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How Rhetoric and Composition Described and Defined New Media at the Start of the Twenty-First Century

In this article, I argue that new media is defined and situated within two distinct scholarly conversations (*composing in contemporary society* and *composing in academia*) and has varied definitions supporting arguments made within these overarching conversations. Discussions of new media contribute to rhetoric and composition's twenty-first-century *composing frameworks*.

Dene Grigar opens her “What New Media Offers” with an anecdote: “a new member of the group asked what new media offers rhetoric. ‘Why,’ this person queried, ‘do rhetoricians pursue new media? Isn’t rhetoric essentially a word-centered discipline?’”(214). Grigar’s answer to this question was twofold: first, craft a course around the question to explore it in more detail and, second, claim “from the standpoint of postmodern, postcolonial, transdisciplinary thinking, [the answer is] a new way of seeing, a new way of defining, a new way of knowing—of *loving text*” (216). Conversations in our published research afford rhetoric and composition scholars new ways

of defining and knowing text. Through concepts of new media, scholars in the field identify, examine, and understand contemporary genres of text. Critically examining discussions of new media in rhetoric and composition scholarship highlights the ways the field's scholars prioritize composing frameworks and the contextual applications of those frameworks. In published articles discussing new media, rhetoric and composition scholars frame conversations about new media by examining what constitutes writing, and they explain the field's focus on *how* and *why* we use contemporary technologies to compose.

In this study, I expand Grigar's answer to the question "Why do rhetoricians pursue new media?" (214). I argue scholars have framed issues of new media as integral to the field: new media is a logical pursuit for rhetoricians once the field's stakeholders recognize new media as writing; such assertions have been made in a straightforward manner in the new millennium's first decade, 2000–2010. Ready answers to questions of what new media has to do with rhetoric and composition exist and are easy to find, yet scholars often frame issues of new media as issues of relevancy because composition occurring in contemporary society (both within and outside of academic settings) depends on the production of and interaction with new media texts.

In a keynote address at the 2005 Computers and Writing Conference (later published in *Computers and Composition*), Andrea Lunsford calls writing "an active performance" and claims, "Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, [...] and crescendoing in the last two decades [1990s and 2000s], the arts and crafts associated with the fifth canon have moved to the center of our discipline" (170). In 2005, Lunsford pressed the discipline for expanded notions of multimodal composition, but today questions of multimodality's (and new media's) fit in the discipline are still raised (WIDE; Cushman 64). Such questions occur in department meetings, classrooms, hiring discussions, and even reviewer feedback.

Although well-known scholars such as Lunsford explain the need to study, understand, teach, and create multimodal and new media texts, others still feel these texts are only for members of the computers and writing subfield—but as Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes claim, "our students' compositional landscape has changed," (7) and so has our own: we daily struggle with, interact with, engage with new written genres. Thoughtful scholars and teachers work toward understanding these genres,

using them, creating them; even if “alphabetic writing and textual production should still be taught” and are central to our discipline, “our students’ increasing personal engagement with multimedia technologies, as well as the steady adoption of multimedia in the classroom, challenges the primacy of alphabetic writing in how we communicate” (Alexander and Rhodes 7). Indeed, Claire Lauer demonstrates just how badly our students need this work in her article “Expertise with New/Multi/Modal/Visual/Digital/Media Technologies Desired: Tracing Composition’s Evolving Relationship with Technology through the *MLA JIL*.” Lauer shows that *MLA JIL* positions calling for expertise with at least one of the seventeen key words “that referenced technology or new composing skills and practices” grew to 20% of the *JIL* by the 2011–2012 list (63). Clearly, at 20% of the positions on the *JIL*, departments (and, arguably, the institutions that approved the lines) understand the need to teach these content areas. As Claire Lutkewitte states, “In order for our pedagogy to succeed, we must be willing to build an environment in which it can thrive” (7), and expertise in new media contributes to building such an environment.

Because of the direction popular writing is taking, discussions of new media have been increasingly prevalent in our scholarship; along with this prevalence comes a need to more thoroughly understand what constitutes new media. Elizabeth Birr Moje calls for “an archaeological expedition to excavate and explicate several necessary distinctions in the study of new and multiple media and literacies” (349). She acknowledges the lack of consensus in regard to these key terms and suggests scholars codify the distinctions. By expanding on Grigar’s discussion of why new media is important to composition, I begin Moje’s envisioned excavation. By analyzing how scholars frame issues of new media and related modes of composition, I articulate a definition of how new media has become an integral branch on the disciplinary tree.

“Why Do Rhetoricians Pursue New Media?”

In order to better answer this question—“Why do rhetoricians pursue new media?”—I examine how rhetoric and composition scholars frame issues of new media and define new media in published research. I examine how definitions of and conversations about new media impact rhetoric and composition studies. I show that how we frame and define new media as writing solidifies the importance of rhetoric and composition to both

academic and popular writing. I argue our work on new media revolves around maintaining our position within the university, especially when that position necessarily relies on interdisciplinarity. Just as the term *new media* is frequently redefined, so the field is redefined with each new paradigm or century. Defining new media contributes to the field's self-definitions.

I argue that defining the discipline as a discipline that studies, uses, and teaches new media is a *socially timely* definition of composition and rhetoric. I further argue that, for rhetoric and composition, new media is tied to multimodality and digital composition, marking the first decade of the twenty-first century as one in which writing has become *more than* print-linguistic. I argue a reliance on multimodality and digital composition suggests composition scholars associate new media with two prevalent (though sometimes conflicting) means of composing in the contemporary field and creates a venue for relevancy to other communities (both academic and popular). New media is a way for composition scholars to engage their students, their academic communities, and popular society, securing the field's relevancy in technology-saturated societies.

