Spring 2007

Revisiting the "current -traditional era": Innovations in writing instruction at the University of New Hampshire, 1940--1949

Katherine E. Tirabassi

University of New Hampshire, Durham

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation

Recommended Citation
Tirabassi, Katherine E., "Revisiting the "current -traditional era": Innovations in writing instruction at the University of New Hampshire, 1940--1949" (2007). Doctoral Dissertations. 385.
https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/385

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.
REVISITING THE "CURRENT-TRADITIONAL ERA":
INNOVATIONS IN WRITING INSTRUCTION AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1940-1949

BY
KATHERINE E. TIRABASSI

Baccalaureate of Art Degree, St. Michael's College, 1993
Master of Science in Teaching Degree, University of New Hampshire, 2000

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
English

May, 2007
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

Thomas R. Newkirk
Dissertation Director
Thomas R. Newkirk, Professor of English

Paul Kei Matsuda, Associate Professor of English

Lisa C. Miller, Associate Professor of English

Cinthia Gannett, Associate Professor of Writing
Loyola College in Maryland

John C. Brereton, Director, Calderwood Writing Initiative
Boston Athenaeum

April 18, 2007
Date
DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this dissertation to two of my writing mentors.

As an early writing mentor, my grandmother Helen Maguire Zegarowski, Mimi, who was a writer herself, cultivated my interest in writing, offering feedback on my stories, asking me to read and respond to her work, and writing collaborative stories with me at her kitchen table. I want to thank her publicly for her dedication to the craft of writing. I watched her develop story after story, publishing her work in local newspapers, winning writing contests, and even working on poetry, a novella and a novel. On December 20, 2006, Mimi passed away. I miss her very much and I dedicate my work to her memory.

Another writing mentor for me, one I talk about throughout this dissertation, is Donald M. Murray. Although Don had retired by the time I arrived at UNH, he still maintained a strong connection with the English Department and with the PhD students in Composition Studies; in many ways, Don was still teaching us--visiting our classes--those we taught and those we were taking, inspiring us in our teaching of writing and inspiring us to write daily and to persevere in the great discoveries that come with such discipline. He always made himself available to talk with UNH graduate students and in the past few years, we were privileged to share meals with him at his home and to talk with him about his writing experiences past and present. I will truly miss him and I will carry his lessons with me throughout my professional career.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the Spring of 2000, the final semester of my Masters degree, I took a History of Composition course with Robert J. Connors. One day before class, Bob asked to talk with me about my future plans. As we stood in the hallway of Hamilton-Smith, he said that he’d observed my enthusiasm for research as had Cinthia Gannett. They both felt that I should consider applying for the PhD in Composition. After much discussion with professors and graduate students already in the program, with my husband, friends and family, and after much thought and prayer, I decided to embark on this several year journey. Due to his untimely death in a motorcycle accident, I was never able to take another course with Bob, but I am forever grateful for the short time I did know him as a teacher and a writing center director, and for the moment when he urged me to pursue a PhD in composition studies, a moment that profoundly changed my life trajectory.

I want to thank my dissertation chair Thomas Newkirk for his encouragement and for acting as my advisor throughout my graduate work at the University of New Hampshire. Tom’s belief in me and his enthusiasm for my dissertation research motivated me to puzzle through my questions, to press on in research and to discover more about my project through the writing itself. I appreciated his willingness to give me the space to think through sections of the dissertation and yet to gently but firmly push me to keep a forward momentum in my writing. Tom’s insightful questions and comments helped me to consider and articulate new ways of thinking about my project. I thank Tom for the time and intellectual energy he’s devoted to my work, in this project...
and in many others. Tom has always encouraged me, in his words and by his example, to keep teaching at the forefront of my professional life, to consider current and ethical implications of my research and to serve the institutional and local community to which I belong.

I want to thank the other members of my dissertation committee: Paul Kei Matsuda, Lisa Miller, John Brereton and Cinthia Gannett. Paul Matsuda’s work in composition history and in L2 writing helped me to look past disciplinary boundaries, extending my view of the scope of composition studies. I am grateful for Paul’s thought-provoking questions and comments that helped me to refine my research design and to articulate the theoretical framework for my research. Lisa Miller kindly agreed to join my committee at a later stage in my project. Lisa’s expertise in journalism and nonfiction writing helped me to consider these areas of study as I explored regional connections among 1940s professional writers and writing teachers. I want to thank John Brereton for ushering me into the field in important ways, introducing me to many key scholars in the field of composition, working with me and a research team to develop, write about, and present on a UNH writing program archive, and reading and responding to my work. I thank him for his encouragement, his thoughtful questions and his continued support throughout this project.

Cinthia Gannett has mentored me in so many ways, as a teacher, writing program administrator, co-presenter at several professional conferences, and collaborative writer of multiple articles. Cindy introduced me to archival research at a crucial moment in my graduate program as I contemplated ideas for my dissertation. She fostered that interest by hiring me as a research assistant to develop a writing program archive at UNH, a
project that laid theoretical and practical groundwork for this dissertation study. Together, we have pursued a research agenda in historical studies as we have co-written articles and co-presented at conferences on the subject of building local writing program archives. I thank her for sharing with me her scholarly expertise—especially for introducing me to writing center and writing across the curriculum theory and practices—and her intellectual curiosities, her encouragements, her writing and, most of all, her continued friendship.

I would also like to thank Jessica Enoch for her ongoing intellectual engagement with my project. Our many conversations before I began my study laid the theoretical foundation for much of my dissertation proposal and first chapter.

I would also like to thank my writing group, Happy Mondays: Michelle Cox, Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, Mike Michaud, Abby Knoblauch, and Meagan Rodgers. Their support, encouragement, prodding, goal setting, extensive feedback, and direct questions kept me on track, helped me to revise significantly and gave me the mini-deadlines I needed. I especially thank Christina and Michelle, with whom I began the PhD program in the Fall of 2000, first for their friendship through it all, for their frequent pep talks, for holding me to a high standard in my research, writing and teaching, and for their belief in me. They are two of the dearest friends I will ever have. I also thank Amy Zenger for her friendship and support, for checking in—long-distance from Lebanon—to see how I was doing, and for reading large sections of my writing when I needed quick feedback. I want to thank those who came before me in the PhD program in Composition, for the ways that they mentored me and fostered my success in the program, especially Dot Kasik, Chris Dean, Joyce Rain Anderson, Megan Fulwiler, Stephanie Patterson,
Mary Hallet, Dave Edwards, Kuhio Walters, Bronwyn Williams. I also want to thank Rhondda Thomas, Freda Hauser, and Cara Snider, each for inspiring me in their teaching and scholarship. I also want to thank those who are currently in the program for challenging me to learn about emerging trends in composition and for building a scholarly community that is fun-loving, intellectually stimulating and built on mutual respect: Joleen Hanson, Jeff Ringer, Steve Simpson, Mike Garcia, Mike DePalma, Elizabeth Ann Kramer, Jim Webber, Alexandria Peary and Keri Thomas. The collegiality of this community made me feel at home and made me want to look deeper into the history of this institutional writing culture.

I would like to thank the English Department Graduate Coordinators who have served and provided me with excellent counsel throughout my studies, especially Doug Lanier and Brigitte Bailey. I am grateful to the UNH Graduate School for granting me the financial means, through a Summer TA Fellowship (2005) and a Dissertation Fellowship (2006-07), to complete my research and to have dedicated time to write, time that I cherished and that made it possible for me to focus on my writing alone. I also want to thank the UNH Milne Special Collections and University Archives staff, especially UNH Archivist Elizabeth Slomba, for their help in locating artifacts relevant to my study and for their permission to draw from these materials for my study. Finally, I want to thank the UNH Alumni for being willing to share their stories of life at UNH during the 1940s. This historical study is richer because of their stories.

On a personal note, I want to thank my immediate and extended families for their constant support, love and understanding; they too have lived each stage of this journey with me. I especially want to thank my parents David and Anne DeVoe for their constant
encouragement during my graduate programs and throughout my life. They have always believed in me, even when my own strength and confidence wavered and they fostered my educational, intellectual, and spiritual pursuits. I also want to thank my in-laws Elaine and Victor Tirabassi for their encouragement, love, prayers and support. I want to thank my adopted aunts Fernande and Jeanne Richard for their faithful prayers for me. And I want to thank my church family at Christ the King Church in Rochester, NH—especially my home group and those who have held me up in prayer time and time again.

My husband Dan has been immensely supportive throughout my graduate career—a time that has spanned every year of our marriage thus far. I want to thank him for supporting me in so many ways, as my best friend who listened to me when I needed a sounding board, who helped me to have fun amid the pressures of graduate school, and who prayed for me throughout the years, amid whatever circumstances I was facing. I love him more every day and I thank him for traveling this road with me.

Above all, I thank God and I give Him the glory for this achievement.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ......................................................................................................................... iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...................................................................................................... v
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................. xiii
ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................... xiv

CHAPTER PAGE

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................... 1
  Dissertation Overview .......................................................................................................... 8
  Chapter Overview ............................................................................................................... 9
I. RECONSIDERING THE BOUNDARIES OF DISCURSIVE HISTORIES:
  CURRENT PERCEPTIONS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES ......................................... 12
  Defining Current-Traditional Rhetoric .............................................................................. 13
  Factors Contributing to the Rise of “Current-Traditional Rhetoric” ............................... 15
  Historicizing Pedagogy: Considering the Limitations of Periodization ....................... 18
  Finding Innovation, Not Anomaly, in Alternate Sites of Writing Instruction ............... 23
  A Rationale for Multiple, Local Historical Studies .......................................................... 27
  Looking Beyond the First-Year Course to an Institutional Writing Culture ................. 29
  Questions Guiding This Study ............................................................................................ 34
II. THE ETHICS OF HISTORICAL METHODOLOGY/IES: A RATIONALE AND AN
  ILLUSTRATION .................................................................................................................... 36
  A Personal Narrative: A Day in the University of New Hampshire Archives ............... 36
  Developing a Methodological Ethos for Historical Research ........................................ 39
  A Methodological Illustration .......................................................................................... 45
  Data Collection .................................................................................................................... 56
  Conclusion: Writing Up the Historical Narrative ............................................................. 71

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Start Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III. CONSIDERING THE STATE OF A STATE UNIVERSITY AND OF 1940S</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITING INSTRUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: On the Emergence of Institutional Traditions and Cultures</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Influences on the Social and Curricular Makeup of the University: Pre-, During, and Post- World War II</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is English Studies?: Establishing a Disciplinary/Departmental Culture</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating Pedagogical Realities and Institutional Pressures in Writing Instruction</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. RINGS OF INFLUENCE: THE IMPACT OF THE EXTRACURRICULUM ON Institutional Writing Cultures</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions of the Extracurriculum</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll Towle and Three Writing Initiatives in UNH's Extracurriculum</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. ADDITIONAL RINGS OF INFLUENCE: EXTENDING A WRITING CULTURE BEYOND THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situating the Summer Writers' Conference in National and Local Contexts</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaped by an Institutional Writing Culture: The Origin, Mission and Structure of the UNH Writers' Conference</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Influences: The Staff Extends Conversations about Writing Beyond the Conference</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: A Map of An Institution</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary, Implications, Future Research</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Legacy: Mentorships and Changing Curricular Cultures</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
APPENDIX A: WRITTEN INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE ...................................... 242
APPENDIX B: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS.......... 243
APPENDIX C: UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE WRITERS’ CONFERENCE LECTURE SERIES, 1942 ................................................................................................... 245
APPENDIX D: UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE WRITERS’ CONFERENCE LECTURE SERIES, 1947 ................................................................................................... 246
APPENDIX E: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM...........247
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Descriptions of Research Resources .................................................59
ABSTRACT

REVISITING THE "CURRENT-TRADITIONAL ERA":
INNOVATIONS IN WRITING INSTRUCTION AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1940-1949

by

Katherine E. Tirabassi

University of New Hampshire, May, 2007

Composition histories mainly focus on a study of "official" texts such as composition textbooks and administrative records to elucidate pedagogical and curricular practices in writing instruction. Yet in recent years, more studies have focused on archival research, on what John Brereton calls the "everyday fabric" of writing instruction. My dissertation project explores the "everyday fabric" of writing instruction during the 1940s at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), looking at archival records, 1940s disciplinary debates and pedagogical practices within and beyond the formal curriculum on the national and local levels, and interviews I conducted with UNH alumni about their curricular and extracurricular experiences while attending UNH during the 1940s. My study draws on primary sources to consider what I term institutional writing cultures that are shaped by external pressures, curricular choices, theoretical perspectives, extracurricular initiatives, and regional influences.
This institutional historical study highlights how the archival records of even one institution's writing culture can complicate the field's current views of the current-traditional period and issues a challenge to some of the assumptions in composition studies about 1940s writing instruction. I argue that organizing writing theory and pedagogy in terms of periods can limit ways that we conceive of, study, and write about historical and current shifts in writing theory. This study also includes an argument for and an illustration of writing methodological descriptions for historical studies in composition as a means of engaging with and yet resisting the hegemony of a grand narrative and as a means of displaying the seams and gaps within historical narratives. The findings from my study illustrate that institutional writing cultures emerge from reciprocal relationships between the formal writing curriculum and the writing initiatives in the extracurriculum. Overall, this dissertation demonstrates that the study of institutional writing cultures is a productive means of understanding and analyzing contradictions, connections and intersections among various sites of writing in localized contexts and a key starting place for future studies of regional trends in writing instruction.
INTRODUCTION

THE BIRTH OF A DISCIPLINE

April 1-2, 1949, Chicago, Illinois, The Stevens Hotel. Five hundred teachers of college writing gather for two days at the first Conference on College Composition and Communication, then called “College Freshman Courses in Composition and Communication.”¹ The seven workshops and seventeen speakers and the historic moment itself have sparked lively discussions among the conferees. In one corner of the lobby, three professors are talking about the benefits of student conferencing. On the steps at the far end of the lobby, another group of writing teachers are talking about their workload, student numbers in their courses, and commenting on and grading student papers. Yet another set of teachers are preparing to attend the upcoming session on “The Organization and Use of the Writing Laboratory,”² interested in talking with others engaged in this work. A number of conferees are filing out of a session-turned-debate between Richard Weaver and James McCrimmon, and all are discussing the crux of the debate—what should the subject of or approach to first-year composition be? These conversations fill the lobby, creating cross-institutional connections between writing teachers, building connective threads shaping perspectives about English studies, and about sense of the new field called composition.

¹ David Bartholomae “Freshman English, Composition, and CCCC.” CCC 40.1: 38-50.
The above scene is a familiar one to those who have attended the CCCC conference, though the scene, site, and the conference have undergone changes as the field's professional concerns and the professionals themselves within the field have changed. In his 1988 Chair's Address to the Conference on College Composition and Communication entitled “Freshman English, Composition, and CCCC,” David Bartholomae discusses the early days of CCCC as a time when members engaged in discussions about what English Studies should include, and in particular what first-year composition courses should teach. Bartholomae notes that there was a lack of consensus regarding the subject and pedagogy of the first-year course in the early-to-mid-part of the twentieth century, that “no one knows, on any given day on any given campus, what goes on in freshman English; it’s there as a force on every campus, it carries a common name, but it refers to everything, anything—no one knows what it is” (41).

In contrast to the scene I have painted above and to the previous quote, Bartholomae's brief *PMLA* article “Composition 1900-2000” presents a more standard or generalized view of the first-year composition course that is more representative of the ways that the scholars in the field of composition have depicted writing instruction during this time, “As English departments grew into literature departments and as the number of students grew (and the problems of managing small, labor-intensive courses increased), the composition course was viewed as a burden and a drain and made mechanical and trivial enough to justify the scorn with which it was usually treated” (1952). With this description representing the first half of the twentieth-century, Bartholomae moves quickly through time, saying that: "In a brief history like this one, the next significant date is 1949, the year of the first meeting of the Conference on College Composition and
Communication” (1952). In citing 1949 as the only date of significance in the 1940s, Bartholomae seems to imply that nothing innovative was going on in writing instruction before 1949. One problem with a brief history like this one, of course, is that it cannot adequately capture exceptions to the rule, and offers a view of composition that while generally accepted in composition studies, is not fully representative. As the first quote from Bartholomae suggests, however, if there was little national consensus regarding the subjects of English Studies and first-year composition in the late 1940s, then these more generalized depictions of writing instruction may not provide the historical picture that regional or localized historical studies of writing instruction could provide.

Before I take up this question about local histories of writing instruction, I want to return to the first CCCCs conference once more, as it is a key moment in the field of composition and its premier meeting falls within the decade of my dissertation study. First, it seems important to consider the reasons why a conference on college composition would emerge at the end of this decade, so I will pose the following question: what was the impetus for such a meeting? The official familiar story or the “grand narrative” told to us over the years from many sources follows: at the 1948 NCTE Convention, a meeting focusing on a discussion of Freshman English was so populated and so animated that the session ran overtime, encroaching on the planned banquet and speech by author James Michener. Amid this enthusiasm, conference organizers and participants determined that enough interest was evident to warrant establishing a separate meeting of college writing teachers. Naturally, composition scholars cite this new conference in 1949 as a significant beginning for the field, and often set their historical gaze forward from that date. We don’t, however, often cast a backward glance much further beyond the impetus for the
meeting itself, to the earlier, national, regional, and institutional conversations and practices that might have inspired or lead to the exigency for a new conference on collegiate writing instruction.

We have had other, plausible stories already articulated about factors influencing the creation of CCCCs. David Bartholomae, in his 1988 CCCCs Chair’s Address posited two potential reasons for the CCCCs to emerge as an organization connected to and yet distinct from NCTE: first, that the conference organizers were responding to pressures within English departments to privilege literature over other aspects of English studies, and second, that the conference organizers were responding to pressures of increased class sizes due to the postwar influx of students (41). John Heyda, in his article “Fighting Over Freshmen English: CCCC’s Early Years and the Turf Wars of the 1950s,” offers a third impetus for the creation of CCCCs, the potential of the newer communications course to replace the first-year composition course as the one course that all students would take (666), suggesting that “the ways in which communications courses combined instruction in writing with the teaching of reading, speaking, and listening skills” had caught the attention of university administrators.

However, rather than speculating on external concerns, we can also turn to the first CCCCs Chair John Gerber who described the educational climate that drew these conferees together in this way: “Faced with many of the same problems, concerned certainly with the same general objectives, we [composition instructors] have for the most part gone our separate ways, experimenting here and improving there” (12). His 1950 comments hint at the kinds of innovative work that composition instructors were
doing in isolation across the country, and at a desire to organize these efforts in an effort to share practices and to conduct further research:

Occasionally we have heard that a new kind of course is working well at Upper A & M or that a new staff training program has been found successful at Lower T.C. But we rarely get the facts we have had no systemic way of exchanging views and information quickly. Certainly we have had no means of developing a coordinated research program. To meet such obvious needs the Conference on College Composition and Communication has been formed. (12)

This first meeting, if we are to take Gerber’s first-hand perspective, was seen not only as a new beginning, but also as a culmination of the hard work, effort, and vision that conference organizers and composition teachers were already engaging in nationwide. Such a conference does not emerge out of frustration alone, out of a sense that, as writing teachers, this group needed to carve out a safe place in which to advocate for their work (against the encroachment of communications courses or literature). Nor does such a conference emerge out of a time of crisis alone, in a triage effort for writing teachers facing a deluge of students entering colleges and universities. Among this original group of conference organizers and conference attendees, there was also, a pride in one’s work, an interest in a sharing and exchanging of ideas among composition instructors, and, an interest in furthering composition research that began not just with the advent of the conference, but decades prior to the conference.

What if we viewed the 1949 beginning of the CCCCs conference, not only as a beginning, but also as a culmination of a series of generative, more regional conversations about writing theory and pedagogy? In our composition histories, we see multiple versions of 1940s writing instruction, though each description is often characterized as a stagnant time in writing instruction, with pedagogies focusing on
mechanical correctness and form, classrooms brimming, overloaded with students, and led by overworked junior instructors and professors, a circumstance that arguably persists today. Through these histories come generalized and often pejorative views of this decade, an age of writing instruction often depicted as the “Stone Age” or “Dark Ages” of writing instruction. If this view of 1940s writing instruction being less than innovative is so prevalent, why do we need a study such as this one? My answer is precisely that this view of 1940s writing instruction is so prevalent in a scholarly climate which, especially recently, celebrates and encourages the study of literacy and writing instruction within and beyond the boundaries of formal educational circles, not only in historical studies, but also in other areas of composition research. In terms of historical studies, however, composition historians such as Nan Johnson, Katherine Adams, Cheryl Glenn, Thomas Masters and Robin Varnum, among others, have begun the excellent work of returning to forgotten periods of writing instruction, searching for unheard voices, untapped sites of literacy, and untold stories of writing instruction within and outside of formal educational settings. Yet most of this work, save a few studies (Varnum, Masters, Adam, Myers, Goggin) tends to gloss over the 1940s, either as a means of delimiting the data used in the study (ending quite often prior to 1939), as an unintentional omission or blind spot in the research, or, perhaps, as an implicit acknowledgement of the current views about 1940s writing instruction.

This dissertation study, then, intentionally focuses on this blind spot, seeking to explore trends and conversations in composition during the 1940s in particular. I draw together some of these strands of conversations at the institutional level with national trends as expressed in the key composition journal *College English*. In conducting this
study of one institution’s writing culture, I suggest that what was happening with writing instruction locally on college and university campuses was more innovative than previously discussed and though this study can only scratch the surface, other institutional and regional historical studies should be conducted to provide a fuller picture of writing innovations during the 1940s. These institutional and regional influences, in addition to national conversations and impetuses that Bartholomae, Heyda and others have suggested, may have contributed to the creation of a professional organization and the birth of a discipline. I explore a small part of the history before the founding of CCCC that suggests that the 1940s is a part of our pedagogical and theoretical heritage that warrants further time, research, and consideration. I am not suggesting that there is a causal link between this study and the founding of CCCCs; rather what I am suggesting, as Gerber did in 1950, is that the creation of an organization such as CCCC was simply a natural, large-scale effort to organize and begin a much-needed conversation with the estimated 9,000 writing instructors teaching across the United States during the 1940s and during the first part of the twentieth century (12). That most of these instructors did not write textbooks, or even publish their important work in journals does not mean innovative work did not happen within and beyond composition courses across the country during the 1940s. In my study, I have turned to archival research and to the voices of UNH alumni from the Classes of 1947 and 1948 to explore the writing culture at UNH during the 1940s. In general, this dissertation considers a microcosmic look at the ways in which a university’s writing culture is shaped by national, regional, institutional, departmental, and individual influences, and considers what we can learn
from studying a larger scope within an institution’s writing history, both in formal and informal campus forums.

