

How many times have we heard that the Author Is Dead, only to be asked to arbitrate a plagiarism case involving students and colleagues?

That not-altogether-rhetorical question encapsulates many writing scholars' experiences with today's ambiguous, contradictory notions of authorship. Since 1967, Barthes's "Death of the Author" has been countered by arguments that the Author has risen, Lazarus-like, from his (sexism intended, as the construction of The Author is certainly gendered) momentary grave. But in rhetoric and composition, the push towards the reader embedded in Barthes's argument responds to Western Rhetoric's long bias toward the audience, extended back at *least* as far as Aristotle's enjoinder that [the "hearer" is the person who "determines a speech's end and object."](#) That valuing of the hearer/reader/viewer was also highlighted in the theories of Bakhtin, as well as by the cultural-historical activity theorists who have followed his ideas that all utterances are multivocal as they anticipate and/or echo other utterances, and who have extended the agency for utterances to technologies, tools, institutions, documents, organizations, and other nonhuman agents. Remix culture likewise has embraced this view, with its celebration of multiple, distributed, and embedded points of authorship and the active recombination of elements by both composers and hearers.

A generation of scholars, moreover, has pursued collaborative scholarship, following the pathbreaking work of Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede on collaborative composition, most notably in their 1990 book, [Singular Texts/Plural Authors](#). This theoretical challenge to authorship-as-usual has since been complemented by the arrival of tools that effectively facilitate collaboration, even [real-time-collaboration](#) among joint authors that has been a substantial (and, at present, unremarkable) part of the editorial processes for this issue. If we view the concept of the author as worth maintaining (and "composer" sure seems a much less sexist and sedimented term) then we need to find ways to underscore the practical reality that something like authorShip or authors-ship is increasingly routine. And if that recognition erodes some of the power and *authority* that has been encoded into the figure of The Author, well, that's what Barthes, Foucault, and Helene Cixous (among many others) were warning against in the first place.

And yet, simultaneously, Deborah Brandt argues in *The Rise of Writing: Redefining Mass Literacy* that, in the United States, the privileged position of reading over writing in standard definitions of mass literacy has been shifting ever since the publication of the first *Kairos* special issue. Drawing on interviews with 90 people conducted since 2005, Brandt traces a shift in attitude towards the relative values of reading and writing. Whereas reading was (and often still is) promoted as literacy for much of our country's existence, today, writing is starting to be increasingly valued in its own right. Many of the active writers she interviewed, for instance, did not see writing as a supplement to reading, and they did not buy into the received wisdom that "to write better, one must read more." Rather, writing is valued as a means of actively participating in culture, whether through organizations or social media. In fact, some of her younger participants claimed that they wrote and shared materials widely on social media and

blogs without spending much time reading others' works at all. What we -- or, at least, our students -- seem to be experiencing is a cultural shift in the relative value of reading and writing.

Perhaps that shift partially explains why, despite twenty years' development of remix practices in digital spaces, the author is dead except when it comes to accusations of plagiarism. Clancy Ratliff's "Plagiarism and Authorship: A Review and Retrospective of the *CCCC Intellectual Property Annual*" traces the past decade's responses to plagiarism questions: arguments about how to redefine questions of plagiarism, citation, and attribution; assessments of how punishments and their effects differ for students, celebrities, and international composers; and examinations of the impact of new technologies on plagiarism issues.

In a similar vein, Alexis Teagarden's webtext, "Stories of Plagiarism / Theories of Writing: How Public Cases of Plagiarism Reveal Circulating Theories of Writing," applies a new method of coding materials to determine which notions of authorship are at play when the claim is made that a public figure has plagiarised materials, or when the public figure provides defenses against such accusations. As does Ratliff's retrospective on the *CCCC-IP Annual*, Teagarden's research offers writing specialists new, systematic ways to understand today's varied ethical approaches to authorship.

Copyright

At the time of the first *Kairos* issue on this topic, there was hope that the law would shift in recognition of the advent of new communicative tools (the computer, primarily, and the still-very-new Internet). The law has shifted, but more often than not these shifts in law and legal precedent have been directed at perpetuating a foundationally-print focused model within Internet spaces (and any other spaces that seem to be potential candidates for protection, including [boat hulls](#) and — in a thankfully failed gambit — [the flavor of cheese](#)).

That first *Kairos* issue also arrived just as the United States Congress engineered an ongoing 20-year (and counting?) pause in the entry of works into the public domain by means of a retroactive 20-year extension to the term of copyright. The landscape we now face is one where the public domain is impoverished relative to the 1990s' routine annual advancement of works into the public domain. As this is being written, [we stand on the verge of the first New Year's Day in which past works \(in this case from 1923\) will become available for unfettered scholarship, use, and commercialization](#).

Though this feels like the broader culture is trending towards a victory for members of the extended scholarly community who have participated in arguments against copyright laws and decisions that have limited public access, the concept of fair use is suffering due to increasing awareness of the possibility to deploy "notice and takedown" mechanisms enabled by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and — more generally — "slap" and nuisance suits that effectively cede copyright control to the deepest pocket.

Copyright is also a looming presence throughout higher education. Educators depend on texts, and in particular *current* texts. Because of academia's bias toward recency, academic publishing remains an especially lucrative niche market. Quality control within this space is usually assured by way of peer-review, usually involving no direct compensation for reviewers and often involving little to no compensation for those editors who are situated within educational institutions. Efforts to leverage the Internet to sidestep the existing academic publishing structures have been only partially successful (with [Kairos being among one of the longest-standing examples](#)). More generally, copyright's presence on college campuses has clearly not been making [textbooks](#) or [academic journals](#) more affordable.

