Ann Rothermel have discovered archival evidence of innovative pedagogical composition practices at normal schools that are strikingly consistent with current best practices in our field. In the early teachers colleges, Lindblom and Dunn discover faculty “who began with the assumption that pedagogy was a legitimate scholarly practice” (63). They note that in such a context, rather than being marginalized by literary study, composition instruction would have been “celebrated as central to the intellectual mission of the [normal] university” (63). Fitzgerald's examination of the Midwestern normal schools demonstrates how pedagogical and psychological theories informed the faculty's approach to composition, rendering textbooks marginal, at best, to the work of the normal school writing classroom (244). Similarly, in a chapter that illustrates how “elitist motivations” negatively impacted the curriculum and values of the Fitchburg Normal School in Massachusetts (Moon 4), Gray still finds some pedagogical common ground between the Northeastern and Midwestern normal schools. She comments that faculty at Fitchburg were also skeptical about the pedagogical value of textbooks and, instead, encouraged their students to learn “by doing” (Gray 172).

As they rejected the formulaic approaches to writing instruction endorsed in

many of the popular textbooks from the time, a number of normal school pedagogues in turn embraced rhetorical instruction in their composition classes. For example, in her earlier work Rothermel argues that between 1839 and 1929 faculty at the Westfield State Normal School in Massachusetts resisted “disciplinary attempts to redefine rhetorical education in mechanistic terms” and instead offered their students “a richer understanding of rhetorical theory and practice than more elite institutions” (154). Likewise, Gold suggests that from 1889 to 1917, the East Texas Normal College provided students with “a rich rhetorical environment in which reading, writing, and speaking were well integrated; [and] participation in public discourse was encouraged” (116–17). Each emerging history of composition in the normal schools complicates what we know of early theories and practices in the field and challenges us to discover more about the early pedagogues who devoted their careers to educating subsequent generations of teachers of writing.

## Chapter Overviews

This collection is organized by institution type and chronology, beginning with a section on the high schools that preceded and, in many ways, led to the development of normal schools. Next is a section on normal schools, followed by three studies that link secondary and postsecondary composition studies.

### *Part I: High Schools*

The four chapters comprising Part I of this collection draw attention to the important and overlooked role of secondary schools in the history of composition. While they have been marginalized in our histories of the field, case studies of high school composition practices, curricula, and extracurricular activities may provide insights into some of the most historically influential sites of writing and rhetorical education in the United States.

In the first study in this section, Henrietta documents extracurricular writing at a Midwestern high school for white students. Her chapter challenges assumptions about the wane of rhetorical instruction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Henrietta examines the editorials and essays of students at Central High School in Kansas City as early examples of what Robert J. Connors calls “composition-rhetoric,” rather than current-traditional rhetoric (*Composition-Rhetoric*). She demonstrates that young people were schooled in adaptations of classical rhetoric and used their training to influence their peers on a range of issues through texts that they contributed to school-sponsored periodicals.

The next two chapters in Part I investigate how a Native American board-

ing school and a segregated African American high school prepared their students to become rhetorically and critically engaged with—rather than passive consumers of—dominant, white ideologies and narratives. First, Whitney Myers reconstructs the writing curriculum at the Albuquerque Indian School (AIS), the third-oldest off-reservation boarding school in the United States. Myers observes that “reading, writing, and speaking English well” remained at the center of this school’s curriculum, but English-language instruction was never simply about “assimilation” for teachers or students at the school. Instead, Myers reveals that this boarding school’s curriculum provided students with a “vital second language,” one meant to prepare them to be effective rhetors “in both worlds” (Rosenberg).

Then, Candace Epps-Robertson examines the Prince Edward County Free School in Prince Edward County, Virginia, a school created by the African American community in response to the county’s refusal to fund integrated schools in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*. The Free School informs our histories of the field by revealing how an institution born of the Civil Rights Movement instructed students in a “literacy for social justice.” Epps-Robertson considers the school’s unique mission, pedagogy, and curriculum in a case study that both complicates our conversations about “activist education” (Kates) and “emancipatory composition” (Stull) and enriches our understanding of the intersections of race and literacy.

In the final chapter of this section, Jane Greer analyzes the diary of a Midwestern high school student. Patricia Lee Huyett began her diary in 1966, the year that American and British educators met at Dartmouth College to address the question: “What is English?” Huyett’s journal exposes the curricular and extracurricular writing instruction of one high school student during this time, revealing English instruction that Greer argues was a complicated mix of the “transmission” and “growth” models debated at Dartmouth. Greer suggests that contemporary educators should pay closer attention to the rich diversity of students’ experiences as compositionists attempt to evaluate and reform English curricula.

Modeling new methodologies for analyzing historical trends and events, these secondary school chapters privilege the perspectives of students whose voices are seldom heard in our histories of composition-rhetoric. These stories contribute to our understanding of composition instruction by recognizing adolescents as active practitioners of composition-rhetoric and high schools as innovative sites of praxis.

