

Interviewees: Jenn Fishman [F], Elizabeth Kimball [K], Jessica Enoch [E], René De los Santos [S], and Scott Wible [W]

Interviewer: Sweta Baniya [B]

Transcriber: Elizabeth McGhee Williams

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Transcript¹

B: Good morning, everyone.

Scattered Interviewees: Good morning.

B: My name is Sweta Baniya. I am a third-year PhD student at Purdue University. I am originally from Nepal, and I'm interested in digital rhetoric, cultural rhetoric, professional and technical writing, and also feminist rhetoric. And why don't you just get started and tell us who you are.

F: Okay. I'm Jenn Fishman, and now I'm an associate professor at Marquette University. And in 2005, when I attended the first RSA seminar, I had just finished my first year of teaching and my first job out of graduate school, and I was at [University of] Tennessee, Knoxville.

K: I'm Liz Kimball. I'm starting a position at Drexel University. I've been at Drew University most of the last eight years. When I—in 2005, I was a grad student at Temple. I think I had only just finished coursework and knew next to nothing about rhetoric.

[laughter]

E: I'm Jess Enoch. I'm at the University of Maryland. In 2005, I had just started a tenure-track job at the University of New Hampshire. It was my first year—I had just finished my first year, yeah.

S: I'm René De los Santos. In 2005, I was a graduate student at UC Santa Barbara. Now, I am at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in Mexico, so it is kind of a big shift from there to here.

[chuckles]

W: I'm Scott Wible. In 2005, I was a PhD student at Penn State University finishing a dissertation on language diversity and politics in history of composition studies. Now, I am an associate professor and director of professional writing at the University of Maryland, College Park. And the reason we're all talking about 2005—Jenn alluded to it—we were five of the I think 20 attendees, either very junior assistant professors or

¹ Throughout the interview, the document the interviewees are passing around is a copy of the program from the 2005 RSA institute.

graduate students, at the first RSA seminar at Kent, Ohio, and the theme that week was the history of rhetoric as a teaching— [pauses]

F: Teaching tradition.

[general agreement]

W: Teaching tradition.

F: That's right. Which kind of came out of, in part, the Alliance of Rhetoric Societies' discussion of rhetoric is a teaching tradition, which as I remember it—

W: Jeff Walker.

F: Yeah, and also took off in a way that no one had predicted.

E: Right.

F: In terms of really grabbing everyone's attention and being noncontroversial in ways that sometimes saying "rhetoric was about teaching" seemed to really push and pull at other ideas of what rhetoric is as a tradition.

[agreement]

E: Yeah, that's true. I think that's something that everyone—when we all came together—we were all interested in issues around pedagogy and that did feel very new, and to talk about rhetorical education felt really new at that moment.

[agreement and laughter]

E: Now, it feels so funny that it felt new because it feels like we've been talking about it, but it does. Yeah, that's so true.

B: I attended my first RSA summer Institute last year, and the way I got information about it—I had no idea about that it even existed. So I saw my friend's Facebook post, and she was saying the deadline is two hours away, and I'm applying *now*.

[laughter]

B: So in between that two hours, I just wrote my abstract and sent it. I want to know how did you guys find out more about this in 2005. How did you find out about the society and institute, and how did you apply?

F: Wow, I'm trying to remember.

E: Cheryl Glenn was running the institute, and Scott and I were her students, so she encouraged us to apply. And she was running it with—wasn't she running it with Mike Leff?

F: Mike Leff.

W: Michael Leff.

E: Mike Leff.

W: I remember writing a one-page, single-spaced abstract to apply. For me it was talking about—I was thinking of my dissertation very much in terms of composition studies, not rhetoric at all, so it was a matter of trying to think about it more in those terms as a way to pitch my way into it. I don't remember much more about hearing it, how we heard about it.

S: Well, for my case, it was kind of an interesting moment in my graduate studies. I remember it being not quite clear if I was a rhetoric person or, you know, what the hell.

