


2010

Making the Case for Disciplinarity in Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies: The Visibility Project

Louise Weatherbee Phelps
Old Dominion University, lwphelps@odu.edu

John M. Ackerman

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english_fac_pubs

 Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Phelps, Louise Weatherbee and Ackerman, John M., "Making the Case for Disciplinarity in Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies: The Visibility Project" (2010). *English Faculty Publications*. 84.
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english_fac_pubs/84

Original Publication Citation

Phelps, L. W., & Ackerman, J. M. (2010). Making the case for disciplinarity in rhetoric, composition, and writing studies: The Visibility Project. *College Composition and Communication*, 62(1), 180-215.

Louise Wetherbee Phelps and John M. Ackerman

Making the Case for Disciplinarity in Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies: The Visibility Project

In the Visibility Project, professional organizations have worked to gain recognition for the disciplinarity of writing and rhetoric studies through representation of the field in the information codes and databases of higher education. We report success in two important cases: recognition as an “emerging field” in the National Research Council’s taxonomy of research disciplines; and the assignment of a code series to rhetoric and composition/writing studies in the federal Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP). We analyze the rhetorical strategies and implications of each case and call for continuing efforts to develop and implement a “digital strategy” for handling data about the field and its representation in information networks.

One of the more enduring desires among those who study writing and rhetoric is for the academy and the public to acknowledge that what we do, across an exceptionally broad institutional landscape, is worthy of disciplinary status. Ours is a field that grew after World War II when an influx of students increased demands for workplace and academic skills, a growth cycle that now stands in contrast with the interdisciplinary synapses that gave rise to new disciplines such as nanotechnology or postcolonial studies. This history

has been charted by many before us, seeking to establish the evolution of a discipline. To be recognized as a discipline is a powerful measure of whether we have earned the respect of others, because, as Steven Mailloux points out, “Placing oneself in a specialized field when one speaks, writes, publishes, teaches, hires and engages in other rhetorical [and, we would add, writing] practices . . . constitutes perhaps the most powerful condition of academic work” (125). A disciplinary identity is necessary for such work to be taken seriously within the meritocracies of higher education and to help sustain the working identities of practitioners, scholars, teachers, and administrators across the United States. Yet, on the anniversary of our flagship journal, the search for recognition remains a work in progress.

The heteroglot that has become rhetoric and composition would deny generalization, but we suggest that the growth of our field is coincidental to and instrumental in the rise of the “practical arts” (Brint) that has across the twentieth century replaced the old arts and sciences core. Though we are denigrated by some in the academy as being *merely* practical and without the cultural prestige of literature or the economic value of engineering, writing studies have grown in concert with three features of the evolving face of research universities: a “utilitarian” ethos, entrepreneurialism, and the

Said differently, writing and rhetoric greatly matter for post-baccalaureate student success, well beyond elite calls for eloquence in the nineteenth century, the progressive response to industrialization in the early twentieth century, or the postwar deficit theories of an illiterate public—all of which are foundational to the field’s disciplinary identity today.

move by universities to strengthen community relations for social, political, and economic gain (244–45). Said differently, writing and rhetoric greatly matter for post-baccalaureate student success, well beyond elite calls for eloquence in the nineteenth century, the progressive response to industrialization in the early twentieth century, or the postwar deficit theories of an illiterate public—all of which are foundational to the field’s disciplinary identity today. In parallel with the rise of the practical arts, writing and rhetoric remain catalysts for intellectual and economic entrepreneurialism, as they function dynamically as primary social currencies for crossing intellectual and cultural boundaries.

Over time and through practice, we have produced our equivalent of a *wissenschaft*, recognizing that our work has value as science and not (merely) as an art, though practice alone cannot do this. Rather, as Maureen Goggin chronicles in *Authoring a Discipline*, the ascent of our discipline is empirically told as one of writing ourselves into the position of disciplinary equal. Since

1950, we have bootstrapped ourselves into a disciplinary identity by inventing a network of publishing venues, replete with criteria for scholarly achievement. We have published enough articles, invented enough journals, minted enough editors, and, through the course of it all, developed and marketed our expertise as “disciplinographers” or “writers of the discipline” (184) to the point that disciplinarity as a condition of labor is arguably ours. And for good reason: if the practical arts are on the rise in the twenty-first century, then teaching for the sake of teaching will never guarantee visibility or public value.

One might think that a clear record of scholarly achievement, added to sixty years of institutional labor, would indeed be enough to ensure rhetoric and composition a secure place in the marketplace of disciplines. We were, perhaps, too complacent about this, relying on the plain evidence of growth in the number of programs, tenure-stream faculty, publications, and administrative positions. But such

External validation matters; disciplinary status can't be willed from within, nor can it be solely written into existence.

good work isn't sufficient in itself; to be judged worthy or unworthy within the meri-

tocracy of postsecondary education, it must first be seen or heard, not merely noticed but appreciated in terms that make it eligible for such judgments. At the most basic level, it's necessary for academic peers, administrators, or other stakeholders to be aware of the material facts (programs, publications, faculty, and students) that give the field presence in the academy. But to carry any weight or gain purchase in that domain, these facts must be recognized as the intellectual work of a scholarly community, not merely a service or supplement to other fields. External validation matters; disciplinary status can't be willed from within, nor can it be solely written into existence.

The Visibility Project began when a group of scholars concerned with doctoral education began to question why, as a field, we had not met this fundamental prerequisite. It had become evident that the scholarly and programmatic successes we'd celebrated were neither salient to other disciplines nor validated comprehensively in the realm of university politics, government statistics, federal funding, and foundations—in short, in the eyes of the academic establishment. This is the tale of how we discovered another, unexpected route to this validation—the information codes and databases of higher education. These informational networks, we came to understand, are a primary medium by which a discipline is represented to various publics and becomes eligible for recognition, support, and full participation by its members in the academic enterprise, both individually and collectively. Without the ability to accurately

“code” activities and products like instructional programs, community projects, dissertations, publications, or grant proposals in disciplinary terms, these remain invisible to the broader community for judgment or use. Collectively, the work of the field is mischaracterized or simply unknown to other scholars, administrators, legislators, popular media, and prospective students, and its members and organizations are denied opportunities and access to broader venues of policymaking, innovation, recruitment, funding, and public engagement. The Visibility Project undertook to tackle this problem directly, by seeking representation for the field in important databases and coding schemes.

Within this epideictic moment, in this a commemorative issue of *College Composition and Communication*, we wish to report that our field has succeeded in articulating disciplinary identity in two major national codes, with momentous symbolic and practical implications. The first instance, called here the “NRC case,” represents a prestigious taxonomy of research disciplines produced by the National Research Council for the purpose of periodically evaluating doctoral programs. The second, called here the “CIP case,” takes its name from the Classification of Instructional Programs, or “CIP” code, used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to gather data annually on postsecondary degree completions for the federal database called IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System). These two are among the most consequential codes by which educational data is gathered and disseminated, both because of their specific functions (which go well beyond their original context) and because of their interconnections with one another and other codes.

After explaining the two contexts and the differential rhetorical strategies adopted to fit them, we address the value and significance of attaining “visibility” within such information networks, on a parity with other newly formed or newly identified fields, and the future actions that can build on this breakthrough. We also point to the need for ongoing critical reflection on the costs as well as the benefits of success in this project. We risk something at every level: in the process, as we negotiate the terms of visibility with one another and with gatekeepers; in the results, which encode expressions of identity; in the achievement of visibility itself, which makes us vulnerable to scrutiny and to the entanglements of worldly engagement. We must weigh these risks

Within this epideictic moment, in this a commemorative issue of *College Composition and Communication*, we wish to report that our field has succeeded in articulating disciplinary identity in two major national codes, with momentous symbolic and practical implications.

against the opportunity of gaining more control of our public identities and the increased freedom of action that representation and recognition can bring.

The Visibility Project

The Visibility Project is an ongoing, collaborative effort to gain national recognition for the disciplinary study of writing by focusing on the ways that fields of instruction and research are identified, coded, and represented statistically and

We risk something at every level: in the process, as we negotiate the terms of visibility with one another and with gatekeepers; in the results, which encode expressions of identity; in the achievement of visibility itself, which makes us vulnerable to scrutiny and to the entanglements of worldly engagement. We must weigh these risks against the opportunity of gaining more control of our public identities and the increased freedom of action that representation and recognition can bring.

descriptively for the purposes of data collection, reports, records, comparison, analysis, and assessment of higher education. Inclusion and accurate representation of writing and rhetoric studies in these codes are vital to generating the information that governs perceptions of the discipline, which in turn both enable and limit its academic and public

roles. In this section we describe two important breakthroughs for the project in modifying such codes to include rhetoric and composition and writing studies. In the first, the NRC case, the discipline (designated “Rhetoric and Composition”) was recognized as an emerging field in the National Research Council’s taxonomy of research disciplines, in the context of its 2009 survey of doctoral programs. In the second, the CIP case, the field (designated “Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies”) was assigned its own codes for classifying instructional programs within the multilevel “CIP” code that is the federal standard for educational statistics and the source code for many others.

The Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition originally initiated the Visibility Project in response to an exigency specific to doctoral education, in the first case reported below (NRC). But as the project expanded to other databases and codes, it grew beyond the bounds of the doctoral consortium and acquired new sponsors and partners. In the second (CIP) case we describe here, where the code serves to classify both undergraduate and graduate programs, the consortium recognized that the proposed changes needed to represent the interests of the field at large and to be inclusive of all its variants and specializations. At its request, the Conference on College Composition and Communication Executive Committee appointed a broadly representative task force to develop a proposal for changes in the CIP code to

cover all instructional programs in rhetoric and composition/writing studies. The success of these two cases has paved the way for continuing the project through CCCC and in partnerships and coalitions with other organizations. We continue to uncover other databases with codes that need revision, and we've learned the job is not done when the codes are changed. Systematic follow-through is required to ensure local implementation and to exploit the implications of these changes at various levels of professional activity. To be effective, this work requires sustained attention from the profession, backed by resources and support from its diverse organizations.

The Visibility Project began in 2004 under the auspices of the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition, continuing the consortium's tradition of working to make research in the field, including dissertations, accessible to other scholars.¹ An early focus of the consortium, under the leadership of Janice Lauer, had been to add a category for the field in the Dissertation Abstracts International index. Through the efforts of Linda Ferreira-Buckley, the group succeeded in obtaining a code for "Rhetoric and Composition" dissertations (0681) in 1996.² But the consortium remained frustrated by continuing difficulties in making the field's research salient to other scholars. The longstanding problem of accessing bibliography in rhetoric/composition and writing studies through scholarly indexes (Scott) persisted into the new century. Discussion in consortium meetings often focused on the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of the discipline in the growing networks of linked information (increasingly, in digital form) over which scholarship is stored, indexed, disseminated, and discovered by learners, other scholars, and other constituencies and publics.

Meanwhile, the field was producing a stream of doctoral graduates, whose numbers reached a critical mass for institutionalizing the discipline as they secured tenure-track positions in departments and programs and moved up the academic ladder through tenure and administrative appointments. The consortium worked as an organization to support this growth and analyze its implications, while *Rhetoric Review* published a series of surveys tracking the expansion of doctoral programs between 1987 and 2000 (see issues 5.2, 12.2, and 18.2). As it turned out, these surveys, despite the limitations of self-reported data, provided one of the few sources of information to support claims that became crucial to the Visibility Project. As we began to realize in pursuing the two cases here, indifference to the discipline at this level of the educational establishment reflected not necessarily the conspiracies and political opposition we imagined, but simple ignorance or misapprehension of its

existence as concrete fact. This is what the doctoral consortium came to call “invisibility”—a condition that effectively prevents members of the field from participating alongside other disciplines in competing for research grants, taking part in funded educational reform initiatives, recruiting students, or speaking to policy through organizational representatives.

The consortium’s work on the NRC case revealed that this condition, whatever the complexity of its origins, is ultimately a matter of information and can be combated in those terms. The codes used for naming, describing, and organizing data about subject fields, instructional programs, research specializations, publications, and other academic facts both manifest and shape perceptions and conceptions of disciplines and disciplinarity. They determine what kind of information can flow into databases, what “counts” and what can be counted, and how this information is analyzed and interpreted. Without appropriate codes, the informational correlates of disciplinary activity simply disappear into a black hole, diffused into this network of data where no search can find them. Despite their differences, these codes are subtly linked and mutually reinforcing, constructing a complex web of crisscrossing databases that produce statistical representations of disciplines and their products, rankings, and assessments, all situated in a set of agencies and organizations that control our destiny in ways that are as invisible to us as we are to them.

The Visibility Project, by seeking to identify and change these codes one by one, directly attacks this mechanism for perpetuating, however inadvertently, the invisibility of writing studies to academic stakeholders and, in turn, the media and various publics.

The Visibility Project, by seeking to identify and change these codes one by one, directly attacks this mechanism for perpetuating, however inadvertently, the invisibility of writing studies to academic stakeholders and, in turn, the media and various publics. Luckily, the two cases here presented kairotic opportunities for intervention, because both involved codes that were scheduled for periodic revision. (Historically, these reviews have taken place about a decade apart, updating codes to reflect changes in the content and organization of knowledge making and instruction.)³

Each of these cases is a classic instance of rhetorical work. Each involved a complex collaborative process of research, data gathering, invention, and communication that was fraught with obstacles and difficulties. Although we will mention some of those problems that are particularly instructive or pertinent to future cases, our primary focus in the case reports is to explain the arguments made, the evidence developed (in part by the survey described below), and the different rhetorical strategies adopted to fit each case.

The NRC Case

The National Research Council is part of the National Academies, along with the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine. According to its mission statement, the NRC works to provide “elected leaders, policymakers, and the public with expert advice based on sound scientific evidence” in order to foster public understanding and to improve policies and government decision making on matters related to science, engineering, technology, and health (<http://sites.nationalacademies.org/NRC/>). By 1995 the NRC had conducted a survey and assessment of doctoral programs in all disciplines. By 2004 the council was well into the process of planning another. NRC explained that the goal of the doctoral study was to enable society to “compare doctoral programs, assess their quality, and provide information about these programs for doctoral students choosing programs, for faculty responsible for developing programs, and for administrators charged with making wise program investments.” Besides these publics, NRC also identified another audience—“the state, federal, and philanthropic funders of doctoral study” (Ostriker et al. 1). Through its connection to the science-based National Research Council and its focus on research, this taxonomy carries considerable weight with administrators, foundations and government agencies, and policy makers. Although it is uncertain whether or how the NRC’s evaluative study of doctoral programs will continue in its present form, representation in this database facilitates comparison and competition among programs and schools.⁴

An initial methodology report was published in 2003 (Ostriker and Kuh), making recommendations based on a pilot study of questionnaires and including a draft taxonomy of research disciplines. The NRC invited feedback, including suggestions on revising the taxonomy, which was a hierarchical list without descriptions of “fields” that offer research doctorates and “subfields” representing specialized research areas (applied both to faculty work and to programs).

Consortium representatives immediately realized the significance of representation in this prestigious taxonomy. So we were taken aback, upon reading the committee’s methodology report, to find that writing and rhetoric studies didn’t appear in the new draft taxonomy at all, even as a subfield of English. This was particularly inexplicable since, among the eight pilot institutions for the pilot study, five were in the consortium and might have been expected to identify Ph.D. programs in the field (under “rhetoric and composition” or some other title), at least when asked to name “emerging fields.” The consortium decided to seize the moment to make a proposal to the National Research Council’s

methodology committee to add rhetoric and composition to the list. Louise Phelps was appointed as coordinator of the Visibility Project to organize and present the case, with the help of volunteers from the consortium.

The strategy for the argument to the National Research Council was greatly informed by what was learned from an early interview with Charlotte Kuh, director of the NRC Assessment of Research Doctorate Programs. Asked how we should frame our argument, Kuh explained that it was necessary to demonstrate that doctoral programs in the field had collectively produced a critical mass of graduates in recent years. As later refined by the NRC, the requirement for listing a field in the taxonomy of established scholarly areas was “that it had produced at least 500 Ph.D’s in the five years prior to 2005–2006, and that there were programs in the field in at least 25 universities” (Ostriker et al. 6) The taxonomy committee, however, acutely conscious of the constant formation of new disciplines and interdisciplinary studies, included a new section for “emerging fields.”

The consortium believed, and later demonstrated in the survey discussed below, that by these criteria “rhetoric and composition” (inclusive of programs in the consortium by any name) already qualified for the taxonomy as an established field. However, Kuh advised that we request status as an “emerging field” in view of the fact that she (and presumably the taxonomy committee) had no prior awareness or evidence of even the existence of the discipline. Mindful that it would be difficult to make an empirical case for full status, the consortium adopted this goal. We knew that we lacked a good source of reliable data on graduates, in the absence of codes already tracking them in federal surveys and records (Catch-22!). Moreover, despite a forty-year history of graduate studies in the field, many programs still had an ambiguous, evolving identity as tracks or concentrations, and formation of new programs was continuing vigorously—both characteristic signs of a young field. Even with the survey we planned to undertake, these factors would limit the reliability of our empirical claims.

Through the information and counsel provided by Kuh (and her associate, James Voytuk) and study of the draft taxonomy and taxonomy report, we developed an argument intended to fit this particular taxonomy and the concepts and values underlying it.⁵ Although we didn’t know then exactly who would review the consortium’s proposal (NRC staff? scholars in English? educational researchers?), we made some inferences about audience, based on the membership of the original taxonomy committee and the organizations (of science, engineering, and medicine) that administer the National Research

Council. Rhetorically, we needed to appeal to the values expressed in the methodology report. We knew, for example, that it had recommended excluding education from the taxonomy as an “applied” field whose research couldn’t be assessed independent of its practice.⁶

The danger of being dismissed as a merely practical field determined the consortium’s strategic decision—for this case—to foreground the research dimension of the field, underplay its pedagogical imperative, and limit references to the historical contributions and contemporary connections of

English education to composition. (As you’ll see, we reasserted these connections in the CIP case, where the context was instruction rather than research, with mixed results.)

