

COMPOSING IN NEW ENVIRONMENTS: INCORPORATING NEW MEDIA
WRITING IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Composition studies maintains a strong foundation within academia, but many composition instructors neglect the field's relationship and approaches to the ever-expanding existence of new media technologies. While the formal writing skills that represent the main focus of the majority of current composition programs retain vital skills that are necessary for students to learn, the fact remains that the field of composition studies is evolving as a result of communication technologies. Students no longer work in the sole context of the written word, but participate in environments that include abstract language and visual components. This new technological environment represents an arena upon which current composition programs often fail to capitalize. The question I plan to address throughout my research is how new media texts can be incorporated into composition classrooms and why new media texts are vitally important for college students in FYC courses.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my dad, Joe Virtue, who never allowed me to give up no matter what. Your love and guidance has shaped me to become the person I am today.

Chapter One: Defining New Media and Its Place in Composition Studies

“I actually believe that some tug of war between words and images or between writing and design can be productive as it brings into relief the multiple dimensions of all forms of communication.” Diana George (14)

Composition studies maintains a strong foundation within academia, but many composition instructors neglect the field’s relationship and approaches to the ever-expanding existence of new media technologies. Students no longer work in the sole context of the written word, but participate in diverse learning environments that include multiple language discourse communities that incorporate elements such as sound, still images, video, and texture. The current state of composition faces a new era with the emerging presence of new media writing. While some composition programs are unable to provide access to technologies to teach new media, the benefits of incorporating new media into the classroom transcend new boundaries in critical thinking. For example, essay assignments included in writing courses facilitate certain aspects of learning to think critically, but fail to engage students in an atypical fashion. Essays and other writing assignments dictate certain aspects of critical thinking, but the consequential effect becomes students who only gain the skills to negotiate critical problems when they are present under very specific guidelines and within limited parameters. New media should not replace current practices of composition studies, such as written essays, but they should be examined as a form of communication that is more effective in given situations.

New media expands on the process of critical thinking by adding numerous variations in terms of the materialities that can be used to construct a project, but also by the way limitations are deconstructed by asking students to develop parameters through which they create their work. Materialities represent the various elements that are combined to create new media writing, such as sound, images, texture, smell, written text, and moving images. Assigning an essay to students forces them to engage in critical thinking by picking a topic, creating an argument, supporting that argument with evidence, and several other steps; but at the same time, the majority of essay assignments are predetermined. Students are limited to the medium of alphabetic text, the format of standard 8½ by 11 inch paper, the style of traditional writing (introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion), and several other constrictive forms that feed into a predetermined end product that limits the creative process through which students are able to produce compositions. New media represents a necessary addition to composition programs because of the new environments in which students are becoming active participants in everyday. Students constantly engage with new media writing through the presence of television and the Internet, and the growing presence of technology necessitates the need for new media instruction for students. New media writing offers a new way in which instructors can engage students and reinforce critical thinking and writing skills. I plan to examine the importance of new media writing in composition studies by examining three textbooks that have addressed the need to further instruct new media in conjunction with traditional composition practices.

English departments' scarce technological resources and instructors' lack of experience and comfort with new technologies frequently prohibit the inclusion of new

media in composition courses. The humanities often represent the least sophisticated departments, in terms of technology, because they receive limited funding in relation to departments such as math and science whose technology needs are given higher priority. Adding additional technology to English departments offers new ways to instruct students in critical thinking and writing. Including new media components in composition courses presents benefits to English departments because it provides the means from which to view the department from a new perspective. Incorporating new media can redefine the needs of English departments, and possibly transition the field to a contemporary and technologically sophisticated model of writing instruction. The question becomes how to initiate the transition into a more modern age. There are two possibilities addressing the problem of lack of technology. First, new media does not have to incorporate digital technology into its final products. The dichotomy between digital and non-digital new media will be discussed in more detail, but it can exist outside digital environments as a non-digital form of technology. Another solution to combat the lack of technology relies on being creative with the limited means of technology that English departments possess. Although complete technologically integrated classrooms offer the ideal environment for teaching new media, instructors can create diverse and sound environments for new media writing with the combination of a laptop computer and projector. The lack of technology in English departments creates barriers that can be surpassed with the ingenuity of composition instructors.

Inexperience and a lack of comfort help explain why new media has not been heavily incorporated into composition programs. English departments sometimes have the connotation of being very traditional departments, but the choice of not including

newer technologies comes from a barrier of not being experienced in the use of new technology. New media represents a transitioning age that demands time and work from composition instructors. While computers and digital technologies have existed for a number of years, earlier technologies came into existence through a translation of older forms of composition such as writing by hand and typewriters. Much of the technologies that are currently used within English departments, such as word processing programs, were not entirely foreign, but instead could be learned based on prior knowledge. Even more advanced software such as PowerPoint incorporated previous knowledge of making presentations using posters and transparencies. New media presents difficulties for many composition instructors because it is not a modern translation of older styles of composition, but instead a brand new and diverse environment that demands a completely new set of skills and knowledge. This problem of being unfamiliar with new media demonstrates why both older and younger instructors are choosing not to include new media within composition programs. Composition instructors incorporate the teaching of critical thinking through the act of composing, and new media represents a new arena that affects students constantly. Critical thinking skills need to be addressed in relation to new media because students participate in environments constantly influenced by new media.

Although my focus has been on why new media needs to be incorporated into composition classrooms, one question that remains important is how to negotiate the meaning of technology in relation to new media writing. First, technology represents for many the presence of computer software and computer-related equipment. This idea limits the possibilities of incorporating new media into composition courses because

English departments often lack the resources to create digitally sound environments in their classrooms. Technology, therefore, can represent a combination of different media constructed to act as a particular form of communication. Examples of technology can include both non-digital elements, such as image and texture, or represent something digital such as moving images or websites.

Now that the perception of technology incorporates a much broader realm of discourse, the question of how to define new media must be addressed to further explore the relationship between the two ideas. Scholars differ in their definitions of new media, further complicating matters. The ways in which the relatively new term is used often vary in relation to the ways technology is defined. For many scholars, new media writing must involve a digital component in the creation of compositions. New media becomes easily visible within a digital context, but the effects created through digital new media can also be created/translated through non-digital components. In order to include both digital and non-digital components, Anne Francis Wysocki defines new media as:

Those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who then highlight the materiality: such composers design texts that help readers/consumers/viewers stay alert to how any text—like its composers and readers—doesn't function independently of how it is made and in what contexts. Such composers design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they embody. (15)

Many scholars may challenge this definition of new media due to the lack of digital components, but this definition becomes more concrete in the way that vocabulary

characterized specifically for digital new media also work in non-digital new media compositions.

Mary E. Hocks and Lev Manovich both provide a unique set of vocabulary to describe different aspects of analyzing digital new media. Demonstrating how these terms also relate to non-digital new media, however, legitimizes Wysocki's definition of new media not being limited to a digital environment. Hocks focuses a great deal of attention on defining audience stance, transparency, and hybridity. Hocks characterizes audience stance as the method in which a composer attempts to persuade the audience to participate (in a digital environment) in a communicative process that "requires, encourages, or even discourages" a discourse between the audience and the communicative artifact (632). This definition works well in relation to the interactive nature of digital environments, but the practice of audience stance can still take place outside of digital arenas. By analyzing a simple piece of new media, such as a poster, an audience stance still occurs in the way that the design concept of the poster fosters a specific way of reading the visual artifact. Although there are multiple ways in which to read the poster, the composer provides a means through which to guide the viewer in a visual manner that designates the intended meaning. This process can be complicated more by adding elements to the poster that not only ask the viewer to view it in a particular manner, but also require a physical involvement of lifting flaps or moving things around to display more of the intended message. The presence of audience stance also creates an ethos for the composer because it asks the audience to take an active part in the composition process.

The next term that Hocks analyzes, transparency, examines the ways in which an artifact relies on “established conventions” of previous forms of communication to transcend obstacles that may be present due to the use of digital technology (632). Transparency represents an idea that is clearly present in both digital and non-digital forms of new media. The use of a poster as a new media project demonstrates the role of transparency because it relies on the standard conventions that allow the viewer to construct a meaningful interpretation of what the composer is trying to convey. Incorporating the idea of transparency in relation to audience stance, however, produces an arena in which the composer may attempt to reject the formal idea of transparency to complicate the new media artifact and disrupt the interactivity between the artifact and viewer. Transparency can affect the role of audience stance because it provides one method of supplementing or disrupting the relationship between viewer and audience which consequently produces another effect of the new media component. The interrelationship between audience stance and transparency caters to the multiple ways in which composers are able to construct new media projects that can complicate or simplify the viewer’s relationship to the final product, but also further demonstrates the ways in which new media demands a sophisticated analysis, in the way such artifacts are constructed and how they will be perceived by a given audience.

The last component that Hocks describes in her analysis of new media is the presence of hybridity. Hocks defines hybridity as “the ways in which online documents combine and construct visual and verbal designs” (632). Hybridity translates easily into the idea of non-digital new media because forms of new media, such as a poster, often include a combination of text and visual images that co-exist to foster a more meaningful

interpretation of what the composer conveys throughout her or his work. Although the three terms that Hocks places in context to new media writing are rather simplistic as stand-alone terms, the ways in which all three terms interrelate create a complex system which displays the multitude of choices that a composer of new media must take into account.

Manovich creates a more specific vocabulary that focuses on new media solely as a digital process. Although I have discussed the ways new media transcends digital boundaries, Manovich's terms are important to analyze how digital new media is created. The five terms that Manovich explores in detail are numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding. Numerical representation refers to the fact that "[a]ll new media objects, whether created from scratch on computers or converted from analog media sources, are composed of digital code" (Manovich 27). This idea creates several meaningful effects in new media writing. The first effect blurs the distinctions between the verbal and visual. By representing everything in a digital environment through numerical representation, the "opposition between visual and verbal is bridged" because they no longer exist as separate entities (Sorapure 5). Although they still appear as visual images and verbal words, they each have been created through the numerical representation that Manovich discusses. Another important consequence that occurs in digital new media is that "*media becomes programmable*" (Manovich 27). By creating media in a digital environment, the new media artifacts no longer constitute a physical materiality, but instead demonstrate their significance through abstract ideas that can be continually modified to achieve a desired effect on a specific audience. New media, from the digital perspective of Manovich, gains a significant ability in the fact that it can

gradually evolve through the work of a composer to become more effective in presenting an intended message.

The next element that Manovich discusses, modularity, stems from numerical representation and further demonstrates the programmability of digital new media. Manovich describes the modularity as “a new media object [that] consists of independent parts, each of which consists of smaller independent parts” (31). In essence, the digital environment allows users to focus on the minute aspects of new media. Wysocki defines new media as the combination of multiple medias, and the idea of modularity demonstrates that single elements or components, such as sound or one specific image, can be modified and then placed back within the piece. Not only can single elements be manipulated, but single elements can be extracted from one piece of new media and placed within another. Modularity further demonstrates the idea of the digital lacking any physical materiality, and because of that fact can be edited in countless ways to obtain a desired effect within a new media piece.

Automation relates to the idea of modularity in the way the single elements can be separated from an entity, but also are (re)combined to construct new works. The fact that all digital new media maintains its existence through numerical representation demonstrates the idea of automation in the way that the composer does not create the work on a screen, but instead creates a combination of several preexisting forms of media. A significant effect of this process is the idea that “human intentionality can be removed from the creative process, at least in part” (32). Another consequential product of this effect is that digital new media provides composers with new sets of skills. One reason that new media is not included in composition courses was because it relies on

technology that does not translate from earlier technologies. While individuals had a basic familiarity with word processors because they mirrored previous forms of writing like the typewriter, automation provided access to skills that many people are not familiar with. While individuals may not possess the ability to draw, splice clips of image together, or edit sound clips; automation has provided short cuts that provide individuals a chance to work with art, cinematography, and music. The fact that composition instructors may not have the base knowledge of these skills alienates them from the new technologies present within new media.

The first three terms that Manovich discusses address the creation of digital new media, but the fourth concept, variability, discusses the ways in which digital new media can be viewed by an audience. Variability demonstrates the ways in which “a new media object is not something fixed once and for all, but something that can exist in different, potentially infinite versions” (36). While Manovich discusses the close relationship that variability has to numerical representation, modularity, and automation; one aspect that he seems to avoid is the incorporation of the audience. Looking at variability as the different paths of navigation that can be chosen to view a piece of new media, such as choosing multiple ways to examine a website through choosing different links, the audience possesses a much larger role in digital new media because they factor into the production of it. Although the audience does not construct new media to the extent of the composer, the fact that they get to choose the path in which they view a piece of new media because of the idea of variability contributes to the production of the overall effect once they have finished viewing it. Variability also demands more attention from the

composer because it forces her/him to take into consideration the way in which the audience will interact with that piece of new media.

