



CHAPTER 3*

Giving Voice to Students

A Rhetorical Analysis of the Frameworks

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Introduction

Although our daily work may look different, writing center professionals, writing instructors, and reference and instruction librarians are, first and foremost, educators. We use pedagogical recommendations from our professional communities to inform, direct, and assess our work with students. Putting the professional documents guiding post-secondary writing and information literacy into conversation with each other reveals the intersections of these fields and the benefits of viewing one's work through the lens of another profession. Writing and library instruction were not intended to be conducted in isolation, but the increasing compartmentalization of higher education makes it easy to do so. Yet a writing professional and a librarian who understand each other's roles can use this conversation to improve interactions that invite emerging student voices.

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While all educators contribute to the development of student voice, librarians and writing professionals have particular access to students during vital transitional moments. These transitions involve induction into new communities and modes of discourse, and the library, writing center, and writing classroom form a spatial nexus that nurtures students in the development of their authentic professional and academic voices. By designing assignments, activities, and interventions that validate student voice, educators validate a student's presence in higher education; such validation helps students develop a new identity as college students capable of engaging in academic scholarship and discourse. Many higher education researchers and professionals view first-year student success in terms of identity development. Students who identify as college students believe they will succeed as college students, and this belief has been proven to foster success in higher education.¹

The connection between identity and success in higher education is not limited to first-year students. Students also transition from general education curricula to advanced courses required for their disciplines and once again consider their identity; the first- or second-year college student becomes an aspiring social worker, political scientist, clinical psychologist, or elementary school teacher. Again, students are asked to consider their positions in discourse communities and to view themselves as being both in professional roles and capable of contributing to the academic conversation of these communities. In the same way, students transitioning into a graduate program experience another identity shift; these students must learn to see themselves as having expertise in their field and as being capable of graduate level research and writing.

In this chapter, we focus on the usage and frequency of terms related to the idea of student voice in our rhetorical analysis of three primary documents: *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* from the Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Writing Project (WPA, NCTE, and NWP); the related *WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition*; and the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).² This analysis informs our discussion of the emergence of student voice in the library, writing center, and other transitional spaces. It also allows us to present and reflect upon our current classroom collaborations and determine how successfully they foster student voice. Since student voice plays a crucial role in the development of postsecondary research and writing skills, fostering and amplifying student voice is the primary objective of our work. Students whose voices are heard and valued are much better positioned to develop the authoritative, authentic, and original voices they need in order to fully engage with their new communities and modes of discourse.

A Rhetorical Analysis of the WPA and ACRL Frameworks

Through education, especially higher education, students learn to adopt the conventions of discourse communities. Broadly speaking, students encounter an existing conversation and learn to add their own voices to it, making the language of the academy their own. Students pursuing higher education find themselves on the threshold of a new linguistic world, and their experiences in classes, from introductory to graduate level, usher them across this border. These experiences do not happen in isolation, as Bakhtin explains:

As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing ... language, for the ideological consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own.³

Students encounter academic language in these essentially social contexts; when they come to understand themselves, their ethical purposes (ethos) and their connection to these contexts, students can make this new language their own. Librarians, writing center professionals, and writing instructors can use the Frameworks to structure, guide, and assess student progress in the acquisition of academic voice, but they must recognize a superficial application of the Frameworks may create situations where skill development takes precedence over individual intellectual development.⁴ Using the Frameworks in concert can avoid this problem.

When read closely in conjunction with one another, the WPA and ACRL Frameworks illustrate how writing and library professionals can cultivate spaces in which students' authentic voices are heard, nurtured, and amplified. Although each Framework constructs the idea of student voice using different words, and each situates emerging student voice differently, both Frameworks present voice as a set of contextualized choices made by authors to communicate their informed ideas and beliefs to an audience. These Frameworks speak to each other and guide their professional communities to remain stu-

dent-centered as they assess their interactions, interventions, and instructional practices.

The WPA Framework does not use the word *voice*, but instead locates student voice within the notion of authentic audience. It has, as its explicit audience, educators who are preparing students for college success. At the same time, it shapes a vision of success in college writing having ramifications for first-year composition as well as writing in the disciplines.

