

Chapter One: Reimagining Writing Program Web Sites as Pedagogical Tools

The opportunities and challenges for writing programs in relation to technology—the very subtle knife of my introduction—are located across the spectrum of computers and technologies in their relation to writing classes. One very concrete place to begin redefining this relationship between writing programs and technology is the writing program Web site.

Scholars have already explored the pedagogical uses of hypertext, HTML, and the World Wide Web in the composition classroom since their emergence. Though initial optimism about their possibilities has since been tempered, critics have nevertheless explored the ways in which student-authored and class Web sites can provide a sense of place in cyberspace, can cross socioeconomic, disciplinary, and cultural boundaries, and can help defamiliarize academic genres (Kent-Drury, 1998; Watkins, 1999; Winner & Shields, 2002; LeCourt 1998). Despite cautions about both the tensions between hypertext and the goals of a writing class and the complex disciplinary investments students bring to classes involving Web authoring, students have begun to acquire proficiency in the literate practices of these new technologies (Mauriello, Pagnucci, & Winner, 1999; Gresham, 1999; Sheridan-Rabideau, McLaughlin, & Novak 2002; Wickliff & Yancey, 2001). Though questions of access and power remain, technorhetoricians have begun to move towards effective pedagogies which employ this new mode of writing, voiced in edited collections such as Sibylle Gruber's *Weaving a Virtual Web: Practical Approaches to New Information Technologies* (2000) and Scott Lloyd DeWitt and Kip Strasma's *Contexts, Intertexts, and Hypertexts* (1999), thereby validating Alan Rea and Doug White's conclusion that "Ultimately, although the

demands of Web writing instruction can be demanding, the benefits far outweigh the costs” (1999, p. 435).

Yet one aspect that has been left unexplored in this growing body of scholarship is the potential of the Web on the programmatic level. What possibilities are engendered when writing program Web sites are reimagined as effective pedagogical tools? Based on the experience of the writing program of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick (the Rutgers Writing Program), they can in fact become central components of a program’s adoption of technology. In the fall of 2000, the Rutgers Writing Program launched a new version of its Web site (<http://wp.rutgers.edu>) based on a student-centered, content-driven, collaboratively-constructed model. Although the project of the Rutgers Writing Program Web site continues to develop—as do ideas about the Web’s application in the classroom—this vision of a program Web site provides a new context to explore the pedagogical possibilities of the Web.

In this chapter, I want to use my experience in the process of recreating the Rutgers Writing Program Web site to illustrate the ways in which writing program administrators can wrest control of a national agenda for technological literacy, seizing the subtle knife. I begin by examining the former Rutgers Writing Program Web site and the pressures that forced the writing program directors at Rutgers, including myself, to reimagine it in the context of what Cynthia Selfe (1999) identifies as a national agenda of technological literacy. Only after realizing our Web site could be a central pedagogical tool did we see the ways in which our former Web site responded to institutional demands and discourses. In this process we answered Selfe’s call to “pay attention” to issues of technology. I proceed with an explanation of the student-centered, content-

driven, collaboratively-constructed model we adopted. After relating the experience of actually building the Web site, I consider some of its benefits, ending with an examination of the further complications and challenges engendered by using the Web in this way, including issues of labor and intellectual property.

i. Paying Attention: Writing Program Web Sites, Institutional Pressure, and the National Agenda for Technological Literacy

The Rutgers Writing Program was not without a presence on the Web prior to the fall of 2000. Though small, the Web site¹ we had at the time, we believed, fulfilled all of its requisite functions: it offered information about our classes, listed which classes were being offered each semester, and provided contact information for the administrators of the program. Given the ephemeral nature of the Web, our previous Web site has been lost; however, its basic design was nearly identical to the design of our former instructional technology Web site, shown in Figure 1. Below banner text identifying the Web site as belonging to the Rutgers Writing Program was a picture of the texts used in three of our main courses. On a blue border to the left was a list of links that guided visitors to the various information resources of the site.

¹ The spelling of “Web site” has yet to be fully standardized. Throughout this project I follow the recommendations of the *Columbia Guide to Online Style*, though of course I retain all original spellings of the term.

