



2014 CCCC Exemplar Award Winner



Gail E. Hawisher
University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign



Cynthia L. Selfe
The Ohio State
University, Columbus

2014 Award Committee: Dora Ramirez-Dhoore, Michael Day, Cecilia Rodriguez Milanés, Sondra Perl, and Duane Roen

In recent decades, scholarship in the field of composition and rhetoric has been shaped by remarkable collaborations between innovative teachers and researchers. The collaborative team of Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe has influenced the present and future of our discipline more than any other individual or collaborative team. As Bruce Horner and Min-Zhan Lu stated, “Cindy and Gail have often been credited, and rightfully so, for having enabled the ‘birth’ of digital media and writing and its increasingly central role in the workings of rhetoric and composition.” Art Young and Donna Reiss give understanding to their contribution: “As if they could see the future, Cindy and Gail recognized early the importance of personal computers and the Internet to writers and their teachers. Among the earliest proponents of computers in the composition classroom, Cindy and Gail saw that ‘word processing’ offered students an opportunity to experiment with language, to engage their learning processes as well as their writing processes and products, and to explore rhetorical choices until they discovered an appropriate purpose, audience, voice, and style, discovering in the act of writing the most effective sentence or just the right word to express themselves.”

It is notable that as co-editors of the groundbreaking journal *Computers and Composition* and authors/co-authors of countless books and articles, print and digital, this collaborative team has led our field (sometimes kicking and screaming!) into the 21st century, a period marked by a transition for writers and teachers of writing, to digitally-mediated forms of written communication. Hawisher and Selfe have co-authored many books together that have changed the field of composition, rhetoric, literacy, and computers. Most recently, their “born-digital book,” *Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times*, coauthored with Patrick W. Berry through Utah State University Press in 2012, won the 2013 CCCC Advancement of Knowledge Award and the 2013 CCCC Research Impact Award. Of Hawisher and Selfe’s other work, Patrick Berry states, “Their 2004 *Literate Lives in the Information Age: Narratives of Literacy in the United States* offered a useful method for studying ecologies of literacy in an increasingly digital age and also dem-

onstrated the value of allowing participants to serve as coauthors. They extended this concept further in the award-winning 2013 born digital *Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times* by encouraging coauthors to express themselves through digital media.”

Through their efforts at national conferences such as the CCCC and Computers and Writing, as well as in local and individual consultations and focus groups such as Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms (CIWIC) and Digital Media and Composition (DMAC), they have mentored thousands of graduate students, contingent faculty, and tenure track faculty at all stages of their careers, offering support, advice, and a helping hand to generations of our colleagues. Their consistent mentoring feeds into their teaching. Hawisher and Selfe are innovative and engaged teachers who constantly remind their students and colleagues about the importance of diversity and the political/ social dimensions of the work we do in composition studies. Paul Prior and Kristin Blair speak of the reciprocal relationship Gail and Cynthia have in honoring “those who have mentored them and who have in turn shaped the discipline.” They state that “rather than hoard the cultural capital that comes through their international reputations, they have extended recognition to their many grateful colleagues. Similarly, at the international level, Gail and Cindy have consistently worked to ensure that we ‘pay attention’ to the material and cultural conditions that enable and constrain technological access among diverse international populations and thus better understand that contemporary discussions of digital literacy mandate a global perspective.”

Lastly, they have generously served NCTE/CCCC and other national efforts, as well as local committees at their respective institutions, providing vision and innovation in contexts ranging from department affairs to international endeavors: in short, they have done the “heavy lifting” of our discipline and their local institutions. Hawisher and Selfe have significantly changed the way teacher/scholars of writing theorize and teach composition and communication through their steadfast attention to and interrogation of digital media. They have made substantial contributions to the field and embody the qualities one looks for in Exemplars: care, commitment, generosity, and insight, to name only a few. Therefore, CCCC honors Gail E. Hawisher, Professor Emeritus of English and University Distinguished Scholar/Teacher at the University of Illinois, Urbana, and Cynthia L. Selfe, Humanities Distinguished Professor in the Department of English at The Ohio State University, with its most prestigious honor, the 2014 Exemplar Award for their forward-looking work and the democratic spirit in which they model and practice collaboration.

