

This is a pre-print version of the Alison Sutherland webtext "Academic Labor, Career Invention, & Workflow Processes: Case Studying Paul Kei Matsuda" published in *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 19.1, available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/19.1/interviews/sutherland>.

Academic Labor, Career Invention, & Workflow Processes: Case Studying Paul Kei Matsuda

By Alison Sutherland

Published in *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 19.1

YouTube Video

Paul Matsuda sitting at his desk in his office.

"Hi, My name is Paul Matsuda, and this is my workflow."

Career Purpose & Positioning

Inventing an Academic Identity & Community

Dr. Paul Kei Matsuda has published part of his scholarly identity development in "Coming to Voice: Publishing as a Grad Student" (2003), and in the interview included in this case study project, he expounds on the later years of his scholarly identity invention. After working hard to establish that second-language writing studies has a legitimate place in rhetoric and composition, much of his current efforts have focused on diplomacy to foster a stronger link between academic communities that might have otherwise remained rather separate. His L2-rhetcomp navigation can be considered an embodied practice of *techne*, which Janice M. Lauer (2004) wrote about in her book on invention. She described *techne* as the kind of knowledge necessary to "challenge given circumstances and create not only new relations of power but new subjectivities" (p. 47). Dr. Matsuda creates new subjectivities by developing this research area's professionalism through investing graduate student mentoring, flying to institutions and conferences to support L2 writing studies, and serving as the President-Elect of the American Association for Applied Linguistics.

[Photo of Matsuda at his desk looking at his computer screen.]

Career Purpose & Positioning

Because Dr. Matsuda travels around the world flying every few weeks, he has written down a lot of his graduate student expectations to ensure that everyone is clear about what to do (and as you can see in the screenshot, he ensures that they know they are his priority). A number of his methods characterize some of the best-practice professionalization methods detailed by academics such as Robert Boice (2000), who wrote about the benefits of purposeful mentoring. Dr. Matsuda has also published a chapter on the process of mentoring with one of his mentees, Steve Simpson (Simpson & Matsuda, 2008), and in this project's interview, Dr. Matsuda

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articulates his collaborative writing process. He makes it a priority to co-author with a number of his graduate students to offer opportunities to help them invent their scholarly careers.

[Screen shot of course website with course policies and information about Matsuda’s availability and how to contact him.]

[Screen shot of a series of email lists for various graduate student groups.]

Dr. Matsuda authors a blog where he helps network his scholarly sub-community. Here is an example of how he is helping to foster the community of rhetoric and composition second language writing scholars. Read more at <http://dissoillogoi2.blogspot.com/>

[Screen shot of Matsuda’s professional website with information about hosting visiting scholars.]

In the email screen shot above, Dr. Matsuda has been invited to propose his best publications to a landmark collection. This is evidence of his well-crafted scholarly identity and how he has effectively contributed to the field.

[Screen shot of Matsuda’s email inbox with an email open with an invitation for him to contribute to a landmark collection.]

[Screen shot of Matsuda’s C.V. open in MS Word and a smaller window open with a series of file folders on his computer.]

Interview with Paul Kei Matsuda

WORK PHILOSOPHIES AND HABITS

When considering the larger questions that frame your work life, what are your philosophies on how to get your work done? Do you impose rigid boundaries between work time and personal time, or do you embrace the adaptability of our profession?

I’m an impulsive writer. I would prefer to sit down and write whenever I have an idea. I used to be able to do it whenever I was not eating or sleeping--I was free to open my laptop or get to my computer and start writing.

But now with my daughter and other things going on in my life, like travel schedules, I can’t do that anymore. I write when someone emails me and reminds me that the article is due--I’m more deadline driven. When I collaborate with students, we sit down and we have meetings, or Skype meetings. That’s how I write.

In terms of actionable behaviors, what do you see as essential to your success when writing for publication?

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A keyword that I can think of is “distributing my cognition.” There are many dimensions, but my current process is that I don’t necessarily plan or develop arguments bit by bit. I just sit down and focus on a research question or a problem or something that I need to work on. It’s almost like I’m rehearsing the whole outline in my head. I rehearse it a couple times, maybe in different situations, and then I’m ready to sit down and start writing.

I do a lot of collaboration because part of what I do is train graduate students. When I have a project or an idea that my students might be interested in, I invite specific students to work with me who have expertise or interest in those areas.

Depending on how proficient they are, sometimes I let them just sit with me as I write and then they observe what I do. As they become more comfortable, I might ask them to write a paragraph, or I might ask them to summarize something. Then I go over it line by line and sometimes (or in many cases, at the beginning) I rewrite the whole part.

