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Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects
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Reviewed by Elkie Burnside

Published in January 2014, Writer/Designer brings together the expertise of Kristin L. Arola, Jennifer Sheppard, and Cheryl E. Ball to provide those interested in creating multimodal projects in classrooms with a process-oriented guide for understanding, drafting, and producing multimodal texts across disciplinary bounds.

This audio review is based on a presentation by all three at Computers and Writing 2014. Clips are also included of this reviewer's critique of and experiences teaching with the text. The review can be experienced in any order the reader wishes. Each section is described below, select a starting point as desired.

Content

This section of the review features clips that give an overview of the background for creating the book, specific design features used throughout the text, and a brief overview of the table of contents.

Context

This section of the review features an example sequence created by Arola based on the book and general authorial advice on the benefit of the text and thoughts on assessment of multimodal projects.

Critique

This section of the review features an example sequence based on this reviewer's use of the text and a chapter-by-chapter and overarching critique of text content based on several semesters of instruction with the text.

About the Reviewer

Dr. Elkie Burnside is an Assistant Professor of English at The University of Findlay. Her research interests center on the intersections of multimodality, rhetoric, and instructional methods in a variety of settings (both academic and professional). She instructs undergraduate and graduate writing courses focused on professional writing, multimodal composing, and visual rhetoric. She also serves as an Assistant Editor for *Kairos*.

CONTENT

The following clips give a general description of the book and the decisions the authors made while designing, creating, and finalizing the text. The first clip explains the theoretical foundation used in developing the text. The second clip briefly highlights the design features of the text. The final clip provides a chapter-by-chapter overview from an author's perspective. Brief descriptions outline the main ideas in each clip to assist readers in selection, clips do not need to be listened to in order to be understandable.

Background and Commitment for Practice

Sheppard explains how the authors developed the idea for the textbook and outlines the book's three pedagogical commitments: 1) Look at and analyze many examples, 2) Provide hands-on learning, and 3) Use flexible assessment strategies. (*length 4:04*)

> Sheppard: Alright, well I'm gonna go ahead and get started. My name is Jenny Sheppard, I'm going to be presenting with Kristen and Cheryl today and we're going to talk just a little bit about the book that we just finished writing: Writer/Designer: A guide to making multimodal projects. I'm going to give you a little bit of background on why we wrote this book and kind of our approach to it. We were all grad students together at Michigan Tech when the faculty there got rid of first year writing and turned it into a second year course called Revisions on Written, Oral, and Visual Communication. And it was really a challenging course for us to teach as grad students and to move from being compositionists to people who were really focused on integrating all these different modes. And the idea behind the course was really to make sure students could think about the rhetorical situation, using all available means of persuasion. So one of the arguments that those faculty made was that the underlying strategy of the class was not to separate the oral and the written and the visual communication but rather to help students come to an understanding that purposeful selection of mode and medium always involves making rhetorical decisions and requires thoughtful and aware modification for particular audiences and circumstances. So in other words our job was not to teach discrete conventions of each mode but really to help students consider which modes were most appropriate in a given circumstance.

> And so in the about decade or so since we've graduated we've all gone on to work in kind of different areas of writing studies. I've focused a little bit more on professional communication, Cheryl's looked at digital publishing, and Kristen has worked in indigenous rhetorics that gives you the simplification. In that time though, we've continued to modify what we've done in our teaching. We constantly are sharing syllabi, back and forth, taking each other's work and kind of modifying it, making it into new courses. But what we found along the way is that we didn't, we couldn't find a book that really captured the way that we wanted to think about moving from theory into practice. So there's a lot of multimodal theory out there, we've really followed kind of The New London Group's work on multiliteracies and a belief that students need an experience with all of those things. So we decided to write a book that would help us translate that. I'm just going to tell you how we shaped this book and what we believe in.

> First, we really believe in having students look at lots and lots of examples and analyzing them, from all different kinds of modes so that they can see how other people are

approaching this. We want students to have a common language, so common terms that we can talk about in class. Things about design, things about – if we are talking about audio, how different sound effects or volume levels or transitions, all of those things really affect the audience. So the ability of students to identify particular affordances and rhetorical choices within various media is really important for them in being able to choose what's appropriate for a given situation.

Secondly we believe in the power of hands-on learning. That it's really important to actually get in there and try creating these kinds of texts. It's a huge difference between reading and analyzing a text and actually putting one together yourself. And so a lot of the work in the book is really about getting students to actually construct their own texts through whatever medium they are choosing.

