

This is a pre-print version of Elkie Burnside's webtext *A Review of Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* published in *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 20(1), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/20.1/reviews/burnside>.

Textual Critique

Burnside discusses strengths of the text and areas users may want to consider when planning for instruction. This assessment is based on teaching with the text in three different types of classes over several semesters. Two instructor resources are mentioned in the critique. These are briefly described and linked to below.

Instructor Guide: This downloadable PDF is provided free and includes:

Introduction – Further details of the theoretical background for the text – As shared in this review

Annotated table of contents – Connecting the e-Pages, in-text activities, and the overall scope of the text together on a chapter-by-chapter basis

Sample syllabi – Three different approaches to incorporating the text into classes

Assessment of multimodal work – Instructional strategies and sample grading policy for multimodal work

Annotated bibliography – Further foundational texts on the theories and practices that shaped the text

xi: [Visualizing Composition](#): This online resource is offered free to students purchasing the text and provides further activities and enrichment that teach vocabulary and frameworks for multimodal composing.

Opening Thoughts and Chapters 1 to 4 (length 7:10)

In this clip I will provide a chapter-by-chapter overview based on my experience with teaching with *Writer/Designer*. I've used *Writer/Designer* in three different types of courses: A 300-level eRhetoric and writing class, a 300-level visual rhetorics course, a 200-level introduction to technical writing class. All of these experiences have produced something different, but they do have digital multimodal portfolio text as the final assessment in the class. So that is why *Writer/Designer* is so great for me, it is kind of nice because it does bring together all of these resources into one book that I used to have to kind of cobble together from readings or other different kinds of activities. I really like the Preface for Instructors, the authors really do want to have this book not only be for first year writing or even writing centered classes but also have an interdisciplinary approach. The authors really do work to help people make the case for multimodal composing in different classes, giving that kind of back ground in text. I really do like the activities as they have them scattered throughout the book. I will give a few comments as I go through about ways that they could be better organized or better labeled. As I started teaching with this book, I did go to the instructor resource page that the publisher offers. I did download the instructor manual, which is a free PDF that you can also access. So that is also something nice, in addition to the other free resources that come along with, the xi that Cheryl talks about in another clip and the other *Write/Design* assignments that are already part of the book.

The book starts with a solid introduction for the students, having them, kind of giving them the background and helping them understand the concepts that they are about to

approach. I think sometimes the students have an understanding of what multimodal is, but they don't have the vocabulary, they don't have the language...and so really like that the introduction does kind of jumpstart them into that. The first chapter about what is multimodal projects and how the modes work, giving that background, allowing the student to perceive and understand these things. I think that I really like, the thing I like about this chapter is that it is a very good overview of the ideas that are about to come and it is very well supported by strong examples. I especially like that they provide case studies. I think sometimes though, as I have taught with this, students are really reluctant to see multimodal texts as scholarly. They have a hard time understanding where that academic piece comes in, and chapter four does a really good job of addressing that, so that is something that comes up, but it is very difficult sometimes to get them to kind of come along with you initially as you work through this kind of a text.

The next chapter is about analyzing and thinking about rhetoric and multimodality and I do like it. However, sometimes the order of talking about audience, purpose, context, and then author seems to be at the last. And in my classes, I know my students, that's the point which we can start from. They understand themselves as authors and where they need to go from, from that point. So the organization is a little difficult there. And then also, looking at genre conventions, I think that genre is a concepts that students struggle with sometimes and there really is an oneness on the instructor here to make sure that you are bringing in enough genres. The case study that is in this chapter is good, but I really feel like I have to bring in a lot of other genres. One thing that I do use with this chapter, we happen to have a museum on campus, instead of just focusing the design choices, the examples out of the book or any digital examples that students can find or I can bring in. We actually go to the museum and walk around with the curator. We have some analysis assignments based on the art in the museum where they consider what if the author had made a different design choice. And the museum that we have is a children's illustration museum and so they very often to get see the choices that were changed from the illustration on the wall, the original illustration, to what was being published in the book. So if you can find something like that, it really seems to help the students understand that. I think that chapter two is a very central chapter. In this place I would say the xi: Visualizing Composition exercises are mentioned as optional. I would say in this chapter they are really critical and students seem to be more successful with them, if you use them.

So chapter three is about choosing the genre, pitching your project and again, my critique about "they don't know enough about genre" in chapter two, they answer that in chapter three and I think it's just difficult to know where to bring that in. They do a great job of having them assess genre in this chapter. I just get a lot of questions about it. I think in the context of how I teach, some of the Write/Design assignments, which are assignments at the end of major sections to allow students to start working through the process. Some of them are a little ambitious, having students look at a lot of texts in this way. In my context it is difficult, you want to definitely take a look at them and see if it is accomplishable for your students before you assign those. I think it is very interesting, the pitch and the idea of proposal. Because I teach this with a technical writing class it is very fun and unique to talk about proposals not just being written, alphabetic documents, but also incorporating that oral and spoken part of the pitch.

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Chapter four I find very valuable, again, because of that idea that students have a reluctance to work with multimodal sources, that they have a difficulty thinking about multimodal sources. I really like the section on creative commons and fair use. I actually use this in my graduate classes as well when I am teaching digital multimodality, that section on thinking about fair use. I would say that it is good as an overview of complex issues. I don't expect my students to understand all of the issues in the chapter, I think that is something to think about. So you might, as you go through this you might want to help students by selecting a specific style. This chapter helps them understand how it can be different styles. So in my sequence students have the choice to choose between a video, a series of audio clips, or a poster-flyer-pamphlet series. And in class we talk about so what would it look like in a flyer? You know you have a lot more space, versus in a pamphlet where your textual space is really restricted. We talk a lot about, ok, so maybe you want to use footnotes and have that whole back space for your references. And how would the footnotes work within the brochure? But why or how would you do that on a poster? That would be different, you have a lot more room on a poster. However posters are for larger spaces and people aren't going to read the fine print as much. So we talk about all of those things and that chapter really helps bring that up.