

A Book of Stars: Slicing, Scaling, and Data Mining Our Discipline

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It is possible to present the image of a man in three anecdotes; I shall try to emphasize three anecdotes in each system and abandon the rest.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*

Early in his most recent book, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Malcolm Gladwell explains that he is concerned with “the very smallest components of our everyday lives—the content and origin of those instantaneous impressions and conclusions that spontaneously arise whenever we meet a new person or confront a complex situation or have to make a decision under conditions of stress” (16). *Blink* is a book about the “power of the glance”, the insights that “first sight” can provide, its (sometimes tragic) potential for misleading us, and finally, the degree to which “rapid cognition” can be controlled or educated (albeit incompletely). Much like his earlier book *The Tipping Point*, Gladwell’s latest offering assembles a broad range of anecdotes and narratives out of which a pattern emerges, one less concerned with celebrating or condemning the power of the glance than with exploring its cross-disciplinary relevance.

Crucial to this effort is the idea of *thin-slicing*, “the ability of our unconscious to find patterns in situations and behavior based on very narrow slices of experience” (23). Thin-slicing is what enables psychologist John Gottman, on the basis of an hour’s worth of videotape, to predict with 95% accuracy whether a marriage will last or not. Psychologist Nalini Ambady, working with content-filtered, 40-second conversations with patients, is able to predict which surgeons are likely to be sued for malpractice. Because it’s unconscious, though, thin-slicing is also the source of our worst stereotypes and our tendencies toward homogeneity, the judgments we base on less than a full, conscious consideration of all the variables. In this sense, thin-slicing is diametrically opposed to a concept like Clifford Geertz’s *thick description*, the “multiplicity of

complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which [the ethnographer] must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render” (10). If Geertz’s thick description is the result of a patient, articulated hermeneutics, Gladwell’s glance is “spur-meneutic,” a spur-of-the-moment judgment that often escapes articulation.

Despite its wide array of examples, Gladwell’s book itself can be thin-sliced; in terms of rhetorical tropology, *Blink* is a book about the power of synecdoche. The relationship between a first impression and the kind of knowledge that produces a thick description is, quite literally, the relationship between part and whole. Some of Gladwell’s examples come from professions where the substitution of part for whole is vital; for better or worse, police and firefighters must often trust their instincts, lacking the time for more careful investigation. Others, however, come from industries where synecdoche, in the form of focus groups and market research, is used as a matter of convenience, in order to predict the likely success of a particular product. To Gladwell’s credit, he shares plenty of examples of the failures of thin-slicing (the failure of New Coke, and the successes of the Aeron chair and the TV series *All in the Family*, e.g.) alongside its successes.

I dwell on Gladwell’s book at length here in part because of this ambivalence. His book demonstrates that “decisions made very quickly can be every bit as good as decisions made cautiously and deliberately” (14), but he also demonstrates that they can be much worse. This ambivalence is instructive, even for scholars who are committed to cautious and deliberate judgments, for despite the importance we attach to close reading, the fact of the matter is that thin-slicing is an indispensable part of our own repertoires. Titles, abstracts, bibliographies, tables of contents, and indices: each of these generic features provides the reader of academic prose with a thin slice of the article, chapter, or book in question. Given a finite amount of time, we necessarily make decisions about where to focus our attention, and while it is perhaps pessimistic to suggest that we might make these decisions on evidence as minimal as a list of titles, such decisions are undoubtedly commonplace.

But not all forms of synecdochic reasoning are equal. Fifteen years of reading and writing in the field of composition and rhetoric have educated my rapid cognition to the point where I am able to predict with some accuracy, and on a minimum of information, whether or not a particular article or book will prove immediately fruitful for my own work. Even then, I am occasionally mistaken. Contrast this example with a form of synecdoche that our discipline has actively resisted for years, recently resurfacing thanks to the efforts of the College Board, the timed, impromptu essay exam. Proponents of such an exam insist that its results are representative of a student’s writing ability, while detractors argue that the slice is so thin, the situation so specialized, that there is no significant correspondence between part (exam) and whole (writing ability). Furthermore, they will argue that preparation for success at the exam may actually interfere with the development of writing ability, reinforcing particular attitudes (a preference for formulaic organizational schemes, e.g.) that will later need to be untaught. Regardless of the success or failure of any particular instance, however, synecdoche is not *right* or *wrong*. Like Gladwell’s thin-slicing, it is what we do, no more, no less.