The WPA Framework has three sections: an introduction; an articulation of habits of mind that support success; and a description of experiences with reading, writing, and analysis that develop those habits of mind. The authors respect the notion of writing for an authentic audience, naming audience in the introduction as “instructors who teach writing and include writing in their classes at all levels and in all subjects” along with “parents, policymakers, employers, and the general public.”⁵ The introduction includes the following crucial statement: “At its essence, the Framework suggests that writing activities and assignments should be designed with genuine purposes and audiences in mind.”⁶ The WPA Framework returns again and again to the idea of a genuine or authentic audience, and the authors argue that authentic audience is necessary for the development of habits of mind including curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition.⁷

In the descriptions of these habits of mind, audience awareness plays the largest role in developing curiosity and metacognition.⁸ Curiosity involves “inquiry as a process to develop questions relevant for authentic audiences within a variety of disciplines” and communicates “to multiple audiences inside and outside school using discipline-appropriate conventions.”⁹ Curiosity is followed by openness and engagement, which both encourage respecting and listening to the views of others. Likewise, responsibility, as defined in this document, appears as “the ability to take ownership of one’s actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.”¹⁰ Finally, metacognition involves reflection on the choices an author makes in the interest of communicating to an authentic audience.¹¹ These habits, whether explicitly or implicitly performed, all involve consideration of the other, the reader, the audience.

The next section of the WPA Framework outlines the experiences supporting these explicit and implicit habits of mind. Nearly every experience described involves writing as an act necessitating consideration of audience, context, and purpose. While the WPA Framework does not directly mention student voice, it positions student writers as individuals with an important message to deliver to carefully considered readers. This section of the document begins to use the term *conversation*, which implies a voice in dialogue. It does not, however, address the very real challenge of finding an authentic audience in the classroom.

In 2014, the WPA issued the *WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition* which aligns with the WPA Framework.¹² In this statement, however, authentic audience does not emerge as the primary vehicle for fostering student voice. Instead, we find a particular emphasis on the act of composing and the development of students' ideas. The introductory section of this outcomes statement describes composing as "complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies" and are "individual and social" acts that "demand continued practice and informed guidance."¹³ The authors view writers' growth through an interdisciplinary lens that takes into account professional and civic goals.

The outcomes supporting the composing process include: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and composing; and knowledge of conventions. The outcomes represent rhetorical knowledge actively as "the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts."¹⁴ The term voice is used here to represent something modulated in response to audience, which allows student writers to "develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure."¹⁵ Significantly, voice is not associated with agency; rather, as in classical rhetoric, circumstances outside the individual determine voice. In completing this discussion of rhetoric, the WPA emphasizes that students learn "the main purposes of composing in their fields."¹⁶ While purpose may be viewed as agency, the subsequent phrase, "in their fields," reminds readers decisions may be determined by outside factors, such as the conventions of a particular discourse community.

The WPA Outcomes Statement section on critical thinking pays attention to students' ideas, asserting first-year students should "use strategies ... to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources."¹⁷ The section on reading and composition processes explains the social nature of writing and revision and the value of collaboration. Like the WPA Framework, the WPA Outcomes Statement views writing as social and as active, but student voice is, again, largely absent from consideration in the text.

The ACRL Framework, on the other hand, emphasizes student voice in multiple areas related to the responsibilities of professionals and students in their ethical use of information, particularly through scholarship.¹⁸ Through its consistent emphasis on metacognition and metaliteracy, this document encourages readers to reflect on their own voices and the ways they create, share, and use information.

Voice plays a significant role in the frame "Authority is Constructed and Contextual."¹⁹ In this frame, the authors remind their audience that authority is determined differently by different communities and that one must under-

stand one's position in a community in order to evaluate sources effectively, since "experts know how to seek authoritative voices but also recognize that unlikely voices can be authoritative, depending on need."²⁰ This frame encourages the contextualization and examination of power structures authorizing some voices over others. By associating authority with voice and considering authority as constructed and contextual, this frame empowers students to view their own voices as authoritative in certain contexts.

The frame "Information Has Value" continues the theme of empowerment by reminding us information affects the lived experiences of those who seek and employ it. Information literacy "experts understand that value may be wielded by powerful interests in ways that marginalize certain voices. However, value may [also] be leveraged for civic, economic, social, or personal gains."²¹ This frame empowers the student to make decisions about information and to recognize that these decisions have real-world ramifications. This consistent view of information as power wielded by individuals acting within communities highlights the agency and ethos that must be present to create authentic student voice.