My hope is that this dissertation will be the beginning of an in-depth investigation of 1940s writing instruction, characterizing the decade not as a "dark age" in comp's history, but as a vibrant time to be celebrated in the history of our field, and, such a vibrant period that, it was natural by decade's end, for teachers of writing to call for and start their own professional conference. We might consider, then, the development of writing pedagogies and theories to be shaped by local and regional events, traditions, and practices over time, leading to key, significant events or shifts in writing instruction, rather than casting a pejorative, judgmental backward glance at where we’ve come from, to view where we’ve come from as the means to this current circumstance.

**Dissertation Overview**

Composition historical studies mainly focus on a study of “official” texts such as composition textbooks and administrative records to elucidate pedagogical and curricular practices in writing instruction. However, in *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: A Documentary History*, John Brereton argues for the importance of archival research, saying that, when historians focus on such official texts, “what got left out was the detail, the everyday fabric of history as lived by the student, the teacher, and the general public” (xiv). My dissertation project explores the “everyday fabric” of writing instruction during the 1940s at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), looking at archival records, the pedagogical practices (within and beyond the formal curriculum) of UNH English professors in the 1940s, and interviews I conducted with alumni about their curricular and extracurricular experiences during that decade at
In “The History of Composition: Reclaiming Our Lost Generations,” Robin Vamum argues that periodization of a writing pedagogy can overlook innovations in writing instruction and can “have the effect of denying the resources and lessons of portions of the past to many of us currently teaching composition” (40). This study extends her argument that organizing writing theory and pedagogy in terms of periods can limit ways that we conceive of, study, and write about historical and current shifts in writing theory. While Vamum focuses on expanding the list of primary sources (archival, oral histories) that we select to study the first-year composition course, my study draws on these primary sources to study institutional writing cultures shaped by external pressures, curricular choices and extracurricular initiatives. This institutional case study highlights how the archival records of even one institution’s writing culture can complicate the field’s current views of the current-traditional period, and issues a challenge to some of the assumptions in composition studies about 1940s writing instruction.

**Chapter Overview**

In Chapter one, “Reconsidering the Boundaries of Discursive Histories: Current Perceptions and Future Possibilities,” I provide an overview of the ways in which the field has characterized 1940s writing instruction, focusing on a discussion of current-traditional rhetoric as the primary pedagogy associated with 1940s writing instruction. I argue against the periodization of writing pedagogy and advocate for refocusing historical studies beyond temporal boundaries to consider the curricular, extracurricular, institutional, regional, and national influences on writing theories and pedagogies.
In Chapter two, "The Ethics of Historical Methodology/ies: A Rationale and An Illustration," I argue, as the title suggests, for the ethics of writing methodological descriptions for historical studies in composition as a means of engaging with and yet resisting the hegemony of a grand narrative and as a means of displaying the seams and gaps within the historical narrative. In arguing for this approach, I provide an illustration of such a methodology by describing my research design. I talk about how I surveyed 1940s issues of *College English* and conducted archival research and interviews with UNH alumni. This chapter provides the rationale for my selection of each data source, discusses why UNH is an ideal research site for this study and describes research contexts that brought me to this particular study.

In Chapter three, "Considering the State of 1940s Writing Instruction and the State of a State University," I discuss particular trends in composition during the 1940s, using a survey of *College English* articles to supply particular themes and trends, and how UNH reflects and stands apart from these trends. I explore the historical context of UNH, describing, in particular, defining moments in the shaping of the university during the 1940s. I focus especially on the debates, initiatives and struggles within the UNH English Department, as the staff debated what courses of study constituted an appropriate and complete degree in English Studies, and decided on curricular shifts in response to institutional and national viewpoints and pressures of the time.

In Chapter four, "Rings of Influence: the Impact of the Extracurriculum on Institutional Writing Cultures" I point to innovations in writing instruction that were not yet folded into the curriculum, but were still present within (rather than outside of) the university setting, and that influenced the formal curriculum over time. I explore the
ways in which English faculty orchestrated and organized extracurricular events highlighting writing at UNH, developing positive attitudes toward student writing and encouraging the active production of student writing as a contribution to the emergent American literary tradition. In Chapter five, "Additional Rings of Influence: Extending a Writing Culture Beyond the Institutional Context," I extend the discussion of the extracurriculum further, focusing on UNH’s Summer Writers’ conference and the productive interactions between teachers of writing and professional writers.

In the Chapter six, "Conclusion: Implications of an Institutional Case Study," I discuss how this study provides a rationale for further research into this decade, for the study of institutional writing cultures and archives to understand regional influences on writing theory and pedagogy and for the investigation of local writing program archives and histories to add to and diversify the historical record. In addition to historical implications, I discuss pedagogical and administrative implications for this study.
CHAPTER I

RECONSIDERING THE BOUNDARIES OF DISCURSIVE HISTORIES: CURRENT PERCEPTIONS AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

*Our downfall as historians, Connors points out, is assuming that anything that happened in the past was less effective than what we do in the present and viewing the past as the mistake that the present corrects. –Ruth Mirtz (122)*

In recent years, a renewed interest in what Tom Brokaw calls “the greatest generation” has yielded several books, documentaries and oral histories in an urgent attempt to understand this period before its contemporaries have gone. In the field of composition, however, historical studies have largely neglected the decade of the 1940s, and this generation’s contributions to writing theory. Composition scholars often associate this decade of writing instruction with a writing pedagogy called “current-traditional” pedagogy, dating the “current-traditional” period between the late 1880s to the 1950s (and beyond in many cases), and representing current-traditional pedagogy as “old-fashioned,” a pedagogy of repudiation against which composition scholars gauge progress in current writing theory. Overall, my dissertation project explores innovations in writing instruction during the 1940s, using as its focal point a historical institutional case study of the University of New Hampshire (UNH) writing culture during this decade. Drawing on 1940s composition journals, archival research, and interviews with UNH Alumni, I examine both the curricular and extracurricular writing culture at UNH, as well as wider trends in composition pedagogy during that time period. In this chapter, I explain the approach and scope of this historical study by reviewing what has been said
about 1940s writing instruction, particularly in connection with current-traditional pedagogy. As much has been written about current-traditional pedagogy, I intend this review to be representative rather than exhaustive, providing a disciplinary context for my study and a rationale for the importance of localized historical studies like this project.

**Defining Current-Traditional Rhetoric**

In considering what has been characterized as the predominant pedagogical approach to writing during the 1940s, it is important to discuss the field’s perception of the pedagogy labeled “current-traditional,” first in outlining its origins, its definitions, and its later application in scholarly conversations. The term “current traditional rhetoric” was first coined in a non-hyphenated form in 1959 by Daniel Fogarty, but in 1978, Richard Young discussed the term as we’ve come to recognize it today. In his chapter “Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention,” Richard Young describes current-traditional pedagogy as emphasizing “the composed product rather than the composing process” and maintaining a “strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis)” (qtd. in Matsuda 70).

Young’s definition translated quickly into the disciplinary consciousness of Composition Studies. Consider Lester Faigley’s depiction of current-traditional pedagogy just eight years later, in his article “Competing Theories of Process: A Critique

---

1Robert J. Connors, in his 1997 book *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*, questions the usefulness of the term “current-traditional,” stating that the “current” in current-traditional refers to the textbook tradition that is, in itself not current if the texts have fallen into disuse, so that the description is “no longer current *enough*” (5-6). He also questions the term traditional, since it refers to a tradition of lore and invention rather than “adhering to or developing organically from the older, orally based rhetorical tradition” (6). In questioning the term, his main point is that theory and pedagogy in written instruction did not remain unified, unchanged, or follow the rhetorical tradition in a systematic fashion.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
and a Proposal," when he says, "Nearly everyone seems to agree that writing as a process is good, and ‘current-traditional rhetoric’ is bad" (527). That Faigley can make this statement with such certainty suggests his sense that scholars would agree with him, and, his statement, made in 1986, provides a window into the field’s understanding and depiction of current-traditional rhetoric in the mid-1980s, a perception that still persists, in large part, today.

While briefer descriptions like Faigley’s provide us with a snapshot of the field’s assumptions about current-traditional rhetoric as a pedagogy, the following descriptions provide a deeper understanding of the epistemologies and factors that shaped current-traditional pedagogies, and are important to consider when looking for potential innovations during historical moments with which this pedagogy is most often associated. James A. Berlin, in his book Rhetoric and Reality, suggests that the main concern for current-traditional rhetoric was to attempt an objectivity that denied “the role of the writer, reader, and language in arriving at meaning” and “placed truth in the external world, existing prior to the individual’s perception of it” (36). If truth existed outside of the writer, then the writer would need to find the adequate means to express that truth. A practical application of this epistemology, then, was that the main goals for writing instruction were to work on “patterns of arrangement and superficial correctness” (9). In her book Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays, Sharon Crowley notes that by 1910, most composition textbooks contained a fairly standard set of current-traditional instructional materials. Current-traditional textbooks, in particular, focused primarily on the form that a piece of writing took, rather than its rhetorical situation, “collaps[ing] every composing occasion into an ideal in which authors, readers,
and messages are alike undistinguished” (94). One reason for this focus on the forms of writing is, to return to Berlin, that the writer is seen as transcribing reality for the reader, “to record this reality exactly as it has been experienced so that it can be reproduced in the reader” (7). The practical application for this pedagogy then, was to focus on precision of language, style, and mechanical correctness, so that the content was transmitted as clearly as possible.

Ironically, while they can sometimes be limiting, these descriptions of current-traditional pedagogy can also be helpful. In terms of my project, for example, I have found descriptions of current-traditional pedagogy to be helpful in determining whether archival materials seem to represent a departure from current-traditional rhetoric, and when these materials seem to represent pedagogical practices that are in line with these descriptions.

**Factors Contributing to the Rise of “Current-Traditional Rhetoric”**

Composition scholars offer many, often practical, factors contributing to the popularity of the pedagogy they’ve named “current-traditional rhetoric” during the early twentieth-century. Keeping these factors in mind can help us to remember the contexts in which the pedagogy took hold. The first factor I’ll cite focuses on the disciplinary struggle within English Studies departments in the early twentieth century. Mike Rose, in his article “The Language of Exclusion,” notes that, in the 1920s and 1930s, newly formed English departments had to argue for their legitimacy to “efficiency-obsessed administrators and legislators” (531). Their argument shaped an approach to writing instruction that was, of necessity, primarily utilitarian, with composition programs existing to serve, address, and fix the writing ills of the entering or current student
population, a view that we have yet to shake. English departments using this argument focused on the “utility of English” to equip students with skills required “to achieve in almost any subject and to function as productive citizens” (531). This approach gave composition a certified place in the university system as the sole course in common for all students, however, this certified place has often been quite problematic for composition as a field, as it is often viewed as secondary or lower than the other sub-fields within English Studies, literature in particular. Other institutional pressures such as questions about disciplinarity, questions about the purposes of Freshman English and the nature of English Studies contributed to shaping approaches and attitudes toward composition courses and toward writing instruction.

Another factor often cited for the rise in “current-traditional rhetoric” is the practical concern of class size. Robert J. Connors, in his 1997 book *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy* notes that as the size of composition courses grew and the labor shifted to “section hands” or “graduate student instructors” (13), pedagogical methods were adopted or discarded based on their “teachability” (12). These large classes offered little opportunity for teacher-student contact, and writing pedagogy increasingly focused on mechanical correctness. Students submitted themes, received the teacher-marked copies, and either corrected “all the marked errors” or tried to avoid those errors in subsequent assignments (13). Other factors directly related to the shifts in student population and increased class size during the 1940s were national pressures such as those imposed by the United States’ involvement in World War II (i.e. rationing efforts, or Army Specialized Training Units stationed on university campuses.
such as UNH), the creation of the GI Bill, and, post-WWII, the subsequent influx of veterans on campuses.

In addition to increased class size, World War II and the creation of the GI Bill contributed to curricular shifts in American schools and universities. Deborah Brandt points out in her article “Drafting US Literacy,” WWII played a large part in shifting standards of functional literacy. The U.S. military became intimately involved in increasing the literacy of their soldiers, in part because of technological advances in military equipment, and in part because literacy was now seen as “a resource or raw material vital to national security and global competition” (485).² The purpose of literacy shifted from being a “moral good” to being important “for productivity,” or, “for what people could do with it” (490). In other words, in order for a person to be a contributive, productive member of society, one had to be functionally literate; literacy became utilitarian rather than being “linked closely to hierarchies of class and race” (489). The pressure created by a hi-tech war offered greater access to and calls for literacy for larger groups of people than in the past, though the pressure was contingent upon the supply and demand also created by the war (497). In this climate, then, an emphasis on correctness and remedial education in writing instruction makes sense in its connection to life and death situations. In Chapter Three of this dissertation, I discuss curricular changes that occurred at UNH in response to the Second World War, and how these changes offer some insight into the war’s effect on institutional social climates and writing cultures during this historical moment. As Brandt suggests, WWII and its veterans attending institutions of higher learning created numerous opportunities for

---

² Mike Rose also discusses shifting standards of functional literacy in his introduction to Lives on the Boundary.
curricular change, an issue that I take up in Chapter Three as well. Each of these factors contributed to shifts in theoretical and pedagogical practices with regard to writing instruction at the University of New Hampshire and at other US colleges and universities.

**Historicizing Pedagogy: Considering the Limitations of Periodization**

Amid these and other descriptions of current-traditional rhetoric, I have seen what I would call a disturbing trend toward representing writing instruction in the early twentieth-century, and particularly the 1940s, as a “Dark Age” of writing instruction. Although some scholars note limitations and exceptions to their descriptions, many do not, and the result seems to be an accumulation of nearly homogeneous descriptions that could lull us into a sense that the period requires no further investigation.\(^3\) The danger of a field accepting a generalized understanding of a “period” is that this understanding glosses over differences and innovations in writing instruction, and creates assumptions about the period that can be too limiting. In her article, “The History of Composition: Reclaiming Our Lost Generations,” Robin Vamum notes that one problem with glossing over a period in writing instruction is that it can “have the effect of denying the resources and lessons of portions of the past to many of us currently teaching composition” (40).

As Vamum points out, composition scholars can tend to ignore the influence of previous decades once a period has been set in disciplinary consciousness. In reference to the period being discussed in this study, Vamum notes that “the sixty years between roughly 1900 and 1960 have been characterized as a period of stagnation in the history of composition and as a period in which ‘current-traditional’ rhetoric, an approach developed in the late nineteenth century, operated as a monolithic and increasingly

---

\(^3\) I’m sure that composition historians believe that innovations in writing instruction did exist during the 1940s, but the literature as yet does not demonstrate this scholarly curiosity.
obstructive paradigm" (39). Such sweeping descriptions of time create too much opportunity for assumptions about early twentieth-century writing instruction, assumptions that composition scholars tend to build on when they refer to the "current-traditional" period in various abbreviated forms: e.g., using the term "current-traditional" alone without definition (assuming that the term completes the description), using the brief "drills and skills" reference as a description, or even using sardonic descriptions of the period, intended to inspire a knowing smile from its readers. In her critique, Varnum provides an overview of some of the descriptions encouraging a homogeneous view of early twentieth-century writing instruction:

Donald Stewart derides current-traditional rhetoric as belonging to "the Stone Age of our discipline" ("History" 17). Robert Connors specifically dismisses the period between 1900 and 1930 as the "Dark Ages" of composition ("Textbooks" 189). Richard Young and Maxine Hairston applaud a "paradigm shift" which they say occurred in the 1960s, displacing an old-fashioned and wrong-headed paradigm which might best be forgotten. (39-40)

These definitions and descriptions contribute, for better or for worse (intended or not), to the perception that current-traditional rhetoric alone reigned during a period such as the 1940s, and can limit the discipline's historical understanding of itself, and of multiple histories of writing instruction during that period.

Generalized descriptions of the 1940s predominantly focused on so-called current-traditional approaches to writing instruction have often taken the place of more in-depth studies of the period, creating a tacitly agreed upon understanding of early twentieth-century writing instruction that encourages scholars to repudiate, rather than investigate the period. Periodization of a writing pedagogy, then, can contribute to a tacitly (or explicitly) agreed upon narrative of progress for the discipline. For example,
Robert J. Connors describes current-traditional rhetoric as the “convenient whipping boy, the term of choice after 1985 for describing whatever in nineteenth- and twentieth-century rhetorical or pedagogical history any given author found wanting. Got a contemporary problem? Blame it on that darn old current-traditional rhetoric” (Composition-Rhetoric 5). In her book Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition, Susan Miller argues that “‘current-traditional’ or ‘product’ theory appears to have been created at the same time that process theory was, to help explain process as a theory pitted against old practices” (110). Miller suggests that the creation of the current-traditional period served as a foil for the emerging process theory, and served as an affirmation of progress in writing instruction.

Lad Tobin, too, critiques the depiction of the “current-traditional” period as “a dark period in our discipline’s history” in his article “How The Process Movement Was Born—and Other Conversion Narratives,” by offering a satirical description of the drill and skill approach to writing instruction that we assume to characterize the period. Tobin critiques the tendency to create a narrative of progress, seeing his own support for process pedagogy receiving a similar treatment from proponents of the post-process movement, and taking a somewhat repentant approach toward current-traditional rhetoric: “In some sense, process had it coming. After all, those of us who supported process pedagogies often misrepresented preprocess approaches as retrograde and ineffectual when, in fact, much of what we know about the teaching of writing long preceded the process movement” (14). This dissertation is an effort toward fleshing out some of these as yet untold narratives, the ones that “long preceded [and may have contributed to] the process movement.”
In leaving out nuances and anomalies for the sake of homogeneity, historical representations can and do serve as a basis for presumption on which a disciplinary community builds tacit (and potentially mistaken) or explicit understandings of the period. The definitions and descriptions develop a sense of a period in writing instruction as containable, while also providing a means to consider whether practice has altered. Paul Kei Matsuda, in his essay, “Process and Post-Process: A Discursive History,” points out that terms such as \textit{process, post-process}, and I will add \textit{current-traditional rhetoric} here, that construct historical periods of writing instruction “contribute to the discursive construction of reality within a site of intellectual practice,” although they “have helped to clarify changing currents in the intellectual practices of composition studies” (66, 74). Period labels and definitions, though necessarily reductive, allow us to make sense of a temporal moment. Considering descriptions of current-traditional rhetoric is one way to understand the patterns that marked writing instruction and to consider the ways in which these patterns still connect, either directly or in historical form, to current practice—a function of historical inquiry.

Though it is important for a discipline to develop a sense of a beginning foundation, the “discursive construction” of the current-traditional period has been represented as the object of rejection, an aged past to disown. Matsuda points out that “in attempting to draw a clear-cut boundary between current-traditional and process ‘paradigms,’ the popular history of process also created the impression that composition pedagogy before the process movement was methodologically monolithic” (68). For example, in general usage, the term “expressivism” has been accepted both as a description of an approach to writing instruction and a period in composition studies.
The notion of *era*, then, can extend beyond its initial usefulness (e.g., making sense of an epistemological perspective), and become a false boundary. We begin to see the era in dichotomies: past/present, before/after, then/now, good/bad. Charles Paine suggests that, simply because of its centrality in composition histories, current-traditional rhetoric seems to become "a historical agent itself" and is often cast as "villainous" (29). What I am most concerned about in terms of holding a monolithic view of a particular era in writing instruction is that scholars can began to accept a view of the current field as "being beyond" the "old" ideas, in their zeal to form or define new theoretical camps (and to establish themselves as innovators).

Although defining a particular period of writing instruction is problematic, since writing pedagogy is not containable within temporal boundaries, and does not begin and end at discreet boundaries that are implied by the label "period," we have benefited, too, from the histories describing writing instruction in the early twentieth-century. These histories have provided a beginning understanding of general writing instruction during this period. As Charles Paine notes, one benefit is that "the practitioners and theorists of composition studies—like any group trying to establish a community identity and trying to attain the power that can accompany such identity—wanted, first, simply to have a history that would indicate a 'respectable past'" (24). The constructed narrative of writing instruction, Paine says, "provided a space for identity and solidarity for the discipline of composition teachers" (27). In addition to addressing the need for solidarity as a discipline, composition historians note that the lenses that we look through

---

4 Berlin's taxonomies or North's depictions of the field in *The Making of Knowledge* provide us with a common ground, a starting place from which to posit new questions and investigate generalities within these texts.
have much to do with how we see the period. In her book *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920*, Anne Ruggles Gere notes that just as the past may provide insight into our present practices, “Representations of former ages, of course, change with the times. History or what we say about the past has to do with the present more than with what happened at another time” (269). Creating a narrative of the past can, and has, provided us with a means for critiquing prior practices to legitimize new writing theories and practices and can provide us with a rationale for the emergence of current practices; and, as I suggest through this study, it can help us to view the past as part of a continuum, infusing present practices, emerging from prior practices, and still evolving.