The last term that Manovich discusses has profound consequences on the idea of new media writing. Transcoding represents the idea of transferring one form of media to another. Manovich increases the significance of this term, however, by demonstrating the “traditional ways in which human culture modeled the world and the computer’s own means of representing it” (46). For Manovich, new media represents the transcoding of human culture into computerization. In this instance, the increasing presence of technology in society will begin to shape culture rather than the opposite and previous effect of culture shaping technology. This final idea put forth by Manovich describes not only the importance, but the necessity of instructors to incorporate new media into composition classrooms. If new media and technology are destined to play such a large part in affecting culture, then it becomes necessary for students to possess the skills to meaningfully create and interpret new media.

In order to understand new media better and to further legitimize its importance in the composition classroom, we can turn to I.A. Richards who provides a system through which new media writing can be analyzed as a form of communication. Incorporating Richards’ ideas of the semantic triangle, comparison fields, background noise, and feedforward provides the means to evaluate the effectiveness of new media. I use Richards specifically because he:

defines rhetoric in two ways: as ‘how words work in discourse’ and as ‘the study of misunderstanding and its remedies.’ These definitions summarize two distinctive features of Richards’ work: first, his theory that the

meaning of words is a function of their interpretation in context and, second, his mission to promote better understanding by criticizing impediments to understanding and by creating tools for effective communication. (Bizzell 964)

Several theorists approach semiotics and concepts similar to Richards' semantic triangle, but Richards produces several concepts that go into more detail than the semantic triangle to examine effective communication. Bizzell points out Richards' interest in interpretation through context which coincides with several of the ideas presented in the three textbooks that I will analyze. For the authors of the textbooks, context plays a large role in critical thinking and composing because it allows a composer to effectively engage an audience. Richards also wanted to find ways to eliminate communicative barriers that inhibit communication which ties into new media writing fitting specific rhetorical situations. One thing that each textbook stresses is that new media writing should not replace traditional compositions, but should be used as a more effective means of communication in certain situations. Richards' semantic triangle provides a foundation for his other concepts, but comparison fields, feedforward/feedback, and background noise are the most important terms in analyzing new media writing and its effectiveness as a means of communication.

I.A. Richards offers a different perspective in the examination of rhetoric by delving into the use of words rather than arguments as a whole. The fact that Richards takes this stance has several interesting repercussions in the study of rhetoric. Meaning plays a large role in Richards' work, and the fact that meaning often relies on language also can be expanded to fit rhetorical ideas associated with new media writing. One of

Richards' main contributions to rhetoric, the semantic triangle, offers an interesting look at language and how it is interpreted by different individuals. By focusing on the idea of a symbol, a referent, and the thought or reference; Richards provides a breakdown of language and the communicative process. While Richards focuses on written text, however, the semantic triangle could also be examined from a new media writing perspective.

New media writing acts similarly to written text as a form of communication, but expands upon this idea by adding multiple layers through which communication can be delivered and perceived. The multiple layers found in new media writing represent the combination materialities like sound, image, and text. This multi-layered form of discourse represents a relatively new form of communication that can still be analyzed using different means of interpreting the message. Richards' work on analyzing language provides the necessary tools to demonstrate how we might analyze new media writing. The initial use of the semantic triangle will provide a foundation from which to expand several of Richards' ideas on the analysis of new media writing.

By analyzing the semantic triangle from the point of the symbol representing new media writing, the symbol represents a combination of media rather than a sole alphabetic text. Assuming that the symbol can represent an image or an animation (such as clips, movies, images in motion), it is interesting to examine how that would affect or modify the thought/reference. Symbols depicted as written text, which can arguably be manipulated to an extent, possess more of a fixed and objective state of being. Foss provides an example of the symbol "dog," which creates a very specific thought or reference based solely on personal experiences (26). If you examine "dog" from the

perspective of new media writing, however, the symbol can be controlled or manipulated in a manner to shape the desired thought or reference. New media writing affects the perception of the reader because of the fact that it influences the idea of the referent. Richards' semantic triangle examines the act of meaning and the way it is constructed through the symbol, referent, and thought/reference. In using alphabetic text, the symbol creates a link to a specific image in the mind of the reader. The word "dog" may connote a specific dog or type of dog that the reader has in mind. Using new media writing, however, modifies the referent that comes to mind because it visually depicts a specific dog for the reader. By providing an image that creates a specific referent in the mind of the reader, new media writing disrupts and modifies the link between referent and thought/reference.

Using new media to present an image of a large, mean dog to an individual would then create the referent of an intimidating dog that would influence the thought/reference in thinking of the dog as a dangerous animal. If you showed a small puppy playing with a young child, the referent would be a friendly dog in which the effect would create a thought/reference with the dog representing a fun and caring animal. From a new media writing perspective, the symbol represents a different form of communication that provides a certain sense of control shaping the image of the referent, which in turn modifies the thoughts/references of an individual.

While Richards' semantic triangle demonstrates how new media creates meaning, his notion of comparison fields can be used to take the process one step further and demonstrates effective communication. Richards' model of communication presents a dynamic process through which the message sent by a source undergoes a chaotic process

in which the message is encoded and decoded before it is eventually received at its destination. Although the process of constructing meaning contains many different steps, the most original component that Richards contributes is his idea of comparison fields. Comparison fields represent the “various experiences of the people involved in the communicative effort—the contexts from which the symbols derive their meaning” (Foss, Foss, and Trapp 28). In order for effective communication to take place, the source and destination of a message have to possess a sense of commonality. In other words, meaning is derived from context, and the presence of shared or similar experience fosters this idea of context between the participants in communication. Meaning is ultimately constructed through a similar conception of thought or reference in Richards’ semantic triangle by the participants communicating. In the example of the dog, if two individuals share a similar experience of being attacked by dogs, then their perception of the symbol “dog,” represented by the written word, will draw a similar meaning and foster effective communication. If the thought or reference for each individual was different, however, then the meaning may be confused or lost altogether between the individuals. One individual possessing an experience of playing with a dog versus an individual possessing an experience of being attacked by a dog will limit the shared context and negatively affect the meaning they create in the written word “dog.”

Comparison fields, therefore, represent an essential component in constructing a shared meaning because they represent the contexts through which individuals perceive the meaning within a message. The medium, however, arguably has the ability to modify or influence the context created through comparison fields. New media writing can provide an opportunity to alter the communication process in a positive manner so that

the context between two individuals becomes modified to create stronger comparison fields. Using Richards' idea of the semantic triangle, new media writing has the ability to affect the referent by providing a multifaceted form of communication that influences the idea of the referent by providing a component, such as a visual image, that would conjure a very specific image in the mind of an individual. The effect of influencing the referent of the individual would continue to affect the way meaning is perceived by also modifying the thought or reference.

In Wysocki's definition of new media writing, the idea that a composer uses a combination of multiple materialities to create a certain set of values within a specific audience provides the initial attributes to alter the comparison fields between different individuals to establish a sense of meaning. New media writing creates a different experience from alphabetic text in the idea of constructing comparison fields because it relies on several different components that influence the way in which an individual may examine her or his thoughts or references. While alphabetic text influences a referent that in turn affects thoughts and references through arbitrary symbols such as words, new media writing incorporates a variety of media that represent less arbitrary symbols that can directly influence the referent. By analyzing something such as an animated clip that contains image, text, and sound; the referent of an individual is being influenced by three different effects, as well as any combination of the three. The image and sound of this clip can directly influence the referent of the individual because it does not rely on connotations for meanings such as written words, but instead physically provides an image and sound that can be used to create the referent in the mind of the individual. From this point, the text can be used to further direct the way in which an individual

observes the image and sound governing the referent of the individual. By having the ability to influence the referent to any degree, new media writing also affects the perception of meaning in the thought/reference of an individual. Incorporating the ideas just presented with Richards' idea of comparison fields, if new media writing can shape the referent in multiple individuals, then it also creates stronger comparison fields between individuals as well. The effect of this process leads to a more efficient form of communication in which similar meanings exist between multiple people because of the effect that new media writing has on displaying a message and fostering stronger comparison fields.

Another aspect in Richards' model of communication that relates to new media and effective communication is the idea of noise. In the idea of verbal or written communication, noise represents a form of interference between two subjects, but the idea of noise represents a great deal more in the realm of new media writing. In the process of composing new media, noise would still play a part, but it would coincide with a larger idea of foreground and background. In presenting new media, a foregrounded message relates what the composer wants to convey. In addition to this, noise is also present, but it works in two different ways. The original notion of noise representing a form of interference would still exist as far as interrupting or confusing the message, but it would also exist in the form of background noise. This idea of background noise would not represent a form of interference, but instead would represent an underlying message placed beneath the foreground. In effect, the background noise would represent subtle rhetorical effects that would attempt to reinforce the foregrounded message. A background noise would arguably exist in written texts too, but the combination of

materialities in new media writing provides more room for a composer to imbed several background messages in new media compositions.

Examining the effects of advertisements as forms of new media writing provides a way in which to analyze the effect of both types of noise. Richards promotes the idea that effective communication takes place because of shared contexts or comparison fields. Advertisements represent an interesting and unique form of communication because of the fact that companies want to reach a massive audience in a short amount of time. In order to do this, advertisements attempt to create comparison fields by using new media writing techniques. One way in which noise works in commercials is in the way that some advertisements fail to convey a meaningful and persuasive message to viewers. Noise operates in the sense that Richards talks about in his model of communication because a form of interference disrupts the decoding of a message by an individual. An example of this occurrence could be when a commercial makes several sports references in which a viewer is unable to make the connections between the sport and a product because of the fact that he or she possesses little, if any, knowledge of sports. Without a proper knowledge of sports, the viewer would be unable to create any meaningful contexts between her or his experience and the commercial. The result would be a failure to create strong comparison fields, which would lead to ineffective communication and meaning.

Noise could also operate on a subconscious level, however, in which the effect would contribute to the production of meaning. In this case, noise would represent a background to be used to construct additional comparison fields between an individual and new media writing. New media writing consists of multiple layers of media, which

in turn create a combined effect. While each medium works together, one component may stand out and act as a foregrounded message. Consequently, the other forms of media may not be in the foreground, but an additional form of communication is still taking place. The example of commercials presents a situation in which an animated image may represent the foregrounded element of communication. Although the product being advertised through the images may not appeal to an individual, the sound placed in the background of the commercial may be appealing, which in effect still draws the individual to the product. This example demonstrates how new media writing works on multiple fronts. The background noise of an appealing song works on a subconscious level, helping to create a shared context and comparison fields, even though the foregrounded message may fail to establish a comparison field. The concept of noise is an important feature in Richards' communication model because it helps demonstrate the complexity of communication involving new media writing.

Richards' idea of comparison fields relies on a shared context to establish meaning. In creating this shared context, Richards also analyzes the process in which shared contexts are able to develop. For Richards, a constant negotiation of communication and meaning takes place between two individuals. The terms that Richards uses to illustrate this negotiation are feedback and feedforward. Feedback relies on the acknowledgement and response of an individual to make sure that an effective form of communication has taken place. Feedforward, however, helps in the practice of communication because it relies on assumptions to set up and reinforce contexts and comparison fields. Richards defines feedforward as "a product of former experience: a selective reflection of what has been relevant in similar activity in our past" (Richards 11).

In other words, feedforward relies on past forms of communication to establish meaning within present and future conversations.

New media writing relies on feedback and feedforward to establish meaning through the development of contexts that are (re)negotiated by the individual who receives the intended message. Feedforward necessitates meaning because it provides a logical progression through which an individual interprets a message. New media writing uses feedforward and feedback as a means to establish effective communication. Richards describes the importance of feedforward because it notes that “utterances that claim some importance...whether they seem to be guided and guarded by reasonable feedforward as to how people of very different prepossessions are likely to take them” create comparison fields that generate better communication (15). New media writing therefore relies on feedforward to generate stronger comparison fields to establish a stronger sense of meaning. The meaning an individual takes out of the act of communication is problematic because meaning does not represent a single defining moment in the practice of communication. Instead, meaning relies on the same idea of (re)negotiation throughout the entire act of communicating. If an individual fails to comprehend one moment of communication because the process of feedforward and feedback are disrupted, then the whole meaning of a communication may be lost; the subsequent moments of communication may be based on the understanding of a previous part of the initial message. New media writing provides the means to establish an efficient method of feedback and feedforward in the way that the combination of different media allows the viewer to take part in this complex arena of communication on multiple fronts and to establish meaning by relying on multiple components of

communication rather than relying on a single mode such as alphabetic text or verbal communication.