[laughter]

[04:53]

S: Is that the edited version? 'Cause I was in the education department, so one of the things I was thinking about is, how do I locate myself? The disciplinarity issue, right? I remember the conversation I had with my advisor at the time, Chuck Bazerman, he said, "This thing just seems to be here. Maybe you should go here and see if there is anything in there for you." So I think that was sort of my—I remember going to the institute with this message of going, "Eh, what's this gonna be?"

[laughter]

S: For me, in that sense it was good, but that's how it came about. It was also secondhand in some ways, but I remember that being a crucial moment in my education.

K: Yeah. I was working with Sue Wells. She got the email, I suppose. Well, I'm sure she was part of the discussions too. And she had said—we had just done an independent study and read through the rhetorical tradition together. I guess because most of my entry into the field was composition, that was just the lens I was thinking about and then the research directions I was starting to think about. I remember her saying, "You have to do this. This is perfect for you."

[laughter]

K: But definitely the approach—the historical approach was the real draw that drew me to it and away from just regular old composition.

F: That's right. I remember, because the week was broken up chronologically with different scholars who worked in different of those periods leading the day or half a day, I had just finished my first year of teaching and I had come out of a program at Stanford University that had Andrea Lunsford and Marvin Diogenes and all of these wonderful people in the program in writing and rhetoric, but no actual established rhet/comp curriculum until after I had finished all of my courses. And so all of my rhet/comp education was hands-on and oriented toward college writing research, and though my dissertation was historical, the gaps in my own actual knowledge of rhetoric history were enormous, and so the idea of a week of intensive, with these people who work in each of those areas—I mean, there's no department where that really is feasible because it's not how rhetoric is staffed.

E: Yeah. And now the seminars don't work that way anymore. It's just the same people—I mean, not that it's bad. Logistically, I don't know if you could even read through—

K: It could only happen once.

F: Yeah, we should read through that.

E: Because this was the first seminar ever. I had forgotten, but people came just for just, like—Jeff Walker was there just for the day or for the morning, and Shirley Logan came for the afternoon, so. Wasn't Martin Camargo there for like a day?

F: Yeah.

K: It was a ton of people.

E: It just was also really amazing just to kind of see these people who you have read or you knew were big scholars just kind of to pop in for a little, you know, exercise—

[sounds of agreement]

E: What's that called when you have a class from an expert?

[07:45]

F: Oh, a master class! Something like that.

E: Master class! Yeah, just like a master class and kind of take all these notes and hear them—a lot of them lectured. It wasn't like group work; it was like a real, "I'm gonna tell you about this period and how teaching worked in this period." And we all took notes. I bet we still—I still have my notes from all of them.

[general agreement]

S: I still have a blue accordion folder.

E: Me too. Mine's red.

F: I think Linda Ferreira-Buckley was one of the only people who actually had us do an activity. She brought archival materials from the eighteenth century, and we actually did some interpretation or something like that. I remember writing notes for my life. It was not a complaint about being lectured to at all.

[agreement]

E: No, it was not a complaint, no. But that was the idea—and it still is, that especially the week-longs² are supposed to be something like if you don't get a seminar in your graduate program that this is supposed to fill in for that. So they were definitely doing that. It was great.

K: But I think now they're so much more focused. and with fewer people.

W: Right.

K: Still super special, but I think the newness of it and the breadth was really cool.

[agreement]

E: Yeah, we felt pretty lucky.

W: To me—and you were mentioning Martin Camargo—and I can remember pretty vividly from that week that his session is when the value of that theme, or the value of that lens, became apparent to me: thinking of the history of rhetoric as the history of its teaching tradition. And I can remember him making that point, that a book like *The Rhetorical Tradition* has largely this gap in the medieval period because no new theory emerged from that. So if you're looking at the history of rhetoric as a history of its theory and philosophy, nothing happened there. And the way that he showed us all the letter-writing exercises and things that were happening, rhetoric was taught in the Middle Ages and in the medieval period, here's what we gain from looking at it, even though there wasn't some new theoretical principle. I can really remember his week.