The Fallacy of Scale

We might say that representation (synecdoche) stresses a *relationship* or *connectedness* between two sides of an equation, a connectedness that, like a road, extends in either direction...

Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*

In all likelihood, there is no better disciplinary explanation of both the appeal and risk of synecdochic reasoning than Kenneth Burke's analysis of the *representative anecdote*, itself an exemplary form of synecdoche. In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke lays out the specific implications for a definition of synecdochic reason:

Men seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a *deflection* of reality. Insofar as the vocabulary meets the needs of reflection, we can say that it has the necessary scope. In its selectivity, it is a reduction. Its scope and reduction become a deflection when the given terminology, or calculus, is not suited to the subject matter which it is designed to calculate (59).

For Burke, an anecdote is sufficiently representative if meets the conditions of scope (reflection) and reduction (selection) without falling prey too excessively to deflection. That is, it must simultaneously offer the simplicity of the part at the same time that it captures the complexity of the whole. Concerned as he is with system-building, however, Burke spends little time—in this context, at least—with the workings of the trope itself. An anecdote that is not representative, for Burke, is simply informative, and “the vocabulary developed in strict conformity with it will not be representative” (59).

What does it mean, though, to say that a given terminology is “not suited to the subject matter”? One of Gladwell's examples comes from the “cola wars” of the 1980s, the battle between Pepsi and Coca-Cola that resulted in the latter company's ill-fated “New Coke.” This move was prompted by Coca-Cola officials' dismay in the face of their product's performance in the “Pepsi Challenge,” a series of national taste tests. Based on the *representative anecdote* of the taste test, Pepsi was out-performing Coke despite a marked disadvantage in shelf space, vending machines, and visibility in general. And New Coke reversed their poor performance, immediately and substantially. The problem, however, was that the taste test was misleading:

The difficulty with interpreting the Pepsi Challenge findings begins with the fact that they were based on what the industry calls a sip test or a CLT (central location test). Tasters don't drink the entire can. They take a sip from a cup of each of the brands being tested and then make their choice. Now suppose I were to ask you to test a soft drink a little differently. What if you were to take a case of the drink home and tell me what you think after a few weeks? Would that change your opinion? It turns out it would (158).

Obviously, for Pepsi's purposes, the Pepsi Challenge was delightfully representative. Its results provided Pepsi with one of the cornerstones of their marketing campaigns for years, and the story of New Coke remains, some twenty years later, an anecdote that itself represents the problems of relying on corporate market research. The problem with the Pepsi Challenge, and with some other forms of synecdochic reasoning, is what I would call the *fallacy of scale*.

In hindsight, it's pretty easy to refute the Pepsi Challenge. The problem doesn't rest so much with its reduction or its scope so much as the relationship between the two. A sip of soft drink from a cup doesn't *scale up* to represent the way that we normally consume such beverages, and our consumption patterns can't be *scaled down* to a single sip. Or, to return to an earlier example, we might argue that a timed, impromptu essay exam doesn't scale to the kinds of academic writing that are taught in a first-year composition course, and thus the results of such an exam shouldn't be used to exempt students from the course. The difficulty of making arguments like these, of course, is that it requires us to confront the layers of context implicit in the analogies. The Pepsi Challenge, at a certain level, did test for cola preference, and timed exams do indeed assess a student's writing ability. It is in the attempt to scale those results beyond their immediate context where the fallacy lies, where they become deflective.

The remainder of this essay is concerned with a very specific instance of the fallacy of scale, one drawn from discourse in our field that is perhaps best described as meta-disciplinary. One of the characteristic concerns of rhetoric and composition, as a relatively young discipline, is a preoccupation with its own disciplinarity, its place in contemporary institutions of higher learning, and its status when compared to (or ignored by) practitioners in other disciplines. And as is the case in any organization or network that has grown as large as the one we identify as our discipline, we must engage in our own versions of synecdochic reason—thin-slicing, even—to make sense of it. This kind of engagement is both necessary and ultimately inevitable, regardless of how accurate our slices actually are.

The particular example of disciplinary thin-slicing I want to consider here is our use of the annual *CCCC Program* as a form of evidence for claims about the discipline. I cannot say whether this practice is widespread enough to be labeled a tendency or a habit *per se*, and much of my evidence of the practice is informal, garnered from conversations with colleagues and friends about how the conference has changed over the past few academic generations. I can offer three instances of the practice, each drawn from a different "official" context, albeit at varying levels of formality.

