

Celebrating our Discipline: On the Occasion of WPA's 40th Anniversary

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[Archives] are the basis for and validation of the stories we tell ourselves, the story-telling narratives that give cohesion and meaning to individuals, groups, and societies.

—Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook,
“Archives, Records, and Power” (2)

The editors determined to use the newly rigorous journal not merely to keep in touch with other administrators, but to define and improve an area of composition that was coming to be extremely important.

—Robert J. Connors,
“Journals in Composition” (360)

What does it mean to see, for a moment, CWPA or WPA as a middle-aged entity, and to open, through that metaphor, a consideration of the vitality, viability, pace, precaution, maturity, regret, vision, and second chances that come with middle age?

—Stephanie Roach,
“Tools of the Trade” (17)

Compared to other academic organizations and their journals—MLA and PMLA, NCTE and *College English*, CCCC and CCC—CWPA and WPA maintain, even in their 40s, the lovely blush of youth (witness this issue's red cover!). Today WPAs are more confident in the ways we address the world of academe, more assured of our value to the university, more knowl-

edgeable about the types of research that can support our programs, and better prepared to fight for our colleagues and our students than we were when this journal was still in its infancy. We have matured as a discipline, but that maturity has not led to complacency: as we approach middle age, we do not take our disciplinary accomplishments for granted. And so, in celebration of this journal's fourth decade, we pause to offer up this collection of historical works documenting both our journal's youthful dalliances and its inevitable and righteous coming of age.

The contributors to this anniversary issue provide us with new insights into our past, offer up reflections from the scholars and editors who have shaped this journal over the past four decades, and draw our attention to areas for future work and research. When we called for contributions to this special issue, we were overwhelmed by the responses both from the newest members of our disciplinary community and from scholars who have been with this organization since its earliest years. Given the sheer number of articles selected for inclusion, we will forego our tradition of summarizing the issue's contents piece by piece. In this issue most broadly, however, readers will find interviews with *WPA* contributors and editors, as well as works documenting the journal's historical engagement with disciplinary activities, including assessment and GTA training. Our contributors have provided opportunities for us to acknowledge this journal's longstanding investment in confronting our labor practices; engaging with issues of race, gender, and ability/disability; and interrogating our disciplinary assumptions. We hope readers will see these pieces as invitations to delve deeper into the journal's archives, and as roadmaps to help guide the way.

Woven through a number of these works are references to *WPA*'s founding editor, Kenneth Bruffee, including a review of his editorial legacy written by Melissa Ianetta. While we were working on this special issue, we were saddened to learn of Bruffee's passing. His editorship established the journal as an important instrument in the knowledge-building efforts of WPAs. We would like to think that our editorial predecessor would be pleased by the historical reflections found in this issue.

A number of our authors also mention the journal's original red cover. Doug Hesse has contributed a story about the red cover's symbolic connection to the Works Progress Administration and the history of organized labor in the United States, a legacy of activism that we believe is worth commemorating. As we revive the red cover for this one special issue to honor the journal's origins, we find it a happy coincidence that the traditional gift for the 40th anniversary is the ruby.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An issue celebrating *WPA*'s history seems like an ideal opportunity to acknowledge and thank David Blakesley for the myriad ways he has contributed to the journal for almost two decades. David began serving as the journal's production editor in 2002, he has done the layout of every issue of *WPA* since that time, and Parlor Press has published the journal for almost seventeen years. But this special issue owes its very existence to David for another reason: all of our contributors made use of the digital archive of past *WPA* journal and newsletter issues that David—with the assistance of his graduate students—prepared and made available on the CWPA website. As editors of *WPA*, we are grateful to David for his immense professionalism, creativity, and support. This journal would not be what it is today without David and Parlor Press. Thank you, David!

We are especially grateful to our reviewers for this special issue: Beth Brunk-Chavez, Amy Cicchino, Sarah Z. Johnson, Kelly Moreland, Shelley Rodrigo, Wendy Sharer, Susan Thomas, and Chris Warnick. These members of the editorial board helped us decide what historical works to include in this special issue, and their insights into these pieces proved invaluable throughout the editing process.

Finally, we would like to thank the CWPA Executive Board and leadership for their support of this special issue. We would also be remiss to not thank the members of CWPA whose modest dues support this publication. If you are not already a member of CWPA, we encourage you to join at the CWPA website. And if you are able, please consider joining the council at the sustaining level.

WORKS CITED

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