Collaborative Scholarship and the Idea of Authorship

Drs. Anne Zanzucchi & Tom Hothem
UC Merced Writing Program
“As to Writing... Do we expect that every Man that publishes a Book, and sets his name to it, should *Bona fide*, be the Author *of it all* himself? ... [H]ave not several Authors, who are particular for being voluminous, their several Journeymen that work for them?"

— Daniel Defoe, from *The Commentator*, 1720
When you think of a writer, what kind of person do you think of?

William Wordsworth, 1770–1850
[A]ll good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. …
I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. …
… [O]ft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.
Wordsworth himself couldn’t have done what he did without at least two key acquaintances.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772–1834

Dorothy Wordsworth, 1771–1855
2. The Web of Authorship:
Communities of Collaboration

“Writing ... is become a very considerable Branch of the English Commerce; Composing, Inventing, Translating, Versifying, &c., are the several Manufactures which supply this Commerce. The Booksellers are the ... Employers. The several Writers, Authors, Copyers, Sub-Writers, and all other Operators with Pen and Ink, are the Workmen employed by the said Master Manufacturers, in the forming, dressing, and finishing the said Manufactures; as the Combers, Spinners, Weavers.”

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• Writing expertise
• Interdisciplinary perspective
Basic participants in any publishing project, whether explicitly collaborative or not (readers/audience help determine author’s purpose/message):

- author(s)
- their family, friends, co-workers, colleagues
- audiences (academic, professional, popular)
- publishers
- editors
- peer reviewers
- conference attendees
- listserv participants
- teachers, scholars and librarians
- production teams (managing and layout editors, graphic designers)
- booksellers
Choosing an Approach

Analyze and discuss the team’s process

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- **Writing Strategies**: How will text be created?
Document Control

- **Email Exchanges**: Always cc the group; Title files in a sequence [e.g. AbstractDraft1, etc.]; Maintain a log
- **Googledocs**: Check site routinely!
- **PBwiki**: Create a page and then add text rather than attachment
Potential roles/strategies for your groups

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- *team collaboration*—when multiple authors work on parts of a single work (often of some magnitude). This differs from collective collaboration in the sense that no single authorship is claimed. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is one such example (which involved nine principle writers), and, even more currently, Wikipedia.
and also...

- *responsive collaboration*—when one author sends a draft to another who revises, expands, or otherwise alters it, and returns it to the first who may continue the process, and so forth.
- *epistolary collaboration*—when two letter-writers create a substantial dialogue that could be read as one work in two voices. (cf. listservs, email exchanges, discussion groups, blogging)
- *editorial collaboration*—when one author revises and adds to the work of another, who maintains public authorship.
- *production collaboration*—when a performance piece originally offered by a writer to a theater or film production company, undergoes revision, development, and expansion, until those who contribute to these changes might be credited as co-authors. (cf. Chris Markus, Steven McFeely with *Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*)
- *citational collaboration*—when small contributions such as annotations, brief passages, or lengthier quotes are incorporated into a work with appropriate acknowledgment.
Organizational Patterns

Based on the results of a survey study of various professional organizations and their writing activities, seven organizational patterns for collaborative authoring were identified. These patterns include:

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7. one dictates, another transcribes and edits.
Level of satisfaction in the group writing project was influenced by:

- the degree to which goals are articulated and shared;
- the degree of openness and mutual respect;
- the degree of control the writers have over the text;
- the degree to which writers can respond to others who modify the text;
- the way in which credit (directly or indirectly) is acknowledged;
- the presence of an agreed upon procedure for managing conflicts and resolving disputes;
- the number and types of (bureaucratic) constraints imposed on the authors-- deadlines, technical/legal requirements, etc., and;
- the status of the project within the organization.
3. The Process: Some Kind of Monster?

See what kinds of collaboration apply in the following clip from the rock group Metallica’s Some Kind of Monster, a documentary about the making of their album St. Anger.

The Cast of Characters:
- James Hetfield, lead singer and guitarist
- Lars Ulrich, drummer
- Kirk Hammett, lead guitarist
- Bob Rock, producer doubling as bassist
- Phil Towle, performance therapist

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQMk79XOxE0&feature=related (start at 2:44)

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- **Feeling expressers**: Can be digressive, but unexpressed feelings can interfere with group work. Remember to explicitly identify a feeling as a feeling, and take responsibility for feelings by using “I statements.” Good feeling expressers say things like “I’m upset that there's been so little discussion” instead of saying “Tom keeps dominating this discussion and imposing his ideas.”

