
Retrospective

JAMES BUDDENDORFF

James Buddendorff's article, "[Analysis of an Online Activity System](#)," was published in Stylus 7.1 in Spring 2016 and won the 2016 John C. Hitt Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing. He also served as assistant editor for Issues 7.2 and 8.1 as well as production editor for Issue 7.2.

When I sat down for the very first lecture of my academic career at UCF, I never imagined that in that class I would become a published author. The first thing I noticed was that instead of sitting in desks facing a lecturer in the front of the classroom, the students sat around a long table. We held discussions about what it takes to write effectively, and we passed each other's writing around for review. What at first seemed like any other composition class I had taken in high school became a major point of reflection for me about my writing.

My professor challenged me to think deeply about my writing and understand how my habits and tendencies comprise my process of writing an essay. I started to ask myself: When and how do I get my best ideas? Is my writing carefully premeditated or does it flow naturally like conversation? When my pencil hits the paper, are my words set in stone or do they only exist to inspire something better? I realized that everyone has a unique writing process, and by actively examining it, they can identify the strengths and weaknesses that paint the final picture of their written work. I set out to explore my process and optimize it.

I found my passion for writing as a child, but I never thought I was any good at it until one day, my professor held me back after class. She told me my essay is being considered for publication with the university. What followed was a gradual buildup of achievement and disbelief as I eventually found myself standing on stage shaking hands with then-UCF President John C. Hitt. I was accepting the first-place award for excellence in first-year writing. Not only was it a tremendous honor, it was a pivotal moment for me as I finally believed in my writing ability.

I am grateful for having a strong understanding of my writing process, as it proves to be invaluable in my line of work. As a data analyst, my goal is to gather insights that can improve the business. If I come up with a great idea, I need more than just a fancy looking graph to sell it to my boss. I need to tell a story about where I identified a problem or opportunity, how I captured and analyzed data to understand it, and what action or decision I recommend for the company's next move. Storytelling is vital to success in analytics, and effective writing is the backbone of a good story.

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James Buddendorff obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial engineering and management systems from the University of Central Florida in December 2019. He then began working as a data analyst for Lockheed Martin in Orlando. In addition to writing, he enjoys music production, martial arts, and outdoor adventuring.