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Composition teachers, scholars, and writing program administrators have long been concerned with matters of mobility, whether in terms of transnational writing program administration; translingual and transcultural writing; (dis)abilities; the role of written language in knowledge mobility; interrelationships between literacy, careers, and identity; mobile composing practices; writing and immigration; or the interrelations of literacy practices, technologies, locations, and mobilities.\textsuperscript{1} Such scholarship has advanced understandings of the role writing and its teaching play in maintaining and transforming social identity and shaping knowledge production and its mobilization. But while mobility is regularly invoked as a phenomenon characterizing students, literacy practices, knowledge transfer, texts, and even writing programs, what constitutes mobility as a phenomenon that might link these itself remains unexamined.

Responding to this state of affairs, this collection advances a mobilities perspective on work in composition. We see a mobilities perspective offering a framework by which to articulate relations between seemingly disparate concerns in composition by providing an alternative inflection of these concerns—a mobilities paradigm. The term \textit{mobilities} itself offers a name for what seem to be related concerns: the “globalization” of higher education and, with it, writing programs; the transnational movement of students and faculty; the mobilization of knowledge about composition as it travels (or doesn’t) from research articles to policy proposals to pedagogical and compositional practices; the circulation of texts and ideas, and the role of language and literacy in the movement of not just texts and ideas but also of people, geographically and socially; and of course the mobility of capital shaping the conditions within which composition work takes place and with which that work contends.

However, in suggesting a common feature to these concerns, mobility studies also provides a different inflection to them. Ordinarily, in
composition studies, these concerns are understood as matters requiring adjustment or accommodation: how we might best (ethically and pedagogically) accommodate a more transnational student body; how we can avert the mistranslation of knowledge in efforts at its implementation in teaching; how we can smooth the career paths of students and faculty; and how and why we (and others) should accommodate differences in literacy and language practices. Mobility, in other words, is approached as a problem to be solved in order to return to what we imagine should normally happen.

But a meaningful application of a mobilities perspective involves adopting a mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006), whereby the phenomena of the movement and transformation of knowledge, people, identities, ideas, languages, texts, bodies, and institutions no longer represent deviations from a norm to which they are to be accommodated (cf. Faist 2013, 1638). Instead, our confrontations with these phenomena can lead us to recognize their mobility as itself the norm—not something to be accommodated to a norm of stability, or “sedentarism,” but instead, the expected, to which any apparent stability must itself be reconciled (Sheller and Urry 2006). While adopting such a paradigm maintains attention to these phenomena, it casts their mobility in a different light. Rather than their mobility *per se* constituting a feature distinguishing them from the norm, the specific dynamics of their mobility come to the fore: the conditions and relations shaping mobility as well as producing different kinds (paces, means, meanings, experiences, effects) of mobility (e.g., sanctioned vs. unsanctioned), understood as “ontological absolutes” (Adey 2006, 76).

In other words, in rendering mobility itself the norm rather than deviation from the norm, a mobilities paradigm opens up mobility itself to investigation—again, not as a deviation or exception to be accounted for, but rather, in terms of the various forms mobility takes. Just as the New Literacy Studies (NLS) is characterized by its insistent pluralization of literacy to literacies (Lillis and Scott 2007) to mark differentiation among what had hitherto been understood as a noncount monolith (“literacy”) into various social practices, mobility studies—or at least those informing this collection—in rendering mobility the norm makes possible the differentiation among what is now a “countable”: mobilities (see Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). That, then, is one conceptual purchase to a mobilities paradigm.²

As also suggested by the comparison to NLS, in positing and then differentiating among various mobilities, a mobilities paradigm foregrounds material social practice—understood here as the location and
source rather than simply the means of manipulating, or manifesting, what are understood to be stable languages, classrooms, bodies, identities, texts, and knowledge. Thus, for example, a mobilities paradigm identifies language as located in and the (always emerging) outcome of practices, rather than as a preexisting entity that writers use or write in. Even the apparent stability of a language is rendered as the outcome of ongoing efforts (sedimentation) that themselves change, by reinforcing but relocating specific usages as part of what we thereby can justifiably term “common practice.”

One further consequence of adopting this mobilities paradigm is that mobility is no longer understood as synonymous with movement, at least not as movement is ordinarily conceived. Instead, stasis and movement are understood as relations within mobility (see Adey 2006, 86–87). Whereas a sedentarist paradigm imagines a world of solids that may or may not on occasion move or be moved, and whose movement merits attention as a break from the norm, a mobilities paradigm sees a world of fluidity—a sea, as it were, of currents in and on and with which various entities contend. In such a world, even those entities that appear stable are necessarily mobile—like boats at sea—in order to maintain their seemingly stable position. Stasis, rather than the assumed norm, becomes a point of inquiry, something to be accounted for. A further consequence of adopting a mobilities paradigm is that more attention is drawn to the forces shaping—setting the pace, direction, quality, and effects of—mobility, thereby producing diverse kinds of mobilities, ascribed different kinds of value, enacted by different means, and carrying quite different meanings (e.g., the mobility of the itinerant laborer vs. the mobility of the idle global rich). In place of a mobile/immobile binary, a range of mobilities appears for our consideration, each of them also fluctuating in character (Sheller and Urry 2006, 212–14).