Richards' best summary may be in his examination of the feedforward-feedback relationship that states that "billions of hierarchically systematic cycles, through which we live and move and have our being, are guided in all they do for one another by concord or discord in their feedforward-feedback. And it is perhaps a reasonable suggestion that much in what we call ourselves and admit to be 'us' includes these billions of concordant cycles" (14). New media writing fits into this idea, as well as other of Richards' theories of communication, because it provides the means to create stronger contextual foundations from which a truer sense of meaning can be created between individuals. The use of multiple media creates a groundwork for further developing communication because it can limit the context through which we decode a message, therefore creating stronger comparison fields and ultimately providing a more accurate meaning between individuals.

After providing a method of evaluating the effectiveness of new media writing as a form of communication using Richards' ideas on semantics, I will analyze three textbooks that address the idea of the visual text in addition to written text. Since new media represents an emerging skill in composition studies, the analysis of these three textbooks will provide a way to see how new media can be better incorporated into the classroom. The three textbooks that I will analyze are Picturing Texts by Lester Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchik, and Cynthia Selfe; Writing in a Visual Age by Lee Odell and Susan M. Katz; and Compose, Design, and Advocate by Anne Frances Wysocki and Dennis A. Lynch. These textbooks were chosen because they attempt to incorporate new

media in addition to traditional composition practices and because the authors of these textbooks are dominant scholars in the study of new media writing. The analysis of each textbook will focus on examining the introductions and purpose for creating each text, the readings, both non-digital and digital assignments, and the supplemental materials included.

New media represents a new, diverse form of writing that will consequently affect college students. In order to prepare students the constant bombardment of new media, we must provide them with opportunities that move past the sole standard practice of written essays as a form of critical presentation. Jody Shipka expands upon this premise by stating that “assignments that predetermine goals and narrowly limit the materials, methodologies, and technologies that students employ in service of those goals...perpetuate arhetorical, mechanical, one-sided views of production” (285). New media writing contributes to the further engagement of critical thinking in “establishing an atmosphere in which students are able to prove that, beyond being critically minded consumers of existing knowledge, they are also extremely capable, critically minded producers of new knowledge” (292). Shipka’s concept of students as consumers and producers in relation to knowledge further demonstrates the significance of new media writing. By incorporating new media writing into composition classrooms, students will be better prepared to engage in critical thinking in various situations as well as produce multiple forms of compositions that fit specific rhetorical needs.

Chapter Two: The Analysis of Picturing Texts and the Role of New Media Writing

Picturing Texts provides a detailed account of how visuals affect our daily lives. This chapter will look at several different aspects of Picturing Texts to explain the ways in which instructors can incorporate new media in their composition courses. The first section examines the introduction of Picturing Texts and the authors' purpose of writing the textbook. After examining the motives in writing the textbook, the following section will analyze the chapters included in the textbook and examine them in conjunction with Richards' ideas of semiotics with a focus on the semantic triangle, comparison fields, the role of noise, and the process of feedforward. Each chapter contains several articles with assignments that will be analyzed as non-digital new media assignments and digital new media assignments. The theory of Mary E. Hocks discussed in the introduction will be used to analyze non-digital new media, while Lev Manovich's theory will be used to discuss digital new media. Finally, the supplemental material included in Picturing Texts will be examined in relation to the lessons included in the textbook.

The opening words of Picturing Texts demonstrate the importance of visual symbols by referring to an archaeological find that demonstrates that "Our current era may be called a 'visual age,' but there is no known time when people did not create images" (2). Introducing the text in this manner introduces two important ideas to the reader: first, the presence of images has always existed along with words; and two, that at some point a hierarchy was created that placed the written word as being more important than visual images. Picturing Texts analyzes the way present technology has surrounded us with images. The advancement of technology has provided the public with the tools to

produce images and has also supplemented individuals who possess limited artistic skills with programs and software to create and develop appealing visual products. Images no longer consist of an artist creating a work from scratch, but instead, with the incorporation of technology, we have created environments in which visuals are created through manipulation, extraction, digital overlays, and other techniques. After demonstrating that the role of images has changed in present day society, Picturing Texts emphasizes the importance of visuals to composition in producing stronger and clearer messages.

Introducing New Media and its Effect on Composition

Including images and words has several interesting effects in the interpretation of meaning through the combination of the two. While Picturing Texts provides additional examples of images and words through a historical context, it quickly transitions into two examples in which words can influence the meaning of an image and how the inclusion of an image can strengthen the meaning behind words. The first example that the textbook provides is a photograph of a rural farm (7). After characterizing the photo as a nostalgic look at rural America, the textbook provides the title of the photo, which modifies the context of the photo, which alters the meaning that an audience will take from it. In a different example that demonstrates the effect an image can have on words, the authors of Picturing Texts discuss how writing a description of events that occurred during times of segregation may get the idea across to the reader, but providing a picture that shows separate water fountains labeled “white” and “black” provides a more in-depth look at the effect of racial discrimination (8). Providing two simple examples that

demonstrate the relationship between visual and written words emphasizes the importance of incorporating new media into the composition classroom.

In the final pages of the introduction, Picturing Texts demonstrates the ways images and words can be interchanged in certain situations to further demonstrate the importance of incorporating both into composition studies. The authors provide a rationale that demonstrates the rhetorical effects that can be produced through looking at composition as a diverse process as opposed to traditional standard written compositions. Incorporating new media into composition studies provides additional ways to examine rhetorical strategies and provide students with more resources to critically observe the world that they inhabit.

Consuming Images and Comparison Fields

Picturing Texts structures its readings to reflect an initially broad notion of visuals that narrows as the readings progress. Examining the textbook using Richards' ideas of semiotics shows a logical progression through each chapter that demonstrates several of the characteristics that Richards discusses in the act of communication. The opening chapter, "Picturing Texts," includes a brief analysis of several terms that relate to the idea of visual communication. By establishing a common vocabulary within the first chapter, Picturing Texts follows one of Richards' main ideas in effective communication by creating comparison fields between the source (the textbook) and the destination (the reader). Sharing a common set of vocabulary creates a foundation from which readers of the textbook will be able to understand later chapters in the textbook as well as start to understand visual images in a different way because of the new set of vocabulary terms

that they can now explore the images with. Although this opening chapter establishes a comparison field, the next two chapters explore visuals in greater detail, expanding upon the terms discussed in the first chapter.

“Looking Closer,” the second chapter of Picturing Texts, begins with a thorough analysis of two similar images. In looking at these images, the text also begins to address the rhetorical strategies that are present within the images. The first distinction that the chapter makes is examining the immediate context and the broader context of the images. The immediate context deals with “anyone or anything that has an immediate role in forming the message” (Faigley 100). The broader context presents a little more difficulty in the way that it deals with connotations that can be perceived through a detailed analysis of an image. Examining the broader context of a visual artifact demands a careful analysis that asks questions about the author, purpose, medium/genre, subject, and several other characteristics of an image. Looking at the questions that the broader context of a visual image conveys relates back to Richards’ notion of noise, and how it can be separated into foreground and background noise. Each element of the visual that constructs the broader context features elements that exist as background noise, elements that are supposed to be perceived in a more subtle manner. After providing a common vocabulary and analytical strategies, Picturing Texts continues to narrow the focus by looking at visual images as a form of narrative.

The third and fourth chapters, “Making Lives Visible” and “Representing Others,” once again follow the process of narrowing the focus on how we look at visual images, and examine the ways in which the combination of individual elements (author, purpose, medium/genre, etc) creates a narrative that the reader can construct out of

images. By structuring the chapters this way, Picturing Texts starts off with looking at visuals as a whole and then strips them down into smaller concepts. Afterwards, however, the text looks at reconstructing images to create narratives as demonstrated in chapters three and four. Structuring the text in this manner demonstrates the process of communication through the encoding and decoding of a message between a sender and receiver much the same way that Richards describes his model of communication. “Representing Others” necessitates the need for careful construction of visual images because it demonstrates the ways in which certain elements can be ambiguous in their meaning, which can act as an obstructive form of noise that disrupts the intended meaning in the communication between the visual artifact and viewer. While the first half of the textbook examines new media from the point of examining it in other pieces of work, “Representing Others” represents a transitioning point in which the focus switches from analysis to the production of new media.

Producing the Image: Feedback and Feedforward

While the previous chapters work on analyzing visual images, chapter five, entitled “Constructing Realities,” demonstrates the ways in which visual images can be modified to create new effects. During the process of manipulating images through digital technology, however, the role of Richards’ ideas on feedback and feedforward come into play. Richards explores how communication relies on a commonality shared between the sender and receiver in which they both know where the message is going to be received. The concept of feedforward also relates to visuals because viewers of images have a specific notion in mind in relation to the context of a visual element. The

content found in “Constructing Realities” demonstrates the ways in which false realities are perceived as being real because the viewer is able to construct a feedforward process that legitimates meaning found within the image. In essence, visual images demonstrate their effectiveness in such a way that they are able to create a willing suspension of disbelief among the viewer. Images can be modified in subtle ways until viewers begin to comprehend the image as being legitimate because feedforward allows the viewer see where the image intends to go beyond the still image presented.

The writers of Picturing Text explore the idea of feedforward further when they begin to look at the use of creating arguments using pictures. The opening pages of “Picturing Argument,” chapter six, include very dramatic examples of how visual images can be constructed as arguments. These dramatic images reflect Richards’ idea of feedforward because each image possesses three characteristics that create the overall argument. The three characteristics are a premise, what is going in the image, and how the combination of the first two create a logical conclusion. For example, one image that is included in this chapter portrays a woman sticking a gun up her nose with the single word “cocaine” printed at the bottom in a large white font. The premise of this image relies on the viewer knowing that cocaine is inhaled through the nose. The second part of the argument illustrates an image of the woman with a gun placed in her nose. Richards’ idea of feedforward, theoretically, generates the idea that the premise and the image create the conclusion that using cocaine is like suicide. After demonstrating the use of visuals to create arguments, “Picturing Argument” goes on to analyze the rhetorical effects that are produced through the use of visual images.

Making Texts Matter: The Semantic Triangle

The final chapter of Picturing Texts focuses on the idea of designing a text through focusing on combining single elements to create the whole image. In “Designing Texts,” Richards’ idea of the semantic triangle demonstrates that the creation of the visual piece shows the way in which the symbol, represented by a visual image, affects the referent and thought/reference. This chapter focuses on the careful ways in which the symbol (visual image) is constructed to create a very specific referent within the individual to affect the thought or reference that the viewer experiences. By controlling the referent by providing an image that affects the visual association of the individual, such as the image of the woman with the gun up her nose with the single word cocaine, the thought/reference becomes directly influenced with the idea that cocaine is dangerous and deadly to those who use it. The use of Richards’ semantic triangle also demonstrates the effectiveness of using visual elements as a form of communication because it demonstrates the strong rhetorical effects that are taking place in the mind of the viewer through the semantic triangle.

Analyzing Non-Digital New Media with Hocks

The incorporation of new media becomes clearly evident with the included articles at the end of each chapter and how they are tied into assignments that deal with new media writing compositions. Although there are several readings in addition to the chapters that have not been discussed, Picturing Texts relies on the combination of the included articles and the assignments located at the end of chapters to work together in producing new media assignments. The combination of readings and assignments works

well because it provides readings that demonstrate, exemplify, or use new media writing prior to the introduction of the assignment. These readings create a foundation from which the readers of this text are able to analyze new media from a broad perspective while having a specific idea of what new media aspects they should be focusing on.

While many of the assignments ask the reader to analyze the ways in which visual images and new media work through written responses, Picturing Texts also allows students to work with new media themselves and create their own new media work. The two assignments I will discuss deal with non-digital new media and will include theory from Mary E. Hocks' ideas of audience stance, transparency, and hybridity to demonstrate the effects that new media writing has on viewers.