As noted, the principal purpose of the assessment study was to compare, rate, and rank research-doctorate programs. The taxonomy of “research disciplines” provides a way to organize programs into comparable categories for such assessment. The NRC is also interested, through periodic review and revision of the taxonomy, in tracking the evolution and emergence of disciplines, especially (in the recent review) the proliferation of interdisciplinary formations in the life sciences. The taxonomy serves to identify—in a sense, to certify—which research activities have risen to the status of a discipline by the NRC criteria. These criteria have to do with size (enough graduates to constitute a research enterprise), distribution across the academy (sufficient to guarantee a research community), and continuity (stability, endurance of programs over time), signifying ability to reproduce the discipline in new generations.

We learned from these goals and criteria that, for the National Research Council, disciplinarity is identified with research as manifested in graduate programs. Specifically, a field in the taxonomy is a research enterprise that has become capable of sustaining itself over time through the production of new members in graduate programs, which also function as major centers for research activity. It was evident that we could meet this standard only as a collectivity, finding identity in our commonalities, not as a set of contending micro-disciplines.

This strategy was debated vigorously before its adoption, since the consortium represents a full range of doctoral programs and, thus, disciplinary paradigms, and many scholars and programs resist identification of their own

The danger of being dismissed as a merely practical field determined the consortium’s strategic decision—for this case—to foreground the research dimension of the field, underplay its pedagogical imperative, and limit references to the historical contributions and contemporary connections of English education to composition.

paradigm or specialization with any kind of amalgamated “disciplinary” collective. In *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Anthony Cohen explains that such an argument as the consortium made to the NRC constitutes

the presentation to the outside world of the common interests of the community When a group of people engages with some other, it has to simplify its message down to a form and generality with which each of the members can identify their personal interests. Otherwise the message becomes impossibly convoluted and so heavily qualified as to be unintelligible to the outsider. . . . Such general statements of position, if not exactly fictions, are often sufficient distortions of individuals’ aspirations that they would not pass *within* the community, which is internally diverse and conflicted. (35)

The primary message that members of the field needed to convey to the National Research Council was that we exist as a community by virtue of sufficient mass, sufficient unity, and a clear enough boundary to function as a discipline distinct from other disciplines. This required demonstrating that our doctoral programs, no matter how diverse, belong together in one field.

The consortium’s memo to the (new) taxonomy committee approached candidly the problem of establishing disciplinarity in this sense for a field so diverse and contentious in its self-definitions and research traditions, whose

The primary message that members of the field needed to convey to the National Research Council was that we exist as a community by virtue of sufficient mass, sufficient unity, and a clear enough boundary to function as a discipline distinct from other disciplines.

doctoral programs vary greatly in their titles, intellectual configuration, structures, and locations (as explained and exemplified in the proposal). The consortium itself, with its more than seventy members, was a strong argument that

such programs have emerged and assumed a common identity despite their diversity. To our advantage, the methodology committee’s concept of disciplinarity didn’t seem to identify disciplines with departments, and we were encouraged by the report’s recognition that rapidly developing new fields, especially interdisciplinary ones, can be chaotic in their organization. It seemed not to matter, for purposes of assessment, where programs are situated institutionally, how they are named, or whether they are embedded in other programs, as long as they can be identified with an established research enterprise and compared to peers.⁷

In Cohen’s analysis, boundaries “encapsulate the identity of the community” (12) and express its integrity. A symbolic expression of unity and boundary is the ability to name a discipline consistently, but as program titles

demonstrated, the field has never settled that issue definitively and probably will not. Our disagreements over naming reflect the internal divisions, differentiations, specializations, and alternate constructions of the community represented in the field (and the consortium doctorates), as well as the scale at which scholars locate their identity. Nonetheless, we had to settle on a single term, an oversimplification appropriate to the taxonomy (including the near certainty that the NRC would locate the field in the humanities) in order to assert an ethos of integrity. As explained in the memo, the consortium adopted “rhetoric and composition” as a generic designation of the field at its founding and again in this proposal, because these terms and their variants are the most commonly used in scholarly discourse and in current doctoral program titles to refer to the discipline as a whole. They are also the most distinctive to the field and (especially when linked) are the least likely to produce confusion with other disciplines. The linkage expresses the field’s dual scholarly heritage and distinguishes its study of rhetoric from the subfield of rhetoric within communication studies. But the proposal forthrightly highlighted the complexity of the field in its formative influences and contemporary manifestations, pointing to the most common alternate terms and pairings in program titles as evidence of its alternate paradigms, multiple roots and traditions, evolving specializations, and interdisciplinary blends. Among them, the consortium identified professional and technical communication as a semi-autonomous specialization with an independent but convergent history and requested a subfield designation for these programs, but emerging fields were not assigned subfields in the final taxonomy.

Ultimately, the persuasiveness of the NRC argument rested on counting graduates and, particularly, documenting their steady production by a relatively stable set of programs. We were still completing the survey reported below at the time we submitted the case, but it succeeded in confirming over six hundred graduates during the prior five years, with at least thirty programs graduating five or more PhDs in that period. This, of course, constituted our primary claim for inclusion, and the ability to establish it was a key step in cracking the invisibility barriers that had hindered the field’s progress.

Survey of Doctoral Programs

To provide the evidence needed for the NRC case, in 2004 we designed a survey of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition with the limited focus of learning this information: how programs named themselves within an institutional location and for degrees; where programs were located across depart-

ments, colleges, and university systems; who coordinated or directed doctoral programs and under what title; the number and rank of tenure-stream faculty assigned to doctoral education; when programs were founded; and then, most importantly, what were the enrollments and graduation rates from 1999 to 2004 and from each program's inception.⁸ Because the oldest programs began in the 1960s, we approached this survey as a limited snapshot of the forty-year growth of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition, knowing it was only one of many indications of an emerging field of study.

Of the seventy doctoral programs on record in 2005, forty-six responded to the survey, including to our knowledge all of those producing at the rate of "five over five." As with any survey, we learned through the process as much as from the results. For example, we learned that some programs struggled to find the desired data and that the administrative responsibility for doctoral education took many forms. We learned that some programs, when housed within larger departments (typically English), met resistance or confusion in ferreting out rhetoric and composition graduates from others in a department; after all, the distinction of an "emerging" discipline was new to the consortium, to all who participated in the NRC survey, and presumably to departments less enamored with this distinction. We also heard from faculty who were nervous about going public; we infer that the more visible a program becomes, the more vulnerable it might become locally, to the degree that with visibility comes accountability according to these measurements. For the sake of brevity, we address those results that pertain directly to the question of disciplinary recognition by NRC and to future cycles of such assessments.

As the survey demonstrated, clearly the field, by NRC criteria, had by 2004 produced graduates at rates comparable to sustained disciplines. From 1964 to 2004, the programs participating in the survey produced 1,625 graduates, and from 1999 to 2004, enrolled 1,245 students and graduated 613 specialists in rhetoric and composition. There were at least thirty programs that met the NRC requirement of at minimum five graduates every five years. Assuming that the field had reached a steady state, based on a leveling off of new programs coming on line, we were graduating on average 125 PhDs each academic year for a market that had so far accommodated this growth.

By charting the inception of programs over a forty-year period, we saw that program growth clustered, first with a jump between 1979 and 1981, followed by healthy growth in the late 1980s and early 1990s and then with a smaller jump in new programs from 1997 to 2004. Not surprisingly, the most graduates came from the largest programs, most which began prior to 1980,

taking over twenty years to develop. The time to develop a successful program could also be surmised from the data on newer programs. They tended to have steady or even high enrollments, but few graduates, unless their program had operated for many years without an official designation. In other words, some of our more venerable programs were new on paper but not in practice. The years required to develop a successful program, by these metrics, was also born out by the fact that doctoral education was delivered by programs with senior faculty: 72 percent of the faculty assigned to the programs participating in our survey were ranked as associate or full professors.

To gauge how all reporting programs currently named their areas of study, we asked whether a program was a “minor emphasis,” a “major concentration,” or an “independent degree” within a department. To discover if doctoral education was migrating away from a departmental home, we asked whether programs were designated “autonomous” within a college or university or were self-defined as “interdisciplinary.” Though our respondents struggled with such a priori designations, they reported that at the time of the survey 85 percent of doctoral programs were affiliated with departments, mainly departments of English, with 15 percent of programs named and located outside of a departmental organization.