Understanding composition work as mobility work thus means understanding the work not only in terms of movement or its absence—contributing (or not) to the upward social mobility of students, say, or facilitating the transfer of writing skills across diverse sites—but in terms of the transformations effected by processes of any such movement on what moves (or is moved or seems/is kept still); shifts in the pace and direction of such movements; and differences in such directions and pace (see Leander et al. 2010). Instead of imagining some students, for example, as “stuck” versus those whom we see as “going far,” we can investigate what produces the appearance of being stuck (given mobility as the norm), and ways that going far may constitute a kind of stasis in
itself, or rely on kinds of friction that keep those going far nonetheless “in place,” like sailors struggling to remain “on course.”

Further, in assuming and seeking out the mobile in the seemingly stable, a mobilities paradigm enforces a historical view of our work and the academic and social institutions and locations in and with which we work as mobile, however seemingly s(t)olid. And that identification itself assumes a range of often conflicting pressures contributing to the specific course and character of the mobility of these institutions and locations and relations of relative degrees and kinds of mobility. If place is an event, as Tim Cresswell (2002, 26) suggests, then, from a mobilities perspective, it is a continually unfolding event of shifting character in response to tides of movement and pressure.

In insisting on the historicity of even such seemingly timeless entities as institutions and locations, recognition of their mobility would, on its surface, appear to offer hope of change. That hope would, however, need to be tempered by the clear historical evidence of apparent continuity, that is, a lack of change. At the same time, a mobilities paradigm makes possible the identification of any appearances of continuity as the ongoing results of ongoing efforts; and hence, results that are inevitably partial, temporary, and vulnerable to contrary efforts, as illustrated in this collection by Eli Goldblatt’s chapter on the shifting status and hopes of Moore School and plans for a vacant lot, John Scenters-Zapico’s description of the strategies deployed by university administrators to keep him and his writing programs in a permanent state of limbo, and Carmen Kynard’s account of the effect of a student’s website on the otherwise seemingly inevitable and willful blindness among students to the color caste system.

As suggested by this insistence on the mobile character of all phenomena, however seemingly recalcitrant, a mobilities paradigm offers provocative inflections to questions of research methodologies in composition (and other fields—see Spinney 2015), as well as to matters of curricular design and pedagogy and our theories of language, language difference, writing development, and knowledge mobilization. Rather than assuming a stable language/skill/identity/body/institution/site/environment/pedagogy/curriculum, we start from the premise of all these as always and inevitably fluid and relational to one another and transformed in and through practice. Such a starting premise changes the sense of all these and our work: who the “we” are who do that work, what that work looks like, and how we might recognize it, as illustrated by the example of the work accomplished by a student’s reiteration of a “common” usage (see Donahue’s discussion of reprise-modification and
Ann Shivers-McNair’s discussion of the role of her own mobility in discussing her research). A mobilities paradigm provides not just a way of identifying a particular feature of contemporary social experience, and the involvement of the study and teaching of composition in that experience; a mobilities paradigm calls on us to rethink the terms in which we see ourselves, our work, and the location of our work by removing our sense of the stability of the foundation of all these, and by posing an alternative foundation that runs counter to dominant understandings of what “foundation” means and might consist of. As heady and vertiginous as such a shift may feel like and be, it also promises a more adequate rendering of the unsteady state in which we find ourselves.

MOBILE PROCESSES FOR MOBILITY WORK: CHARTING THE COURSE OF THE COLLECTION

In keeping with the premise of a mobilities paradigm of the fluid and relational character of ideas as well as other phenomena, this collection is designed to both allow for and illustrate the dynamics of knowledge mobilization as ideas move and are in the process transformed through relocation. For what a mobility studies paradigm claims about ideas and phenomena applies equally to itself: Rather than constituting a stable foundation on or from which to build or draw, a mobility studies paradigm is itself subject to and, indeed, dependent on ongoing and diverse reworkings even in efforts to maintain a sense of “a mobilities paradigm.”

