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Review: *Open-Access, Multimodality, and Writing Center Studies* by Elisabeth H. Buck

In *Open-Access, Multimodality, and Writing Center Studies* (2018), Elisabeth H. Buck captures how writing center studies scholars and scholarship adapt to changes in publishing and offers a big-picture narrative detailing how writing center studies emblematizes this current state of academic publishing. She focuses on *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, *The Writing Center Journal*, and *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* and demonstrates how these journals position themselves through the scholarship lining their pages and the ethos they create through a social media presence. She zooms in on seven writing center studies scholars and how these scholars navigate publication. In sum, Buck teaches us, the entire writing center studies community, about us.

  Almost in the exact middle of her book, Buck does reasonably consider something I wondered as I made my way through her words: *why publish a writing center studies book about writing center studies publishing?* I think one can and should. But I wanted to hear *why* from the author. Buck explains, "This navel-gazing can have particular import" and may help "researchers understand a field's contemporary privileging of certain content and/or methodologies" (p. 64). Buck follows up her statement with Neal Lerner's (2014) argument that our institutional values should

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mirror writing center values. Well said, but I don't see how Buck via Lerner directly answers the need for navel gazing.

In these paragraphs, I offer an overview of Buck's book. But instead of moving into areas of critique, I ask readers to see this overview as a conversation starter. Buck is correct: navel gazing does have import if we take what we see and move forward with what we now know. In this spirit of communal knowledge building, what might we do next with *Open-Access, Multimodality, and Writing Center Studies*?

Buck's introduction provides readers an argument for analyzing writing center publishing outlets and those who publish in these outlets. She describes her book as a "large-scale, multifaceted assessment of writing center studies" that can "reveal significant implications for the relationship between the old and new guards of academic publishing" (p. 5). In the next chapter, Buck illustrates the "multifaceted" nature of her work by drawing from a survey of over two hundred writing scholars. She uses survey data to sketch broad claims about perceived tensions between digital and print publications. Buck describes the third chapter as a "historiography" in that she digs through the archives of *WLN*, *WCJ*, and *Praxis* to make broad claims about the content published in these journals, namely how "conversations about computers and computer technologies have evolved in each of these journals . . . [conversations that] can reveal something important about each journal's identity and future direction" (p. 28). In the conclusion to this chapter, she brings attention to access, which, she holds, is "consequently not only a matter of whether digital records are obtainable, but involves the extent to which they are easily navigable and straightforward" (p. 59). To this end, she helpfully connects labor to access, and, by extension, open access—how easily can one find, read, and engage with the scholarship in our journals? The fourth chapter dovetails with the third by keeping the focus on these three journals and turning attention to what Buck refers to as "supplementary digital representation" (p. 73) and later cleverly terms "metadiscursive outlets" (p. 91). Here, Buck looks to social media content connected to *WLN*, *WCJ*, and *Praxis*. Near the end of this chapter, she pulls back from her close reading of various social media accounts to offer "one critical implication for this research" (p. 90): that "researchers must question the extent to which a journal is now 'only' a platform for distributing scholarship" (p. 90). I was unsure what makes such a claim "critical," but Buck does pick up the pieces again when she begins tying a journal's perceived prestige to the "navigability of its web-page(s), the accessibility of its content, and its other digital tools" (p. 90).

The fifth chapter is available in open-access format. Buck draws from interviews with seven writing center studies scholars who read and publish in *WLN*, *WCJ*, and *Praxis*. Buck uses these interviews to illustrate

how "individuals facilitate and conceptualize entrance into writing center communities" (p. 108). To establish prominence as a writing studies researcher, one must have the institutional resources to access paywalled journal content and develop digital literacy, which helps one navigate journal websites or databases where journal content is archived. For example, *WCJ* migrated its archives to JSTOR, a well-known and pricey digital library. If a researcher has institutional access to JSTOR, the researcher then must navigate JSTOR's database, which Buck argues is "neither a simple nor a straightforward process" (p. 108). I agree with Buck's assessment of JSTOR's navigational features. When I access JSTOR through my institution's library, I land, initially, on JSTOR's Advanced Search page with two search boxes and one drop-down menu for Boolean operators (Boolean operators alone are challenging). This page is not the most direct way to *WCJ*. Instead, I need to look at the top menu, select Browse, then select By Publisher because *WCJ* is classified as a publisher in JSTOR. The publisher page provides an alphabetized table of contents; I select *W*, scroll to the bottom, and there sits *Writing Center Journal*. My experience aligns with the experiences Buck offers in this chapter—publishing in writing center studies requires institutional access and an ability to navigate websites. The final chapter is a broad reflection on the nature of academic publishing informed by the previous chapters. Buck describes her "major takeaway" that "authors at all levels should seek to be more transparent about the intricacies of publishing" (p. 120). She then argues that her readers can "maintain the publication standards required by institutions and still work to ensure that as many individuals as possible read our scholarship" (p. 120).

