



a journal of first-year writing

**Historical and
Institutional Literacy
Sponsors: A Love Story**
ADRIEN PITCHMAN

**Through a Microscope, Darkly:
Students' Perceptions of
What Scientific
Communication Is and
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**Personality and Its Effects on
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LATRICE STIRRUP

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From the Editor

Where does writing go? That's a question that, sitting in your first-year writing class, you've quite possibly pondered, and it's the question we're taking up with this issue of *Stylus*. You spend hours researching, planning, drafting, and revising, but for what exactly? The four pieces published here provide four very different answers to this question. I hope you'll find them useful as you reflect on how your own writing moves and travels.

First up is Adrien Pitchman's, "Historical and Institutional Literacy Sponsors: A Love Story." Many of you reading this will likely encounter or have already encountered Deborah Brandt's landmark essay on literacy and literacy acquisition, "Sponsors of Literacy." I won't summarize that article here (though I encourage you to read it if you haven't), but know that Pitchman's essay builds directly off of this very important work. His essay, then, is a good model of what contributive research can actually look like. More than that, though, Pitchman pushes readers to consider literacies beyond reading and writing. By focusing on his literate development in relation to acting, Pitchman creates a compelling case for how individuals, institutions, and histories collide in the process of one person's learning. While not all of us may have experience with theater, Pitchman asks us to consider the broader contexts in which we develop as learners.

Dylan Lanser's research provides a similarly personal research topic, but demonstrates a very different—though no less meaningful—sort of approach and research. "Through a Microscope, Darkly: Students' Perceptions of What Scientific Communication Is and What It Achieves" is the culmination of Lanser's semester-long research into how STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and non-STEM majors perceive the role of communication in science. Lanser's work demonstrates the new insights that can come when different disciplines share knowledge and ideas: by connecting previous research from Writing Studies with his own interest in the sciences, Lanser is able to consider and answer questions that will help him in his future work in his own major. His findings and conclusions about the rhetoric of science and audience's role in the scientific process, however, extend beyond that and have implications for all of us.

Next is Lindsay Schmit's "Personality and Its Effects on Facebook and Self-Disclosure." Like Lanser, Schmit developed her research over the course of an entire semester, but her methods are quite different. As you read her article, pay attention to how she identified a meaningful gap in the ongoing research conversation and then developed research methods to help her fill this gap. If you're a regular Facebook user, you might be surprised by some of her results.

The final piece published in this issue might look very different from the other essays we've published, but the research and writing that went into it is no less impressive. Latrice Stirrup's "The Effects of Double Consciousness" takes the form of a documentary, allowing her to directly (and literally) add her voice and the voices of her family members to the ongoing conversation about race and identity in America. A video might seem like a surprising endpoint for a writing class, but,

as you watch, consider the sorts of writing and research that went into the creation of this documentary. These might take the form of “smaller” or unseen genres like interview questions, research notes, release forms, and scripts in addition to more formal, written drafts. Stirrup discusses some of these in the writer’s statement that accompanies her documentary.

These writer’s statements are a new feature for the journal, but we hope that they’ll provide some sense of both the context in which the writer was working and how his or her writing process developed. Not surprisingly, none of these projects sprang up overnight. Seeing how they evolved over time might provide some inspiration as you engage in your own projects in ENC1101 or ENC1102. This is also the chance to hear these student writers talking directly about their own work.

I hope that, by the time you finish reading this issue of *Stylus*, you’ll see that writing can indeed go quite a few places. It’s not only an endpoint; rather, writing coordinates and surrounds all of our work and research. And, while what we end up doing with our research and thinking on a particular subject might look very different from one person or situation to the next, all of you are capable of making meaningful contributions to ongoing conversations that are important to both you as an individual and also larger communities.

-Matt Bryan