[10:17]

E: I think that's what *he* said. I'm worried now if we print that out, we're gonna go, and a lot of people are gonna go, "There was theory!"

² I.e., the seminars (rather than the workshops) offered as part of the institute circa 2018.

[laughter]

E: But yeah, that was his pitch, and I think that made a lot of sense.

B: So the institute was completely different from what it is now? Presuming that it was a week-long seminar on each different topic, with all 20 members in one seminar room? Is that right?

[general agreement]

S: Right, and we would go out to lunch together. For me, one of the presences that I remember all the time is Mike Leff. Mike Leff was there all the time. They were very accessible, but I remember Mike Leff's special sort of reaching out. For me especially, I was like, "Am I a rhetoric guy or not?" And so for me, Mike Leff's sort of reaching out to me personally was very touching and very moving for me at that time.

B: So do you think that that particular institute was kind of a transformative experience for you to move from education to rhetoric?

S: Yeah, I think definitely. I can remember at the end I think we had some sort of roundtable and we were discussing, and I had this, I would say, this kind of back-to-Jesus moment?

[laughter]

S: I think I remember saying something like that. For me, definitely. I think it really helped me see where my work could fit because, you know, I was thinking about Mexican history and Mexican rhetoric, and at the time, nobody was doing that. Not even thinking of Mexico at all in any real sense. Latin America, for example. So for me, I could see myself in the field doing something. And now, I was just at a panel, and somebody was talking about a Mexican president. Things like that, it's really nice how far it's come. So, yeah—for me it was very important.

B: What are your fond memories?

F: The sociability was an enormous part of it, and we were the only ones there.

K: Like literally on the whole campus.

E: Yeah, there wasn't another group.

K: Everything else was shut down.

[laughter]

E: That was true because restaurants just were not open. It was funny.

K: Yeah, there was nowhere to eat!

F: That's right. Does anyone remember, we were staying in the convention center, which was like glorified dorms, essentially, and it was not a member of the institute attendees, I believe it was one of the institute teachers who was the leader in breaking the no alcohol in the convention center—

[laughter]

F: And so some of the conviviality in the evening was very genuine and, you know, it was as much a classroom as the formal classroom, for sure.

E: I mean, I think it was really exciting to kind of think of being there at that moment, and for a lot of the scholars who were leading the session to think about pedagogy as being really important was new for them, and they were excited. So we kind of felt like this was just this unbelievable moment where we were being engaged and, like, reaching out to us, and saying, "Well, that makes sense." And I had—rhetorical education was the keyword of the book I was working on, and it just helped me crystallize everything I was doing to say, "This is where the book belongs, it's within this tradition," this is a good way to understand what I was grappling with with my book revisions and things like that. I think it was just really an exciting moment individually, but collectively we're all still really good friends. And what Jenn said: there weren't other seminars happening, so we were the only people, so it was kind of like if you don't want to be part of the group then you're just in Kent, Ohio, alone.

[laughter]

E: So it was fun. It was really, really fun.

F: Some of the seminars—there had been readings, right? I think that matches the style here: get sent this impressive amount of reading, and of course you're doing whatever is your semester's or quarter's work, and then you're preparing for this intensive, and getting a glimpse of how intensive, maybe, it is about to be. And then there were evening homeworks sometimes, which we might have indulged in collaboratively. The most notorious one was a copia exercise where our catch phrase was "Beer is good for rhetoricians."

E: Oh, that's right! Oh my goodness, Jenn, you have such a good memory.

[laughter]

F: I feel like that cemented my friendship with René.

[laughter]

S: Yeah! For some obvious reasons. I don't—

[laughter]

E: But that's right. There was a kind of performative aspect to it all. Did Jeff Walker make us do *progymnasmata*? You were remembering that, Scott. I don't know.