*Part II: Normal Schools*

Part II of the collection presents four historical case studies that recover the composition practices of normal school faculty and students. In the first chapter of this section, Melissa Ianetta examines the competing scholarly journals of Cyrus Peirce, a rhetoric professor at the first state normal school in the United States, and Mary Swift, Peirce's student. Ianetta's research illustrates the complex and conflicting gender expectations as women students were expected to simultaneously embody a "feminine elocutionary style" and engage in more agonistic classroom debates. In her chapter, Lori examines the efforts of an Illinois State Normal University professor to expand her college's composition curriculum during the early twentieth century and to raise the status of composition on her campus by separating it from literature. This case history of Professor June Rose Colby's composition program illustrates how a failed national push for disciplinary separation may have succeeded in raising the intellectual status of composition on the local level.

In the next chapter, Beth Ann Rothermel analyzes how curricular and extra-curricular writing at the Westfield State Normal School helped students "develop and express their understandings of professional identity" in the 1920s and 1930s. In particular, Rothermel examines student work to determine to what extent the writing curriculum aided transformative reflective practices that worked against the conception of educators "as autonomous, isolated and authoritative expert[s]," and promoted definitions of "teacher expertise as a space for learning, social critique, and collaboration." And in the fourth chapter in this section, Elaine Hays builds on Jacqueline Jones Royster's work on the literacy practices of nineteenth-century African American women by examining those practices at a twentieth-century normal school. Analyzing the rhetorical instruction and practice offered to students at the Elizabeth City Colored State Normal College, Hays illustrates how the student newspaper helped future teachers employ "rhetoric . . . to develop an ethos that redefined what it means to be a 'normalite.'" In their newspaper work, these students adapted a pedagogical and practical rhetoric for "sociopolitical intent," seeking to "change the future of race through education."

These chapters offer new insights on the historical experiences of students, professors, and teachers-in-training in composition-rhetoric programs at normal schools. Registering the activism and resistance of pupils and pedagogues, these studies also interrogate how gender and race inflects the theories and practices of our discipline.

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*Part III: Building Secondary-Postsecondary Connections*

While it is instructive for our field to consider both high school and normal school composition and rhetorical instruction in their respective contexts, Part III presents three chapters demonstrating that we have much to learn from archival histories that blur institutional boundaries. First, in a chapter examining a popular high school textbook written by Sara Lockwood in 1888, Nancy Myers demonstrates how this text may have extended professional possibilities for female students by constructing women as teaching professionals and as writers. In its appropriation and adaptation of a male-dominated college English curriculum from Yale and Harvard, and through Lockwood's subversion of current-traditional rhetoric, *Lessons in English* advanced "a nationalistic agenda that support[ed] women's literacy, their appreciation for American literature, and their work in the home, in the workplace, and in higher education."

Next, Edward J. Comstock's chapter analyzes the self-reports of 150 Harvard freshmen from the 1890s, who were asked to "[d]escribe the training [they] received, or the experience [they] may have had, in writing English before entering College." These student accounts were preserved in the 1897 "Report of the Committee on Composition and Rhetoric." Comstock's chapter demonstrates "the classroom experience and the idiosyncrasies of [secondary] writing instruction during this time," and suggests that shifts in local technologies and practices of subjectification may actually precede the social, ideological, and economic structures that scholars conventionally analyze in historiographical accounts of the field.

In the last chapter, Curtis Mason explores the Cold War curricular initiative Project English at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in the 1960s. As Mason notes, this national initiative had a "far reaching influence on education in Nebraska" through curricular innovations that developed and promoted methods for high school writing instruction that privileged a rhetorical approach to teaching grammar (rather than mere correction), depended on peer response, and encouraged students to write to audiences beyond the classroom. Led by university researchers, Project English in Nebraska emphasized the role of classroom teachers in shaping a new high school English curriculum.

As these chapters suggest, teachers, students, and scholars of composition and rhetoric of the past have confronted some of the same challenges that we face today: how best to empower all students; how to teach students to write effectively while also teaching "to the test"; and how to bridge high school and college composition instruction for the good of all writing students.

## Doing History

In her Foreword, Kelly Ritter invites readers who “*don’t* ‘do’ history, who *don’t* know much about less-examined rhetorical and pedagogical practices” to join in the intellectual work of the authors in this collection. “Doing history” for the authors whose work is included here means more than simply documenting our disciplinary past. For scholars like Elaine Hays, “doing history” can help us to reflect on the work we do in the present, to “continue to question what [we] believe and value, to question [our] own path[s] to knowledge, and to be in a constant stage of revision.” Edward Comstock seeks “to make the familiar strange” with his historical research, to provide insights into the present day through an understanding of how power was once exercised in the seemingly “‘mundane’ documents” of the past. “Doing history” can lead us to interrogate our most basic assumptions about “whose accounts are authorized, what information matters, who has access, and what silences [still] resonate” in the present day (W. Myers). In short, the contributors to this collection believe that “doing history” can lead our field to more critically examine our present-day best practices, disciplinary values, and unacknowledged assumptions about teachers and students of writing.