The first reading that precedes one of the new media assignments found within Picturing Texts is entitled "Covered in Glory" and is a short excerpt from a selection included in Smithsonian Magazine. The excerpt contains the covers of twenty magazines/comics that display the American flag shortly following the United States entering World War II. Although the excerpt is only one page long, the inclusion of twenty magazine covers displays the importance and strength of the symbol of the American flag, and how the idea of patriotism was displayed on several different genres of magazines from Time to House and Garden to Wow Comics. The assignment following "Covered in Glory" provides brief questions asking the reader to analyze the meaning behind the visual image of the flag. The assignment asks:

When the president and other elected officials refer to the American flag, they usually speak of the flag representing justice, freedom, and equal opportunity for all. How, then, do we account for the use of the flag to

sell products, from the huge flags that fly over car lots and strip malls to the tiny flags on jewelry and clothing labels? (Faigley 92)

This question provides various pictures depicting the flag in various settings (advertisements, art, funerals, etc.), providing Picturing Texts a rich framework through which the reader can view the flag as a complex symbol consisting of different meanings based on its context.

The final element of the assignment asks the reader to revise the American flag visually after taking into consideration all the different ways the flag can be perceived. After revising the image of the American flag, the textbook asks the reader to create a written analysis that demonstrates why he/she made those changes. Although this is only a very small new media project, the analysis of the American flag forces readers to interpret what rhetorical effects symbols, such as flags, have within our society. Revising the flag requires further rhetorical analysis because it focuses the reader on examining different ways in which the flag can be presented and perceived by different viewers.

The second assignment that I will analyze focuses on a series of texts that demonstrate the relationship between visual and textual compositions. “Nighthawks,” a familiar painting by Edward Hopper, acts as the basis from which additional writings are used to demonstrate the way in which visual and written texts affect one another. Mark Strand’s story “Hopper” and Joyce Carol Oates’ poem “On Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks*” represent two written texts based on the painting by Hopper. By including all three of these works, Picturing Texts clearly demonstrates the ways in which images can produce narratives. Hopper’s “Nighthawks” portrays a still frame of a scene in downtown Chicago, but the way in which the visual works allows individuals like Strand

and Oates to create complex narratives that demonstrate all the different things that the visual images can possibly portray. The questions following the readings ask the reader to take part in the same process by creating her or his own interpretation of Hopper's "Nighthawks" through a narrative story. Including the readings with the assignment provides readers with a smooth transition from analyzing the effects of visual images and new media to producing their own new media writing.

Reading visuals in relation to written text creates a strong rhetorical effect within composition, and the section that includes Hopper's painting concludes with an assignment asking the reader to find a specific photo and create a story that coincides with what is taking place in the visual image. By including both a visual and written component in the final product of this assignment, Picturing Texts demonstrates the relationship that words and images have with one another, and how conjoining the two separate entities can provide a stronger rhetorical effect.

These two selections of readings, "Covered in Glory" and the series of readings based on Hopper's "Nighthawks," demonstrate the way in which Mary E. Hocks' ideas on digital new media translate also to the arena of non-digital new media writing. The first idea that Hocks presents is the role of "audience stance," representing the way in which an audience participates with the piece of new media. While neither of the assignments or readings were digital in nature, an audience stance still exists in the way that the viewers take an active part in viewing images and constructing meanings through an interactivity between the texts and the contexts that surrounds them. By creating a narrative for the painting "Nighthawks," for example, the audience takes a stance in the production of meaning in the work.

Another aspect of new media that Hocks addresses is the idea of transparency in a new media object. Hocks discusses the idea of transparency in relation to digital new media, but one of the key aspects this term relies upon is “familiar conventions” (632). Hocks characterizes transparency in digital new media as relying on familiar conventions, specifically in relation to how digital new media relies on conventions of earlier textual production, but Hocks fails to point out that familiar conventions exist in a much broader perspective. While analyzing Hopper’s “Nighthawks,” a viewer may establish meaning through the fact that the painting relies on familiar conventions of “twentieth-century realist painters” (Faigley 116). Another convention that viewers may appeal to is the literary devices and narrative styles that both Strand and Oates use in their portrayals of Hopper’s painting. By defining transparency through the idea of familiar conventions, Hocks provides the means to analyze both digital and non-digital new media through this context. The transparency of visual elements and new media writing either exposes or subtly displays the contexts through which viewers are supposed to interpret meaning from these works.

The last term that Hocks discusses in relation to digital new media is the idea of hybridity, and how an audience should look at the combination of “visual and verbal designs” (Hocks 632). Hybridity clearly represents an idea that could be applied to both digital and non-digital new media compositions. The interweaving of visual and verbal designs is an aspect that Picturing Texts looks at specifically in regards to Hopper’s “Nighthawks” and Strand and Oates’ literary portrayals of Hopper’s painting. The reader must also incorporate a link between the visual and verbal when the textbook asks the reader to provide a story for a photo of her or his choice. Hybridity examines the effect

which visual images and written text have when they are combined to create one meaning, and the assignments found in Picturing Texts often analyze this same idea throughout the reading in the chapters as well as the assignments that are presented at the end of each chapter. While the focus of the textbook relies mainly on analysis and non-digital new media components, Picturing Texts also provides opportunities to explore digital new media concepts along with some of the readings found at the end of every chapter.

Exploring the Digital: Manovich and New Media

“Through the Door: Digital Production,” an article by Scott McCloud that displays digital new media, looks at the evolution of digital technology in relation to the idea of art. The article, presented as a comic book in the first chapter titled “Picturing Texts,” demonstrates the ways in which technology has provided individuals with the resources to create intricate works of art without having the array of skills that traditional artists possess. Instead, digital technology has provided individuals with the ability to draw artwork and include several different ways in which to creatively manipulate it through digital tools and software. One of the most interesting observations that McCloud makes in his article is that “the computer is an environment to explore, an extension of their whims, and a place where things ‘happen’ first and are understood later” (72). The following assignments that follow McCloud’s article examine this idea in detail by providing a historical background of the computer and how it evolved to allow users to work with images while also looking at the effectiveness of presenting images and written text individually and conjoined.

The first assignment following “Through the Door: Digital Production” asks the reader to examine a digital image using software such as Adobe Photoshop or Macromedia Fireworks. After selecting an image, the assignment asks the reader to employ the different filters possible in the software they are using, and to observe the ways in which different filters affect the way in which we perceive the digital image. The second two elements of the assignment examine the relationship between words and images. First, the reader is supposed to find a comic strip and try to convey every thing that is going on in the comic strip by just using words. Following this exercise, the reader is then asked to look through clip art collections found on the internet and construct a story by just using clip art. From the sequencing of this assignment, the reader can reflect on multiple points that are emphasized through the inclusion of one medium over another. Using only words for one portion of the assignment and only images for the other portion of the assignment demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses that occur through each act of communication. It also demonstrates the ways in which words and images can be combined to create a more thorough form of communication, much like the idea of hybridity that Hocks discusses.

Another assignment that includes digital elements follows the reading of a poem by Billy Collins entitled “Litany.” Collins explores a comparison between two individuals in his poem by using several visually oriented phrases that provide detailed and graphic descriptions of common imagery. For example, Collins characterizes one of the individuals as “You are the dew on the morning grass, / and the burning wheel of the sun. / You are the white apron of the baker / and the marsh birds suddenly in flight” (187). Following the poem, Picturing Texts asks readers first to think about different ways in

which they could represent themselves using only metaphorical and visual images followed by ways in which readers could reconstruct Collins' poem using only visual images and a digital movie-production program. While the assignment does not ask for a complex digital production, it provides readers with a basis for using digital software to create new media compositions. In order to further explore the relevance behind digital new media compositions, Lev Manovich provides several defining characteristics that separate digital new media from non-digital new media.

Manovich argues first that every aspect of digital technology consists of numerical representation. Numerical representation becomes important in working with new media because it is programmable. Looking at McCloud's article, "Through the Door: Digital Production," the programs he analyzes through his comic strip article demonstrate the way in which he uses filters to physically alter original works. The assignment at the end of that reading also demonstrates the programmability of digital new media when it asks the reader to manipulate a photo by using common software programs. Manovich also examines how modularity allows users to create new compositions through the combination of various independent elements. The assignment that asks readers to create a comic strip using clip art found on the internet portrays this idea in the way that users are able to take pre-made digital components and link them together to create new projects.

Manovich also explores automation and variability, which are clearly presented in McCloud's article. Examples of automation are given through the exercise dealing with digital image software and how composers are not creating the image itself, but instead are creating the way in which the original image is perceived through manipulation with

different software and effects. Variability also plays into this example in the way that digital components do not possess a sense of permanence, but are instead always available to be modified. Manovich discusses the idea of transcoding in a broad way that describes how technology has become so prevalent in the daily lives of so many individuals. If technology has reached the point in which it influences our daily lives, then it becomes more imperative to incorporate textbooks like Picturing Texts that provide readings and articles geared toward giving individuals the resources to critically analyze the technology which they consume.

Constructing Knowledge: Supplemental Resources to Reinforce Learning

Supplemental materials become a valuable tool when you are trying to teach things such as digital new media using a textbook that does not possess digital characteristics. Although Picturing Texts does not include any direct supplemental material, the textbook does include several links throughout the chapters and readings with additional resources to find on the internet. These links offer more depth to the textbook as a whole, allowing the reader to take the skills learned throughout the readings and apply them using the resources listed throughout the textbook.

Picturing Texts delivers a unique and in-depth look at the way in which visuals are becoming more important within our daily lives. In designing the textbook with readings, articles, and assignments, Picturing Texts allows readers to see the rhetorical process in both visual images and the written word. As stated in the opening pages of the textbook by W.J.T. Mitchell, “Effective rhetoric is...a two-pronged strategy of

verbal/visual persuasion, showing while it tells, illustrating its claims with powerful examples, making the listener *see* and not merely *hear* . . .”

Chapter Three: What Entails in Writing in a Visual Age: Producing Written Compositions Using Images as Support

Writing in a Visual Age maintains a similar focus to Picturing Texts through the incorporation of images, but includes a stronger emphasis on written compositions. The contents in this chapter focus on the way in which Lee Odell and Susan M. Katz rely on new media in written compositions by analyzing the introduction of the text, examining the chapters in regards to Richards' ideas on semiotics, the inclusion of digital and non-digital new media assignments using Hocks and Manovich, and looking at the ways in which supplemental materials further reinforce the lessons listed throughout the text. Each area of focus will demonstrate the way in which Odell and Katz include images in composition, and how effective they are in using new media in a composition textbook.

Odell and Katz's textbook Writing in a Visual Age incorporates visual aspects, but the main focus of the textbook is about writing and composition. The authors of this textbook are introducing elements of new media writing into composition studies, but are doing so in a way that textual elements remain the focus. One of the things that Odell and Katz stress is the fact that often students exceed our own skills as teachers, in relation to using visual images and technology. Although students possess more knowledge about how to use technology, they do not possess the skills to adequately recognize its full potential in meaningful settings. Teaching students how to use technology effectively in their writing represents one of the main goals of Writing in a Visual Age. In order to achieve this goal, Odell and Katz focus on incorporating various assignments that focus on specific rhetorical situations such as writing reports, proposals, profiles, etc. Odell and Katz offer the reasoning behind their textbook stating, "Students learn to pay

attention not only to the situations in which their audience will likely be reading but also to the knowledge, needs, and values with which their audience is likely to approach the students' work" (Odell vii). While the textbook deals specifically with the idea of the visual age, the methods provided throughout the chapters offer strong skills in both rhetoric and composition.

Visually Sustained: The Immediacy of Visuals in Our Lives

The introduction offers several examples of images that range from covers of magazines to images from websites to flyers that would be found in the hallways of college buildings. By providing these initial images, Odell and Katz offer a detailed look at how readily apparent visuals are within our society as well as how they are used for a variety of purposes. After providing these initial images, the introduction continues to discuss the relationship between words and images, and how they work together to create a desired effect. Examples, Odell and Katz point out, are the main goals of their textbook, and are displayed within a given context. Each context focuses on the analysis of an audience, circumstances, and purposes. Writing in a specific context further outlines the tools a student needs to acquire in order to write with certain objectives in mind that help facilitate the structuring of an effective essay. In giving a brief run through of the main objectives behind Writing in a Visual Age, the rest of the introduction focuses on how the textbook is structured to meet Odell and Katz's goals.