Gradually, I give them bigger chunks of text to write. When we meet again, I will go over it. As we read or revise their produced text, I do a think-aloud so that they can see what’s going on in my head and why I’m making certain changes. They can see how I’m responding to reviewers, anticipating the audience questions, coming to arguments, and things like that.

At the end of each meeting, I schedule the next appointment so that I don’t lose the momentum. Usually, for the same project, we’ll meet each week for an hour or two. When we sit down, I’ll ask the students, “So, what are we working on today?” Then when the meeting is done, I don’t think about that project at all. That’s one way of focusing.

When you’re collaboratively writing, do you work on two different computers using Google Drive? Or do you work on one computer sharing a keyboard?

It depends on the project, and it depends on what the student has. Sometimes I use my own computer and the student will be sitting next to me. Sometimes I give them the keyboard so that we’re working on the same computer. If they have a laptop, I have a power strip in my office so that students can easily access it and plug in.

We’ve also had [Skype](#) sessions in the same room, using Sype’s [Screenshare](#), so that they can see my screen as I work on it. That’s one idea. Another possibility is to use [Google Docs](#), which allows both of us to interact with the screen. Those are the two main ways of sharing documents.

I prefer to use Google Docs over [Dropbox](#). Because when I use Dropbox, only one person can open it, otherwise there’s going to be multiple files. Usually even if we have a separate work folder or file, we’ll put it in Google Docs and work on it. Then once it’s ready, we’ll convert it into a regular [Word](#) document.

TIME MANAGEMENT

So you travel a lot. Do you find that you can get that deep scholarship written while you’re traveling, or do you only do that at home? How does that distribution work?

I used to be able to write on the plane. That was my favorite writing space! And I’d write at the airport. But lately when I’m at the airport, I just check email and catch up on things I have to do, like reviewing articles. I mostly spend time doing things that I have to do--deadline-driven articles rather than more creative scholarship. I also use the flight time to catch up on sleep. If it’s a cross-Atlantic or cross-Pacific flight, then I watch a lot of movies, and I don’t really do any writing. I don’t like to be interrupted in the middle of my thought, so usually I don’t start writing when I have to catch a plane or when I have to be somewhere at a certain time.

I used to write at night so that nobody could interrupt me. If I wanted to, I could go on till 7 or 8 in the morning. But lately, by the time I get home from meetings, I’m tired. So I take a nap, and sometimes I just sleep through the night. In the morning, I check email, and I catch up.

I don’t really know when I actually do the writing! It just happens. When I feel right, or when I have to, I open up a document and I start focusing.

So it sounds like one of your strengths is that when you’re inspired, you’re disciplined about harnessing that inspiration.

I wouldn’t say I’m disciplined. I’m just focused and I can’t see anything else. I forget to eat and I forget to do other things.

You hit that [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi \(2008\)](#) “flow” state of creativity.

Yes.

RESEARCH LIFECYCLE: TAKING AN IDEA INTO A DEVELOPED PIECE OF SCHOLARSHIP

Can you speak about your research lifecycle? How do you move a thought from an idea spark into a developed piece of scholarship?

Sometimes I have new ideas in the middle of the night or when I’m taking a shower. I rehearse arguments and I think about what other people have said and how I respond to it. I don’t take notes, and I don’t try to remember things. I figure if it’s important enough, it will come back to me when I need it. And it usually happens.

When I was a graduate student, I had a notepad or a clipboard with a bunch of paper attached to it, and I would write down my ideas. But I realized I would lose these notes, or I wouldn’t be

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able to read my handwriting. I used to put post-it notes on my books, but I then I didn't know which note was for what. I lost track of it. When I highlighted things, I couldn't read anything but the highlighted section, so the books became useless. I stopped doing all those things.

Sometimes I create a new file and think that I'm going to start a new article. I write down a few things, but I file it away and I never look at it again, because I don't open files unless I really need to. When I'm writing a whole article, occasionally I'll look at older files I've created, finding paragraphs here and there that I can use. But in most cases, if I have any notes or paragraphs that have already been written, I retype the whole thing and revise it as I type.

In the early drafting stage, I often use all-caps so that I can't read it as I write it. I use all-caps to outline or write a paragraph and then retype the whole thing in lower case. And then I revise and fill in the blanks as I do that retyping. I used to take copied passages from other sources and then paraphrase them as I went along, but I stopped doing that as well.

Now, I usually write what I think, or what other people have said. Then I go back and check the source, using square brackets or something like that to indicate that I need to verify the source.