**Finding Innovation, Not Anomaly, in Alternate Sites of Writing Instruction**

Recent scholarship in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literacy practices demonstrates that the grand historical narrative can be complicated by extending our historical gaze to include new sites of literacy and writing instruction, (the extracurriculum, for example), and investigating local institutional histories as a means for complicating a period that could otherwise be written off as uninteresting or “stagnant.” In any given “period,” pedagogies are shaped by past, current, and even future trends in writing instruction. In her book *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*, Sharon Crowley notes that pedagogical shifts do not necessarily indicate one paradigm replacing another (such as process models replacing current-traditional rhetoric), but rather that various emergent pedagogical strategies

---

5For example, books such as Lucille M. Schultz's *The Young Composers: Composition's Beginnings in Nineteenth-Century Schools* help us to see how shifting sites of literacy can provide a more diverse understanding of a period or pedagogical innovation. In the Introduction of her book, Schultz discusses several instances in writing instruction in the schools that prefigure some composition theorists: Frost for Elbow (freewriting) and Pestalozzi for Dewey.
merge with existing practices in writing instruction, weaving into and being affected by the dominant approaches (65). In discussing some of Barrett Wendell’s pedagogical practices that do not reflect current-traditional pedagogical characteristics, Sue Carter Simmons argues that “past” and present pedagogical ideologies live simultaneously: “process pedagogies did not emerge for the first time in the 1960s, nor did current-traditional rhetoric disappear as soon as teachers began to critique it” (348). She points out that rather than seeing composition studies as evolving from current-traditional to process pedagogy, “we can look instead at the political and ideological situations which have supported both” (348). For example, Gerald Muldering notes that current-traditional approaches to writing instruction were not universally employed or embraced between 1930 and 1950, and that instead, there was a Gradual erosion of confidence in classroom drill as a useful pedagogical practice. Throughout these decades, a vocal minority expressed its dissatisfaction with the prevailing approaches to teaching and proposed some surprising alternatives—alternatives anticipating many of the ideas that have informed the teaching of writing [in recent history]. (305)

In his Introduction to Composition-Rhetoric, Robert Connors describes the period of writing instruction between 1910 to World War II as “a period of relative stasis that is

6 Crowley begins this chapter by discussing the emergence of process pedagogy, tracing its historical roots to articles published in the 1950s and 1960s. Later in this chapter, she also points out the staying power of current-traditional pedagogy, pointing to recent textbooks that still employ aspects of this pedagogy. Although there is no mention of the 1940s in this chapter, I believe that Crowley provides a rationale for looking further at the 1940s in her previous chapter “Freshman English and War” when she discusses the many changes in pedagogy due to WWII, the GI Bill, and the communication-based Freshman English course.

7 And, as Crowley, Connors and others have noted, current-traditional pedagogy has not yet “disappeared,” as evidenced in textbooks, online discussions, and journals.

8 In Rhetoric and Reality, Berlin also argues that competing ideologies always exist in any period of writing instruction (5), and he discusses important shifts in current-traditional pedagogy during what Connors calls the “period of relative stasis,” most notably the appearance of a library research paper (coinciding with various endowments for libraries), the change in rhetoric textbooks from the modes of discourse to the “types approach,” (genres that were popular in print culture), and, in the East and the Midwest, the decline of rhetorics in favor of a literary text paired with a grammar handbook (a popular choice even now) (70-1).
usually associated with the pejorative uses of the term ‘current-traditional rhetoric’” (Composition-Rhetoric13). Yet elsewhere, Connors points out that organizations such as NCTE were fairly vocal in arguing for alternative views of writing instruction. In his article “Composition Teaching in America, 1930-1950: Reconsidering Our Recent Past,” Gerald Muldering again questions the idea that current-traditional rhetoric was a generally accepted pedagogy, citing research studies and journal articles from the 1920s and 1930s that demonstrate disagreements with “the value of teaching absolute standards of correctness” (307). For example, Muldering cites Sterling Andrus Leonard’s argument based on his research panel of over two hundred professional writers and linguists that an emphasis on mechanical correctness is a-contextual and that “there is literally no authority” for many of the stylistic pronouncements made by textbook authors (308). Muldering also cites several studies during the 1920s and 1930s that laid the groundwork for the claim a focus on grammar instruction does not necessarily translate into one’s writing (309). C.W. and W.A. Kerby-Miller argued in a 1937 article for English Journal that teachers should see writing as a process, and that “writing must start with the first steps and build carefully and soundly though the whole process” (qtd. in Muldering 312). Muldering also discusses then NCTE president Porter Perrin’s 1946 speech during the general session, in which Perrin argued that mechanics are “incidentals, not sufficient to be the basis of a course at any level of instruction” (qtd. in Muldering 313), and that writing should be seen as a means of communication. In this speech, Perrin said that the standards by which teachers often evaluated their students’ writing were unrealistic and that professional writing was often the product of collaborative writing. Perrin argued
that if a piece of writing “made its point for the readers for whom it was intended,” then it was a successful piece of writing (354).

In his book *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: A Documentary History*, John Brereton argues that the way in which a “term like ‘current-traditional’ by its very nature lumps together a vast array of practices in the interest of making a larger point” implies that one might investigate “a whole range of educational practices that were occurring in those supposedly weak composition courses that proliferated for nearly a century” (xiii). This range of educational practices can occur, as Brereton states, in an historical study of composition classroom practices, and in such an investigation, we may discover more Fred Newton Scotts and Gertrude Bucks—figures who were considered anomalous by Kitzhaber (1990)—and find that we can no longer consider them anomalous; for, although they may not have had a wide ranging impact on the field, their varying degrees of local and regional influence can still complicate our understanding of current-traditional practices (especially if an institution on the current map of our grand narrative is part of that landscape). We might also revise our understandings of current major figures in our history, as Thomas Newkirk has done of Barrett Wendell. We could shift our gaze to the extracurriculum as Anne Ruggles Gere has done to reflect on the centrality of literacy practices inside and outside of schools, or we might study histories of writing instruction in sites other than the university to discover innovations and innovators that prefigure our current practices, as Lucille Schultz has done.

We could also discover, as Neal Lerner, Beth Boquet, and Peter Carino have, that investigations of writing labs during the current-traditional period offer many more
innovative, "anomalous" practices than our current descriptions of the period would suggest. This brief listing of anomalies—many of them recently discovered—implies that multiple histories of literacy and writing instruction, and of important figures in Composition Studies, exist in archives and in departmental or external storehouses. Much of the recent historical research on writing instruction innovations in higher education and external sites of literacy, though, has focused on the nineteenth- or early twentieth century—usually ending its scope in the 1930s.\(^9\) With this study, my intention is to add to the historical record, developing a history of writing innovation at UNH at a time when those who would be future process pedagogy advocates were, themselves, in school, and to consider how writing instruction at UNH may have affected pedagogical practices beyond this university’s setting.

**A Rationale for Multiple, Local Historical Studies**

In “Dreams and Play,” Robert J. Connors illustrates the need for multiple histories: “All received wisdom is partial, incomplete. It must be examined again and again, not merely accepted. That, finally, is why there are, and why we need, multiple histories” (34). I would add the word “local” to Connors’ statement. As I have discussed, the definition and creation of historical periods arises from a disciplinary need to understand the history of writing instruction, and, in some cases, the need to distinguish a current theory or practice from the past (to present the current time as innovative).

However, a definition can hide complexities of experience, practice, and theory that are found not in an official historical narrative, such as narratives of writing instruction in a given time period, or narratives of an institution of higher education, but in local

---

\(^9\) As seen in the historical/recovery scholarship of Lucille Schultz, Anne Ruggles Gere, Cinhia Gannett, Andrea Lunsford, Katherine Adams and John L. Adams, Thomas Newkirk, Robin Varnum, Shirley Wilson Logan, Jessica Enoch, and others.
histories. One might argue that local histories do not seem to capture the attention of a wide enough audience, cannot, then, be influential beyond local borders, and are, therefore, anomalous. Yet I would suggest that a useful solution to the homogenizing process of defining a pedagogical trend in history could be to look into multiple sites of history, as several scholars have already begun to do. In this study, then, I look at one of these sites of history.

Influenced by John R. Thelin’s discussion in *A History of American Higher Education* of constructing historical narratives of higher education, I employ what he calls “horizontal” and “vertical” historical narratives to describe 1940s writing instruction at the University of New Hampshire. Thelin argues that in a higher education institution’s “official” histories “even the basic facts—names, numbers, and dates—are subject to contemporary confusion and debate,” citing several recent examples of institutions’ founding dates that have been called into question and disputes over institutional name changes. He suggests that “historical writing about higher education is constantly subject to new estimates and reconsideration” and “if we [even now] find serious disagreements about the names of institutions and their founding dates, then it is reasonable to expect complexity and uncertainty when we try to reconstruct and interpret the most significant issues and episodes of higher education’s past” (xv-xvi). In studying the historical importance of local institutions in histories of higher education, Thelin argues that scholars should look at an institution’s “vertical history” which considers the institution itself as a “familiar landmark” that is part of our “institutional consciousness.”

---

10 Specifically, Thelin cites the case of Trenton State College vs. Princeton University. In 1996, administrators at Trenton State intended to change the college’s name to College of New Jersey. Princeton University disputed this change because this was the original name for Princeton. Trenton State officials compromised and used the name College for New Jersey instead (xiv-xv).
He notes that whether the institution is already well-established in our institutional consciousness and well-studied (like Harvard) or “understudied” (like UNH as compared to Harvard) should not affect its level of importance to the study, since rewriting established histories and recovering unexplored histories are both important to understanding a specific course of study such as writing instruction in the 1940s. The vertical history of the institution is the mark that it makes (or could make) on a particular field’s historical narrative. Thelin also discusses the need for studying an institution’s “horizontal history,” which considers the external forces such as public policy, federal law, and state funding that influence an institution’s policy and pedagogy. Each of these concepts informed the design of this study, as I outline more fully in Chapter two.

**Looking Beyond the First-Year Course to an Institutional Writing Culture**

Although writing instruction during the 1940s has not been studied in depth in the field of composition, the literature that does discuss this period, from Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality*, to more recent studies such as Robin Varnum’s *Fencing With Words: A History of Writing Instruction of Amherst College during the Era of Theodore Baird, 1938-1966*, or Thomas Masters’ *Practicing Writing: The Postwar Discourses of Freshman English*, focus, for the most part, on the first-year writing course. These historical accounts are vital additions to the historical landscape of writing instruction, providing important insights about the course as it was practiced at one New England institution (Varnum) and four Midwestern institutions (Masters), and arguing for

---

11 I want to note here that I am not intending to downplay the important foundational course of our discipline in my discussion of historical discussions centering on the first-year course. I am, however, arguing for expanding the focus of historical studies of writing instruction to include the writing climate on college campuses, to consider the sanctioned practices as seen in formal curricula and to consider the marginal, yet vital extracurricular practices that contribute to an institution’s sense of its writing culture. I am suggesting, simply, that the focus on the FYC alone may have allowed for a blind spot in our current histories, especially considering that contemporary research projects consider the literacy practices of students within and beyond the formal curriculum.
approaches to historical research that incorporate archival research and oral histories as well as publications such as textbooks, an argument that I take up in this study as well. Masters and Varnum, though they both extend their research into sources other than textbooks, focus primarily on the Freshman English course itself—its pedagogy, assignments, and teacher and student reflections on these assignments.

In a History of Composition course that I took with Robert J. Connors, Dr. Connors often said that the first-year composition courses are one of the first places where curricular changes manifest themselves, and that often, these curricular changes are responding to external factors, such as cultural, political, national or international events. It is true that teachers of writing select current topics to discuss, from semester to semester, in response to a specific cultural, political, or even an institutional event. However, we could also consider the possibility that the first-year course might be representative of traditional values of writing instruction—one of the last elements of the curriculum to change, rather than one of the first. Because all students entering the university must take the first-year composition course, and because faculty across the curriculum have opinions about the teaching of writing, the stakes are high in undertaking curricular change for this course and these changes must be vetted through a hierarchical series of institutional approvals (both official and unofficial). It seems that focusing our attention on the first-year course does not give us a complete understanding of the conversations shaping beliefs about writing and writing instruction—rather, this course provides us, in many cases, with existent, traditional or institutionally-approved views, rather than emerging views. Though we cannot retrieve these conversations, we can look in sites other than the Freshman English course, in archival records, university

12 University of New Hampshire, Spring Semester 2000.
publications, and alumni interviews, as I have done in this study, to provide us with glimpses and memories of institutional and even regional conversations about writing during the 1940s.

If the first-year course were the sole representative of writing instruction prior to the creation of the composition studies as a discipline, then we would naturally see a more narrow approach to writing instruction. One of my primary questions throughout this study has been how a focus on first-year composition histories can cause us to miss "writing instruction" in the periphery of the university setting. Though several studies have expanded the scope of historical data from textbooks to other sources such as archival artifacts and oral histories, many of these studies still center on a foundational, introductory English course as the focal point—a focus that may unintentionally limit our understanding of the writing culture on college and university campuses. If we consider, instead, a continuum, or a web of relationships between the formal curriculum and the extracurriculum, we might better understand how attitudes toward writing and writing instruction in a particular university can be shaped by a number of factors (beyond textbooks, assignments, and syllabi) such as departmental and inter-departmental politics, curricular reforms in and outside of the institution, extracurricular initiatives created by faculty, students, and staff, and regional connections among writers and teachers. As I argue in this dissertation, when historical study focuses primarily on one site of writing instruction within a university, we see a partial, or limited, view of the attitudes about writing on that university's campus and our conclusions are also limited. It is true, for example, that the University of New Hampshire first-year course looks much like the so-called current-traditional courses described by many composition scholars. However,
we have the benefit of looking backward, of knowing what innovations in writing
instruction came, in part, through scholars from this university just twenty years later, in
the 1960s. Some of these scholars were students at UNH during the 1940s and were
ostensibly influenced by the writing culture at UNH at the time, raising questions about
what other aspects of the institution’s writing culture we need to know more about. If we
think of the first-year course as part of a larger writing culture, including creative writing
or, under the larger umbrella of English Studies (since, at that time, the distinctions were
not as solidified as they are now), then the field of composition might gain a more
complete understanding of writing instruction before the field came into being, (1963,
according to North, though an argument could be made for an earlier date), and perhaps
how more current pedagogies, influenced by an institution’s or region’s writing culture,
came into being.

A Word on Institutional Writing Cultures

Over time, colleges and universities generate their own local cultural traditions
and rituals. In her study of cultures in institutions of higher learning, Kathleen Manning
argues that we can analyze university events, traditions and ceremonies to determine an
institution’s values and priorities or more precisely, its culture. Throughout this
dissertation, I use the term institutional writing culture to suggest the complex factors
influencing theoretical and practical approaches to writing instruction in a given location.
In presenting this historical narrative, I center my discussions of institutional,
departmental, curricular and extracurricular initiatives on people—the decision-makers,
the creators, the leaders, and the participants in each initiative. As Manning points out, an
institutional culture is shaped by many external and internal factors, but is represented
especially “through the actions and words of community members” and that the study of
cultural events allows for the study of “human communities” which are “dynamic,
complex, and ever changing environments” (2). Manning suggests that at these events,
presidents and administrators are often the mouthpieces who express institutional values;
While Manning focuses her study on such rituals as graduations, convocations and the
like, I extend this notion of culture to institutional customs and instructional practices and
policies since they do, once implemented, represent institutional values that evolved over
time.

In this dissertation, I reconsider writing instruction in the 1940s and argue that
innovations in writing instruction emerged in the 1940s in part due to the strictures of the
formal curriculum, the diverse interests of the faculty, and extracurricular initiatives. I
also discuss how external factors such as World War II, the GI Bill, and the interest in
developing a nationalistic identity in the development of an American literary identity
contributed to curricular shifts in formal and informal writing instruction. As part of this
discussion, I do, naturally, include the first-year composition course at UNH, but I also
look to innovations in the institutional periphery to gain a better understanding of how the
extracurriculum and the formal curriculum shape one another.

As scholars such as Anne Ruggles Gere have suggested, many innovations in
writing instruction originated outside of the formal university curriculum—in writing
groups, summer conferences, in guest lectures by professional creative writers—in what
Gere calls the extracurriculum. Gere’s stated purpose in Intimate Practices is that she is
examining how the women’s club movement “enacted cultural work through their
literacy practices” (2). I am coming at my research from a similar, but not identical
perspective, questioning how the writing culture at UNH and in the region was created through literacy practices both within and outside of the formal curriculum. Rather than focusing on extracurricular learning alone, I consider intersections between extracurricular and curricular approaches to writing instruction—how each arena influenced each other, and what influences contributed to a writing culture at the University of New Hampshire during the 1940s. I argue that the extracurriculum and formal curriculum blended, in a sense, to form that writing culture.

Several extracurricular innovations in writing instruction were prevalent at the University of New Hampshire during the 1940s, and, though they were not yet folded into the curriculum, these practices seem to prefigure movements in writing instruction such as process pedagogy and how national educational trends such as general education reforms and external factors such as WWII, and the GI Bill impacted curricular changes in writing instruction locally (at UNH), regionally, and nationally.¹³

Questions Guiding This Study

As I noted above, my interest in writing a local history led me on a journey through materials within and outside of the official, local archive at UNH and to people who could offer insights into life at UNH during the 1940s. All of this research, within and beyond the archive, was driven by the following research questions:

1. During the 1940s, what pedagogical innovations, if any, prefigured emergent writing theories? Which innovations represent as yet unexplored alternatives to current-traditional pedagogy?

¹³ For example, the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference, (1938-1962), and numerous national and regional contests won by UNH students, placed UNH in the national limelight as an institution with a strong writing culture and as a regional influence on writing pedagogy in surrounding schools.
(2) How is an institutional writing culture formed?

(3) What factors influence this institutional writing culture?

(3) In what ways can local/institutional histories of writing instruction help us to understand regional or larger pedagogical trends?

(4) In looking beyond first-year writing courses to the larger university writing culture, what insights might we gain about writing pedagogies that were not accepted in the mainstream academic curriculum?

(5) What rings of influence—cultural moments, curricular and extracurricular initiatives—intersect or work together to create and shape attitudes about writing, writing instruction, and student writers, and help us to understand more about how this culture of writing influences shifts in writing instruction in later years (e.g., how a writing culture in the 1940s may have contributed in some way to more formalized process pedagogies in the 1960s)?

To address these questions, I turned to numerous sources for my data: archives, departmental files, interviews with alumni, administrative and curricular records among other sources. Because these research questions are motivated by the research design, I will detail the rationale for my research choices in the following chapter. In Chapter Two, I argue for the importance of writing historical methodologies, and, following this argument, I provide, as an illustration of this argument, a description of my methodology for this historical study.
A Personal Narrative: A Day in the University of New Hampshire Archives

Another day in the Archives. I deposit my jacket and bag in the entryway of the UNH Archives, taking only my laptop, a notebook, and a pencil with me to one of the long, wooden tables. No ink or personal belongings beyond this point. I stop at the front desk to sign in; Becky retrieves my folder from the “Recent Visit” bin, and writes down today’s date and time. I have a photocopying balance to pay today. Handing over my check, I collect my receipt and then turn my attention to the row of five carts lining the wall, looking for the one set aside for me. Since I’m visiting the Archives almost daily, the staff has assembled several boxes on this cart. Scanning the titles of each box, I select the one marked “Writers’ Conference,” the box I ended with yesterday. I only have one more folder to look through, and then I can go to the next most promising box—the “President’s Papers.”

I carry the box to the table, looking for one of the two cushioned chairs, since I plan to remain here for several hours. Opening the box, I pull out a folder and turn each page slowly, reading through miscellaneous brochures, letters, and conference registration records for serendipitous finds—answers to my evolving research questions. Occasionally, I find an artifact that I want copied, and I place long, thin, white paper bookmarks (supplied by the Archives) to indicate which document I need. As I look
through the folders, I take notes—in my notebook when I come across possible leads to other boxes and folders, and on my laptop when I find quotes I might want later, when I want to record questions I need answered or make connections I want to remember, or when I want to type longer sections of text.

As I type, Elizabeth the University Archivist approaches me with two blue hardbound books titled UNH News in her hands. “I’ve been indexing these newsletters lately. Since they were printed during two of the years you’re studying, I thought of you.” Thanking Elizabeth for this find, and recognizing that she is handing these materials to me before indexing is completed, I revise my research plan, resolving to review these publications before turning to the President’s Papers. I eagerly crack open the first volume of the UNH News, and discover in the Editor’s Note that this bi-weekly newsletter replaced the two years of student, faculty, and military publications that I’d been searching for. The editor’s note tells me that all of these publications were consolidated into this one newsletter during World War II, part of the war effort to conserve paper. I marvel, once again, at the twists and turns of archival research.

The UNH Archives is housed in a new facility, as far as archival collections go, opening its doors in the lowest level of the Dimond Library in 1997. The room itself is fairly bright, surrounded on two sides by large, ceiling-to-floor windows overlooking the forest in the center of campus, a vista of beautiful, native New England trees, and a series of bridges connecting the walkways over College Brook ravine. As I review the contents of each folder, I often look out these windows. Though I am in the basement of the library, steeped in campus history, I feel connected to the present-day life of the campus.
The personal narrative above represents a small snapshot of my time in the University of New Hampshire Archives while conducting research for this dissertation project. For those who have worked in an archive, the scene is likely a familiar one, though each Archive differs in the procedures used and in the degree of access one has to archival materials, to the staff, and to the physical space of the archive itself. For those who have not worked in an archive, archival research may seem like a solitary act, but it is a series of interactions with texts, archival materials and secondary sources. As the above narrative describes, archival research includes a series of interactions with the archival staff as well. The archivists’ awareness of my project allowed for serendipitous finds directly and tangentially related to my work that I would not have made without their expert direction; they kept an eye out for materials that might benefit my work, and for that I am grateful to them.

In many ways, my research process was methodical—I developed lists of materials to search, added to that list as I located new resources, and searched through documents sequentially. The method was also organic, shaped by the research process itself and by other theoretical and pragmatic factors that I will discuss in the pages of this chapter. In developing the methodology for this chapter, I read what I could about archival methodology, but ultimately, I found it was my entry into the archive itself that shaped my approach most significantly. Overall, this chapter serves three specific functions: first, I first provide a rationale for writing an extended historical methodology. Second, I briefly outline key events leading to my selection of this research focus and design, particularly the circumstances that introduced me to the rich archive at the
University of New Hampshire. And finally, I provide, as an illustration of this argument, the methodology I used for this dissertation project.

**Developing a Methodological Ethos for Historical Research**

*The kind of concealment that the writing of history involves [...] does not reveal the pictures the historian sets up in her head to think by:*

*This concealment, this silence, envelops—the choice of which subjects to treat, which questions to ask, and which not to; the process of reasoning by which the historian arrives at the positions he or she holds; and the structures within the text by means of which the answers are presented to the reader... The result of this concealment, which makes the historian appear the invisible servant of his materials, is to endow him with massive authority over the reader.*

*It is important to at least attempt the writing of a history that at some point reveals the processes of its production."* —Carolyn Steedman, *Past Tenses* (55)

As the above quote by Steedman highlights, historical writing often conceals the research process that historians have used. The seamlessness of a historical narrative can suspend the impression that the historian is interpreting data. Although as readers we know that the historian is interpreting, we are not always sure how a writer arrives at certain conclusions. In most composition histories, discussions of method and methodology are brief, usually focused on a rationale for text selections. Though many historical accounts do not provide a glimpse into the process of archival research used by the scholar, I believe that it is important to provide a rationale for developing a written historical methodology and to include this account as a matter of weaving an ethical historical narrative.