Comparison Fields and Effective Communication

The first section of Writing in a Visual Age includes six different types of specific

writing projects: profiles, reports, position papers, evaluations, proposals, and instructions (20-21). Each chapter included in the first section of the textbook is further broken down into four sections: discussing what makes that particular form of writing unique, readings that demonstrate that style of writing, the assignment of that chapter, and finally a detailed guide demonstrating the process and main objectives of that type of writing project. The second section of the textbook incorporates strategies for design and research. Chapter eight provides insight into the visual production of compositions, and demonstrates in detail how and why certain aspects of visual design (such as fonts, colors, graphics) are better than others. The rest of the chapters, however, relate to more typical aspects of composition and provide insight into research in the library, conducting primary research, evaluating sources and taking notes, and finally documenting sources (23). Included in the final section are chapters that focus on writing within specific situations, which reiterates the importance of writing for and within specific contexts. This section may be the most important section in the textbook because it explains the many different arenas of writing and why writing needs to be important within the focus of students' collegiate careers. Writing in a Visual Age demonstrates that writing does not take place solely within the confines of an academic environment, but is an important skill that transcends into many situations outside of the college atmosphere. In demonstrating this point in the last chapters of their textbook, Odell and Katz make an argument for the need of providing a well rounded education in composition that students can use both within and outside of the academic environment.

One of the strengths that Writing in a Visual Age provides for composition students is the way in which the authors setup very specific sections that detail very

specific types of writing styles in great detail. By focusing on specific forms of writing, just as chapter two does in looking at “Profiles,” Odell and Katz seem to borrow Richards’ ideas on semantics in a very unique way. While examining Picturing Texts and its visual components, Odell and Katz use a similar idea to Richards’ comparison fields as being an effective way of communicating in writing, but their focus relies on the structure, formatting, and presentation of specific writing styles. The assignments following each chapter in the first section of the textbook are followed with rigorous instructions that provide a very in-depth analysis of how to go about creating the type of project that chapter discusses. In providing sample readings that also demonstrate the type of writing project being discussed with descriptive directions, Richards’ idea of comparison fields is being created through the idea of a uniform style of production and reception within a type of writing. For example, by providing sample readings that convey the standards found within writing profiles along with detailed directions about how to create a typical profile piece, Odell and Katz are creating comparison fields by teaching composition students a basic sense of uniformity in profiles. Creating this uniformity allows readers to obtain a significant interpretation from the work because they know what to look for throughout the profile which demonstrates Richards’ idea of comparison fields fostering effective communication.

Making Sense: Richards and the Semantic Triangle

Although the readings that are found in each chapter of the first section were briefly mentioned, the inclusion of the sample readings also demonstrate some of Richards’ ideas on communication in the way that one can apply the use of images to

Richards' semantic triangle. In looking at the article "E.R. Unscripted," by Robert Mackey and Naomi Harris, readers are presented with an article that includes images depicting the graphic realities of emergency rooms. Through the incorporation of these images, Mackey and Harris direct the meaning that they want their readers to infer from the article by providing a symbol that affects the referent that comes to mind in an individual. The images that affect the referent also control the way in which the thought/reference is then perceived by the individual. By using images throughout this article, in addition to the written text which also reinforces the development of the thought/reference, Mackey and Harris direct the ways readers view their article. By analyzing the images in "E.R. Unscripted" in relation to Richards' idea of the semantic triangle, Writing in a Visual Age provides insight into the strengths of incorporating visual images and new media techniques into composition writing.

Background Noise: Subtle Effects in New Media Writing

The majority of the second section of Writing in a Visual Age acts as a handbook for composition students. The chapter that investigates images the most is chapter eight, "Designing Pages and Screens." In "Designing Pages and Screens," Odell and Katz examine the ways in which design elements such as alignment, contrast, consistency, and other elements affect how compositions are received. Analyzing the ways compositions can be made stronger or weaker in relation to their design relates to Richards' idea of noise in his communication model. For Richards, noise acts as a kind of interference disrupting the intended message between the sender and receiver. Much like Richards, Odell and Katz portray the ways in which some design elements generate a stronger

effect in a message while other design choices can inhibit the overall effect of a composition. An example presented in the chapter looks at the phrase “Can you read this line easily?” in various colors (Odell 522). While some colors clearly display the phrase in a manner which is easy to read, a couple colors make it difficult to read the line without analyzing the text closely. Richards’ idea of noise interrupting the intended message can be seen in the way that a poor choice of color (such as a bright yellow text on a white background) determines how easily a text can be read, if at all.

Examining the use of color can also be studied from the opposite perspective, however, if the composer uses color choices to subtly reinforce an important part of the text. Placing an important term in a different color, making it bold, and increasing the size of the font “will make the letters thicker, adding contrast and making them more noticeable” (Odell 520). Readers are conditioned to interpret text that stands out as more important so by interfering (in a positive way) in the presentation of the intended message, composers are able to create a subtle background noise that further drives the point in which they are trying to make. While these examples look at basic design elements such as color, Richards’ idea of noise can be translated to fit all of the design aspects that Odell and Katz refer to in chapter eight. Analyzing the ways in which design elements can create a stronger message relates back to the importance of new media and how focusing on visual elements, such as complex visual images or simple choices such as the color of the font, can change the perception and meaning behind compositions. Incorporating new media writing in textbooks and composition classes allow students to analyze rhetorical effects in a more observable manner while also providing them the necessary skills to analyze the visual environments in which they reside.

Feedforward: Anticipating the Needs of an Audience

The last section of Writing in a Visual Age focuses on developing certain practices of writing for specific situations. Odell and Katz separate this section into four groupings: “Writing for the Classroom,” “Writing Portfolios,” “Writing for the Community,” and “Making Oral Presentations.” While this section provides an in-depth look at writing within specific contexts, it also relates to Richards’ idea of feedback and feedforward. Producing a composition to fit within a specific context relies on an exchange of information/communication between the sender and the receiver. This exchange of information, however, works more efficiently if there is a shared knowledge and interpretation of what has been said and where the rest of the exchange of information is intending to go. By separating the environments for which students will have to compose work, Odell and Katz are creating structures that possess certain expectations from the viewer, more specifically the feedforward process that Richards discusses in his theories of semiotics.

An example of this process can be found in chapter thirteen, “Writing for the Classroom.” In writing this chapter, Odell and Katz discuss how to prepare for essay exams by making assumptions about what the exam will consist of such as content, structure, and managing your time. The assumptions that are discussed in taking essay exams would fit into what Richards calls feedforward in the way that the individual taking the exam attempts to make sense in studying for the exam by attempting to guess what will be on the actual test. Odell and Katz take this one step further in including a section in the chapter entitled “Analyzing the Verbs” (666). In this section, verbs are

listed and followed by descriptions of how they should be perceived in relation the essay exam. Providing the descriptions of students should interpret verbs on a test shows the practice of feedforward in composition textbooks. Incorporating Richards' idea of communication in relation to the ideas presented on visual and written communication in Writing in a Visual Age provide further insight into the importance of composition and new media writing.

Audience Stance, Transparency, and Hybridity in Non-Digital New Media

In looking at the assignments included in both Writing in a Visual Age and Picturing Texts, the assignments vary in the amount of emphasis they place on visual images. Picturing Texts consists of several assignments that deal with the relationship between visuals and written text in a variety of mediums and contexts. Writing in a Visual Age goes in a different direction, however that while the textbook does include several aspects of a visual culture and how to include it in composition classrooms, the assignments found in the textbook focus mainly on the practice of written composition. An example of how Odell and Katz incorporate visual elements within their assignments can be viewed from their writing a report assignment. Although the majority of this section of the text examines the different rhetorical effects of written text, Odell and Katz include a section that describes how to use visual elements effectively in reports. It is interesting to note that the authors incorporate visual elements into an assignment that is often dominated by written text in academic settings. The strategies that are included are: "Identify a specific function for every visual element such as charts, graphs, or pictures [...] Make sure picture are located near the written text they are intended to elaborate on

[...] Make sure photos and other visuals are appropriately captioned” (Odell 174).

Odell and Katz offer several suggestions in incorporating visual images within the report, but provide additional guidelines to make the visual elements rhetorically sound. While the majority of the assignments listed throughout Writing in a Visual Age have traditional textual components, one assignment that strays from these is an assignment that focuses on writing instructions (411-476).

The assignment included in chapter seven asks students to create a set of instructions. Odell and Katz create the assignment in which students choose what they wish to write about, and then follow several different examples of writing components to effectively make a set of instructions. Looking at the readings preceding the writing instructions assignment, the sample instructions provided display more visual images than included in previous chapters reading selections. Two of the sample readings that quickly stand-out are instructions for a K'nex product (called Sky Warriors) and a set of instructions entitled “The Basics of PowerPoint,” by MaryBeth Rajczewski. The directions for K'nex Sky Warriors consist of very little text, but instead focus on detailed visual images. The directions include detailed drawings that only use numbers to guide the directions. Rajczewski's article, “The Basics of PowerPoint,” also uses several visual images in the way that there is a visual element included to demonstrate each direction that Rajczewski provides. “The Basics of PowerPoint” designates an interesting reading throughout Writing in a Visual Age because it represents a sample reading within the textbook, but also acts as a supplement for teaching the design of visual elements. A portion of the assignment focuses again on the visual aspect of creating instructions, but provides different strategies to make the visuals effective. The strategies presented by

Odell and Katz are “Choose a layout that is appropriate for your audience, purpose, and topic [...] Create a clear visual hierarchy [...] Maintain a consistent layout [...] Place images near the written text that refers to them” (468-9). Providing these strategies within the assignment once again focuses on the rhetorical effects in placing visual elements with written text, and also exemplifies the strengths of using visuals and words in conjunction with each other. While these two examples do not rely as heavily on visual elements and new media compared to Picturing Texts, the ideas the Hocks presents in relation to new media also apply to the materials presented in Writing in a Visual Age.

According to Hocks, students should think about audience while creating their compositions (635). Hocks discusses the role of audience stance in relation to the audience participating in the viewing of a composition, but also in relation to the idea that the composer creates an ethos that affects the viewer’s reception of the work (632). Assignments in Writing in a Visual Age discuss audience stance exists in both instances, but the assignment focusing on writing directions specifically stresses this idea in the way that the instructions are created for the reader to interact with. The sample reading of the K’nex instructions represents a clear example of audience stance in the way that several detailed images are provided which in turn allow the viewer to participate in the construction of the project being visually displayed in the instructions. Odell and Katz’s inclusion of the chapter that involves writing instructions fits perfectly into Hocks’ idea because it is a composition process focuses primarily on the idea of audience stance.

Transparency is another term that is visible in the textbook in the way Odell and Katz provide sections on ways in which to integrate visual information into writing assignment projects. Hocks defines transparency in the way that new media projects are

designed to incorporate visual elements subtly to reflect a close relationship to traditional compositions. Odell and Katz follow this idea in the way that they provide detailed strategies to make the visual elements fit in with the text rather than stand out.

Transparency is addressed because Writing in a Visual Age looks at because including visual elements into the writing assignments as long as it blends in with the writing and standard composition procedures. The last term that Hocks examines, hybridity, also ties in with Odell and Katz's instructions of integrating visual elements into written text because they focus on demonstrating ways in which the text and visual elements can work together to create a stronger rhetorical effect on the viewer by displaying a message using multiple medias. Focusing on combining media to create a more powerful message is what Wysocki defines as new media writing.

Incorporating the Digital: Manovich and "IX Visual Exercises"

While Writing in a Visual Age does not include any assignments focused on digital new media projects, one of the supplemental materials that can be included with the textbook is "IX Visual Exercises" created by Cheryl E. Ball and Kristin L. Arola. Although this program is not part of the actual textbook, it offers an interesting component to understanding new media in the way that the digital new media projects are delivered in a digital format rather than being included within a non-digital textbook. The nine exercises that Ball and Arola focus on throughout the program feature definitions, an analysis, and assignments about different characteristics used in creating visual images. Each exercise focuses on one aspect of visual design and include element and contrast, text and purpose, audience and framing, alignment, context, emphasis and

color, proximity, organization, and sequence (Ball). The exercises offer an interactive opportunity for viewers to work with a combination of digital materials that include additional types of media other than still images and written text such as sound and moving images.

Taking a look at the assignment listed under the sequence exercise brings the viewer to a digital poem. The digital poem refers to the events that took place on September 11th, 2001 and includes an interactive component for the viewer. “Murmuring Insects,” the poem in the exercise, includes a blue background depicting three words (air, earth, and water) with the sound of murmuring insects in the background. By clicking on one of the three words, the viewer advances the poem to the point in which different text, moving images, and sound appear. In this way, the viewer takes an active part in the poem by creating the sequence of which the poem is presented thus changing the effect of the poem each time a different sequence is chose to go through the poem. This exercise provides a much more effective way at teaching the idea of sequence in relation to new media because it provides a medium in which the viewer can physically take part in the production and interpretation of sequence. Ball and Arola further explore the idea of sequencing by also asking the question of why the author chose the specific amount of time for each of the three terms and why the terms where chosen to represent the events that took place on September 11th. Providing a digital medium through which the viewer can physically explore the concepts found on Ball and Arola’s program demonstrate one of the ways in which including digital new media within a composition classroom can go beyond the ideas that can be conveyed in a non-digital textbook.