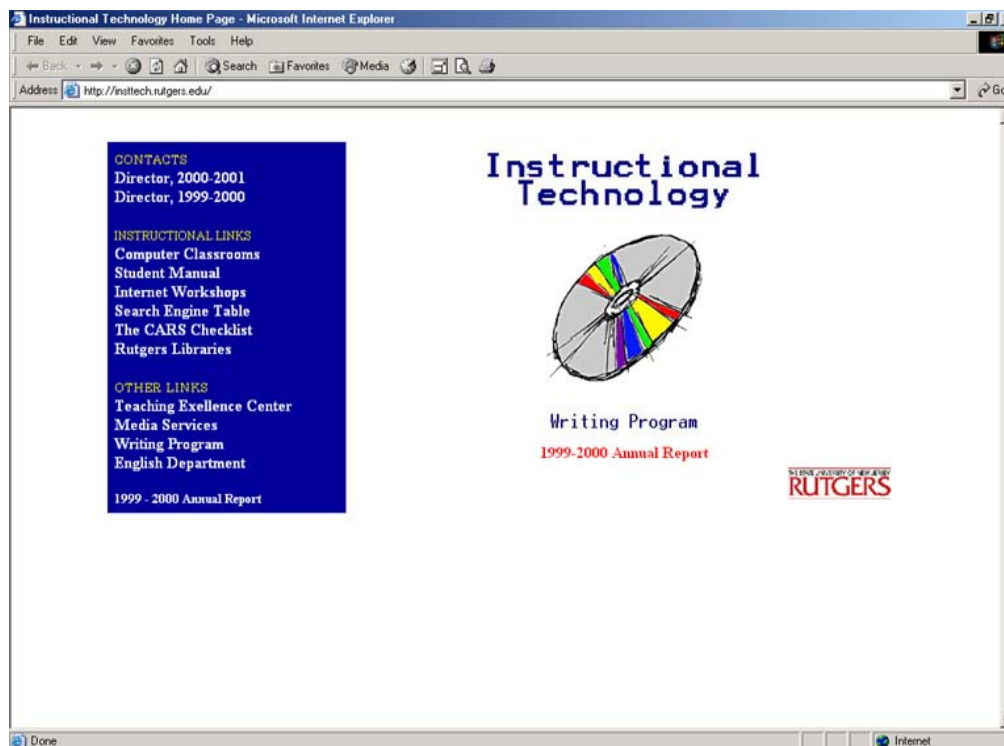


Fig.1: Approximate design of the former Rutgers Writing Program Web site.

Despite this virtual presence on the Web, the program faced pressure from the university administration to embrace technology more fully, specifically pressure from the university's Teaching Excellence Center (TEC), which controlled grants for curricular innovation. The local context for this pressure to embrace technology was similar to the institutional trends Jane Nelson and Cynthia Wambeam (1995) trace to account for the development of an online writing center at the University of Wyoming: Rutgers, too, was experiencing a shift towards technology across all levels of the institution, spearheaded by RUNet 2000, a multi-year, multi-billion dollar project to rewire the entire university for faster internet access. But Cynthia Selfe, in *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century: The Importance of Paying Attention* (1999), explains the broader context for these institutional pressures around technology. Selfe maps a national agenda centered on technological literacy, an agenda in which

educational institutions serve a central role. She notes that “by the late 1990s, the American public education system—as the official instructional agent for literacy—had come to invest heavily in the national project to expand technological literacy. Educators at all levels were adopting the new official vision of technological literacy as a practical way of preparing students for success in an increasingly technological twenty-first century” (1999, p.85). But that vision was poorly articulated; universities wanted to advance technological literacy with little critical understanding of what that meant. As a local manifestation of this national process, the Rutgers Writing Program had already been the recipient of a \$175,000 grant from the university’s Advisory Committee for Instructional Computing (ACIC) to outfit three new computer classrooms. The TEC pushed the writing program to use these resources to have all freshman writers create Web pages, yet we resisted, not only because three computer classrooms (a total of 75 computers) could hardly handle the 6,000 students who passed through Expository Writing each year, but also because we felt that simply asking students to make Web pages did not serve a clear pedagogical purpose—it was merely an attempt to extend technological literacy without thinking about what that really meant. Still, pressure to further advance the agenda of technological literacy remained, primarily because 12,000 students (fully one-quarter of the university population) passed through the whole of the writing program each year.

In response to these pressures, the Rutgers Writing Program considered hiring an outside company for the construction of a new program Web site. The program’s Director of Instructional Technology at the time, Bill Wolfe, consulted with the Web design firm StudioChange about a redesigned Web site. At this point, the new Web site

was projected as a more elaborate version of the current Web site, one which would “allow Faculty users to publish and maintain web sites specific to their individual class and sections” through a combination of a MySQL database and a collection of scripts written in the Web-enabled computer language Perl (StudioChange, 2000, p.2). In this system, the designers imagined faculty as “users” and students as only “visitors,” defined in the design documents as “any anonymous entity not specifically granted User privileges” in the publishing system (StudioChange, 2000, p.2). The goal was to use database-driven Web pages to create content that was more dynamic, and specifically to “provide information about courses, schedules, and teachers” (StudioChange, 2000, p.4). The estimated cost of this redesign was nearly \$50,000.²

Given the exorbitant costs of the project, the program’s Associate Director, Richard E. Miller, asked to meet with me to consider the necessity and feasibility of the project. At the time, I was an Assistant Director in the program coordinating one of our developmental writing courses, but Richard was aware of my familiarity with HTML and Web design. In the course of these conversations, we realized that though the enhanced Web site would be more “dynamic” in that it would respond quickly to the regular changes of each semester, it would not in fact be any more useful. It did not imagine a new Web site so much as it imagined a more elaborate version of the same Web site. In response to this understanding, we came to realize that students were the primary audience of our Web site (not, as the design team imagined, faculty) and that the information most needed on the Web site was information that *students* most needed.

² In Chapter Two I examine how writing programs can successfully use outside companies to meet technological needs. However, crucial to such a move is the kind of critical technological literacy we achieved through the process of redesigning our Web site ourselves.

With this crucial shift in perspective, we realized that both the current and planned Web sites didn't imagine students per se; they imagined instead "student-consumers": browsing a course catalog, contacting staff, reading course descriptions.³ They envisioned students in the institution—not in the classroom—and they envisioned the Web site as nothing more than an extended phone book and course catalog.