In her 2006 CCCC panel, “Revising the Ideological Stance: Rethinking Methodologies of Archival Research,” Barbara L’Eplattenier discussed the importance of developing a *methodological ethos* in archival research, arguing that the inclusion of the historian’s research method serves as both a model for other researchers embarking on
historical research, and as a means of responding to the myth of a seamless (or grand) narrative. L’Eplattenier noted that, to be responsible ethical research, historical narratives must include traces of the work behind the narrative, the method used during archival research. However, she also pointed out that one issue in constructing such a procedural account is that all archives are not alike; if the methodological ethos is intended as a model for other researchers, these researchers must realize that a procedure developed in one archive may not easily transfer to another archive. Despite this challenge, my own work in the UNH Archive and L’Eplattenier’s argument prompted me to write a methodology chapter for this historical study.

In “Dreams and Play: Historical Method and Methodology,” Robert J. Connors describes how historians usually build their studies, beginning with a question, conducting archival research, reviewing the scholarly literature on the topic or question, and writing a historical narrative. In discussions about archival research, Connors’ chapter is oft cited by composition scholars as a seminal text, though his descriptions of archival research methods are, for his rhetorical purposes, generalist at best. Connors’ chapter provides a useful framework and initial set of concerns for the researcher to consider, as I did myself when I first designed my study. However, with closer encounters of a local archive, I’ve come to believe that archival researchers also need to build research methods organically in response to the local archival context. Each archive has its own distinctive structures, strictures, and procedures and policies, and to account
for such parameters, a researcher develops localized research strategies in the midst of exploring the materials in a given archive.\footnote{In recent years, the conversation about developing historical methodologies has grown as a greater number of localized studies have been published and a larger number of scholars become interested in developing local writing program archives at their institutions.}

In his article “Review and Redescribing ‘The Politics of Historiography,’” Kevin Brooks also critiques Connors’ chapter as eliding the presence of the researcher in the archives. About Connors following statement: “The Archive is where storage meets dreams, and the result is history,” Brooks argues that Connors seems to be implying that the researcher mediates between the archival materials and the story already embedded within the materials, rather than acting as interpreter and writer of the historical story (qtd. in Brooks 8). I would argue that although the rest of this article illustrates Connors’ recognition of the role of the historian as constructor of the historical narrative; in particular, he suggests that “no historian is free from prejudiced ideas, but no historian wishes to try for anything less than fair presentation of her findings” (21). Connors proposes that historians should “study the prejudices as data” (21), a proposition that might be more difficult than it sounds at first. We know, of course, that historical narratives inherently house gaps, created by the historian’s biases, blind spots and rhetorical and narrative choices. Sharon Crowley points out in the first Octalogue that historical narratives are constructions, never fully complete because “there exists no objective means of finding, interpreting, or assembling historical data which could guarantee the truth of the resulting narrative” (7). Crowley is highlighting the somewhat idiosyncratic nature of historical research—it is messy, unwieldy, and constructed by the historian’s selections, omissions, and biases.
One reason that historical research can be messy is that the archive itself is often unwieldy and incomplete. The archival record can contribute to gaps in the historical narrative, as records on a given subject may be scarce or material on a given topic could be hidden in an unlikely location in the archive. Despite the laudable efforts of archivists who develop multiple finding aids for archival materials, there will always be a researcher coming to the archive with a question that is not best served by these finding aids, though material in the archive might exist to respond to the question itself; in short, finding aids and keywords cannot account for every research question. As Robert Connors notes, “archival papers and notes tend to be cataloged separately” and “usually researchers have no way to know what college archives contain without hands-on examination, and that can be expensive and difficult for many scholars” (20). Since most archival records are not digitized or organized thematically, archival research can also be hit and miss; any opportunity that a researcher has to cross-reference materials within the archive can only enrich her interpretations.

In my search through recent historical studies in composition for procedural/methodological explanations of archival research, I found that most studies referred briefly—often in just a few lines—to the researcher’s decisions about text selection. Two recent studies, however, do pay particular attention to methodology. In *Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and Composition Books in the United States*, authors Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephen L. Carr and Lucille M. Schultz first provide a general description of the nature of local archival research, in particular, that

Any particular archive is at once a fragmentary and an interested record of textual production, the consequence of innumerable local decisions and unforeseen contingencies about the production and preservation of a large array of texts [. . .]. Archival research [. . .] entails wide reading at various repositories of materials,
often systematically searching to work through a line of inquiry, compiling information from not fully reliable electronic and printed bibliographies, and also at times scanning piles of unfamiliar texts. (19)

Within each individually authored chapter, the author briefly describes his or her experience conducting archival research for a particular aspect of the overall study of nineteenth century rhetorics, readers, and books, discussing how they explored each individual archive within the parameters of their project and limiting the types of records that they looked at.

In *Authoring A Discipline: Scholarly Journals and the Post-world War II Emergence of Rhetoric and Composition*, Maureen Daly Goggin includes a five-page section entitled “A Note about Methodology” in her introductory chapter. Though this section is brief, Goggin spends time discussing the choices she made in selecting journals for her study; she describes her experiences researching in the archives and how this experience helped her to refine the scope of her study. Goggin argues as she does so that “reasonable interpretations of the past begin with limiting decisions” (xv). As she outlines the selective criteria for her study, she notes as well that “my study is thus restricted in material, geographical and temporal foci [...]. There are those who may remember the past somewhat differently than I describe here; given how histories function, that difference is to be not only expected but celebrated” (xv). The data selected and used, she argues, contributes to the ways that a historical narrative is and can reasonably be shaped; another researcher who locates or selects alternate criteria may present a more complicated or alternate narrative altogether.

The availability of archival material also shapes the ways that the historical narrative can be constructed. In the “Octalog II: Serving Time in the Archives,” Linda
Ferreira-Buckley describes her process of sifting through materials in the archives and her efforts to develop an exhaustive search. She notes that, while some of the materials she found in the boxes were “relevant” or even “central,” much of her research in the archives was fruitless, even dull. Archival research, like all research, demands patience, endurance, and perseverance. As I worked in the UNH Archive, I opened each folder with anticipation, scanned each page of each document, hoping that this document would fit another piece of the puzzle I was trying to assemble. Yet, of the numbers of boxes I reviewed, only a few folders in each box yielded the piece I was looking for, and only a small number of these finds appear in this dissertation. There are, of course, always more boxes to search through, more finds that could be had. I might have continued my daily pilgrimage to the beautiful Dimond Library Archive for years, without exhausting all that could be discovered about writing at the University of New Hampshire. However, with only a fraction of the data I collected appearing in the following three chapters, I am satisfied that I have gathered sufficient data to present the historical landscape of the culture of writing at UNH in the 1940s. While I kept my search targeted and focused on the decade of the 1940s, I did also look at materials just before or after the 1940s, in order to learn more about the context or background on a given program or curricular change. Before discussing the methods that I used in archival research, I will describe the genesis of this dissertation project and how my understanding of the principles of archival structures shaped the design of this study.

Ferreira-Buckley also provides a discussion of her experiences with archival research in her article “Archivists With an Attitude: Rescuing the Archives from Foucault.” *College English* 61.5 (1999): 577-583. This series of articles in *College English*, in addition to Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser’s edited collection *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher* (1999) provide a foundational discussion of archival research and the concerns of the researcher as she locates, identifies, preserves, catalogues, reads, and interprets archival materials within the current archival record and those that require preservation for future research.
A Methodological Illustration

In the following section, I present a methodological illustration that describes my research process for this dissertation project. First, I discuss how my initial work with archives aided me in formulating the project. Then, I discuss the particular methods I selected for the research design and present a description of the data collection and analysis for this project.

My Journey Into the Archive: How I Came to This Study

Material traces of theoretical commitments or instructional practices [. . .] complicate the history and self-understanding of the field, for archives of any size or complexity support multiple and often contradictory representations of a field. —Stephen L. Carr (20)

As researchers coming to archives with particular questions, we need to understand how our view of the archive can shape the ways we investigate and ask questions of their contents. Susan Miller, in her article “X-Files in the Archive,” argues that understanding what one means by “archival research” is vital to archival researchers because “when we make prior assumptions about what ‘archival research’ is, we may erase many options and experiences that composition scholars haven’t yet taken up” (1). In my own work, my views of the archive itself and, by extension, of archival research shifted as I encountered new surprises and as I struggled with the seemingly irresolvable gaps within the archive.

Though the personal narrative at the beginning of this chapter describes my apparent familiarity with the archives, this familiarity developed through a series of encounters with the archive. My first encounter with the archive was both theoretical and contributory, theoretical in the sense that, in a graduate seminar, I read scholarly articles on the functions of an archive, and at that time, I viewed an archive mainly as a storage
facility, an inert repository that preserved historical materials that might otherwise be lost in closets, attics, barns, and local landfills. This encounter was contributory because I submitted my field research study of a local homeschooling teaching community to the UNH Archive; this paper provided a record of local culture and future history as well as a sample of graduate student writing in the archives. Since I never visited the archive, these archival "encounters" remained secondary, but I received information about the archive through the intermediary efforts of the professor. This brief encounter with the archives was significant because it allowed me to imagine the archive as a place containing local living histories. My second encounter with the archives was much more involved, what I would call participatory and generative in nature, as I discovered new depths of archival research that I had not yet considered.

This second encounter and my enduring interest in archival research begins as a story of acquainting myself with the materials of the UNH archive through an altogether different research project, the creation of a local writing program archive. In the summer of 2003, Dr. Cinthia Gannett, then Director of the UNH Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program hired a research team ³ to create a writing program archive for ten years' worth of writing center and writing across the curriculum records at UNH (1993-2003).⁴ As part of this project, I sought to learn more about

³I want to thank the Center for the Humanities at the University of New Hampshire and the Robert J. Connors Memorial Fund for providing a portion of the funds for this research endeavor, allowing Dr. Gannett to hire me and Amy Zenger as research assistants, and John Brereton as a consultant to create this archive. UNH University Archivist Elizabeth Slomba was also a member of this research team.

archival organization, as I had—until then—little training in this area. With the guidance of the UNH Archivist Elizabeth Slomba, I explored artifacts within the existent UNH Archive, focusing especially on a number of popular writing initiatives at UNH in the early twentieth century. Since these artifacts suggested a vibrant writing culture at UNH during this period, I saw an opportunity to present a longer view of UNH's writing culture, linking some gaps between the current archival record and the newly created writing program archive. In addition, these artifacts presented a more complex picture of writing instruction in the early twentieth century than is currently told in the field of composition, as I described in Chapter one. In extending my gaze beyond Freshman English, then, these artifacts suggested to me that the extracurricular life of an institution could prove to be much more vital to developing an institution’s writing culture.

In addition to exploring the current archive, my work developing a local writing program archive helped me to understand the kinds of materials that are valued by archivists. A photocopied article with a scholar’s marginalia is more interesting to an archivist than the clean copy because it provides additional context for the artifact. I also learned about the kinds of questions to ask of archival materials. In sifting through materials to be sent to the archive, I penciled notes on the backs of documents whenever possible to provide future researchers with a record of how, when and why this document was used, and who created it. These questions—how, when, and why a document was used, and who created it—followed me into my research, as I developed ways of reading archival documents for my dissertation. Most importantly, though, as I worked with materials to be submitted to the archive, I noted distinct principles shaping the archival space that proved to be most useful as I designed this dissertation project. These
principles formed the essential conceptual framework guiding my day-to-day work in the archive and influencing my evolving understanding of the archive. In the following section, I outline three principles comprising an archive’s structure, defining each principle and discussing its relation to my dissertation project.

**Exploring Relationships Between Archival Structure and Research Design**

First, I saw that the archivist applies a principle of selectivity in developing a usable archive. Including all of the materials from a given donor could create an archive that is too cumbersome for the researcher, and could overwhelm the physical space of the archive. Some artifacts, then, have to be omitted, some selected; a principle of selectivity allows the archivist to sift materials appropriate for a particular archival category and to negotiate with the donor(s) about what materials are most interesting or historically significant for the archive.\(^5\) Keeping this principle in mind was vital to my study because it emphasized the need to interrogate the archival record, to enter the archive with questions about what kinds of stories were not or could not be told given the available data. Since the archival record is inevitably incomplete, being aware of these silences and gaps encouraged me to look past established categories (called “finding aids”) in the archive, to conceive of new labels for materials in the archive, and to look for materials.

---

\(^5\)There are moments, of course, when these principles of selectivity change, due to theoretical shifts in a field. For example, in her work with the writing program archive, Elizabeth Slomba notes that her field is just beginning to recognize student writing as valuable artifacts to be preserved. Her work with the team to develop a writing program archive helped her to see the importance of student writing to the field of composition: “In some archival literature, archivists are encouraged to collect student papers to document student life on campus. But in practice, there is a tacit bias against collecting papers because they are difficult to collect, do not have inherent research value as secondary sources, and do not immediately reflect in themselves the student experience. But what Cindy, John, Kate and Amy were advocating was the collecting of papers for documenting both the process of writing as well as the textual products and along with evidence of writing pedagogies. This triangulation of materials made a difference in my understanding of the desirability of collecting all levels and stages of student work along with other program materials. And it also emphasized the advantages of studying writing in a University or College archive because the whole process could be studied from course development, to the kinds of specific genres assigned, to the resulting papers and teacher’s responses and evaluations” (123).
that were not in the archive yet but that corroborated my developing thesis and filled in
some of these gaps in understanding. For my study, some of these alternate sites were the
English Department’s filing cabinets and the materials given to me by UNH Alumni.

Since many archival materials reach the archivist and consequently the researcher
with a marginal context—sometimes with no clear author or a vague temporal marker (if
any)—the archival researcher needs to look for *contextual traces*\(^6\) that situate the
document in time and place. Carol Steedman notes that the historian is “the reader of
what is never intended for his or her eyes” (30); the historical researcher then needs to
locate contextual traces to help her make interpretive connections between artifacts.
Understanding that such a-contextual gaps are inherent in the archive, the researcher must
apply a *principle of cross-referencing* in an attempt to read across documents to fill in
some of these gaps.\(^7\)

In reviewing documents to be submitted to the writing program archive and
documents for my dissertation research, I learned how important a document’s contextual
traces are. Whenever possible during my research process, I tried to develop notes that
included contextual traces describing a document’s rhetorical situation—the author
(when knowable), the intended audience, and the purpose of the document. These
contextual traces helped me to determine whether certain documents were vital, useful, or
tangential to my study, to confirm what I thought were emergent trends or developing
traditions, and to reassess my understanding of the types of documents that could or

\(^6\) If no contextual traces can be found, the researcher should, returning to my argument about
methodological ethos, make it clear in the resultant historical narrative when intuitive leaps have been
made.

\(^7\) As I asked questions of the archivists, I saw them use this principle of cross-referencing as they drew on
their comprehensive knowledge of what was in the archive. As a researcher, then, I did not have to rely
only on serendipity or my personal knowledge of the archive to make connective links between materials in
the archive.
should be relevant to my study. For example, when I first began my dissertation study, I looked at a series of letters focusing on an annual Writers’ Conference held at UNH from 1938-1962. Some of these letters were written on stationary that told me more about the author than the person’s name. Several letters contained language that was understandable only to the members of that particular discourse community or intended audience. By searching the official brochures of the conference, I located some of the contextual traces for the letters; for example, in a letter signed by “John,” I determined from the context of the letter, from his mention of a collaborative lecture that he was designing with American poet Rolfe Humphries, and from the brochure and conference schedule of that year (1945) that this signature referred to John Holmes, American poet and teacher at Tufts who lectured and led writing groups at the Writers’ Conference for several years.

Finding these contextual traces was not always so easy, apparent, or possible. Some documents were in folders assembled by faculty or staff members who could no longer be contacted and the rhetorical situation of other documents was simply hard to decipher due to too much time having passed or too much missing information in the documents themselves. As I examined whole folders, I could sometimes find contextual traces in the “original order”\footnote{Zenger and Tirabassi define “original order” as “preserving the order in which documents are filed [. . .], one of the key principles in archival work because the way documents are ordered can reveal a great deal about how the creators and users envisioned their own work” (Gannett, Slomba, Tirabassi, Zenger and Brereton 127-8).} within the folder; for example, if a document’s temporal context was in question, the surrounding documents provided insights into the
chronological order of the documents and, as I mention above, into missing information (full names, locations, events) within the documents themselves.\(^9\)

Another means that I used in finding contextual traces was by cross-referencing archival documents with other related documents, as I did with the John Holmes letter, or with artifacts found in unofficial archives—the student newspapers, college and university publications, departmental filing cabinets, public library special collections, and other local sources such as interviews with faculty, staff and students shedding some light, directly or indirectly, on the gaps within documents. In my daily research, I developed particular questions to ask of the archival materials that I encountered in my study that extended my understanding of their context and of their appearance in the archive itself:

1. Who created this document originally and why,
2. For what audience was this document created,
3. Who included this document in the archival record and why,
4. Where is this document found in the archival record and why is it catalogued in this manner,
5. How might I re-categorize the document in the context of this study, and
6. What gaps in the archival record can be filled in other, unofficial archival sites,
7. What gaps can’t be filled?

The answers to these questions were often found in unexpected places. For example, after discovering a box of letters and poetry by Robert P.T. Coffin, American poet and

---

\(^9\) This was especially true of correspondence, where one letter in a series or the letter to which a writer was responding was missing.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
longstanding “leader” (as they were called) at the annual UNH Summer Writers’ Conference, I found a few letters written by Coffin and indicating his assessment of the Writers’ Conference. These letters also described the political climate of the Bowdoin College English Department during the 1940s. These discoveries were helpful to my study because I wanted to know how the Writers’ Conference staff felt about its practices and emergent traditions and because I wanted to know more about the structures and debates in English departments at colleges and universities geographically close to UNH. Had I not searched a folder that seemed to be unrelated to my study, beyond Coffin’s connection with the Writers’ Conference, I might not have made this discovery, and I would have missed out on this piece of the contextual puzzle.

As I continued my research, I also learned that in organizing the documents found in an archive, the archivist uses a principle of categorization to develop finding aids that make an archive accessible and navigable for researchers. At the beginning of my dissertation project, I developed classification terms and key questions to make my searches more fruitful, though, as with the Coffin correspondence, I often found useful materials in unexpected locations.10 I took note of where a document was found and considered why it was catalogued in this manner. Paying attention to where I found materials gave me insight into the archive’s categorizing structures, and allowed me to imagine other potential locations in the archive that might yield relevant data. In exploring the UNH archive, for example, I found that documents were organized based on four primary criteria:

---

10Susan Miller, in her discussion of the difficulties related to archival research such as the expense in traveling to a distant archive, or the challenges of searching through “spotty” texts, points also to the difficulty in finding materials in archival research, “unless a relevant archive [...] is well-catalogued to guide a researcher to examples of assignments and student writing that are proofs for one perspective on this hypothesis, an archive is a difficult place to be” (2).
1. As a collection of artifacts donated by a certain person, as in Coffin’s papers;
2. As a collection of artifacts created by university members in given positions, as in Presidents’ Papers;
3. As a collection of artifacts created in connection with a given event or institutional tradition such as the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference (1938-1962);
4. As a collection of artifacts created in connection with a specific course, such as Freshman English, academic department, or university committee.

I found that as I learned more about the archive’s layout, I could cross-reference materials more easily because I could look for material about a specific person or course in two, three, or even all four categories. Understanding the principle of categorization also provided me with information about the ways that certain artifacts had been valued or viewed by archivists and in some cases by the institution, and allowed me to consider how I might re-see the document in the context of my study. For example, I looked at a box containing the papers of Edward Eddy, Assistant to the President. This box was categorized by the major administrative role that Mr. Eddy held at UNH, but the reason I was interested in the box was that it contained pedagogical information on the Freshman English course and on documents created by the English Department regarding this course. Although Mr. Eddy’s papers and his lesson plans for Freshman English were important, the more useful information for my purposes was the insight into the policies and practices of the English Department that this resource provided. These three principles provided me with strategies to negotiate the archive, helped me to see the

11 There are other categories than the ones I have outlined here that do not fit within this listing; however these general categories were the main organizing features that I observed in the archive.
richness and limitations of the UNH archive, and allowed me to design a research study that took these issues into account.12

**Designing the Study**

*Primary sources should ground our projects, however slow and painstaking the work, however incomplete the records*—Linda Ferreira-Buckley (26).

In her article “The History of Composition: Reclaiming Our Lost Generations,” Robin Varnum has argued that the study of composition textbooks as primary indicators of pedagogical trends in composition during the early twentieth century contributes to a monolithic view of the period that is not, as I demonstrate in Chapter one, representative of localized innovations. She argues, instead, that textbooks represent the conservative, rather than the innovative practices in writing instruction and she calls for researchers to look “for new sources of information” such as oral histories of students and teachers, as well as curriculum materials, and administrative documents which “may also give us new views of writing instruction at earlier periods” (50). Until these alternate data sites are studied more in depth, she argues that “it is premature to conclude that current-traditional rhetoric was the dominant and all-pervasive rhetoric of the period” (50). Varnum suggests that further research “may show that current-traditional rhetoric was not so monolithic nor composition theory and pedagogy so stagnant as textbook-based histories have indicated.”

In this study, I address Varnum’s points: (1) I have designed my study using alternative data sites and sources; my study, like her study on Theodore Baird at Amherst College, centers on local, institutional archival materials, as well as alumni interviews

---

12 Experiencing the archival research process also strengthened my belief that scholars writing histories need to provide more of a view of the researcher backstage, to show the seams and gaps between the historical narrative.
and a brief overview of trends in writing instruction during the 1940s as articulated in *College English* journal articles of the 1940s. (2) By looking beyond the first-year course as the sole indicator of approaches toward writing (and toward student writing) at a given institution, my study contributes to the field’s understanding of this period through its exploration of relationships between curricular, disciplinary, and extracurricular moments in the shaping of a writing culture at UNH.