Another assignment included in “IX Visual Exercises” focuses on the use of emphasis and color. Throughout this lesson, Ball and Arola describe the differences that color and shades of color can have on the reception of a work. In looking at color, the distinction between warm colors and cool colors is explored demonstrating the effects in which each type of shading can have on a visual image. One of the assignments in this exercise takes a look at the image of a mural on the side of a building. Beneath the image are three buttons which the viewer can click on to modify the colors used in the mural. Each of the buttons portray the mural in different combinations of warm and cool colors, and with each rendition comes an analysis that points out which aspects of the mural are accented by the choice in color. The assignment following this exercise portrays a still image of a girl in a store. First the image is presented in black and white, but then the image is portrayed in color including a bar in which the viewer can manipulate to change the tones of the colors included in the image. Providing the means to allow the viewer to manipulate the photo further demonstrates the ideas that Ball and Arola try to convey throughout the exercise because it allows the viewer to take part in the lesson in which they are trying to convey. The digital medium represents an additional resource for instructors to use in the way that it can provide the textual resources that critically examine the effects of different ideas, but also allows the viewer to take part in producing the effects and experiencing them first hand.

Lev Manovich provides further analysis in looking at the exercises included in Ball and Arola’s work by demonstrating how digital new media is present and how it offers new ways of producing composition. The ideas presented by Manovich are more applicable with the inclusion of a digital program like “IX Visual Exercises,” because it

provides a digital environment where a student can apply Manovich's terms. Each exercise, as well as the entire program, consists of Manovich's idea of numerical representation because it represents a composition created by mathematical formulas. Numerical representation demonstrates the ways in which new media compositions are programmable through their algorithms, and Ball and Arola's work demonstrate this in the interactive nature found within their exercises. Modularity, the second term that Manovich applies as a necessity to digital new media also becomes apparent in the numerous amounts of media that are present within the program. While the digital components described in Picturing Texts provided a glimpse at digital new media, the content often focused on the idea of visual and written text which fails to also address forms of media such as sound and moving images. Some of the assignments included in Ball and Arola's program clearly define the role of modularity in the presentation of a media project that consists of several smaller forms of media such as text, still images, moving images, and sound. Incorporating characteristics provide a foundation through which it becomes easier to explore Manovich's lists in relation to digital new media.

Automation examines the ways in which digital new media composers do not create works from scratch, but instead create compositions by manipulating existing pieces of media. The role of automation can be seen throughout "IX Visual Exercises" in the way that individuals who interact with the software do not produce the initial medias, but instead click on buttons and use other tools to demonstrate the effects that different composition choices can have on the interpretation of a work. Automation progresses into the idea of variability in the way that the forms of media that are manipulated through the process of automation exist in an environment in which they are able to be

continually modified and changed. In looking at the assignment including the digital poem “Murmuring Insects,” variability is present based on the fact that the digital poem does not possess one permanent sequence. Instead, the viewer of “Murmuring Insects” demonstrates the idea of variability based on the way the sequence of the poem can be changed each time by the viewer. The last component that Manovich discusses as being an effect of digital new media is the idea of transcoding and the way in which technology affects society and individuals in the way they view themselves. While transcoding represents an abstract idea that is difficult to clearly demonstrate, “IX Visual Exercises” offers a glimpse into the idea in the way that the design elements of digital new media (such as the use of warm and cool colors) creates a rhetorical effect on the viewer which also has the ability to change the way in which we represent ourselves. Since digital new media can create rhetorical effects on its viewers, it is also possible that these effects change the way in which viewers observe the world around them.

Supplemental Resources

In addition to Ball and Arola’s “IX Visual Exercises,” Katz also incorporates a supplemental instructor’s resource manual that provides several resources to foster the idea of incorporating visual aspects into composition courses. Within the opening pages, Katz not only describes how the manual can help foster the visual aspects included in Writing in a Visual Age, but also provides sample syllabi offered to structure composition courses with the desired focus of the instructor. The manual maintains a similar setup to the textbook focusing on three sections: “Teaching Strategies,” “Suggestions for Teaching *Writing in a Visual Age*,” and “Teaching Resources.” The

section that deals with teaching strategies provides helpful hints towards creating assignments, creating the schedule, creating lesson plans, and several other hints for making the composition course stronger and more organized. Katz's second section, which comprises the bulk of the manual, provides numerous in-depth resources that coincide with the work found in each chapter providing insight into the exercises located in the chapter, questions for each reading, and a sample worksheet to help students with each chapter's assignment. The last section provides additional resources that can be used in conjunction with the textbook. Including the manual along with the textbook provides composition instructors with the means to include new media elements in their courses and provides help in navigating how to effectively teach visual elements.

Writing in a Visual Age is an interesting choice for composition instructors because it includes traditional written compositions while including a visual element to the course. This textbook offers an effective blend between a course focused solely on written compositions and textbooks that focus specifically on new media elements and visual design. The supplemental materials also strengthen the attraction of this textbook because it provides instructors with a variety of options in how to construct the course. Odell and Katz create a well functioning textbook that provides a variety of options that should meet the needs and desires of various composition instructors who wish to incorporate new media elements while retaining a focus on traditional composition practices.

Chapter Four: Incorporating New Media into Composition: An Analysis of
Compose, Design, Advocate by Wysocki and Lynch

Wysocki and Lynch provide a detailed analysis of how to include theories of rhetoric and the practice of new media to foster the traditional act of writing within composition courses. This chapter provides an overview of Wysocki and Lynch's work in regards to the strategies they employ to carry out their goals. The first section explores the introduction of the text and why Wysocki and Lynch decided to title their work Compose, Design, Advocate. Following an examination of the introduction is an analysis of the readings using Richards' ideas of semantics. Looking at the effectiveness of the readings offers a bridge into the assignments that Wysocki and Lynch include on the supplemental website and how they relate to new media in terms of ideas presented by Mary E. Hocks and Lev Manovich. Finally, the chapter concludes by looking at what supplemental materials can be used in conjunction with Wysocki and Lynch's textbook and a conclusion of how each of the above elements combine to make an effective composition textbook.

Reasoning Behind the Title Compose, Design, Advocate

Compose, Design, Advocate presents its purpose on creating this textbook in the opening pages as a way to "see thoughtful and careful communication as being central to active and engaged citizenship, we present our approach to communication with a focus on civic advocacy" (iii). One of the main goals that Wysocki and Lynch provide with their textbook is to examine new media elements and composition to foster better rhetorical awareness in students' production of text. In an attempt to provide this goal, Wysocki and Lynch provide a graphic structure of their textbook that focuses on the idea of amplification, starting with a small premise and adding on to that premise throughout

the course of the textbook. The stages of this graphic coincide with the three sections included throughout the textbook including “Designing Compositions Rhetorically,” “Producing Compositions,” “Analyzing the Arguments of others,” and the last section “Your Own Production” which looks at the culmination of skills learned in the first three sections that allow students to produce their own work. Throughout the introduction of the first chapter, Wysocki and Lynch explore in detail the reasoning behind the title of Compose, Design, Advocate and why each word signifies importance in the development and action of communication.

Wysocki and Lynch explore the term “composing” in a broad context looking at it not from the point of writing text, but from the perspective of representing communication. By presenting it in this way, composing becomes a social practice that demonstrates the necessity of including a context when creating a composition. One of the goals discussed as far as providing an effective means of teaching composing is to “help you become a stronger communicator through drawing on what the disciplines of composition and rhetoric bring to communication” (Wysocki and Lynch 3). Effective communication, therefore, relies on the combination of context and rhetoric. The resources included in Compose, Design, Advocate attempt to build on context and rhetoric to allow students to create meaningful compositions.

Designing represents a large focus in Compose, Design, Advocate because it supports the idea of rhetorical effects in new media writing. One of the limitations that exists in written texts occurs because of the way in which the structure and the format are somewhat limited by conventional forms. The design component, however, asks student to take time in the design of their compositions in order to garner the strongest effects out

of their work. Wysocki and Lynch expand upon the role of design stating how “designers are concerned with how people use things, and they are concerned that what they design is engaging and, very frequently, that it improves people’s lives” (Wysocki and Lynch 4). The design aspect of new media writing then becomes one of the most important aspects of composing because it acts in engaging the audiences which view forms of new media in a way that benefits their lives. Design elements differ from the conventional written texts in the way that “Design is a more physically material process than composition and rhetoric...Design has a stronger tradition of creativity than composition and rhetoric...Design has stronger tradition of testing its production” (Wysocki and Lynch 5). New media relies heavily on the incorporation of design to foster effective communication which can be seen by expanding on these three elements that Wysocki and Lynch discuss.

The first element of design that Compose, Design, Advocate addresses is the way that it represents a more “physically material process: because it works on creating a message, but also creates the medium which conveys that message. Written texts also convey a message like new media, but the way the message is delivered includes several traditional formats governed by the Modern Language Association in which the composer has very little freedom. The second element of design that Wysocki and Lynch discuss looks at the design element of new media relying on more creativity than that of traditional written compositions. The combination of media found in new media composition demonstrates creativity in the way that the composer looks at each media separately and as a combined whole. During the process of composing, a composer looks at what effects pertain to which medias and how the combination of media will result in a

new combined effect. Designing new media artifacts demonstrates more creativity in the way that the composer needs to constantly be aware of design elements. The last element that Wysocki and Lynch discuss in relation to the term design is the idea that new media compositions have to be tested throughout the stages of production. Composers have to consider the ways in which design elements will affect how their audiences perceive the new media that they are constructing. The focus of testing throughout production coincides with the creative aspect of design in the way that the composer needs to make sure that the new media will produce the desired effects within an audience (5). Design plays a large role in the practice of new media writing and therefore represents one of the key aspects of Compose, Design, Advocate.

“Advocate,” the last word in the title of Wysocki and Lynch’s book, arguably represents the most important of the terms. While compose and design are major aspects in creating new media, Wysocki and Lynch include the idea of advocating because they hope students will see the significance of their own work. New media represents a form of communication and Wysocki and Lynch define the importance of this in recognizing it is “the power you have as a result of the communications you compose and design—a power that exists because of what communication simply is—and that you take responsibility for the effects of your communication” (9). Effective communication represents a power tool in change, and Wysocki and Lynch confess that they hope through learning the lessons included in their textbook that students will learn the skills needed to affect positive change in society. In creating this book, the authors “hope you strengthen your insights about the effects different communication strategies, arrangements, and media have on others” (9). New media writing represents a new form

of communication that is becoming prevalent within our society, and through the use of it represents an arena for change.

Subtle Layers and Background Noise: Addressing Audience, Purpose, and Richards

Looking at the structure of the textbook, the first collection of chapters looks at designing compositions rhetorically. The first chapter and second chapter, “A Rhetorical Process for Designing Compositions” and “Laying Out a Design Plan,” look at basic elements of rhetorical strategies in composition. Chapter one focuses on a broad overview of the production process, while chapter two provides strategies to employ in the actual production. It continues with this process by analyzing the different aspects that will affect the way in which the final composition is perceived by the intended audience. The process described in chapter two looks at creating a statement of purpose through the analysis of the intent/purpose of the piece, the audience, and the context (Wysocki and Lynch 33-40). After looking at each of these aspects in creating the statement of purpose, the chapter continues by looking at production techniques such as strategies to employ in creating the medium, the arrangement, and the actual production of the composition. While this designates several resources for creating a rhetorical effect through composition, the third and fourth chapters expand upon this complicating the ways in which students produce compositions.

The third chapter, appropriately titled “Developing a (more complex) Statement of Purpose,” begins to complicate composition by examining choices that can alter or create secondary effects within compositions. Wysocki and Lynch introduce the chapter stating in “chapter 2, we pointed out that if you don’t have a clear purpose for

communicating, there's no reason to communicate. In chapter 3 we consider, among other things, the possibility of having conflicting purposes for communicating, or what we might call 'layers of purpose'" (57). Wysocki and Lynch examine the way in which elements of compositions such as the purpose or audience can have multiple layers by including examples from famous pieces of writing. One example of a work including multiple layers, in terms of audience, is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail." While the original audience that Martin Luther King Jr. was writing for was clergymen, Wysocki and Lynch point out that "As he composed the letter he realized he had to be mindful that the letter would eventually make its way into the world and be read by more people than the original clergymen" (67). This example illustrates a situation in which the context for which a composition contains multiple layers, which relates back to Richards' idea of noise.