[15:00]

W: I remember looking at a page of *progymnasmata* exercises that I think was something, at the time, he was developing to put into the book he was working on.³ I don't remember if we—I do think we did do some tales, creating some.

[agreement]

F: I think we did too.

E: I feel like we did.

S: Didn't Larry Green—

K: Yeah, that's how I remember it.

W: There was the story of the spider that bit the kid or something like that. We had to do some exercise like that.

S: I remember—maybe it was the wrong memory—I remember Larry Green did that whole dead parrot thing. Was that true?

K: That's what I always think of.

S: That's what I remember.

E: What was it? I don't remember.

S: Monty Python and the dead parrot sketch and, you know.

K: "Bit the dust," "pushing up daisies."

S: Yeah, yeah. "Is no more."

[laughter]

K: "He went to the great beyond."

³ Presumably Walker's *The Genuine Teachers of this Art: Rhetorical Education in Antiquity*.

S: "The great beyond," yeah.

W: I do remember that reading, the two that Jenn mentioned.

[Jenn laughs]

W: Because I had sort of timed—I was doing an archival research trip at Urbana, Illinois, like, the days leading up to it, so I remember being in the archives for eight hours a day and then going to dinner and sitting at dinner by myself with these readings for four straight nights. It was a load.

[laughter]

F: It was a lot of reading.

[agreement]

E: And if Cheryl was in charge of it, you know we all were expected to be, like, tip-top by the next day.

[agreement]

W: I remember, too, that the only five people sitting here from it are English people, but it was an evenly balanced, ten people from comm, ten from English, and I don't even remember his name anymore, to be honest, so if he listens to this, maybe it will resonate. To me there was only one person there who was really working on research projects that were pedagogically oriented. There was someone working on a project about the history of public speaking education and really thinking of it as a rhetorical practice.

F: Was that Chris?

W: Lundberg? No, no. I shouldn't even have said this. This might be a part that Eric [Detweiler] edits out. [taps mic]

[laughter]

E: Do we have a listing of everybody?

F: We do. There's that email.

K: And I was shocked at who I couldn't place.

W: But to me—I had a sense it felt like the teaching tradition element of it was one that the English people were connecting more with for the research side, not just their pedagogy side.

F: Yeah. Here, do you want this, Scott? [sound of passing paper]

W: I remember that coming up in some of the conversations in the evenings over dinner.

S: Well, I mean, thinking about the idea, we did some writing off of that right? Where we were thinking about—

F: Yeah, that's right.

E: I could get that out. It's on my laptop.

S: What I remember from that exercise is that idea of teaching tradition, and I used the Mexican National Museum of Art to talk about that.

F: Yes! Oh, I remember that now.

S: Because I remember going—it's in Mexico City—and I remember going through it and every room is pedagogical. This room is, you know, about the revolution, and everything is about instructing people about how to understand the nation through the art, right? And so when I was thinking through—so it helped me make that connection between the seminar. At that moment, it was really useful for me because it helped me connect what I was thinking in terms of, you know my area *and* rhetoric and the idea of the teaching tradition and how can it work in other spheres, in other areas. So for me, that was an interesting exercise to think about.

E: So that—it is kind of nice to have this conversation because we wanted to publish an article when we got out. Now that I'm looking, we did a lot of work on it.

F: Yes!

W: For *RSQ*.

F: That's right.

W: We sent it out. We sent it in and got the reader reports back. I don't remember who they were from.

E: Yeah. And it's just interesting. I think it was just—it seemed at one point that it was just too hard. There's yours, René.

K: That's right. It was a sort of octalog logic, but maybe we were more than eight. The only thing I can remember in this moment about the reader report is that we were encouraged to make something that was coherent, whole, and we had really

understood things as our very individual reflections 'cause we shared this thing. There wasn't a hook that we were able to figure out to make that—

W: Mmhmm.