In other words, the Web site we had at that point was subject to the kinds of discursive colonization noted by John Killoran (2002). Though his work focuses on the ways in which authors of personal homepages synthetically adopt institutional discourses, I would argue his insights can be applied to writing programs, despite the fact that they are, in fact, embedded in institutions. For like authors of personal Web pages, writing program administrators, instructors, and staff tend to be fairly new entrants into the online medium, which Killoran argues opens the possibility of colonization:

Enticed by the Web's opportunities but also overwhelmed by such challenges, prospective homepage publishers would seek models of how to behave in the media gaze. With few prominent role models among their own kind, individuals are susceptible to influences from well-established institutional models. Their voices are thereby open to colonization by institutions' public discourses. (2002, p. 23)

"Seek[ing] models of how to behave," we created a Web site that reflected "institutions' public discourses." While Killoran focuses primarily on corporate and media institutions,

³ The figure of the "student-consumer" gestures towards the increasing corporatization of the university, an issue I explore more fully in Chapter Three. Viewed in terms of the analysis I develop there, one might say that the eventual reconception of our Web site worked within the corporate model to achieve our local pedagogical ends. As such, it is an example of the "strategic corporatization" I discuss in that chapter.

in our case the institution was the university, and its public discourse—heavily inflected by the agenda for technological literacy—determined our Web site.

Not only did we imagine our students the way the university imagined them, as potential consumers, but even the design of our site reflected a kind of colonization.

Figure 2 shows the main page of the Rutgers University Web site

(<http://www.rutgers.edu>) during this period. Like the former Rutgers Writing Program Web site, it features a blue border along the left with navigation links and a large, white content block on the right. In both design and content, our Web site was consistent with Gail Hawisher and Patricia Sullivan’s (1999) assessment of university Web sites in general in that both “emphasize dispensing information, though not from an innocent and neutral position. The purposes of university websites, for example, are often related to image promotion; each university crafts information that promotes the image that it wants prospective students, future employers, and the public to associate with it” (p. 277). Our former Web site was only an information resource and only for prospective students.

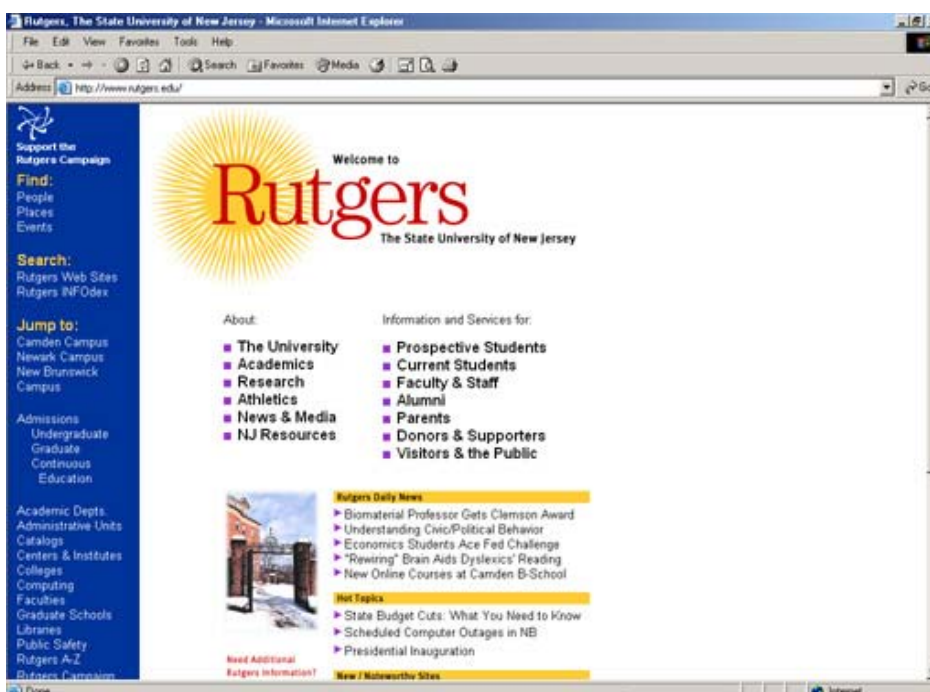


Fig.2: Main page of the Rutgers University Web site.

At the same time, while it's tempting to cast StudioChange as part of the larger media institutions that Killoran sees as discursive colonizers and to see their projected redesign as another instance of this colonization, it's more accurate to say they were a business doing what businesses do—meeting the needs of customers. In this case, because our conception of what a Web site should do was predetermined by our identification with the larger institution it's not at all surprising that StudioChange produced a design that reflected that back to us. If the design documents imagined our students as anonymous visitors, it's not because StudioChange cast them as such, it's because the Web site we imagined at that point did.

In contrast, our new vision of our Web site was fully consistent with, if significantly different from, the attempts of individuals to resist institutional forces noted by Hawisher and Sullivan (1999) and Mickey Hess (2002). Though their work focuses primarily on faculty attempts to carve a Web identity apart from the institution, we too were able to reimagine our relationship to the institution by reimagining the audience for our Web site, shifting our Web site's identification from the institution to our students. In coming to understand that our Web site could be something else, something different, something directed towards the needs of our student population, we were answering Selfe's (1999) call to "pay attention" to matters of technology (p.134). Rather than advancing the technological literacy agenda advocated by the university and reflected in our colonized Web site, we could take control of the Web site as a tool for what Selfe (1999) calls *critical technological literacy*: a reflective awareness of the literate processes of technology as social and cultural phenomena, and a movement towards an ability to "carefully analyze, to pay attention to, the technology-literacy link at both fundamental

levels of conception and social practice” (Selfe, 1999, p. 148). In rethinking the focus of the Web site, we reflected this political agenda by reimagining the Web site such that its very conception would respond not to pat narratives of technology and literacy but instead to the needs of students. Thus we were able to make informed decisions rather than being passive consumers of technological goods—the very goods offered by StudioChange at our prompting (Selfe, 1999, p.155).