How do you curate the work others?

I buy all the books, whether it's necessary or not, on topics related to what I'm working on. I go through them and read quickly; I don't read the whole book cover to cover, but rather, I start reading one thing, and if I think of something that I might find in another book, I'll go to that book. It's like hypertext reading.

I don't take notes when I read; I try to keep track of what I'm going to do, but usually if I'm disturbed by somebody's argument, I tend to remember where I found it. So I just go there and use it when I have to.

So you're relying on a critical mass of field knowledge that you've curated internally, then.

Yes, the general knowledge helps. Because usually I can guess, depending on the tone of argument and the kind of statement, where in the article or book I will find it. So I use that general knowledge to find specific information. Sometimes I don't find it, but I may realize that there's another interpretation when I go back and read it. That's better than having a quote or a highlight that locks me into reading the text only in one way.

It offers context fluidity.

Yes. My reading is based on what kind of argument I'm making.

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I think that a lot of thinking happens in the process of writing. I used to be much more exploratory; I’d write something, and then new ideas would come and I’d reorganize them over and over. But lately I’ve been getting better at coming up with an outline and a whole argument. So I do most of my planning in my head.

When I collaborate with students, one strategy that I use is sitting down together where I’ll tell students, “So this is how the argument goes.” They take notes, and they draft the writing based on that outline. As the actual argument develops, we look at it and revise. And we find that it works in most cases.

I use iAnnotate to read PDF files. I also use my laptop or desktop, depending on if I’m writing, as it’s easier to combine both reading and writing in one device. But if I’m just reading, or browsing through different articles, I use iAnnotate.

SOCIAL PROCESSES

You’ve talked about collaborative writing. Can you expand on the social component of your research, such as conversations with other scholars?

Conversations do figure prominently. I often recall little conversations that I’ve had with someone, or an argument that someone made at a conference. I just keep thinking, “So how do I respond to the argument,” especially when I’m not comfortable with the argument they’re making--I rehearse the whole argument in my head.

You’re a multilingual scholar, and I’ve noticed that you Facebook in multiple languages. I wonder if you could talk about how your multilingualism factors into your scholarly workflow process, both with meaning-making as well with technology, such as typing on an English keyboard.

It really doesn’t. Most of my writing is in English. And it’s faster, in fact, to write in English for me. I’m supposed to write a book chapter in Japanese, based on the WPA article that I published recently. So all the ideas are there, but I’m having such a hard time writing in Japanese, because the ways in which I would construct my argument are quite different. I’m not as proficient in Japanese academic writing; I’ve never published an article in Japanese. I can write emails, I can write formal letters and documents, but article writing in Japanese is not a genre that I have a lot of experience with. I read a lot, but personally, it’s easier for me to not use Japanese.

I’ve given a few talks in Japanese. Sometimes people request to give a talk in Japanese on the spot. When that happens, what I end up doing is I give my talk in my head in English, and I translate my thoughts as I present.

Is that hard?

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It’s not too hard. I have some experience in translation and interpreting for other people. When I was in high school, one of the ways in which I tried to learn English was adapting the strategies in simultaneous interpretation. So I’ve had some practice in doing that. I think the obstacle is sometimes I translate *everything*, even when there are English terms that have been transliterated into Japanese. I try to find the equivalent, but sometimes I can’t find it, and sometimes it sounds odd.

So I’m thinking of this question in terms of digital tools . . . if we imagine your workflow process as a liquid that flows from your brain to the final publication, where’s a leak in the digital flow that’s not your fault, but where a programmer or a device developer could help you get your work done more easily?

I’ve never been happy with any interface, because it doesn’t work the way my mind works. I’ve tried to find alternative ways of doing things, but I’ve just given up on it. I don’t like to customize things too much, because every time I move to a new computer, or update my computer, I have to reset everything. So I keep customization to a minimum.

When it gets stuck or when I run out of space, it interrupts my line of thinking and I really hate that. So when I buy a computer I buy the highest spec machine so there are fewer problems. And I also use Dropbox; I pay the subscription so that I have more server space. I’m not interrupted by not having documents when I need them.

But I rely on word processing, because I’ve always hated writing with pen and paper. It’s just messy, and I can’t read my own handwriting. When I’m typing I can go back and forth and rewrite the whole thing.

When I draft something, I usually start from the beginning of the section, and I start the process by reading what I’ve written. Sometimes I never get to the end of it, because I constantly revise. I come through each line, word, and phrase, over and over. Gradually I get to the end of it.

By the time I have a complete draft, it’s almost ready to go. It’s all edited and everything.