When we array the survey data geo-historically, plotting the inception points of programs by density of graduates, we can see that over the last forty years, doctoral education has clustered in the industrial northeast, certainly with productive centers dotting the South and Southwest, but without an encompassing national presence on all coasts and the intermountain West.⁹ Doctoral programs primarily developed first at state land-grant institutions, clustered around the upper Midwest, the industrial Great Lakes region, with key programs in Texas, California, and across the Southwest. Such geographical histories, as Jeremy Terrell has demonstrated, place doctoral education on multiple social and economic axes. As the population and economic concentrations swing from east to west, either a sizeable portion of the United States will be underserved, or our programs, whether new or old, will need to reflect the cultural and economic influences of coastal communities and the Pacific Rim. Our survey drew attention to a wave of newer and emerging programs that certainly were responsible to local stakeholders and the unique characteristics of their home institutions but that were also framed by post-industrial economies, by ethnic density and migration defining the West Coast, Southwest, and Southeast, or by epistemic casts that embraced a global distribution of information, mediation, and communication.¹⁰

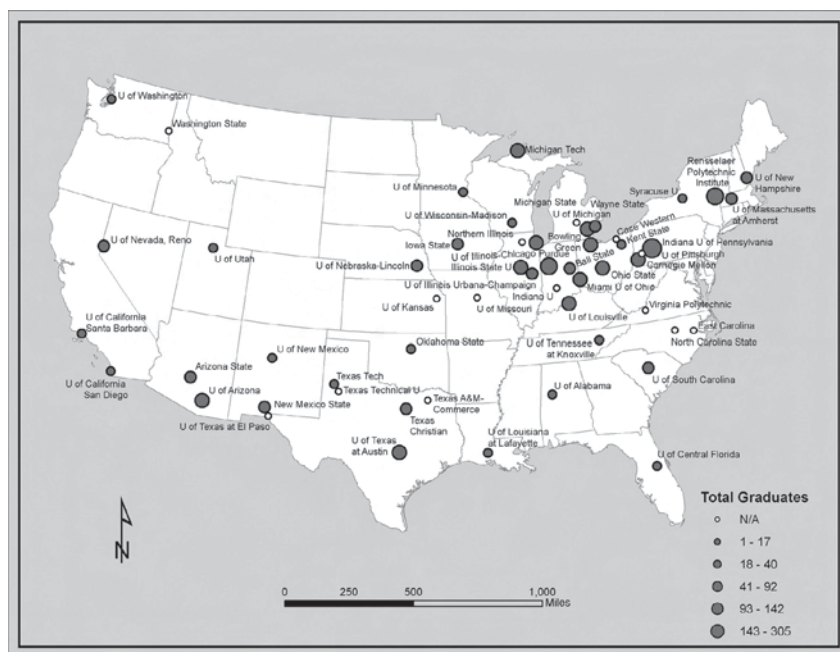


Figure 1. Regional density: Total graduates from 1965 to 2004.

The CIP Case

Because of their hidden interdependencies, codes lead to more codes.¹¹ Following success with the National Research Council's taxonomy, the next target for the Visibility Project was the annual Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED), whose federal sponsors are mainly in the sciences (National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, NASA, Department of Agriculture, Department of Education) except for the National Endowment for the Humanities. The data from the survey are fed into the Doctorate Records File, a database that goes back to 1920 and is the main source of national information on doctoral recipients. Without an SED category for the discipline, graduates and degrees in the field were not being tracked and counted as a group. Repeated requests for an SED code had gotten nowhere, but the doctoral consortium sent another query, hoping the new NRC code would make the difference. Instead, through some helpful officials, we found out that the field-of-study list for the SED was supposed to follow the federal Classification of Instructional Programs, and that

this taxonomy was due for revision in 2008. When we looked up the most recent (2000) CIP code, it was no surprise to find that the available titles and descriptions could not account for undergraduate and graduate programs in writing and rhetoric, including professional and technical communication, although some categories were a poor fit (inaccurate, outdated, mistitled, or misplaced in the taxonomy) rather than completely absent. For example, one code designated programs in “English composition” as focusing on “the principles of English vocabulary, grammar, morphology, syntax and semantics” (CIP 2000).

Further investigation revealed that the CIP code’s functions and uses for multiple stakeholders go far beyond its mandated purpose of facilitating “the organization, collection, and reporting of fields of study and program completions” (CIP 2010 1). As the federal government statistical standard for classifying instruction (and, by extension, fields of study), it has multiple users—federal and state agencies, academic institutions, disciplinary organizations, employment counseling services, foundations, and educational researchers, among others. It has a range of direct and indirect purposes we have yet to learn, but which certainly include informational surveys, comparisons, assessment, selection and eligibility of fields (for awards of grants, admission to programs, qualification for visas), and the construction of other databases. Within and across academic institutions, institutional researchers can apply the CIP code to categorize any kind of educational information (e.g., faculty or student demographics, student enrollments, faculty salaries, research productivity) and make intra- or inter-institutional comparisons. Taken in total, degree completions, reported through the CIP code filter for all U.S. institutions, paint an important statistical picture of the size and distribution of a given field. Importantly for the Visibility Project, the CIP taxonomy functions as the Ur-code for other educational codes, presumably because it is the most

With so much at stake in a taxonomy that would govern the next decade, representation in the CIP code became an urgent priority, not just for the doctoral programs of the consortium, but for the whole field.

comprehensive and frequently (annually) updated database for higher education degree programs, both undergraduate and graduate. Uses of the CIP code will undoubtedly be expanded and enhanced by access to a fully searchable electronic version of the CIP 2010 with new features, capabilities, and tools.

With so much at stake in a taxonomy that would govern the next decade, representation in the CIP code became an urgent priority, not just for the doctoral programs of the consortium, but for the whole field. When informed of this exigency, the CCCC Executive Committee appointed a task force to develop a

timely proposal for an array of codes to cover all undergraduate and graduate programs. It began work in January 2008.¹²

The 2010 CIP report quoted above, released in June 2009, documents the process and results of the recent review by the National Center for Education Statistics. (Implementation of the 2010 revised CIP code starts in fall 2010, affecting the reporting of degrees completed after July 1, 2009). The report makes the process and principles for decision making clear—but only in retrospect. In the case of the National Research Council, the review process had been relatively transparent, given that the NRC maintained a regularly updated public website with accessible process reports, schedules, rationale for methodology, and, eventually, postings on FAQs. We had opportunities, if infrequent, for direct access to the project staff. In contrast, the CIP code revision process implemented by the National Center for Education Statistics was extraordinarily opaque, even secretive. Efforts to communicate with NCES staff got the classic bureaucratic runaround. As we eventually learned from an NCES official, this stonewalling was deliberate. The agency had decided to change the process followed in the earlier CIP 2000 review to exclude disciplinary organizations (and other contentious stakeholders) from direct input to the process and to accept requests for changes only through “keyholders,” staff on campuses responsible for entering educational data annually into the federal system (IPEDS). As a concession, the task force was told that it could submit a detailed proposal indirectly, through a willing keyholder.

While this is not the place to recount the detective work and persistence this policy required of the task force, it is important to explain how it redefined the rhetorical situation we had initially anticipated. First, we had to persuade keyholders on our own seven campuses to serve as conduits for communication with NCES, not only for submitting the proposal and our later response to the draft code, but also for alerting us to announcements and details about process, schedule, and (eventually) the contents of the draft code, available only through a private website.¹³ The task force’s original plan of action had been to conduct its own research in order to develop proposed codes inductively from up-to-date knowledge of the range of current programs. But unexpected deadlines with very short time frames for each phase of the process meant the task force had to rely mainly on existing program lists and descriptions and institutional websites, updated as accurately as possible with the help of professional groups and consortia concerned with undergraduate majors, master’s programs, and doctoral programs. This information, while not comprehensive, proved sufficient both to guide our deliberations and to support our argument.

While keyholders were extremely helpful in channeling communications, they frankly admitted they had no special knowledge of the CIP code or audience for the proposal that would help the task force craft an argument. The best source of rhetorical insight was the 2000 CIP codes and the rationale its report offered for decisions made in that previous review. The task force studied the 2000 report to understand the taxonomy's purpose, values, principles, and rules, using existing codes as genre models for titles and descriptions. However, in explaining the rhetorical strategy in this case and the codes and descriptions that were ultimately approved by NCES, we refer to the 2010 report (largely consistent with the 2000 report, but more conservative about changes) that ultimately governed these decisions.¹⁴

An important principle of the task force was to account as carefully and fully as possible for the diversity of programs and the specializations or paradigms they represent across the spectrum of studies in composition, rhetoric, writing, literacy, and professional and technical communication. In contrast to the National Research Council taxonomy, which allowed only a single inclusive term for the field as a research discipline, the multilevel CIP, with its descriptive content as well as titles, accommodated and invited detailed differentiation in its categories.

Whereas the NRC taxonomy classifies areas of research, the CIP taxonomy classifies and describes instruction: specifically, degree and certificate programs. This difference in the codes represents two views of how to define disciplinarity and evidence for it, which, although potentially in tension, serve in this context as complementary routes to recognition, selectively highlighting different aspects of identity. The National Research Council, identifying disciplines with research communities, produces an explicit taxonomy of disciplines that treats disciplinarity as a function of doctoral production by those communities. The CIP taxonomy, by codifying instructional programs, indirectly defines disciplines as the "fields of study" or knowledge areas *taught* in the academy, either for the purposes of understanding (or contributing to) a knowledge domain or to prepare individuals for particular occupations. In order to aid classifiers (for example, registrars or state officials) in placing programs within categories, CIP codes provide not only a hierarchy of program groupings but also descriptions of instructional (i.e., disciplinary) content: topics, skills, research methods, and so on. Although both the National Research Council

An important principle of the task force was to account as carefully and fully as possible for the diversity of programs and the specializations or paradigms they represent across the spectrum of studies in composition, rhetoric, writing, literacy, and professional and technical communication.

and the National Center for Education Statistics aspire to account for the evolution of disciplines, the latter's CIP codes are probably more nimble in doing so because they must be able to capture data from all program completions annually. For this reason, an "other" category is built into each code series to accommodate new, unclassifiable programs.

