Everyday Writing and Implications for Teachers, Students, and Scholars

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How—and why—should English scholars and teachers attend to the vast varied practices of “everyday writing” that suffuse contemporary culture? Our talks will engage audience members in answering this question by exploring three sites of everyday writing, discussing how to study and teach about them, and offering

Everyday writings, often informal and self-sponsored, weave in and out of most people’s work, personal, and social lives, in genres ranging from postcards to recipes, emails to lists, diaries to blogs, social media to case notes, scrapbooks to memoirs, comments, musings, greetings, poems, reactions, logs, and many more. Typically, these aren’t the types of texts that get studied in classrooms, which focus on school genres (“papers” of various sorts), formalized (and idealized) civic genres, and, a few work genres.

In her recent book, *The Rise of Writing*, Deborah Brandt demonstrates how day-to-day writing has replaced reading as the dominant form of literacy. Brandt attends closely to workplace writing. Our panel will put our main attention on writing for personal, interpersonal, communal, and civic purposes.

In "Learning from the Museum of Everyday Writing," Kathi will showcase the online Museum of Everyday Writing (MoEW) and the kinds of learning it sponsors. Created by Florida State University graduate students, the Museum hosts multiple varieties of everyday writing--that composed for personal, social, and civic, purposes--ranging from tattoos, personal journals, and bathroom graffiti to wedding invitations, monthly calendars, and post-it notes. The Museum is more than a repository, however: it also serves as a site for undergraduate researchers taking up many tasks, from identifying and cataloging new artifacts, to curating special museum exhibits, and composing social media highlighting the MoEW. This presentation, then, asks: What have all of us--faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates--learned through creating and sustaining the Museum of Everyday Writing?

In “Learning from Writing in a Climbing Community,” Doug will look at extensive writings circulated among a large group of mountain climbers. These writings range from technical questions, condition updates, trip reports, routes and advice, to photographs, stories and more. How are their purposes simultaneously immediate and function v. archival? What, if anything, performs a curatorial function? How and why might researchers and teachers study and teach writings like these? This site of everyday writing differs in focus--but mirrors in function--many other enthusiast sites, so there are broad applications.

In “Writing in Search of a Home,” John will draw upon his experience teaching in homeless shelters to consider the challenges of collecting and meaningfully preserving everyday writing that emerges from particularly transitory and marginal spaces. How do we create the kinds of archives that would capture such writing in its proper context and locale? How do we avoid replicating, in the structure of such archives, the power structures that render some writing, and some lives, more ephemeral, less memorable than others? Is such a project necessarily as much about activism and organizing as it is about scholarship and pedagogy?