Helpful Roles:

- **Harmonizers**: Help resolve disagreements, often by depersonalizing them. Harmonizers insist upon referring to ideas by names that reflect the contents of the ideas rather than by the name of the person who is arguing for the idea. Harmonizers consider ideas upon their own merits. Harmonizers can frequently defuse volatile and potentially destructive arguments by jumping in and paraphrasing ideas of the two camps, calling attention objectively to both the advantages and the disadvantages of both sides.

Helpful Roles:

- **Compromisers**: Model behavior of all group members, and invite criticism of their own ideas. They sometimes withdraw their ideas and can admit error and fallibility. They create an atmosphere in the group which is fertile because people are less apprehensive about being wrong; because harmonizers show that it's always OK to back down and because people are consequently less afraid to criticize ideas for fear of hurting someone's feelings.

Helpful Roles:

- **Gatekeepers**: Keep an objective eye on the group's progress during the meeting, and are concerned with having a balance of member participation in the group. They help keep individuals from taking too much "air time," and they help draw quiet members into the discussion. They also remember what has to be accomplished, and they keep an eye on the clock to make sure that the group can accomplish it. They help the group keep an eye on the tasks before them.

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- **Status and recognition seekers**: Distinguish themselves from the group, dwell upon their achievements, or play games to seek sympathy.
Sir Isaac Newton in conversation with Robert Hooke, concerning his claim to have discovered the inverse square law of gravitation before him: “Merely because one says something might be so, it does not follow that it has been proved that it is.”

Newton famously added elsewhere that “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”—i.e., by utilizing and acknowledging others’ work.
Who is Robert Hooke?
You might know him as:

- The inventor of the law of elasticity: “The Power of any Spring is in the same proportion with the Tension thereof”
- Friend of Robert Boyle, the father of modern Chemistry
- Author of watershed book on microscopy, *Micrographia*
- The first biologist to observe “cells” in living matter
- An astronomer who discovered planetary rotation and binary stars, and who proposed a wave theory of light
- Friend of Christopher Wren and fellow surveyor involved in rebuilding London after the Great Fire of 1666
He has also gone down in history as laying claim to such achievements as:

- Designing the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral and the College of Physicians, despite there being no evidence to support this.
- Designing or improving a range of precision instruments and devices simultaneously with other inventors.
- Developing a pocket watch precise enough to be used by astronomers and navigators, but failed to produce a working prototype.
- Discovering Newton’s Laws of Motion before Newton himself did (the proverbial apple falling from the tree and knocking sense into the young physicist), despite not producing sufficient detailed and dated paperwork to support this claim.
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But unlike Newton, Hooke didn’t clearly document his role in such team-driven projects, so we cannot be sure of his claims.
Some Procedural Tips

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• Remember that writing is a series of sub-processes—among them Brainstorming, Information gathering, Organizing, Drafting, Revising, and Editing
To develop your group perspective in writing, consider:

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***Remember that successful collaboration allows not only for group cohesion but also for creative conflict and the protection of minority views.***
Preparing to write…

- Consider meeting after individual members have gathered information but before they have started writing.

- Each member should report to the group on the information found. What one member has found may affect what another writes.

- The group should evaluate the quality of the information.
Two Approaches to Drafting

• **Dialogic Collaboration**: The group works together on all aspects of the project.

• **Hierarchical Collaboration**: The group divides the tasks into components assigned to individuals.

***Note that most collaboration is a mixture of both at any given time in a project.***
Advanced Drafting

• If everyone has done a good job, you will have more than enough material.
• Think about what material can be cut; consider what is necessary for the purpose of your project.
• Begin drafting introduction and conclusion.
Review

• Each drafted section should be read by at least one group member
• Reviewers should try to imagine themselves as the intended audience for the piece
• Some common review questions are:
  1. What questions remain unanswered?
  2. What assertions are insufficiently supported?
  3. What material seems irrelevant?
  4. Would the audience find what they are looking for in the piece?
  5. Is the material presented logically?
Some practical advice for running meetings and workshops during revision

- Distribute drafts to the group well in advance
- Discuss the draft in progress as a group
- Consider the following questions:
  1. Is the organization firm and logical?
  2. Are the connections clear?
  3. What transitions need to be added?
  4. What areas need development?
  5. What sections should be consolidated?
Acknowledgements and Bibliography

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• Writing studies referred to in Section 2 were drawn from: Ede, L., & Lunsford, A. (1990) *Singular Texts / Plural Authors*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University.

• “Positive and Negative Roles” adapted from Brian A. Connery and John L.Vohs. “Group Work and Collaborative Writing.”

  [http://facultyfiles.deanza.edu/gems/reberm/GroupWorkandCollaborativeWri.doc](http://facultyfiles.deanza.edu/gems/reberm/GroupWorkandCollaborativeWri.doc)