**Setting**

In Chapter one, I established my rationale for studying writing instruction in the 1940s. While Chapter three provides the 1940s institutional historical backdrop for this study, I will briefly discuss my rationale for selecting the University of New Hampshire as my research site. First, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, the prior experience I had investigating the rich materials in the UNH Archives convinced me that UNH would be an ideal site for this study; by the 1940s, the university had established multiple traditions valuing student writing and had developed a regional network of writers and writing instructors through the Summer Writers’ Conference indicating to me that discussions about writing instruction extended beyond the borders of the UNH campus. In the findings chapters of this dissertation, readers will see a UNH English Department that cultivated a national reputation for writing during the 1940s. This national reputation emerged primarily through the efforts of a few English professors acting both within and beyond the confines of the formal curriculum, in efforts such as a Summer Writers’

---

13 The following is a current brief overview of the university in 2007: the University of New Hampshire is a land, sea, and space-grant institution with 10,000 undergraduate and 3000 graduate students. Located in Durham, NH, a southeastern town on the Seacoast of New Hampshire, the university has eleven colleges and over eighty majors. In terms of its origin, UNH, or New Hampshire College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, as it was originally called, came into being through the federal financial provisions established through the 1862 Morrill Act, and through the philanthropic donations of land and money from New Hampshire residents.
Conference, regional and national student writing contests, weekly writing and literature groups, and instructor exchanges among regional colleges and universities. Given the wealth of existent archival artifacts and UNH’s reputation within the field of composition as one of the starting points for the process movement, I decided that UNH would be a fruitful and logical site for my study.

Data Collection

In the following section, I outline the research methods that I selected for this study, including the rationale for each method, my research process—including the benefits and limitations of each method—and how each method proved to be important to this study.

Archival Research

In archival research, Connors notes that a historian “browse[s] with directed intention,” realizing that much of the search will be fruitless, but that she will be extending her knowledge base of a period, refashioning her hypothesis based on evidence, and following “circuitous” paths that may lead her off track or to new and important insights (24). Connors compares historical research with “detective work,” both exciting in its potential for “puzzle solving,” and frustrating in its dead ends (“Dreams and Play” 24). These metaphorical depictions do, generally, describe my experience as a researcher in the archives, particularly in the research process itself. To extend this metaphor further, I would add that detectives (as many TV dramas demonstrate) do not work alone; as witnesses and key informants aid detectives in solving a case, an archival staff aids the researcher in negotiating the maze of the archive.
In my search for possible beginning sites for my dissertation project, I consulted with Dr. Slomba, in part because I had worked so closely with her on the creation of the writing programs archive. She recommended first that I read a history of the university to provide me with an overall understanding of the university’s evolving mission. Then she listed what she called the “usual suspects” in archival research—the presidents’ papers to provide a sense of an institutional mission, the faculty senate minutes to provide a sense of curricular and disciplinary discussions, and registrar records to provide an understanding of student demographics and success/retention rates. Throughout the study, I remained in contact with the archival staff, asking questions that I had about certain documents or university practices. As I looked for resources that would help me cross-reference materials, I sought their advice about which files could be most fruitful in my search; they often steered me away from files that contained very little, if anything, related to my project, and confirmed or recommended files that would be more helpful to my research questions. I appreciated the staff’s input, willingness to share information, and interest in talking with me about my initial observations or questions as I worked through certain materials.

Beyond my consultations with the staff, much of my research time in the UNH Archives was solitary, typing out observations as I leafed through page after page in a folder, or typing whole documents verbatim—suspecting all along that I did not need the whole document, but knowing that there was a gem hidden within the document that I might need when writing about my findings. Although it was difficult, I did limit the tributaries I traversed in pursuit of these “gems,” cognizant of the time I was spending,
and finding, after some lengthy side trips, that they might lead to dead ends.\textsuperscript{14} On the advice of my dissertation committee, I kept track of my developing questions as I encountered a given set of artifacts—where was this document leading me, what type(s) of knowledge was this document providing, or what questions did this document raise that required further research? These questions shaped my interpretations of the archival materials, and as I described in the principles section of this chapter, new ways of reading emerged from my contact with the archival materials themselves; as I encountered each new archival document, I learned and interpreted new information, began to see which documents were less—or not—relevant to my study, and learned to reread documents I’d already encountered based on each new document before me.

In general, as I sifted through boxes and folders, I developed research methods in response to the artifacts I found, methods of note-taking, methods of reading, and methods of writing about what I was seeing. While I photocopied some longer items that I wanted to review after my research day was complete, for the most part taking electronic notes was my preferred mode of note-taking. In writing my dissertation, these electronic notes were invaluable because they were searchable and because I had already begun processing the data through my selective quoting and through the reflective and observational notes that I wrote while conducting research.

I collected several helpful artifacts within the archive including university publications such as catalogs, newsletters, magazines, student publications and statistics. Since I was interested in examining the writing culture at UNH in the 1940s, I also looked to fill in gaps in the official archive by searching sites such as the English

\textsuperscript{14} As Carol Steedman points out, the researcher must accept that she “\textit{will not finish}, that there will be something left unread, unnoted, untranscribed” (18).
Departmental Archive. In the following table (Table 1), I provide a listing of each category of materials that I investigated, indicating the source’s location, document type, brief description, and relevance to the project.

Table 1: Descriptions of Research Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Information</th>
<th>Types of Documents</th>
<th>Document Descriptions and Relevance to Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNH University Archives, Dimond Library</strong></td>
<td>Presidents’ Papers</td>
<td>These papers record major university events and curricular shifts in the university during the 1940s. The following presidents and interim presidents served from 1940-1949: Fred Englehardt (1933-Feb. 3, 1944); Harold Stoke (1944-47); Frank W. Randall (Interim 1947); Lauren E. Seeley (Interim 1947-48); and Arthur S. Adams (1948-1950).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Publications (course catalogs, newsletters, magazines, writings/papers of former UNH instructors)</td>
<td>University Publications</td>
<td>These documents provide the official records of the university curriculum, admission requirements, major requirements, policies and procedures, student rules and regulations, as well as a detailed description of university and local events/meetings for faculty, staff, students, and townspeople. Some of these papers also include correspondence between townspeople, students, faculty, staff, and the administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student and faculty organizations</td>
<td>These files contain event or posed photos and publications of clubs at UNH during the 1940s. One club of particular note is the literary club called the “Folio Club” that was held at Prof. Carroll Towle’s home. These photos include captions with the names of the club’s student members, some alumni such as Donald Murray.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative records</td>
<td>These files contain office documents regarding student demographics, student retention, and curricular changes. These files are from sources such as the Office of the Registrar, Student Records, Faculty Personnel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
| UNH University Archives, Dimond Library Cont. | Images/documents related to a UNH Summer Writers' Conference directed by Dr. Carroll S. Towle (1939-1962)\(^\text{15}\) | These files include photos, brochures, curriculum, and program schedules for the summer writing program. This program was intended for aspiring writers and NH high school teachers, and provides insight into the interactions between secondary and higher educational systems during the 1940s. I can see the materials on the UNH summer conferences being useful in understanding the pedagogies being taught or advocated at these conferences to writer and teachers. Related to this material is a book edited by Herschel Brickell called *Writers On Writing* by the 1948-49 staff of the University of New Hampshire Summer Writers' Conference on various topics such as the four genres, publishing, magazine writing, etc. |
| --- | --- | |
| | Carroll Towle and John Holmes's *A Complete College Reader*, Houghton-Mifflin, 1950 | A rhetoric arranged thematically by genre: Non-fiction, Play, Story, and Verse. Provides insight into the types of readings Towle was assigning in 1950. In its first review, the book was described as emphasizing contemporary literature. The introduction could also be useful in understanding more about the design and purpose of this textbook. John Holmes was an instructor at Tufts and at the UNH Summer Writing Conferences. |
| UNH English Departmental Archives | Meeting Minutes (1945-1952) | These minutes provide insight into the kinds of questions that faculty was asking about the nature of the English major, and they provide insight into curricular innovations that were either implemented or discussed in the meetings. During the 1940s, many curricular and staffing questions were sent to a subcommittee to be researched and then discussed by the faculty as a whole. Faculty who tended to be active and mentioned often are Carroll Towle, Gwynne Daggett, Sylvester Bingham, and Harold Scudder. |

\(^{15}\) I discuss this conference in depth in Chapter Five, but as a brief explanation, this conference was held annually from 1938-1962, and was directed by UNH English Professor Dr. Carroll Towle. Called one of the "Big Four" summer writers' conferences by the *Saturday Review of Literature*, this conference created a writing community on the UNH campus comprised of students, faculty, professional writers, and conferees from across the country, and developed professional connections among teachers, students, and professional writers in New England and New York and beyond.
Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNH English Departmental Archives Cont.</th>
<th>Course Curriculum Change (1945-1950)</th>
<th>The departmental archives include multiple drafts of course proposals and the correspondence accompanying these attempts—not always successful—to change the course curriculum. There several documents that discuss abolishing or exempting students from Freshman English, the need for critical analysis course, and the differences between an English Teaching and an English Literature major.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microfilm</td>
<td>UNH Newspaper, <em>The New Hampshire</em></td>
<td>This publication extends through the years of my study, with a brief interruption during the years of the US involvement in WWII. During these years, all UNH publications were reduced to one brief newsletter called <em>The UNH News</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Stacks</td>
<td>Durham Chapbooks</td>
<td>This yearly poetry publication was the result of a contest for poets attending the UNH Writers Conference, sponsored by the UNH Writers’ Conference, and <em>American Weave</em> and <em>Rewrite</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In her article “WPA’s as Historians: Discovering a First-Year Writing Program by Researching its Past” Ruth Mirtz suggests a method of reading archival documents similar to the one I described in the previous section: considering authorship of the document when available, looking for the existence of documents in different departments or locations, and the trails of history that each line in the document can lead to (124). As I have described, I used each type of documentary reading as I encountered archival materials; some documents required a closer read, such as the rhetorical changes from year to year in the Writers’ Conference Brochures, and other documents were more significant due to the factual information they could provide about a program or event. As much as possible, I cross-referenced vague or a-contextual artifacts in other sites within and beyond the archive or through the oral histories that I gathered.
Survey of 1940s Composition Journal *College English*

In order to place my institutional study in the context of national conversations about writing instruction, I also conducted a partial survey of the 1940s composition journal *College English*. To determine trends in writing instruction, I reviewed article titles for each year, noting topics that were discussed repeatedly and reading articles that focused on themes I saw emerging in my archival research as well—themes such as teacher-student conferencing, the purpose of English Studies and Freshman English, and discussions about the impact of the war on higher education. In selecting this aspect of study as part of my research design, I wanted to investigate whether Gerald Muldering’s suggestion in his article “Composition Teaching in America, 1930-1959: Reconsidering Our Recent Past” that several writing instructors in the 1930s argued against reductive or atomistic pedagogies held true in the 1940s. While he glosses over 1940s journal articles, or in part because he does so, Muldering’s suggestion raised questions for me about whether these dissenting voices persisted in the 1940s, and how prevalent they were. My study of *College English* confirms that such voices did persist and also links specific trends in writing instruction during the 1940s to such practices at the University of New Hampshire at that time.

I selected *College English* in particular because the journal was established in 1938, just prior to the period that I am studying, and because it replaced the *English Journal College Edition*. In this journal review, the recurrent themes that emerged

---

16 Although Muldering’s article purportedly discusses the 1930s-1950s, it is important to note that, beyond Porter Perrin, he offers very few examples or studies from the 1940s to extend his argument through this decade.

17 I did not select *English Journal* for my study because the primary audience for this journal is not focused on college writing instructors; though many of the articles could be directed to multiple levels, I wanted to limit the scope of the journal review to one journal with a primary audience of college writing teachers. The
were descriptions of pedagogical approaches to the first year composition course, attitudes toward student writing, discussions about the nature of English Studies and the training of English instructors, and discussions about shifting demographics during and post-World War II. In order to gain a better understanding of regional writing trends, I also took note of the authors writing about these issues and their institutions. This information also helped me to connect trends that I saw at the University of New Hampshire with trends in other US colleges and universities and to trace writing pedagogies running counter to current-traditional pedagogy.  

Overall, as this survey helped me to identify national and regional trends in writing instruction during this period, it also demonstrated that my archival research findings were not unique to UNH. In general, I found that, although first-year writing courses did tend toward grammar-based instruction (though some did not), pedagogical practices such as teacher-student conferences, peer workshops, reading/speech/writing labs and the publication of student writing were also popular during the 1940s within and outside of the formal curriculum. In Chapter three, I explore two trends in particular: disciplinary debates about the nature of English Studies and pedagogical trends in writing instruction. In each case, I discuss the trend by weaving together national discussions

---

*English Journal College Edition* was published between the years of 1928-1939, outside the scope of my study.

18 I want to briefly acknowledge that some composition scholars have argued that journals did not always represent classroom practice, that, as Connors argues “journal articles often reflect mainly what authors wished or hoped students were doing or learning” (60). Though several such articles do exist in the pages of *College English*, in my survey, I noted several articles that discussed current classroom practices, curricular changes, and research studies indicating otherwise. As Gerald Nelms argues “simply put, historians should not make broad generalizations about the evidentiary worth of any categories of historical sources; the form of historical data does not dictate the value of those data as evidence” (361). Additionally, as Nelms points out, studies such as Kim Town’s investigation of *English Journal* (1988) suggest that “our most current theories about the composing process have existed since the turn of the century” though they may not have emerged beyond local contexts in a systematic form until the 1960s (qtd. in Nelms 365).
about this trend as seen in *College English* articles with the related local discussions at UNH.

**Oral Histories: Personal Reminiscence and Filling Gaps in the Documentary Story**

Historian John R. Thelan argues that institutions have an “official chronology” that is found in the university’s archive, and also the “embellished history associated with legends, lore, and heroic events. This history includes the informal yet powerful memories of students” or what he calls *saga* (xx). Gerald Nelms also provides a compelling argument for composition histories to include oral evidence as a data source. Nelms notes that oral evidence services multiple functions in historical research—recording histories “that might otherwise be lost,” collecting new information and generating new research possibilities, and “explor[ing] the motivations, values, and feelings of informants” (368). Related to my study, Nelms points out that student voices are often marginalized and that oral interviews allow us to include their voices in histories of composition (369-70). In designing my research study, Thelin’s discussion of saga, Nelms’ discussion of oral evidence, and my desire to understand the university culture during the 1940s influenced my decision to collect oral histories from UNH Alumni.

During the summer of 2005, I interviewed six UNH alumni from the 1940s and these oral histories provided a richer context for the archival artifacts I collected and provided some insights into the university’s social climate and pedagogical practices of UNH instructors.\(^9\) Though I’d hoped to hear more from the alumni about their writing experiences at UNH, many of them did not have specific recollections about writing experiences, particularly as they related to the formal curriculum. Instead, the alumni

---

\(^9\) See Appendix A for Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval form.
spoke of the active extracurricular life and social culture that they experienced at UNH, a life that often provided intellectual opportunities—including writing—beyond the classroom. Excerpts and narratives based on these interviews appear throughout the dissertation as a means of bringing student reflections to bear on particular archival artifacts or historical moments and to offer insights that I could not collect through reading artifacts alone.

To locate interview participants for the study, I drew on contacts suggested to me by English Department faculty, the University Archives staff, and the Alumni Association. In May 2005, I also contacted the Alumni Association about gathering a list of alumni from the 1940s who were New Hampshire residents, and Director of Stewardship Kate Cameron provided me with a confidential list of 130 alumni. Because I wanted to conduct face to face interviews, I narrowed the list down to alumni living in the NH Seacoast, a total of 37 names; despite these efforts, the most fruitful approach to locating interview subjects was through referrals from other alumni I interviewed.

In an additional effort to talk with UNH alumni, I also contacted the Alumni Association about the possibility of my attending an event during the Alumni Reunion Weekend in June; the Alumni Association granted permission for me to attend the Class of ‘45/’46 Reunion Meetings at the UNH Browne Center for Innovative Learning. I shared a table with an Outing Club representative gathering oral histories; during the class meetings, I took notes and introduced my project during the meetings, and after the

---

20 Gerald Nelms notes that what the interview subject “selects to remember is usually what that person found meaningful. An oral history interview taps that which the informant believes is important in his or her past. And recording that belief can be significant historical information itself” (374).

21 At that time, there were over 3,000 UNH Alumni across the United States from the Classes of the 1940s.

22 The Browne Center is a UNH facility that focuses on experiential learning and leadership training.
meetings, I talked informally with alumni. Ultimately, I gathered anecdotal social and educational stories that helped me to understand more about the culture at UNH during the 1940s, and that led me to additional files in the UNH Archive. Lillian Richard was one of the UNH alumni who told me particularly interesting stories about her experience with writing at UNH as a student of Carroll Towle’s. Richard lived in Washington State and agreed to recount her stories in a written interview. I developed a written version of my interview questions and sent this questionnaire (See Appendix A) to Mrs. Richard with an accompanying letter and a written interview consent form. I received her completed questionnaire in September 2005.23

Overall, I interviewed six University of New Hampshire Alumni, five from the classes of the 1940s, and one graduate from the Class of 1957 (four interview sessions total, two interviews including two alumni each). I tape recorded each interview session. Of the six alumni interviewed, two requested that I use pseudonyms in writing about their comments, and the rest requested that I use their names: Donald Murray, Ted and Liz Finnegan, Steve and Margot Smith,24 and Donald Silva.25 Although the final alumnus in this list graduated in 1957, he provided significant insights into the teaching practices of one key figure at UNH during the 1940s, Dr. Carroll S. Towle, and into the UNH writing culture just beyond the temporal borders of this study.26 I will now provide a brief

23 Her story appears in Chapter three.

24 Pseudonyms

25 Towle was a UNH English Department professor from 1932-1962.

26 As I discuss in the previous chapter, pedagogical practices are not confined to particular periods—many of the practices that Mr. Silva discussed in my interview with him were ongoing or developing practices throughout the 1930s and 1940s.
profile for each interview subject, including their majors, the years that they attended UNH, and additional relevant background information:

1. **Donald M. Murray**: A UNH alumnus who is well-known in the field of Composition Studies, Mr. Murray, Class of ’48, attended the University of New Hampshire as a World War II veteran after the war ended. Prior to the war, he attended Tilton Academy for one year, and attended public schools in Quincy, Massachusetts. At UNH, Murray studied English and went on to become a journalist, winning the Pulitzer Prize for editorial reporting in 1954. Murray returned to UNH in 1963 to begin the journalism program and to teach writing in the English Department. An early leader of the process movement in Composition, Murray noted during his interview that he had learned many of his teaching techniques from his professors at UNH and through his work in the professional world of journalism.

2. **Elizabeth “Liz” Finnegan**: Mrs. Finnegan was a student at UNH during the war years when women significantly outnumbered men. Liz majored in English and noted that she was the only person from Laconia High School to attend UNH that year, a fact that she attributes to its being wartime. She attended UNH because she “was a NH resident.” While at UNH, she met and married WWII veteran Ted Finnegan (see profile #3 below). In addition to taking classes, Liz also worked at the UNH News Bureau with editor and writer Ella Shannon Bowles. Liz offered important insights into the social climate on campus, the role of Greek life on

---

27 Murray was a paratrooper in the war.

28 Ella Shannon Bowles was often a staff member of the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference, and she also co-wrote books on New England cooking traditions with Dorothy Towle, wife of UNH English Dept. Professor Carroll S. Towle.
campus, and the teaching practices of certain English professors. Liz also
provided me with materials such as student yearbooks and a few short essays
from her time at UNH.

3. **Ted Finnegan**: Mr. Finnegan was a World War II Army Air Force veteran who
began attending UNH in the Fall of 1945. He spoke of the GI Bill as a “marvelous
piece of legislation” that enabled him to attend university. He majored in business
administration and joined the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, especially because
housing was scarce otherwise. Ted met and married Liz while at UNH and then
lived in married housing, which he described in detail in our interview. Ted
became a history teacher and then returned to the military during and after the
Korean War. One point of interest raised by both Ted and Liz Finnegan was that
the social climate changed significantly with the arrival of the WWII veterans;
campus traditions signifying class rank, such as freshmen wearing beanies, ended
when the returning veterans refused to participate in what they saw as trivial or
juvenile pursuits. They also discussed how married students changed the face of
the campus.

4. **Mr. Steve Smith (pseudonym)**: Mr. Smith was a World War II Army Air Force
veteran but he had also attended UNH from Fall 1940 through Fall 1941—just
prior to the US involvement in the war. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Mr.
Smith described enlisting in the military as soon as he could, and spent four years
in Europe before returning to his studies at UNH. He was an Economics major,
and he returned to military service when he was called back during the Korean
War. During our interview, Steve compared life at UNH in the early 1940s and
after he returned from the war. He also offered key insights into the Speech
courses at UNH, as well as his observations as a university employee involved
with the Summer Writers’ Conference.

5. **Mrs. Margot Smith (pseudonym):** Mrs. Smith attended a two-year college in the
Midwest, graduating with an Associates Degree prior to transferring to UNH. At
this Midwestern school, she was studying to be a flight attendant and would have
received her pilot’s license as well but she was needed by her family in New
Hampshire after her mother’s death. She preferred the educational experience at
the Midwestern college, an experience that she described as much “freer” than her
experience of the more rigid UNH curriculum. She was a Family Studies major
and graduated in 1947. As a career, Margot became a special education teacher at
an elementary school.

6. **Donald Silva:** Mr. Silva attended UNH from 1953 to 1957, receiving his BA in
English. In high school, one of Mr. Silva’s teachers encouraged him to attend
UNH, a decision that was essentially pre-determined by a long tradition of UNH
alumni in Mr. Silva’s family. This teacher also encouraged Don to seek out one
professor in particular, Dr. Carroll Towle. Don followed this advice, and
eventually took several courses from Dr. Towle and participated in extracurricular
initiatives sponsored by Towle such as the Folio Club. After five years of service
in the Army, Don returned to UNH in 1961 for his Masters in English Literature.
After he graduated, Don began teaching in the UNH English Department in 1962.
Reading from his class notes during the interview, Don provided invaluable
insights into Dr. Towle’s teaching practices and into the English department community.

I interviewed Donald Murray and Donald Silva individually. For the couples, I interviewed the husband and wife at the same time, which was beneficial in gathering information because the spouses helped one another to remember the timing of events, specific instructors’ names and they encouraged one another to share particular memories or stories.