The CIP codes map programs onto a hierarchy that groups similar programs at three levels of descriptions: a two-digit series, the most general; a four-digit series, an intermediate level; and a six-digit series, applied to specific programs. For example, a campus program in children's literature would be classified under 23.1405, which breaks down this way: the two-digit code 23 for English Language and Literature/Letters; the four-digit code 23.14 for Literature; and the six-digit code 23.1405 for the specific program—"Children's and Adolescent Literature." According to the CIP 2000 report, six-digit codes "are the basic unit of analysis used by NCES and other institutions in tracking and reporting program completions and fields of study data" (2).

Although CIP code levels aren't intended to correspond consistently to a hierarchy of disciplines, the two-digit level may conveniently be thought of as supradisciplinary (e.g., physical sciences, social sciences, multi- and interdisciplinary studies, education, engineering), often represented institutionally as a college. The four-digit summary level can be interpreted as a (macro-) discipline in the sense described earlier for the National Research Council taxonomy—still a broad grouping that can include highly diverse instructional programs. The six-digit level represents the concrete programs that represent well-established varieties and specializations of work within that broad field. A slash is used to recognize variants in naming at any level, whose use may indicate different concepts or paradigms at work in a field.

The task force, misunderstanding the generality of the top (two-digit) level, originally proposed a two-digit series for the field, "rhetoric and composition/writing studies," with accompanying four-digit and six-digit codes. Instead, it was placed under the series (23) "English Language and Literature/Letters" and granted a new four-digit series (23.13) for "Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies" parallel with "Literature" (23.14).¹⁵ This constitutes recognition of the field at the disciplinary level—a major breakthrough. In fact, NCES didn't add any two-digit series in the 2010 CIP, and 23 was one of the few series at the four-digit level that was reorganized. The field was also assigned four six-digit codes for classifying the different types of programs the task force had identified, largely following our suggested titles and descriptions (as amended in our response to the draft). These four included the "other" category (99),

always assigned to any four-digit series to classify new programs that don't fit within existing series. NCES also independently decided to move the code for "Creative Writing" from "Literature" to the 23.13 series.

Here is the complete set for the 23.13 series approved for the CIP 2010 (see the Appendix for descriptions for each six-digit code):

23.13 Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies

23.1301	Writing, General
23.1302	Creative Writing
23.1303	Professional, Technical, Business and Scientific Writing
23.1304	Rhetoric and Composition
23.1399	Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies, Other

Our argument was successful, despite the filters it had to go through, because the task force made a very simple but compelling appeal to the agency. The 2000 CIP report begins with this statement of the NCES mission:

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. It fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States; conduct and publish reports and specialized analyses of the meaning and significance of such statistics; assist state and local education agencies in improving their statistical systems; and review and report on education activities in foreign countries. NCES activities are designed to address high priority education data needs; provide consistent, reliable, and accurate indicators of education status and trends; and report timely, useful, and high quality data to the U.S. Department of Education, the states, other education policymakers, practitioners, data users, and the general public. (CIP 2000)

The absence of appropriate CIP codes and descriptions for rhetoric and composition/writing studies meant that the agency was failing its mandate to be comprehensive and accurate. It was undercounting and statistically misrepresenting a large body of programs, and (as the agency that set the standard for taxonomies of disciplines) it had missed the emergence of a new field of study. The agency had a strong motive for correcting such errors. In essence, the task force said, let us help you fix this problem. We will provide categories and descriptions so that you can find these programs, classify them properly, and count degree completions accurately.

Judging by the instructions to keyholders, it was not necessary (or, indeed, possible) to do such counting ourselves; the task force needed only to

exemplify a group of programs found at multiple institutions to fit each of the categories we proposed. According to the CIP 2010 report, NCES did extensive background research, using multiple data sources including a catalog scan of institutional websites, to identify new and emerging instructional programs; and later NCES researched each proposed title to see if it met criteria for inclusion. In general, to qualify for a code in the CIP, programs had to be offered by at least ten institutions (as documented by NCES researchers), with exceptions for rapidly growing areas (CIP 2010 4).

We also (although not encouraged to do so) offered descriptions for six-digit codes and explanations of how categories fit undergraduate or graduate programs. Fortunately, NCES accepted these descriptions as the basis for specifying the six-digit program codes. While NCES might well have located many of these programs and tried to modify categories to include them, we doubt they would have arrived at an outcome acceptable to stakeholders in the field, especially the descriptions. Unlike keyholders, we were able to speak authoritatively as representatives of the field with the specialized professional knowledge, within the collective of a CCCC task force, to characterize and group programs of study in the larger domain of the discipline. This ethos helped especially, we think, when we took strong exception to an outdated category and description (for “technical writing”) that had survived in the draft code, pointing to the evolution and contemporary content of programs in professional and technical communication.

We didn’t win all the battles. We infer that revisions by NCES were made primarily where the proposed language was expected to cause confusion (in searches) with another discipline, especially in a title. Thus “communication” was disallowed for professional and technical communication; “literacy and language studies” as alternate (slash) terms for “rhetoric and composition” (23.1304) were cut; and references to pedagogy and the teaching of writing in descriptions were reduced. In each case, though, the idea survived in alternate language or examples.

The final outcome was a set of codes that, in sharp contrast to the NRC case, which called for a unified, relatively stable identity centered on research and doctorate production, allows the field to express its dynamic multiple identities, capturing the variance and differentiation of the field as represented in its instructional programs, both general and specialized. As the “Other” code presumes, categories themselves, along with their descriptions (i.e., the knowledge content of the field) are expected to evolve in response to changes in the

learning environment, the needs of stakeholders, interdisciplinary dynamics, and advances in research and theory.

One implication we draw from the rhetorical situations and strategies of these cases is that to achieve recognition or visibility via particular codes, representing different stakeholders, purposes, and uses, disciplinary aggregates like ourselves must conceive and project identity in rhetorically fluid ways. Rather than essentialist descriptions of the discipline, each proposed code is an enthymematic argument that must incorporate the values of its layered audiences and anticipates a negotiated result, even while trying to assert vigorously the values and self-perceptions of those it tries

One implication we draw from the rhetorical situations and strategies of these cases is that to achieve recognition or visibility via particular codes, representing different stakeholders, purposes, and uses, disciplinary aggregates like ourselves must conceive and project identity in rhetorically fluid ways.

to represent. The results are imperfect and, from a purist perspective, tend to conceal, distort, overgeneralize, or incompletely represent the complexity of laminated, conflictual, and overlapping groups that, together, we claim as the “field.” These inadequacies can be partly compensated for by multiplying the codes and venues of representation so that, in toto, they offset each other’s limitations and constitute a more complete and satisfying portrait. More disturbingly, sometimes accommodating the purposes, rules, and implicit values of particular codes requires omissions and compromises that we may see as violating important principles or undermining the integrity of the field. For example, codes typically don’t recognize our pedagogy or “applied” work as topics or functions of a research discipline; and their hierarchical system of locating fields in one of the traditional divisions (sciences/social sciences, humanities, the professions) forces a false choice on a field whose modes and traditions include all three. But these are the same costs entailed in participating in the academy at all—the codes simply echo the broader features and values that we simultaneously accommodate to and resist in daily practice of professional life.

Consequences and Next Steps

Ours is a field that practices alterity; that is, across our self-narrative, our disciplinary identity has been imagined as oppositional to literary study (see Ianetta, this issue), or as an ancillary epistemological apparatus for traditional, long-established fields (e.g., writing in and across disciplines of the university), or as “basic” or preparatory to full disciplinary performance. While these

constructions suggest a sense of supplementarity or derivative identity, elsewhere the field is claimed to be ubiquitous, so that our field's twin engines of writing and rhetoric both operate simultaneously at the center and margins of all discursive formations (Gaonkar; cf. Miller). Meanwhile, debates about disciplinarity throughout the history of the field swing between the poles of unity and fragmentation, embracing the coalescence of a discipline from multidisciplinary sources or rejecting the very notion of discipline as a singular identity in favor of a postdisciplinary instability and multiplicity. All these views represent intellectual constructions within an internal conversation that presumes we have the luxury of arguing and settling matters of identity and disciplinarity among ourselves and then persuading others to accept our work in these terms. They are also strikingly non-empirical; for all our self-study and reflexivity, seldom do those arguing the nature of the field and its identity rest their claims on actual data. Indeed, as we discovered in trying to pursue these

The NRC and CIP codes revealed an activity system (silently governing much of our institutional lives) in which disciplinarity identity and viability depend on numbers, which are both produced through the use of codes and also reshape the codes themselves, when they are periodically revised to reflect current data.

two cases, there simply isn't any source within the field of comprehensive, accurate, accessible, up-to-date information about its activities and personnel.