Writing from 2000 to 2010

The first decade of a new millennium is a tone-setting decade. The years 2000–2010 set the tone for composition and rhetoric in the twenty-first century because this decade was rife with what-ifs: what might writing be like in the future; how can we push our students to engage in digital technologies; and what are the technological possibilities in classrooms and workplaces? The first ten years of the century demonstrate our knowledge in a tech-saturated, tech-evolving society. Work such as Lauer's "What's in a Name?" demonstrates scholars' familiarity with and representations of various writing technologies terms: "*new/multi/modal/digital/media texts*" (Lauer, "What's"; emphasis in original). She says, "When I thought about the term *new media*, I immediately thought of *Cheryl Ball* and *Anne Wysocki*," who have become known for their interest in and work with new media ("What's"; emphasis in original). Ball's and Wysocki's iconic works were published between 2000 and 2010, and Lauer's own research was undertaken "in May of 2007" and continued throughout 2010. Additionally, her work on the *MLA JIL* demonstrates the shifting needs of the field in terms of hiring scholars and instructors with special knowledge of such digital literacies at the start of the century (Lauer, "Expertise" 63–65). With so much inter-

est in and scholarship about new media during 2000–2010, this decade is a useful starting point for exploring new media's position in the discipline.

New media is a slippery term, and its definitions are many, but several baseline definitions framed the early 2000s, including definitions of multimodality. With such varied definitions, understanding the distinctions between modes, media, and new media is crucial to our disciplinary conversations and knowledge building. Though modes, media, and new media are often conflated terms, they maintain distinct attributes.

Multimodality is linked with multiliteracies, and theories of multiliteracies suggest that literacy is semiotic and not limited to print-linguistic modes of social meaning making. In “Contending with Terms,” Lauer makes a compelling argument for the use of the term *multimodal* in rhetoric and composition studies, claiming that the emphasis on the word *mode* suggests *the process* of design, while arguing that the term *media* has more to do with *the product* of design (227–28). When composition scholars take up the term *multimodal* instead of the more frequently used industry term *multimedia*, the emphasis moves away from the end product or means of distribution (the media employed: book, film, website) and toward the process of designing and composing the piece.

Bump Halbritter also distinguishes between multimodality and media. He uses the term “*integrated media* where you may otherwise expect to read the term multimedia” or multimodal (318; emphasis in original). He uses *integrated media* to foreground the composing process. He claims integrated media emphasizes “individual modes and senses” as a way to “[spotlight] the process of creating the product more than the product itself” (318). Halbritter’s discussion reiterates composition’s focus on rhetorical modes of construction and the process of crafting communication while using all available modes to (in Halbritter’s case) integrate those modes into a unified rhetorical construct.

In contemporary rhetoric and composition studies, although there is a difference between the terms and a reason *modes* is sometimes preferred to *media*, the terms are often used seemingly interchangeably even though the distinction between process of design and channels of dissemination is disciplinarily useful (Lauer, “What’s”). Although multimodal writing is about designing texts by utilizing various modes of writing (image, audio, print-linguistic text, video, hypertext), it isn’t always digital: sometimes it’s physical, like the portfolios and *OED* assignments Jody Shipka’s students

construct (279). One student creates a portfolio from a large blue gift bag containing eleven numbered gift boxes (279). Another student completes the *OED* assignments using an interactive standardized testing scenario with various types of mirrors, shifting readers' lenses and making the test even more difficult (293–95). These projects are multimodal, not digital. Yet, multimodality helps the field describe multimedia writing—the final product created after authors have composed using multiple modes or multiple, already-finished media (such as those media used for visual/aural mash-ups) using the modularity principle Lev Manovich describes (30). New media is the typical digital outcome of multimodal composition: writers use various modes to craft an argument; the final product is usually a media text (composed of other discrete media) and disseminated in digital media form.

When distinctions are made between these related terms (*modes*, *modalities*, *multimodality*, *literacies*, *multiliteracies*, *media*, and *multimedia*), the distinctions are often based on the purpose of the writing (scholarly, theoretical, practical, pedagogical) or the genre (print-linguistic, audio essay, or artistic mash-up on YouTube). For my purposes, new media refers to social semiotic iterations crafted, distributed, exhibited, and accessed via digital means. This definition relies on Manovich's five principles of new media (numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding) (27–48), as well as other definitions circulating in rhetoric and composition studies—namely, Wysocki's and Cynthia Selfe's definitions. Wysocki says:

I desire to define (finally) new media differently from how the term as been defined in other places. I think *we should call “new media texts” those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who then highlight the materiality: such composers design texts that help readers/consumers/viewers stay alert to how any text—like its composers and readers—doesn’t function independently of how it is made and in what contexts. Such composers design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they embody.* (Wysocki et al. 15: emphasis in original)

On the other hand, Selfe defines new media as “texts created primarily in digital environments, composed in multiple media (e.g., film, video, audio, among others), and designed for presentation and exchange in digital venues” (Wysocki et al. 43).

The three definitions provided by Manovich, Wysocki, and Selfe are preliminary definitions of new media meant to give readers context for my analysis: these definitions are not agreed upon by the field—nor were they published in peer-reviewed journals—but these definitions do offer starting points. Because they are starting points taken up throughout the published literature from 2000 to 2010 in composition and rhetoric scholarship, they demonstrate key areas of disciplinary knowledge. As Edward Schiappa notes, definitions are always rhetorical, always contextualized, always evoked for the needs of a particular audience (3). These definitions, then, undergird the needs of the composition audience and set a tone for the discipline's contextual knowledge of new media at the start of the century. As such, they are particularly important for the purview of this study.

