

## A Case for Using Feminist Editorial Practices in Scholarly Journals: An Analysis of *Computers and Composition*

Patricia WEBB\*

### Abstract

*Neoliberalism influences are evident in the editorial practices of many high-ranking scholarly journals. Given the importance that journals have in tenured/tenured-track academics' careers, they are an important arena to analyse and in which to implement best practices. I argue that Shari Stenberg's (2015) concept of feminist repurposing can be used to make visible the impacts of neoliberal practices and also helps to disrupt them by enacting different alternatives in the university system, of which scholarly journals are a part. In order to illustrate what a feminist ethics of editing would look like, I analyse the feminist-inspired practices of Computers and Composition's editorial staff. Drawing on published interviews and survey I administered, I show how feminist repurposing editorial roles from gatekeeper to colleague and mentor have beneficial impacts on the scholarship produced.*

**Keywords:** *Neoliberalism, feminist repurposing, editing practices, scholarly journals, university system*

### Introduction

Neoliberalism is an increasingly powerful logic governing the university system and all that intersects with it, including scholarly publishing. Scholarly journals play a significant part in defining the boundaries of a discipline. Editorial practices of journals are, therefore, impactful because they determine who and what gets published. All too often, exclusionary, gatekeeping practices are used by high-ranking journals so that their reputations are based on whom they exclude rather than on the quality of the ideas presented (Starbuck 2005). Theories that challenge neoliberalist principles can help to raise necessary critiques of these problematic practices. Equally as important as critiquing the current status quo is imagining alternatives to those practices. Once we challenge the current system, we need to envision what we want to replace it with. Feminist theories are useful in both regards. They can help us both critique and create.

---

\* Arizona State University, Tempe AZ, USA. Patricia.Boyd@asu.edu

In this article, I draw on Shari Stenberg's (2005) theory of feminist repurposing in order to both critique and create. Feminist repurposing is "a practice that involves 1) attending to and challenging the habitual or status quo, 2) drawing on and departing from these existing conditions, and 3) moving to articulate and enact new purposes" (Stenberg 2015: 17). When they use this practice to frame their work with both authors and texts, journals' editorial staff [1] can challenge neoliberalist approaches to scholarly editing and encourage more diverse and inclusive research that reflects the best thinking of the communities in which scholars are situated.

Since its inception in 1983, *Computers and Composition* has evidenced the use of feminist principles in its publishing practices. Its three founders are heavily steeped in feminist theories and value enactment of them through actions such as collaborative editorial decisions, extensive mentoring of new authors, inclusion of diverse topics and methodologies, creation of a diverse editorial board who were supportive of innovative scholarship, encouragement of a diverse range of authors, and the use of non-traditional required citation format practices (a modified APA style). Drawing on published interviews with the editors of the journal along with surveys I distributed to both editorial board members and authors [2], I map out what feminist editing practices can – and *do* – look like in order to make an argument for embracing feminist editorial practices that position the editor as mentor and colleague rather than as neoliberalist gatekeeper.

### **Traditional publishing approaches in the Neoliberal university**

Publishing in high-ranking journals is a central feature of how success is measured for tenure-track and tenured professors in universities (Anderson 2017; Levin & Aliyeva 2015; Ozkazanc-Pan 2012). Despite the fact that professorial positions in higher education are typically based on the triumvirate of research, teaching, and service, many colleges and universities privilege research over the other two; as a result, publications play an increasingly significant role in tenure-track and tenured careers and can ultimately make or break a person's career (Levin & Aliyeva 2015). As Stephen McGinty (1999: 2) posits, "much of the intellectual commerce of higher education takes the form of published literature. Individual scholarly reputations are built around work that carries the results of study out into an audience of colleagues." Despite the critiques raised about the workings of journal ranking (Merilainen et al 2008; Ozbilgin 2009; Starbuck 2005), "increasingly, for tenure-track faculty to achieve tenure and promotion, they have to not only publish in journals but in certain prestigious journals that become gatekeepers to success in the academy" (Anderson 2017: 1009). A reliance on journal ranking systems that use external metrics to evaluate the

impact of journals has become increasingly problematic and results all too often in the marginalization of important scholars and work.