Lastly we believe in a flexible assessment strategy. So our strategy for looking at the work of students and providing feedback really has to be dependent upon where they're starting from, the kinds of media that they are using, the kind of audience that they are creating it for, all of those things. So we don't really have on set strategy for how we assess things.

So that gives you a little bit of sense of why we approached this book the way we did and what we hoped students will get from it. For 176 page book it took us a remarkably long time, but we hope that if you check it out and use it in your class it will be something that you'll see can be used as a linear text or something very modular. So if you want to look at just how to do storyboarding or you want to look at genre analysis, each of the chapters will give you a way of being able to do that.

Book Design and Special Features

Ball describes the book size, overall design, textual features, and online components included with the text. (length 4:35)

Ball: But just to, very briefly, go over some of the very specific ways that it's different – like what Jenny was talking about than other writing textbooks. The first thing you can see is the size. It's tiny and that's for a very specific purpose. One because this book is not meant to be **the** book you use. If you are required to use a textbook in your writing class or in your design class or whatever. This might be the only that you use, but it's meant to supplement other readers or rhetorics that you might have. So it's really formed on that heuristic based design structure that Jenny was talking about. We also kept it small so that the students could afford it.

This is a book purposefully written so that students might actually keep it, if they are interested in keeping it. Because it is process oriented and not around a specific genre but allows for any kind of project to be completed using this structure. They paid extra to have it spiral bound so that it would set open like a handbook, like the Hacker, or something like that. But of course it's not nearly that monolithic, but it makes it very portable.

And people ask: But, why are you doing a multimodal book in print? Part of it's so that you can have it right there and you can mark it up and flip through it. We went back and forth on that issue, but there is an entire online component to it. The ePages part which

supplements this has an incredible amount of resources that we can continue to add to. So if you find stuff that you would like us to add to it, you can go to our Facebook page and make recommendations for us to include interactive multimedia stuff – audio files, video files, other interactive types of things that we can't put in a print book.

There's also, if you're familiar with the earlier project that Kristen and I worked on *ix: visualizing exercises*, which is now online – in an online edition, that's also hooked into the book so students get that for free. And what that project does is give students a very specific design vocabulary to work from.

We don't actually use the term students in the book by the way. We talk about writers. We've tried to scrub all of the teacher and student language out of the book. Occasionally the word instructor I think is used, but we try very hard to talk about writers and projects and clients and sometimes stakeholders. Things like that because we want to encourage teachers and students to be grounded in these real world projects that they might take up in the class, in a writing intensive class.

At the end of every chapter is an assignment that takes students – writers, to the next stage. So it is all process oriented, but as a teacher you might pull parts out. Use some chapters, don't use others; use some assignments, don't use others.

The assignment sequence moves from analysis, genre selection, pitching your project idea, coming up with a source list, creating a proposal for that project that's more detail oriented. So there's all sorts of genres built in there. And then we've got creating mock-ups and storyboards. So how do you draft the design of the piece, how do you focus on the non-linguistic elements of it, how do you do that by choosing which technologies you might use in the classroom?

One of the ways that we didn't want to write this book was to say: Let's teach them how to write a visual argument. I have to put that in scare quotes "visual argument." Because in my opinion that is not a genre. It's a move that a text makes, right? And so you see a lot of handbooks that will teach visual argument or a video essay, and I'm like – I don't know what that is, right? I don't know how to grade that because I don't know what genre conventions a visual argument should have. And so, we got rid of that in order to allow students and teachers to figure out what they wanted to work on themselves.

And then building the grading criteria for this stuff is built throughout the book and it's a collaborative process that instructors do with students based on what the genre conventions are of whatever text the groups or the individuals have chosen to design.

Table of Contents Overview

Ball provides a brief description of the eight chapters included in the text. (length 2:56)

- Chapter 1: What are Multimodal Projects?
- Chapter 2: Analyzing Multimodal Projects
- Chapter 3: Choosing a Genre and Pitching Your Project
- Chapter 4: Working with Multimodal Sources
- Chapter 5: Assembling your Technologies and Your Team
- Chapter 6: Designing Your Project

- Chapter 7: Drafting and Revising Your Project
- Chapter 8: Putting Your Project to Work

Ball: To very briefly go through the table of contents. The first chapter explains The New London Group. The second chapter is the analysis chapter and in that one we've got a lot of work and tie-ins with *visualizing exercises*, so the design terms are included in there. The third chapter is choosing a genre and pitching your project.