Additionally, just as Lauer “immediately thought of [. . .] Anne Wysocki” when she “thought about the term *new media*” (“What’s”; emphasis in original), I, too, have long associated this term with Wysocki. Wysocki’s edited collection *Writing New Media* is a staple in the field. Wysocki’s definition is the first offered in the collection, so it is likely new media novices will find her definition first, allowing it to inform their own thoughts about new media. Unlike Manovich’s definition, which is technical and relies heavily on both media and digital technology terminology, Wysocki’s definition focuses new media on rhetorical foundations, connecting with an audience through modalities that reinforce the argument. Her definition is a composition and rhetoric disciplinary definition, clearly demonstrating how new media applies to the discipline and can be utilized by all members of the discipline. While Wysocki’s focus on argumentative materialities opens doors to scholars and teachers who may be uncomfortable with digital writing, especially new media, Manovich’s definition may scare novice scholars and teachers away from new media due to its technicality. His definition is not a definition for composition and rhetoric writ large, but it is an appropriate definition for members of the computers and writing subfield because of its narrowness and focus on the technical, digital elements of new media.

Selfe’s definition, though, is the most approachable and is more appealing to a wider array of rhetoric and compositionists. Published in the same book as Wysocki’s, Selfe’s definition of new media presents a middle ground. While it has some technical attributes (being crafted via and for digital platforms) (Wysocki et al. 43), Selfe’s definition draws on multimodal writing and her familiarity with digital composition. In regard to research,

writing, and teaching, her definition is easy to understand and easy to implement, especially for digital writing novices.

Methodology and Methods: Studying Framing Conversations about and Definitions of New Media

For the purposes of this study, I consider rhetoric and composition an intellectual discipline encompassing the following: ancient to modern rhetoric, composition pedagogy and the theory of college composition, how writers write, and situated writing in public, private, and school (both public and private) settings.

In order to understand how rhetoric and composition uses, defines, and frames issues of new media and the discipline from 2000 to 2010, I ask two guiding research questions (thus also answering the question, “why do rhetoricians pursue new media?”):

1. In what ways do scholars frame discussions of new media within rhetoric and composition studies from 2000 to 2010?
2. How do scholars define new media from 2000 to 2010 in published scholarship?

I identified methods that would help me answer my research questions in ways that made sense for my particular epistemological foundations and expectations, including empirical, mixed-methods, and RAD (replicable, aggregable, and data-driven) research (Haswell 201). I frame my project in historical methods in composition by drawing on Robert Connors’s “Dreams and Play.” Connors urges researchers to consider the question “Does this interpretation of the historical data seem coherent, reliable, interesting, and useful?” (231). Connors’s question pushed me toward Haswell’s idea of RAD research (201).

Because my research questions require different analytic frameworks and processes, I use two distinct analyses. For both analyses, I draw from the same corpus of primary sources: I analyze 70 peer-reviewed journal articles concerned with and defining new media. All 70 articles were published during 2000–2010. Maureen Daly Goggin explains the role journal articles have played in understanding the growth of rhetoric and composition:

[J]ournals serve as an important locus of disciplinary power, shaping the discipline even as they are shaped by it. [...] Moreover, of all the disciplinary

discursive spaces [...], journals have played one of the most important roles in fostering the field of rhetoric and composition. (225)

Goggin argues that the discipline's journals are its gatekeepers by virtue of what they publish (222–25). As disciplinary gatekeepers, journals are an effective means of examining disciplinary knowledge and the evolution of the discipline's conceptual work. Further, Susan P. MacDonald claims, "one way to probe assumptions and values in a profession is to examine the discourse of its professional conferences and publications" (588). Peer-reviewed journals are integral to the development of disciplines; therefore, important journals in the field are logical starting points to answer the research questions. I review articles for discussions and definitions of new media in four peer-reviewed journals in rhetoric and composition: *College Composition and Communication* (CCC), *Research in the Teaching of English* (RTE), *Computers and Composition* (C & C), and *Kairos*.

In order to see what conversations about and definitions of new media look like in the field, I turned to two journals that publish across composition and rhetoric's diffuse spectrum of research questions and objects. I use CCC and RTE because they are foundational to the discipline and publish across various questions, objects, and methods; they house all subfields under one roof. For example, in CCC's February 2015 issue, topics cover everything from archives and undergraduate research to writing program/major design to current-traditionalist composition paradigms. The February 2015 issue of RTE covers topics from software, ESL translation, and dialogic teaching to literacy education and written representations of African American identity. These journals represent the breadth of the overarching field, but because they represent such breadth, they do not afford scholars as much opportunity to engage in conversations about new media. Therefore, it is also necessary to explore how conversations about new media are framed within the subfield where they are likely to occur: computers and writing.

Although the subfield of computers and writing is necessarily concerned with the study of writing, writing programs, and writing pedagogy, it addresses the concerns of the broader field through the lens of digital technologies, making the subfield more focused and less diffuse than the overarching field. Because the subfield is more concerned with issues of new media than the overarching field, the subfield accounts for more of the

data in this study's corpus. Work on new media is more likely to appear in journals that focus on questions about areas where new media might occur. For example, the overarching field might have scholarship about composition classrooms that privilege rhetorical analysis while the subfield might discuss this same scholarship in terms of rhetorical analysis of digital and new media texts specifically.

C & C and *Kairos* have been foundational to the subfield of computers and writing. In fact, *C & C* is the longest running journal particularly devoted to computers and writing. Initially a newsletter edited by Kathleen Kiefer and Cynthia L. Selfe in 1983, the publication became a peer-reviewed journal in 1985, long before the catchphrase *digital humanities* caught traction ("Brief"). According to its website, the journal is

devoted to exploring the use of computers in composition classes, programs, and scholarly projects. It provides teachers and scholars a forum for discussing issues connected to computer use. The journal also offers information about integrating digital composing environments into writing programs. ("*Computers*")

The journal specifically focuses on contemporary writing technologies and publishes scholarship in print essay genres (*C & C Online*—the affiliated online, digital journal—does publish nontraditional and new media scholarship, but *C & C Online* was not investigated for this study).