Richards discusses the idea of noise as something inhibiting the effectiveness of communication, but one way in which noise exists within new media and the example of King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in a positive way is through the multiple layers of meaning that can be included within a composition. Noise, or more specifically background noise, represents a subtle, underlying message beneath the main act of communication. Incorporating background noise further strengthens the overall effect of a composition by offering additional modes of communication that can possess separate rhetorical effects. Richards limits the idea of noise viewing it only as a form of interference in communication between a sender and receiver, but including additional layers, like purpose and audience for example, that reinforce a composition's primary message reinforces the rhetorical effects taking place in the practice of communication.

New media presents the perfect opportunity to include a form of background noise because the combination of medias allows composers to present multiple messages using different media to effectively communicate with an audience.

Rhetorical Effects and the Process of Feedforward Feedback

The second collection of chapters focuses on the actual production aspect of a composition rather than the initial planning stages. Chapters five and six focus on analyzing “contexts for production,” but the majority of the second section deals with “strategies for production” (Wysocki and Lynch v). While chapters seven and eight deal with the production “About Written Modes of Communication” and “About Oral Modes of Communication,” this section will focus on chapter nine, “About Visual Modes of Communication.” The focus of this section will examine chapter nine because it provides an in-depth discussion on how visual images (new media) affects a specific audience. Three rhetorical effects that Wysocki and Lynch examine are incorporating ethos, pathos, and logos in visual images.

Many individual may not account for the inclusion of ethos, pathos, and logos in a visual composition; but Wysocki and Lynch provide several examples of how each of these effects present themselves in new media writing. The inclusion of ethos within a visual image takes place through the viewer adopting the stance of the photograph while looking at a visual image. Wysocki and Lynch provide examples of ethos in photographs in the way that viewers are taking in “the position the photographer chose for the camera, the exposure time, and the use or not of a flash or filters—and they show us that the photographer thought there was something in the scene worth photographing” (271). The

idea of ethos works through an active participation between the photographer, the photograph, and the individual looking at the photograph. By examining all the positions and methods the photographer uses to create a photo, the viewer creates an ethos for the photographer by judging whether or not the techniques the photographer uses are effective.

The second rhetorical effect examined by Wysocki and Lynch is the role of pathos in visual images. While some examples of pathos in visual images may be more apparent, such as an image depicting a child smiling creating a feeling of happiness, other aspects also affect the role of pathos such as color choice and selection of typefaces. Wysocki and Lynch provide a detailed analysis of color and the way in which certain choices reinforce pathos. Before analyzing the effects of color, the components of color are separated into three distinct categories: hue, saturation, and brightness. Hue represents the range of colors in relation to one another; saturation looks at the amount of hue a color possesses; brightness looks at how light or dark a color appears within a work (Wysocki and Lynch 275). By manipulating hue, saturation, and brightness; a composer can choose how to display her or his work by using color to make certain aspects jump out or make other aspects very laid back. Using color to accent the delivery of a message feeds into the idea of pathos. The other effect that Wysocki and Lynch examine is the use of typeface to display a message. Typefaces used in forms of new media writing differ because traditional written compositions are regulated to a specific typeface, such as Times New Roman. Typefaces used in new media writing often stand out, however, because they are used to create a rhetorical effect in the viewer. One example of how typefaces affect the ethos of new media writing is the way in which typefaces that are

typically seen as informal create an effect of openness and fun while incorporating a more formal typeface gives a sense of professionalism and seriousness (282-83).

Although these are basic examples, they convey the effects in using typefaces to create a sense of pathos.

Finally, Compose, Design, Advocate looks at logos and the ways in which new media presents it. Wysocki and Lynch show how to use logos within visual images by summing it up stating “first, you need to consider how much to include [...] Second, you need to know how to create a visual hierarchy through using contrast and sameness [...] Third, you need to create visual unity through using repetition and alignment” (285). Logos, therefore, exists through the logical structure of a piece of new media. Examining the role of ethos, pathos, and logos in images and new media relates to Richards’ idea of feedback and feedforward in the way that communication between a new media artifact and a viewer takes place though the continual exchange of information. The roles of ethos, pathos, and logos require participation from the viewer in creating a meaning for visual artifacts. Including the viewer in the construction of these rhetorical effects demonstrates feedforward in the way that the audience examines smaller elements of a visual image (such as the filters used in a photo, color choice, or visual hierarchy) in order to interpret the whole meaning of the piece. Viewers anticipate the combined meaning in looking at these elements through the process of feedforward, and then develop a conclusion through the process of feedback.

Analyzing New Media: Meaning through Comparison Fields and the Semantic Triangle

The final section of Compose, Design, Advocate looks at “Analyzing the Arguments of Others” through interpreting several different kinds of media. Although this section analyzes multiple types of arguments including photography, instruction sets, editorial and opinion pieces, essays, comics, and interviews; the section that Wysocki and Lynch include on the analysis of posters provides a perfect example of using Richards’ semantic triangle and comparison fields to analyze the effects of communication that occur. Although this chapter includes posters for movies, movies in other countries, and war propaganda posters; the type of poster that will be analyzed looks at the standard movie poster. Three sets of questions that Wysocki and Lynch ask in judging the communication taking place in a poster are:

[1]What visual aspects of this poster tell you that it is probably for a movie?

[2] When do you think the movie publicized by this poster was made?

Why do you guess the time period you do? [3] What kind of movie is being publicized here, a comedy or a horror film or a sci-fi film or...?

What visual aspects of the poster encourage you to make the judgment you do? (331)

Each of the three sets of questions included above are ones that most individuals answer on a subconscious level, but further analysis demonstrates the effects of comparison fields and the semantic triangle has on individuals making meaning from the visual image of a movie poster. In looking at an example of a movie poster, the first question asks the viewer why he or she assumes a poster is for a movie. Using a poster depicting Alfred Hitchcock’s “Vertigo,” comparison fields are used by the viewer to establish the fact that the poster represents a movie (Wysocki and Lynch 345). A viewer uses comparison fields

to determine that the poster represents a film by the way in which it is structured. Including the title of the film, a scene or a collage of scenes from the film, and the inclusion of credits provides the viewer with a comparison field in which he or she relates it to other movie posters he or she has seen to determine that this visual image is also a poster for a movie.

The second set of questions can also be answered by using prior knowledge of movie posters and comparison fields. One way a viewer is able to determine when a movie was made is to look at visual elements of the image to create a comparison field to a specific time period. Looking at the image of the movie poster for “Vertigo,” three elements that create the comparison field to establish when the movie was made is the artwork, the actors/director, and the vocabulary used in the poster. The artwork used to portray scenes from the movie characterize a specific style and possess a quality similar to movie posters of the fifties. Also, looking at the names included on the poster (James Stewart, Kim Novak, and Alfred Hitchcock) creates a comparison field in the way that those actors were prevalent in the fifties. Finally, looking at specific words used in the movie poster, like “Technicolor” for instance, represent a specific time in which Technicolor technology was used (345). Using Richards’ idea of comparison fields, viewers are able to construct a context for movie posters by analyzing what is taking place within the visual image.

Using Richards’ idea of the semantic triangle, a viewer can interpret the last set of questions that ask what kind of genre a movie represents by analyzing the poster as a whole. Richards describes the semantic triangle as a three way relationship involving a symbol, a referent, and a thought/reference. Using a poster depicting the movie “Attack

of the 50ft Woman,” the semantic triangle portrays the way in which a viewer determines the genre of the movie. The poster depicting the movie “Attack of the 50ft Woman” represents the symbol in Richards’ semantic triangle (Wysocki and Lynch 331). Taking the initial symbol of the poster which shows a woman standing over a highway terrorizing vehicles with people running away from her forms the referent by providing a visual image that will shape the viewer’s interpretation by including an image that shows one thing that takes place in the movie while providing text that further reinforces that image. Having a form of new media that directly influences the referent also affects the formation of the through/reference. The through/reference, which in a way uses comparison fields based on an individual’s past experiences, demonstrates that the movie represents the sci-fi genre because the idea of a 50ft woman terrorizing a city is not realistically plausible. The combination of the image and text create an effect which allows the viewer to disassociate the movie from other genres because of the content and the thought/reference produced by analyzing the poster with Richards’ semantic triangle. Using Richards’ semantic triangle and comparison fields provides individuals with the means to examine and construct meaningful contexts through which to interpret visual images.

Mary E. Hocks and a Focus on Non-Digital New Media

Although there are several assignments included throughout Compose, Design, Advocate, the majority of them focus on analyzing preexisting forms of new media. The website created in conjunction with the textbook, *Compose, Design, Advocate*, provides additional assignments that ask students to produce their own forms of new media writing.

The first two assignments examined deal specifically with non-digital new media writing. One of the assignments that Wysocki and Lynch include on the website asks students to develop a documentary photography book. In order to complete this assignment, the directions state that students should pick at least ten photographs describing an individual or a specific subject and placing them within a meaningful order that creates a rhetorical argument. Wysocki and Lynch also point out that the photographs should include captions to further reinforce the rhetorical argument the student makes within her or his project. The last element that Wysocki and Lynch include in the assignment asks students to bound the work together creating one piece of new media writing. This assignment demonstrates new media writing in the way that students incorporate multiple medias, visual images and written text, to create a rhetorical communication.

Another assignment included on the supplemental website assigns students the task of collecting a series of photos depicting technology and to create a poster using the photos that attempts to define the term technology. In addition to creating the poster, however, Wysocki and Lynch include a detailed progression of the assignment in which each student has to develop a statement of purpose, create an initial design plan, produce a rough draft to be critiqued by classmates, and finally do revisions based on the feedback of classmates to produce a final draft. Creating the assignment in this manner allows instructors to use all the materials in the textbook to create a foundation through which students experience the complex process of producing a composition. The assignment also allows students to take advantage in the full process of rhetorically designing the poster to fit a specific audience and purpose.

The assignments included on the supplemental website that focus on non-digital new media assignments demonstrate the three terms that Hocks addresses in relation to new media: audience stance, transparency, and hybridity. Audience stance works in the way that both assignments ask the viewer to take an active role in creating the final meaning of the works. In the documentary photograph book of an event or person, the audience stance comes into effect when the viewer to take part in constructing the meaning by combining the images and captions to understand what the composer attempts to convey in her or his work. Audience stance plays an equal role in the analysis of posters defining technology because the viewers have to visualize the images used to represent technology and construct an overall meaning of the term by combining the meanings found within all the photographs. The audience takes an active role in both assignments because the audience takes part in the production and interpretation of the poster by providing insight into how the documentary photography book and poster use a combination of text and images to create an overall effect.

Hocks also discusses the role of transparency in new media in how the comparison to familiar conventions makes it easier for viewers to examine new media writing. Both assignments contain a sense of transparency in the way that both assignments to rely heavily on established conventions of composing. The documentary photography book demonstrates transparency in the way that it relies on the common structuring of a book. Although the material included inside the assignment may be different than standard books, the way in which it is structured provides viewers with the means to easily make sense of the work as a whole. The assignment that asks student to develop a poster that defines technology also possesses a strong element of transparency

in the way that posters are often used in composition classes. Although the material may be different, viewers possess the necessary skills to adequately navigate the poster to construct an overall meaning that the composer conveys.

The last term that Hocks examines, hybridity, provides a practice that leads to more effective communication. Wysocki and Lynch address at multiple points in Compose, Design, Advocate that the combined effect of visual images and written text fosters a stronger form of communication between a composer and her or his audience. Both assignments included on the supplemental website exhibit examples of hybridity, and how they are used to create a stronger rhetorical effect. The documentary photography book uses hybridity through the incorporation of captions to describe the photos included by the composer. Each caption strengthens the overall effect of the assignment because each caption further shapes the design of the argument and shapes the way in which the viewer analyzes the argument as a whole. While the poster assignment does not include detailed captions that coincide with each image, the inclusion of text in the photographs chosen to define technology further constructs the overall definition of technology. Incorporating Hocks' terms audience stance, transparency, and hybridity provide viewers with additional tools through which it becomes easier to construct overall meanings in examples of new media writing.

Digital Works Explored through Manovich

Although the majority of assignments included throughout Compose, Design, Advocate focus on the analysis of new media or the production of non-digital new media, one assignment included on the supplemental website focuses on digital software and

tools to complete the project. The assignment asks students to select five self-portraits to modify using photo editing software. After selecting five photographs, the assignment asks the student to use the photo editing software to create final products in which:

- 2 must be based on photographic representations of you.
- 2 must look more like drawings.
- 1 can be whatever you want.
- 3 of the representations must make you happy, by representing you in a good light; 2 representations must make you a little queasy, by representing you in ways that you'd really prefer others not to see you.

