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From the Editors

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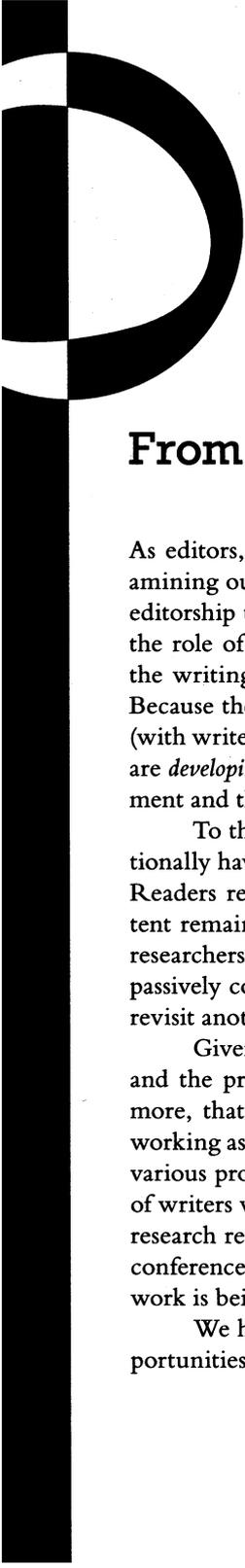
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From the Editors

As editors, we are always reflexive, noting trends in submissions, examining our own interactions with authors and texts, and tracking our editorship through our notes and conversations. We are learning about the role of journals, about *The Writing Center Journal* itself, and about the writing center community as we engage in the editorial process. Because the three of us share an orientation of *development* in our work (with writers, with peers, with each other), we find it easy to see that we are *developing* editors—in the sense that our skills are always in development and that we want to help develop others in the field.

To that end, we want to develop the journal itself. Journals traditionally have been product oriented—the journal *is* the published issue. Readers read the issue, researchers consult past issues, with the content remaining static and fixed and the interactions between authors/researchers and the readers being minimal, even nonexistent. Readers passively consume some of the journal content and often set it aside to revisit another day, which sometimes, let's face it, never comes.

Given the collaborative spirit of the writing center community and the process-oriented nature of writing, we believe *WCJ* can do more, that the role of the journal can be further developed. We are working as editors to expand the role of the journal: We have sponsored various professional development activities, from meeting with dozens of writers while at CCCC in Tampa and IWCA in Orlando; to hosting research retreats, both in-person and virtual/online; to offering online conferences with writers and extensive feedback, even for those whose work is being currently declined.

We have also initiated *WCJ* Live online discussions, creating opportunities for readers of the journal to talk with, question, and continue

to learn from the journal's authors. To date, every author published in *WCJ* during our time as editors has agreed to participate, and we've seen the authors take great care and time preparing. We've been impressed with the level of discussion, seeing ideas generated for the journal being built upon and carried in new directions. Still, as a recent *WCJ* Live attendee noted in an email to us, participation has been slim:

I can't believe more people didn't take advantage of the event because it's so amazing to get to talk about the articles with the authors. Where else does that even happen? What does it mean to draw so relatively few, especially when so many take the time to "discuss" in so much less intellectually engaged ways on WCenter.

I really hope *WCJ* Live catches on big time because I believe it is a huge opportunity for professional development.

The reality is that if 20 people attend a *WCJ* Live event, that number represents only about two percent of our *WCJ* subscribers. We ourselves wish more members of the writing center community would consider themselves "developing" and seek these professional development opportunities to participate actively in the scholarly conversation and making of new knowledge.

John Nordlof, during his recent *WCJ* Live discussion, pointed out that writing centers are a "maturing field," and we agree. As such, we believe it's time to revisit earlier work and rethink some of our assumptions, about what happens in a tutoring session, what's productive or not productive, whether a best practice truly is a best practice. From the *WCJ* Live events we have learned even more from our published authors. The recent issue (34.1) and this current one (34.2) send a message that needs to be heard: Our field *can* question our long-held assumptions. But we aren't always willing to do so.

To carry this idea of development even further, we could map the writing center research trajectory onto the classic literature on student development. Doing so would show us to be near where William G. Perry's (1970) students were: sure, we are growing up, but still exhibiting some right/wrong or dualistic thinking about our world. Writing center practitioners too often still maintain an either/or, it-must-be-this-or-that approach, often closing off alternative avenues for inquiry. We are stuck in an intellectual stage that still allows for uncritiqued practices and has settled for lore-based mantras over intentional and informed choices: we're nondirective rather than directive, HOCs before LOCs, better writers rather than better papers, required visits are problematic, candy is good. Extensions of Perry's scheme have helped us see how humans move through developmental stages that take us from mere receptacles of knowledge, to über relativism, to understanding and

judging within contexts. Development is complicated and difficult and deserves perennial attention, certainly when talking about the development of a field like writing centers.

To promote the development and maturing of the writing center community through *WCJ*, we find ourselves turning to Marcia Baxter-Magolda and her concept of *self-authorship*. Baxter-Magolda's work resonates with us as more than just a metaphor for what we do in the writing center. Fostering self-authorship with students, Baxter-Magolda learned, requires pedagogies that "facilitate change and growth by providing challenges" and that enable "mutual relations with the larger world." These concepts can also serve as goals of our field's journal and our profession as well. *WCJ* is committed to supporting the authoring/authorizing of our everyday work in ways that could inscribe our future identity and direction. But, according to the self-authorship model, we need to face challenges and seek relations with the larger world. That could be using scholarship from other disciplines; it could mean pushing ourselves and our colleagues to conduct a research project that gets published; it could mean questioning assumptions in our own work and in our own centers.

In short, we hope that readers of *WCJ* become more than mere passive consumers of the journal. Instead, we want to encourage the development of participants in the writing center community who will self-author the notion that they could become active creators of new knowledge. Sherri Winans captures the inquisitive, question-driven mindset we advocate for in a note she posted immediately following the recent IWCA Collaborative (Collaboratory 2015 at CCCC): "Back in this writing center today, everything seems 'deep': the stories I'm hearing, the numbers we're processing, and the design of the whole place. And I'm looking forward to the ongoing conversations about all of it, locally and with you all."

We hope that *WCJ* can be a catalyst for our maturing field. We want to be there as you embrace challenges and along the way "try to love the questions...[and] live the questions now!" (Rilke, 1904/1993).

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