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UNH Global

Alecia Magnifico

Assistant Professor of English (COLA) ~ United Kingdom

In June and July, 2018, I had the privilege of traveling to the United Kingdom to present papers at three different events and locations: The International Conference of the Learning Sciences and London Festival of Learning at University College London, the UK Literacy Association's annual meeting in Cardiff, and the Center for Research in Digital Education at the University of Edinburgh. Each of these events brought together an international group of educators to discuss learning and teacher education in this digital age, and their confluence gave me the opportunity to work face-to-face with far-off collaborators.



UNH Professors Christina Ortmeier-Hooper (l.) and Alecia Magnifico (R.) at the International Conference of the Learning Sciences

At the International Conference of the Learning Sciences, the first event in the series, Prof. Christina Ortmeier-Hooper and I gave a talk titled “Designing Dialogues on Writing and College Readiness Across Educational Institutions.” This paper reports on our ongoing project – the UNH School-University Dialogues – that brings together secondary English teachers and college composition professors to conduct and present cross-institutional action research about writing education. This effort has evolved into an inspiring, complex

partnership, and we were eager to discuss our experiences with researchers who have attempted

similar efforts. While many grants are funding public humanities projects like the Dialogues, little existing work documents how they can enhance teachers' professional learning. We were able to share our findings, learn about many wonderful partnership projects, and begin to explore conversations with researchers who, like us, want to open opportunities for teachers to learn from each other.

Following this conference, I traveled north to Scotland where I met with my longtime collaborators, Prof. Jayne Lammers of the University of Rochester and Prof. Jen Scott Curwood of the University of Sydney, Australia. Together, we presented a seminar about online writing networks at the Center for Research in Digital Education at the University of Edinburgh. This seminar discussed the idea

that researchers often focus on the experiences of online writers and creators, even as we acknowledge the importance of “ancillary” activities like reading, reviewing, liking, archiving, and sharing. Essentially, many kinds of work go into maintaining a writing community, but existing research ignores aspects beyond writing itself. Profs. Curwood, Lammers, and I have been working to both document a wide range of online activities and devise methods for capturing and describing them. Our seminar presentation led to a generative afternoon of discussion with members of the Center, many of whom think deeply about online teaching and learning in formal settings – as well as a promise to consider future collaboration.

In addition, our time in Scotland led to a writing breakthrough on a revision for a journal article and many chances to talk about future research plans while climbing Edinburgh's steep closes and corridors. Fellow English teachers and Harry Potter aficionados might be excited to learn that we found the gravestone that likely inspired J.K. Rowling to name her villain Tom Riddle!

Finally, I flew to Wales with Profs. Lammers and Curwood to take part in the annual meeting of the UK Literacy Association, situated in Cardiff. Here, the three of us presented a workshop titled “Exploring How Teachers Can Bring Innovative Digital Literacies into the Classroom.” This talk built on our work in online writing communities and networks, specifically examining how we teach our own teacher education classes differently as a result of what we have learned from our ongoing



Alecia Magnifico (r.) with colleagues at the University of Edinburgh



Castle in Scotland

research on writers and creators. In the workshop, we discussed both challenges and openings for teachers who wish to incorporate digital composition methods and digital pedagogies into their secondary and college classes. This talk, and more broadly, this conference, offered me the chance to talk in person with many UK researchers whose work I have read and admired. I also found it interesting to identify resonances and differences between typical digital learning and literacies research topics and methods in the US and the UK, and I am excited to share new sources and ideas with my colleagues and students when the fall semester begins.

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