Finally, the frame "Scholarship as Conversation" legitimizes student voice in the academic context.²² Conversations bind communities, and it is through these conversations that individuals achieve full membership. To help students understand themselves as part of the college community, their active participation in scholarly conversation must be possible. In this frame, the authors remind us established power and authority structures potentially privilege certain voices and information even though novice learners and experts at all levels can take part in the same conversation. This inequity may impact a student's ability to participate in scholarly discourse. Developing familiarity with the sources of evidence, methods, and modes of discourse in their relevant field allows novice learners to enter the ongoing conversations in that field. In addition, new forms of scholarly conversations provide more avenues in which a wide variety of individuals may have a voice in the conversation.

As writing and information literacy professionals, we have the ability to facilitate entry into this conversation through our example, our teaching, and our encouragement. As we help students navigate actual and perceived barriers to participation in scholarly and professional discourse, we validate their voices and support their transition into new forms of communication. Interestingly, the ACRL Framework, with its contextualization of authority and orientation toward community participation provides the most guidance for finding opportunities to foster the growth of student voice.

However, the WPA Framework does remind us the written word lacks power in the absence of audience and purpose. Understanding their own audiences and purposes helps students recognize the authority and power of their own voices, and the ACRL Framework connects this recognition to the dy-

namics of the communities in which students communicate. Using the ACRL Framework in conjunction with the WPA Framework allows library and writing professionals to encourage students to address rhetorical situations without deferring their own voices and purposes in consideration of audience and context. The idea of the scholarly conversation is central to our work with students, and an explicit focus on student voice encourages us to examine how students are positioning themselves in the academic context and how we can cultivate their full engagement with academic and professional discourse.

Putting the Frameworks into Practice

As library and writing professionals, this careful analysis of the intersections of the ACRL and WPA Frameworks provides the theoretical foundation upon which we build our practice of supporting students as they enter scholarly and professional conversations. Thus, the ACRL frame “Scholarship as Conversation” emerges as central to our efforts to foster student voice.²³ Our work with students in the writing center and at the reference desk has emphasized two additional ACRL frames: “Research as Inquiry” and “Authority is Constructed and Contextual.”²⁴ These frames clearly connect to the habits of mind articulated in the WPA Framework, especially curiosity, openness, engagement, and responsibility.²⁵

Although not directly addressed in the frame “Research as Inquiry,” student voice is implied through the role of student as questioner.²⁶ Through their research and writing, students may be entering an ongoing and unresolved conversation where even simple questions may be viewed as disruptive. By validating students’ interests and inviting exploration of authentic questions, librarians and writing professionals can help students see an opening in the conversation through which they can enter. The importance of “Research as Inquiry” for developing student voice is further emphasized by findings from a recent study conducted by Project Information Literacy (PIL).²⁷ In a survey of recent college graduates, PIL found only slightly more than one in four respondents felt college had helped them learn to frame and ask questions of their own.²⁸ These findings reveal an opportunity for collaborative teaching practices that help students develop the habits and dispositions needed to become lifelong learners. In library research consultations, we center our information searching on students’ own questions. When students come to us, we spend the first few minutes of the consultation encouraging them to rephrase or to ask questions about their topics if they have not yet articulated a research question. In writing center sessions, we use open-ended questions to direct consultations and create space for students to work independently.²⁹ Practices such as these foster curiosity and engagement by involving students

in an authentic inquiry process and giving them space to make connections and find meaning.³⁰

Closely related to the idea of the student-as-questioner is the ACRL frame “Authority is Constructed and Contextual.”³¹ In order to make room for student voice, librarians and writing professionals benefit from examining the constructs and contexts of our own authority. When we recognize authority within students, we allow them to retain control of their research and writing processes. By encouraging students to determine the direction of a research consultation and to make decisions about what sources are relevant and authoritative for their purposes, librarians help students develop their own authentic and authoritative voices. In the writing center, we emphasize successful choices students made during the composition process, encourage students to treat their writing challenges as problems to be solved rather than mistakes to be corrected, and use body language that confirms the student’s authority over the text.³² These practices of librarians and writing professionals develop responsibility and openness in students who take ownership of their research and writing actions during consultations and examine their own perspectives in light of those of others.³³

