



**Special Issue on Digital Compositions, Literacies, and Pedagogies**

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**Introduction: Digital Compositions, Literacies, and Pedagogies**

The ever-increasing significance of digital composition practices and communication systems has been remarkably evident in the diverse professional, research and academic

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activities carried out in transcultural contexts. Leading-edge technologies, digital networks, and mediated publics have offered novel ways of designing, composing, and communicating content. Designs of digital composition primarily rely on the affordances of digital media, digital writing tools, and interactive spaces, including digital literacy practices. Jones and Hafner (2012) elaborate on digital compositions as dynamic, interactive, collaborative, and networked in their production and globally accessible in terms of the knowledge they disseminate and, as multimodal compositions are different from the traditional ones, are fundamentally characterized by the three native attributes of new media: hypertext, interactivity, and multimedia (pp. 35-49). Crawley (2015) argues that digital compositions occasion opportunities for incorporating written texts, images, audiovisuals, and voice narrations that “all work in tandem to construct meaning and influence mood” of their audiences and “can be more widely distributed, engaging, and accessible” (p. 51). Overall, writing in the digital age has become multimodal using the affordances of mediated and hyperlinked texts and images, visual spaces of a screen or user-friendly interfaces and sounds combined to make meaning and enhance the proficiency of authors and writing instructors and students’ confidence in competent composing and their critical understanding of the knowledge multimodally embedded in digital texts (Foxworth, et al., 2019; Jones & Hafner, 2012, pp. 50-66; Schmidt, 2019, pp. 5-6).

Emerging digital technologies, multimodal compositions, and digital literacy practices have occupied a central space in knowledge creation, preservation, and dissemination, as well as in scholarship and pedagogical approaches to new transcultural literacy studies. In the current technology-saturated global society, digital technologies like smartphones, personal computers, tablets, iPads, and the Internet-based interactive networks like social media have become very productive writing tools in our digital lives in and across diverse cultural contexts— metaphorically, they have become a new appendage to our bodies. Consequently, multimodal composition and digital literacy practices have predominantly pervaded every aspect of our everyday lives in relation to communication with and for diverse publics. In academic and professional communities, these practices pervade a wide range of scholarly and academic activities such as literacies research, composition studies research, preparation of teaching materials, and preparation of students as global digital citizens who can engage themselves in creative and innovative problem solving, critical thinking, and informed decision making. Critiquing “digital literacy” in transcultural contexts offers us a broad analytical framework for understanding, at the deeper level, the creativity, complexity, productivity, and novelty introduced by digital technologies to diverse areas of our daily lives.

Digital composing plays a constructive role in promoting teaching and learning activities. Educators and learners have been increasingly attracted to using new/emerging digital devices and experimenting them in classroom practices to facilitate learning outcomes. Oakley et al. (2020) suggest that digital composition, using computing

devices and open-ended creative apps have improved students' learning and composing abilities (traditional and multimodal composition implied). Incorporating multimodality, in the composition classroom setting, has constructed motivating learning environments for students (Jiang & Luk, 2015). Liang and Lim (2020) still caution that instructors should not assume that students are "intuitively capable of digital multimodal composing skills;" instead, "a pedagogical framework that guides [students'] development and demonstration of these skills can be useful" (p. 1). Broadly, interactive and collaborative composition platforms and online resources have become essential to syllabi, multimodal writing exercises, and collaborative assignments. Various digital/multimodal compositions, among many others, infographics, text messages, podcasts, websites, YouTube videos, word documents, blogs, mind mapping platforms, PowerPoint slides, artificial intelligence-based composition tools, and interactive apps constitute important components of digital skills and/or digital literacies.

According to the BC's Digital Literacy Framework (n.d.), digital literacy is "the interest, attitude and ability of individuals to use digital technology and communication tools appropriately to access, manage, integrate, analyze and evaluate information, construct new knowledge and create and communicate with others" (p.1). It is critical for scholars and teachers of composition to be concerned with digital literacies as digital literacy practices and applications have also mostly occurred in transcultural contexts because of the global mobilization of people and transnational students in the scenario of current global academia. Kim (2015) reminds us that transcultural digital literacies refer to the phenomenon of multimodal practices such as "using new technological affordances to learn, imagine, and create knowledge that traverses national boundaries and conventional cultural borders" (p. 1). With this in mind, we are moved to consider deeply how digital literacies impact composition at the intersection of transculturalism, composition pedagogy (in class and beyond), and composition research. As we take up this question, we hold the view that digital composition and literacy practices and their social, educational, and cultural implications in transcultural contexts need to be continuously investigated to keep researchers, instructors, and students updated, confident, and competent in their professional fields in the ever-evolving transcultural digital environment. However, the digital compositions and transcultural literacy practices as well as their pedagogical implications are at no time free of complexities because new media and/or digital technologies always go through a process of advancements, (re)tweakings, and changes, requiring users to consistently upgrade, learn new skills, and explore further in the field (McEwan, 2015).