E: Yeah, I think everyone was at such critical parts in careers—people were starting new jobs and finishing dissertations—that people started falling off. But it's nice to think that we got this moment because I remember thinking, "We need to mark what just happened," because it felt really important to be there and special to be a part of that group."

F: Yeah.

B: Was it published somewhere?

[19:52]

F: It wasn't, and one of the things that I'm now remembering, one of the contributors to that, is somebody who—Erin, who was writing from outside of academia, so she was maybe a master's student in 2005. But her career trajectory was to do non-for-profit, education-related work, and I think at that time maybe she was working with a non-for-profit doing curriculum development in Colombia and in some African countries. So her piece was all about how this theme of rhetorical education made sense to her and enabled her to do things that were really different from what any of the rest of us is doing.

K: That's really cool.

[agreement]

K: I wasn't involved with that at all, but I should have been.

W: You have to answer that question, just to fill in that history. We—I think Jenn, Jess, and I took sort of the editorial lead on it. We sent a manuscript to *RSQ* and got two reader reports back, and it kind of hasn't been published since then.

E: Here's our moment!

F: Let's get on that.

[laughter]

E: Does anyone stand by what they said? That's the real question.

F: Gosh, I'd have to reread it.

E: That's interesting.

S: As a historical moment, right?

F: Right.

E: I can't figure out which one is the latest—anyway, we shouldn't dwell on this, right? It's never good just to be, like, "Let's just let someone look through some—"

[laughter]

B: So how do you define that particular week in your life as a scholar or a group of scholars? [inaudible] How do you think about it now?

W: I mean, I'm still working with that topic. I don't know that I do it necessarily from the historiographic angle, but I taught a graduate seminar last year on contemporary rhetorical education—what is it, where does it manifest itself inside, outside educational institutions, what are the aims of it? I think I've shifted away from working on language diversity and language pedagogy working more on professional writing, entrepreneurship, and education stuff, but still I think that rhetorical education is always framing how I'm seeing these topics. Again, not just from the teaching side but from the research side.

K: Yeah, me too. I think it's been—in some ways the writing I'm doing is finally starting to get away from the pedagogy aspect of it because I'm starting to think about audiences beyond people who get it, who are teachers. 'Cause we're invested in teaching. You know, I think I'm still working with some of the same themes and starting to frame them more in terms of democracy and things like that. But at the same time, developing now what was unheard of at the time, but developing undergraduate writing majors.

[agreement]

K: And I find myself being really appreciative of giving some of this stuff to undergraduates and finding out just how much they get it—even though I'm not teaching people who want to be teachers. Not necessarily just history of rhetoric, but reading [Jacqueline Jones Royster's] "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own," for instance. How much it grabs students. At the time, I never would have dreamed of giving that. To me that was a piece that was for us, not for, you know, classroom consumption.

E: I feel like that was such a moment where I just identified so much with RSA as an organization and really felt part of the group because we were a small group, and all these different scholars were coming in and we were meeting them, and it just felt like RSA wanted our generation to be invested in RSA.

[agreement]

E: And it worked. It was very persuasive, and I know Cheryl and Mike were really great about just being genuinely interested in us and our work, and feeling like what we were thinking about had value and was really adding to scholarly and pedagogical conversations. And I'm just really glad that the genre continued because it's a different experience than a conference experience. We spent all week together. People still do, and I know that these workshops and seminars are transformative for people, regardless of what the theme is. Just to be able to sit in a room with people and not just give a paper and kind of ask a few questions and leave, but to think through ideas with other people. I think it's a great thing for RSA. It's a big community builder, and it definitely worked that first time, and I'm glad that we were kind of proof positive to it because if it had failed, or they hadn't continued, it would be sad.

[25:05]

K: Yeah, and I think being authorized to do this work by having mentors who aren't just from your own graduate program. I mean, because there is always that, "You have to be nice to me." Right?