Integral to our shared practice is the knowledge that the library and writing center are physical spaces where students engage in academic and professional discourse. Many competing voices inhabit these spaces: the potentially authoritative voice of the professional, the seemingly more approachable voice of the peer consultant, the pervasive voice of the instructor, and the sometimes uncertain voice of the student. For decades, writing center scholarship has investigated ways to bring these voices into harmonious conversation by positioning students as the owners of authentic, original voices exercising authority over the texts they create. Foundational essays, such as Brooks’ “Minimalist Tutoring,” encourage both writing professionals and librarians to help students recognize their authority by establishing them as the experts of their text.³⁴ The focus of all our work should be communicating to students that their papers have the same value as any other piece of writing; our words and actions must tell students their writing deserves to be read and thought about with the same level of attention we would give any other written text.³⁵

However, students, especially students in transitional phases of their higher education careers, can be reluctant to assume authority over their texts and the processes by which they produce them. Their desire to understand and meet instructor expectations often supersedes their desire to assume agency over ideas and express agency through their writing. In the absence of their instructor’s voice and authority, students position writing teachers and librarians as authorities who will make decisions about the research and writing process for them.

To address this hesitance on the part of students, librarians and writing professionals can work together to help students with research, documen-

tation, and citation. Faculty can be invited to participate in this process by working with professionals to negotiate the tension between their expectations and their students' individual conceptions of audience, purpose, and authority. Librarians and writing professionals who transcend traditional professional boundaries in order to instruct and empower their students encourage students to transcend the boundaries between research and writing as well as the boundaries that prevent them from fully engaging in academic discourse.

In order to completely embrace their ability to succeed in the college environment, students transitioning from high school to college, from general education courses to required courses for a particular discipline, or from introductory courses to advanced ones, need to find their authentic voices and participate in conversations, both oral and written, in which they listen to others and are heard by others. These conversations typically take place during one-on-one conferences and consultations in the library, in the writing center, and in faculty offices. The challenge we address through our collaborations is bringing these same conversations into classrooms, and other shared learning spaces, then guiding students in transition as they explore and enter the realm of scholarly and professional discourse. Our understanding of the Frameworks and our explicit goal of fostering student voice guides our close collaboration in support of transitional student learning.

Collaborations in the First-Year Classroom

The nature of assignments encountered in college can be bewildering to first-year students. Project Information Literacy's 2013 report on how college freshman conduct course research demonstrated college-level assignments "require independent choices and encourage intellectual exploration."³⁶ This emphasis on choice and exploration is a significant departure from the more structured assignments students encounter in high school. While many students find this new freedom exciting, most also find it challenging. One student interviewed as part of the Project Information Literacy study reported, "[T]hinking about what I'm interested in is really scary ... being forced to find something that I'm passionate about is kind of daunting."³⁷ In addition, many students find it stressful to try to determine an instructor's expectations for an assignment; anxiety about meeting assignment requirements, combined with the challenge of exercising academic freedom, can make it difficult for students to formulate authentic research and writing questions.

It is not surprising, then, that librarians and faculty often encounter students who take a pragmatic approach when choosing a topic for a research writing assignment. Such students select topics they think will be easy to research or will please their professors. Rarely do students seriously consider

their own interests when selecting a research topic. In the same way, students, especially first-year students, seldom take the time to develop their research topics into research questions, which means they often miss the opportunity to approach research as inquiry, a threshold concept identified in the ACRL Framework,³⁸ or to develop curiosity and openness, habits of mind encouraged in the WPA Framework.³⁹ Developing the habits of mind and practical skills required to understand research as inquiry is critical to the development of authentic student voice; therefore, fostering student inquiry in the first year must be a priority for both librarians and faculty who work with first-year students.

At Wheelock College, the first-year seminar course required of all students in the fall semester offers an interesting opportunity for fostering the development of student voice. This introductory general education course, taught in a variety of disciplines, focuses on building community among first-year students and recognizes that writing and learning are both individual and social; this recognition mirrors the values emphasized in the WPA Framework.⁴⁰ Many first-year seminar instructors offer non-traditional research assignments believing these offer students more opportunities to explore, question, and engage their own interests.⁴¹ To encourage the development of student voice during instruction, librarians, writing professionals, and first-year faculty recently introduced a technique used among K-12 educators and community organizers to generate authentic research questions.