(Compose, Design, Advocate)

after following these steps, Wysocki and Lynch provide follow up questions that ask the student to analyze the effects of these photographs and to address the responsibilities of accurately representing events and people using new media, as well as in general. The incorporation of the digital aspect of this assignment provides the means through which to apply Lev Manovich's concepts of new media into this assignment.

As previously stated in the previous chapters, the first component that Manovich uses to elaborate on digital new media is the idea of numerical representation. Numerical representation relates to the idea that digital components, such as digital photos, exist through algorithms. The second aspect of digital new media that Manovich discusses is the presence of modularity, the combination of smaller elements to create forms of new media. Using photo editing software displays modularity in the way that "new" new media writings are formed through the combination of the original digital photo and filters used to alter the initial image. This process also displays the act of automation in

the way that the composer does not create the work from scratch, but instead uses preexisting forms of algorithms to create a piece of new media writing. Working with digital photographs also describes the idea of variability in the way that the image never becomes a final product. Although the image can be saved as a file, the user has the ability to modify the same image later demonstrating variability in the way that the image is never final. The last term that Manovich discusses in relation to new media is transcoding which represents the influence that media and culture have on one another. Transcoding exists in the way in which the digital image represents an aspect of culture which the software changes into media. Manovich's notions of digital new media apply to the assignment included on the supplemental website for Compose, Design, Advocate in the way that the photo software used to change the self portraits demonstrates the ways in which technology changes the ways in which individuals create compositions.

Branching Out: Supplemental Resources for Compose, Design, Advocate

The supplemental materials that are available with Compose, Design, Advocate include the website that offers several resources for instructors using Wysocki and Lynch's textbook in their composition classes. The website includes downloadable resources for instructors to incorporate in their classes, a link providing sample syllabi and assignments, and a digital chapter that the textbook lists in its contents entitled "Analyzing Interviews." Providing the supplemental website offers several additional resources for composition instructors that can be used to complement the readings and assignments included throughout the textbook. Another resource that Wysocki and

Lynch offer in addition to Compose, Design, Advocate is an instructor's manual that provides additional supplemental resources that coincide with the textbook.

Compose, Design, Advocate represents a textbook that supplies a diverse range of resources to include within composition classrooms. The greatest strength this textbook demonstrates is the wide variety of composition elements that an instructor can choose to focus on within her or his course. Providing a detailed analysis of the rhetorical effects of multiple situations also provides skills that composition students can use in a variety of settings. The title of Wysocki and Lynch's textbook, Compose, Design, Advocate, provides a look at the ways in which both authors wish to teach a better form of communication for students to use in ways that will benefit the environments in which they reside. Wysocki and Lynch succeed in creating a text that provides a diverse range of skills that composition students can use to think and produce critical forms of compositions.

Chapter Five: The Effects of New Media Composition Textbooks

After looking at three textbooks in detail, one point that needs to be stressed in incorporating new media into composition classrooms is that it will not (and should not) replace traditional writing practices. Each textbook demonstrates this fact in the way that written composition still maintains a large presence in relation to the readings, the lessons, and the assignments. The goal of new media should not be to replace older composition practices, but instead foster a relationship between the old and new to create a stronger more effective means of communication. In looking at the three textbooks that address new media writing, each text looks at argument and rhetoric from the perspective of context. Context becomes one of the main ideas located in each textbook because it provides the initial means for constructing a detailed design of how and what to deliver to an audience to obtain the best result. Consequently, the role of context does not justify a sole focus on new media writing, but instead looks at the various ways in which composition classes can create a meaningful act of communication in the most effective setting. Written compositions can be used to teach each form of rhetorical effect, but by including new media, instructors can provide multiple venues through which students are able to see the rhetorical effects in process. Wysocki addresses the issue of new media being incorporated into classrooms stating, “There needs to be more of this sort of critique for new media, which shows us—because of its attentiveness to the particular material ways we use communicational technologies and media—that new technologies do not automatically erase or overthrow or change old practices” (8). Instead, students can learn more effectively by learning the skills associated with written compositions and

new media writing, and the rhetorical effects that each method can have on their potential audiences.

Analyzing the rhetorical effects used within new media writing provides additional ways in which students can perceive the skills that they use in different ways which expand their knowledge of rhetoric and the rhetorical effects that an individual can use in communicating with an audience. Jody Shipka explains this in detail describing the process of new media writing as being:

When called upon to set their own goals and to structure the production, delivery, and reception of the work they accomplish in the course, students can: (1) demonstrate an enhanced awareness of the affordances provided by the variety of media they employ in service of those goals; (2) successfully engineer ways of contextualizing, structuring, and realizing the production, representation, distribution, delivery, and reception of their work; and (3) become better equipped to negotiate the range of communicative contexts they find themselves encountering both in and outside of school. (284)

Each aspect that Shipka discusses deals with the study of rhetoric and provides more illustrative examples in which students can “visualize” the effects rather than discuss the abstract ways in which rhetoric works. An example could be made while trying to instruct students on using pathos as a rhetorical effect. Analyzing written text that incorporates pathos, such as a story that describes the atrocities of World War II, can provide an arena through which students can see the effect of using pathos, but showing a video that illustrates a graphic and detailed portrayal of the actual acts should elicit a

more direct response from students exemplifying pathos in action. Another point that Shipka addresses is the fact that students can see the creative process (contextualizing, structuring, and realizing the production) behind creating a piece of new media writing, while written compositions can possess certain barriers in explaining the production process because discussing written compositions requires looking at elements of production in abstract terms. New media writing provides a rich arena through which students are able to clearly view the rhetorical effects that occur; this event can be used by composition classes and instructors because it provides a new method through which to teach rhetorical effects in a way that can be perceived easier. Not only does new media depict rhetorical effects in a way that allows students to easily see rhetorical effects, but instructors can translate the analysis of rhetorical effects from new media to written compositions to further reinforce the strength to students writing skills.

In looking at the role of new media, Sonja K. Foss states that the incorporation of visuals “must have a rhetorical, rather than mere aesthetic response” (Foss 306). While it is possible to argue that all examples of new media are rhetorical in one way or another, Foss opens up a valuable discussion to explore the rhetorical implications found within new media writing. Each of the three textbooks I have analyzed takes the time to discuss the ways in which visual images and new media in general has multiple rhetorical effects on its audience. Perhaps the strongest rhetorical effect of all, however, can be stated by J. Anthony Blair in how “Visual arguments are typically enthymemes—arguments with gaps left to be filled in by the participation of the audience” (52). This statement ties in with Hocks’ idea of audience stance and demonstrates the possible effectiveness of a new media writing by drawing the viewer into willingly participating in the construct of

meaning within a new media artifact. If a viewer commits herself or himself to a piece of new media by helping to create a meaning through the act of observing, then the viewer will likely agree or go along with the piece of new media because they have invested themselves into the meaning and overall effect. Allowing the viewers to participate in a new media provides a stronger ethos in the way that you have the ethos of the composer, but also the ethos of the viewer if he or she takes the time to fill in the argumentative gaps that Blair refers to. Blair continues describing new media and visual arguments by arguing “What makes visual arguments distinctive is how much greater is their potential for rhetorical power than that of purely verbal arguments” (52).

Looking at the rhetorical effects found within new media, one of the strongest characteristics included in the three textbooks were the digital supplements that were offered in conjunction with the text. While each textbook varied in the amount of digital resources supplied, the fact that each one made reference to digital media or included digital media through a website creates a new medium through which students are able to partake in using new media. The inclusion of new media in assignments also becomes integral because it opens doors for students and instructors alike in the production aspect. What little focus has been included on new media writing in composition programs often focuses on the analysis of preexisting forms of new media compositions. While this does have several positive effects in teaching composition, it fails to account for many arenas that are not being taken advantage of in the classroom. Looking at the inclusion of digital supplements indicates the ways in which new media further benefits students in composition classrooms.

The most basic inclusion of digital supplements included in the three textbooks provides composition students with links to certain websites. While this example may seem similar to the limited analysis of new media currently found in most composition courses, it differs in the way that allowing students to explore these websites on their own allows them to take part in the audience stance rather than as an observer looking at a non-interactive image in the classroom. The inclusion of interactivity allows students to critically engage in a different way by working directly with new media. Another way in which digital supplements are included among the three textbooks are websites or the “IX Visual Exercises” included with Writing in a Visual Age that include assignments for composition students. This is similar to the inclusion of website links throughout the textbook, but differs in the way it allows students more freedom in taking part in the production process. By including digital assignments, composition students are beginning to take part in the production of new media, but in a guided manner in which they are able to view and analyze the rhetorical effects in a supervised environment. The most important inclusion of digital supplements, however, are the ones in which students are asked to create their own kinds of digital new media. These assignments can be included in the textbooks or on the digital supplements, but the important part is the process of the student taking everything he or she has learned and using it to create a digital new media composition. Providing the means for students to compose any kind of composition with a digital component will help reinforce the learning of rhetorical effects and provide students with resources that will benefit them no matter what profession they end up in.

One of the main complaints offered by students taking mandatory composition courses required by most colleges is the fact that they will not use the writing skills they are taught. Although students may miss one of the main objectives of composition courses being to teach critical thinking skills, some students are partially right in the fact that they can avoid using the resources taught to them in composition courses during their entire college tenure and their professional careers. The question then becomes how to make composition courses more relevant for students today. New media provides a solution for this problem because it provides resources for materials in which students will not be able to avoid. The rapid evolution of technology has created an environment in which no one can ignore the significance of the constant bombardment of new media. New media exists within various popular medias such as the Internet and television, but it continues to expand in new and inventive ways everyday. Although new media can offer students the chance to learn rhetorical effects in new ways, it also becomes important to teach how to perceive various forms of new media. New media becomes important in addition to production skills then because it also provides the means to understand visual literacy. Cynthia L. Selfe defines visual literacy as:

the ability to read, understand, value, and learn from visual materials (still photographs, videos, films animations, still images, pictures, drawings, graphics)—especially as these are combined to create a texts—as well as the ability to create, combine, and use visual elements (e.g., colors, forms, lines, images) and messages for the purposes of communicating. (67)

New media, therefore, provides students with skills that complement the skills taught in written compositions, and provides students with a set of skills to critically navigate the new media they will encounter throughout their daily lives.

One thing that the examination of Picturing Texts, Writing in a Visual Age, and Compose, Design, Advocate brings to the surface, however, is that there is still room for improvement in relation to incorporating new media into composition classrooms. Each textbook provides several sound methods to teach rhetorical effects and the production of new media to students, but it has to be noted that each textbook goes about this practice in different ways. Looking at the way in which each textbook goes about teaching and incorporating new media into composition classrooms differently demonstrates the fact that there is a limited amount of commonality between each textbook and the study of new media writing. New media writing represents a branch of academia that is still relatively new, and the way in which new media is defined and practiced vary from scholar to scholar. Bringing a sense of commonality and cohesiveness to the study of new media will make it stronger and more enticing to incorporate into composition studies. Two aspects that I feel should be addressed, however, in future new media textbooks is the incorporation of more new media assignments and a stronger focus on digital materials.

Although all three textbooks incorporate new media assignments to some degree, the majority of the assignments still focus on the written analysis of other pieces of new media. This becomes problematic in the way that instructors have very little versatility in incorporating new media assignments within their courses. By providing more new media assignments, instructors will have the opportunity to choose between various

assignments which should make it easier for instructors to incorporate new media assignments to fit with the specific goals within their courses. Another aspect that should be given more focus is digital new media. While there are a lot of barriers included in using digital new media within the classroom such as lack of technology or instructors being uncomfortable in teaching with advanced technology, the fact that digital technology is becoming so prevalent within our daily lives cannot be ignored. Adding a greater focus on digital technology will offer instructors more options to choose from and provide more chances for students to be able to critically intake the technology rich society in which they live.

John Berger describes the use of visual as “The relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled [...] The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe” (8). This statement provides an effective analysis of why new media needs to be incorporated into composition courses. On one hand, Berger’s statement shows the importance of new media and how it can be used to rhetorically communicate with individuals. Berger also demonstrates the necessity of including new media because without the proper skills, students will not be able to critically examine the effects of communication using new media because they will not have the necessary skills. If the motives behind composition courses are to communicate effectively and think critically, new media needs to be included to fit the continually growing presence of new media within our lives.

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