[laughter]

K: But getting to hang out with Cheryl Glenn for the week, where at a conference I'd never do more than say hello, maybe.

F: That's right. That makes me think of two things. One: Cheryl took a number of us women participants to dinner and had an explicit, professional mentoring session. So there are all these small things I certainly think about that, where on the one hand, some of it wasn't news, but she was so deliberate, that was also part of this seminar experience, right? It had all these features to it that aren't visible when you read the theme or the description or the kinds of things that are available. Around the theme, one of my projects now is about undergraduate research in rhetoric and writing, and part of how Jane Greer, Dominic DelliCarpini, and I are interpreting data, you know, there's always a question: is the hit that a student gets off undergraduate research simply from doing undergraduate research and having mentorship and a long project, or are they gaining something that's specific to the discipline in which they're doing the research? And as we listened to transcripts of our focus-group data, part of what students seem to learn—whichever school they do rhetoric research, whether they're in comm doing it or in comp doing it—they become teachers of the knowledge in our field, and they bring it up, whether they want to be able to teach the students sitting next to them in the class because they are on fire about what they are doing and they think their classmates could, or because they come here and they have the experience at a poster session or something like that of actually being able to share knowledge. They lifted that out, but I'm sure it clicked for me as something to talk about in relationship to how we've learned to talk about rhetoric as a teaching tradition, connecting to the first seminar.

B: How important was it to develop mentor-mentee relationship in that seminar? Were you able to develop that kind of relationship with some of them?

F: I mean, here we are!

[laughter]

K: I mean, the other person that was mentioned that I hung out with a bunch was Linda Ferreira-Buckley.

S: Oh, yeah. She was great.

K: I was really interested in eighteenth-century stuff, and she was doing that, and I didn't have somebody on my campus quite in that way. Yeah, she wrote letters for me when I went on the job market. I sent her pictures of my kid.

[laughter]

K: Yeah!

E: Yeah, yeah. But I think there was also, like, our peer-to-peer mentoring and collaborations. Like, Jenn and I have done a few projects together. Cheryl was my advisor, so I was already so lucky to be working with her, but it was great. She was great during that week, and Linda was amazing, and I remember talking with Susan Jarratt when she came in to do the workshop. Just being able to talk with those people was great. But I think the peer piece, too, you kind of realize that the peer-to-peer and kind of creating a cohort was really helpful to make through the profession that way, too.

F: Absolutely.

S: For me, it was—especially because I was coming out of an education department, and so I had no cohort. That was, like, it. Literally, that was it. So for me to find people who not only like me for who I am, I *think*—

[laughter]

E: Come on, René.

S: —but also shared some interests, that was very important for me. It was great, you know, in that sense.

W: [paper shuffling] I've seen the list.

B: There was a lot of community-building, networking, mentoring it seems, through this program?

F: Didn't we also do an RSA presentation in Memphis⁴ coming out of the seminar—

E: We did.

F: —some of us who were going to that RSA? Which I think that was my first RSA conference, so my first RSA was actually the institute because I'd been in graduate school on the quarter system and that had made the conference seem like the last good idea as a graduate student in negotiating all those deadlines. So I had never come to an RSA conference until after the RSA institute.

K: Was Memphis the following summer?

F: I think so.

W: It was. I did not come because I was in the last week of writing my dissertation.

[laughter]

K: Yeah, I didn't come because I probably had a six-month-old.

E: I remember that, yeah. I'm just realizing, did Shirley [Logan]'s book come out right after this? That's amazing.

[30:02]

W: Yes, I think that's an interesting—I think both Shirley and Jeff Walker had books that were very much in process and very much a part, topically, of that week.

E: Yeah, that's exciting. 'Cause we were not reading chapters from her book, they had not yet been [published]—

W: No, Shirley was developing her—

E: That's cool.