The Question Formulation Technique (QFT), developed by the Right Question Institute, is a method for generating, improving, and prioritizing questions that helps students gain confidence in their ability to ask appropriate or authentic questions.⁴² Exercises like the QFT help learners “acquire strategic perspectives on inquiry and a greater repertoire of investigative methods,” as indicated in the ACRL frame “Research as Inquiry.”⁴³ The experience of developing one’s own questions can be an especially powerful one in the first-year seminar where students are discovering new disciplines, exploring new discourse communities, and creating their own sense of meaning and belonging within those communities. Such activities allow students to once again engage in the habits of mind articulated in the WPA Framework, particularly curiosity and openness. Thus, collaboration between library and writing professionals in first-year seminars at Wheelock College center on bringing the QFT into the classroom.

Three different first-year seminars engaged in this question generating activity. In each case, the QFT facilitator and first-year faculty member discussed the assignment at hand and developed prompts which the students used to generate questions. In an anthropology course, students had been asked to write a short essay in which they explored and explained a symbol of a specific culture. In an American studies course, students needed to use primary sourc-

es to write an original research paper about an American leader. In a literature course, students had been asked to write a short story based on the life experiences of an individual they interviewed.

Using the QFT, students worked in groups to generate as many questions as they could about the prompts. The facilitators instructed students to write down each question, without alteration or discussion, as well as number the questions generated. Then students categorized each question as open- or closed-ended, discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each question type, and practiced changing each question type into its inverse. The facilitators then asked the groups to identify the questions they considered to be most important. Once the groups had selected three questions, they shared them with the class, along with their rationale for their choices. Rationales often included consideration of what the audience for their assignments would want or need to know. At the end of the session, students reflected on what they learned using the QFT and how they would apply what they learned when completing their assignment.

Student reflections indicated they developed an appreciation for the role of questioning as a result of their experience with the QFT, and demonstrated dispositional developments in their conception of research as inquiry,⁴⁴ in their curiosity, and in their openness to exploring questions relevant to their interests, as well as those of imagined audiences.⁴⁵ For example, many students recognized open-ended questions offer new avenues of exploration and closed-ended questions may be valuable despite their apparent simplicity.⁴⁶ Students also demonstrated “an open mind and a critical stance”⁴⁷ when they reported new understandings about how questions serve different purposes and meet the needs of different audiences depending on how they are framed rhetorically.⁴⁸

Because the first part of the QFT focuses on generating as many questions as possible, students began to understand that the first question they develop about a topic may not be the most interesting or fruitful. This finding helps them recognize the importance of asking more than one question about a topic and of “value persistence, adaptability, and flexibility”⁴⁹ undertaking investigations in their academic, personal, and professional lives. Reflections like these were especially encouraging indicators of student progress toward the threshold concept described in the ACRL frame “Research as Inquiry,” as well as the WPA Framework’s habits of persistence and flexibility.⁵⁰ Valuing one’s own intellectual curiosity is an important step toward developing one’s own authentic voice, and the writing professionals, first-year faculty, and librarians at Wheelock College will continue incorporating the QFT into first-year seminar instruction.

Furthermore, students reported they found the QFT valuable for the immediate assignment and more general purposes. Students preparing to

do interviews reported the value of distinguishing between open and closed questions and offering a variety of questions in the interview setting. Other students reported they would apply the technique to non-interview writing assignments, supporting the development of adaptable writing processes⁵¹ and flexible habits of mind.⁵² This suggests the QFT helps students understand the connections between learning, research, and writing situations and may also help them distinguish between different types of academic and professional discourse.

Collaborations in the Professional Degree Classroom

Collaborations between library and writing professionals in intermediate courses for professional degree programs, like early childhood education or social work at Wheelock College, have also included the QFT. These courses are designed to introduce students to the theories, conventions, and practices of their chosen field; they are frequently taught in a once-a-week, three-hour block, and their curriculum demands students learn a large amount of unfamiliar content in a short amount of time. Students in these courses often see themselves as novices, or even outsiders. Many of the texts they read have been written by foundational theorists or contemporary researchers, and these authors routinely use specific language containing cues and codes easily understood by those who have already been inducted into that particular discourse community.