My first encounter with this particular brand of synecdoche came in the spring of 2001, in a discussion held on the WPA-L discussion list. In the weeks leading up to that year's CCCC, and after the programs had been mailed out to attendees, Tom Miller initiated a conversation thread called "composition, and rhetoric?" where he wrote, in part, that

Every year I look at the 4Cs program as a sort of yearbook of the discipline, an alternative to the vision of the field provided by MLA. This year's program is striking in its documentation of the disappearance of rhetoric from the discipline. There is no subject index entry for "rhetoric," and this absence accurately represents the almost complete lack of attention to rhetoric on the program.

At the risk of belaboring the obvious, Miller invokes the program here as a slice of the discipline; the discipline represents the scope while the program itself (or more accurately, the presence/absence of the term “rhetoric” therein) is the reduction. “I am led to conclude that,” Miller argued, “while rhetoric may have been instrumental in professionalizing composition, now that that status is achieved, the discipline has decided that it can dispense with rhetoric.” Needless to say, Miller’s remarks were provocative, resulting in a great deal of listserv discussion, at least one panel at the following year’s CCCC, and a double issue of the journal *Enculturation* on the relationship between rhetoric and composition.

More recently, similar arguments have been made on behalf of research, claiming that it receives insufficient attention in the field. At the 2005 CCCC, in a panel titled “Researching Rhetorically: Conceptualizing and Teaching Research,” Carole Clark Papper compared the number of panels at that conference located in the “Research” subject area to the numbers of panels in other areas. Rather than attempt to reproduce her argument from my own notes, I will turn instead to my third example, which makes an identical argument in print. Richard Haswell’s “NCTE/CCCC’s Recent War on Scholarship” makes the case that, over the past couple of decades, NCTE/CCCC “first sponsored” and then “radically unsponsored” a type of research that Haswell describes with the acronym RAD (Replicable, Aggregable, and Data-Supported). Haswell opens the section where he defines this type of research with an observation about the 2004 CCCC: “Of the 495 panels at its 2004 annual conference, CCCC designated 17 of them as concerned with research” (201). Four pages later, this data informs specific questions that Haswell describes as unpleasant and “disturbing”:

Whatever the true ratio of RAD to non-RAD scholarship presented at the 2004 CCCC convention (Berkenkotter, 1991, shows how constructed the CCCC convention program classification of panels is²), what other academic discipline would publicly admit to a ratio of 17 research to 478 other? Is that proportion, real or constructed, connected with the reason much of compositionist RAD research, though aggregable, has remained unaggregated, remained dormant, unvalidated, unreplicated, and unreviewed? (205)

Although it is presented more subtly, in the form of rhetorical questions, Haswell’s claim about the importance of research in our field is grounded in the same way as Papper’s and as Miller’s claim about the relevance of rhetoric. And each of these arguments commits what I am describing as the fallacy of scale.

I want to be clear about one thing before I proceed, however, and that is that I *agree* with each of these writers. Composition has developed a broader array of professionalization strategies in recent years, and thus rhetoric, as one such strategy, may no longer enjoy the disciplinary centrality it once did. (The mainstream status of the discussion list where Miller’s comments occur, a list nominally devoted to the discussion of writing program administration, is itself anecdotal evidence of this change.) And research, if we extend its definition beyond the textual methods prevalent in English departments, is indeed represented weakly (if at all) in our publications and curricula. Furthermore, none of these scholars rely exclusively on the fallacy of scale for their arguments. Haswell’s documentation of the decline of RAD research in NCTE-supported

publications supports his claims directly; the survey work performed by Papper *et al.* on the place of research in our graduate curricula leads to the conclusions offered in their CCCC session; finally, Miller's years of experience most likely grounded his observations far more thoroughly than his reference to that year's program. And yet, having qualified my observations so thoroughly, I would nevertheless contend that the CCCC Program fails to offer the kind of evidence that these writers, and doubtless others in more informal contexts, assert on its behalf. Like Miller, I believe that we all tend to view the *Program* as a yearbook of the field, despite the fallacy involved in doing so, a fallacy that it is worth our time both to identify more concretely and to address if possible.

A Book of Stars

We see ourselves, our ideas and our world
in terms of these artifacts. As a result we live
not in the world so much as in the world as
it is represented to us in those artifacts.

