



a journal of first-year writing

Throw the Notebook at
the Wall: What Writing
Can Do to the Average
Student

AUSTIN LEMASTER

Fanfiction, Poetry, Blogs, and
Journals: A Case Study of
the Connection between
Extracurricular and
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The Genres of Chi Omega: An
Activity Analysis

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From the Editor

“Genuine inquiry.” If you’re currently enrolled in an ENC1102 class here at UCF, the odds are good that you’ve heard your teacher use this phrase at least once and likely more. It is the focus of that course, something that those of us in the first-year program consider to be quite valuable. Your other professors and even future employers would probably agree. But what exactly is it? Genuine inquiry is the pursuit of answers to questions that you really don’t know the answer to and that probably don’t have simple or easy answers. It means evaluating every available means of research, deciding what will work best, and using those methods to acquire data that’ll help you construct new knowledge, arguments, and ideas.

In some ways, it’s easier to describe genuine inquiry by what it is not. It’s *not* conducting research only to regurgitate the opinions and ideas of “experts.” It’s *not* doing research for the sake of doing research or to prove that you can properly cite sources. And it’s *not* looking for information to back up opinions and ideas you already hold.

I’m not sure, however, that simply describing the concept in the abstract is all that useful. Instead, I point you to the three essays published in this issue, all of which more effectively illustrate the notion of genuine inquiry than any attempt at a definition that I’ve seen. Keep this in mind as you read. Put yourself in these writers’ shoes: what would you have done differently if you were asking the same questions? Or, even better, what questions does their research inspire that you might want to pursue? That’s the beauty of thinking of research as genuine inquiry; rather than seeing other texts as some sort of authoritative statement that must be correct, the works of other authors become invitations to respond rather than closing off conversation. I find that an incredibly encouraging and even hopeful idea, and, as you read the essays in this issue of *Stylus*, I think you will, too.

First is Austin Lemaster’s “Throw the Notebook at the Wall: What Writing Can Do to the Average Student.” I think many of you will be able to relate to his discussion of the alternating frustrations and moments of joy that come with writing. Lemaster vividly portrays these moments by incorporating passages from his own writing journal directly into his essay. This demonstrates a very personal connection to the research that informs his entire investigation, making for some very meaningful research.

In “Fanfiction, Poetry, Blogs, and Journals: A Case Study of the Connection between Extracurricular and Academic Writings,” Marissa Penzato goes in-depth to look at how the various discourse communities students write in impact each other. Her case studies are well-detailed and her analysis is quite thoughtful. Penzato’s research prompts us to consider our own overlapping discourse communities and their impact on our writing processes.

The final essay of the issue is Victoria Marro’s “The Genres of Chi Omega: An Activity Analysis.” Some of you might not be familiar with activity theory, but Marro provides a thorough explanation before launching into an analysis of her sorority that uses that framework to great

effect. Like Penzato, Marro explores connections that are often overlooked or not considered. This brings her to a fuller understanding of what turns out to be a rather complex discourse community.

While all three of these projects started with some investigation of writing and how it works, the end products show the range of paths this sort of inquiry might take. Each author reviews different research literature, uses different methods, organizes and presents information in different ways. Yet each is still successful, thought-provoking, and informative. I hope that you, too, will be able to find your own way through this difficult—but very rewarding—process of genuine inquiry.

Finally, I would like to take this space to congratulate all of those who participated in the 2nd Annual Knights Write Showcase in February 2012. Congratulations go out, too, to the winner and runners-up of the 2011 President John C. Hitt Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing: Steve Liu (Winner) for his essay “The Most Popular Thing You’ve Probably Never Heard of” that appeared in *Stylus* 2.1, Thomas Osborne (1st Runner-Up) for his essay “Late Nights, Last Rites, and the Rain-Slick Road to Self-Destruction” that appeared in *Stylus* 2.2, and Alissa Warren (2nd Runner-Up) for her essay “Tuesday Night is Hamingo Night: A Glimpse of the Drag Queen Culture” that appeared in *Stylus* 2.1. We’re very proud to have had the opportunity to publish these students in *Stylus*.

-Matt Bryan