For these interviews, I developed questions that focused on the alumni’s academic, social, and writing experiences while they were students at UNH. These questions served as guiding questions, but, since the primary objective of the interviews was to collect oral histories, I allowed the conversation to guide many of the stories told to me, and to guide my additional questions during the interview (for list of interview questions, see Appendix B). For each interview, I have a transcript, reflective notes, and written observations to provide the interview context. Through these interviews, I gathered vital information that helped me to refine my research questions and to search the archives for materials mentioned by interview participants.

One of the layers of research that I’d hoped to gather during my interviews was a cache of student writings. I asked each interview participants for sample essays that they might have saved over the years. As I noted earlier, Donald Silva had class notes from Dr. Towle’s course and shared these notes in the context of the interview. Although Liz Finnegan provided me with a few pieces of writing that she’d kept from her

---

29 I requested these materials from interview subjects because the UNH Archives do not contain many examples of student writing. Elizabeth Slomba explained that collections of student academic writing are sparse because archival theory is only recently shifting toward valuing student writing and because students do not often include their academic writing when donating materials. In the findings chapters that follow this one, I have included some student writing from the annual publication of the Student Writer. This gap in the Archive is a part of my rationale for pursuing the interviews described in this chapter.
coursework at UNH, the rest of the people I interviewed did not have written materials for me to review. As I encountered archival materials that reshaped my project conceptually, however, gathering this additional data set proved to be less crucial to my study. Overall, the alumni I interviewed provided important insights into the social and academic climate at UNH during the 1940s, elements that I discuss in detail at the beginning of Chapter three. Partial transcripts and insights from the alumni interviews appear throughout the findings chapters, enriching and corroborating evidence found in the archival record with anecdotal evidence and providing student voices throughout the historical narrative.

Conclusion: Writing Up the Historical Narrative

*What I am describing is [. . .] an act of writing history. The acts of interpreting, representing, and authorizing historical narratives can happen simultaneously [. . .]. We can, of course, think of the acts as separate, as located in various places—the archives, at one's computer, in a conference presentation—but representing and authorizing one's views is never very far removed from interpreting historical material. —Kevin Brooks (19)*

*The history I am about to present seems to mask what went into its making.*
—Carolyn Steedman (54)

The ability of the archival researcher to correlate and triangulate the materials in the archive is measured by many factors, not the least of which is the fact that the archival record is not complete, and, the archival research we do, however exhaustive we try to be, will always include gaps. As researchers, we are beholden to those people who took care to save important papers and other artifacts, to those people who donated these materials to the archives, and to those archivists, past and present, who acquired these documents. As I have argued and illustrated in this chapter, historical researchers need to

---

30 I have refocused the chapters around writing instruction in the curriculum and extracurriculum, rather than around UNH faculty and student perspectives about writing instruction.
display more of the research process, presenting a better understanding of sources used and sources omitted, and foregrounding historical gaps in anticipation of a narrative that might appear to close or ignore them.

Kevin Brooks describes history writing as

Quite literally an attempt to fill a gap [...]. If we accept the necessity of contingency, however, that gap can never be filled. Histories meet a need, take on the general form of fullness, but their content from generation to generation or from situation to situation no longer fills the need as adequately as it did for its author(s) [...]. The contingency of history becomes visible, but that visibility does not alleviate the need to once again fill the gap, nor should it make one uneasy about the need and responsibility for representation. (14-15)

The gaps show us that there is always more story to tell than we can infer, and that the sources we do find will not always line up easily into a neat historical narrative, that parts of these histories will remain and others will be subsumed or overwritten. As historians, then, we weave our historical accounts based on what we can find, creating a sense of closure while understanding that the narrative may not be as seamless as it appears.

About this seamless narrative, Linda Ferreira-Buckley argues, “Very often we impose narrative structures where they ought not to be by smoothing over missing links. It may well be that we need to start not only with local histories but with fragments of local histories” (26, italics mine).

In filling some of the gaps in my own research, I looked in multiple places within and outside of the official archive, consulted living witnesses testifying to the cultural moment of UNH in the 1940s, and reviewed composition journals and existing UNH histories; however, some gaps remained. The majority of the key faculty in the UNH English Department did not directly submit their papers to the UNH archive, so few traces of their work, especially their work in the classroom, appeared in the archive—
though some remnants of their work appeared in general files labeled “Freshman
English” or in the crumbling pages of the unofficial archival record kept in the English
Department Office. In some cases, external sources such as the student newspaper, or oral
histories filled in some of these gaps, providing the student reporter’s or alumni’s
interpretation of a given event or curricular shift; but, again, this interpretive lens allows
some inevitable gaps to remain. This chapter, then, is my effort at acknowledging these
gaps, prior to presenting the historical narrative found in the following three chapters.

In the following chapter, I discuss key shifts in university culture, social climate
and curriculum during the 1940s, nationally and then locally at the University of New
Hampshire. I also consider how disciplinary debates and the formal writing curriculum
created the exigency for extending and developing the extracurricular writing initiatives
that I discuss in Chapters four and five and how the curriculum played a crucial role in
shaping the institutional writing culture at UNH in the 1940s.
CHAPTER III

CONSIDERING THE STATE OF A STATE UNIVERSITY AND OF 1940S WRITING INSTRUCTION

We should have known that isolationism is impossible for the colleges of a country at war; that no campus, no institution is immune to the repercussions. War terminates or postpones the formal education of many, redirects that of others, converts both plant and curriculum to new uses, and permanently alters the nature of higher education. —J. Hillis Miller and Dorothy V.N. Brooks, The Role of Higher Education in War and After (1944) (1-2)

Education is not static [. . .]. It is the most dynamic force we have in our society.—UNH President Fred Engelhardt, “Many Attend Conference on Postwar Education” U.N.H. News (1944) (2)

Introduction: On the Emergence of Institutional Traditions and Cultures

In their book Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and Composition Books in the United States, Stephen Carr, Jean Ferguson Carr and Lucille Schultz invoke Michael Katz’s notion that schools are “‘culturally sensitive institutions,’ responding to shifts and changes in the political, economic, and cultural landscape” (4).

In the 1940s, American colleges and universities were responding to a host of such influences, from changing political views about U.S. involvement in World War II, to shifting enrollments due to increased interest in higher education for diverse groups of learners,¹ including an influx of veterans after the creation of the GI Bill. In this chapter, my purpose is three-fold: I argue that shifts university culture (due to external and demographic pressures), shifts in the department’s understanding and articulation of

¹In his article “Beyond the Classroom Walls: Student Writing at Texas Women’s University, 1901-1939,” David Gold notes the rise in female college students and states that “by 1920, women accounted for 47.3% of college students” (264).
English Studies as a discipline and shifts in curricular culture are all factors contributing, in part, to the shaping of an institutional writing culture.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the external influences affecting social and demographic shifts in the American university during the 1940s and the local implications of these shifts at the University of New Hampshire. In particular, I address significant changes in the American university, looking especially at the college social and classroom culture pre-, during, and post-war. This examination of university culture is important to my dissertation project because it provides a larger institutional context and a rationale for the ways that the institutional writing culture at UNH was formed. In particular, it provides a lens through which to view the 1940s UNH English department’s disciplinary debates, the pedagogical choices that were made, and the extracurricular initiatives that were developed.

In the second section of this chapter, I discuss specific disciplinary concerns about the nature, purpose and direction of English Studies from a national and localized perspective. In the third section of this chapter, I then explore selected formal curricular practices in writing instruction at UNH as articulated by UNH administrators, faculty and alumni—especially those practices and changes contributing to UNH’s writing culture. In many ways, this chapter forms the larger backdrop and rationale for my discussion of extracurricular writing cultures in Chapters four and five. Although the university social climate changed rapidly, curricular changes were much slower because of institutional and departmental pressures. Looking at both the curriculum and the extracurriculum draws attention to these pressures and as well as the events and people influencing the evolving writing culture at the University of New Hampshire during the 1940s.
External Influences on the Social and Curricular Makeup of the University: Pre-, During, and Post- World War II

This growth [in American colleges and universities] has changed the campus from a scholarly retreat to a new and fabulous design for four years’ living. It has caused colleges to expand and multiply until their mere bricks and stone is worth two billion dollars. Behind this vast investment is tremendous faith in the benefits of higher education [...].

Presently the colleges will turn out their annual product—150,000 members of the Class of 1937. These boys and girls—and the others like them who will make up the Classes of 1938, 1939, and 1940—will in 20 years occupy the seats of authority. Only then will the historian be able to tell how far mass education has advanced the American Dream. – June 1937 Life magazine (qtd. in Thelin 23)

War changes values for the nation and for the individual. Some immediate goals become more urgent than long-range objectives. Traditions are less binding upon policies. Only one question is now uppermost in the minds of administrators, teachers, and students in our colleges and universities—’How can this institution, how can I, as an individual, best serve the nation?’ – Higher Education and National Defense, Bulletin No. 19, December 20, 1941 (qtd. in Miller and Brooks 31)

Changing Student Enrollments

At the beginning of the 1940s, American colleges and universities grew rapidly in student enrollment and administrators were faced with responding to the subsequent social and curricular pressures arising from such increases. As each shift on the campus affected other aspects of campus life, I first consider the implications of a rising student population on a university’s overall culture and then consider how these student populations presented new challenges to formal curricular structures. Historian John Thelin notes that in the early twentieth-century, the “wave of campus building signaled a transformation in access to American higher education—a shift away from being a scarce commodity and an elite experience. The nation was edging toward a commitment to mass higher education,” a circumstance fed by increased enrollment in secondary education (205). Thelin further comments that “predictably, the increased number of high school
graduates created a large new pool of college aspirants. The result was that between World War I and World War II, enrollment in colleges and universities increased more than fivefold, from 250,000 to 1.3 million” (205). At UNH, student enrollment steadily increased throughout the early twentieth century,² and in 1939-40, the Registrar reported the enrollment increased 4.9% from the previous year—from 2013 students to 2111.³

The Second World War dramatically changed campus demographics. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, for instance, UNH enrollments dipped as UNH male students enlisted in the military; in particular, UNH historians John D. Bardwell and Ron P. Bergeron record that male enrollment at the University of New Hampshire went from 1,230 to 830 students after December 1941 and by September 1943, the overall student enrollment had dropped to 1,083 (76).⁴ There was still a male presence on the campus, thanks to then UNH President Engelhardt’s provision of a campus home for a division of the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP),⁵ a series of pre-medical and engineering training courses for the 1,101 enlisted men preparing to go overseas (“Army Unit Leaves” 4).⁶ In the fall of 1944, seventy-five percent of the 1200 students at UNH were women. After the war ended, enrollments reached record levels. As Bardwell and

² An exception to this upward trend in student enrollment was the decrease in enrollment from 1933-34 (1654 students) to 1934-35 (1559 students).

³ Including summer school, that figure would change to 2551 students.

⁴ The student newspaper and archival records indicate that UNH women also enlisted in the military and worked in technical/engineering jobs vacated by men enlisting in the war or in jobs created for the war effort.

⁵ This training program was a federal initiative and was sited on many college and university campuses across the United States. While UNH’s program focused primarily on engineering and pre-med, other ASTP programs across the country focused on a variety of disciplinary studies, as Frederic H. Weigle’s (1944) description of the English, speech and reading-focused ASTP program at Eastern Oregon College of Education and Paul Matsuda’s (2000) discussion of the initial “language-teaching” objective of the program illustrate.

⁶ This military presence on the UNH campus was short-lived as the trainees were deployed to the Battle of the Bulge 1 ½ years after they arrived (Personal Interview, Liz Finnegan).
Bergeron put it, "the sudden capitulation of Japan, rapid demobilization, and the GI Bill that provided educational benefits for veterans, all combined to push registration for first semester of 1946-47 to 3,478—far beyond the figure the University had estimated" (77). Prior to 1946, women students still far outnumbered men and although the number of veterans was growing, only ninety veterans were enrolled at UNH by September 1945.7 These enrollment numbers are significant to this study because they present an overview of the shifting demographic landscape and conditions under which social, curricular and extracurricular changes were made.

**Evolutions in Campus Life: Social and Curricular Changes**

What did it mean to be a student at UNH during the 1940s? The answer to this question changed dramatically throughout the 1940s, depending on the student’s dates of attendance at UNH, the student’s gender, the student’s veteran status, and the student’s economic resources, to name just a few factors. Prior to World War II, the social climate at the University of New Hampshire, as in many institutions, centered on the traditional-aged (18-21 year old) student. Contemporary photos and descriptions in magazines and newspapers presented a view of the typical “Joe College” student—the student with the financial means or familial pressure to attend college; the student who was young, still a “boy” as the *Life* magazine quote at the start of this chapter labeled him; the student who, while he might engage in extracurricular excesses, was seen as participating in what John Thelin describes as “part of the process of upward social mobility that the college facilitated” (215).8 College policies and structures affirmed that universities were acting

---

7 A UNH article reported in September 27, 1945 that there were 842 women students enrolled to 436 men. Of the 1,278 students enrolled, 505 were Freshmen and 90 Freshmen were veterans (“Ninety Veterans” 1).
in loco parentis, governing the social mores and actions of the student while he (or she) was away from home. 9

As part of their extracurricular lives, many UNH students joined fraternities and sororities due in part to their desire for camaraderie and in part for pragmatic reasons such as the affordable room and board provided by the Greek system. Through university traditions emphasizing student rank, students developed a sense of solidarity with other students in their class and often organized class initiatives identifying their rank, such as a one-act playwriting contest sponsored by the freshman Class of 1944 (open to all UNH students). Students also had several opportunities to socialize cross-ranks through the frequent dances and events sponsored by extracurricular student clubs on the campus. In a newspaper article for U.N.H. News, UNH Alumnus Private First Class Maurice McQuillen described annual traditions such as a freshman orientation week on Lake Winnipesaukee, a winter carnival, special formal dances, Outing Club ski trips to Jackson and the following description of football rallies:

Remember those football rallies? The crack Wildcat band – the lovely ‘Pep-Cat’ cheer-leaders – cheers and school songs rising into the frosty air together with the smoke and flame of the huge bonfires – colorful weekends when we joined the team and invaded other campuses – victory parades in Durham – the triumphant ringing of the ‘T’ Hall bell. (2) 10

8 While many UNH students did not fit the Joe College characteristic of being from a family “of financial means,” UNH students worked, received partial scholarships through generous alumni donations, or were able to afford the lower tuition set by the land-grant institution of their home state. By 1940, many UNH students were already following the family’s tradition to attend UNH.

9 At UNH, as with many coed campuses, the Dean of Women set different rules for women than for men. Prior to 1939, women who wanted to stay out beyond curfew had to have a note from home permitting them to do so (“Rules for Women” 1).

10 McQuillen uses a nostalgic tone because he is writing during the war, when athletic events were suspended.
I offer this particular description because it captures the carefree spirit of the pre-war campus; students could attend as many extracurricular activities as their schedules and academic achievements would allow. These activities were sponsored by many sources and were plentiful, as McQuillen’s partial list illustrates: “plays, lectures, concerts, club meetings, work on school publications, religious organizations, and honor societies [. . .] and a regular dance was held in New Hampshire Hall on Saturday night” (3).

Historian Christopher Lucas notes that especially in the late thirties and early forties, college students began to look beyond the insular walls of their campuses and became more politically and civically active than previous generations had been. This activist trend created a climate for heated debates about World War II, “Collegians now joined picket lines and protest marches, they circulated petitions [. . .]. And, as war clouds began to gather on the political horizon, campus peace demonstrations attracted large crowds” (205). At UNH, anti-war sentiment abounded prior to World War II and was often expressed in writing; many articles, regular columns and letters to the editor in The New Hampshire (TNH), the student newspaper, expressed isolationist viewpoints such as the one expressed in the following statement by Donald Mendelson, “Our economic interests require that we be interested vitally in a European war. The horrors, tragedies, and cost of a modern war should be sufficiently evident to prevent our entrance no matter how just the cause” (2).\(^\text{11}\) After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 however, most UNH students, like most Americans at that point, abandoned this isolationist view.

\(^{11}\)On April 18, 1939, a letter to the editor discusses the fact that across the country various student groups had chosen April 20 to demonstrate against the US going to war, but the editors of TNH were happy that no demonstrations were planned in Durham, arguing that such demonstrations were useless and that “if the students are anxious to convince their superiors and the people who run this country, they can do it in somewhat more rational and clear-thinking ways than to give a childish display such as the proposed ‘strikes’ will undoubtedly be” (2).
When the US became involved in World War II, what had been a rich social climate also shifted dramatically. All social and extracurricular programs were scaled back and on-campus publications were halted or consolidated in an effort to preserve resources for the war effort. Male students left the university in droves to enlist in the military after the attack on Pearl Harbor, an event that UNH Alumnae Margot Smith described as "the call to arms." In my interview with her husband Steve Smith, he said that he was a UNH student during the Fall of 1941 and he described his decision to enlist as almost automatic:

Well, we were attacked [. . .]. I enlisted. I remember the day that Pearl Harbor got attacked. I was with my best friend at the university at the time. I'd go home frequently to his home in Chester, Massachusetts, just for the weekend. And I remember we were sitting in his car. We were sitting in his car just listening to the radio [. . .]. Just like that [after hearing about the attack] we enlisted as soon as we could.

Compared to the liveliness of the 1930s and early 1940s, the UNH campus life during the war became relatively quiet. Chagrined at the loss of campus culture and activity during the war years, *TNH* Editor Thomas O’Donnell (1943) urged fellow students not to forget traditions and campus organizations that had to suspend their activities for the war effort, saying that these “customs and traditions [should be] placed in cold storage rather than allowed to die” (2). He warned that the carefree campus climate would change with the arrival of the ASTP on campus: “This unit will not be compromised of college boys. It

---

12 In their study of enrollment decline in New York colleges and universities, J. Hillis Miller and Dorothy V.N. Brooks state that “By October 1942 there were 23 per cent fewer men enrolled than the preceding year [. . .]. This compares with a national loss of 15.5 per cent for men [in American colleges and universities]” (9). They also discuss the fact that women in coeducational institutions outnumbered the men and that “perhaps it was to be the peculiar duty of women to maintain uninterruptedly the cultural links of our heritage” (9).

13 A *TNH* editorial “Days to Come” on February 10, 1943 describes the sense of loss that ensued: “The mass evacuation of Durham which began at the end of last semester with the exodus of the Enlisted Reserve Corps continues this week with the calling to active service of the Army Air Corps Reserve. Indications would point to the removal of the Naval Reserve in the not too distant future. An appalling void has been left here that will be impossible to fill. This is the end, at least temporarily, of the days that used to be” (2).
will be strictly military in character [. . .]. A real military spirit will pervade the campus” (2). During our interview, UNH Alumnae Liz Finnegan reminisced about the campus comprised primarily of women and ASTP military men, saying that the two populations mixed to provide activity on the otherwise quiet campus and that the main social “events” on campus were occasional military dances and casual walks through the surrounding Seacoast area.

While O’Donnell argued that students left on campus had the responsibility to get involved “in the war activities here” (2), Liz Finnegan noted that the students on campus were not very knowledgeable about the war at first:

In a way, the first year or two was like being in a cocoon and the thoughts of war didn’t really penetrate [. . .]. But then we were doing things like taking First Aid courses [. . .] and we became more and more aware of what was going on in the world. [. . .]. Of course, we became much more aware when the veterans with their war stories returned.

Over time, however, the specter of war reached campus life and UNH students did participate in campus-sponsored activities to support the war effort, such as buying war bonds. More UNH female students majored or took courses in the technical fields.14 The US involvement in the war brought about other administratively-sponsored curricular changes. In 1942, UNH offered “condensed” courses to allow the men and women involved with the military to complete course/degree requirements prior to the start of their service (“Drop in Enrollment Expected” 1). In 1944, the UNH administration also created the Postwar Education Service to begin planning new curriculum and ways to meet the needs of returning veterans.

14A TNH article on January 27, 1943 reports that three aircraft manufacturers had agreed to train UNH women for engineering jobs in their facilities (“Plan to Train Women for Aircraft Industry: New War Training Program to Start” 4).
After the GI Bill was instituted, large numbers of veterans enrolled in American colleges and universities. In his 2002 chapter “Omnivorous Study,” composition scholar Richard Lloyd-Jones, himself a student during the mid-1940s, discusses the effect of this new population on American college culture:

In a single year, enrollments at most colleges at least doubled, and the average age of male students jumped about four years by the calendar and twice that in experience. These were males who had seen much of the world and had discovered all sorts of reasons for leading lives different from that of their parents. Rules made for docile eighteen-year-olds simply didn’t work for the new students, and a grateful nation was willing to support veterans in a college education. (13)

The social and curricular climate changed, in part, due to the maturity and experience of this vast new collegiate population.

On the local level, UNH Alumnus Ted Finnegan noted that by January 1946, the UNH campus “filled up” and “was immensely crowded.” Despite the crowded campus, the administrative and the student attitude toward this new student population was initially enthusiastic; in her September 27, 1945 *TNH* editorial, Jean Gleason talked about the ways that current UNH students could learn from the veterans “who have seen war at first hand, who have seen poverty, famine, suffering and death as we who stayed at home have never seen it. They have a lot of ideas to impart to us and they are being trained to do it. The colleges of this country will no longer merely educate; they must in turn be educated” (2). In anticipation of the GIs’ return, the administration appointed Dean

---

15 The GI Bill provided financial support to veterans who wished to go to college. The first veteran to attend UNH on the GI Bill was UNH junior Rudolf Honkala, an art education major from Salisbury, NH. Honkala had attended UNH prior to the war, and the UNH News highlighted the benefits of the new legislation by reporting the specific benefits that Honkala received, “Honkala [...] applied for aid under the new ‘G.I.’ Bill as soon as it was passed, and now receives his tuition, books and supplies, and $50 a month subsistence, which will enable him to finish his college education” (“Rudolf Honkala is First NH Man Under “G.I.’ Bill” 2).