Kairos is a particularly interesting journal for this project because the journal, active since 1995, specifically publishes "scholarship that examines digital and multimodal composing practices, *promoting work that enacts* its scholarly argument through rhetorical and innovative uses of *new media*" ("What"; emphasis added). This journal does something unique: it encourages scholars to publish scholarship about new media in new media formats. The fact that *Kairos* has served the discipline since the mid-1990s demonstrates the need for new modes of expressing scholarship and implementing the scholarship the subfield argues is important. If scholars only ever *wrote* about new media or digital writing without ever *producing* new media and digital writing, the credibility of the subfield would substantially decrease for both disciplinary insiders and outsiders.

After identifying four journals in the field where discussions of new media might arise—journals where both the overarching field and the subfield are represented—I narrowed the corpus to articles relevant to

the framing and defining of new media within the field. I used an initial method similar to Mark Faust and Mark Dressman's process of data collection for their article "The Other Tradition." Faust and Dressman describe a process of "title and content" skimming for "each issue" of *English Journal* (115), draw on Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm L. Strauss's "Grounded Theory," and identify several categories of conversations about poetry within the scholarship (115–17). I follow a similar method to compile and analyze my data set. By examining article titles, abstracts, and key terms including new media, multimodality/multiple modes, modes, digital, digital rhetoric, visual rhetoric, online, Internet, and any mention of software, I located 179 potential articles for analysis. When I reviewed the articles for these key terms, 11 preliminary categories emerged. Because of my interest in definitions and scholarly conversations incorporating concepts of new media, I narrowed the corpus to articles fitting into one of three most pertinent categories that would help me answer my research questions: 1) "article is about media, digital modes, and remediation," 2) "contextualized argument using new media scholarship," and 3) "article key term 'new media.'" The results of this narrowing process left me with 70 articles published in *CCC*, *RTE*, *C & C*, and *Kairos* between 2000 and 2010.

To answer my first research question (In what ways do scholars frame discussions of new media within the rhetoric and composition studies from 2000 to 2010?), I approached the data through an inductive content analysis, which Keith Grant-Davie describes as "the process of identifying units of analysis and classifying each unit according to the categories in a coding system," where an *inductive analysis* is a coding system "developed for the data in question" (274). I also drew on content analysis. According to Thomas Huckin,

content analysis allows the [...] analyst to examine each of the texts in a corpus and discern thematic patterns that extend across texts. [...] In contrast to traditional (quantitative) content analysis, [...] qualitative content analysis uses a less mechanical, more interpretive procedure without statistical modeling. The result is a compilation of subtopics found in the corpus as a whole, representing thematic threads that run across the corpus. ("Textual" 356)

In a later piece, Huckin, adds:

Content analysis is the identifying, quantifying, and analyzing of specific words, phrases, concepts, or other observable semantic data in a text or body

of texts with the aim of uncovering some underlying thematic or rhetorical pattern running through these texts. ("Content"14)

Huckin's description is just one way of identifying salient patterns. Rebecca Moore Howard further explains the necessity of using empirical methods in her piece "Why This Humanist Codes," in which she writes: "Whatever value close reading may have in the study of literature [...] it is interpretive, individualistic, and not replicable" (76). Howard pushes those who study student writing to develop more reliable, valid methods of understanding and describing their findings. I take up her call to answer my research questions. Two aspects of content analysis inform my research: the quantitative aspect that helps identify and quantify specific words or phrases and the qualitative approach of identifying overarching trends. I further draw on Corbin and Strauss's notions of grounded theory by using both superficial (minor) categories and deeper (major) categories to better understand new media's position in the field (*Basics* 50–51) (see Table 1). In order to ensure a reliable analysis, an inter-rater helped me determine reliability: our reliability was 86% (agreement percentage) or 0.8 (agreement kappa), described as "very good" (agreement level).¹

I used a similar inductive analysis to answer my second research question: How do scholars define new media from 2000 to 2010 in published scholarship? In order to understand how scholars define new media in the discipline, I analyzed actual definitions in the published, peer-reviewed scholarship: not all of the articles in the corpus included definitions of new media, and some articles included multiple definitions. I collected each definition from the original corpus, and these definitions composed my source material for the second analysis. For the purposes of this study, a definition of new media consists of a statement in which an author describes new media with either explicit use of the term *new media* or reference to it through some other means (referent pronouns or use of other related terms such as *digital composition, media, remediation*) coupled with a definitional verb (especially *defines*), a "to be" verb (*is, are*), or an active, argumentative verb (e.g., *explain, suggest, attribute*). Definitions, then, are statements about new media that suggest what its characteristics are, who it affects, the position it maintains in the discipline, or even what earlier scholars have said about it. The inter-rater and I had a simple agreement percentage of 87%, with a kappa of 0.8: the strength of this agreement is

“very good.” The inter-rater and I were satisfied with this degree of reliability in the coding scheme.

Results

My inductive analysis resulted in the following findings: scholars in the field frame issues of new media in seven minor categories of conversations, three major categories of conversations, and two overarching, framing conversations (see Table 1 below). The two overarching, framing conversations are nearly halved in the corpus: framing conversations about *composing in contemporary society* make up 52% of the corpus (36 articles) while framing conversations about *composing in academia* account for 48% of the corpus (20 articles).

Composing in contemporary society demonstrates where new media fulfills popular needs and is composed of four minor conversations. *Digital texts* is a minor conversation represented by works such as Wysocki’s

Table 1. Results of the Inductive Analysis of Issues of New Media

Overarching framing conversation	Major conversation	Minor conversation	Number of articles	Percentage of the corpus
<i>Composing in contemporary society</i>	<i>Composing in contemporary society</i>	Digital texts	15	22%
		Foundational knowledge	14	20%
		Composing technology	5	7%
		Community and literacy	2	3%
Total			36	52%
<i>Composing in academia</i>	Composing in the university	Classroom context	12	17%
		Institutional context	8	11%
	Total		20	28%
	Composing in the discipline	Issues about/defining modern and traditional concepts of composing	14	20%
	Total		14	20%
Total			34	48%

“Impossibly Distinct,” which focuses on CD-ROMS with digital, rhetorical constructs. *Foundational knowledge* conversations are represented by Michele Shauf’s “The Problem of Electronic Argument,” which defines a grammar for electronic writing. Wysocki’s “It is Not Only Ours” represents *composing technology* because of its attention to “structures for designing, producing, distributing, sharing, and consuming texts” (284). *Community and literacy* conversations highlight how communities use new media literacies, evidenced by Glenda Hull’s review of youth’s “multi-media compositions” (229).