Therefore, the conversation in writing center studies Buck prompts is a call for more public scholarship.

We labor in fractured times. We—writing center scholars, administrators, and tutors—feel these fractured times, particularly those of us who work in U.S. institutions. In July 2017, the Pew Research Center gathered survey data on the "impact of major institutions on the country," institutions such as churches, labor unions, the banking industry, and higher education. According to the report, "Sharp Partisan Divisions in Views of National Institutions" (2017), "A majority of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents (58%) now say that colleges and universities have a negative effect on the country, up from 45% last year. By contrast, most Democrats and Democratic leaners (72%) say colleges and universities have a positive effect, which is little changed from recent years." As a professor at a public institution, I serve all people in my local community and wonder what I am to make of the acute bifurcation in people's views of my profession, my work.

I suggest Buck's book provides a starting place for engaging with these unsettling statistics. More specifically, I suggest we start with Buck's understanding of accessibility. Buck tucks accessibility under open access by asking whether readers can literally access writing center publications. Focusing on this understanding of accessibility, we would do well to ask what accessibility might mean for the public. I believe one response to the statistics I quoted above is for us to find ways to bring our knowledge making to our external communities. I wonder how accessibility might also include public scholarship. I don't think members of our community, the people we see at the grocery store, ball field, gas station, can find and read and engage with our work. But we can imagine and then enact ways to make this possible. We can do a better job communicating our work to more audiences.

To begin making writing center studies' scholarship more available to the public, we might do well to browse journals dedicated to public scholarship such as the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* or the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* to better understand methods of outreach and connect with colleagues across disciplines who are already engaged in theorizing and practicing public scholarship. We could look at Brown University's Swearer Center (Brown University 2018). The Swearer Center coordinates the only elective Carnegie Classification—the Community Engagement classification. The center's website provides five norms of public scholarship: collaborative research, transdisciplinarity, knowledge experts from outside the academy (i.e., peers), impact, and scholarly artifacts as publication. We would do well to read Arlene Stein and Jessie Daniels's (2017) *Going Public: A Guide for Social Scientists*. And, maybe more important, we must understand the potential perils of going public, which include the possibility that local op-ed pieces may not count for promotion and tenure and the danger of becoming targets of anonymous digital trolls or of partisan groups such as Turning Point USA.

I'd like to make one concrete suggestion here at the close. We publish our work in our journals, books, and edited collections. But our community members are not subscribing to our journals, let alone JSTOR. Buck suggests in her fifth chapter that "in the most ideal situation, though, everyone who wanted or needed to have access to writing center research would be able to do so at a free or affordable rate" (p. 108). Placing financial demands aside for a moment and picking up Buck's hopeful stance, I believe we can encourage access and use this access to connect with our increasingly skeptical public stakeholders. One way is through a newly designed position on journal editorial boards. Let's name this position something like *external operations editor* or *community engagement editor*. And

let's use *WCJ* as an example. When I published my case study of athletics writing centers (Rifenburg 2016), then-editors Michele Eodice, Kerri Jordan, and Steven Price took on the traditional role of coordinating two rounds of reader feedback. Kerri kept me up to date via email; Michele and Steve encouraged me when we crossed paths at conferences. My article was published. And that was the end. But there is a larger audience outside writing center studies that would be interested in what athletics writing centers do. But I don't know how to find and speak to this audience, and those editors had completed their work and were looking toward the next issue. An external ops editor, just like a marketing editor with a publishing house, would work with me to disseminate my article further. Maybe the external ops editor would help me craft a pithy five hundred-word version of my article, help me connect my arguments and exigencies to issues I see in my local community, and then help me place this op-ed in local media outlets. Maybe an external ops editor would design a visual of my work I could hang on the bulletin board of the local coffee shop or library or help me land a two-minute interview on a local radio station. Our scholarship speaks to exigencies in our field. Our scholarship also speaks to exigencies in our local communities. However, many of us struggle to transfer academic articles to op-eds for local outlets. A newly designed position on a journal's editorial board could help facilitate that work.

There's more to say, more work to do than what I offer in this brief review. Instead of asking *what doesn't work?*, I believe strongly in looking at scholarship and asking *what next?* This *next* may come from an undergraduate introduction-to-tutoring class using the fifth chapter of Buck's book, available in open-access format, to allow students to peek, briefly, into how scholars reflect on publishing. This *next* may come from dissertators writing disciplinary histories of writing center studies. This *next* may come from new writing center professionals thrust into running a center without much preparation and who wish to read about the state of scholarship before reading the scholarship itself. This *next* may come from the next editorial team of the relatively recently launched writing center journal *Peer Review* pushing its authors to speak to an audience beyond the immediate writing center professional. I ask readers to continue that spirit of *what's next?* with the ideas I offer in this review.

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