16 It’s true that veterans returning to or attending college for the first time had gathered a wealth of life experience, much of it traumatic in nature. In talking about students’ topic selections for a Public Speaking
William Medesy—himself a World War II veteran—to lead the Postwar Education Service established in 1944 intended to aid in veterans’ academic success; the *U.N.H. News* reported that the service would address the “educational, financial, and personal problems of returning veterans, and students who may be returning to school from jobs in war industries” (“Student Veterans’ Club Holds Meeting” 1). With the creation of the GI Bill, the University was faced with the need to prepare some students who, for various reasons, may not have considered themselves “college-bound” prior to the war and who may not have taken the high school courses required to gain admission. To address these needs, the Postwar Education Service also established a series of abbreviated “veterans’ refresher courses” that were intended to help veterans transition smoothly into collegiate academic life. A 1945 *TNH* article that the intent of the course were to “reacquaint the returning veterans with present study methods and techniques” (“Ninety Veterans Enroll” 1). Overall, these refresher courses in English, mathematics, athletics and sociology were open to veterans enrolled fulltime or those who wanted some additional training.

course, Steve Smith noted that several veterans deliberately avoided the topic of the war, an omission he attributed to an aversion to boast: “I think that most of us [veterans] were reticent to tell of our so-called experiences, harrowing and not harrowing. Because it looked like you’re blowing your own horn and you’re, “Ah you’re a big hero!” This decision to avoid such topics may have been due to other factors, such as the avoidance of discussing traumatic events for obvious psychological reasons and tensions between veterans and traditional-age students due to the seeming gulf of life experience between them. Donald Murray, for example, said that students “laughed at” him when he said in class that he’d seen the Mona Lisa firsthand.

---

17 *The Bulletin of the University of New Hampshire on Postwar Education Service* notes that Captain William A. Medesy was an assistant professor of forestry at the University. He is a veteran of the landings in Africa, Sicily, and the Tunisian campaign, and has been honorably discharged because of injuries suffered in combat” (Vol. XXXVI, No. 1: 2).

18 Since there was provision made in the GI Bill for such courses, the practice of offering veterans’ refresher courses was not unique to UNH. UNH Professor Dr. Everett Sackett taught at Colorado State College and had the opportunity to observe several like programs, though he declared that UNH had “one of the most progressive in the country” (“Student Veterans’ Club Holds Meeting in Murkland” 1). Also, see Paul Bunyan Anderson. “GIs Evaluate a Freshman English Course.” *Journal of Higher Education* 18.8 (November 1947): 418-22, 446. This article discusses a Refresher Course for Veterans at Otterbein College from 1945-1946 in which 24 returning GIs beginning coursework halfway through the year took Freshman English six days per week to “complete a year’s worth of English by the end of June” (418).
before entering the work world; this secondary option seemed to be the administration’s attempt to offer services to veterans interested in trying college or in receiving some training without the full degree. These courses were also the University administration’s effort to address deficiencies or gaps in the veterans’ education, due to either time away from school or lack of preparedness; to that end, examinations and curriculum for the courses centered on skills, “improving study habits and methods rather than imparting factual knowledge” (“Veterans Complete”).

In addition to the newfound financial access to higher education provided by the GI Bill, veterans had multiple reasons for choosing to go to college after the war. In the Bulletin on Postwar Education Service, the authors note that veterans would likely come to college for many of the same reasons that pre-war students did:

Cultural development, learning how to enjoy the good things of life, economic training, learning how to make a good living, social opportunities, acquiring poise and making worth-while friends, civic understanding, and learning to be intelligent leaders in community and governmental affairs. (2)

While some veterans may well have had these goals, the veterans I interviewed seemed to have more pragmatic goals at heart. For Ted Finnegan, he said that the financial provision of the GI Bill allowed him to explore his options and he changed majors several times in

19 UNH Alumnus Ted Finnegan noted that about half of the veterans entering UNH at the same time as he did chose to leave before completing a degree, but he credited the GI Bill with providing veterans the freedom to experiment with college.

20 Although this offering was intended specifically for veterans, the three veterans I interviewed did not recall participating in these courses.

21 In addition to the GI Bill, some financial resources were available to students who applied for them. Enrolling at the university in September 1940, UNH Alumnus Steve Smith was a recipient of an alumni scholarship, the Valentine Smith scholarship, which provided half tuition to successful applicants. With tuition in 1940 being $75 per semester, the scholarship provided half of a semester’s tuition and allowed Smith to remain in NH close to his family. The scholarship was the main reason why Smith decided to attend UNH over the University of Alabama or Ohio State University. Attending UNH from 1942-1946, Alumnae Lillian Richards also received a $75 scholarship and she said that since “we were a poor family, education was a dream [...]. The scholarship was a huge incentive to a whole new world.”
his first few years. However, he noted that one of the reasons he changed majors so often was to find a major that allowed him to get his degree in the shortest time that he was anxious to get through and get a job. I wanted to earn money [...] the whole objective was to get out early.” Since most veterans received some college credit for their military service and training courses, they usually did complete their degree in under four years. Steve Smith’s goal was straightforward; he wanted to complete the degree he’d begun four years before and he was happy to do so with newfound financial support. Although he’d attended college prior to the war, he recognized that the GI Bill was a boon for many veterans: “I contend that was the best piece of legislation that there was, the GI Bill was much needed. Thousands and thousands of guys [...], they’d have never gone to college without it, they couldn’t have.” Donald Murray said that many of the World War II veterans he knew had enrolled in college because they had watched the World War I veterans return home to little or no work opportunities; the World War II veterans wanted to maintain a competitive edge in job searches.

The large veteran presence on American university campuses greatly affected the social and curricular structures established before and during the war. Although the administration, in their official literature from the Postwar Education Service, implied that the university was prepared for students who were more mature, they were not

22 About his initial admission to the university, Ted Finnegan said that the whole process took “about three minutes.” He related the story that Dean Medesy met him on the steps of T-Hall with another veteran Jerry Chase and that they helped to enroll him in classes. Although he hadn’t been to college, Ted was enrolled as a sophomore because he was given college credits for time served in the military.

23 As one example of how quickly some veterans progressed through college, Donald Murray offered some commentary about the workings of the system to offer college credit for military service: “They had a very good system that they made you wait a year or two semesters and saw what your grades were, and my grades had been honor grades at Tilton [Academy], and they were honor grades, so I went from a freshman to a senior [... ] in one leap.”
always prepared for the ways that veteran student self-advocated in both extracurricular and curricular arenas. The social traditions highlighting class rank were not interesting or even amusing to this new student population; rather, the veterans put little stock in the common established hierarchy and the traditions that emphasized this hierarchy. For example, Ted Finnegan told me that when an upper level fraternity brother demanded that the freshmen veterans wear a beanie, as freshmen had done before the war, they flatly refused, "We all laughed at him. You know, who the hell are you kidding? My roommate [. . .] shot down fourteen German [planes], and you're going to tell him to put on a beanie, for god's sake. You know, c'mon.” This attitude of resistance extended to curricular traditions as well.

When veterans began to attend classes, the classroom climate changed significantly. Prior to their arrival, UNH students were primarily traditional-aged (18-21) and they followed the social and curricular rules set by the faculty and administrators. The classroom was the place to listen to the professor’s lecture, with little room for class discussion (if any). The professor’s expertise and authority governed teacher-student interactions. However, Bardwell and Bergeron describe postwar shifts in the UNH classroom culture due to the veterans’ presence, noting that “the veterans who enrolled proved to be capable students. They provided spirited competition for students who

---

24 In the Bulletin of UNH on the Postwar Education Service, the discussion about the veterans’ maturity envisions a student who would be fairly clear about his or her academic or professional direction, a student portrait that was always not borne out in my alumni interviews and their discussions of fellow veterans: “Veterans who have seen considerable service will have gained degrees of maturity and background that are denied to typical college students. [. . .]. Being more mature, a veteran usually will have a more definite goal in mind than has the average young person who goes directly from high school to college” (3).

25 The students who were already at UNH when the veterans arrived noted a difference in the maturity level and conduct of the veterans. In discussing her initial interest in Steve, Margot Smith contrasted his life experiences with those of the traditional-age male student of the time, saying that, “there were young men that you met, the ones who were cute and fun to be with [. . .]. Then you meet someone like Steve who had been through so much and yet was more mature and responsible. That was the difference.”
entered directly from high school. Because of their broad interests, military experience, and unusual talents, they also presented a challenge to their teachers” (77).26 As veterans arrived on campus, they represented an older, more experienced population of students than the university faculty was used to working with, and the power dynamics in the classroom shifted based on a few mitigating factors. First, with their pragmatic and economic reasons for attending college, veteran students were more willing to advocate for the types of training they needed to succeed in the professional world. Donald Murray related a moment in his humanities course with Professor Gwynne Daggett when the veterans asked Daggett to slow down the curriculum so that they could grasp a concept they were discussing more fully. To accommodate this need, Daggett added a class meeting to the schedule which the students happily attended; as Murray put it, “there was a lot of energy for us to get into the middle of class.”

Second, although as I’ve noted earlier, while some veterans were reticent to talk about their experiences overseas, many veterans found their experience to be important in offering context to a given class discussion or even a teacher’s lecture. That the veterans could offer such a context altered the classroom climate and structure from lecture to class discussion and, since many instructors had never been overseas, these accounts undermined the teacher’s authority as the primary expert in the classroom. Although several TNH articles during the mid-1940s relate teacher frustration with the changed class dynamics, Steve Smith felt that overall, UNH faculty

26 In 1946, in his address to the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, UNH President Harold Walter Stoke described the ways that this new influx of veterans had affected the culture of the university’s classrooms, and forecasted the effects of this student population on higher education: “Veterans have brought new elements into the classroom and new anxieties to complacent and unchallenged teachers. Education will have to reflect more than it now does a variety of interests and talents which its enlarged clientele will bring to it” (qtd. in Bardwell and Bergeron 90).
Had respect [for the veteran students] because these gentlemen had come back from being overseas. They were so far ahead of anything maybe that they [the professors] had done [. . .].

They treated us as equals. Yes, a lot of them hadn’t been in the military. I mean very few of them had. And it wasn’t that we knew more, it was just that we maybe we had been around more. To go overseas as a civilian—most people never did because they couldn’t afford it. A very expensive fare. [The instructors] were amazed that we’d been there. They’d show us a movie every now and then, and one of the men would say ‘I remember going there!’

Ted Finnegan concurred with this description but added that the fact that the veterans were older than traditional-age students caused some UNH professors to feel “a bit overwhelmed by the veterans. And they realized, these are no longer 18-year old kids. Most of them are 24 or 25 year-old people. So the whole [classroom] atmosphere changed.”

Concurrent with these significant changes in social and classroom culture were university-wide discussions about the changing nature of the university’s disciplines and of students’ needs. For the English Department, many of these discussions centered on the types of knowledge that an undergraduate English major or a student in first-year composition courses should develop, and the pedagogical practices that would best impart this knowledge to the student. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss fundamental debates about the purpose of English Studies at UNH during the 1940s in order to outline the departmental culture. This discussion provides the philosophical basis for many of the department’s choices, including the pedagogical practices I discuss in the final pages of this chapter, practices that contributed to the writing culture at UNH.

**What is English Studies?: Establishing a Disciplinary/Departmental Culture**

Throughout the 1940s (and even today), the faculty at UNH was comprised of primarily literature professors, yet there were many non-literature specialists in the
department whose areas of concentration were quite varied: advanced composition (Carroll Towle),\textsuperscript{27} freshman composition (Lucinda P. Smith), reading (Robert G. Webster), speech and communications (Edmund Cortez, head, Ray Keeseey, instructor), theatre/drama (William Hennessy),\textsuperscript{28} and journalism (Harold Scudder).\textsuperscript{29} In the mid-1940s, Professor Gwynne Daggett also added a Humanities course of study to the English Department curriculum.\textsuperscript{30} Though the interdisciplinarity—as we might term it now—of the English Department was celebrated publicly by the faculty and by English majors,\textsuperscript{31} several of these specialized areas of study eventually separated from the English department. During the 1940s and even through the majority of the 1950s, however, these areas remained firmly seated in the English Department. While the sub-fields in the department often struggled for legitimacy in proposing courses beyond the lower level, since upper level courses were reserved for the English major; upper level speech or writing courses were seen as additional or supplemental advanced electives that students

\textsuperscript{27}Towle was Director of Advanced Composition at UNH, though his formal graduate study from Yale University was in Renaissance Literature.

\textsuperscript{28}After Hennessy returned to a literary focus on drama—especially the study of Shakespearean plays—speech and media professors Edmund Cortez and Joseph Batchellor assumed the responsibility for the Dramatics Workshops.

\textsuperscript{29}Professor Scudder held a B.S. from Dartmouth College and he had worked as a reporter for the \textit{Worcester Telegram}, the \textit{Hartford Courant}, and the \textit{Boston Herald}. Donald Silva said that Scudder "brought journalism to UNH." Scudder was also president of the New England Section of the National College English Association in 1941, the year that UNH hosted that conference. Upon Scudder's retirement, Robert G. Webster took over the journalism program.

\textsuperscript{30}About the advent of humanities study at UNH, an article in the September 27, 1945 issue of \textit{TNH} described the initial course as providing integrated content and a variety of pedagogical materials from several liberal arts fields of study, "For the first time, an experimental study of the humanities, limited to 25 students, is being offered. The course is designed to inspire an appreciation of languages, English, music, the arts and philosophy. Material from several departments in the forms of reading matter, slides, films and recordings will be used" ("LA College Adds Three New Courses" 3).

\textsuperscript{31}In my interview with UNH Alumni Don Silva, he expressed a pride in the interdisciplinarity of the English Department during his undergraduate years and he expressed his belief that "we should go back to it."
could take if they had time in their schedule. Although the literary emphasis of the department was well-established by the 1940s, the existence of sub-fields within—not yet splintered from—the English department and the significant changes in the university culture that I have described above ensured that debates would continue about the nature of English Studies as well as the types of training English majors should receive to be adequately educated in the field of English.32

Like many English Departments across the country, the UNH English Department faculty wrestled with how much differentiation—or how many sub-fields—was appropriate for the English Major.33 In his 1945 *College English* article “The Problem of the English Major,” Herbert Weisinger of the University of Michigan, echoing some of the issues at faced by UNH English faculty, provides a rationale for reassessing and revising the English curriculum during the mid-1940s. He notes that the “temporary lull” in the fluctuations in student populations—due to military enlistment, the departure of the ASTP and an anticipated influx of students postwar—supplied English faculty with the time to reflect on the “inadequacies” of the current English major “before the expected rush of enrollment no longer permits us the leisure for criticism and reorganization” (342).34 Weisinger’s greatest criticism of the way that the English major was structured

---

32 In an announcement of an NCTE-sponsored curriculum study, study organizers Dora V. Smith, Porter Perrin and Angela M. Broening imply that these debates about the nature of English studies were common. In their list of proposed topics of study, they focus on concerns that I explore in the local context of the UNH English Department: “the range of the subject matter of ‘English’: main branches of literature, speech, written composition; contributions to related or cooperating fields,” “the aims of the work in English,” and “the work of English majors: typical programs, comprehensive examinations, standards” (346-47).

33 Such discussions created the circumstances under which some sub-fields that were becoming more specialized such as speech/communications, and drama eventually left the English Department to become separate departments.

34 An additional rationale for reassessing the English major was motivated by the anxiety in the mid- to late 1940s about the rise in scientific and technological study. There was great concern that the humanities
centered on literary concerns—that students had too much freedom in course selection, and that this freedom caused students to graduate without having read Milton, Shakespeare, Pope, Chaucer or even American literature, texts that Weisinger believed to be primary (or foundational) literary essentials for an English major (342).

Such debates were also quite prevalent at the University of New Hampshire, especially after World War II. From 1945-1949, multiple departmental meetings were spent discussing the types of courses that English majors needed to take and the ways to measure whether an English major had gathered the knowledge the faculty had tried to impart. The discussion about which courses to take represented a theoretical tug-of-war regarding which subjects should be taught in English studies. Whether the discussion was about how to restructure the English Education track or whether to reduce course offerings, referred to throughout the minutes as “contracting courses,” the core of the discussion always focused on literary studies. For instance, in the case of restructuring the English Teaching track, the primary concern was finding a way for English Education students could take all of the required literature courses. When Department Chair Bingham raised the issue that English Education students who were student teaching could not take a required upper level English Literature course, the faculty proposed several solutions, from reducing course requirements to implementing a “prescribed curriculum” for these students (English Departmental Meeting Minutes, 11 March 1948).

would be left behind or be in danger of obsolescence At UNH, however, the Liberal Arts and English major in particular was quite popular during the 1940s.

35In my survey of College English, I noted several writers who expressed similar concerns over particular literary texts that must be studied if an English major was to receive a proper education in English Studies. For a similar viewpoint, see: William Clyde deVane. “The English Major” College English, Vol. 3, No. 1. (Oct., 1941), pp. 47-52. In his paper given at the 28th College Conference on English in the Central Atlantic States, Nov. 23, 1940, de Vane, the Dean of Yale College and English Professor at Yale University argued that proven authors such as Milton or Shakespeare were worth much more than contemporary writers and he provided his own listing of the types of courses and texts English majors needed at each year of study.
Ultimately though, the faculty’s main concern was that if these students were to be considered “English majors,” then they should be prepared as English majors (a focus on literature was implied). The meeting minutes for April 8, 1948 register a heated debate about whether English Education students, who took fewer literature courses, should be considered “equal to” English (literature) majors.\(^{36}\)

A second example of the literature-centeredness of the department arose in the Fall of 1945, when the faculty considered “restructuring” the English major. With this consideration came concerns about reducing existent course requirements to make room for other courses; here again, the primary discussion focused on literature requirements and whether English majors could be considered well-trained or equipped if they lost the opportunity to study a given author in depth (e.g., taking only one semester of Shakespeare rather than two\(^ {37}\) or having to choose between Milton and Chaucer) (7 November 1945). In this same discussion, two faculty members suggested reducing the American Literature survey from two semesters to one and they proposed adding courses in the survey of drama and the novel. While a final decision is not recorded, the remainder of the discussion focused on whether required literature courses should be organized around periods or major literary figures. What I want to highlight here is that while some advanced courses were offered in dramatics, speech and composition, almost all of the courses required for the English major were literature courses.

\(^{36}\) In addition, some faculty raised the question about the body of literature that an English high school teacher should know. Since English teaching majors were still required to take a comprehensive exam at the end of their senior year (focusing on a literature reading list), they needed to have an extensive knowledge of the literary canon.

\(^{37}\) While many discussions about course reductions occurred in department meetings, the English Department was actually quite slow to implement such changes. According to the 1947 *Bulletin of the University of New Hampshire Course Catalog for 1947-48*, two years after the debate I detail above, English majors were still required to take two semesters of Shakespeare.
Ironically, the department had just recently taken up the question of "problems of major requirements in English," where their views diverged significantly based on the specific interests of each faculty member in the department. Here are three specific examples of these views from an English Departmental meeting on October 24, 1945:

Mr. Towle [Director of Advanced Composition] argued that the "department should be concerned with the student’s knowledge and his skills in writing, speech and application of logic, and literary criticism."

Mr. Daggett [Milton expert and creator/director of humanities program] "suggested that this could be expressed as reading, writing, speaking, and thinking."

Mr. Bingham [Department chair] thought that the emphasis should be "on literature or reading."

It is noteworthy, I believe, to consider the ordering of the items in each list. The Director of Advanced Writing placed writing first in his list of primary objectives for English Studies and the founder of the UNH Humanities program articulated the types of knowledge that an English major should cultivate, an integrative approach. In practice, however, the Department Chair’s literary focus seems to have had the most sway with the rest of the department.38

Another popular debate related to the purpose of English Studies was how to assess the English Major’s knowledge at the close of his or her senior year. In 1940s *College English* articles, one of the primary assessment tools discussed was a

---

38 The impression I have gathered of Sylvester Bingham, a Yale PhD, was that he was a formidable presence and quite influential in shaping the UNH English Department. He was the English Department head for twenty years (from 1946 through the mid-1960s), a long administrative stint to be sure. Donald Murray, who was hired by Bingham in 1963 to teach, related two telling moments suggesting the type of authority Bingham wielded. First, being a man of means himself, Bingham believed that an academic should make no more than $4000 per year and he looked down upon faculty who had to work a second job to make a living, even scolding them for doing so. Second, Bingham took steps to create and maintain a specific departmental culture. Murray told me that Bingham required that junior and senior faculty share offices, not with the intent of mentorship, but with the intent of helping junior faculty assimilate quickly and allowing senior faculty to impart the department’s values to the junior member.
comprehensive exam administered to seniors prior to graduation; in most cases, the rationale given for creating such an exam was to ensure that English majors had a firm grasp of foundational texts in literary history and to allow the English department faculty, through the creation of the exam, to articulate their beliefs about what English majors should know at the end of their studies.39 In his article “Uses of the Comprehensive Examination in English,” Strang Lawson of Colgate University pointed out that the impetus for such an exam was to address the faculty’s “perennial question” of “What are we trying to do? or What ought we to try to do?” (298). Instead of testing the breadth of students’ knowledge of literary texts, Lawson suggests that the purpose of a senior exam was to “test [...] the essential residues of majoring in English with the emphasis less on what the student knows than what he can do with what he knows” (298). Lawson suggests that the occasion of putting together the examination forced department members to consider their personal priorities for the English major and allowed them to see how their goals for English majors were being met or missed each year. The exam, then, benefits the faculty in that “curriculum, teaching emphasis, and individual efficiency may in time be modified by such perceptions; and approximate agreement may be reached in a department as to what is essential, what is incidental” (299). According to Lawson, then, the exam was intended to determine a student’s readiness to graduate and helped the faculty to articulate “statements of what, with varying degrees of emphasis, we think we are driving at in the teaching program” (299-300). Since Lawson suggests that one function of these exams was to help the department articulate its priorities for the

39Another common assessment practice suggested in College English articles was the addition of a senior thesis or paper allowing students to demonstrate their ability to conduct advanced literary study. See for example William Clyde deVane’s (1941) discussion of the “departmental essay,” E.K. Brown’s (1945) discussion of the “graduating essay.”
English major, he argues that such exams cannot be standardized and must be developed locally.

With Lawson’s directive in mind, I turn to the UNH English Department’s use of the senior examination in order to explore what this local practice suggests about the departmental values in the 1940s. The primary nature of the senior examination at UNH was performance-based; the English faculty wanted to test students’ knowledge of the literary canon. The Bulletin of the University of New Hampshire Catalog Issue for 1947-1948 describes the English program as follows:

At the end of the Senior Year English majors must pass a written examination on English and American Literature.40 As a preparation for this the Department issues a syllabus of the works to be covered in the examination and offers for Seniors and Graduate Students a survey course, which is optional and does not carry major credit. (101)

The syllabus referred to in this description was a reading list that faculty had developed and revised annually41; students were given this list when they declared English as their major42 so that they could assess what they had yet to read. Upon receiving his reading list, UNH Alumnus Donald Silva remembered “the first day with my little pencil checking off to see how many of all that was on there that I had read.” Students were expected to read the books on the reading list in addition to the required course texts, although there was some overlap, and the “survey course” referred to in the description was a seminar course intended to prepare students for exams; again, in Donald Silva’s

40 Speaking of his experience of the English major from 1955-57, Donald Silva noted that the study of American Literature focused on early American literature through the 1930s. Contemporary literature was not included in the American Literature survey or the Advanced American Literature courses.