So you’re a revise on the fly kind of guy.

Yes. All writing is revising!

Zooming out from your research lifecycle to the larger pathway of just being a research scholar, do you feel like your multicultural experiences give you insights into how things “could be otherwise” that others might not have insight into?

To some extent. I can think of examples that appeal to people from other countries, but not so much in writing. Because the audience--even though journals are becoming more international--

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the scholarship is so Western-centric and US-centric that people in other countries have not really developed their own discourses, aside from different topics or kinds of arguments. So in teaching and research, a lot of things that people think about and talk about are similar across different contexts. But people want to believe that they are different. I’m always perplexed by how *similar* they are. It doesn’t really help expand my repertoire, but I do see certain ways of thinking things that are US-centric, and I try to avoid them. But I’m not always successful.

You mentioned the think aloud protocols. I think that is a good lead-in to a question that’s been captivating me this past year. I’ve been thinking a lot about career success methodologies. Steve Jobs said in his famous Stanford address, “Follow your passion!” But Cal Newport (2012) has published a book on the evidence of Steve Jobs’s (and many others’) pathways. Newport points to evidence that successful people, Jobs included, didn’t actually follow their passions; rather, they traded rare and valuable skills as career capital for the kind of work position that they wanted.

I’m wondering, how would you narrate your career trajectory? How would a devil’s advocate narrate your career trajectory?

I think my passion, as it were, is that I do what I do because I want to do something that’s useful for Second Language Writers. In order to do that, a lot of people focus on pedagogy, local issues, and working with second language writers directly. And while that’s important and meaningful, I don’t think that’s the best use of my skills, or even the most effective way of addressing those issues. Because many of those problems are much larger institutional issues and disciplinary issues.

My approach is to change the institutional practices, and change the disciplinary practices. The best way to do that is to redefine the field. So I decided to write my dissertation as an historical study, looking at the disciplinary historical development--how people have systemically excluded second-language considerations from rhetoric and composition. I also looked at how writing has not been a central focus in second language studies.

But critique is easy; it’s cheap. What’s more important is to get people to actually pay attention and to do something more useful at addressing the needs of this population. So changing people’s attitudes is important. And a good way to do that is to be present and establish myself as a member, rather than an outsider critiquing people.

So I try to establish my career identity as a multidisciplinary scholar. Someone who is not only a rhetoric and composition scholar, or an applied linguistics TESOL scholar, but both at the same time.

In order to do that I need to go to conferences. I attend CCCC, TESOL, and AAA almost every year. Even when they happen at the same time, I commute from one conference to another as much as possible so that I’m there and creating institutional structures within each of the

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organizations, or at least contributing to those structures, so that L2 writing becomes a legitimate part of the institutional practices.

I deliberately chose to publish in mainstream, high-visibility journals like *CCC*, *College English*, and *Written Communication*, so that nobody can deny I’m a legitimate rhetoric and composition scholar. I also published in second language publications for the same reason. The scholarship is useful, but people *talk* about it; usually people don’t *do* much about it. They may want to, but they don’t know exactly how.

Another important piece of it is that when I have an opportunity, I go to different universities. I engage in conversations, establish good relationships, and provide whatever help I can to improve things locally. That’s important. And it’s not just the teachers, but it’s the program administrators, too, so that naturally drew me to WPA. Because of my summer travel schedule I often can’t go to the conference, but I maintain my presence through my publications, and my network with other WPAs.

Sometimes random people email me and ask for help; they ask questions, or for resources. I try to help as much as possible. What I do is motivated by recognizing that there is a big picture, but I just don’t follow one thing. I try to do everything to build a systemic response to a problem that I see as very important.

You obviously do very deep, important scholarship, but it looks like you’re also doing a lot of intentional diplomacy work between disparate communities that you’re drawing together through your leadership.

The kind of topics that I take on, and where I publish things, or how I position myself, present an issue that matters to me. It’s really is driven by all of these systemic concerns.

How do you curate the work of others?

I buy all the books, whether it’s necessary or not, on topics related to what I’m working on. I go through them and read . . . like hypertext reading.

[Graph showing different methods through which Matsuda accesses scholarship: In my head, Digital articles, Physical books, iAnnotate, and Dropbox.]

How do you capture those idea sparks?

I don’t take notes, and I don’t try to remember things. I figure if it’s important enough, it will come back to me.

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[Graph showing different methods for how Matsuda captures ideas: Google (Personal Drive, Gmail, & Keep), iAnnotate, Evernote / Pocket, Whiteboard/art paper, etc., MS Office/OS X, Dropbox, In my head.]