Like all aspects of higher education, the scholarly publishing industry has been affected by neoliberalist pressures. Dave Ghamandi (2018: 7) argues that in the neoliberal university “scholarly publishing has been part of a system that moves away from social justice, increases income and wealth inequality, consolidates economic and political power among the elite, cuts social services and programs, and creates disposable workers.” Henry Giroux (2002: 434) paints an equally grim picture of the impact of neoliberalism on scholarly publishing, positing that “as large amounts of corporate capital flow into the universities, those areas of study in the university that don’t translate into substantial profits get either marginalized, underfunded, or eliminated. Hence, we are witnessing both a downsizing in the humanities and the increasing refusal on the part of universities to fund research in services such as public health that are largely used by people who can’t pay for them.” While they have long been a part of professors’ workload in higher education, publications are becoming increasingly valorized in this neoliberalist environment that quantifies individual performances and commodifies knowledge construction (Anderson 2017; Levin & Aliyeva 2015). As scholarly publishing is increasingly consolidated by for-profit publishing conglomerates (Lariviere et al 2015), neoliberalist publishing trends are becoming ever more troubling, especially when we consider their impact on the range of perspectives and approaches privileged within that framework.

Of the various venues for scholarly publication, journals have a particularly significant role in this system. Scholarly journals play an integral part in constructing and maintaining – policing, even – the boundaries of disciplines. A study of high-ranking journals’ editorial practices illustrates that neoliberalist principles frequently guide these practices. While some journals publish the work of a diverse range of disciplines’ researchers, frequently the common editorial practice employed by editorial staff act, as Hugh Wilmot (2011: 429) argues, “like a suffocating ligature as we are pressured, incentivised and/or (self)-disciplined to squeeze our research activity and scholarly work into the constricted mould of the journals accorded the highest ranking.” These practices place significant restrictions on what and who gets published in the journals and position a journal’s worth as measured by whom it excludes (e.g., rejection rates) rather than by the quality and/or usefulness of the scholarship presented (Starbuck 2005). As Wellington and Nixon (2005: 650) argue, “increasingly the quality of a journal is rated on the quantity of its rejections as a proportion of its overall submissions. It is difficult not to conclude that rejection is part of the rules of the collective game in which we all play a part: exclusivity drives some abstracted notion of standards from which normative values are then derived.”

Neoliberalism in publishing translates not only into the privileging of particular perspectives and research methodologies that contribute to the continuation of neoliberalism – particularly positivist, technicized approaches (Anderson 2017: 1007) – but also to the marginalization of critical research that raises challenges to the status quo. One way that high-ranking journals’ editorial staff police disciplinary boundaries is by not publishing articles whose arguments run counter to the principles that support neoliberalist principles (Ozbilgin 2009; Ozkazanc-Pan 2012; Starbuck 2005; Wellington & Nixon 2005; Wilmott 2011). In this way, journals are directed by a logic of methodological closure in which editorial practices prioritize a limited set of methodologies (typically positivist in nature) and treat “non-positivist methodologies as suspicious, capricious, or subjective” (Ozbilgin 2009: 116). Further, these high-ranking journals tend to publish only well-known scholars, making it difficult for novice scholars and newcomers to the discipline to publish their work, unless they collaborate with someone who is well-known and/or publish conservative positions on widely accepted topics (Hart 2006: 53; Ozbilgin 2009: 114). Further complicating the situation is the fact that neoliberalist principles often lead editorial staff to obscure the norms under which they operate. Mustafa Ozbilgin (2009: 116) argues that while journals’ stated editorial policies may suggest that they publish a wide range of topics and methods, “in practice... insiders know very well what kind of themes and what particular methodological approaches would be appropriate for these journals, while outsiders (novices, junior, and international scholars) are sent on wild goose chases or guessing games” which can lead to significant delays in the publishing of important critical work. Through these neoliberalist strategies, hegemonic approaches to scholarship are secured.

### **Feminist critiques of Neoliberalism in scholarly publishing**

Feminists have raised strong critiques of neoliberalist principles in higher education and have worked to make visible the detrimental effects of relying on those problematic practices (Hart 2006; Jenkins 2014; Lund 2012; Newman 2013; van Anders 2004). These scholars have highlighted that a key problem with neoliberalist approaches is the ways in which they are hidden from view by being positioned as neutral “givens.” As Stenberg (2015: 9) argues, feminist theory is particularly useful in revealing the effects of neoliberalist practices “due to its long history of highlighting and challenging notions held to be natural and neutral, and instead pointing to how these constructs are ideologically, socially constructed, and – as contemporary scholars argue – enacted through specific practices.” Feminists have contended that an important first step toward countering neoliberalism’s effects in the university system is to make visible the practices that repeatedly support neoliberalism.

In order to bring about change within these spaces, Sara Ahmed (2017: 96) argues that “you have to work the system by working out the mechanisms whereby the system is not transformed. You have to work out where things get stuck.” She argues that feminists are “institutional plumbers” who “develop an expertise in how things get stuck, as well as where they get stuck” (Ahmed, 2017: 96). The journal publishing system is one of these sticking points where university practices are enmeshed in neoliberal principles and, consequently, one place where changes need to be enacted.