As a part of their contribution to this collection, we asked our chapter authors to tell us about their experiences “doing history,” and we conclude this introduction with their observations about the importance of researching and writing new archival works to illuminate our field’s early history. Most of our contributors observed that their work seeks both to uncover unexplored sites of writing instruction and to reevaluate the sites where our history has already been written. As Nancy Myers suggests, we may “blame Harvard” for the failings of the past, “but not many of us Rhetoric-Composition folk have really spent that much time in the Harvard archives.” Revisiting established historical narratives can be instructive: Comstock’s own foray into the Harvard archives results in the inclusion of student voices in one of the foundational histories of the field. Our personal knowledge of the Harvard archive may be understandably incomplete, as Myers suggests, but few of us may even know how writing and rhetoric were taught by high school faculty or college professors laboring in our own departments twenty, fifty, or a hundred years ago. Local archives may help to fill in some of the gaps in our disciplinary history, but, as Beth Ann Rothenmel notes, “digging where [we] stand” and working in the “archives connected to the places [we] inhabit” may also provide us with important insights into our own institutions.

When asked to describe the research they do, our contributors suggest this work is inductive or exploratory. Rather than enter the archives to discover

support for our own suppositions, archival scholars begin with research questions that may need to be reframed, revised, or ignored in light of what we discover or what we fail to discover. Whitney Myers's chapter in this collection began with only "an interest in rhetoric histories and a large, empty plot of land in Albuquerque that [she] drove by on [her] way to campus every morning." Her interest in this project was spurred, ironically, by the silences she encountered as she tried to piece together the few historical fragments that remained from the school. When her initial research revealed "nothing but empty spaces, this silence told [her] that a group of people had been marginalized" and their story "needed to be told." The school and its archive had been destroyed, but Myers was able to piece together a history from interviews and from the private archives of students and teachers. In contrast to Whitney Myers, Curtis Mason relied in part on the expertly preserved archive at NCTE. When Mason shifted his focus, however, to examine how the national movement, Project English, was enacted on the local level, he found that he also needed to supplement his documentary research through an interview with someone who was closely associated with Project English at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, with files from the university's archives, and with articles published in *The Nebraska English Counselor* during the height of Project English.

Personal accounts, journals, interviews, and private collections can help to "humanize history" (Mason), but such materials may also put archival scholars into the dual roles of historical researcher and archivist, responsible for preserving unique oral and documentary artifacts for future generations. As Hays notes, "the nature of archive work begs us to follow unconventional leads," and for Candace Epps-Robertson, some of those leads were former students of the Prince Edward County Free School whose stories had never before been told beyond the family dinner table. This dual responsibility of historians to analyze history and to preserve its artifacts becomes even more apparent when, as Melissa Ianetta observes in her interview for this collection, working in the archives helps us to imagine the stories that may one day emerge from the archives we compile for our own writing programs. Ianetta echoes the feelings of many of us who like to imagine "the stories that someone someday might tell" using the archives we construct today.

Imagining the stories others might one day write of our programs may provide archival scholars with an appreciation for more nuanced, complex readings of history. Lisa Mastrangelo warns against constructing "both heroes and villains out of the relatively ordinary but nevertheless complex players we have found" in the archives ("Lone Wolf" 248). Like Mastrangelo, David Gold reminds us to

resist “the temptation to reinscribe easy binaries, taxonomies, and master narratives, even when countering them” (“Remapping” 17). Indeed, this desire to simplify history may affect both new and experienced scholars in the archives, but for many of us, researching the archives becomes a quest for colleagues and collaborators more so than for heroes or villains from the past. Like Jane Greer, many of our contributors find themselves “looking for conversational partners” when they enter the archives. The people who populate our institutional and local histories, like our own present-day departmental colleagues, do not fit neatly under the labels we might wish to assign to them: literary scholar or compositionist, innovator or follower, progressive or conservative, current-traditional or rhetorical. Instead, as Mason notes, the stories that we find and tell “are the result of complex interactions and competitions between stakeholders;” indeed, “the historical puzzle is always more complicated” than we expected (N. Myers). To counteract the inclination to construct histories that simplify the past, researchers like Epps-Robertson assert both the need for constant self-reflexivity and the “importance of historicizing and contextualizing the documents” we work with.

This complex historical work requires a kind of interdisciplinary expertise that Nancy Myers suggests may blend “socio-cultural history, institutional history, and literacy history.” What’s more, as Jessica Enoch suggests, an enlarged conception of our work also requires that we cease imagining that archival scholars are “detectives or hunters” (“Changing” 60) because we have a much greater responsibility to the archives and the communities we study than to “just take the materials and run” toward facile interpretations (61). If archival historians are more than just detectives ferreting out clues in the archives, then the institutions we study are also much more than just microcosms of our larger disciplinary history, reflections in miniature of that history as it played out on the local stage. Because local institutions do not merely duplicate national disciplinary movements or trends, because the teachers whose work is preserved in smaller institutional and public archives are not simply local versions of Gertrude Buck, A. S. Hill, or Fred Newton Scott, and because their students are not generic composites of every writing student, local stories can reveal powerful counter-narratives as well as co-narratives that may productively complicate our sense of our own disciplinary past.

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