

Editor's Note

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Issue 5.2 of *Prompt* is our largest issue ever, and it is overflowing with exciting pedagogical innovations. The issue contains two assignments that lead writers to explore specific existing genres in new ways and to unique ends. Another assignment calls on students to eschew a traditional genre, the lab report, and design their own writing assignment in its place. One contributor leads students through a version of a professional editing process, preparing them for careers in writing fields. And two authors offer different multimodal assignments for supporting student reflection.

Before I provide a more detailed introduction to this issue's bounty of essays and assignments, I want to announce that this issue of *Prompt* breaks ground in another way, as it inaugurates a new section in the journal: "Innovations." The Innovations section is an occasional, non-peer-reviewed part of the journal. Its goal is to connect our readers with excellent ideas about college writing assignments that do not fit into our traditional essay/assignment format. Authors should query editors (thepromptjournal@gmail.com) if they have an idea about submitting something to our "Innovations" section.

Our first Innovations piece is Laurie Edwards and Mya Poe's "Writing in Response to Trauma in a Time of Pandemic." Their work, at first glance, is not so unlike most of the pieces which appear in our journal. It presents rich, innovative writing assignments and includes a reflective essay by the authors who developed them. It differs from our peer-reviewed articles in a couple of important ways. Whereas articles in *Prompt* focus primarily on a single writing assignment, this piece covers a suite of assignments the authors developed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, though the assignments draw on prior instructional work the authors had done in their own classes, these assignments were developed as part of the Pandemic Teaching Initiative at the Northeastern University Humanities Center. Thus, the assignments were designed to be open-access—to be shared and then taken up by groups or individuals seeking ways to use writing to navigate the challenges of living through a pandemic. We hope that by sharing these assignments in our journal, we help spread the word of Edwards and Poe's excellent work, as well as that of other participants in the initiative. Further, we aim to offer the authors a platform to richly explain the nature and goals of the assignments to other writing instructors, as well as space to share what the work of creating and sharing the assignments through a unique initiative meant to them during a difficult time.

The first article in the issue is Matthew Kelly's "Writing for Players: Using Video Game Documentation to Explore the Role of Audience Agency in Technical Writing." It offers a technical writing assignment that leads students to think about audience in new ways. Students worked collaboratively to create documentation to help players navigate a Minecraft environment the students had designed. Kelly notes the way the project enriched students' understanding of technical communication, challenging their sense that such communication is somehow neutral or outside of readerly interpretation.

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Carol Hayes’s “The Research Prospectus in First-Year Writing (and Beyond): Teaching Writing for Transfer” tackles a genre that is pivotal for researchers but often overlooked in the composition classroom. Her structured research prospectus assignment guides writers through intellectual activities that are key to the early phases of a major research process. Her focus on creating an assignment that is taught for transfer means that this assignment could be useful to students in many contexts.

Bryan Wang takes a creative approach to lab-based writing in “If They Build It: Student-Designed Assignments in a Molecular Biology Laboratory.” The assignment calls on students to design their own final assignment through a carefully scaffolded process. Wang found that giving students in a lab freedom to write to non-experts in varied genres, they became engaged in the course materials in new ways and invested in the writing process itself to a greater extent than had been the case with more traditional assignments.

In “Multifaceted Editing and Reflection Project: The DEE-CR Project,” Drew M. Loewe presents a thoughtful and thorough assignment that lets students explore the world of professional editing. Many instructors in professional writing programs will be interested in this comprehensive and well-designed assignment, and it would also be relevant to many kinds of composition courses where students are learning about various modes of revision.

In “Proleptic Autobiography: Envisioning a Future—and a Path to Get There,” James Gilligan helps students training to be language arts teachers imagine their future professional selves. The assignment flips the orientation of more traditional reflection assignments, which look to the past, by asking students to compose a reflection about their futures. Even though the assignment is geared to an English education context, the fundamentals of this approach could be useful to instructors teaching courses that prepare students for a wide range of careers, in education and beyond.

While writing instructors often think carefully about supporting students’ writing processes, some student writers may not have done much explicit reflection on how their actions in composing texts cohere into a process than can be critically studied. If they have been asked to do such reflections, it may have been in the form of a writer’s memo or other short, linear, written format. Two assignments in this issue use multimodal approaches to exploring and expanding students’ composing processes. Kory Ching’s “Writing Process Photo Essay” assignment brings students’ attention to their processes as writers using photography. By documenting that process in a multimodal essay, writers are led to reflect upon their work as writers in new and exciting ways. Rebecca Conklin’s “A Cabinet of Curiosities, A Dwelling Place: Weekly Writing on Instagram as Multimodal Praxis” encourages innovation and experimentation. The low-stakes assignment calls on writers to post to Instagram three times a week during the term, aiming to encourage the generation of ideas, self-observation, and reflection.

I want to close by welcoming seven new members to the *Prompt* editorial team. Until now, the journal has had two associate editors with specializations in writing studies (the wonderful Aimee Mapes and Jaime White-Farnham). We have long recognized that as a multidisciplinary journal, we would benefit from having additional associate editors from across disciplines. Our new associate editors bring a wealth of disciplinary expertise that will improve our work as editors, as well as connections to networks that will help us grow the journal’s reach. We warmly welcome these new members of our team:

Nancy Barr, Professor of Practice of Engineering Communication, Michigan Tech

Alex Halperin, Associate Professor of Math and Computer Science, Salisbury University

Leanne Havis, Professor of Criminal Justice, Neumann University

Eleni Pinnow, Professor of Psychology, University of Wisconsin, Superior

Dave Wessner, Professor of Biology, Davidson College

Ethan Youngerman, Senior Language Lecturer in Expository Writing, New York University

We also welcome a new member of our production team. Joseph Glover, a J.D. candidate at Texas A&M University School of Law, joins our team with this issue as associate production editor, sharing typesetting (\LaTeX), bibliography-building, and design work with our production editor.