F: You know, one of the features of the seminar that I remember sort of coming up maybe during Shirley's time with us. You know, we were a seriously predominantly white group of seminarians, and the issue of who's present both in the history and in doing the historiography, that was a present topic very much, and was with us in a way that is a puzzle of representation.

[agreement]

B: I can see one of the sessions that was really interesting with you.

⁴ The RSA conference was held in Memphis in 2006.

[agreement]

E: But that was revolutionary even, for me, talking about that. I think Shirley really pushed it. She always does, which I think is so great. She was a good mentor to us all that week as well, but yeah.

W: To think about what that week would look like now, if you were to do it in 2018.

[quiet laughter]

W: That would be a lens to frame the whole week, not the last session on the last day.

F: Mmhmm. That's right.

B: You called it revolutionary. Can you tell us something more about it?

E: Well, kind of what we've been saying a little bit is just like—Jeff Walker had just published a piece that was arguing for the history of rhetoric as a teaching tradition and kind of [challenging] the idea that theory is the thing that we should be talking about and pedagogy is kind of secondary.⁵ I think we've all been bringing up—at least I know Liz has a few times—the idea, what was composition's relationship to rhetoric and how do we come together? And if you are on the English side, what's your investment? And if you are on the comm side, what's our shared investment? I think Roxanne Mountford and Bill Keith's deep concern in trying to—and Rosa Eberly too—in making bridges between English and comm was for them to say, "We've always taught this," was Jeff's argument. That was new. That was new, and it was something new to even say and be okay with. And not just say, "Theory is the thing, and teaching is the thing we're not gonna be—it's not interesting." And so when we all came together, I think especially for the comp people, we were like, "We have a lot to say about teaching." And I think from the comm people, they were saying, "We don't talk about teaching as much, but we want to talk about this. We spend a lot of time teaching, and we want to see ourselves as part of this tradition." And so there was just a lot of excitement around, "What does it mean to teach rhetoric?" Then, at the same time, there was all this troubling of "the rhetorical tradition" and all these other—you know, Shirley's work and Cheryl's work and all these critiques of the Western canon were just emerging. I mean, that was really, they were in the late 90s being published, so catching that critique up to rhetorical education was fun, and it felt like, "Okay, we can put these two things together and a lot can happen."

F: That's right, and the implications to go beyond what you *can* put in an anthology because pedagogy is physical, and it happens in time, and so there are methodological implications to getting really interested in instruction, and I remember Linda especially bringing those forward. And what does a document really do for you if you're studying a

⁵ Perhaps Walker's 2006 *RSQ* article "What Difference a Definition Makes, or William Dean Howells and the Sophist's Shoes."

theory versus if you're studying an exchange between humans in a room? And those sorts of things, I mean, they opened up research projects in a way that had exigence that maybe wasn't the case before. Had felt marginal rather than potentially central.

E: 'Cause you are really interested—and are—about performance and how do you capture this performance?

F: Right. And when a performance, you know, if it has to relate to an important or groundbreaking theory moment, that's a tough sell. But if it's about the practice of something, then you're in a different zone. And to have that have legitimacy and urgency because of how we were trying to articulate a tradition really changed what it felt like to be interested in that kind of stuff, and to want to also have a career, you know?

[laughter]

E: I think we were participating—I mean, this was happening outside the institute. It wasn't just us. But I think that they really chose a great theme that felt exciting and cutting-edge at that moment that a lot of stakeholders could jump in on.

F: And that continued mentorship. Like René, you mentioned talking with Mike Leff, and a lot of those relationships just carried forward in different ways, and Liz, you mentioned it too.

[34:56]

S: And just the idea of time. I like that way you said "time." They all spent time with us, and I think that is hard to replicate. And even now, because it's so big now, the relationship's a little bit different than it was back then. You know, I still remember everybody spent some time with us, and that was special.

F: Yeah. It was really special.

S: It was like, "This moment we have, we're gonna share this moment together." And so that for me was really important.