As newcomers to these conversations in their academic and professional fields, intermediate-level students struggle to see themselves having the authority or knowledge required to engage in this new mode of discourse and often attempt to engage with it only as “it exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions.”⁵³ In these courses, students may engage with the threshold concepts articulated in the ACRL frames “Scholarship as Conversation”⁵⁴ and “Authority is Constructed and Contextual.”⁵⁵ At the same time, they are developing their intellectual curiosity and openness to new ways of thinking, as well as their experiences with critical thinking that puts a “writer’s ideas in conversation with those in a text in ways that are appropriate to the academic discipline or context.”⁵⁶ Again, using these Frameworks in conjunction with one another supports the development of authentic student voice.

The culminating project in these intermediate courses is generally a lengthy research paper or small-scale study. Many students have never been assigned this type of research project before and rely on habits they used to write research papers in secondary school, such as beginning with a compre-

hensive overview of an overly broad topic. They may also try to replicate the writing style and use of language in their assigned course readings while still developing the ability to understand and contextualize the choices made by the authors of these texts.⁵⁷

In the same way, students in the early stages of their professional degree programs, in many cases, have not yet determined their own purpose and audience. Like their first-year counterparts, they tend to select research topics based on misconceptions about instructor expectations or the perceived ease of finding enough information about a topic. Their conceptions of an appropriate research topic inform their conceptions of a successful research paper and leave little room for the development of an authentic student voice; a voice students must discover and employ before they can fully participate in their discipline's discourse community. As noted in the ACRL frame "Scholarship as Conversation," "developing familiarity with the sources of evidence, methods, and modes of discourse in the field assists novice learners to enter the conversation."⁵⁸ Likewise, second- and third-year students in these courses have only just begun to develop the critical reading, thinking, and writing skills needed to add their own voices to existing scholarly conversations.⁵⁹ Librarians and writing professionals often invite students to contribute to academic conversations associated with their chosen fields; when we do so, we teach students to equate success in their field with the ability to contribute to these conversations. Therefore, our classroom collaborations must focus on helping students develop a sense of authority, purpose, and audience as they begin the research process. Visiting the classroom early in the process to facilitate activities such as the QFT gives us the opportunity to encourage students to view their research projects as a recursive path of inquiry shaped by information searches, critical reading, and reflective writing.

To further emphasize the intersections between writing and research, the writing center director and the librarian who works most closely with the professional degree programs have begun conducting instructional sessions together. Developing authentic questions about their topics guides students not only through their research process, but also through their writing process. When we work together to help students generate, improve, and prioritize their questions by creating classroom experiences that allow students to develop habits of mind intended to foster deeper engagement with the theoretical and research literature of their chosen discipline,⁶⁰ we directly engage with concepts from the ACRL frame "Research as Inquiry" and the habits of curiosity and openness articulated in the WPA Framework.

Working with students collaboratively allows us to encourage students to identify their personal interests, the gaps in their current knowledge, and the connections between their lived experiences and their future goals from a research and writing perspective. When we plan our workshops with students,

we intentionally include activities and reflective writing designed to show students “what [they] don’t know is also a form of knowledge” and encourage them to “discern the shape of what [they] don’t know and why [they] don’t know it.”⁶¹ Encouraging students to view the gaps in their knowledge, as well as the reasons these gaps exist, as valuable encourages them to position themselves as someone possessing expertise in their field. In this way, we engage students with the concept “Authority is Constructed and Contextual,” as outlined in the ACRL Framework.⁶² As students learn to “acknowledge they are developing their own authoritative voices in a particular area and recognize the responsibilities this entails,”⁶³ they begin to see themselves as the professionals they are becoming.

Student reflections written after we used the QFT in human development courses required for professional degree programs indicate the activity reinforced not only the importance of generating research questions, but also the importance of brainstorming in a way that allows students to articulate and externalize their ideas. Students expressed feelings of being prepared or on track to write a paper that will teach them as well as their readers. Notable in these reflections, students expressed the belief they possessed the authority and skill to teach their audience. By incorporating reflective writing exercises into classroom sessions, writing professionals and librarians can aid the development of metacognitive thinking, the culminating habit of mind in the WPA Framework.⁶⁴ Reflection also encourages students to try on professional authority, conceptualize a real audience for their writing, and view themselves as contributors to scholarly and professional discourse, a key disposition in the ACRL frame “Scholarship as Conversation”⁶⁵ and a key element of rhetorical thinking espoused by both the WPA Framework and the WPA Outcomes Statement.