Chapter four is one close to my heart – if you can say such a thing about a guidebook. *(Audience laughter)* Because it is called working with multimodal sources. And one of the things that you've probably discovered in teaching multimodal texts to your own students, is that the kinds of sources that we call credible these days are not necessarily in scholarly journals and books, right? If you're doing a remix project with your students, a credible source might be another remix project on YouTube or Vimeo or something like that. And so there's a thorough discussion about the differences between the kinds of sources that you might pull from. What might be credible, when and why according to the genre that you are using. With a nice discussion about the copyright and fair use, and permissions and creative commons is going to be useful for folks as well.

And then we've got creating mockups and storyboards. So how do you draft the design of the piece, how do you focus on the non-linguistic elements of it, how do you do that by choosing which technologies you might use in the classroom? And then the genre conventions are used as part of the evaluative criteria during chapter seven: Drafting and revising your project. Which includes peer review feedback.

And then the last chapter: Putting your project to work. You know we often teach multimodal classes and then we have these texts at the end of the class that we're just like: Put on YouTube. And then we walk away from them and never think back. And we wanted to avoid that because there are so many times when students need to say: Wait, I'm going into law school, or I need to – I'm becoming a doctor and I don't want somebody to come back seven years from now and Google this. So we talk about what is the life cycle of your work. Whether it's client based work or whether it's personal expressive work, what do you need to do to make this work, either livable or to scrub it from the internet entirely? So we've included that including doing reports for other clients or for the teacher as the audience.

CONTEXT

The following clips help provide a brief glimpse at the ways the author's believe the text can be used and applied. The first clip and accompanying link provides an example teaching sequence created by Arola's based on using Writer/Designer. The clip provides a brief description of the assignments and rational provided by the instructor. The next clip includes Sheppard and Arola's opinions on the benefit of the text as well as a brief thoughts on assessment from Ball. Brief descriptions outline the main ideas in each clip to assist readers in selection, clips do not need to be listened to in order to be understandable.

DTC/ENGL 355 ~ Multimedia Authoring: Exploring New Rhetorics

Arola provides an overview of how she developed a three part sequence of assignments using the concept of slow composition. The assignment descriptions can be found on Arola's website. You may want to follow the link before listening to the clip. (length 5:35)

> Arola: I'm going to show you a couple student examples and explain to you probably the biggest thing I learned by using this book for the first time this spring in one of my classes, which is the concept of slow composition. That is, taking the time to actually do the work that students need to produce multimodal texts that they can be proud of and that you can feel good about having worked with them on. This is for a course called DTC355: Multimedia authoring. So it is a 300 level course, however, truthfully the way that I taught it, it could probably be more a 100 and 200 level, I'm not sure this assignment would quite retrofit into a 101 in the slow way that I'm talking about, it might. So you might just be thinking about ways that you could do that. I'm going to talk about it in the context that I taught the course.

> This class had three projects. The first project in this course was an introductory website and design justification. This was really just teaching them to do HTML and CSS, so this was more of a techie based assignment – learn some code, introduce yourself, and then talk a little bit about why you did what you did. The second project was similar but with video, and so messing around. We just did iMovie in this class, we were going to do FinalCut and time got weird. So we just did iMovie, which was fine for the needs of the class. Some people think it is a little too simplistic, I think students can do just as good or horrible a job with iMovie as they can with something much more advanced and expensive. And then the final project, which I'm going to talk about. You'll notice how the percentages here build to the final project as this big thing. So really they're just getting some technical chops at the beginning and then for the entire second half of the semester, even a little more, I think it was about 9 weeks for me, students worked on this final project.

> And the final project was an informational campaign. This was pretty broad, so when we were talking about genre, I chose the genre for them sort of, I chose the big umbrella genre, which is informational campaign. It was up to them to choose the smaller genre within that. So are we talking about informational health related campaigns, are we talking about sort of environmental issues, are we talking about information in terms of travel tips, things like that. How are you defining information? So it was up to them to choose.