In order to challenge neoliberalism’s hold in the university system, Stenberg (2015: 2) argues for a feminist repurposing which is “a practice of locating and enacting imaginative possibilities for change and agency within – and often out of – prohibitive and even damaging cultural conditions.” As she argues, “illuminating normative neoliberal assumptions allows us to break familiar repetitions, working toward purposes and practices in keeping with feminist values” (10). Feminist repurposing helps us to see neoliberalism not as a neutral given but as one ideologically infused way of organizing the practices of the university. In addition to bringing to light the impacts of neoliberalist practices, “feminist repurposing also involves inquiring into and analyzing social context to consider where possibilities exist for working both within and against current structures, systems, and practices” (10). Once these neoliberalist practices are illuminated for what they are and do, feminist repurposing can disrupt the performative actions that are repeatedly producing the status quo; it can help us explore other possibilities for organizing the university systems we inhabit. The goal of feminist repurposing then is to “create something new out of existing conditions” (11). It provides a framework to think through ways to practice the university differently.

*Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* is an example of a journal in which the editorial staff uses their positioning to repurpose neoliberalist-based publishing practices. In the next sections, I analyze the editorial practices of the journal to see how the editorial staff have worked within the current system of scholarly publishing in ways that have allowed them to achieve a high ranking while at the same time challenging neoliberalist logic that plagues the system. Relying on material from the journal’s website, several published interviews with the editors, and surveys I conducted of the journal’s editorial board members and authors, I illustrate how *Computers and Composition* provides an example of a repurposed approach to scholarly publishing – one that is more inclusive and diverse.

### **Feminist vision of *Computers and Composition***

*Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* started in 1983 as a short newsletter. Its founders, Kate Kiefer and Cynthia Selfe,

wanted to create an idea-sharing space for a newly forming community of scholars and teachers interested in the ways that computer technologies were impacting the teaching of writing (Blair et al 2009: 160). Selfe (Beck 2013: 350) describes the initial goal of the newsletter: "Our whole goal was to create some sort of publication vehicle around the topic of computers and composition so that people could share information." At that time, computers were new to the writing classroom, and teachers were just learning to use them in ways that benefitted students. As that community of scholars and teachers rapidly grew, in part due to the journal's help (Moran 2003: 344), the newsletter was soon transformed into an official journal in 1985. Selfe (Beck 2013: 350) explains the importance of the shift from newsletter to journal: "Certainly in the early days when the journal was a newsletter, Kate Kiefer and I wanted to share information with each other, but later on, we wanted a place where computers and composition folk could get published. That wasn't happening at the time in the journals." Therefore, they transitioned into a journal that has since become a high-ranking one in English Studies that focuses on, according to the journal's website, "issues connected with writing and computer use, as well as information about integrating computers into writing programs on the basis of sound theoretical and pedagogical decisions and empirical evidence." In 1996, the enterprise again expanded with the creation of the companion online journal, *Computers and Composition Online*. Wishing to make scholarship more widely available, in 2007 the journal's editors created an open-access digital press that is, according to the editors, a version of "scholarly activism."

Despite the growth of the journal's venues for publishing sites and changes in the editorial staff (Gail Hawisher replaced Kiefer in 1988, Kris Blair replaced Hawisher in January 2011 and became the sole editor in August 2011 when Selfe retired), the guiding purpose for the journal has remained remarkably stable: a desire to build a community of scholars and teachers who are invested in sharing the best ways to incorporate technologies into the teaching writing. This spirit has infused not only the publishing venues but the field of computers and composition (sometimes called computers and writing) more broadly. Charles Moran (2003: 345) explains that "As a community, we reflect the values of our leaders (they'd hate to be called this, but they are and they have been) – three generous, energetic, and hopeful teacher-scholars: Kate Kiefer, Cynthia Selfe, and Gail Hawisher. These remarkable teacher-scholars have drawn to their work others who share the same generosity, energy, and optimism. This group, call it a *de facto* (and partially *de jure*) editorial board, has shaped the journal and the community, infusing both with temperament, enthusiasm, and vision."

Since the beginning of the journal and the development of the field itself, this vision has been a feminist one, as the editors are quick to emphasize when discussing the journal. Hawisher (Beck 2013: 355) explains that

even though this field is about technology, the pioneering efforts of so many, especially women, have made some of the major contributions to building this field. I would say that without women, we would have been a field that might have talked primarily about the tools rather than concentrating on what Kris [Blair] says so well. There is an ethic of care involved, and this ethic of care is central to all we do in computers and writing among both women and men.

