This is a transcript of the video clip "Selfe Interview: Part 4" from the interview with Dr. Cynthia Selfe in Samuel Head, "A Scholarly Legacy: Professor Cynthia Selfe and the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives" published in *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy, 22*(1), available at http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/22.1/interviews/head.

Sam:

I would like to ask you if you could tell a story about an experience where you've learned something about literacy from creating this archive.

Dr. Selfe:

There is not a day that goes by that I don't learn something from looking at the narratives in the DALN. Literacy in so varied in all its human manifestations: people learn how to read from cereal boxes, and by reading the Bible, one by bedtime stories, and by going to school, and by attending Sunday school, by reading in church, you know, by reading instructions. They read in their homes, they read in hardware stores, they read under work benches in the garage, they read in libraries, they read on playgrounds, in trees, you know, in forts, they read everywhere. And they're taught by mothers, and fathers, and brothers, and sisters, and they're taught by by peers, they are taught by Sunday School teachers. They read to dogs, and people, and classes. There's so much variation in the practice and the valuing of literate experiences, that you can't help but learn something new every time you listen to one of those stories.

And so it's the variation on literacy that most intrigues me. How the activity of signing shapes your literate expressions, values, understandings, ASL signing. Or how the experience of reading music shapes your understanding of what it means to communicate Or how the experiences and the values surrounding alphabetic reading or multimodal reading and composing shapes what you think of his communication... shapes what you think of as composing or reading. All that remains fascinating to me because of its variability.

Sam:

So this archive, it's a *digital* archive of literacy narratives, and you've mentioned why having this digital archive has provided this great access and collaboration. But how do you feel the worlds of digital studies and literacy intersect or collide?

Dr. Selfe:

Yeah, from the time when the first fully assembled micro computers came on the market, the popular market, I don't think from that time forward we could really talk about literacy practices and values without talking about digital contexts, because digital contexts changed and altered and shaped literacy practices and values so dramatically from the very first. It was speed, reach, extension. It was the velocity with which communications went different places. And that's not to say that everybody had access, or that everybody has access to this day because they don't. Access is differentially aligned along existing social formations like age, race, class, sometimes gender still in different places in the world. But nonetheless computers have, it's opened up all kinds of environments and networks within which communications can circulate, and be distributed, and delivered, and interpreted, and composed in different media, using different modalities, and then exchanged with different people. I think that if you, today, if you think you can talk

about reading and composing without talking about digital environments, you'd be missing a huge swath of the literacy practices and understandings that people are engaged in during the 21st century.

Sam:

What do you think people can learn about digital media and technology from the DALN?

Dr. Selfe:

Well, I think, first, people tell stories about using computers and computer environments to read and compose, just like they tell stories about reading and composing in libraries or at home or anywhere else. And so, I think at this point in time we're at a very interesting point in history where we're making the transition from... making "a" transition from print and alphabetic literacy to digital literacy. I mean that's happening at many levels and in many cultures around the world. Computer networks are one of the factors that contribute to globalized sharing of knowledge, right? Not that they're... not that computers are available to everyone, but it's one of the factors that reaches across conventional geopolitical, linguistic, cultural borders. So, it seems to me that if you don't study that transition, you'll lose the sense of what it was like before, what it's like now, and what it's going to be like in the future. If nobody is collecting narratives about that, how do you remember, and then how you compare, and then have you understand changes that are going to be going forward. And I think that's the value of a project like the DALN. It exists in a point in history where there's a lot of change in the way we compose, and the way we read, and the environments within which we do so, and the purposes for which we do so.

Sam:

So how does your work with the DALN fit into your other scholarly work?

Dr. Selfe:

[Laughs] Here's what I would say, I would say that at this point my career, I'm going to retire in May of this year [2017], and what I was able -- what I've been able to do with the DALN is to do a project that's not for me but that's for the profession at large. And I like doing that kind of project. And the same thing with the Computers in Composition Digital Press: if you can do projects that are for the benefit of the profession at large, there's a great deal of satisfaction in that. And I think it leaves a legacy that -- I hope it leaves a legacy -- that far out lives the more conventional scholarly work that I've done, the articles I've written, and, you know, I've written enough journal articles to kill a horse, and books and the whole thing. Those things are important, but those things, I think, pale because there's always new research coming out, there's always new work coming out, those books are going to get old, the journal articles are going to get old, etc. But institutions like the DALN that benefit the profession can live on if there are people to look after them and sustain them and contribute to them and participate in them. And the same

with the Computers and Composition Digital Press. I would say that it is up to the next generation of scholars to contribute to those efforts. And I like to think that every scholar will do a little bit of tending of the communal garden, looking after things like the Digital Archive, looking after things like new presses, because each of those projects takes a lot of work. Sandra Pearls' Writing Tree. They don't persist and evolve on their own, they require input and effort, and the ideas of individuals. And while young scholars are busy writing their own articles in their own books because they have to do that for tenure and promotion, I hope they save a little bit of time as well to contribute to those more those communal projects that provide ground for the whole profession to prosper.