This has two consequences: first, the term “mobility” is inflected quite differently across the chapters. However disconcerting, those inflectional differences illustrate the mercurial character of mobilities itself, though we would add that it is possible and, in fact, common if unacknowledged, for individual contributions to those collections claiming a stable foundation to inflect differently, and thereby remake, that foundation through those inflections. This does not, of course, mean any or everything can, should, or does represent scholarship in mobility studies. Rather, it means that mobility—in the sense articulated above as the norm—serves as the point of departure for research projects taking diverse directions. Hence, the collection provides not so much a set of how-to’s but, instead, diverse engagements with the dynamics of mobilities and responses from various perspectives on those engagements. What binds the work of the chapters in this collection as a collection is that the mobilities addressed are those worked in composition (broadly construed). Mobilities offers a particular inflection to composition, and composition inflects (works) mobilities.
As editors of this collection, we nonetheless faced the peculiar challenge of attempting somehow to capture, as it were, what we and our contributors otherwise insist is mercurial in character. We addressed this challenge during the collection’s development and in the organization of the contributions in the collection you are now reading. First, what are presented here as finished chapters represent the culmination of an extended process of not only the expected drafting and revision of individual chapters, but also of extended, and repeated, conversations by the authors about one another’s drafts and revisions. These conversations first began at a symposium held at the University of Louisville, and continued at the 2016 Thomas Watson Conference on Rhetoric and Composition, where revised versions of symposium drafts, and essays responding to them, were subjected to extensive and broad discussion by the several hundred teacherscholars attending the conference, in addition to pre- and post-conference and symposium exchanges between the editors and the authors. While a collection cannot capture the various turns the drafts, and conversations about them, have taken, we see traces of these in the chapters and responses presented here, knowing as well that readers will subject these to further twists as they take up what these present.

The organization of the collection into two parts is meant to encourage readers to adopt a mobilities perspective toward the work presented, and to forestall any temptation to see the matter as settled. In the eight chapters comprising part 1, the questions raised by a mobilities perspective are explored across key issues in rhetoric and composition, including translingual and multilingual literacies, digital and professional writing pedagogies, and community literacy. These chapters map threads of mobility that stretch across subfields, showing what a mobilities perspective brings to our work. The responses making up part 2 take up again, to revise, practices of thinking from a mobilities perspective presented in the chapters comprising part 1. In each of these response chapters, authors draw on two or more of the chapters in part 1 to continue exploring mobility work in composition. By this two-part organization, we hope to encourage, if not capture, a mobilities dynamic of ideas and knowledge at odds with the conventional and expected debate dynamic of argument and counterargument, claim and rebuttal; a dynamic that, instead, asks us to look again, and (inevitably) differently, at what we thought we knew and to rework it.

The authors of chapters in part 1 offer ways of thinking about how to use mobility to find connections and mark differences. Christiane Donahue offers a model for using a mobilities perspective to find and
employ points of connection across subfields to better illuminate studies of writing and language, depicting the possibilities of such research through her analysis of how mobile connections between transfer and translingualism can deepen understanding of both practices. Ann Shivers-McNair, however, cautions scholars to not assume mobility is a given, but instead mark it in their research, attending to who and what counts as mobile and is allowed to move to the potential exclusion of others. Other chapter authors show how a mobilities perspective affords them new possibilities for considering the temporal and spatial mobility of people, writing, and ideas. John Scenters-Zapico uses his professional transition from Texas to California as a case study to explore how a mobilities paradigm might illuminate the complexities of workplace mobilities for individual faculty and larger trends related to how and why faculty move institutions (and don’t). Rebecca Lorimer Leonard uses literacy “management” as a frame for examining the physical and linguistic mobility of both Nimet, a multilingual migrant writer from Azerbaijan living in the United States, and her writing, depicting Nimet’s struggles with institutional management of literacy learning seen in the pronunciation classes she was required to attend for her nursing degree, and the successes of her personal literacy management, which illuminates the depth and complexity of her multilingual capacity. Carmen Kynard uses Pretty for a Black Girl, a website created by a first-year writing student, Andrene, to highlight how the mobilization of black women’s vernacular technological creativity respatializes dominant white, neoliberal imperatives of higher education that maintain racist boundaries/binaries. Beyond temporal and spatial mobility, scholars depict instances of knowledge mobilization (the processes of knowledge distribution and uptake and the transformations wrought on knowledge by those processes): mobilizing ideas and people to create new understandings of how we teach, practice, and use writing alongside other communities. Scott Wible depicts how his use of design thinking in the writing classroom encourages students to learn to mobilize knowledge production for collaborative solution building with and for community partners, emphasizing how rhetoric and composition scholars might use this methodology for conducting socially transformative research. Jody Shipka analyzes the composition processes of the Inhabiting Dorothy project in which participants remediate strangers’ memory objects, mobilizing them for a new audience and purpose, ultimately arguing for a more dynamic focus for composition research, theory, and practice that treats agency, action, and collaboration as distributed amongst both human and nonhuman entities. Eli Goldblatt maps the network of actors who are mobilizing to
sponsor literacy development through the redesign of the schoolyard of an underserved Philadelphia school, calling for and showing the importance of a deeply relational, networked approach toward creating community change, strengthening social mobility through literacy, and reinventing a neighborhood and those working and traversing its space. In each of these chapters, scholars reveal the complex ways mobility is already working across rhetoric and composition, making the processes of spatial, temporal, and knowledge mobilization more visible.

