*SHOWCASING THE BEST OF CIWIC/DMAC*

ISSUE 1 (2015)

INTRODUCTION TRANSCRIPT

**Text:** Introduction

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Featuring Trey Conatser, Scott DeWitt, and Cindy Selfe

Interviewed by Paula Miller

**Paula:** Hi, I’m Paula Miller. I’m a graduate fellow at The Ohio State University in the PhD program in rhetoric, composition, and literacy, and I’m also a graduate fellow with the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative. And I’m here with some of the leadership of the Digital Media and Composition [DMAC] conference; I’ll let them introduce themselves.

**Cindy Selfe:** My name is Cindy Selfe, and I was the founder of Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms, or CIWIC, at Michigan Technological University. Uh, CIWIC ran for twenty years, and then I came to Ohio State, and with Scott DeWitt, um, I was the founder of the subsequent iteration of CIWIC, which is called DMAC: Digital Media and Composition here at Ohio State. DMAC will have run for ten years by the time I retire next year.

**Scott DeWitt:** And I’m Scott DeWitt. I’m on the faculty here at Ohio State, and Cindy’s co-director for DMAC.

**Trey Conatser:** And I’m Trey Conatser, a graduate student here at Ohio State, the current associate director of DMAC, and the editor of *Showcasing the Best of CIWIC/DMAC*.

**Text:** What have people missed in writing about CIWIC and/or DMAC?

**Paula:** So ya’ll I’m interested in knowing what current writing on CIWIC and DMAC has missed.

**Cindy:** I think we should start with Trey because Trey is the editor of this collection, so, Trey, can you talk a little bit about that?

**Trey:** Sure. I think, uh, especially in walking through the initial process to the finished product with these pieces I think what we’re addressing that might have been missed…all these different genres and modes, um, and all their affordances, we still in talking about that [DMAC] experience default back to older models sort of encrusted around alphabetic text, print publications, and the kinds of readerly expectations associated with that.

**Cindy:** Yeah.

**Scott:** I think that one of the things that this publication is going to, um, do that we have not seen is that it’s, it’s really gonna capture the experience as closely as possible of what it means to be here for the two weeks of DMAC. Um, you know, people, they, they really kind of check out of their lives for two weeks and they come here and they come to a city where they’ve never been before in most cases. And they live here for, for many, many days, and they live in a hotel. And, you know, they, um, but when they come here they make—they meet people, and there’s this sense of community. And they produce texts and they read texts, and they have these conversations. And, I think that for many people they feel a little less isolated when they go back home because of this experience.

So these publications [*Showcasing* along with special CIWIC/DMAC issues of *Computers and Composition* and *Computers and Composition Online*], I think, will be one of the first times that we’re actually seeing, um, scholarship that’s about the experience of being here. Not about what necessarily just happened after the fact, but also it’s really gonna capture what happens here at the Institute itself.

**Cindy:** And not just what happens during the Institute, but how much that community of scholars has become national, um, and how it happens elsewhere as well. For me, the most important thing that this collection will do is to highlight, uh, an axiom that we always start CIWIC and DMAC with and that is: “people first, teaching and learning and instruction second, and third technology.” Now we generally interpret that to mean that we don’t talk about technology before we talk about people’s needs—both teachers and students—instructional direction and, uh, focus, and then we talk about technology. So that’s one level at which we always work at CIWIC or DMAC.

But, I think an even more important interpretation of the axiom is, uh, comes out of computer science, and actually the invention of computers (I just went to see, uh, *The Imitation Game* about Alan Turing, or even the early work in artificial intelligence that Margaret Boden did). The only reason that we find computers so fascinating is because they help us understand human creativity. And I think in this collection, of everything I’ve seen, it’s the attention to the whole range of human creativity in and around and through technology that really fascinates me. And it keeps me coming back to CIWIC and DMAC for thirty years! I mean, you’d think it would be exhausted, but it’s not because it’s the human creative mind that is the focus of our work.

**Scott:** And you talk about a creative force—I mean, I’m not sure there are instances in my professional life where I have felt more creative force than here at DMAC. And all these people come together, um, with all of these varying experiences working in all of these different kinds of institutions and they produce all of this work that they share amongst themselves. And I think what this publication is doing is it’s showing that creative force and that culture of sharing and how you can actually then produce texts out of all of that. And we’re, and we’re seeing that in these pieces in this publication.

**Text:** What does the Showcase invite?

**Paula:** So, if this is what people have been missing when they’ve been writing about DMAC, then what does the *Showcasing* collection invite?

**Cindy:** Well, I can start that one. I think [laughing] what the *Showcasing* collection invites is, um, attention to how CIWIC and DMAC changes with every single year and every single group that attends. So, to me it’s not—the fact that we’re doing this now is important, because it’s inaugurating the Showcase, but what’s really important is that the Showcase can proceed afterwards. It can track the, um, the innovation that happens and the people that, um, participate and make CIWIC or DMAC what it is in future years as well.

**Trey:** Right.

**Scott:** And it, and it has the potential to become, uh, this living publication that, you know, with so many—so much publication tends to be fixed. You put out an issue or, um, there’s an edition of something. Um, you know, we have the potential here that as, as more people reflect on their experience at DMAC and new people come to DMAC and they go home and have that experience, that they can produce these kinds of texts also. And they will have different takes on DMAC and the DMAC experience. And this is a cumulative, um, text that we have. We don’t have to stop; nobody’s stopping us from, from publishing more down the road.

**Trey:** Right. Right. It invites us—it invites both readers and authors to think about what they can do with DMAC in terms of producing, right, both during and after.