The NRC and CIP codes revealed an activity system (silently governing much of our institutional lives) in which disciplinarity identity and viability depend on numbers, which are both produced through the

use of codes and also reshape the codes themselves, when they are periodically revised to reflect current data. Each, however, presented a different conception, or face, of disciplinarity in the data it highlighted, the uses it facilitated, and the consequentiality of a successful case for representation. The NRC taxonomy makers didn't value or even take note of internal constructions of the discipline, through its published scholarship or competing self-portrayals—for example, as a critical enterprise devoted to achieving social justice, or one organized by a relationship between theory and pedagogical practice. They simply took data about research-doctoral production in sustainable programs as an index of disciplinarity. The CIP case didn't add a supportive layer to the embodied narratives, told in our journals and books, of personal and political growth for teachers and students. Rather, the NCES researchers measured disciplinarity as a function of widely distributed instructional activity and described fields of study in terms of content taught in degree programs.

The outcome in the NRC case is primarily symbolic and lies in the validation of being included in the taxonomy as a field, rather than any practical consequences of being part of the just completed survey. (Recognition of the field was a precondition for doctoral programs to participate in the survey, but no guarantee of it.) Someone who learns to speak this discourse can now report that rhetoric and composition is recognized by the National Academies as an *emerging* discipline, and as such one that is comparable to other newly recognized fields of study. The National Academy of Science's taxonomy of fields and subfields, working from NRC categories, now lists "Rhetoric and Composition" as an emerging field among others in four epistemic domains: the life sciences; the physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering; the social and behavioral sciences; and the humanities (Research). Rhetoric and composition, therefore, by category is equally as emergent as fields such as "bioinformatics and biotechnology"; "information science, nanotechnology, and nuclear engineering"; "criminal justice, science and technology studies, and urban planning"; and "race, ethnicity, and post-colonial studies" in these domains. We do not confuse our epistemic or economic value as compared with other fields, but neither do we diminish the symbolic and strategic value of this comparison.

As a newly identified emerging field, our programs were eligible to participate in the NRC doctoral survey, although for purposes of data collection only, not assessment. Our exploitation of this opportunity was incomplete, however, because of multiple factors that prevented many programs from participating even after the consortium alerted them to the possibility. First, programs had to qualify by size and other criteria; many were too small or too new. Second, they had to be recognized as qualified by their campuses and allowed to report under the rubric of emerging fields. Many of the programs that were situated more or less ambiguously within another program or degree, or were simply identified on campus with "English" programs or departments, were unable to report independently even when qualified, because of misunderstandings of the NRC survey's procedures or resistance from departments or deans. This was the case despite efforts by the doctoral consortium, aided eventually by survey administrators, to clarify to campus personnel the survey's conditions for reporting emerging-field programs. However, the assessment methodology did allow for faculty who participated as members of any program or department to select "rhetoric and composition" (from a menu) as their primary research area. It will obviously take time for the recognition of the discipline in

the taxonomy itself to translate into campus inclusion of its programs in this or similar surveys (and some programs will remain too small or embedded to qualify). But it is clear that the emerging field designation carries substantial rhetorical weight with administrators.

Though there is much speculation on the future of the NRC doctoral assessments, such comparative metrics are becoming the lingua franca of institutional rankings. As we pass, presumably, from “emergent” to “established”

As we pass, presumably, from “emergent” to “established” field, we need to prepare for this (and similar) surveys in a variety of ways, from making programs visible on campuses and keeping good records on graduate education to educating faculty, program leaders, and graduate students across the field on the meaning, rewards, and risks of such competitive assessment (by no means an unmitigated good).

field, we need to prepare for this (and similar) surveys in a variety of ways, from making programs visible on campuses and keeping good records on graduate education to educating faculty, program leaders, and graduate students across the field on the

meaning, rewards, and risks of such competitive assessment (by no means an unmitigated good).

The CIP case presents a much more complex picture. Although it doesn’t carry the prestige of being listed in the NRC taxonomy of research disciplines, it may have even more widespread consequences because of its multiple uses and its influence on other codes. As we write, registrars, institutional research professionals, and staff in provosts’ offices—whoever has the responsibility on a given campus—are in the process of revising CIP codes for each institution’s programs to match the new CIP 2010, for purposes of reporting degree completions for IPEDS in fall 2010. According to one registrar with whom we talked, working back from next fall’s reporting dates, these changes should be made by or in September 2010. In listserv postings, we have urged members of the field to take the initiative to make sure that the new CIP codes are appropriately assigned or reassigned to programs offering degrees or certificates in rhetoric and composition, writing studies, and professional and technical communication.¹⁶ In the past, assigning CIP codes was on most campuses a routine process carried out by staff members and involved no consultation with faculty members in disciplines. On at least some campuses where members of the CCC task force cooperated with keyholders and others on the CIP case, these officials have begun to realize the significance of the codes to disciplines and are making plans to include department chairs and faculty representatives in decision-making processes, both for revisions and for code additions and

changes in the future. This is a development we should encourage and participate in as a field, especially where our faculty members' institutional authority (as tenured professors, department chairs, senate leaders, deans or provosts) allow them to make this case effectively.

Responsibilities for continuing and building on the Visibility Project need to be shared widely across the profession. Both the difficulties and successes of the project so far raise new issues that scholars, especially those with expertise in information networks and issues of identity and representation, need to take up critically. To accomplish these breakthroughs, we had to depend too heavily on inference and speculation. Investigative and analytical work is needed to explore the nature and extent of these and other codes, how they are interconnected, who uses them, for what purposes, and how both invisibility and potential visibility in information networks will affect us as individuals and in collectives like programs, departments, and professional organizations.

It is important to follow up these two cases now, both to implement and to capitalize on them. For any given taxonomy or database code, our work doesn't end when the discipline is literally recognized. Each has challenges of implementation and exploitation that may require proactive attention, including major components of education and communication, both within the profession and outside it, to bureaucracies and publics. And more codes await our intervention, each of them requiring a distinctive analysis and rhetorical approach, depending on its sponsors, audiences, uses, and basis for inclusion. We have, for example, yet to address effectively the problem of bibliographical access to the work of the field through scholarly databases and indexes, as these increasingly link users to digitally stored or created materials.

This work needs to be taken up by professional organizations that can bring to it resources (staff, funding), communication channels to their membership and to various publics, access to those who shape policy and control funding for higher education, and symbolic power as representatives of their members. One outcome of the work of the CCCC Task Force on Composition and Rhetoric Databases was the formation of a new CCCC Committee on Professional Visibility and Databases, appointed by the Executive Committee and chaired by Helen Foster. It is charged to identify other governmental and nongovernmental taxonomies and public databases that influence how the field is recognized and evaluated and to take steps to ensure that the field is represented in these with appropriate codes and data. It is also expected to coordinate such efforts with other professional organizations with overlapping interests. CCCC and NCTE have already been engaged in communications

concerning representation in the taxonomy used by the Survey of Earned Doctorates, setting the stage for the new committee to tackle this code (again) when it next undergoes revision in fall 2011.

On the other hand, faculty bear a number of responsibilities on their own campuses, beyond the work they do within their professional organizations. Besides attempting to inform and persuade administrators at their own campuses or in state systems about such successes and their implications or implementation (as in the NRC and CIP cases), they have a primary obligation to educate future generations in the field about the nature and implications of information networks for the discipline. Even while enrolled in programs, both undergraduate and graduate, students are called upon to provide information for assessments (e.g., the NRC doctoral survey just conducted; institutional program assessment, which might include interviews or focus groups; and accreditation). If they apply for grants as students or young faculty members, they will need to choose a code from a list provided by an agency or foundation. Upon graduation, PhD students themselves, usually (in the current system) without faculty guidance or even awareness, select codes to categorize their dissertations (the Survey of Earned Doctorates, Dissertation Abstracts). Upon publishing a book, young faculty will find that it will be assigned codes by publishers and libraries. If anything, codes and databases that categorize their work and influence its reception will continue to proliferate in the age of information networks and new media. Clearly, the professional demeanor required in the new century will include fluencies in the institutional literacy and numeracy (and their visual counterparts) that plot a field's vitality and contribute to its spatial relevance. Curricula and professional development in the future must not only teach these fluencies as performative skills or knowledge about the network of codes we have uncovered but also foster critical examination of their operations and consequences and facilitate debates about their risks and potential.

The Visibility Project compelled us to view ourselves as we appear (or don't appear) in images of disciplinarity that are entirely databased, drawn in and through a network of codes that differentially select information to portray, compare, and facilitate evaluation of disciplines. Where this image was distorted or simply missing in particular codes, we were handicapped by having no adequate, independent sources of information to correct the distortions or fill in the gap, except what we were able to generate or assemble for the project, and had to resort otherwise to our own intuitions and experiential knowledge. Herein lies one lesson of these cases: it is important as a field to generate and

control our own data, beginning at the program and department level, where faculty keep (often incomplete and partial) records and conduct their own assessment of students and perhaps graduates. We have an opportunity at this level to ensure the accuracy of information about the field that flows from programs and departments to the institution, the state, and the federal government, where the information is shared with many stakeholders.

Herein lies one lesson of these cases: it is important as a field to generate and control our own data, beginning at the program and department level, where faculty keep (often incomplete and partial) records and conduct their own assessment of students and perhaps graduates.