David Olson, *The World on Paper*

David Olson begins his book *The World on Paper* with a brief discussion of the phrase "you are here." This phrase, along with an icon, usually a star or arrow, is everywhere; we see it on maps at kiosks, in shopping malls, on the backs of hotel room doors signifying fire escape routes, and so on. But this brief sentence is more than it seems. Olson observes that

in a deep sense that usually goes unnoticed, the caption is anomalous. I don't need a map to tell me where I am; I know where I am, 'I am here, right where I stand.' The map, so to speak, contradicts me, insisting that I am at the point indicated by the arrow. The map undertakes to lift me from my firm stance on the floor and transpose me into this geometry of lines and angles (xiii).

According to Olson, the phrase "you are here" introduces a tension into our lived sense of location. With that simple phrase, we are encouraged to abstract ourselves from that lived sense, and to locate ourselves instead in an exterior representation.

At the same time that the phrase fails to capture our own experience, it is not simply part of the map, either. The value of maps lies in their ability to abstract from individual experience, to offer us a static representation of space as it has been designed and built. If the space represented by a map were to change on a regular basis, then that map would be worse than useless. It would be misleading, an obstruction. The phrase "you are here" is anomalous in the context of the map, because it calls attention not to abstract space, but to the moment at which it is read. An example of what Kathleen Blake Yancey, in her 2004 CCCC *Chair's Address*, describes as *deixis*, "you are here" really means, "you are here now." This brief phrase is a hybrid, gathering into itself both the time of our lived experience as well as the space abstracted and represented in the form of a map.

Olson acknowledges that “It is not only our maps which put us and our world on paper,” but it is worth reflecting on whether this ubiquitous example of his might provide us with an analogy for understanding the CCCC *Program*. For just as the phrase “you are here” places us temporarily on the map in front of us, every April we speak of “getting on the program.” To be “on the program” guarantees many of us that we will receive financial support for attending the convention, but that is a deictic rationale, one that is only relevant to the year of a given conference. What does it mean to get “on the program?” How might we locate the *Program* in our ecology of professional activities?

In the most basic sense, an individual’s presence in the CCCC *Program* signifies the successful completion of the application process, a process with which I presume we are all familiar. The submission process has become so substantial, involving thousands of proposals annually, that it is itself a site for a great deal of thin-slicing. In the case of a panel proposal where the panel itself is represented, individual panelists may not be allowed more than one or two sentences for the purposes of characterizing their specific contributions. One consequence of this rhetorical situation is the importance placed on subject area; faced with the constraints of the submission form, proposals rely heavily on the context that the reviewers in a given subject area provide³. Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin’s analysis of successful CCCC proposals cites current interest, problem definition, novelty, and an insider ethos as those features that spanned the successful proposals (102), each of which presumes a reader capable of responding to such features. While reviewers are undoubtedly asked to “represent” the discipline to a certain degree, the fact that they are responsible for individual area clusters belies that request.

Is it too painfully obvious, then, to suggest that the proposal reviewers are the primary audience for CCCC proposals? Perhaps so. I am not suggesting that our trust in their judgment each year is misplaced, or that their status as reviewers isn’t earned through a certain degree of disciplinary reputation and credibility. But I will argue that to “get on the program” is to successfully persuade a few colleagues in a given area of specialization, on the basis of a fairly thin slice of information, that a session belongs there. This is not to minimize the role of the annual Chair, who does possess some deal of latitude in shaping the conference (Berkenkotter and Huckin refer to the expectation that “chairs ‘put their mark on’ the convention” (101).), but neither should we overestimate that role. If a large portion of proposals identifies a particular area cluster (or neglects another), those clusters will be disproportionately represented on the program itself, even with the intervention of the Chair.

In their discussion of the quality of “novelty,” Berkenkotter and Huckin suggest that “novelty in CCCC appears to be associated primarily with the *framing* of a study” (109), as opposed to its results. They attribute this to composition and rhetoric’s close relationship with literary criticism, but I think just as likely that it has to do with the tendency to propose a session (or study) in advance of the actual research. CCCC proposals operate in a strange sort of future tense, predicting what each of our sessions *will have* accomplished. In part, this is because the process of determining a program and staging the conference is so time-intensive, requiring a submission process almost a year in advance of the actual conference. As a result, barring a title change on the acceptance form, the vast majority of panels and titles in a given *Program* are actually indicative of what presenters thought, almost a year before the fact, they would be doing at the conference.