Their job was to create an informational campaign geared towards this community here on the Pulouse, so Moscow, Pullman, maybe WSU. The topic was up to them, I gave them some ideas, but what they needed to do in these – I think it was 9 weeks – they needed a logo and a clearly defined color scheme and graphic identity. They needed a 30 second to one minute video that served either as an introduction to the campaign or as an advertisement. And they needed written components consistent with their genre of informational campaigns. So it was pretty broad, but what the book allowed me to do was to walk them through those steps to get them to the end point. So you'll see: "in order to get to this final project you need to complete the following steps." Part one was a genre analysis report and this is coming out of kind of the first three chapters of the book, where students are grounded in some terminology. They are doing some assessment of genres out there and figuring out what a genre looks like, what are those conventions, what colors do cancer awareness sites tend to use? What kind of images do they tend to use? What kind of language do they tend to use? We do this stuff already but it was kind of formalizing it and slowing it down a little for them.

So they were in groups for this project and each group had to write a genre analysis report along with an appendix with examples. You can look at how I did that if you are interested. After doing that work they needed to create a pitch proposal. So what are **you** going to do in your group? So with the genre analysis they had to kind of have an idea, we think we want to do a save the whales sort of thing. So they will go out and look at other save the whales type of campaign because that is what the genre analysis report is on. The pitch is on what are they going to do. So we looked at a bunch of save the whales campaigns and learned these things and this is what we're going to do and we're going to be a little different or we're going to take these best practices, we're not going to do these things because these things, we didn't think worked and here's how we're going to frame it. So the pitch was part two and they got feedback on that from their classmates and from me as well. Then they had a team contract, they had to decide who was going to do what in the group, who was going to be in charge. They tended to break it down, although not all did, by their strengths and skill set. So we had the communications person was doing a lot of the writing and the script writing. And a visual person doing a lot of the graphic identity, a web person doing some of the web work, sometimes a video person. They sort of worked it out in their team. Then we got to mock-ups and storyboards. So the mock-up would be for the website itself, what's the website going to look like? The storyboard was for the video and we did some peer reviewing with that. Then we have a rough draft, then we have a final draft, and a presentation. The presentation was where in this case the students did a justification. In some ways it was more, it was a justification insofar as I wanted them to imagine we were the clients and they were pitching their informational campaign to us. Why should we choose this informational campaign to use for your imagined organization?

Authorial Perspective and Advice

Sheppard, Arola, and Ball provide insight into possible benefits for using the text and aspects of assessment that may need to be addressed when using the book. (length 2:38)

Burnside: This clip shares the benefit of the book from Sheppard and Arola's viewpoint. In addition the clip ends with a little bit of a discussion of assessment that Ball brings up in response to a questions toward the end of the panel.

(Authors speak post-panel with reviewer about the book – background noise of other participants throughout)

Burnside: Where do you see the benefit of this book?

Jenny Sheppard: Well I think we talk a lot about multimodality and multiliteracies kind of in a theoretical way, but this gives support for the hands on implementation of that. So for me that is one of the biggest benefits. We really value this as writing instructors to be able to think about these issues but this gives kind of hands on support as you are going through it.

EB: Where do you see the benefit of this text?

Kristen Arola: I think interdisciplinary work would be ideal, but you kind of never know and can't control that as much as you control your local situation. So for me, the benefit quite locally is that my students in the digital technology and culture program that I teach in here. By using the ideas that come out of this book I hope no matter what class they take, no matter what media they are working with they will be really mindful about the texts that they produce. So they'll be able to justify it, think about why they made the choices they made, understand what a genre looks like, understand why to work within a genre, or why not to work within a genre. And I hope that's transferrable to other courses for my students.

(Ball responds during Q and A portion of panel.)

Ball: Think about too, one of the things that I think we've all learned by using this process is, we change the bar of what we expect students to be able to accomplish in a semester. While they can produce, in some ways, much more difficult and larger texts than they would by producing writing in our class, only writing. When I teach the book in my undergraduate multimodal composition class I ask students to produce webtexts for online journals like *Kairos* and *C and C Online*, etc. But the end point, where the project ends up at the end of the semester is only a webtext that is submit-able. Because that's the same requirement an author has for the journal. It doesn't have to be publishable, it just has to be useable, it can't be broken. And so I think that these examples that Kristen has shown are another good example of that. The first video, you know that meets some of the genre conventions but doesn't quite get it. That's good, with another week of revision, yeah they probably could have fixed those issues. But what is that bar? Where are we going to set that bar for students with these real world projects?

CRITIQUE

The following clips provide a brief critique of the content and overall design of the book. The first clip examines an example sequence created based on using Writer/Designer by this reviewer. The final set of clips provides opening thoughts, a chapter-by-chapter critique and closing thoughts on the text. These critiques are based on several semesters of instruction with the text. Brief descriptions outline the main ideas in each clip to assist readers in selection, clips do not need to be listened to in order to be understandable.