This ethic of care is expressed through a focus on the humans behind the computers, as Selfe (Beck 2013: 350) states: “In and around technology or digital environments, if you aren’t paying attention to people, and how they interact and what’s happening, then you are missing a big boat.” She (Beck 2013: 352) argues that this emphasis on the human aspects of using technology comes from a feminist perspective. Blair illustrates that this focus on feminist principles shapes the editorial staff’s interactions with authors and texts in all of the publishing venues: “I would definitely consider *Computers and Composition Online* a feminist journal, simply because we have engaged in review processes/support processes for graduate students who work on the journal as well as new and established authors who submit to the journal in ways that are more supportive and nurturing rather than ‘Oh, you submitted; this isn’t working, we must reject it.’” Arguing that this same philosophy is also evident in the print *Computers and Composition*, Blair emphasizes that the editorial staff seek to ask “How can we make this a mentoring moment?” rather than simply rejecting a manuscript – or “the squash like a bug mode.” As such, Blair insists that the journal is “feminist because it’s non-hierarchical; it emphasizes collaboration; it emphasizes mentoring. And it’s not just because you have a woman as an editor – I think that that could be done by male editors as well. I think it’s a matter of what we see journal editing to be. Is it a dialogue? Is it a conversation? Or is it gatekeeping?”

I analyze *Computers and Composition*’s editorial practices in order to show that the editorial staff have largely responded to those questions through the continual performance of feminist practices. They have repurposed their positions within the journal publishing system so as to emphasize a community spirit that embraces diversity, inclusivity, and embodiment. Their editorial practices provide us with one example of how we can use feminist repurposing principles in order to “unstuck” (Ahmed 2017) journal publishing from limiting neoliberalist principles. The community spirit that was at the heart of the creation of *Computers and Composition* is still strongly evident in current editorial practices that continue to focus on community good rather than commodified market interests.

## Transparency and mentoring

One way the journal's feminist community spirit is enacted is in the transparency of the journal's editorial practices. Instead of being opaque about what they consider to be publishable or misrepresenting themselves as being open to a wider range of topics and methodologies than they are, *Computers and Composition's* editorial staff actively work to make their publishing practices clear to those wishing to publish in the journal. The collaboratively written "Style Manual" published on the journal's own website is evidence of the priority given to transparency by the editorial staff. Written and maintained throughout the years by the journal's associate editors, the thirty-three-paged "Style Manual" serves not only as a guide to publishing with *Computers and Composition* but also as an overview of academic journal publishing more broadly. In addition to providing nuts-and-bolts information for authors (for instance, the manual tells authors that submissions will not be sent out for peer review unless they are written in APA format), the "Style Manual" provides descriptions of how the larger publishing industry works. One way they do this is by introducing potential authors to the journal's editorial staff positions, describing in detail the responsibilities associated with each position. For instance, the manual describes the assistant editors' positions in the following way: "*Computers and Composition* provides practical experience to graduate students who express an interest in journal editing. Assistant editors take responsibility for the copy editing of three to four articles per year; copy editing entails formatting the article in the house style, correcting grammar and punctuation errors, "tightening up" the prose, and working with the author to produce a high-quality article." Providing explanations like this one helps to demystify the publishing process and works to open up the community to newcomers.

Further, in the "Style Manual," the editorial staff invite feedback from the community, encouraging them to let the editors know of any additional information that would be helpful to them as they prepare work for the journal:

We welcome any suggestions for changes and advice on how we can clarify or extend our commentary to assist you in accomplishing your editing tasks, regardless of whether you are a guest editor or working with us for the first time. Only if you tell us what you need to know, can we make these manuals living, useful documents. As *Computers and Composition* matures, we make changes in our conventions and procedures. Thus, the manuals are also maturing; please inform us of what you see as needed improvements.

This invitation reflects an openness that is central to feminist repurposing. As Stenberg (2015: 77) argues, "one must be willing – indeed, to view it as a responsibility – to listen with the purpose of movement between one's



established knowledge and positions.” By inviting community feedback into the journal’s practices, the editorial staff are taking on the responsibility of continuing to listen to and learn from the community for which the journal was created. Instead of a top-down hierarchical approach to editing authority, then, the journal’s editorial staff strives to work with the community, acting out of a sense of responsibility to the community rather than profit-driven motives.