[agreement]

K: Do you remember, speaking of that moment that you are mentioning, do you remember Karlyn's? Karlyn Kohrs Campbell? Because she did this whole thing—was it the end or was it the beginning? Her talk was really about how—ways of organizing a history of rhetoric survey.

F: Yes!

K: But then it was, like, freaking Karlyn Kohrs Campbell!

[laughter]

K: You know, like, she—for someone to present that sort of traditional classroom problem but doing it, like, who she was through what her work had been, of totally upending the whole notion of the canon was really—

E: Yeah, that was cool.

F: And there was such a pragmatic aspect to the seminar too.

K: Yeah.

[papers shuffling]

B: How do you see it now? Do you have any advice for graduate students to how to participate in those kinds of conversations? Are there any maybe note-taking strategies, or maybe talking to mentors strategies? What are your suggestions for graduate students?

K: You know, I remember getting all this coaching in grad school. I went to a program that was so tiny, their method was go to all our conferences and meet people, and I remember feeling really, really bad at how hard that was, like I should have been better at it. And I think the way the [institute's] structure was set up that let that happen was so much better, so I think not so much advice to graduate students as advice to, you know, now that we're in leadership positions really, how do we keep creating those small communities? Like you say, even the institute has grown so much. Growth is good, but there's a loss with it too.

E: It's still good though. Come to 2019 at Maryland.

[laughter]

F: That's right.

E: And I'm excited. Scott and I are hosting in Maryland with Kristy Maddux and the comm department, and it's exciting to kind of see how big it is, but also the real positive responses that people have. And I just—you rarely hear negative things coming out of these experiences. I just hope people embrace it when they're there and really take it seriously, because it's a really special thing that RSA offers, and they really believe in. Or that we all believe in.

[agreement]

F: Go and be present—what you just said. It's the wrong thing to go to and think, "I'm also gonna complete revisions on this," or "I'm also gonna be finishing that online class that I'm also taking that summer." If you are going to do it, *really* do it.

E: And socialize with the people in your group and meet other people, because it does—

W: Yeah.

F: That's right.

B: What other outcomes do you see in 2019 for this, for the summer institute?

E: The outcomes of ours?

B: No, no, no. For graduate students or the outcome of the whole summer institute in comparison to 2005.

E: Oh! Me personally?

K: It's your institute.

[laughter]

F: Yeah, you two are on the spot.

E: Well, when I think about it now, I don't even know how many workshops they offered. Was it two or three? We have, like 24, workshops and eight week-long seminars. I think Shirley's and the rest of the leaders' plug for diversity, I hope, is represented in this institute. That has been a major objective for us, to bring scholars in who are working from different perspectives. There is no way that we could—not that there is anything wrong with how that [inaugural institute] was run—but like Scott said, I think this is a reflection of how much the field is troubling, you know, "the" rhetorical tradition or what "the" understanding of rhetorical education is by how, I hope, diverse the offerings look like.

[39:42]

W: I think, too, there's just been a real—we spent a lot of time thinking about it being where it is too. Being in the Washington, DC, suburbs, and how to—not with every single workshop—but I think there was discussion with every single one of these topics about what it means to have it here in DC, what are the opportunities for archival studies, site visits? So thinking about how to deepen the learning experience by connecting the theme to the geographic location and cultural location was important.

E: It's also an interesting moment that you're asking because they are doing the project—which is new—at Reno this next summer.⁶ And so they'll be doing kind of what we did and be going through this, and hopefully, you know, ten years from now, the projects will be getting as much love and good feelings about what that experience was because I think it's good that RSA is continuing to rethink how people experience the association.

W: That's a good final line.

E: Still come to the institute!

W: That's a good final line right there.

[laughter]

F: Well done.

[general expressions of gratitude]

⁶ I.e., the RSA Project in Power, Place, and Publics, held in Reno, Nevada, in May 2019.