ENGL 272 ~ Introduction to Technical Communication

Burnside provides an overview of how she developed a sequence of assignments using the multimodal composing principles for a Technical Writing sequence (this can be found here. (length 5:47)

> The Introduction to Technical Writing course that I teach using Writer/Designer as an aspect of that is actually a 200 level, second writing requirement course. It has a variety of students from all different majors that are in there for a lot of different reasons: Environmental Safety Health and Wellness, Pharmacy, there are a lot of people from sometimes Criminal Justice, Psychology. It is kind of just a hodge-podge of different students. Trying to find an approach to teach the different genres within technical writing and still meet the different interests of these students is kind of interesting. So how I do it is that individually they each write a problem report that is on a specific topic, reports a balanced view on a non-polemical topic that they can investigate. Then the students post those to a public discussion board and read reports from classmates. After which they email me the top three topics they would be interested in continuing forward with. Then I divide them into groups based on their interests and I also try to spread out – earlier in the semester I get a survey of their technological skills – I try to spread out people throughout the group so it's not all techie people in one group and all non techie people in another.
>
> Then students move forward, they investigate the problem a little bit more. They think about the public service announcement, what genre that is, who they might want to target, and create a proposal based on their planning documents after considering the rhetorical situation. During this process we are reading Writer/Designer about multimodal composing, we're reading about design choices and that theory as we move through this. Then after that they do an audience analysis for the actual media text. They get the choice between a minimum 30 second video clip – maximum 60 seconds, three 10 second audio clips – maximum 60 seconds collectively, or a poster-flyer-pamphlet sequence. So in the proposal stage we really talk about why you would choose one genre over the other, who the target audience is, where are they most likely to encounter the message – all of those considerations that really make Writer/Designer great about having the rhetorical aspects of what you are designing also drive how you decide to deliver the message. I think that is one thing that the book does really well.
>
> Then students create a draft and we do a peer review of the media text draft. Because I teach several sections I actually create a peer review wiki and they get to review groups from other classes. Combining the sections allows students to see more drafts and get different ideas from peers in other classes. Through the wiki they use a SurveyMonkey link to complete the peer review. Students are not required to review their own draft, but I

do point out that this would be an anonymous way to give feedback if they feel their voice is not being heard in the group meetings.

The feedback comes back to me, I compile it and pass it along. This requires the students to practice interpreting different types of graphs and tables – a useful technical writing skill as well. When we begin the revision discussion and talk about how this is their document.

My feedback is anonymously included in the survey, so they do not know which comment is mine and which is that of their classmates. I find this allows the revision process to be more authentic – when they are not trying to simply address my comments and ignoring others. I emphasize students have the final decision on what advice they want to listen to – looking for general trends – or what to ignore – outliers that do not have specific support for the critique.

Because group work can be an issue there are a few documents throughout the sequence that allow individuals to anonymously report on the function of the group and perceptions of individual effort. This allows me to try to address any major issues before it becomes detrimental to the group or a group member's grade.

Students move forward and continue the project by creating a set of instructions. They have the option to either teach a specific group how to use their PSA materials or teach a specific group how to create a social media campaign on the topic using their PSA materials. This is another multimodal piece that students have to make design decisions about and by this time I get to see that they are actually understanding how the rhetorical situation of who will use the instructions and how placement of images within the document will affect usability of smaller portions of a larger project.

This is an ongoing project where they create drafts of all of these documents but the final is not assessed until the end of the semester. At this point they are also starting to gather a web portfolio which must include a revised version of the original problem report, a revised version of the PSA media text, and a revised version of the instructions. We go through and examine each piece – what does the revised version need to have, what does that look like? What will each piece include on the portfolio, and then at the end they do a group presentation together to explain the decision making process and how they evaluated draft feedback and chose to make or not make revisions. They close by individually providing a project evaluation memo to reflect on how the process worked for them and what they learned about basic technical writing issues – working as a team, drafting and usability testing, project management, etc.

This sequence takes nine to ten weeks of the semester but it is really worth it. It requires students to encounter all of the forms based technical writing requirements, but also allows them to apply a more rhetorically reactive, more critical thinking focused approach that I think is encouraged by Writer/Designer. This allows them to really bring out the decision making process along the way.

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.

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.