### *Mentoring practices*

Another way the journal’s community spirit gets enacted is through the extensive mentoring of authors. When the editorial staff see a promising yet not thoroughly realized argument in a submission, they are willing to extensively work with the authors to help them develop their work into a publishable piece. Although also present in the interactions with those who submit to the print journal, this kind of mentoring work is particularly evident in the way the editorial staff helps authors create digital scholarship for the companion journal *Computers and Composition Online*. The editorial staff recognizes that the production of digital scholarship can be quite time-consuming and requires a skill set that not all authors have. Therefore, they frequently work with authors on the development of their texts: “Rather than automatically reject submissions that are not Web-ready, online editors of content sections... help bring authors to a better understanding of what goes into effective digital scholarship” (Blair et al 2009: 164). The editors see multiple benefits of their approach for the authors, the journal, and the discipline: “This mentoring model bolsters the integrity of peer review and at the same time encourages new voices in new media to contribute to the academic community. Equally important, it levels the generational playing field, given that graduate students and junior faculty members tend to be the most proficient in digital literacy specialties” (Blair et al 2009: 164). Instead of acting like a gatekeeper and establishing a reputation as a high-ranking journal through whom it excludes, the journal’s editors repurpose their roles into that of collegial mentors. Through moves such as these, the editorial staff break the “repetition of normative roles” (Stenberg 2015: 111).

### *Advocacy practices*

Further, the editors’ sense of responsibility to authors does not end at the point of final publication; instead, the editorial staff of *Computers and Composition* perceive it to be part of their responsibility to serve as advocates for the work that is published in the journal. They thus work to help review boards and tenure/promotion committee members understand the significance and impact of the important scholarship that is being done by those who publish in

the journal – in all its venues. As the editors explain, “we want all authors – writing alone or with others – to receive the recognition and attention they deserve, and we take it as our responsibility that their scholarship with us – whether alphabetic in its reliance on print presentation or multimodal in its reliance on new and mixed media – should count at critical junctures like tenure and promotion” (Blair et al 2009: 161).

Through all of these practices, which are based in feminist philosophies, *Computer and Composition's* editors repurpose the role of the editor from gatekeeper to a colleague who is, at times, also a mentor. As one of the authors in my survey said, “I do not see them [editorial staff] as gatekeepers but as colleagues trying to help.” The editor’s positive and supportive approach performs a community spirit instead of the commodified, individualist, and exclusionary perspectives valued by neoliberalism. Through transparency and mentoring, the editors repurpose editorial practices to foster diversity and inclusion. Instead of policing the boundaries to keep people and ideas out, newcomers are mentored and fresh approaches to writing technologies are encouraged and supported by the community.

### *Editorial board members' repurposed roles*

The editorial board members work to enact the editors’ vision for the journal. In their responses to a survey that I sent to the current editorial board members of *Computers and Composition*, they unanimously stressed the importance of working with authors to help them make their scholarship as strong as it could be. Acknowledging that her/his first role was to be of service to the editors, one board member claimed that “I envision my secondary role as supporting the authors, by hopefully providing meaningful, engaged, and productive responses to, comments on, and recommendations regarding their scholarship.” The emphasis on being supportive of authors was evident in this and many other survey responses that spoke more about helping authors than judging them. Another survey respondent also stresses agreement with the editors’ emphasis on diversity and inclusion: “I feel my role, as a board member and reviewer, is to foster those diverse perspectives and projects by offering authors/researchers concrete advice on revising their manuscripts for publication.” Rather than viewing her/his job as either accepting or rejecting the article, this reviewer felt her/his job was to serve as a mentor and help guide the author’s revisions.

These stances reflect not only a practice but also a feminist philosophy. Although the peer review procedure for the journal is still the traditional, double-blind system, the members of the community have found ways to repurpose the space of peer review in order to make the review process more collegial, inviting, and supportive. The board members position themselves as

mentors, not necessarily evaluators. This collegial performance interrupts the repetition of neoliberalist publishing practices which privileges exclusion through high rejection rates. In the neoliberalist framework, “the burden, then, lies on individuals to acclimate to the existing structures of the institution, since they will be accepted only to the extent, as Jones and Calafel put it, that they remain ‘docile, unthreatening, and invested in self-commodification’” (Stenberg 2015: 99). *Computers and Composition*’s editorial board members work to position themselves differently so as to understand the authors’ goals and to help them achieve those, rather than making them fit within a fixed norm. Based on their responses to my survey, the editorial staff value the diversity that the authors bring with them and work to help the authors best achieve their goals.

