

CFP

Histories of the Future: Computer Labs in Writing Instruction

Editors: Scott Lloyd DeWitt, John Jones, and Ben McCorkle

Background

The editors are seeking proposals for chapters in an edited collection that will explore the history, development, and future of computer labs and classrooms in writing and rhetoric. Computer labs and classrooms have had a prominent role in the teaching of writing for multiple decades. As computers became widely available in educational spaces, writing instructors established independent computer writing labs (Selfe, 1989, p. xix) where students and instructors could practice writing skills and engage with emerging computational technologies. Crucially, these spaces took on unique features because they were designed by writing scholars specifically for the teaching of writing.

Computing spaces designed for writing by writing instructors offer a currently under-studied window into the development of writing pedagogy, as well as how this pedagogy was impacted both by the evolution of computing technologies and the often-mundane processes of seeking funding, space, and administrative time to support these labs. As Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe (1996) note, the development of computers and writing practices occurs not only at the level of a field, but also within institutions, which can move more quickly (or more slowly) than the field as a whole (p. 15). By collecting histories of these writing spaces—how they came to be, what goals and principles guided their design, how they changed over time—this collection will provide valuable information about how writing instruction has reacted to technological and institutional changes.

We believe our current moment also provides an interesting opportunity to explore the future of dedicated computing spaces in the teaching of writing. Not only must writing programs grapple with the ubiquity of mobile computing and new computing paradigms like virtual reality and generative AI, but higher education is also faced with multiple challenges, including calls for austerity for writing programs and the humanities more broadly. In this context, there are important questions to ask about the future of computer-based writing instruction and the type of support that instruction requires. While writing programs continue to innovate with dedicated computing spaces, some have reevaluated the cost of (and need for) these spaces and adapted their pedagogy to incorporate students' personal writing technologies. The state of the art in computers and writing instruction can vary from program to program, and we hope to bring together contributions documenting how writing instructors are reimagining computing spaces in ways that focus on the writing goals of their users, not current technological trends or whims of the computing industry.

Call for proposals

The editors seek proposals for chapters that will fit in two sections: First, we are looking for **histories that document the stories of computer labs**, including how they were funded, staffed, and supported, the writing pedagogies and institutional or programmatic needs they were designed to address, how these factors changed over time, and the impact of these spaces on students.

Second, we wish to pair these histories with **forward-looking speculations that suggest new approaches to computer-supported writing spaces** and respond to the material conditions of computing technologies and writing instruction in contemporary institutions.

These chapters could take one of several possible forms:

- Histories of a department or program's establishment of computer labs or classroom spaces for writing instruction told within their institutional context
- Histories of the pedagogical approaches to writing instruction in computing spaces and how these affected lab design and development (such as choices in software, room layout and design, administrative structures, etc.)
- Interviews or oral histories with faculty and administrators instrumental in the development of an institution or program's computing spaces
- Multimodal projects that integrate archival materials promoting or advocating for computer-based writing spaces into these histories
- Descriptions of innovative computer/technology classroom designs and the pedagogical goals they address
- Speculations on the role of computing spaces in writing instruction drawn from emerging theories or pedagogical practices in the academy
- Descriptions and definitions of what now constitutes a computing space in writing studies
- Descriptions of emerging or cutting-edge technology teaching practices for computer classrooms, non-computer classrooms, teaching online, or other environments
- Descriptions of the ways programs or institutions have moved past computer labs to address the writing needs of their students
- Explorations of current and future infrastructural challenges related to supporting computer labs and classrooms (or other technologies) associated with writing programs

Submission instructions

Please submit proposals of 500-words or less (not including references) along with copies of the contributors' CVs. The editors encourage submissions of traditional essays and born-digital genres. If you intend to write in a digital-born genre or incorporate multimedia elements into your chapter, please indicate this in the proposal. In addition to addressing the content and format of the chapter, authors should provide the names of all contributors, the media requirements of the chapter, and its planned length. Ideally, final chapters should be 5,000–7,000 words (or the equivalent for digital projects).

Please use [this link to upload your documents](#).

For preliminary inquiries and any other questions for the editors, please email jones.6181@osu.edu.

Timeline:

Feb. 1, 2024: Proposals due to editors

Mar. 1, 2024: Responses sent to authors

May 31, 2024: Chapters due for first round of reviews.