Contrary to all appearances, I am not interested in critiquing the process by which the *Program* is developed each year. That process, for all of its flaws, is the product of a broad range of pragmatic concerns, each of which can be justified in certain contexts. And the primary justification for the existence of the *Program*, the overwhelming use to which it is put, has nothing to do with the intellectual shape of the discipline at all. The *Program* is a specific piece of technology that enables thousands of people to coordinate their activity over the course of 4-5 days, allowing them to locate themselves successfully in time and space at the conference itself. More than anything else, the *Program* allows anyone at CCCC to know with relative certainty that if they go to *this* specific room at *this* specific time, they will hear *these* people speak about *this* particular topic. And given the size of our annual convention, this is quite an accomplishment.

In this sense, then, the *Program* is a temporal and spatial map of the conference, but to extend its cartographic qualities to the intellectual shape of the discipline is to ask too much of it. Such an extension ignores all of the practical constraints of the submission process, attributing far more conceptual importance to what are, in the end, fairly minimal representations of the research and scholarship we conduct in the discipline. When I submit a proposal to CCCC, that proposal is less an invocation of the discipline than it is an address to the reviewers, and necessarily so. A successful proposal is more like the star from Olson's map, a gesture that channels our scholarship (or future scholarship) through the deictic moment of the submission process. Each panel, each presentation, represents a here/now of scholarship, a place from which the presenter speaks. But much like David Weinberger's vision of the Web, these are places without space, without disciplinary space, at least. Materially, the CCCC *Program* provides conference attendees with a temporal and spatial map; conceptually, however, rather than seeing the *Program* as a yearbook or a microcosm of the discipline, I would contend that it's more accurately characterized as a book of stars, a loose joining of small pieces (to paraphrase Weinberger) that we are wrong to aggregate to the level of discipline.

Disciplining Our Data

The effective utilization of knowledge and learning requires *both* culture and technology. Explicit information and data can be easily codified, written down, and stored in a database....An organization's *data* is found in its computer systems, but a company's *intelligence* is found in its biological and social systems.

Valdis Krebs, "Knowledge Networks"

One of the pioneers of social network analysis and data visualization, Valdis Krebs is the author both of InFlow, one of the leading applications for network mapping, and of a number of different studies conducted with that software. In one such study (repeated three times over the course of about a year), Krebs took the top 100 best-selling political books on Amazon, and plotted them onto a network. Each of the books is a single node, connected to other books based on whether or not they appear on the "People who bought this book also bought..." feature at Amazon's site. In other words, books were linked in the network when they were purchased together. The results

of this study are not particularly surprising: despite the presence of a handful of “boundary-spanning” books,

The division between left and right remains strong -- polarization and the political food fight continues. Social network metrics, as well as the visuals, show two dense clusters with high preference for homogeneous choices. Echo chambers, on the right and left, remain amongst book readers in America (“Divided”).

The polarization of the political landscape, Krebs argues, is reflected in these purchase patterns, for the patterns themselves hold strong, despite the release of two “popular middle books.” Lada Adamic and Natalie Glance later performed a similar analysis (and arrived at similar conclusions) of the political blogosphere. Both analyses pointed to the kind of polarization that was articulated in mainstream media, in the months leading up to the 2004 Presidential election, in terms of red and blue states.

Krebs’ study provides another example of synecdochic reasoning, albeit one that differs somewhat from Gladwell’s thin-slicing. “Divided We Read” is an example of *data mining*, the extraction of specific data (usually from a much larger database) for the purpose of identifying patterns and relationships. In some ways data mining is the opposite of thin-slicing, which takes an initial impression or judgment and scales it up to a much larger phenomenon. The ideal *result* for data mining is the scaling down of a large dataset into a quickly discernable pattern, such as the diagrams that accompany Krebs’ studies. The rhetorically successful visualization of data communicates those patterns and relationships alongside of the data.