### *Author’s responses to repurposed editorial practices*

To determine how authors perceived the engagements with the editorial staff at *Computers and Composition*, I also surveyed the authors who had been published in *Computers and Composition* within the last five years (2015-2020) to determine their sense of how these editorial practices have influenced them. The authors who responded to my survey questions about their experiences publishing with the journal overwhelmingly expressed gratitude toward and respect for the quality of engagements they had with the editorial staff throughout the process. One respondent wrote: “My experience with the editorial process in *Computers and Composition* was far more pleasant than my experiences with other journals. Everything was done in a timely manner; feedback was always constructive and helpful, even if necessarily critical; and editorial support was always available.” In addition to emphasizing the positive tone set by the journal’s editorial staff, this author also emphasized another aspect of the process that was frequently commented on by my survey respondents – the ready availability of editorial support. When asked to compare their experience with *Computers and Composition*’s editorial staff to other journals’ editorial staff, the authors repeatedly emphasized that not only was the editorial staff positive, but they were supportive and available. One respondent wrote that “my *Computers and Composition* experiences have definitely been far more positive than almost every other journal experience, combined. I also do not think this has in any way lessened the quality of the work they publish [...] So, the C&C model is proof that you can be constructive (as opposed to destructive) with authors without hurting the quality of your publication.”

Other survey respondents emphasized the significant impact that editorial input had on her/his final product. A representative comment summarizes the position taken by several of the authors who responded to my

survey:

Reviewer feedback was critical for me in terms of helping me clarify the central argument and really hone in on actionable recommendations and conclusions, and I found this a positive “R&R” experience. The review process definitely helped sharpen the blunt edges of my manuscript. I found reviewer commentary to be developmental, specific & actionable, and largely positive in critique. And I’ll repeat that emphasized bit again—reviewer feedback was specific and actionable, and this facilitated my revision A LOT.

These authors’ experiences suggest that editorial staff can practice an ethic of care and, at the same time, achieve high-quality publications. In fact, the survey respondents emphasize how the ethic of care performed by the editorial staff actually increases the quality and potential impact of the scholarship featured in the journal. So, the repurposed editorial practices seem to have the impact of creating better engagements between editorial staff and authors and, as a result, also leading to stronger scholarship. Thus, quality is not sacrificed when editorial roles are repurposed to be performed differently than neoliberalist approaches to editing.

### **Repurposed editorial decision-making**

Another practice that *Computers and Composition’s* editorial staff have repurposed relates to how decisions are made about what and who gets published as well as how that research is presented. By including diverse topics and voices, the journal’s editorial staff works to enact their feminist-inspired practices that create a space for a diverse, thriving community of scholars and teachers. Through their practices, *Computers and Composition’s* editorial staff implement their desire “to foster a space of inclusion, diversity, and voice around [...] not only the issues themselves – whether it be sexuality or multilingualism – but certainly the people who get to talk” (Blair 2013). At the heart of their practices is a commitment to a view of research that positions knowledge as socially constructed rather than as disembodied, objective truths.

*Computers and Composition’s* editorial staff strive to re-embodiment research in ways that challenge neoliberalist privileging of those kinds of disembodied, objective perceptions of research. Neoliberalism positions knowledge as being “transcendent, detached from the knower and therefore from responsibility and accountability” (Kember 2014: 110). *Computers and Composition’s* staff’s editorial practices challenge this view of knowledge and scholar, instead embracing a feminist view in which “knowledge is situated, not detached but attached to an embodied knower who is therefore accountable for what she produces” (110). *Computer and Composition’s* feminist-inspired desire to re-embodiment research is evident in the types of topics and methods published in the

journal. The journal's editors frequently accept articles written on issues of interest to feminists (e.g., "'Understanding 'Zoom Fatigue': Theorizing Spatial Dynamics as Third Skins in Computer-mediated Communication" by Robby Nadler). The scholarship published also frequently uses feminism as an analytical lens to study topics related to technology use (e.g., "Acting with Algorithms: Feminist Propositions for Rhetorical Agency" by Heather Brooke Adams, Risa Applegarth, Amber Hester Simpson). The journal also often publishes research that uses feminist research methodologies (e.g., "People as Data? Developing an Ethical Framework for Feminist Digital Research" by Brandy Dieterle). Clearly, then, the journal's editorial staff have embraced feminist perspectives – even going so far as to include perspectives that critique the journal itself (e.g., "'Feminist Leanings': Tracing Technofeminist and Intersectional Practices and Values in Three Decades of *Computers and Composition*" by Lori Beth De Hertogh, Liz Lane, and Jessica Ouellete).

Even when the topics published are not directly about feminism, the editorial practices still privilege diversity and inclusion in a way that is marked by feminist theories and priorities. Instead of focusing only on positivist methods, the journal publishes work that uses a range of methods from empirical studies to interviews to quantitative surveys. What is common amongst the articles published in the journal is that researchers situate themselves within their research so that instead of presenting themselves as disembodied knowers, they illustrate the ways that research is partial and socially constructed.