Work Philosophies, Strategies, & Time Management

Maximizing Intellectual Resources

Even as a graduate student, Dr. Matsuda invested a lot into building a professional library (see publication "Coming to Voice: Publishing as a Graduate Student" [2003] and this current interview for more explanation). He continues to purchase every book in his specialty. Dr. Matsuda's core philosophy is to maximize his knowledge resources around him, which is also why he has moved his files to the digital realm. He makes sure to own large amounts of clouded space to make it easy to move between his campus and home workspaces and enable his ability to work while traveling so frequently. What began as a graduate student putting every article in a manila folder and then rearranging them over and over to find the best method is now a finely tuned digital process chronicled in the screenshots here.

[Photos of shelves and shelves of books and boxes in Matsuda's office.]

Trusting the Process

Though as an undergraduate student and first-year master's student Dr. Matsuda used concrete curation methods (highlighting and underlining, sticky notes, notebook), he came to find that these methods interfered with his scholarship more than they helped. As a graduate student, he chose to focus his workflow process efforts on the curation of field knowledge. He's invested the time to synthesize and network a lot of scholarly arguments in his head, and now relies on this map to guide his research. In the interview, Dr. Matsuda points to his nuanced understanding of our field's argumentative processes and tacit rules for written organization as the method by which he finds evidence in articles and books to support his claims (evidence that others might have highlighted or stickied). He sees this method as more intellectually generative, as it allows for a variety of lenses and positions to "see" and interpret the evidence that best resonates with his scholarly positionality at the moment in which he's writing. His method enables lens-shifting and "seeing" new syntheses of ideas that he found obstructed by the process of underlining or highlighting.

When writing, Dr. Matsuda performs a lot of his invention in his head, noting in the interview that he rehearses his arguments in informal settings while going about his daily life. For example, while in the shower, he rehearses conversations with colleagues (rather than purposefully sitting in front of a computer and drafting ideas that he curates concretely). This imaginatively social, if also largely solo, invention process relies on his ability to locate the intellectual positions of his colleagues and carefully position himself relative to them. Janet Emig (1971) might have loosely named this as a "prewriting" invention activity that he employs. Though most authors, like

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Robert Boice (2000) in *Advice for New Faculty Members* and Wendy Laura Belcher (2009) in *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*, advise regular, moderated writing sessions, Dr. Matsuda writes almost entirely based on his deadlines. Such is the life of a frequently flying academic, I think.

[Screen shots of Matsuda’s calendar in MS Outlook.]

Perfection is not my goal; effectiveness is.

[Screen shots of Matsuda’s computer and email file storage, showing folders and subfolders.]

Hardware Devices and Software Tools: Valuing Efficiency

Dr. Matsuda makes a point to invest in top-performing hardware to ensure that his thinking is never slowed by an over-taxed device, as he gets frustrated when that pulls him out of his research workflow. He has impeccably organized digital folders and processes to ensure that his brain is focused on what matters. We can see that he uses a dual monitor when at his office, and he does everything digitally now (he is only using paper in one of these photos to fill out my questionnaire that I used to make his infographics).

In this photo, you can see Dr. Matsuda's dual screen setup in his office, his iPad, and his MacBook Air (with top hardware specs).

[Photo of Matsuda at his desk with hardware.]

[Photo of Matsuda writing with a pen at his desk.]

[Photo of several rhetoric buttons with phrases like “Rhetoric Rules!”]

[Photo of shelves, coffee maker, and Brita pitcher in Matsuda’s office.]

[Photo of boxes on top of book shelves with yellow post-it notes with journal titles such as *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, etc.]

These are old issues of journals (*College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *The Writing Center Journal*, *Research in the Teaching of English*) sitting in boxes in his office.

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Resources

Dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com>

Evernote: <https://evernote.com/>

Google Docs: <http://docs.google.com>

Google Keep: <http://drive.google.com/keep>

iAnnotate: <http://www.branchfire.com/iannotate/>

Microsoft Office: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word/>

Pocket: <https://getpocket.com/>

Skype: <http://www.skype.com/en/>

Skype Screen-Sharing:
<http://www.skype.com/en/features/screen-sharing/>

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Acknowledgment

I wish to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to Dr. Paul Kei Matsuda, Professor of English and Director of Second Language Writing at Arizona State University. Without his willingness to meet for an interview and generously share his personal work data with *Kairos* audiences, this project would not have been possible. Dr. Matsuda is the President-Elect of the American Association for Applied Linguistics.

Digital media project composed by Alison Sutherland, PhD student at Arizona State University