But of course those visualizations depend on the integrity of the data, and that is one of the reasons why our attempts to generalize or to scale up to the discipline on the basis of CCCC are currently inadequate. In recent years, CCCC has accelerated their efforts to collect data; in addition to designating an area cluster and a level emphasis, submitters are now encouraged to identify an interest emphasis (race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, or disability) as well as a major focus (basic writing, two-year college, first year composition, WAC/WID, feminist studies, or cultural studies), if applicable. Unlike area clusters, which are explicitly designed for the distribution of proposal review, and unlike level emphasis, which affects the distribution of participants, these latter categories come with no explanation or rationale. And the end result is that they make an already opaque submission process that much more opaque. At the 2005 CCCC, where affirmative action was named explicitly in the conference theme, the largest percentage of proposals claiming an interest emphasis designated “race/ethnicity.” For years, the announcement of a conference theme prior to the proposal deadline has resulted in countless attempts to incorporate it into paper and panel titles, sometimes appropriately so, but sometimes not. Whether or not they are intended as such, changes such as these to the submission form will inevitably shape the themes, tenors, and topics of CCCC proposals. And the data collected will reflect not our discipline, but the individual members’ aggregated response as each of them works for whatever edge, real or imagined, they can get in their efforts to get on the program.

And this is to say nothing of some of the larger questions involved. What does it take, for example, to qualify an individual presentation, or a panel session for that matter, for an interest emphasis or a major focus? How might we choose a major focus for a panel that includes one presentation on basic writing and another on writing across the

curriculum? Questions of how to define proposals in these terms inevitably lead to the problems involved in defining a small selection of “major foci” or “interest emphases,” and then only allowing one to be selected. This is a problem with area clusters as well (as I discussed earlier), but in that case, at least, there is the pragmatic consideration of who is to review the proposal, and the *Call for Program Proposals* makes this choice an informed one. What is to be gained, however, from a question about major focus that implies that a panel concerned with feminist studies can’t also be interested in first year composition or basic writing? It is worse in some ways to collect bad data than it is to collect none, and unfortunately, the submission process for CCCC currently guarantees that the data it gathers will be flawed.

The initial solution for this problem is a simple one, for that process doesn’t technically end with the proposal reviewers’ (or the Chair’s) decisions. If we are intent on gathering data about our conference—and I believe that we should be—then the data collection *must* be separated from the submission of proposals. The most obvious venue for collecting meaningful data, besides the convention itself, would be the notification and acceptance process, particularly considering CCCC’s recent efforts to conduct that process digitally. It would also allow for much more nuanced data to be collected, allowing both for a much fuller range of categories and for the possibility of multiple foci or emphases within a single panel session, a possibility that could be extended to area clusters as well, given that the review process will have been completed.

We should think beyond simply moving the point of collection for our data, however. I’ve already implied that, freed from the constraints of the proposal form, the categories themselves could be expanded beyond the five or six entries they currently offer. A more radical step would be to incorporate a system like that at the social bookmarking site del.icio.us, and allow presenters to define their own topic areas, keywords, influences, and to allow them as many and as wide-ranging a set of categories as they can devise. This kind of bottom-up classification, which currently goes by the neologism *folksonomy*, would provide us with data far more significant than is possible with the top-down classification scheme currently in place.

All of this discussion presumes, however, that we exercise our collective will to accomplish these ends. We have been content to thin-slice our discipline, to characterize it according to our initial impressions, and as a consequence, we do not know ourselves nearly as well as we think we do. If we can become more disciplined in our collection of data, the result will be a wealth of information about the discipline. The data is already out there—annually, our field produces literally thousands of pages of scholarship that we share with one another at CCCC—but we have yet to devise the means to access that data in meaningful ways, and to turn it into the kind of self- and field-knowledge that can only assist and enrich our work. As Krebs notes, such efforts require both culture and technology. The technology is readily available; what remains is to set our disciplinary culture the task of attending to it.

Notes

¹ Here's where I thank everyone who gave me feedback on the essay. Also I'll note that portions of this essay were delivered at the 2002 CCCC.

² It is worth noting that Berkenkotter's essay takes an approach that might also be characterized as a fallacy of scale. Her account of the changes in "areas to be emphasized" are attributed to "the shaping hand of the various program chairs" as well as "a drift toward increasingly specialized interests among CCCC members" (157). While I wouldn't necessarily dispute these as *factors*, her argument assumes a transparent correspondence between the submission process and a conception of the discipline that I consider in the following section.

³ My own panel proposal for the 2006 CCCC provides a case in point. My fellow panelists and I proposed a session which would offer several theoretical perspectives on weblogs, in part as a corrective to the qualitative studies that are prevalent in current scholarship on the phenomenon. The panel could have easily fit into the Theory area cluster, or even the Research cluster, since we were making a global claim with respect to methodology, but we ultimately submitted the panel under Information Technologies, feeling that a reviewer in that area was most likely to be cognizant of the conversation our session would participate.