To enact this repositioning we developed a new model for our Web site. The site would be student-centered, meaning that we would tailor its resources to meet the needs not of potential students, but of the students actually in our classes. In particular, we planned three primary pedagogical resources for students in our freshman writing class: because our students have acute anxiety about grading, we would offer the Gradatorium, which would contain our official grading criteria, sample papers from a range of grades, and a description of the grading process; because our students often needed help to succeed in the class, we would offer the Tutorama, a series of self-directed weekly tutorials that reflected common issues in the class; and because students found many of the readings used in our class challenging, we would offer the Link-O-Mat, which placed the texts from our reader in a broader social context by linking to Web sites that offered related or new understandings. The Web site thus would be content-driven, meaning that its focus would be useful content not flashy, “dynamic” technology or a preponderance of graphics (our inside joke was “No spinning Foucault heads”). And it would be collaboratively-constructed within the program, not only minimizing costs but recognizing that as teachers we had the crucial skills in content production needed to make the Web site a success.

ii. Student-Centered, Content-Driven, Collaboratively-Constructed

To elaborate our Web site model we hired a consultant, Todd Reichart, who had experience with both instructional technology and corporate Web design, working for companies such as Merrill Lynch.⁴ Todd played an important role not only in helping us eventually acquire the skills we needed in the actual construction of the Web site, but also in helping us articulate the model we had in mind. Along with myself, Richard, and Todd, Writing Program Assistant Directors Anthony Lioi and Michael Goeller and graduate student teaching assistant Rachel McLaughlin formed the core group that worked together over the summer of 2000 to formulate a design for our Web site that would enact our pedagogical vision.

Central to this pedagogical vision was a student-centered focus, a focus that represented a crucial difference between our goals for the Web site and the ones proposed by StudioChange in response to our former needs. This difference can be explained through Stuart Blythe's (2001) explanation of systems and user-centered approaches to design in the construction of online courses. A systems model of design stresses formal specifications while neglecting actual users, who are "mostly absent from this design approach—except merely to work with a technology once it is in place," hence the "anonymous" student users of the StudioChange proposal (Blythe, 2001, p.332). Blythe advocates instead a user-centered approach, in which users are integral participants of the

⁴ Using an outside consultant in this process was a means of taking control of our technological needs, paying attention to technology in the ways that Selfe asks us all to do. It also serves as an example of the kind of strategies needed to negotiate the technological agenda within institutions that I develop in Chapters Two and Three.

design process. Placing student need at the center of our design focus reflects just such a user-centered approach.

It reflects as well the audience involved model developed by Robert Johnson (1997). Johnson, focusing on collaborative writing (particularly in technical communication), argues that rather than envisioning “addressed” or “invoked” audiences, we should strive for an involved audience, in which the audience is a collaborative presence (1997, p. 363). In his case, technical writers worked collaboratively with users to value their local knowledge and create documents that reflected that knowledge while meeting their specific informational needs. The extent to which we could actually involve our audience was tempered by the nature of that audience—students. Working over the summer, few students were available to participate in our articulation of the Web site’s design. What’s more, as Blythe (2001) explains, “difference in knowledge, experience, and institutionally sanctioned forms of power make it impossible to equate the teacher-student relationship with other workplace relationships” (p. 338). Therefore, like Blythe, though we could not fully implement user-centered design practices we were able to adopt a “user-centered attitude” (2001, p.338).

Specifically, Todd used his background in usability and corporate design to interview potential users for our Web site, both teachers and students. Given that these interviews took place in June, and given that we hoped to launch the fully redesigned Web site by late August, Todd’s sample sizes were necessarily small, interviewing only two teachers and three students. Still, his work in evaluating the needs of our Web site’s users allowed us to refine its student-centered focus while paying attention to the literate practices of our users. As Selfe (1999) explains, it is our obligation to read and respect

the lives of students rather than “perceiving students only in terms of their numbers” (p. 160). Todd thus asked all interviewees about their access to technology and their use of the Web as well as about their needs for the writing program Web site. From these interviews some common themes emerged. One of the teachers, in particular, expressed a desire for information on the Web site to support the work of teaching, suggesting that we needed to see our teachers in the same way we were coming to see our students: in the classroom and not merely in the institution. Students expressed a need for information that would help them in their writing classes, from tutorial resources to information on grading. The results of these interviews produced a very different design document, one in which the target users were students, writing program instructors and staff, parents of students, and university administrators and in which a “key objective of this design effort is to demonstrate an extraordinary level of service to the students” (Reichert, 2000, p.1).

We were able to carry this focus on students into the proposed design for the Web site. One of Todd’s early designs maintained a large area for content on the right side of the main page, containing the Rutgers Writing Program’s mission statement, with navigation links along the left, similar in layout to our former Web site (see Figure 3). We questioned this design because we felt that students neither needed to know nor cared about our program’s mission statement. Because we believed the content students most wanted was located on the inner pages we planned for the site, we moved towards a design that placed these links centrally on the page. In the end, we settled on a design that highlighted the resources for students while also allowing room for teacher resources and program information (see Figure 4).

