

Call for Proposals: **Writing Artifacts** (edited collection)  
Co-Edited by Cydney Alexis and Hannah J. Rule

In our first edited collection *The Material Culture of Writing* (2022), we call for others to join us in addressing a gap in writing studies: scholarship on the histories and uses of writing artifacts that reveal the material lives of those who work with them. This CFP extends that effort. For this edited collection titled *Writing Artifacts*, we invite scholars in writing studies and material culture studies, as well as those across disciplines who study writing or writing artifacts, to help us build a rich archive of the objects and possessions that matter to the study and practice of writing—broadly construed.

What is a writing artifact? For the purposes of this collection, we mean any material thing taken up in acts of writing: tools, implements, possessions, objects—material and immaterial (such as digital objects)—that can teach us about writers and writing. Any mundane human thing can be an artifact when we approach it as worthy of study. Artifacts might be one writer’s personal possessions or heirlooms or those that communities rely on to achieve communal tasks or goals. They could be small objects or large ones, artifacts that uncover the histories of marginalized groups, forgotten or lost objects, or writing tools that we know little about, but about which we want to know more. We are interested in range, from a nineteenth-century “secretaire” desk to the library card, the writing on which could be used to trace sociomaterial inequities across communities. By writing, we signal both alphabetic scribal acts and acts of multimodal, symbolic meaning-making. Our hope is to see the lives, writing histories, and writing practices of everyday people reflected in the artifacts documented in this volume.

To help writers and scholars in diverse disciplines and from diverse professional writing backgrounds envision topics, we offer the following non-exhaustive list of potential focal objects:

- An heirloom, historical artifact, or object in your writing practice or home that you’re curious about researching
- Objects that have undergone “shift” in use during the pandemic or other times of flux/crisis
- Objects that undergird the writing process, even if they’re not traditional writing “objects”
- Sentimental or talismanic objects, those that sustain writing habits
- Objects that gatekeep, surveil, regulate, or impede writing
- Marginalized objects, ones that traditionally have not been showcased or preserved
- Literacy artifacts
- Writing identity artifacts
- Objects that might not at first glance seem like writing tools, but trigger writing and writing identity performance in public or private
- Objects that sustain or tell the stories of members of marginalized communities
- Mundane or vernacular objects
- Objects relevant to specific disciplinary, cross-disciplinary, or discourse community practices
- Objects related to research and lab practices
- Medical or health-related writing objects
- Workplace objects related to writing practice or production, including workplace sites such as businesses, libraries, and printing presses
- Writing and research tools, including AI-created/informed artifacts; coding, citation, and research management software; and revision tools
- *Any object, really*: such as office or desk objects, tools, digital files, good luck charms, art, music, devices, a rolodex, old communication technologies, new communication technologies, dining

room tables, a laptop, family heirlooms, thrifted objects, an item housed in your university or workplace archives, hacked or modified objects, photographs that involve writing, quilts, typewriters, and assistive technologies such as screen readers.

Each shorter form chapter (3,000-5,000 words) in this volume should center on one writing artifact—or related set of them. Our emphasis on shorter pieces is to encourage fresh, new scholarly work—a space to test novel ideas. We hope this CFP generates broad interest and will allow scholars/writers interested in writing objects an opportunity to engage (or re-engage, post-pandemic).

We encourage work that utilizes varied qualitative and hybrid research methodologies and theoretical frameworks, as long as authors demonstrate a core interest in writing artifacts and the lives of the people who use or rely on them. Methods might include, but are not limited to, life-span interviews, autoethnography, consumer research, narrative, phenomenological approaches, observation and thick description, and historical secondary research. Contributors looking for methodological direction might consider undertaking a version of Prownian analysis, as described by Kenneth Haltman in *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture* (2000).

If the project includes research on human subjects, we ask authors to follow the best practices of the research protocols of their discipline.

### **Proposal Submission Guidelines**

- Please submit a proposal by **Sunday, September 25, 2023**, with:
  - 250-400 word abstract that identifies the artifact(s) you'll study and the research methods you'll use. Please include a tentative title for your proposed chapter. We will also accept full chapter draft submissions for consideration, provided authors to edit their work down to the 3,000-5,000 word count.
  - Your name and short bio with institutional/professional affiliation or writing/work background to provide context for your submission.
- Submissions are encouraged from all disciplines and backgrounds and welcome submissions that highlight the artifacts of marginalized communities and cultures.
- Ideally, authors will engage with material culture and/or consumer research scholarship, and we are happy to assist authors at the proposal or acceptance/revision stages. See list of touchstone work below for possible connections.
- We invite a wide range of genres/sub-genres, and favor work that is rich and complex in ideas, but written in a clear prose style that is accessible to a broad audience.
- If your project involves human subject research, please indicate the IRB timeline or share the procedure specific to your discipline.

### **Touchstone Work**

- Alexis and Rule, *The Material Culture of Writing*
- Haltman and Prown, *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture*
- Jules Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method" (*Winterthur Portfolio*)
- Henry Petroski, "Why the Pencil?" (*American Scientist*)
- Laura Micciche, "Writers Have Always Loved Mobile Devices" (*The Atlantic*)
- Henry Glassie, *Material Culture*

- Epp and Price, “The Storied Life of Singularized Objects: Forces of Agency and Network Transformation” (*Journal of Consumer Research*)
- Lesley Bartlett, “Identity Work and Cultural Artefacts in Literacy Learning and Use: A Sociocultural Analysis” (*Language and Education*)
- Gouge and Jones, “Wearables, Wearing, and the Rhetorics that Attend to Them” (*Rhetoric Society Quarterly*)
- Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *Why We Need Things*

### **Project Timeline**

Deadline for proposal submission: Sunday, September 25, 2023

Contributors notified of acceptance: Monday, October 30, 2023

Full chapter submission: Sunday, March 10, 2024

Please direct all queries and submission to both Cydney Alexis, cydneyalexis [at] gmail [dot] com and Hannah Rule, rulehann [at] gmail [dot] com

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