Composing in the university, which suggests how new media is used in higher education, is composed of two minor conversations. Rebecca Wilson Lundin’s “Teaching with Wikis” represents *classroom context* conversations by situating new media practices within the classroom, while Dànielle De-Voss, Ellen Cushman, and Jeff T. Grabill’s “Infrastructure and Composing” situates new media within *institutional contexts*.

Finally, scholars also have conversations about *composing in the discipline*, which emphasizes disciplinary knowledge and knowledge building (such as this article). This conversation is further represented by Mary E. Hocks’s “Understanding Visual Rhetoric in Digital Writing.”

To analyze new media definitions, I coded each definition for content. Keeping in mind my criteria that definitions are statements about new media suggesting its characteristics, who it affects, its disciplinary positions, or what others have said about it, I identified 68 definitions in 28 corpus articles. Six codes emerged from the definitions: *new media is digital composition* (27%); *new media is multimodal* (27%); *new media is interactive* (4%); *new media breaks from print traditions* (23%); *new media is crucial for the development of the discipline* (12%); and *new media is a concept originating in other fields of study* (7%) (see Table 2). Ultimately, 58% of the definitions are practice-driven (associated with how new media might be implemented in communities and classrooms and dealing with how new media is actually produced), and 42% are concept-driven (associated with the theory of new media and its position in our disciplinary knowledge). Key examples of each definitional category are found in Table 3.

Table 2. Results of the Inductive Analysis of New Media Definitions

Definition type	Definition category	Description	Key words	Number in corpus	Percentage in corpus
Practice driven	New media is digital composition	Digital composition and digital environments are highlighted by linking the word <i>digital</i> with <i>new media</i> or by linking new media with digital writing technologies: software, computer systems/languages, networks, hypertext, on- and off-line programs. Texts may be multimodal, but the <i>digital</i> nature is emphasized.	Digital, software, computer systems and languages, networks, hypertext, on- and off-line programs	18	27%
	New media is multimodal	The multimodal nature of new media is emphasized (digital or print) and described as hypersensitive to the rhetorical situation and materiality. This definition emphasizes both the process of composition and the final product.	Combine, blend, multi, integrate, mode	18	27%
	New media is interactive	Audience participation or interactions is a defining mode and characteristic of new media and the new media rhetorical situation.	Audience, interaction, participation	3	4%
Total				39	58%
Concept Driven	New media breaks from print traditions	New media texts rely on remediation and the reworking of previous literate practices through a clear break or shift away from established print traditions. New hardware is required to create new media (computers, CPUs, projectors, cameras).	Linearity, movement, shift, trace, learns from, builds, remediates, transforms, progresses	16	23%

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Table 2. Continued

Definition type	Definition category	Description	Key words	Number in corpus	Percentage in corpus
	New media is crucial for the development of the discipline	New media is a fitting topic for both scholarship and classrooms. The rhetoric and composition community is emphasized along with suggestions for faculty professional development. New media is a challenge to classroom structures.	Faculty, classroom, curriculum, assessment	8	12%
	New media is a concept originating in other disciplines	Authors do not craft a definition of new media; instead, authors offer another scholar's definition from a separate discipline.	Quotations, paraphrases	5	7%
Total				29	42%

Table 3. Examples of New Media Definitions in Composition and Rhetoric Scholarship

Definition category	Example
New media is digital	Flash is the ultimate new media design program, arguing that for some, Flash "has come to represent new media in general" (Sorapure 413).
New media is multimodal	"The discussion of visual rhetoric has helped us envision new possibilities for composing in new media. An ongoing discussion of aural rhetoric may allow us to hear new possibilities as well" (Kitchens 333).
New media breaks from print traditions	"[N]ew media ... break away from print traditions" (Ball 403).
New media is crucial for the development of the discipline	"We have long taught new media technologies ... in our classrooms" (DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill 28).
New media is a concept originating in other disciplines	"In <i>The Language of New Media</i> , [Manovich] identified..." (McKee 338).
New media is interactive	"New media culture is less resonant with interpretation than with engagement" (Rickert and Salvo 296).

Analyzing Conversations and Definitions: Shaping Disciplinary Knowledge and Use of New Media

By first reviewing conversations about new media and then exploring the ways scholars define new media, I have situated rhetoric and composition's scholarship on new media within two distinct areas: the types of conversations in which it is appropriate to discuss new media (conversational categories) and the ways that we understand new media when we read about it and discuss it (definitional categories).

The ways scholars frame new media issues suggest knowledge of new media is assumed; seven distinct conversational categories of new media discussions show new media has become a concrete though diverse part of our disciplinary knowledge. Discussions of new media focus on *digital texts, composing technologies, foundational knowledge, community and literacy, issues about/defining modern and traditional concepts of composing, classroom contexts, and institutional contexts*. These seven minor categories of conversations contribute to three major categories of conversations: *composing in contemporary society, composing in the university, and composing in the discipline*. From these three major categories emerge two overarching conversations framing issues of new media: *composing in contemporary society* and *composing in academia*. Further, scholars are likely to define new media through different types of arguments, including *new media is digital, new media is multimodal, new media is interactive, new media breaks from print traditions, new media is a concept originating in other disciplines, or new media is a necessary concept for disciplinary and professional development*. In this way, arguments about new media belong to certain conversations that shape the field's literature about and knowledge of new media. By presenting arguments about new media, scholars contribute to these same conversations even as they seek to (re)define new media, allowing scholars to argue for new media's integration into composition and rhetoric. In this section, I further explore the connection between conversations framing issues of new media and scholars' definitions of new media.