We may also be able to intervene to shape the questions or kinds of information gathered for institutional assessment.

Across the profession, independent of institutional records and assessment, we need through professional organizations to gather, compile, analyze, and represent (graphically as well as verbally) the information we want to know about the field and to store it in databases that don't depend on a heroic individual to maintain them. Our organizations should collaboratively develop and support Web-based networks of information and communication channels that make such data accessible to members of the field and allow us to take concerted action where necessary and to find efficient ways to update them systematically so that portrayals of the discipline can keep up with accelerated change. Through such research, we can ask questions informed by disciplinary knowledge (that outsiders wouldn't ask); make better-supported claims and predictions about the development, structure, locations, threats, and opportunities of the field; and make more informed choices and decisions. NCTE has recently begun to take up the responsibility of supporting such research and constructing databases for the field, as part of the CCCC Research Initiative. CCCC will award a grant this year for analysis of the data collected in the new CCCC Professional Database, in conjunction with other national datasets.¹⁷ These efforts might be thought of broadly as developing a "digital strategy" for the profession, pursued through organizational action as well as the scholarly and practical work of faculty members enacting roles as scholars, educators, and administrators.¹⁸

The steps taken and results achieved in the NRC and CIP cases illustrate radically different enactments of disciplinarity than we are accustomed to. The disciplinary engagements we describe here are "post-humanist" in their symbolic order and cultural enactments; they are defined by numerical codes, categorical tallies, secretive decision processes, mysterious key-holders, massive

governmental assessments, and production metrics, all of which lend credence to Foucault's accounts of the rise of "governmentality" in our epoch. The disciplinary practices illustrated here reveal our entrainments in the apparatus of bio-power, which for Agamben secures our role in the long history of secular and religious economies (*dispositio*). The conclusion he draws in his essay "What Is An Apparatus?" may well be ours. We must work harder to comprehend and to measure the dimensions and mechanisms of "pure" government in order to define and promote the "profane" or those moments when we intervene in our own subjectification (23–25). We want to be able to promote the identity of our field through the good works of teachers and writers, but we must do so simultaneously and with ample reflection upon our mastery of the tools of intradisciplinary comparison and the statistical and geographic trappings of the institutional apparatus we historically have worked to deconstruct.

Not only are we inevitably embroiled in this new arena, but we also propose that we engage it aggressively. In doing so we may extend the peripheral vision of the field and perhaps with this acuity extend our institutional and societal capacities. Composition, rhetoric, and writing studies may do more than merely survive in a century defined by information management and new economic models; we may thrive. The NRC data provide evidence for both the depth and

Composition, rhetoric, and writing studies may do more than merely survive in a century defined by information management and new economic models; we may thrive.

breadth of the field insofar as doctoral education is a powerful index for disciplinary status; we now operate with production rates for at least thirty institutions equal to sustaining disciplines, with an additive base of over forty smaller or newer programs that may produce

more slowly but otherwise provide a national presence. The CIP codes offer a different lens, one of adaptability and change, that provides a way to demarcate the expansive territory of instructional curricula in writing and rhetoric, moving historically from the initial focus on developing doctorates to the rise of independent master's programs (spreading, but still under the radar) and, now, a rapidly growing undergraduate presence. The rewards of engaging in this game are visceral, as they are tangible.

The NRC and CIP cases expose the relative (in)stability of all academic disciplines in a time when information, technology, bioengineering, and new social ontologies that sponsor multi-axial identities are ascending in prominence. Our field has achieved disciplinary recognition in a time when disciplines themselves are under considerable duress due to systems of global flows of information, people, and capital (Castells). We grew to prominence as

a practical art and a “reflexive project” (Phelps) at the historical juncture when traditional disciplines are “disunifying” (Knorr-Cetina 2) under the pressures of global “machineries of knowledge production” and dissemination. How our field will grow and adapt will depend, at least in part, upon the enlistment of data that help us to engage more forcefully with institutional and government policies that feed the entrepreneurial hunger of a global information economy.

Appendix: 2010 CIP Codes: Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies

Series 23: ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE/LETTERS

Series 23:13 Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies

23.1301 Writing, General.

A program that focuses on writing for applied and liberal arts purposes. Includes instruction in writing and document design in multiple genres, modes, and media; writing technologies; research, evaluation, and use of information; editing and publishing; theories and processes of composing; rhetorical theories, traditions, and analysis; communication across audiences, contexts, and cultures; and practical applications for professional, technical, organizational, academic, and public settings.

Illustrative Examples: English Composition; Writing

23.1302 Creative Writing

A program that focuses on the process and techniques of original composition in various literary forms such as the short story, poetry, the novel, and others. Includes instruction in technical and editorial skills, criticism, and the marketing of finished manuscripts.

23.1303 Professional, Technical, Business, and Scientific Writing

A program that focuses on professional, technical, business, and scientific writing; and that prepares individuals for academic positions or for professional careers as writers, editors, researchers, and related careers in business, government, non-profits, and the professions. Includes instruction in theories of rhetoric, writing, and digital literacy; document design, production, and management; visual rhetoric and multimedia composition; documentation development; usability testing; web writing; and publishing in print and electronic media.

Illustrative Examples: Biomedical Writing; Medical Writing; Professional, Technical, and Scientific Writing/Communication

23.1304 Rhetoric and Composition

A program that focuses on the humanistic and scientific study of rhetoric, composition, literacy, and language/linguistic theories and their practical and pedagogical applications. Includes instruction in historical and contemporary rhetoric/composition

theories; composition and criticism of written, visual, and mixed-media texts; analysis of literacy practices in cultural and cross-cultural contexts; and writing program administration.

Illustrative Examples: Rhetoric and Writing; Rhetoric and Writing Studies; Rhetoric and Composition

23.1399 Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies, Other.

Any instructional program in rhetoric and composition/writing studies not listed above.

Notes

1. The doctoral consortium was founded in 1993 to reenergize efforts to encourage, support, and expand research in the field by shifting their locus from the Research Network to an association of doctoral programs, conceived as centers for scholarship and concentrations of faculty. Through communication and collaboration among doctoral programs, faculty, and graduate students, and through networking with stakeholders, the consortium intended to “enhance research capabilities, dissemination of scholarly work, and visibility for the work of scholars in Rhetoric and Composition and for the field as a research discipline” (http://www.cws.illinois.edu/rc_consortium/). The doctoral consortium advocated and supported the subsequent formation of parallel consortia at the master’s and undergraduate levels, with liaison arrangements for communication among them. Their collaboration became vital when the Visibility Project expanded beyond doctoral education, in the second case (CIP) described here.

2. The importance of obtaining this code became evident when the publisher of Dissertation Abstracts International, University Microfilms, evolved into Proquest, a company that provides digital information storage and access to libraries and other customers worldwide, including archiving of most dissertations in a searchable online database. However, the field is not making optimal use of its indexing function by categorizing dissertations consistently, requesting that pre-1996 dissertations be recategorized, and educating students about selecting the subject category and an array of keywords.

3. These reviews appear to be increasingly difficult to fund and to manage, and there are signs that agencies like these will move to an alternative system of updating other than conducting a deep, comprehensive, and expensive research project. NCES had already limited the scope and depth of the CIP code research project in comparison to the 2000 review. While new technologies allow better access, search capabilities, and frequent updating of data, it is unclear whether such means will suffice to revise the codes any more nimbly or frequently than the current methods, perhaps less so. These uncertainties made us feel the urgency of breaking through the barrier of invisibility now.

4. At the time of this writing, the results of the NRC doctoral study have not been published, but an explanation of the new, complex methodology for rankings was released in July 2009 (Ostriker et al). For a view of mixed reactions to the methodology and value of the rankings, as well as some sense of their importance at a time of budget constraints, see Jaschik.

5. The consortium's proposal to the NRC is available in full on the website of the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition (http://www.cws.illinois.edu/rc_consortium/).

6. The final methodology report confirmed exclusion of education disciplines; they will be studied separately by the American Education Research Association.

7. Instructions on the NRC website evolved to address FAQs. Partly in response to concerns that the consortium raised about listing programs that were called "tracks" or "concentrations" within broader degrees, such as "PhD in English," the NRC provided the following clarification. (Note this applies only to programs that met qualitative and quantitative criteria for listing.)

Emerging Fields. Some fields are listed in this category because they are sometimes offered through stand-alone programs or are sometimes programs that are included as part of another larger field. *Institutions are requested to report programs in emerging fields regardless of whether or not they are included in another program.* If it is a separate program, respondents will be asked to indicate whether it is a stand-alone program or not. Institutions will also be asked to list the number of doctoral faculty members associated with the program and the number of students enrolled in it. Emerging fields will not be included in the ratings process. (emphasis in original)

8. The survey was designed collaboratively by John Ackerman, Louise Wetherbee Phelps, and Dennis Lynch. It was administered and analyzed by John Ackerman and Holly Wells (both then at Kent State University) with support from the Department of English at KSU.

9. A PowerPoint presentation entitled "Plotting the Growth: Rhetoric and Composition" is available at the consortium website (http://www.cws.illinois.edu/rc_consortium/). It summarizes the survey and represents the geographical history of the field with implications for future surveys.