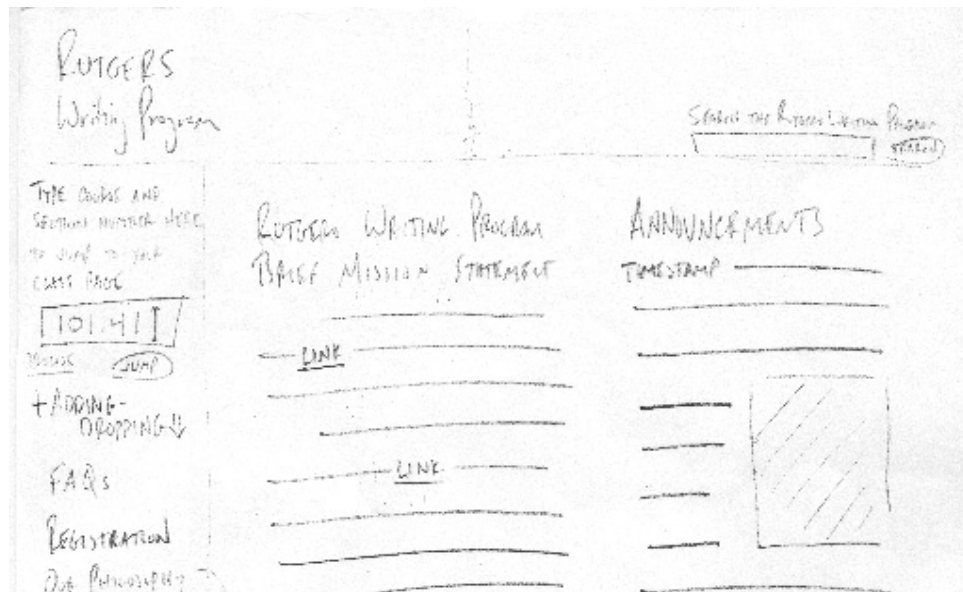


Fig.3: Early draft of Rutgers Writing Program Web site redesign.

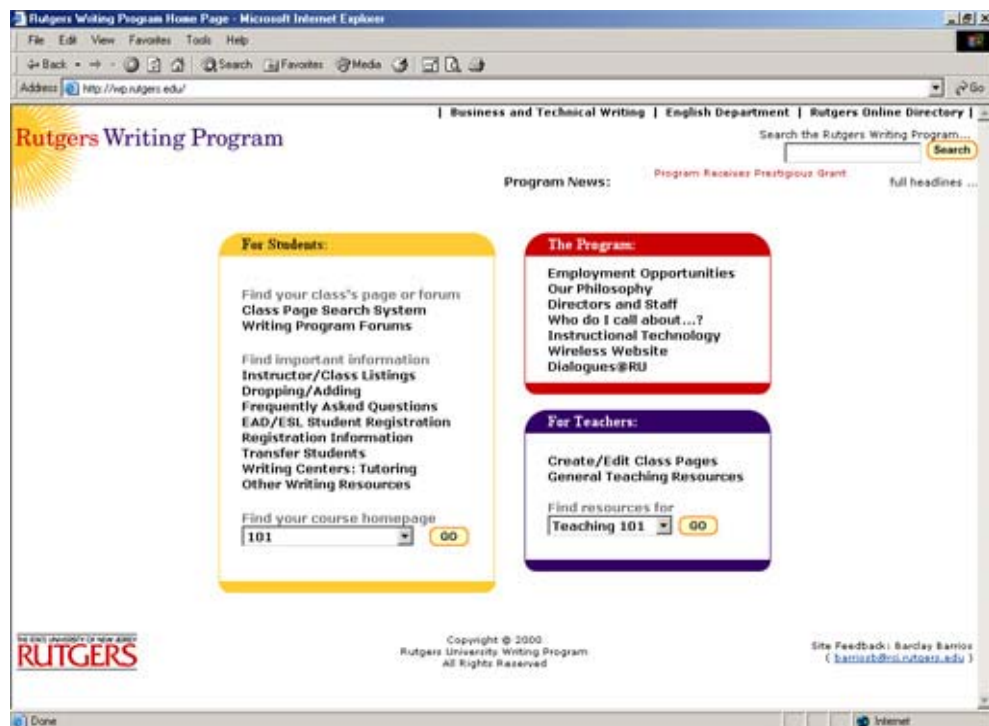


Fig.4: Final design of Rutgers Writing Program Web site.

The interviews Todd conducted not only crystallized the student-centered focus of the Web site but also underscored its content-driven nature: students and teachers both wanted content they could use in the context of the classroom. Thus, while Todd's role

was crucial in articulating both our vision and the eventual design of the Web site, the actual construction could not be relegated to Todd or to anyone who didn't have actual knowledge of our classrooms. That is, given the emphasis on content, members of the Rutgers Writing Program would, of necessity, play a central role in actually building the Web site. This realization at first seemed daunting—after all, none of us had experience with Dreamweaver, the software we would use to build the Web site. Yet, just as articulating our model for the Web site around student needs helped us to reimagine our relationship with those students, focusing on content helped us to reimagine our own roles as well. We knew that, in the end, the Web is about content and we also came to realize that as teachers we were already in some sense professional content producers. Each semester we produced assignments, exercises, tutorial materials, and handouts, and the program already had evidence of this ability in an internally published document, *Things That Work*, which collected useful classroom practices from teachers across the program.