Students also implicitly acknowledge their ability to construct and communicate with a specific audience for a self-determined purpose in their responses to a guided reflection the writing center director uses to begin collaborative workshop sessions designed to introduce students in professional degree courses to resources particular to their field. In addition to building metacognitive skills, this exercise explicitly engages the crucial notion of authentic audience championed in the WPA Framework and reiterates the importance of connecting purpose to authentic audience in the development of student voice.⁶⁶ The exercise asks students to (anonymously) answer the following questions on an index card:

1. What is the topic of your paper?
2. Who is the audience for your paper?
3. Why are you writing this paper?

The writing center director collects the completed cards and uses categories suggested by the students’ responses to sort them into groups while the

librarian presents information about distinguishing between primary and secondary sources in their field and guides students through the online research guide for the course. The cards reveal 40 to 50 percent of the students identify their instructor as their audience, while another 15 to 30 percent consistently list an audience of their own design, such as “parents of adopted children” or “counselors working with foster children.” A small percentage of students also identify themselves as members of the intended audience.

Responses to the question about their paper’s purpose fall into a similar pattern. A small group of students indicate they are writing their paper “to get a grade” or “because it is a requirement of this course.” A slightly larger group of students cite “learning” or “developing skills” as their purpose. Typically, 30 to 40 percent of students list self-determined purposes, such as “conducting research for people who share my interests,” “educating parents of adopted children,” or “helping teachers develop strategies for working with deaf students.” This final group of responses, like the responses from students who identified a self-constructed audience, implicitly recognize the authority and authenticity of student voices. A well-facilitated class discussion addressing the range of responses and inviting students to explore the reasons for their differences helps change this implicit act of recognition into an explicit one. Following this discussion with an activity to help students locate research materials that speak to their personal interests and authentic research questions is a particularly useful way to reposition students as having authority in their discourse communities and encourages the development of student voice in the professional degree classroom. The ACRL Framework’s emphasis on contextualized authority and student voice joins forces here with the WPA Framework’s emphasis on using authentic audience and purpose to enhance student engagement in professional discourse communities.

Collaborations in the Advanced Classroom

Like students in professional degree courses, students in advanced arts and sciences courses are transitioning into full membership in their professional discourse communities and learning to see themselves as valid contributors to scholarly conversation.⁶⁷ Since these transitions can be stressful for students who may be unwilling to relinquish their identities as novices or who have not previously been asked to assume authority in an academic context, collaborations at this level focus on validating students’ feelings of uncertainty and creating a genuine community of inquiry, again building the habit of “metacognition.”⁶⁸

Students in an advanced literature seminar were asked to write a substantial, theoretically-informed work of literary criticism. To encourage students

to view themselves as literary scholars and engage in scholarly conversation during their research and writing process, the instructor and librarian monitored a research discussion board modeled after Kuhlthau's Information Search Process (ISP).⁶⁹ The instructor and librarian collaborated to create discussion prompts that would guide students through the ISP and encourage them to reflect on their experiences; these prompts paid particular attention to the stages of topic selection, pre-focus exploration, and focus formulation. Using the ISP as a model encouraged recognition of the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of the search process—a key component of the ACRL frame “Searching as Strategic Exploration.”⁷⁰ Student, instructor, and librarian participation on the board organically led to several research interventions that cultivated student voice.

Conversing and composing played integral roles in the online discussion and the development of students' scholarly voices since “conversing enables the [student] to articulate thoughts, identify gaps, and clarify inconsistencies in the process of the search” while “composing promotes thinking.”⁷¹ Students used their written responses to articulate their thoughts about their chosen topics, develop personal perspectives on those topics, share research strategies, and consider the role of the literature in developing their personal perspectives. Reflective writing such as this builds on the habits of mind articulated in the WPA Framework—especially curiosity, openness, engagement, flexibility, and metacognition⁷²—students have been developing throughout their collegiate experiences with writing and research. These written reflections alerted the librarian and instructor to the need for interventions, such as recommending additional strategies for research and writing challenges or providing reassurance for students needing encouragement to continue their work. Students also expressed uncertainty about particular genres assigned in the class, such as the annotated bibliography, and in these instances, the librarian and instructor were able to clarify the disciplinary practices associated with that genre.