### *Diversity of authorship*

This editorial privileging of diversity and inclusion also extends to whose work is published in the journal. In conjunction with the neoliberalist view of research as disembodied is a similar view of the researcher as an "ideal academic," one that is "disembodied and reproduces a public-private dichotomy – and with quality journal publications as the most central feature of this construct" (Lund 2012: 219). If research is embodied, it means that the subjectivities of the researchers matter. Thus, there is a need to expand the diversity of those who have agency within the scholarly publishing system. To respond to this challenge, the editorial staff of *Computers and Composition* work to publish research created by a diverse range of scholars – from graduate students to teachers to tenured professors – the journal also embraces authors whose academic homes are outside the humanities and even outside the U.S. Instead of policing the boundaries to keep people out of the community, then, their editorial practices are repurposed to operate out of a recognition that they are not the only group working on issues related to technology and writing; therefore, there is a certain level of humility reflected in the recognition that

they can learn from other groups and disciplines. As a result of editorial decisions that place value on diversity and inclusion, the field is kept infused with fresh perspectives and insights.

### ***Repurposed citation styles***

Feminist principles of editing also shape the way research is presented in *Computers and Composition*. Further evidence of these feminist-inspired editorial practices can be found in the journal's repurposing of citation styles in ways that likewise emphasize the embodiment of researcher and researchers. Calling for all authors to use a modified approach to APA citation style, the editorial policy asks authors to include the first and last name of the sources cited in their articles both the first time they use the source in the pages of the article and on the references page. The underlying reasoning for this policy is the editors' position that the traditional APA citation format erased gender and by doing so masculinized the presentation of research (Hawisher, personal communication, December 12, 2018). As Acker (1990: 150) argues, when gender is not acknowledged, the default is masculine. *Computers and Composition's* editorial staff assert that through the elision of first names, the traditional APA citation style disembodies authors and erases gender from the text. *Computers and Composition's* modified APA style puts first names back into the mix, thus working to re-embody texts. This use of a modified APA citation format not only makes gender evident in the pages of the journal but also foregrounds the importance of feminism in research more generally. By calling authors' and readers' attention to the gendered practices that govern legitimation in research, the editorial policy brings to the forefront the ways in which practices like citation style are often positioned and adhered to neutral requirements. As Stenberg (2015: 133) argues, "feminist repurposing begins with illuminating as value-laden and situated that which has been deemed natural or 'objective.'" Challenging the supposed neutrality of citation style, then, potentially opens up consideration of other seemingly neutral practices involved in scholarly journal publishing. Thus, the *Computers and Composition's* editorial policy foregrounds the ideological and value-laden nature of publishing and publishing decisions.

### **Conclusion**

Neoliberalist approaches to scholarly journal editing need to be critiqued and alternatives must be sought. There is hope, however. As Banu Ozkazanc-Pan (2012: 215) argues, "rather than feel disenfranchised from a publication system that values myopic managerialist contributions or dictates the form of research, as critical scholars we need to become change agents through activism."

*Computers and Composition* is one example of a journal whose editorial staff demonstrate how editing can be a form of activism through their repurposing of neoliberalist approaches to editing. An analysis of the editorial practices of *Computers and Composition* highlights the ways in which feminist theory can be used to repurpose editorial practices in order to shift the positioning of the editor from gatekeeper to colleague and mentor and embrace diversity, inclusivity, and embodiment in scholarly publishing. The journal's editing practices also illustrate that resisting the neoliberal logic that links status to high rejection rates. Instead of defining its worth on whom it excludes, *Computers and Composition* creates a dynamic, multi-voiced space in which committed scholars and teachers invested in the intersections between writing and technologies can gather in print and online to construct and share knowledge. Now, almost 40 years after its first issue appeared, *Computers and Composition* retains the community-based focus that established it. It provides a road map of how other journals' editorial staff can enact a feminist ethic of publishing.

## Notes

[1] In the term "editorial staff," I am referring to the editors (past and present), assistant editors, associate editors, and editorial board members.

[2] This study (The Ethics of Journal Editing, Study #00013195) received institutional review board approval on 1/14/2021 at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona. The approval allows me to anonymously cite material gathered from the surveys in my research intended for publication.

Questions can be directed to: [research.integrity@asu.edu](mailto:research.integrity@asu.edu).