Given that we were content producers but not Web authors, a collaborative model of construction was also necessary—for several reasons. First, the extent of the Web site's materials—ranging from frequently asked questions (FAQs) for students, to orientation and support materials for teachers of our freshman year composition class, to pedagogical materials directly for our students, to information about the program's philosophy and mission—necessitated that we work together to produce the content we envisioned. Second, since Todd was the only member of the team with knowledge of Dreamweaver we had to work first with him to learn the basics of the software and then eventually with each other to share the skills we had acquired. Finally, acquiring these

skills was a way of permanently reducing costs, making this project feasible. Not only would it be significantly cheaper to create the Web site ourselves, but having acquired these skills we would be able to maintain and expand it ourselves.

iii. Building the Web Site: Collaborative Learning and Critical Technological Literacy

After making final decisions about design and content as a group, we worked on building the actual site. Meeting in one of our computer classrooms over the course of several weeks in July and August of 2000, we began Web site construction. The templates feature of Dreamweaver was particularly useful in this respect. Todd designed the infrastructure of the pages in these templates, allowing the rest of us to produce the content for each page in the appropriate space without having to know the complexities of page layout and construction (a process we came to call “pouring” the content). Yet despite this more “content-producer friendly” approach, we did in fact learn a great deal about using Dreamweaver. Our knowledge came to include all the basics of Web page construction, from formatting text and making links to building tables and synchronizing the entire site with the files on the server. Both the collaborative atmosphere and project-centered focus of our work enabled the acquisition of these skills. Richard, for example, explained how he was unable to learn Dreamweaver working on his own in isolation and simply using the software’s tutorials; it was working together on a specific project that made the knowledge relevant and applicable.⁵ Our experience, then, was similar to the

⁵ In an email response to a draft of this chapter, Richard went even further in describing his frustration in learning this software on his own: he “not only couldn’t learn DW on his own, he spent many fruitless days learning fireworks [a graphics program produced by the company that makes Dreamweaver] because he thought that you needed to design

experience of Cecilia Hartley, Ellen Schendel, and Michael R. Neal (1999) in learning the computer language Perl to create the Web site *Writing Spaces*. They were “finally able to learn the language when [they] stopped trying to learn in single, acontextual lessons and began instead to work with Perl in the context of what it does” (p. 367). We, too, became familiar with the tools of Dreamweaver directly in the context of what it does.

We were expanding our own technological literacy, defined by Selfe (1999) as “the complex set of socially and culturally situated values, practices, and skills involved in operating linguistically within the context of electronic environments, including reading, writing, and communicating” (p. 148). Yet we were also expanding our critical technological literacy. Rather than passively consuming the tutorials created by the software’s designers, we were actively questioning what Dreamweaver could or could not do in the context of a specific project directed to our classrooms and our students. We learned about the costs of Dreamweaver licenses, confronting the economic realities that enabled the project to proceed, and we realized the impact of spatial configurations of the computer classroom on collaborative work. Clustered around a central table and unable to see each other over the monitors, we have since changed the layout of that lab—a change that would not have been possible without spending time occupying the positions our students would normally occupy over the course of a semester. We also learned about the limitations of Perl scripts on our university’s Web server, as we watched Todd

your own navigational button system before you could actually get started on the web page” (personal communication, March 4, 2003).

transform one of the computers in the lab into a Web server so that we could run these scripts, which would let our instructors make simple class homepages.⁶

Ultimately, each of us came to understand the intellectual, social, economic, and political capital needed to create Web sites. And we keep that knowledge in circulation by asking each course coordinator in our program to help maintain the content for her or his course, continuing the growth of critical technological literacy in our program. Each summer, I supervise the maintenance and expansion of the Web site, incorporating pedagogical resources for another of our courses in each iteration. Each time, I work with the course coordinator to determine what resources students and teachers of that particular course will need. Though not a requirement, many of these course coordinators have participated in the actual construction of their section of the Web site, repeating the collaborative learning and extending our collective critical technological literacy.

iv. Benefits of a Pedagogically Focused Writing Program Web Site

The immediate benefit of rethinking and rebuilding our Web site was an increase in technological literacy within our program. Since the initial construction, several of us have solidified our knowledge of Dreamweaver. As the person primarily responsible for the Web site, I now use Dreamweaver extensively, and have since used it to create a separate Web site, GetIT (Gaining Experience Teaching with Instructional Technology,

⁶ Subsequently we abandoned this series of Perl scripts, which were not robust enough to offer all the features we wanted available to our instructors. Instead, we contracted with an outside company, Cogneato Interactive (<http://www.cogneato.com>), and had them design a full system that would allow our teachers to make homepages for their classes. In doing this, we were again shaping technology to our own ends, rather than using a commercially-created system such as WebCT.