Chapters 5 to 8 and Overall Critique (length 6:45)

Chapter five is very interesting, especially since this is the first time a lot of students have worked together in groups. And so making them think about the technology they are going to do, doing a technology review the book calls it. Also, working together as a group, collaborating, that is definitely important. Again, because students have a really hard time working together as a group, and then also working over long term, long deadlines, long, extended deadlines. And so from day one I tell students in the class, you're going to have long-term, overlapping deadlines that is part of the working world. You're not always going to get to work on one project and turn it all in before you leave and move to the next project. So that is an interesting thing that I think this chapter really helps approach. I would say that is probably a difficult chapter to think about theoretically for students, so you really need to be in the project process for them to get the content of this chapter. So that is something to consider as you go through.

Chapter six, on mock-ups and storyboards, that's a very solid chapter, I think it is very interesting. Again, really moving into – from four, five, six, to seven – that to me is kind of the core of the process of doing the project and walking students through the steps. So these chapters are better associated with the parts of the semester where you are actually doing the work, so that is very interesting. I got a lot of feedback from students that it is interesting, they never considered designing a file structure before. And they start applying it not only to this class but to other classes and that seems to help them so that is nice. I do like this chapter in that it has a lot of specifics without being prescriptive. I feel like some other textbooks in this genre are like "you must do this way, you must do that" – in the genre of multimodal, writing with multimodality. You know, you have to do this, you have to do that. And what I do like, especially about this chapter but about the book as a whole. It gives a lot of good guidance but allows for a lot of freedom and independence within the book.

Chapter seven is about drafting and revising and in my class we do this multiple times. I really, I think especially one of the stronger parts of this chapter is how to provide feedback as a stakeholder. I think this is the first time that students really have a stake in what they are looking at. So again, in my class they are all working on a similar type of project but they all have different topics. So it is interesting as they start to think about,

"well what can I say to someone else, how can I help them improve it?" So we talk about in the real world, in the work world you find those people in your work group that become kind of your work partners and so they are going to give you the feedback that you need and so trying to practice that. This chapter of the book really helps give a structure for giving feedback. Which I seem to find that students a lot say they don't like peer review because they don't know what to say. This book kind of helps with that so I really like that. The section on creating a revision plan is good. This is they place, they have a lot of questions listed here, I think it can seem a little simplistic to students that making those decisions…what to listen to, what not to listen to, how to find patterns in the feedback. That is mentioned here but I think that there is just not enough emphasis on the fact that this section probably takes the most time in your project. It seems like that's something students would understand, I guess not students, but people, writers would understand, but that's difficult for them.

Then chapter eight is about the lifecycle of your project. I think this is something that I have never really considered myself. I think this is a great chapter to have, but I do think it was probably one of the most difficult chapters for students to consider and understand. I think I want to work with it a bit more and see how they work in upcoming classes just because it is something new to me to think about as well.

Thinking about the book overall, I would say that I think the strongest positives of the text are this very core, essential content if you are interested in the rhetorical aspects of design and message delivery and tying those together. I do think that the authors do a great job of giving someone who is trying to make a case for this at their institution or in their own practices a really good core place to start from to say here's why multimodality is so important and how it is an interdisciplinary concern. I think that the author's say that it is intended for interdisciplinary use and I think in practice it really is as well. It is very clear that these practices aren't limited to **just** an English or a communications focused classroom. I think the other really big strength of the text is that there is that guidance but also a lot of freedom of choice. Topics are up to students and the way that the instructor wants to make the class go together.

Something that is kind of a positive and a critique at the same time are that some aspects of the organization of the text might not work in a linear fashion for you, but at the same time they are created in such a way that they can be used in chunks as well. When the authors were presenting their approach, they did think about maybe you just want to do one, one assignment. They did mention that if you want to dip a toe in, that this book does work in that way as well. Maybe you just want to practice storyboarding or you wanted to use an invention activity based on something out of this book. Or you want to use the genre analysis activity, it still works for the students as well.

So another critique is the actual use of the Write/Design assignments, they are bulleted instead of numbered. And just from my perspective it is easier to give a number and say "I'd like you to do number two on page whatever" instead of "the third bullet down from the top of the list" or something like that, just a usability type thing. And then pulling in the outside assignments, the xi: Visualizing exercises, those kinds of things. In some places they say they're optional and I think in some places they are not optional. That students really need that interaction, that specific example to get the ideas. Overall I am

very pleased with the book, it's nice to have all of the information in one specific location. It allows me to use it in so many different types of classes and incorporate it in both undergraduate and graduate classes. It kind of just gets them to look at this process. It is a very process-based text and I think that's a big strength as well.