By presenting arguments about new media, scholars contribute to these same conversations even as they seek to (re)define new media, allowing scholars to argue for new media's integration into composition and rhetoric.

That scholars discuss *composing frameworks* suggests that, during 2000–2010, scholars are interested in the ways social contexts and composing technologies influence writers and writing. If we think about *composing frameworks* as a set of tools that tell composition and rhetoric scholars

If we think about *composing frameworks* as a set of tools that tell composition and rhetoric scholars how to understand what writing is, then the published work about new media suggests scholars are preoccupied with not just types of writing or the teaching of writing but all the tools and social contexts surrounding how texts are produced and used.

how to understand what writing is, then the published work about new media suggests scholars are preoccupied with not just types of writing or the teaching of writing but all the tools and social contexts surrounding how texts are produced and used. In answer to my first research question, then, the *composing frameworks* of composition and rhetoric contain new media from two perspectives: as issues about *composing in contemporary society* and as issues about *composing in academia*. These two types of conversations demonstrate how scholars

think about composition: during 2000–2010, new media is a composing framework.

Composing in contemporary society is a conversation with the potential to expand the field's *composing frameworks* into digital realms and by capitalizing on digital community literacy events. Likewise, conversations about *composing in academia* afford scholars opportunities to discuss what role new media plays in their institutional work: from first-year college writing assignments to tenure requirements, scholars explain new media's relevance to academic and institutional communities. These larger communities might be encouraged to more thoroughly investigate the composing frameworks of the discipline that incorporate new media and encourage new media's role within the community to be more clearly defined, especially when curricular requirements or academic contributions are being assessed.

Understanding how scholars have defined new media for composition and rhetoric illuminates why scholars *continue to define* new media: these definitions are part of ongoing conversations that help the field relate to other communities (both academic and nonacademic). Scholars' new media definitions help construct the roles new media plays in the field. Just as scholars predominantly discuss new media as a framework for *composing in contemporary society*, they most often define new media as *practice driven*

and useable for contemporary communities. *Practice-driven* definitions are most prevalent in discussions of how new media is created, used, and practiced in the field. The discipline relies heavily on *practice-driven* definitions.

On the other hand, when scholars employ definitions of new media to understand how new media functions theoretically, their definitions are *concept driven* and align more closely with conversations about *composing in academia*. *Concept-driven* definitions of new media pertain directly to the status of the discipline and the theoretical underpinnings of new media texts.

Various new media definitions contribute to conversations about *composing in contemporary society*. For example, when scholars argue *new media is digital*, their arguments focus on *digital texts* and *composing technologies*, making such arguments integral to discussions of *composing in contemporary society*. *Composing in contemporary society* is a type of conversation populated with articles about *digital texts*, *composing technologies*, *foundational knowledge*, and *issues of community literacies*. Arguments connecting new media to digital composition are situated within conversations about *composing in contemporary society*. That *new media breaks from print traditions* is another argument scholars make within discussions about *composing in contemporary society*.

Similarly, when scholars argue *new media is multimodal*, they engage in discussions about *composing in the discipline* and about *composing in academia*. Arguments about new media and multimodality are central to this conversational category. When scholars argue about new media's multimodal nature, they bring up issues about what it means to *write* and to *compose*. When defined as multimodal, new media challenges traditional notions of writing and texts. *Multimodality* is a key word associated with *composing in the discipline* because when scholars argue for the inclusion of multiple modes of writing, they (re)define *composition*. Arguments that *new media is interactive* contribute to scholarly conversations about *composing in the discipline*. *Interactivity* is another key word used to suggest what counts as writing.

Additionally, arguing that *new media is interactive* ties definitions of writing to rhetorical principles where audience is key. When scholars make arguments about new media *originating in other disciplines* or being *necessary for disciplinary and professional development*, their arguments contribute to discussions about *composing in the university*. These arguments

are institutional arguments: they examine the activities that sustain the discipline (scholarship, teaching, and relationships with other disciplines). When scholars argue *new media is a necessary concept for disciplinary and professional development*, they account for the discipline's status in the academic community, what it means to be a member of the disciplinary community, and what it means to teach composition in the university. When scholars argue *new media is a concept originating in other disciplines*, they refer to rhetoric and composition's relationships with other disciplines (especially communications, media, art, and

Most arguments about new media are part of the subfield more than they are a part of the overarching discipline, suggesting new media is not a defining characteristic of the discipline but certainly an element of the discipline's evolution and knowledge base.

film studies), and they draw on these relationships to bolster composition and rhetoric as a distinct field of study or as an interdisciplinary field of study with strong ties across the university.

Although my previous analyses show new media's relationship to digital composition and multimodality, they also show that new media has not been rigorously theorized by the discipline (only 42% of new media definitions offer *concept-driven* definitions). These analyses highlight a moment of friction for the discipline's "current avatar" (Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric* 17): when rhetoric and composition scholars began using new media in their research and pedagogy, there was yet no consensus describing the components of new media.

Most arguments about new media are part of the subfield more than they are a part of the overarching discipline, suggesting new media is not a *defining* characteristic of the discipline but certainly an *element* of the discipline's evolution and knowledge base. *New media* is a buzzword with growing import, and though not every scholar in the field is fully invested in new media theory or composition, enough members of the field are invested to find the subfield's theory and practice worthy of their attention. Most of the articles reviewed in this study are published in *C & C* or *Kairos*. From the 70-article corpus, 23 articles are published in *C & C*, 21 are in *Kairos*, 16 in *CCC*, and 4 in *RTE*—*C & C* and *Kairos* together account for 69% of the corpus with a combined total of 44 articles. *RTE* and *CCC* together account for roughly one-third of the corpus (20 articles or 31%). *C & C* and *Kairos* each account for roughly one-third of the corpus (36% and 33%, respec-

tively), which is only appropriate given their focus on the subfield. Figure 1 shows these breakdowns. Because I did not limit my data corpus to these journals, the fact that so many discussions of new media come out of *C & C* or *Kairos* demonstrates that the subfield is more interested in issues of new media than is the field at large. Given the proliferation of digital writing technologies and their impacts on public education, I expected *CCC* and *RTE* to have published more such articles, but my initial hypothesis did not afford for the vast array of subfields whose scholarship these journals are obligated to represent due to their status as foundational for the overarching discipline (and, therefore, all of its subsets).