<http://getit.rutgers.edu>) to help instructors in our program gain skills with technology. Michael, who directs our Business and Technical Writing Program, produced a Web site for his program with a similar pedagogical focus (<http://bizntech.rutgers.edu>) and regularly teaches a class in Web authoring. Richard has taken our model of a pedagogical Web site into the national arena by constructing a Web site patterned on the model we developed to accompany the reader edited by himself and Rutgers Writing Program Director Kurt Spellmeyer, located at <http://www.newhum.com>. And Rachel has since taught our Web authoring class and assisted Richard in maintaining the national Web site for the reader. The collaborative sharing of knowledge that enabled this acquisition of technological literacy worked in both directions. Since that summer, Todd has taught in our program, teaching not only our Web authoring and information design classes, but also Expository Writing, the freshman writing class that was the original focus of our program's Web site. We gained technical knowledge; he gained pedagogical knowledge.

In maintaining the collaboratively-constructed focus of our site, we've also attempted to draw as many people as possible into the project of our Web site. Course coordinators have a direct role in their content areas, but we've also trained graduate and undergraduate workers in Dreamweaver to assist with maintenance of the Web site. Undergraduates in our Business and Technical Writing Certificate program have been able to complete internships working in this technological and pedagogical atmosphere, and we've even incorporated support staff into maintaining the Web site, involving all members of our writing program's community.

The quantifiable results of our Web site's redesign are remarkable. The number of people visiting the Web site, its "traffic" measured in page requests or "hits" to the server, has increased dramatically. Data on the original Web site is not fully available, but in June 2000, before we began this project, traffic to the Web site measured 2,929 hits. As a direct comparison, traffic to the Web site in June of 2004 measured 154,876 hits. During the semester, our Web site is used even more heavily, with peak recent traffic of 761,532 hits in October of 2003.⁷ However, raw numbers can be misleading, particularly when it comes to trying to measure how many people actually visit a Web site, yet the most requested pages are consistently the pedagogical resources we designed for students.⁸

Teachers have also incorporated the Web site's resources into their classes. Instructors print out tutorials from the Tutorama that they feel individual students most need and have their classes as a whole read the papers of the Gradatorium for a discussion of grading. And while instructors still use the computer classrooms to work on drafting and peer revision, they also use it to have the class explore the Link-O-Mat page of a new reading to begin discussion.⁹ One instructor, Justin Hart, crafted an

⁷ For current statistics on the Rutgers Writing Program Web site, see <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/stats/web/wp.rutgers.edu/>.

⁸ For a discussion of the near impossibility of determining exactly how many users visit a Web site, see <http://www.analog.cx/docs/webworks.html>. While the data on traffic to our Web site cannot reflect how many actual people visited the Web site, let alone how many students visited the Web site, it does reflect a dramatic increase in overall traffic to the site.

⁹ One way to see how instructors have used the resources of our Web site is to explore the homepages they make for their sections using the system we asked Cogneato Interactive to create. Many of these pages link to specific resources on the Rutgers Writing Program Web site or include assignments that reference our program's Web site. Because these pages change each semester, I am unable to provide specific links to examples here;

exercise specifically to introduce students to the resources of our program's Web site. This handout is now shared with all instructors via the GetIT Web site (see http://getit.rutgers.edu/activities/tech_intro/web/index.html). Justin's handout is one example of a collateral benefit for teachers. All instructors in the program are invited to contribute sample assignments, sample assignment sequences, or other pedagogical resources for publication on the Web site. Not only does this practice establish a teaching community by sharing and archiving individual knowledge, but it also provides our teachers an opportunity to list an electronic publication on their *curriculum vitae*.

This communal teaching knowledge has become an important feature of our orientation for new teachers. Though we worked hard to introduce teachers to the resources of the Web site during orientation following its initial launch in the fall of 2000, by the fall of 2002 instructors were arriving at new teacher orientation with questions about our courses derived from their unprompted exploration of the pedagogical materials on our Web site.¹⁰ The role of the Web site in teacher orientation has become so fundamental that in the summer of 2001, while working on construction of the pages for our Basic Composition class, the course coordinator at the time, Katherine Lynes, pivotally shifted the relationship between the Web site and orientation: rather than placing her orientation materials onto the Web site for teachers to use, she printed out the materials from the Web site to orient new teachers.

There is anecdotal evidence suggesting that these pedagogical resources directly benefit students as well. One student emailed me to say the Tutorama was "helping [him]"

however, current examples of usage can be found through the search system for these pages, located at <http://www.classguide.net/rutgers/>.

¹⁰ Data on the extent of this unprompted exploration and its relation to a new instructor's experience of orientation can be found in Chapter Three.

out a lot in 101,” and one of our writing center tutors also found the Web site and Tutorama helpful, writing in her end of year evaluation that she “absolutely loved the Writing Program Web site. [She] tried following along with the schedule and also made copies for [her] students” (cited in Barrios, 2001, p.6). One student, whose first language was not English, even used our Web site to assume a voice of power and authority by writing to correct some typographical errors on the Web site, implicitly reversing the power dynamic involved in instruction by *correcting us*.¹¹

Even the administration has recognized the excellence of our Web site. In a letter to Richard, Joseph Seneca, University Vice President for Academic Affairs, wrote:

The website is one of the most useful I have ever seen. The supplementary instructions provided on the web offer an invaluable structure for the students. I also appreciate your attempts to make the grading process transparent to the students so that they understand the course expectations clearly and the criteria by which assignments are evaluated. . . . This website should do much to provide a supportive learning environment and help them improve their skills. (cited in Barrios, 2001, p.6)

The transparency noted by Seneca is a crucial feature of the model we developed. All the resources we created for students are available for teachers; all the resources we created for teachers are available for students. And both populations benefit. Students are able to look at sample assignments from instructors teaching other classes to help clarify their projects for the assignments in their own classes, while new teachers can further ground

¹¹ I am assuming this student’s primary (or at least additional) language is Chinese based on the fact that opening his email prompts Outlook Express to download support for Traditional Chinese Text Display. I am further assuming this is an email from a student at Rutgers University based on the fact that his email address is at Eden, the Rutgers University computing system for students.

themselves in our program's rigorous grading criteria by going through the Gradatorium for students. At the same time, this transparency invites all members of the larger community to examine our program—from parents to prospective students to administrators such as Seneca.

