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Book Review: Information Literacy and Writing Studies in Conversation: Reenvisioning Library-Writing Program Connections

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Review of *Information Literacy and Writing Studies in Conversation: Reenvisioning Library-Writing Program Connections*

By Andrea Baer

Reviewed by Jacquelyn Ann Williams, Virginia Commonwealth University

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Review of *Information Literacy and Writing Studies in Conversation: Reenvisioning Library-Writing Program Connections*

By Andrea Baer

Equally relevant for both compositionists and teaching librarians, Andrea Baer's *Information Literacy and Writing Studies in Conversation: Reenvisioning Library-Writing Program Connections* (2016) thoughtfully explores the connections between teaching writing and information literacy as well as contemporary efforts of librarians and writing instructors to strengthen library-writing partnerships brought about by theoretically congruent frameworks that govern our communities of practices: the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (2011) of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) and the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (2015) of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). What sets Baer's book apart from other titles addressing the connections across our fields is the author's use of reflective practice to discuss and ultimately shape contemporary discourse about information literacy and writing studies.

The genesis of this book, Baer explains, dates to earlier days working toward a doctoral degree in comparative literature and subsequent professional experience teaching writing and literature as well as her work as a librarian with the responsibility of developing library programming and campus-wide partnerships centered on undergraduate information literacy education. Baer's monograph includes a brief introduction, followed by four chapters focusing on empirical research on composition writing and information literacy development, the interconnections between and pedagogical implications of the WPA and ACRL *Frameworks*, exemplary collaborations between librarians and compositionists via four case studies, and an examination of our histories as well as the various contexts—social, cultural, and structural—that have and continue to impact conversation and collaboration across our disciplines. The final chapter, albeit brief, outlines various approaches to nurturing library-writing partnerships and concludes with a general call for teaching librarians to consider the potential of adopting reflective pedagogical praxis as a potential lens through which our field can promote dialogue and further contribute to theory and practice in information literacy and writing studies across the academy.

[BOOK REVIEW]

Williams
Review: *IL and Writing Studies in Conversation*

Information Literacy and Writing Studies in Conversation: Reenvisioning Library-Writing Program Connections will resonate with teaching librarians who take a social constructivist approach to working with compositionists to advance a deeper understanding of information literacy and writing as creative and social processes of inquiry, reflection, and meaning-making while also offering value to instructional designers, new teaching librarians, and composition instructors (p. 3). Baer's book is a valuable contribution to the growing number of titles that seek not simply to draw awareness of the connections between writing and information literacy instruction, but rather to deepen the conversation about where our communities of practice overlap and intersect and how to think differently about teaching writing, research, and information literacy across the undergraduate experience.

Like a growing number of teaching librarians, Baer's unique perspective is further shaped by pedagogical theory and empirical research on student writing and information literacy development. In chapter 2, "Students as Writers and Researchers: Empirical Studies and Pedagogical Implications," Baer delves into decades of scholarship and theory related to students' information processes and writing and highlights the value of adopting an integrative approach about pedagogical practices that nurture students' engagement in critical inquiry, reflection, and meaning-making (p. 20). This chapter also offers insight into research on learning transfer and metacognition from the National Council of Research's (2000) publication *How People Learn*. The author argues that librarians and compositionists would do well to explore together "the interconnected cognitive and affective domains of learning" that underpin writing and information practices and the opportunities that lay before us to consider new approaches and pedagogies in information literacy teaching and writing centered on learning transfer (p. 58). This chapter, more than any other, has the potential to stimulate conversation beyond disciplinary boundaries, even hinting at new hybrid disciplines. Librarians coming from outside higher education or those that have diverse educational backgrounds will appreciate information in this chapter especially as it draws upon scholarship from a number of disciplines including higher education, rhetoric and writing studies, sociology, psychology, and library science.

In chapter 3, "The Frameworks for Writing and Information Literacy: Catalysts for Further Conversation," Baer outlines the challenges and opportunities for collaboration brought about more recently by the WPA and ACRL *Frameworks*. Baer presents a compelling argument for understanding these documents as "complementary texts [that] may help to open further exploration of how integrated approaches to teaching writing and information

literacy can foster transfer” (p. 82). The *Frameworks*, according to Baer, have also given librarians and compositionists “new vocabularies” that have catalyzed new conversations about collaboration across our disciplines, and they have even provided evidence that many of us working at the intersection of writing and information literacy already knew—our visions for teaching and learning are actually more congruent than we think (p. 84).

Baer presents in chapter 4, “Composition-Library Collaborations: Notes from the Fields,” four case studies of library-writing collaborations. The first two case studies center on the *Frameworks*, the third case study focuses on the library-writing partnership development and the research toolkit that came out of it, and the fourth case study discusses an integrative approach to the design and implementation of an Information Literacy in the Disciplines (WILD) program. The author acknowledges early on that such library-writing collaborations are not the norm, for which the reader will be grateful. Baer begins by explaining her motivation to interview librarians and compositionists about their library-writing partnerships “from an interpersonal perspective” (p. 88). In taking this approach, the author successfully brings a very humanistic perspective to building and sustaining relationships to the forefront. Likewise, the author outlines how each pair of librarian-compositionists’ conversations and collaboration influenced “their own direct teaching and their broader pedagogical efforts” and ultimately “how the experiences and knowledge of librarians and compositionists can function complementarily” (p. 92). While the case study participants’ experiences are thoughtfully laid out, the reader may find more practical value in the questions the author asks interviewees and how these questions, based on the unique instructional environment and institutional culture, can be adapted for conversation.

In the last lengthy chapter, chapter 5, “Expanding the Potential for Collaborations: Intersections Between the Interpersonal and the Sociostructural,” Baer outlines our shared histories in terms of literacy education and then proceeds to examine the social, cultural, and structural contexts or barriers that continue to hinder library-writing partnerships today. The author presents a convincing argument for librarians and compositionists to assume a sense of shared responsibility for information literacy development and the advancement of common pedagogical practices and goals. In this chapter, Baer concisely outlines the various perceptions related to literacy education that continue to plague librarians’ efforts to participate in and advance curricular reform. Readers will easily identify with the author’s identification of “the privilege status of academic discourse” as an example of the persistent and deeply rooted obstacles that have yet to be overcome (p. 128). Nonetheless, Baer ends on a positive note, reminding readers how very far information literacy education has come

and how librarians are more integrated in the very fabric of undergraduate education than we ever have been. Baer encourages librarians to continue exploring and posing questions related to educational theory and the myriad connections between theory and practice and actively challenge misconceptions of our work and how it is truly an integral part of higher education.

Baer's final chapter, "Looking Back, Looking Forward," calls upon the reader to consider the concept of reflective practice as a means to reimagining and reframing the work librarians and compositionists do, both individually and in collaboration, to focus on our shared concerns, pedagogical practices, and dispositions, which in turn can strengthen the kind of library-writing partnerships that can lead to program development and curricular change.

Andrea Baer's *Information Literacy and Writing Studies in Conversation: Reenvisioning Library-Writing Program Connections* is an important contribution to the growing body of literature about teaching writing and information literacy as a shared pedagogy. Chapters are well-written and include a plethora of notes for readers to review as well as a modest bibliography to consult.

While new teaching librarians and compositionists will be particularly interested in Baer's discussion of past and current disciplinary conversations as well as how and where our two communities of practice align with respect learning outcomes, teaching and learning for transfer, and knowledge construction, this reviewer believes the heads of teaching and learning departments, library directors, and/or those aspiring to fully integrate information literacy into curriculum or even institutionalizing it will find exemplary value in this book.