New media's purview falls mainly within the computers and writing subfield, as very little is published about new media in *CCC* or *RTE*, two of the field's foundational journals. *CCC* and *RTE* are journals, though, that we rely on to support all avenues of research appropriate to the discipline at large. As such, they cannot publish as much about new media as specialized journals such as *Kairos* and *C & C*. It is refreshing to see that *CCC* and *RTE* do publish content related to these and other subfields, demonstrating a clear interest in this content as well as an association with the content. If the content was strictly that of an isolated subfield, *CCC* and *RTE* would hardly have published nearly one-third of the data set (31%).

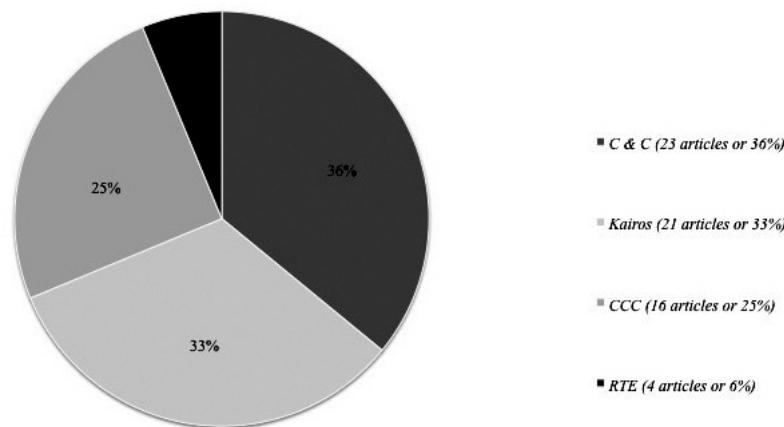


Figure 1. Distribution of corpus articles across the four journals

Alternatively, the 31% of articles published in CCC and *RTE* could be related to several other composing frameworks not discussed in the data set but discussed in department meetings, conference hallways, student evaluations, and interdisciplinary colleagues' statements about students' writing. These journals may also publish less about new media because of the "troubled contact zone between the subfield and the larger field of composition studies—a field that often figures new media and multimedia as somehow subservient to the interests of a more traditional, essayistic, and print-driven conception of composition" (Alexander and Rhodes 30). Though this tension is sometimes felt, sometimes imagined, it may or may not play a role in the journals' publication of composing frameworks incorporating new media. After all, exploring the tension is a worthy project, one both *CCC* and *RTE* have encouraged through their publication records.

Conclusions: How New Media Shapes Rhetoric and Composition

In journal articles published during 2000–2010, rhetoric and composition scholars define new media in ways that expand the definition of writing from printed texts to multimodal compositions (both physical and digital). Further, disciplinary conversations about new media have lasting impacts on the field and outside communities (both academic and nonacademic).

The definition of new media cannot be taken for granted. By engaging in and contributing to particular conversations, scholars mold the field's development. By contributing to conversations about *composing in contemporary society* or *composing in academia*, scholars shape the main concerns of the field and bring new media into the discussion. By contributing to these two categories of conversations, scholars bring new media into the field's other conversations, inviting scholars to accept new media under the field's purview.

Most importantly for the development of computers and writing, this study suggests *new media* is a crucial term, but it is a term with few common definitions: the definition of new media cannot be taken for granted. Scholars draw on a variety of definitions when referring to new media and new media texts. This lack of consensus can sometimes be productive, causing scholars to continuously engage each other and converse in more nuanced manners; other times it can be detrimental, holding scholars back from engaging with each other more rigorously because when drawing on

ambiguous terms such as new media, nuances may be lost on readers. There remains much opportunity for computers and writing scholars to craft substantial arguments *about* and *definitions of* new media, conceptually theorizing what new media means for the subdiscipline and its position within rhetoric and composition studies, helping the overarching field better understand its contemporary *composing frameworks*.

Composition and rhetoric scholars have widely and imprecisely taken up new media. By tracing composition and rhetoric's published research about new media, we can better understand new media's position within the discipline. The results of this study suggest no stable definition of new media exists within the discipline. Instead, new media is largely defined by conflating the term with its prevalent characteristics (digitality, modality, interactivity). The field, therefore, has *not* deeply conceptualized new media at the start of the twenty-first century. Although the field has enough definitions to help scholars understand and construct arguments about new media and related areas, my work suggests disciplinary members can choose to draw on various definitions of new media, and their choices can be strategic and rhetorical when clearly articulated.

Definitions are integral to how we understand our work and our fields, which is why scholars cannot take definitions for granted. As noted, Schiappa contends that definitions "[constitute] rhetorically induced social knowledge [...] or shared understanding among people about themselves, the objects of their world, and how they ought to use language" (3). Using the terminology is not enough: term users can more effectively use the term when they understand its nuances and purposefully apply those nuances; this is the case with *new media* as well as any other buzzword (including related terms such as *multimodal*, *multimedia*, or even *digital*). Without concrete discussions about what we mean when we say *new media*, other scholars may misconstrue our meaning. Such misunderstandings could lead to new subfields or even schisms. Different graduate programs may make specific arguments, scholars might be trained in ways that make the field more and more diffuse with less and less commonality, and such misunderstandings might even contribute to more defined distinctions between rhetoric and composition and English or between rhetoric and composition and computers and writing (although I could not say whether such breaks would be positive, as that is beyond the purview of this study). Based on the scholarship published during 2000–2010, a cohesive identity

for scholars who study new media does not exist. However, the diversity of the definitions and conversations through which scholars frame new media suggests that scholars will continue to challenge ideas about *what counts* as writing, how writing is crafted, and how writing is distributed.