The responses making up part 2 take up again, to revise, practices of thinking from a mobilities perspective presented in the chapters comprising part 1. In each chapter, scholars draw on two or more of the chapters in part 1 to develop when and how mobility might be used within rhetoric and composition. Anis Bawarshi draws on all the case studies from part 1 to explore the work of mobility in composition studies, showing how mobility shifts the emphasis of composition studies from the inhabiting/performing of a standard to the trans-acting/work of communication across difference. Following his chapter, several authors pursue questions of how the work of communicating across difference might be taken up, exploring the mobility of people, places, and activities within the study of literacy practices. Andrea Olinger juxtaposes Lorimer Leonard’s case study with Donahue’s theorizations about mobility to conceive of linguistic and literate repertoires as co-constructed by individuals and institutions, and thus as inherently mobile. Laura Sceniak Matravers focuses on the complicated (and sometimes paradoxical) relationships between acts of literacy, agency, and (im)mobilities using Goldblatt’s conception of networked literacy sponsors to consider how Lorimer Leonard’s and Kynard’s case studies exemplify context as agentic. Timothy Johnson further explores institutional contexts in his discussion of “non-places,” as portrayed in Scents-Zapico’s and Lorimer Leonard’s chapters, showing how non-places use solitude and similitude to render important elements of intellectual and literate activity invisible. Jamila Kareem and Khirsten L. Scott use critical race theory and Jan Blommaert’s theory of sociolinguistic scales to explore the respective presence and absence of race in Kynard’s and Goldblatt’s chapters; they claim that attention to race is necessary to disrupt the boundaries of who can use what literacies under what circumstances and create greater literacy mobility.

Other chapters address how mobility might be used to cross research boundaries within and beyond the discipline. Megan Faver Hartline extends Donahue’s use of mobility as a way to connect disparate disciplinary research frames by analyzing how community writing (Goldblatt) and
design thinking (Wible) are already connected, arguing that such connections might be mobilized to continue developing stronger research practices that involve and work for community members. Patrick Danner reexamines the use of space in Kynard’s and Scenters-Zapico’s case studies, putting their chapters in conversation with social movement rhetorics and proposing a mobility model of such rhetorics as a way of understanding the recursive relationship between objects, space, and meaning-making. Ashanka Kumari rereads Shivers-McNair’s case study through the lens of Scenters-Zapico’s small m– to Big M–Mobility stages model to offer an alternative, multidimensional consideration of Shivers-McNair’s methodology for conducting and interpreting research. Drawing on the genres described by Wible, Kynard, and Shipka, Elizabeth Chamberlain develops a pedagogical framework of creative genre mobilization for writing assignment design; she argues that the best writing assignment prompts are those that invite students to reimagine genres as a mobile framework. Keri Epps examines how the mobility models presented in chapters by Lorimer Leonard, Scenters-Zapico, and Donahue allow for a clearer understanding of the complex reciprocal relationship between mobility and genre uptake, and she argues that, by making the agents of genre uptake more visible, mobility models reveal the embedded power hierarchies that must be negotiated. Rick Wysocki, analyzing agencies and actors in Wible’s, Shipka’s, and Donahue’s mobility case studies, demonstrates that a fluid and distributed understanding of agency is necessary for scholars in rhetoric and composition to mobilize their research to address contemporary challenges. Rachel Gramer and Mary P. Sheridan examine how Wible, Goldblatt, and Kynard take up mobility studies as a methodological framework alongside other disciplinary research frames, interrogating how mobility might be used by writing studies scholars to address the field’s long-standing questions of power. All of the chapters in part 2 extend the study of mobility in composition studies by taking up and responding to the case studies of part 1, furthering the process of mobilizing disciplinary knowledge and demonstrating how these works are transformed when placed in conversation with one another.

As the contributions making up this collection make clear, composition’s uptake of a mobilities paradigm is in its beginning stages. Accordingly, we offer this collection as provocation to the transformations we know will result from readers’ mobilization of what we’ve presented as they take it into their own teaching and scholarly pursuits. All work in composition works with mobility. We invite readers to take up such mobility work in their engagements with this collection.
NOTES


2. Adey, in fact, warns that “if we explore mobility in everything and fail to examine the differences and relations between them, it becomes not meaningless, but, there is a danger in mobilising the world into a transient, yet featureless, homogeneity” (2006, 91).

REFERENCES