The collaborative nature of the discussion board helped diminish “the common experience of isolation in research projects and [enabled the students] to help one another in the process of learning.”⁷³ The discussion board allowed the librarian and instructor to be visibly engaged in each student's project. More importantly, students demonstrated engagement⁷⁴ with and interest in each other's work, developing a practice of mutual support. Like the professionals facilitating the class, students recognized the anxiety and uncertainty their classmates experienced and intervened by sharing their own concerns, offering advice, and providing encouragement. The discussion board established a collaborative community of scholars who had become more comfortable with their own voices and expertise through repeated experiences and practice “work[ing] with others in various stages of writing.”⁷⁵

This community encouraged the students to embrace the social nature of research and engage with the knowledge practices and dispositions outlined in the ACRL frame “Scholarship as Conversation.”⁷⁶ They shared their research questions and insights and responded to each other with enthusiasm and curiosity. Students also shared article citations and resources they deemed potentially helpful to their peers. Within their own community of scholars, students modeled the way expert scholars “engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations.”⁷⁷ Through their participation in the discussion board, students saw themselves adopting new conventions as shifts in audience and context demanded it. Students were also able to reflect on their ability to navigate different conventions and thus entered the drafting stage with more awareness of the role of their own voices in the scholarly conversation, in many ways reaching the goal writing professionals and librarians have been encouraging them to embrace throughout their foundational and intermediate experiences. At the same time, the presence in the class of students who were not humanities majors drew attention to disciplinary discourse as convention.

The discussion board invited students to approach scholarship as a conversation and also provided the librarian and instructor the opportunity to illustrate and model the method of discourse used in literary studies. The research project required students to adopt the practices and conventions of literary scholars. For some, this marked their transition from introductory to advanced scholarship in their major discipline, but for students pursuing majors in the social sciences or professional fields, this expectation demanded they learn a sophisticated scholarly practice completely separate from the discourse conventions of their primary field of study. Every student in the class found it challenging to use existing literary research to frame their projects, especially when the existing literature presented an argument or theoretical lens that differed from their own. This proved exceptionally true for students majoring in the social sciences, who were accustomed to relying on scholarly literature when providing supporting evidence for their theses. By continuing the reflective discussion even as students moved from the drafting to the revision stage, the instructor and librarian were able to highlight the students’ flexible use of disciplinary conventions and the ways in which they could write differently and use research differently for different audiences and purposes.⁷⁸

Without such sustained, supported reflection, students engaged in advanced research run the risk of losing their voices as they engage in research summary and attempt convention-bound analysis. In our roles as library and writing professionals, we have an obligation to help students understand how their unique, authentic voices can both fill and frame gaps they have identified in the existing scholarship about their topic. The research discussion board used in this advanced literature course helped students achieve that

understanding by making the often invisible and assumed conventions of disciplinary discourse visible and explicit. This exposure of discourse methods is a necessary, if frequently overlooked, aspect of entering into any scholarly conversation, and it is also an aspect that librarians and writing instructors are uniquely positioned to address.

Conclusion

Voice equals ethos plus agency; our voices emerge when we discover through language the words that represent our characters and then choose to employ these words in the expression of our own ideas and in the service of others. College students encounter the language of others in the classroom, the writing center, and the library. As professionals inhabiting these spaces, we view our primary responsibility as a welcoming one. We work to empower students to ask their own authentic questions and seek out the information that can answer those questions. We want students to understand they need not adopt an alien voice; rather, they can develop their own authentic, authoritative, and original voices through their interactions with information, academic settings, and scholarly discourse. We recognize developing voice is not a purely intellectual activity but one that also involves the student's feelings, body, and experience.

From the student perspective, librarians, writing faculty, and writing center professionals may seem to exist in parallel locations, each housing a group of experts who help students with discrete parts of their academic enterprise, doing work that never intersects. When students see us working together, it helps them understand how our roles overlap and inform each other. In addition, our willingness to ask questions of one another, defer to another's expertise, or engage in conversations in front of students shows them we too must continuously investigate and redefine our positions in academic and professional communities. We too must continuously interrogate and develop our authentic voices. We are guided in this process by not only our professional Frameworks, but also by our shared desire to empower our students to be the architects of their own learning.

Notes

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 7. *Ibid.*, 4–5.
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 9. *Ibid.*, 4.
 10. *Ibid.*, 5.
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