Moreover, this transparency foregrounds critical technological literacy by exposing the agenda of learning and technological literacy we have for our students. Rather than implementing the blanket conception of such a literacy suggested by the TEC's original desire to have our students author Web pages, we have instead articulated a pedagogical vision of the Web, one that in turn has helped the university value the project not only of our use of technology but of our classrooms as well.¹²

As Seneca's letter suggests, the university's administration did indeed come to value our articulation of the pedagogical uses of the Web. After launching our redesigned site, our program received grants totaling \$15,000 from the university to expand our use of the Web. The data on our Web site traffic has attracted the attention of grantor agencies such as Hewlett-Packard, and most recently our experience in learning and teaching Web authoring helped us secure a grant from the Woodrow Wilson foundation to teach Web design to humanities graduate students.

Given that the Web site continues to grow, and given the always-limited resources writing programs are regularly asked to face, a true assessment of our Web site's impact is difficult to achieve. However, in the online complement to this chapter (<http://www.barclaybarrios.com/articles/assessment/>) I argue that writing program Web

¹² In Chapter Three I examine how effective implementations of technology can help writing programs and English departments reposition themselves in the new university; the Rutgers Writing Program Web site is a prime example of the kinds of moves I discuss there.

sites are best assessed through a multi-modal approach. As that chapter suggests, our approach has been very successful, though there remains improvements to be made to the site and its use within our program.

v. Applications, Complications, and Conclusions

Our model, of course, was developed from a very local context with very local conditions. However, it has already proven itself viable in other writing programs. After attending a workshop presented by several of our program's administrators on writing programs in the new university at the 2002 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Ed Jones of Seton Hall University developed a Web site for his institution's first year writing class, English 1201 (<http://artsci.shu.edu/english/1201/>). Though the content of that Web site mirrors some of the resources we provided for our students, most crucially it does not *reproduce* them. Instead, true to a student-centered focus, it provides resources most needed by the students of that particular course. However, it does maintain the kind of transparency of resources for students and teachers that exposes the particular narratives about technology and pedagogy being constructed.¹³

Despite the benefits the Rutgers Writing Program has seen from its pedagogically-focused Web site, a number of pressing questions and complications remain. For one, we quickly encountered complex issues of intellectual property: Who

¹³ Email correspondence with Ed Jones reveals that despite significant differences in the local context his experience mirrors our own on many levels. Specifically, while the course did not have a prior Web presence and there was no institutional pressure to create one, Ed reports similar anecdotal evidence of success as well as similar complications related to formal assessment and continued maintenance of the Web site. In his email, he stressed that the Web site he created looks very different from our own because of its focus on assignment sequences, yet he "took away from [our] site the need for everything to be very practical and usable," the essence of the student-centered and content-driven core of our model (personal communication, March 12, 2003).

owns the content of the Web site? Those of us who worked that summer in the lab? The Rutgers Writing Program? Rutgers University? We have negotiated answers to these questions as best we can, and compositionists have addressed them in general as well (see, for example, Lang, 1998 and Kolko, 1998), but this kind of collaborative effort requires particular attention to these kinds of issues. Questions of labor have been foregrounded in this process as well. As the Web site has continued to grow, summer is the only time in which we can perform extensive maintenance, updating, and expansion. To enable this work to proceed, my own position has been transformed from a four-year, non-renewable, academic-year instructor appointment (the typical formulation for Assistant Directors in our program) into a fully-renewable, calendar-year staff appointment. Without this transformation, serious questions about how to maintain the Web site need to be addressed: Who will be in charge of the Web site? What kinds of compensation will that person receive in terms of monies or course release? What kinds of support will that person have in terms of additional help and labor? And how will this work relate to issues of promotion and tenure? These, too, are serious questions for technorhetoricians (see, for example, the 2000 special issue of *Computers and Composition* on promotion and tenure).¹⁴

However, my goal in this chapter is not to suggest that reimagining a writing program Web site as a pedagogical tool is, in itself, an answer to the kinds of institutional pressures generated by a national agenda for technological literacy. As I will argue in Chapter Two, even when the administrators of a writing program have managed to

¹⁴ I explore some of these complications in the online component of Chapter Two (<http://www.barclaybarrios.com/articles/kairos/>). Specifically I explore the complex identity of the information technology specialist within writing programs and the challenges involved in distributing responsibility for and knowledge of computers and technology.

achieve a critical technological identity in relation to the Web presence of their programs, the national agenda for technological literacy, as manifested in universities, necessarily creates tensions between writing programs and their institutions. Negotiating these tensions, the main concern of the next chapter, continues the process of critical technological literacy outlined in this chapter.

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