The copyright-complicated academic workspace is front and center in Karen Lunsford, James Purdy, and Erika Carlos's "Mapping the IP Landscape: Reflections on Ownership, Authorship, and Copyright for Writing Instruction." This research project represents a sustained effort to aggregate the thinking of dozens of practitioners as they think through questions of authorship and ownership in writing classrooms, and weigh the degrees to which copyright laws serve as obstacles to their preferred pedagogical and professional approaches. Lunsford, Purdy, and Carlos offer a window into the challenges wrought by copyright laws in the contemporary academy, and the thoughtful and innovative approaches that scholars at every rank are using to cope with these complications.

Also presenting thoughtful reflections on the impact of copyright on academic scholarship, Daniel Frank, Jabeen Firasat, Eda Ozyesipinar, Nathan Riggs, and Joshua Wood, recently matriculated graduate students, comment on their experiences of producing a collaborative film project for a graduate seminar. Their webtext, "Collaboration and/against Copyright: Notes Home from the Information Technology Revolution's Battlefield," notes the many challenges they encountered when addressing copyright protections over media they wished to incorporate into their film -- to the extent that copyright became a tool for censorship. They particularly reflect on the international implications of copyright for freedom of speech and change in the world, and they illustrate the need for changing current copyright regimes.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF IP

A little over two decades ago, *Kairos* was on the leading edge of academic venues addressing the significance of copyright law, plagiarism policies, and "intellectual property" for scholars of rhetoric, technology, and pedagogy. As the editing process for *this* issue draws to a close, we are conscious that *Kairos 3.1* looks prescient at times and quaint at other times (scholarship about the Internet often does not age well, and links in said scholarship even less so). We cannot help but wonder how this issue of *Kairos* will look two decades from now.

As we allow ourselves some satisfaction with respect to the scope, range, and depth of the work collected in this issue, we are also conscious of developments now underway or on the horizon that may well have transformative impacts on the conversation. Among these are:

- Increasingly restrictive approaches to copyright in the European Union, especially if paired with ongoing demands that the United States “harmonize” with European laws.
- Developments in artificial intelligence, and especially increased reliance on bots as composers of at least written texts, and perhaps of media texts more generally.
- Movement toward collective and collaborative composing tools, especially at the point where the “default” writing space is marked as a space for joint — rather than individual — composition.
- Generational developments in Internet technologies which may well make smartphones, rather than conventional routers, the main pathway for Internet delivery, and may offer bandwidth and speeds that transform the practical realities of media composition.
- New capacities for more users -- especially our students -- to innovate via new technologies, such as apps, haptic devices, wearables, AI, and robotics, and the copyright and patent questions raised when the technological infrastructures that allow them to do so are offered by campuses.

The purpose of a special issue like this is to offer a snapshot of where we stand, rather than to prognosticate. Nevertheless, we observe that the many scholars who participated in *Kairos 3.1* offered arguments that still reverberate, even in our dramatically transformed technological landscape. We hope and expect that this will be as true of the work collected here, even as the pace of technological change in our disciplines seems to accelerate with each passing year. We look forward to this work joining the conversation, and becoming part of how we understand who we are and how we compose at the end of the second decade of the 21st Century.

Works Cited

Brandt, Deborah. (2015/2017). *The rise of writing: Redefining mass literacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DeVoss, Dànielle Nicole & Rife, Martine Courant. (Eds.). (2015). *Cultures of copyright: Contemporary intellectual property*. New York: Peter Lang.

Ede, Lisa & Lunsford, Andrea. (1990). *Singular texts/plural authors: Perspectives on collaborative writing*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Gurak, Laura J. & Johnson-Eilola, Johndan. (Eds.). (1998). *Intellectual Property*. Special issue of *Computers and Composition*, 15(2).

Herrington, TyAnna K. (2001). *Controlling voices: Intellectual property, humanistic studies, and the internet*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Herrington, TyAnna K. (2010). *Intellectual property on campus: Students' rights and responsibilities*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Kennedy, Krista, & Howard, Rebecca Moore. (Eds.). (2013). *Western cultures of intellectual property*. Special issue of *College English*, 75(5).

Logie, John. (2006). *Peers, pirates, and persuasion: Rhetoric in the peer-to-peer debates*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press.

Loughran, Patricia. (2007). *The republic in print: Print culture in the age of US nation building, 1770-1870*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Reyman, Jessica. (2009). *The rhetoric of intellectual property: Copyright law and the regulation of digital culture*. New York: Routledge.

Reyman, Jessica & Schuster, Mary Lay. (Eds.). (2010). *Technical Communication and the Law*. Special issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 20(1).

Rife, Martine Courant; Westbrook, Steve; DeVoss, Dànielle Nicole; & Logie, John. (Eds.) (2010). *Copyright, Culture, Creativity, and the Commons*. Special issue of *Computers and Composition*, 27(3).

Rife, Martine Courant; Slattery, Shaun; and DeVoss, Dànielle Nicole (Eds.). (2011). *Copy(write): Intellectual property in the writing classroom*. Perspectives on Writing. Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press.

Westbrook, Steve. (2010). *Composition and copyright: Perspectives on teaching, text-making, and fair use*. New York: SUNY Press.