Big data, big databases, and AI-assisted resources frequently intersect to enhance teaching-learning activities, including data analytics in promoting learning platforms and teaching-learning strategies, improving curricula, language learning, and creating transnational environment (Kenett & Prodromou, 2021; Kou & Song, 2022; Vachkova et al., 2021; Xu, 2021). In the simplest terms, big data in the forms of numerical expressions,

such as bar charts, diagrams and illustrative spreadsheets (datasets are too large and need computing devices) account for fundamental elements of daily professional lives in different social, cultural, economic, and educational domains (planning projects, designing education programs, making various policies based on data analytics, announcing fiscal budgets, preparing data-based teaching materials, evaluating, and providing students with timely feedback). In the broadest terms, big data in bits and bytes, including big databases and memory machines networked by algorithms beneath user-friendly interfaces and Internet-based interactive enclosures, have revolutionized scholarly efforts in producing, disseminating, and acquiring knowledge. Moreover, our daily digital activities in diverse domains are retained as big data and algorithmic so that they can pop up on screens of digital devices and Internet-based interactive platforms. So, knowledge production, dissemination, and acquisition in composition practices have increasingly become multimodal, transcultural, participatory, and ever-evolving. Hence, ever-evolving attributes, (re)tweakings, and advancements of digital technologies always compel researchers, instructors, and students to learn emerging digital literacy skills. Highlighting the problems of constructive and destructive impacts of digital technologies, many institutions, scholars, and educators are called upon to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI). The question that remains is: how are the institutions incorporating DEI theories into pedagogical practices? This calls for continuous and further research in digital compositions, literacies, and emerging pedagogies.

In this special issue, scholars, instructors, and researchers made critical inquiries into emerging opportunities and challenges associated with digital compositions, literacies, pedagogies, and DEI. Up-to-date and original research articles may address but are not limited to the following issues/topics.

Dhruba Neupane's "Unpacking the Covid-19 Rhetorical Situation from a Resilient Diasporic Community Perspective: Some Pedagogical Implications" uncovers how COVID-19 exposed us to some existing social and economic inequalities. By making connections to other Covid-19 related research studies, his article takes on how learning from an immigrant community in the Global North, namely the Nepali diaspora in Canada, can contribute to conversations around the impact of the pandemic. He specifically examines the way the community handled times of hopelessness, unknowability, stress and anxiety, and racial hatred. The purpose of this article is also to re-situate "the rhetorical situation" to map how the community responded to pandemic exigencies. It discusses themes gleaned from the community's engagements during the pandemic and draws research and pedagogical implications.

In the article, "The Digital Cahier Collective: Fostering Québec-Michigan Cultural Exchange through Co-Curricular Multimodal Composition Practices," Michael Lockett, Gabe Wong, Nicklas Haglund, and Summer Issawi engage in a cross-border digital, experiential education design project, where they observed the First-Year Writing (FYW) students from Michigan State University and Champlain College in Montreal, Québec.

This study examines how students in cross-institutional and transnational contexts benefit from one another through collaborative learning. The findings shed light on cross-border digital learning in relation to cross-regional cultural inquiry projects and curricular experience. This study demonstrates students' significant growth in learning more about other cultures and helping with parallel assessment tasks in this setting, such as cross-cultural interactions and textual encounters. Most importantly, their digital cahiers study reinforces students' use of accessibility practices and digital collaborative tools and their benefits in the writing classroom.

Tika Lamsal, in his "Multimodal Composition and Language Empowerment: Lessons from a Multilingual Classroom," discusses how multilingual students offer an insightful perspective regarding their experiences of learning through multimodal writing, and we do little to promote their experiences via multimodal composition in academic writing courses. This study aims to explore a diverse and multimodal approach to writing adopted by multilingual students in freshman writing classes to examine how they co-construct meaning by articulating their voices in audio essays. Lamsal stresses that through multimodal writing, multilingual students not only explore their cultural, transnational, and language identities but also showcase digital writing skills to succeed both academically and professionally.

Finally, Wauseca Briscoe, in "Big Data, Internalization, and Community College Retention," minutely demonstrates how big data analytics are among many economical methods that improve decision-making for higher-education student retention programs. Among economic proportions, metrics enabling improved programming for STEM fields expand domestic and international study through traditional, virtual, and work-study programs. Briscoe's study investigates student preparedness with resources that support student services beyond the digital divide. Briscoe's research findings highlight some factors contributing to student matriculation, suggesting that representations of lower socioeconomic communities impact the global balance of diverse opportunities among students. Briscoe argues that three objectives should drive student retention programs in relation to methods of career success services for students. These objectives include 1) research for socioeconomic issues and student retention, 2) the effectiveness of existing methods of traditional and non-traditional classrooms, and 3) the impact of learning resources for underprivileged communities to support planning for community college education.

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