REVIEW OF *MULTILITERACY CENTERS: WRITING CENTER WORK, NEW MEDIA, AND MULTIMODAL RHETORIC*, EDITED BY DAVID M. SHERIDAN AND JAMES A. INMAN

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While writing center directors will certainly want to read *Multiliteracy Centers: Writing Center Work, New Media, and Multimodal Rhetoric*, a new collection edited by David M. Sheridan and James Inman, this book is equally important for writing program administrators, WAC (writing the curriculum) directors, and other academic professionals charged with composition pedagogy. The book explores the current and future potential for writing centers in light of the "multimodal turn," which arose from three intersecting conditions:

- the "proliferation" of online composing tools,
- the ease with which non-specialists can engage in "multimedia production and distribution," and
- the "increasing cultural acceptance of multimodal compositions as 'serious' and useful forms of communication" (1,2).

The editors and authors promote the notion of the "Multiliteracy Center" (MLC) in response to the multimodal turn.

In five sections, the collection describes, defends, and imagines how MLCs might be structured in terms of:

- physical and online spaces (section one: "Space");
- tutor training (section two: "Operation and Practice");
- outreach within and beyond the university (section three: "Connections");
- services provided (section four: "Production"); and,
- budget (section five: "Reality Check").

The chapters in all five sections encourage readers to take on "a bit of utopian thinking" (6) regarding fashioning writing centers as campus sites of multimodal and multimedia literacy tutoring, while also providing concrete suggestions about where to get resources—both intellectual and fungible.

The "Space" section starts off the collection very practically, with Inman's "Designing Multiliteracy Centers: A Zoning Approach." Inman introduces the notion of "zones" in the writing center that facilitate different kinds of multiliteracy tutoring (from video/audio editing to "old-fashioned" face-to-face conversation). The next chapter in this section reiterates Inman's claim that MLCs need "zones" for tutoring different aspects of the composing process and showcases Clemson University's "Class of '41 Online Studio" ("Composing Multiple Spaces" by Morgan Gresham). Gresham walks readers through the four iterations she designed for Clemson's online MLC before arriving at the final site. She wrestles with how to replicate and expand on a multiliteracy center in an online environment, seeking to provide both static information and interactive communication.

The "Space" section transitions nicely to the first essay in the "Operation and Practice" section by keeping the focus on Clemson's Class of '41 MLC. Teddi Fishman, a colleague of Gresham, describes how the team at Clemson designed the physical Class of '41 Studio in the chapter "When It Isn't Even on the Page: Peer Consulting in Multimedia Environments." Fishman provides readers with a blueprint of the center and discusses how each "zone" (with its unique equipment and layout) facilitates "orientation practices," "theoretical practices," "technology practices," and "tutoring practices." The next two chapters in the "Operation and Practice" section, Sheridan's "All Things to All People: Multiliteracy Consulting and the Materiality of Rhetoric" and Richard Selfe's "Anticipating the Momentum of Cyborg Communicative Events," focus

more directly on the tutors themselves and their capacity to serve multimodal composers. They argue that tutoring cannot be effective without critical decision-making about mode/medium of production and delivery. For example, Sheridan's chapter ends with an impressive heuristic designed to foster (traditional) tutoring conversations about purpose and audience, as well as considerations of how students should deliver the text they are composing (printed page, photo-intensive website, brochure, etc.). Selfe, like Sheridan, asserts the need for MLC tutors to be technologically and rhetorically literate; he calls such a tutor an "advanced literacy practitioner." Advanced literacy practitioners are adept at understanding "cyborg communicative events," described as composing processes that account for human agents (author, audience) and non-human agents, such as hardware and software. The human and non-human together—the *cyborg*—function as the cornerstone of multiliteracy for Selfe.

The "Production" section is comprised of two chapters casting the MLC as a site of knowledge construction. (The "Connections" section falls between "Operation and Practice" and "Production"; I discuss it in depth below.) This section mirrors the "Space" section with a more general, theoretical chapter followed by a specific example from one university. Christina Murphy and Lory Hawkes ("The Future of Multiliteracy Centers in the E-World: An Exploration of Cultural Narratives and Cultural Transformations") argue that writing center professionals must be retrained as "digital content specialists" with knowledge of XML (or other Web text authoring tools) so they can produce online tutoring content and "assume their rightful and credible role as a knowledge-making academic resource that fosters the major educational and societal goals of multimodal literacy" (174). Sheridan's chapter "Multiliteracy Centers as Content Producers: Designing Online Learning Experiences for Writers" features a tutor-produced video about developing thesis statements. As an alternative to the traditional instructional lecture, the group at Michigan State created a narrative of a student talking to a tutor, to

friends, and others, as she strives to write a thesis statement.

Jackie Grutch McKinney's chapter, the final essay in the book and the only entry in the "Reality Check" section, is a "timely . . . cautionary warning" to writing center administrators about the need to embrace multiliteracy tutoring and co-construct "the new media ecology on our campuses" (219), lest it fall to "other campus entities" without pedagogical goals or expertise. With that said, she does urge us to recognize that large-scale change is nearly impossible to achieve quickly, but that it is feasible in small steps that stretch but do not overburden budgets and staff.

The collection provides an introduction to vanguard MLCs—cutting-edge models; however, readers may wish for some chapters to address small campuses, campuses with severe budget challenges, or community colleges. One other shortcoming of note is the lack of discussion of gender, race, or class—they go virtually unmentioned. Given the vexed history of literacy, technology, and gender/race/class, one might expect the editors to have sought a chapter that explicitly addresses how multiliteracy centers can serve historically marginalized students.

In Jo Koster's informative and insightful review of *Multiliteracy Centers* (*Writing Lab Newsletter* September/October 2011), she supposes that two chapters—Sheridan's "All Things to All People" and Selfe's "Anticipating the Momentum of Cyborg Communicative Events"—will become the stand-out essays of this collection: Sheridan's for its useful appendix and Selfe's for its controversial argument. These two chapters, found in the "Operation and Practice" section, are certainly well worth reading, but the chapters in the second half of the book (especially in the "Connections" and "Reality Check" sections) focus more explicitly on collaboration across campus and beyond, which is the most promising theme of the collection.

I see "Connections" as the heart of the book for its long view of collaboration. The two chapters in this section focus on the role a multiliteracy center can play in composition classes using service learning (George Cooper's "Writing Ain't What It Used to Be: An Exercise on College Multiliteracy") and in an

MLC-sponsored summer institute for local K-12 teachers ("Multiliteracies Across Lifetimes: Engaging K-12 Students and Teachers Through Technology-Based Outreach" by Troy Hicks). Readers might fret, "Not only do I have to transform the Writing Center into an MLC, but now I also have to sponsor service-learning and K-12 training!" But, as McKinney suggests, centers can grow slowly into MLC-hood, taking smaller steps as budgets and collaborative opportunities allow. For example, if writing centers collaborate with local high schools to enhance critical literacy, these high school graduates may end up working in our burgeoning MLCs as "advanced literacy practitioners" (Selfe). Likewise, service-learning and community engagement centers are often directed by seasoned grant writers willing to collaborate with aspiring MLCs on funded projects.

As a former writing center director and a current writing program administrator, I see *Multiliteracy Centers* as a series of essays that make explicit (again) the fundamental need for collaboration among rhetoric and composition professionals (writ large) and the wider public. For me, the most generative question the book raises is: who is capable of/responsible for multiliteracy instruction?

Works Cited

Sheridan, David, and James A. Inman, eds. *Multiliteracy Centers: Writing Center Work, New Media, and Multimodal Rhetoric.* New York: Hampton Press, 2010. Print.