Welcome to New Orleans—like no place else in the world. The city where the Mississippi meets the Carribbean has a unique history and culture. It has been a generative force in music and the arts, and now New Orleans represents unique connotations and challenges to contemporary U.S. society, politics, and conscience. This meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, addressing the theme of “Writing Realities, Changing Realities,” will face the complex realities of New Orleans head on—the trauma, the betrayals, the joy, and the continuing spirit. And we will be asked to consider what role writing takes in making places habitable and joyous—how writing by confronting reality helps us make the realities we would want to live in.

We have many panels about addressing the needs of students and communities in the devastated region and its diaspora. We have many panels discussing how writing and writing education addresses social inequality, racism, poverty, environmental crisis. We have an unprecedented number of panels on civic and community engagement, on writing and rhetoric in the public sphere, and on current research. The courses and programs being reported on show engagement with the economic, social, and technological realities of our times and the students of our times. The policies and professional matters of our organization are also getting a hard look as we contemplate how we can address the important role of writing in our global information and knowledge-based age. We have plenty to say to each other on these important matters.

We have also arranged for a few people outside our field to enrich our realities. We will hear many voices from New Orleans: the Neighborhood Story Project, the writers of the Nine Times Social Club, New Orleans Spoken Word and Slam Poets, the Greater New Orleans Writing Project’s Katrina Archive, and the Surviving Katrina and Rita in Houston Project. We will hear from Dr. Marvalene Hughes, the president of Dillard University, which has struggled back from being entirely destroyed by floods. She can tell you about the sacrifices to be made for education. We will also hear from the City Editor of The New Orleans Times-Picayune, Jed Horne, who was in the center of reporting the events and aftermath, and the feature columnist, Chris Rose. We will hear from Dan Baum, who has reported the events in New Orleans for The New Yorker. Telling us about inscribing the largest international realities will be

**Greetings from the 2008 PROGRAM CHAIR**

*Charles Bazerman*
University of California
Santa Barbara

*Suzie Null*
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the Bedford speaker, noted *New Yorker* journalist Seymour Hersh, who broke the stories on My Lai, Abu Ghraib, and other shameful realities our government has wanted to keep hidden.

We have also brought in eminent scholars from other fields to let us know about important writing research from other disciplines. Writing, as we know, is powerful and transformative. It is not surprising that people in other fields should be recognizing this: the archeologist and art historian Denise Schmandt-Bessarat, who has uncovered compelling stories about the origins of writing; psychologist James Pennebaker, who has documented the significant medical impacts of trauma writing; feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith, who has unpacked how writing makes for privilege and exclusion in our documentary society; and educational psychologist Charles MacArthur, who is providing evidence for the importance of explicit writing education from the earliest years of schooling.

The members of the C’s know how to have a good time wherever we go . . . with our dances, parties, dinners, pub crawls, excursions, and just meeting dear friends, there is no better place than New Orleans to let the good times roll! Our hard-working and creative local arrangements team, headed up by our local arrangements committee and its chair T. R. Johnson, know all the ins and outs of the city and will share them with you in the guide to New Orleans they have put together. They have also arranged for music to accompany our every syncopated step. Keep your ears open. The New Orleans Neighborhood Story Project has arranged a community tour and fundraiser for Saturday morning, and New Orleans Outreach has arranged a benefit Poetry Slam on the Tulane campus for those of you staying Saturday night.

Crime, unfortunately, is one of the continuing realities of New Orleans. The French Quarter is well-patrolled and as safe as any urban area can be. Restaurants, clubs, entertainments are open and thriving. Music is everywhere, and you can have a great time. The rest of the city is uneven, as I am sure you have heard on the media. If you are leaving the Quarter, make sure you check out the safety of where you are going and know your route. Don’t travel alone. Be especially cautious after dark. There are parts of the city that as of this writing are still very troubled.

But, as you know, despite hard times, New Orleans is a fantastic place to be. The music will be twice as sweet, the dancing twice as hot, the food twice as spicy, because life is to be enjoyed twice as much. You look at what you got and then you add the pepper.

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University of California, Santa Barbara
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