**Cindy:** And it invites us to be editors of our own experiences. That’s what I like. You know [laughing], so as editors we think of DMAC as an unfolding text every year, a text of relationships, and um, innovative kinds of practices that people bring here. That’s why we like it so much.

**Trey:** Right. So this year, it’s sort of a meta-narrative of DMAC because this year, you know, what the, it’s professional development and technology that we’re focusing on, on DMAC as an institute, right, but next year it could be something completely different based on what the organic experience of that creative energy is, in just a few months.

**Cindy:** And, the other thing I think that we ignore, um, although Danielle DeVoss and others have, um, pointed it out to us, is that it leaves a historical trace of a profession. And I think that’s so important. It, um, the profession proceeds whether we’re there or not, and sometimes things drop out that we don’t even remember at the time. And we’ve learned in putting together this historical trace of CIWIC and DMAC that there are things that we can’t even recover now only twenty-nine, thirty years after they happened. It’s the reason we need to do this now and to keep doing it afterward so that we have a historical trace of what we’ve done.

**Scott:** And, and this will be the first year—this is what’s gonna be really interesting is that people come to DMAC and they have that experience every year that they’re here without a lot of, without necessarily knowing what the experience has been in the past.

**Trey:** No foreknowledge.

**Scott:** So this will be the first year that people, this will be available…

**Cindy:** Yeah, that’s nice.

**Scott:** ...before people come here, and I think that we’re going to encourage people to go look at this before DMAC so this is actually exciting for me, that this will be the first year where people will have dropped into those stories and have looked to see what’s going on the last twenty-, twenty-seven, twenty-eight years.

**Cindy:** What a resource for orientation.

**Trey:** Oh wow, yeah.

**Cindy:** You know, that’s, uh, that’s cool.

**Trey:** And to see those interesting changes of what that energy that you’re [Scott is] talking about of DMAC is after this awareness starts to build, this way of frontloading DMAC before actually being there.

**Cindy:** And what a neat, uh, trace as well of the key figures in the field who have attended CIWIC or DMAC at various times, you know, there have been senior scholars and junior scholars and graduate students who have come to CIWIC or DMAC and then gone on to really shape their arena of the profession in such profound ways, and that’s another neat thing to watch: how, uh, CIWIC and DMAC have had an effect within the field.

**Text:** What do the pieces in the inaugural issue share? Is there a focus?

**Paula:** So, what do the pieces in this inaugural issue share? Is there a focus?

**Scott:** I think for me as I look at these pieces that one of the things they share, um, is a focus, like, it is the, um, variety of production approaches that pe—that, that people came. There’s an openness to the production here that we’re seeing with this publication. Um, we, you know, we’re not necessarily an established journal; we don’t have the style sheet, those kinds of things. And so we’re—so we started out by thinking about some more general guidelines of what we were, what we were interested in seeing. And it was that openness that even though it produced very different kinds of results—and we’re seeing a huge variety of webtexts and, and uses of video and audio and images and print. Um, it was that openness that actually provided some of that common ground.

Um, most people, I’m gonna guess, utilized some of the skills that either they learned directly in DMAC or that they took home and had to learn other ways of producing the kinds of texts we taught them in DMAC. So those things provide some of those common features but I do think that it was the openness here that everybody had this sense of freedom, um, that, that actually, that’s the interesting way of thinking of the common features for me.

**Trey:** All the pieces are thinking about genre and mode as technique. They’re all thinking about it as a technique, but also, and this is what’s most interesting for me, is that that, I guess one could say anarchic, uh, way of just growing them from the ground up is all in the context of reflecting on professional development, right, in the context of technology instruction in the humanities, but nonetheless professional development which, popularly considered, could be, uh, rather limiting or constraining. But the shared interest is thinking about how all the affordances of these different genres, these different modes can be used as techniques towards building meaning, right, in the same way we talk about that in DMAC.

**Cindy:** One of the things that strikes me about what they share is, um, a sense of continuity. That is, um, these share the history of CIWIC and DMAC and they point toward the future of CIWIC and DMAC. So they stitch that, um, history and future together in a, in a big fabric. I like that. I like the fact that the history isn’t lost, but the future remains open. And it remains open because we make an effort to make sure it does.

**Scott:** One of the things we’ve missed here Paula is that you’re actually a DMAC alum, um, and I’m wondering, like, could you talk a little bit about your, like, how did that propel you, like what are you, what are you doing now? How did that, uh, you know, how has that influenced your work now?

**Paula:** So, uh, attending DMAC actually has shaped my research focus. I’ve been working in writing centers for about ten years. And I attended DMAC, and it made me think about writing centers in a new way, and, and think about multi-literacy centers. And eventually one thing led to another and that’s why I chose to come pursue a PhD at Ohio State. Um, part of what also happened as a result of that is I joined the Digital Rhetoric Collaborative, the Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative. Um, we do a lot of really cool stuff there. We host a curated blog. Um, we also host a wiki that serves the computers and writing community and the digital rhetoric and education community in general.

**Cindy:** This is one project in which Ohio State and the University of Michigan [which hosts the Sweetland DRC] are thinking alike, you know, and that’s a wonderful thing, around technology, around teachers, around learners. I think that’s a very positive and productive project.

**Scott:** Well, I might, um, invite our viewers and on behalf of these folks here, to dive right in. Take a look at *Showcasing [the Best of] CIWIC and DMAC*. I think it’s a very exciting publication, um, and we hope you enjoy it.

**Cindy:** And by the time you read this publication it’s gonna be different even than from when we put it online. So, it will keep changing, we encourage you to come to DMAC, uh, if you can, if you possibly can, and become part of the community of DMAC and part of the future of the profession as well.

**Text:** Special thanks to the Digital Union at The Ohio State University

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