Additionally, I argue new media is best understood as a *socially timely*, meaningful break from print traditions, and it embodies *composing frameworks* for the twenty-first century. New media is one version of what

I argue new media is best understood as a socially timely, meaningful break from print traditions, and it embodies composing frameworks for the twenty-first century. New media is one version of what composition aspires to be and mean.

composition aspires to be and mean. Connors once suggested the field “seems sometimes to be spinning centrifugally to pieces” (*Composition-Rhetoric* 17). However, he asserts that the discipline is *not* spinning to pieces; rather, the diverse areas that scholars in the field study simply demonstrate “the current avatar of a tradition of studying and using discourse that is as old as literacy and probably older” (17). New media is one avatar that rhetoric and composition scholars use to explain the field

and their work. The ways scholars define and frame conversations about new media during 2000–2010 set the stage for how the field now accepts, understands, and uses new media to advance knowledge of writing studies and the teaching of writing both to other academic communities and to the composing public.

This project only reviews a small sliver of new media’s history and position in the field. It opens the door for future scholarship. The next decade might be similarly analyzed to determine if trends have held true or if new media is actually as important a term as was expected. Future studies might also see this study as foundational: what is the next new term, and how does this new term demonstrate a shift in our disciplinary development or a shift in *what counts* as writing? Does the field remain concerned with *practice-driven* scholarship, or has the field incorporated more *concept-driven* work relating to digital writing? Do we seek more and more outside expertise from media studies and related or interdisciplinary fields, or are our scholars working from vetted knowledge in the field? Does the knowledge from the field come from our journals, or do they hold less power as gatekeepers for disciplinary knowledge? Are our published monographs more integral to the development of the field than peer-reviewed

journals, as *Writing New Media* seems to have been for the development of new media within the discipline? What constitutes an appropriate means and place of publication for and about digital writing? These questions have yet to be answered, but with knowledge about the fluidity of the field and its terms, these questions can be answered productively.

As scholars continuously (re)define writing, such (re)definitions impact the primary work of the discipline: the teaching of writing and rhetoric. Some writing programs hold on to current-traditionalist paradigms, and all around us higher education is facing severe budget cuts, unrealistic demands on tenured faculty, and an increasing reliance on a poorly compensated adjunct body. With writing's increased connection to digital media, studying and teaching new media is crucial to the field's sustainability. Teaching solely from a current-traditionalist paradigm or *only* teaching students to write for a traditional academic

If curricula fail to meet students' needs, the field will suffer, and our students may miss out on valuable opportunities to implement the necessary writing skills for a technology-saturated workforce.

audience injures students and the field. Teaching new media makes the field relevant to students who will seek careers where critical thinking meets social media and beyond. If curricula fail to meet students' needs, the field will suffer, and our students may miss out on valuable opportunities to implement the necessary writing skills for a technology-saturated workforce. Indeed, Lutkewitte argues engaging students with multimodal (and new media) composition "allow[s] for the rich experiences that engage students in learning and in meaning making" (1). She feels so strongly about this argument that she compiled an entire critical sourcebook to guide members who are new to this area of the discipline. Adapting curricula, though, will mean fighting for adjuncts' rights and bringing all teaching members into the fold by offering professional development and support for new media pedagogies across faculty bodies. This research shows little work has been done during 2000–2010 to help members of the field understand how to teach and translate new media to both field members and nonmembers (only 28% of conversations about new media were about *composing in academia*).

It should be noted, too, that *new media* may not be the preferred term for many scholars. As noted by the results of this study and other studies (Lauer's work on the *JIL*, for example), *new media* as a key term is some-

times conflated with other terms, or other terms are preferred for various reasons (pedagogy, intent, content, rhetorical definition). This study only takes into account *new media* instead of related terms (multimedia, digital media, digital composition, digital rhetoric). While digital composing and multimodal composition might be preferred terms, this study is simply concerned with the use of new media, particularly because of the way it was integrated and theorized by the discipline and its surface-level, seemingly fluid definition (from multimedia to new media to social media) in popular culture and industry terminology. This study does not attempt to understand how or when scholars prefer terms other than new media, as it is concerned with the use of new media in particular as the twenty-first century began.

Although my research shows scholars writing about new media typically do so via conversations about practice, more work needs to be done on how teachers—graduate students, adjuncts, lecturers, long-tenured faculty—can incorporate new media into their own scholarship and teaching. Faculty do need models of practice, but they also need theory and models for pedagogy and programmatic structure. Scholars cannot assume one specific definition of new media, nor can they assume other scholars' knowledge of implementing new media within their programs, whether focused on first-year writing or dissertation mentoring. Lauer shows that since 1990, English studies programs have been looking for computer-related expertise in their new hires ("Expertise" 64). Job ads on the Modern Language Association's *Job Information List* with one or more of Lauer's key words steadily rose from 1990 to 2010 (67), with ads asking for expertise with "technology", "digital", "new media", "online," and "multimodal" all rising every year and peaking in the last five years (65). With careers in the field focusing on key terms and conversations about new media, knowing how to talk about, define, and integrate such theory and practice into programs and classrooms is crucial, yet little scholarship has been done regarding *how* to cohesively implement these ideas. Instead, as Lutkewitte suggests, all too often, "the question of 'why' is likely to be at the forefront of any conversation relating to multimodal composition" (1). The why of new media and related terms in the discipline has been attended to, but the implementation needs further attention.

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Notes

1. To determine the percentage of agreement and Cohen's kappa as well as agreement level, I used GraphPad's QuickCalcs (available here: <http://graphpad.quickcalcs/kappa1.cfm>). I used QuickCalcs for all inter-rater agreement levels in the study.

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