10. The survey provided a snapshot of doctoral programs in 2005, along with some historical information about their development. Five years after the study, it should not be taken as a description of the current state of affairs, much less of future directions. Changes are observable but not thoroughly documented. We know that higher education is suffering from the financial losses of the recession, but the net impact on our doctoral programs is uncertain. We surmise that retirements are changing the ratio of senior to junior faculty in many departments, in a generational transi-

tion. Anecdotally, the number of independent units housing faculty or graduate (and undergraduate) programs in writing and rhetoric seems to be increasing. We don't know how the number of graduates is affected by the maturation of young programs, the development of new ones, the fading or revival of older ones; or how doctoral production matches the available jobs in today's economy.

11. These code interdependencies structurally enforce the condition of invisibility—an important reason for continuing to trace the fact and influence of other codes. The National Research Council consults the Doctorate Records File (updated through the Survey of Earned Doctorates) as a starting point for revising its taxonomy; the SED depends on the CIP; and so on. Although each does independent research to find new categories and programs, over the last ten years they managed to miss the flowering of doctoral programs with over six hundred graduates, the development of undergraduate majors, and over forty years of research production in composition, writing studies, and rhetoric.

12. Members of the task force were Linda Ferreira-Buckley, Kay Halasek, Gail Hawisher, Douglas Hesse, Krista Ratcliffe, David Russell, and Louise Wetherbee Phelps, chair. One dimension of the convoluted process for this case was an early effort to coordinate with other organizations inside and outside the field. The CIP case was discussed in a 2007 workshop on "Improving the Status of Rhetoric Studies" at the Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute, co-chaired by David Zarefsky and Louise Wetherbee Phelps and attended by representatives from composition studies, English, and communication. One outcome of the discussion was to recommend appointment of parallel task forces by CCCC and the National Communication Association, in the hope of coordinating proposals to NCES, and with the specific intention of highlighting the interdisciplinarity of rhetoric in the CIP code. Representatives from the two task forces met jointly in January 2008, but ultimately, in part because of unexpected early deadlines, the NCA group decided not to submit a proposal and declined an invitation to participate in a joint proposal for an interdisciplinary code for rhetoric. Similarly, plans for working with the Modern Language Association, whose executive committee had endorsed the NRC proposal, were shelved for lack of time and relevance (once we understood that professional organizations had no status or role in the process).

13. Fortunately, keyholders at the campuses of task force members were extremely cooperative and helpful. We particularly appreciate the support of Timothy Lally, institutional research analyst at Syracuse University, and Gebre H. Tesfagiorgis, director of institutional research at Iowa State University.

14. The entire 2010 CIP code is published electronically on an enhanced CIP User website with good browsing and search functions (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cip2010>).

15. The subcode titles originally proposed by the task force were “Writing, General”; “Professional, Technical, and Scientific Writing/Communication”; “Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy/Language Studies”; and “Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies, Other.” The task force wrote the following description for the proposed two-digit category “rhetoric and composition/writing studies”: “Instructional programs that focus on the production and use of writing and multimodal texts; literacy practices across contexts and media; writing development and composition pedagogy; and arts, theories, histories, and social practices of rhetoric.” This was not used because four-digit series have no description—they are specified by the six-digit codes.

16. We have been unable to determine how “tracks” that function effectively as majors will be counted in reporting IPEDS data (in particular, degree completions) under the new CIP code. Such decisions appear to be governed by local custom or perhaps statewide practices rather than a rule or widely shared understanding across institutions. Who makes these decisions also varies from campus to campus. The answer will depend on how a particular campus defines a degree in relation to designations like “major,” “BA in xxx,” “track,” “concentration,” and so on.

17. In April 2008, the CCCC Executive Committee passed a motion to “devote 5% of the contingency reserve in FY 09 to establish a core descriptive database that can serve as a resource for all future CCCC-funding research projects,” as part of the CCCC Research Initiative to “advance scholarship in composition and rhetoric and enhance the reputation of CCCC.” An initial core for the database has been built using data collected about writing programs, writing instruction, and writing faculty by Ann Ruggles Gere and the NCTE Squire Office of Policy Research in a survey of CCCC members. (For the results, see <http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/CCCC/InitialReportSurveyCCCCMembers.pdf>.) As described in the call for proposals for this year’s grant, CCCC hopes to “combine and leverage . . . multiple efforts” to collect and analyze data for the field, with the goal of “challeng[ing] our membership to find the potential of the data and come up with smart methods to draw meaningful conclusions from the data” that would allow the organization to speak authoritatively on matters of concern to the field” (<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/awards/researchinitiative>).

18. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently profiled Paolo U. Mangiafico, appointed by Duke University as a “director of digital information strategy.” He describes the work of a digital strategist as “trying to get a better understanding of what the changing needs are, and methods of scholarship in a digital age, and how we produce information, and how we manage it, how to share it, how we preserve it. And to inspire technology planners to adopt approaches that are holistic and have a long-term view” (qtd. in Parry). Our professional organizations can promote and support the work of their members who, as scholars, must study, adapt to, and

innovate in the production, communication, and use of digital information and who, as teachers, must both prepare and learn from the next generation of digitally informed faculty.

Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. "What Is an Apparatus?" *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*. Trans. David Kishik. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2009. 1–14. Print.
- Brint, Steven. "The Rise of the Practical Arts." *The Future of the City of Intellect: The Changing American University*. Ed. Steven Brint. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2002. 231–59. Print.
- Castells, Manuel. "The Space of Flows." *Rethinking Technology: A Reader in Architectural Theory*. Ed. William W. Braham and Jonathan A. Hale. London: Routledge, 2007. 440–56. Print.
- CIP [Classification of Instructional Programs]—2000. *The Integrated Post-secondary Education System (IPEDS)*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Web. 26 June 2009.
- CIP [Classification of Instructional Programs]—2010. *The Integrated Post-secondary Education System (IPEDS)*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Web. 1 July 2010.
- Cohen, Anthony P. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Routledge, 1985. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. "Security, Territory, and Population." *Michel Foucault, Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: New P, 1997. 67–71. Print.
- Gaonkar, Dilip. "Rhetoric and Its Double: Reflections on the Rhetorical Turn in the Human Sciences." *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory*. Ed. John Lucaites, Celeste Condit, and Sally Caudill. New York: Guilford, 1999. 194–212. Print.
- Goggin, Maureen. *Authoring a Discipline: Scholarly Journals and the Post-World War II Emergence of Rhetoric and Composition*. Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2000. Print.
- Jaschik, Scott. "How Ph.D. Programs Will Be Judged." *Inside Higher Education* 10 July 2009. Web. 26 Nov. 2009.
- Knorr-Cetina, Karin. *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999. Print.
- Mailloux, Steven. *Disciplinary Identities: Rhetorical Paths of English, Speech and Composition*. New York: MLA, 2006. Print.
- Miller, Carolyn. "Should We Name the Tools? Concealing and Revealing the Art of Rhetoric." *The Public Work of Rhetoric: Citizen-Scholars and Civic Engagement*. Ed. John Ackerman and David Coogan. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, in press. Print.
- Ostriker, Jeremiah P., et al., eds. *A Guide to the Methodology of the National Research Council Assessment of Doctorate Programs*. Committee to Assess Research-Doctorate Programs. National Research Council, 2009. National Academies P. Web. 20 Jan. 2010.
- Ostriker, Jeremiah P., and Charlotte Kuh, eds. *Assessing Research-Doctorate Programs: A Methodology Study*. National Research Council, 2003. National Academies P. Web. 20 Jan. 2010.
- Parry, Marc. "How to Prepare Your College for an Uncertain Digital Future."

- Chronicle of Higher Education* 13 Dec. 2009. Web. 15 Dec. 2009.
- Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. *Composition as a Human Science*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. Print.
- Research Doctorate Programs. "Taxonomy of Fields and Their Subfields." National Academy of Sciences, 2009. Web. 25 Sept. 2009.
- Scott, Patrick. "Bibliographical Resources and Problems." *An Introduction to Composition Studies*. Ed. Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate. New York: Oxford UP, 72–93. Print.
- Terrill, Jeremy. Mapping a Geographical History of Digital Technology in Rhetoric and Composition. Mapping Digital Technology. Web. 12 Oct. 2009.

Louise Wetherbee Phelps

Louise Wetherbee Phelps is Emeritus Professor of Writing and Rhetoric at Syracuse University and Visiting Scholar of Rhetoric and Writing at Old Dominion University. Her publications include *Composition as a Human Science*; *Feminine Principles and Women's Experience in American Composition and Rhetoric*; and *Composition in Four Keys*, as well as numerous essays on topics in composition, rhetoric, doctoral education, and writing program administration. Recently she has coordinated professional initiatives to include rhetoric and composition/writing studies in classification systems used in scholarly and governmental databases.

John M. Ackerman

John M. Ackerman is an associate professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder and the Ineva Baldwin Chair of Arts and Sciences. He directs the Program for Writing and Rhetoric and holds a faculty position in the Department of Communication. *The Public Work of Rhetoric: Citizen-Scholars and Civic Engagement* (co-edited with David Coogan) will be published in fall 2010 by the University of South Carolina Press.