## References

- Adams, H. B., R. Applegarth, and A. H. Simpson. (2020) "Acting with Algorithms: Feminist Propositions for Rhetorical Agency." *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* 57: 1-17.
- Acker, J. (1990) "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender and Society* 4 (2): 139-158.
- Ahmed, S. (2017) *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham, NC: Duke UP.
- Anderson, G. (2017) "How Education Researchers Have Colluded in the Rise of Neoliberalism: What Should the Role of Academics Be in These Trumpian Times?" *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 30 (10): 1006-1012. doi:10.1080/09518398.2017.1312600.
- Beck, E. (2013) "Reflecting upon the Past, Sitting with the Present, and Charting Our Future: Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe Discussing the Community of Computers & Composition." *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* 30 (4): 349-357.
- Blair, K. (2013) "Past, Present, and Future(s): An Interview with Editor Kris Blair,"

Cultural Intertexts  
Year X Volume 13 (2023)

- Interview by H. Trahan. *Computers and Composition Online*.  
[http://cconlinejournal.org/winter2013/trahan\\_blair/BlairInterview.html](http://cconlinejournal.org/winter2013/trahan_blair/BlairInterview.html).
- Blair, K. L., G. E. Hawisher, and C. L. Selfe. (2009) "The Electronic Landscape of Journal Editing: 'Computers and Composition' as a Scholarly Collective." *Profession* 160-167.
- De Hertogh, L. B., L. Lane, and J. Ouellette. (2019) "'Feminist Leanings': Tracing Technofeminist and Intersectional Practices and Values in Three Decades of Computers and Composition." *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* 51: 4-13.
- Dieterle, B. (2021) "People as Data? Developing an Ethical Framework for Feminist Digital Research." *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* 59: 1-10.
- Ghamandi, D. (2018) "Liberation through Cooperation: How Library Publishing Can Save Scholarly Publishing from Neoliberalism." *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* 6: 1-16.
- Giroux, H. (2002) "Neoliberalism, Corporate Culture, and the Promise of Higher Education: The University as a Democratic Public Sphere." *Harvard Educational Review*. 72 (4): 425-463.
- Hart, J. (2006) "Women and Feminism in Higher Education Scholarship: An Analysis of Three Core Journals." *Journal of Higher Education* 77 (1): 40-61.
- Jenkins, F. (2014) "Epistemic Credibility and Women in Philosophy." *Australian Feminist Studies* 29 (80): 161-170.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977) *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kember, S. (2014) "Why Write? Feminism, Publishing, and the Politics of Communication." *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Praxis* 83: 99-116.
- Lariviere V., S. Haustein, and P. Monegeon. (2015) "The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era." *PLoS ONE* 10 (6).  
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0127502>
- Levin, J. S. and A. Aliyeva. (2015) "Embedded Neoliberalism within Faculty Behaviors." *Review of Higher Education* 38 (4): 537-563.
- Lund, R. (2012) "Publishing to Become an 'Ideal Academic': An Institutional Ethnography and a Feminist Critique." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 28: 218-228.
- McGinty, S. (1999) *Gatekeepers of Knowledge: Journal Editors in the Sciences and Social Sciences*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Merilainen, S., J. Tienari, R. Thomas, and A. Davies. (2008) "Hegemonic Academic Practices: Experiences of Publishing from the Periphery." *Organization Connexions* 15 (4): 584-597.
- Moran, C. (2003) "Computers and Composition 1983-2002: What We Have Hoped For." *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* 20 (4): 343-358.
- Nadler, R. (2020) "Understanding 'Zoom Fatigue': Theorizing Spatial Dynamics as Third Skins in Computer-Mediated Communication." *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing* 58: 1-17.
- Newman, J. (2013) "Spaces of Power: Feminism, Neoliberalism and Gendered Labor." *Social Politics* 20 (2): 200-221.



Cultural Intertexts  
Year X Volume 13 (2023)

- Ozbilgin, M. A. (2009) "From Journal Rankings to Making Sense of the World." *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 8 (1): 113-121.
- Ozkazanc-Pan, B. (2012) "Publishing without Betrayal: Critical Scholarship Meets Mainstream Journals." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 28: 209-217.  
*doi:10.1177/1350508411403532.*
- Starbuck, W. H. (2005) "How Much Better Are the Most-Prestigious Journals? The Statistics of Academic Publication." *Organization Science* 16 (2): 180-200.
- Stenberg, S. J. (2012) *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.
- Van Anders, S. M. (2004) "Why the Academic Pipeline Leaks: Fewer Men than Women Perceive Barriers to Becoming Professors." *Sex Roles* 51 (9/10): 511-521.
- Vrablikova, L. (2020) "Reading the Sexual Economy of Academic Freedom with Sarah Kofman and Jacques Derrida: A Feminist Deconstruction of Kant's Concept of the University." *Australian Feminist Studies* 35 (1): 54-69.
- Wellington, J. and J. Nixon. (2005) "Shaping the Field: The Role of Academic Journal Editors in the Construction of Education as a Field of Study." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25 (5): 643-655.
- Wilmott, H. (2011) "Journal List Fetishism and the Perversion of Scholarships: Reactivity and the ABS List." *Organization* 18 (4): 429-442.