41 An example of this reading list change can be seen in the April 1950 English Departmental Meeting minutes; there were discussions about adding selections from Spenser, Eliot and Joyce and deleting selections from Irving, Auden, and Sandburg.

42 Since, until 1954, only juniors and seniors were allowed to take courses counting toward the English major, it is likely that the students received this list in junior year.
words, "it was good to have the seminar because what the seminar did was that it covered chunks of [the list]. And so you could rapidly read. You talk about reading."

Commenting on the rigor of the program and preparations for this exam, Silva said "You were really reading, let me tell you. I mean I read seven days a week, every spare minute."

According to the February 2, 1948 meeting minutes, English faculty had intended the "seminar" course described in the catalog to follow the model of most English courses at the time: a series of lectures on selected topics (in this case related to the material on the reading list); in these notes, for instance, the faculty decided to work on a rotating lecture schedule. By December 1949, however, the faculty was rethinking the practicality of this seminar approach, the students' lack of attendance told faculty that "the course ha[d] fallen short of its expectations" and the faculty proposed either "dropping both the course and the examination" or "making the course more practical, frankly aiming it at preparation for the examination." Members of the department noted that several like universities had senior examinations and in order to remain in line with current trends, the faculty was unwilling to drop the examination.

In a final point about the comprehensive exam, I offer an example from the perspective of a UNH English major that presents what I see as one of the key problems with the English Department's literary focus. In a letter he wrote to then English Department Chair Sylvester Bingham on December 2, 1948, Robert Young, Class of '49,

---

43 The 1948-49 departmental meeting minutes reveal the faculty's anxiety over the steady decline in English majors and the question about whether the comprehensive examination was a primary influence in this decline. The faculty noted that "the switch from cultural to vocational majors is a nation-wide trend." (7 December 1948).

44 Since UNH Alumnus Donald Silva took part in the May 1957 version of the senior examination and he described the seminar as helping him to study "chunks" of the list, we know that the exam continued to be required. Instead, the seminar approach was revised.
argued his case to be exempted from taking the senior comprehensive examination. Among Young’s arguments were practical reasons: He was a transfer student taking a heavy course load in order to graduate on time; he didn’t have extra time to devote to studying for the exam; and he did not know about the exam until the semester prior to graduation. While he presented a long list of such reasons, Young also mounted a compelling argument against the exam based on the question of specialization, citing his intent to pursue a career in radio rather than literature. This point is crucial because it highlights the fact that while the majority of the English faculty had taken the more conservative approach toward English Studies, there was a spirit in the fringes of the department to diversify the courses of study; some of these interests were expressed in ancillary coursework—formal coursework offered by the English Department that interested students could pursue if they could find time. These courses typically did not count toward the English Major. Some of these interests were expressed in extracurricular work—in the clubs and groups developed by faculty and students to enhance or address gaps in the formal curriculum.45

Returning to Young’s letter, he stated that, in his pursuit of radio broadcasting, he’d been “admitted to the School of Radio on the graduate level at Columbia starting February 1, 1949.” In his concern about completing degree requirements, he had begun to study for the exam, forgoing “all vacations […] to stay in Durham to study” and all “extra-curricular activities except Mike and Dial46 which by its nature I need for

45 I discuss some of these clubs and initiatives in detail in Chapters four and five.

46 Mike and Dial was an extracurricular club created by Speech professor Edmund Cortez that focused on radio broadcasting. The Bulletin of the University of New Hampshire Catalog Issue 1947-1948 describes Mike and Dial as being “comprised of students interested in various radio work—announcing, writing, and technical work” (40).
experience (1).” However, as he concluded that literary study was not his lifelong pursuit, he made the following argument:

I am going into the field of Radio as my life work and feel that U.N.H. and the English Department have prepared me well for it and also feel that I do not need such specific information [as the literature included on the reading list] for this profession even though I do, or did until it became such a grind, enjoy this work. I [. . .] am trying very hard to get through with my undergraduate work and do something that directly applies to my chosen profession. (2)

I read Young’s letter as not simply a plea on the part of one student to “get out of” a given requirement of the English major, but as an argument for an expanded view of English Studies. Since the comprehensive exam focused on literary knowledge alone, Young did not see the validity or relevance of this pursuit, given his career goals.\(^4^7\) And, since these goals were cultivated by ancillary English courses and extracurricular activities sponsored by a few English Department faculty, Young’s tone implies that he feels authorized to make such an appeal to the department.

Each of these smaller departmental discussions as well as Young’s letter highlights the fact that the UNH English Department, like many departments across the country, was engaged in a moment of *disciplinary definition*. These endeavors to articulate the types of courses English majors should take and to assess the knowledge of English majors represent incremental steps toward the creation of a particular vision (or version) of English Studies, one that, while consonant with the national trend,\(^4^8\) grew and developed in the local institutional context of the UNH English department. For UNH English faculty of the 1940s, these attempts to define their daily work was both pragmatic

\(^4^7\) Ultimately, the English Department did not agree with Young and the December 7, 1948 English Departmental Meeting Minutes indicate the decision that Young would still be required to take the exam, though the exam “will exclude specific factual questions.”

and philosophical in the sense that as they were shaping and revising the curriculum, they were describing "what they do" and "why" to themselves and to other faculty, students and administrators. The examples I have presented here, the course requirements and the comprehensive exam for the English major, suggest that on the macro level, the UNH department's theoretical leanings were toward literature as the "most" legitimate course of study for English. While some members of the UNH English Department faculty held wider interests than just literary pursuits, a point I will explore in the following section and in subsequent chapters, their structuring of the English major around literature courses privileged this pursuit of literary study in particular. That faculty took a more conservative approach toward designing the major provides some insight into the development of the English Studies department at UNH but it also raises questions about whether this design was motivated by personal philosophies or by other external influences such as institutional or administrative pressures.

On the micro level, the pedagogical choices of the 1940s UNH English department illustrate the department's day-to-day development of its own culture and, in part, its formal curricular contributions to the institutional writing culture; these pedagogical choices also illustrate the department's values on multiple issues including the department's sense of responsibility to the administration, other departments and to students across the university, as seen in certain practices in Freshman English; the department's attitudes toward teacher-student interaction; and the department's methods of disseminating course content. Some pedagogical choices also expose other more subtle
debates within the department, debates about the purpose for a given course or the importance of expertise in teaching certain sub-fields within the English Department.49

In the following section, I explore specific pedagogical practices in order to illustrate the climate of the formal curriculum in the 1940s UNH English Department and to suggest that, taken alone, this picture would represent a limited view of UNH’s writing culture in the 1940s. While in Chapter one, I argue that composition historians should not focus their study only on the first-year writing course, these courses do, of course, comprise one part of an institution’s writing culture. Whether the sponsoring department, usually English, applies programmatic standards or not, the first year composition course becomes a de facto “common experience” for the majority of students at a given institution. Because this course plays such a role in shaping an institutional writing culture, I will present pedagogical practices within the formal curriculum of the UNH English Department as seen through the lens of Freshman English. In particular, I explore the programmatic structure and some of the classroom practices of the Freshman English program. I also discuss the ways that these features of Freshman English were consonant with or diverged from pedagogical practices in more advanced writing courses in the English department to consider what these practices suggest about the department’s sense of responsibility toward students and the administration, at least as we might analyze them through formal curricular structures. This discussion will further develop my

49 While I do not detail these debates in this dissertation, I summarize one such debate involving the department’s support of the sub-field of speech as an instance of institutional pressures on the department. In 1944, the Educational Policy Committee drafted a proposal to collapse the required first-year courses English 1 (Composition/Speech) and English 2 (Reading) into one course taught by one instructor. Spearheaded by the speech professors, the English department faculty mounted a firm protest, noting that the proposed conflation of subjects into one course precluded students from learning specialized skills such as speech from instructors with expertise in speech, and that such an “omnibus” course would not allow enough time for each “skill” to be treated adequately.
argument for extending our gaze into the institutional extracurriculum, as I do in Chapters four and five.

**Negotiating Pedagogical Realities and Institutional Pressures in Writing Instruction**

*When we permit ourselves to become excited over the problem of “it’s me” or “different than,” when we allow spelling to be considered as a fundamental linguistic skill, when we grow excited over what we consider an “incorrect” pronunciation, are we not betraying our trust? Are we not guilty of direction the attention of our students to the trees rather than the woods, and are not the trees we point out to them mere saplings? It is my conviction that we are emphasizing superficials rather than fundamentals in much of our teaching. — Leo L. Rockwell, English Professor, Colgate University (61)*

In his 1939 article “The Fourth ‘R’ is an ‘L’,” Leo L. Rockwell joined the ongoing conversation about the mission and subject of English, focusing primarily on the courses required of all students in the university, rather than courses shaping the English major, dual purposes that still co-exist in many English departments today. He notes, in particular, that “college courses in Freshman composition, Sophomore literature, and public speaking have been established, condemned, revised, despaired of, abolished, revived, reformed, and endlessly rechristened. Of new evangels there has been no end” (62). This quote, in particular, suggests that heading into the 1940s, no national consensus existed regarding the purview of and approach toward these required courses and whether they should include the development of writing, reading, speaking and listening skills, or of particular interest during and post-World War II, whether they should be recast as communications courses. Rockwell argues that these courses should focus on language as it is experienced by people in daily life, “Language is people talking, listening, writing, reading. Not all at once, of course. But usually when one is

---

50 For an extended discussion of the "communication battle" in the professional context of CCCC, see Diana George and John Trimbur. “The ‘Communication Battle,’ or Whatever Happened to the 4th C?” *CCC* 50.4 (June 1999): 682-698.
talking, another is listening. One writes in the hope that another may read [. . .]. For the most part, linguistic activity is aimed at communication (in speaking and writing) or at interpretation (in listening and reading)” (62).51 Rockwell’s voice is one of many at the close of the 1930s to suggest that the 1940s would be a time to debate these questions further.52

At the beginning of the 1940s, the University of New Hampshire’s writing curriculum, and especially its Freshman English course, does not seem to fit the visions of Freshman English that Rockwell forwards. Instead, UNH’s formal writing curriculum seems to fit in with the field of composition’s descriptions of the period and with current-traditional pedagogy in general. Since I focused much of my discussion in Chapter one on the theoretical and definitional constructions of the current-traditional period created by composition scholars, I briefly recall that discussion to provide a context for the pedagogical practices I discuss in this section. In current-traditional pedagogy, the clarity and correctness of the written product, often in the form of a short theme, was of paramount concern; little if any attention was given to invention, the rhetorical situation, or to revision beyond correcting the errors within a student’s theme. Robert J. Connors says that Freshman English was, after 1925, a “benighted processing of students through the obstacle course of mechanical correctness” and that “it seemed a tacit assumption that

51 The remainder of Rockwell’s article focuses on the art of listening, and pedagogical strategies for teaching this art, however, Rockwell’s initial points convey his perceptions about appropriate subjects of study for English overall.

52 In his 1941 College English article “A Philosophy for Required Freshman English,” Harvard Lecturer Theodore Morrison agrees with Rockwell’s contention that Freshman English alone cannot remedy problems of incorrect grammar and that this approach reduces the course to “police duty” (786). He states that Freshman English should provide “training in language as an instrument of reading, thinking, and writing. This is an immense task. It is a task of education in general, not of any one department” (787). Morrison states that Freshman English should focus on “expository writing” conceived of broadly—to “explain, argue, summarize, analyze, criticize, report scenes, describe character, try to create the impression of a home town, of the life of the people he knows” (787).
the average composition course was an essentially remedial endeavor” (“Mechanical Correctness” 91). While David Russell qualifies his description with a disclaimer that there were varying approaches to freshman composition, his description of the required course points to what composition scholars might characterize as the typical features of such a course: “Freshman composition was almost always treated writing as a generalizable elementary skill, independent of disciplinary content. The course focused on mechanical skills: correct grammar, spelling, and usage necessary for transcribing preexisting fully formed speech or thought into correct written form” (7). Russell’s description of the typical freshman composition course could be a description of the required course at UNH during the 1940s.

For the UNH English Department faculty, the two required English courses, first named “Elementary Written and Oral English” and changed to the more popular “Freshman English” in 1944 (often referred to as English 1-2), were seen as “skills” courses serving a different student population than the English major and thus separate from disciplinary discussions defining English Studies. In the April 29, 1952 Liberal Arts Committee Meeting Minutes, English Department Head Professor Bingham is cited as saying that while the English Department offered foundational courses in speech, composition and reading for all UNH freshmen, “these are skill sections and are not in the same field of concentration as the major of the department which is English and American literature” (“Edward Eddy Papers: English I & II,” italics mine).53 In part, this philosophical separation was due to the perceived purposes of each course of study; the

53While Bingham’s comment was made in the early 1950s, it represents an attitude toward these courses that developed over a number of years; the Freshman English course was established at UNH in 1911 and underwent a significant changes, as I discuss, just prior to the 1940s based on the philosophical stance expressed by Bingham.
English department faculty viewed required freshman composition courses as providing a service to the university while they saw English major courses providing specialized disciplinary instruction. This separation was also due in part to the clientele that these courses served. In the 1940s, all UNH students had to pass through (or be exempted from) the required course and, like many required composition course across the country, the English department shouldered the responsibility for certifying students’ abilities in speech, reading and writing. By contrast, only English majors took upper level English courses and they were seen as scholars-in-training. The major courses focused on disseminating knowledge about selective content, preparing students for future scholarly work or teaching through exposure to the great books, great literary figures, and types of literature (short story, novel, drama, etc.).

Freshman English focused more on what were seen as fundamental language skills: writing correctly as expressed through grammar/mechanics, speaking as a means of communicating both effectively and eloquently, and reading as a means of appreciating or analyzing literature.

With my primary focus on the secondary “skills-oriented” mission of the English department, I will now provide a brief overview of the major curricular change that occurred in Freshman English at the start of the 1940s. From its inception in 1911 to the Fall of 1939, the year-long Freshman English course at UNH was a fairly structured course required of every first-year student. Harold Scudder and Robert G. Webster (1940) said the early version of the course was “a perfectly orthodox composition course—

---

54 Additional specialized courses housed in the English department, in public speaking, advanced composition, dramatics, and journalism were offered, though these courses were often viewed as ancillary or supplementary to the primary literary purpose of the English major.

55 These purposes are not directly stated in the archival records, but represent my summary of the course’s purpose after reading archival materials such as lesson plans (Edward Eddy files), course descriptions (1941-1949), and English department meeting minutes (1945-1949).
including instruction in grammar and rhetoric, and devoting the latter half of the year to a consideration of the stock subjects of exposition, argumentation, description, and narration” (492). According to Scudder and Webster, the UNH English Department faculty found “the greatest fault of our freshman course was that [the course] applied the same treatment to all, wasting the time of many, going quite over the heads of others, and though the staff worked long and hard hours it could not apply its labors where it was most needed” (493). To address this problem the English department revised its curriculum to allow for student exemptions from the course. From the fall of 1939 through the 1940s and 1950s, all first-year students took an entrance examination in elementary oral and written English. The top half of the freshman class were “released” from taking Freshman English and the bottom half were required to take the course. I suggest of this curricular change that while the course had always been seen as skills-based, the move to exempt half of the entering freshman class from taking the course underscored its purpose as a remedial or corrective skills-based course.

In “The Language of Exclusion: Writing Instruction at the University,” Mike Rose provides insight into how current-traditional pedagogies addressed the deficiencies of student writers:

A writer has a relatively fixed repository of linguistic blunders that can be pinpointed and then corrected through drill, that repetitive drill on specific

---

56 In his 1937 article for *TNH*, UNH student reporter Paul Dupell describes the pedagogical tools used in this early version of Freshman English: “The objective of the first years’ work is clear and correct expression […]. Tangible methods employed […] include writing of themes, essays, biographies and other representative literary types: four individual conferences each semester; classroom and outside reading. *Patterns in Reading and Writing* by C.H. Conley […] is being used this year for classroom reading and serves as a model for student writings. Six books of the student’s choice are read for outside work. These are so selected that they deal with integrated phrases of some one topic. For his own benefit the student keeps a journal in which he jots down ideas gleaned from his reading” (1).

57 Steadily rising enrollments may have also provided the impetus for a reduction in the number of students taking Freshman English.
linguistic features represented in isolated sentences will result in mastery of linguistic (or stylistic or rhetorical) principles, that bits of discourse bereft of rhetorical or conceptual context can form the basis of curriculum and assessment, that good writing is correct writing, and that correctness has to do with pronoun choice, verb formation and the like. (530)

Generally speaking, while this pedagogy was based on an assumption that student writers were deficient in certain writing skills, the belief was that practice and drill—such as that described by Rose—would eradicate or at least directly address many of these deficiencies so the student would not be deficient in subsequent years of schooling.

In theory, the UNH Freshman English curriculum in the 1940s held to this belief, but the English faculty’s creation of a new safeguard measure illustrated their growing skepticism of the one course achieving such a result in students’ writing. Amid complaints from UNH faculty in other disciplines that students were not writing well after having taken Freshman English, the English Department faculty essentially extended the reach of Freshman English beyond the first year to all four years by creating the following policy: “Anyone may be recalled and reassigned to an instruction group at any time in his four years in college upon report of any member that the student’s work in English [including writing, speaking and reading] is deficient” (Bulletin 1939-40, 198-99). This safeguard measure emphasized that, with regard to student writers across the curriculum and regardless of students’ class rank, the English department and other university departments worked together to uphold a corrective model of writing instruction in the formal curriculum throughout students’ time at the university. Even students exempted from freshman English were not exempt from revisiting it in later years. UNH Professor Robert Webster suggested that, because advanced students had either taken or been exempted from Freshman English, their work ethic was called into
question if they were required to take additional corrective instruction in writing, because they were seen as becoming “negligent or careless in [. . .] written or spoken English” (Webster 1). That the explanation of this policy is linked to Freshman English course descriptions further highlights the corrective intent of the required course.

Requiring only half of incoming freshmen to take Freshman English eliminated the commonality previously established by all students taking this one required course; this change meant that the institutional writing culture no longer included this shared experience. Instead, the writing culture influenced by this curricular change made for a division between students who were proficient or and those who were deficient in writing, a division that was not as clearly evident in the earlier iteration of the course. Webster states that these programmatic changes were made to meet the needs of students of varying writing abilities, calling it a “comprehensive program which will permit those who do not need instruction in elementary written and spoken English to go on at once to other subjects, and at the same time to provide instruction for those who do need it” (1).

The assumption that some students “do not need instruction in elementary written and spoken English” and could “go on at once to other subjects” also implied that the first-year composition curriculum was intended to be remedial in nature. In her School and Society article “Freshman English at the University of New Hampshire” (1939), UNH Professor Lucinda P. Smith used more colorful descriptors to suggest why the programmatic structure was changed, because “quality students mark time while we patiently, but mistakenly, tend our incubator babies” (122). As Smith’s description of

---

58 Students exempted from Freshman English were allowed to take the more advanced “Reading for Thought” (critical analysis), and “Survey of English Literature” courses (Webster “Professor Webster Outlines” 1).
“incubator babies” suggests, this 1940 curricular revision of the Freshman English program reflects a view of students required to take a course in first-year writing instruction as being deficient in some way. Several *College English* articles in the first half of the 1940s placed blame on secondary school English curriculum for students’ writing deficiencies and called for “articulation” (or coordination) between higher and secondary education. In her *School and Society* article “Freshman English at the University of New Hampshire” (1939) UNH Professor Lucinda P. Smith stated that the UNH Freshman English program was revised to respond to perceived deficiencies in the secondary school curriculum. According to Smith, the UNH English Department addressed the problem of secondary school curricular “deficiencies” by providing NH high school teachers and administrators with a “brief list of minimum essentials,” all focusing on grammatical concerns to be taught in the high school English curriculum to prepare students for college writing. According to Smith, this curricular “experiment” increased interactions between English teachers at the high school and university levels but the primary measure of “progress” Smith cited was whether UNH English

59 Seven articles from 1940-1945 address this concern directly as the primary topic of the article. Other articles discussing Freshman English refer briefly to the need for reform in secondary school writing instruction or raise a sympathetic voice toward the challenges facing secondary school English teachers and call for cooperation across educational levels. See Howard Mumford Jones, “Dilemmas Confronting English Teachers” in “The New York Convention” *College English* 40.5 (1940): 445-54.

60 The tone Smith uses in the piece assumes an attitude of expert conferring knowledge to “bewildered [high school] teachers of English” who were unsure “what training they should give” (122). She points out that teachers were responsive to this input.

61 The UNH English department also furnished the NH State Department of Education with a list of students (and the high school they graduated from) receiving the highest test scores on the UNH oral and written placement examinations. The practice of providing such lists to high schools was not unique to UNH. For his discussion of this practice at Penn State College, see Theodore J. Gates, “The First Instruction in Composition.” *College English* 3.1 (Oct. 1941): 64-69.
Department faculty saw improvement in students’ grammar after the list had been distributed to schools (123).  

Under the new curriculum, UNH students required to take English 1 and English 2 were “organized in small groups” with an instructor directing the group’s activities—sometimes meeting as a whole group to discuss writing issues and often providing “individual instruction, meeting each student three times a week, and varying the work to suit individual needs” (Webster “Professor Webster Outlines” 1). By 1946, the department had also created a formalized noncredit remedial course series—English A (writing), B (reading), and C (speech) required of students whose ability in one or more areas was found to be “unsatisfactory.” Depending on progress, students could be released from a remedial course mid-semester, at the end of the semester, or at the end of the year. While this focus on addressing individual students’ needs may seem to be fairly progressive, I would contextualize this practice—as well as the UNH Writing laboratory

---

62 Smith notes, for example, that “during the second year we discovered that certain pupils were perfectly trained in ‘who’ and ‘whom’” (123).

63 In addition to these options, in the Fall of 1939, the English department established a writing laboratory (“Professor Webster Outlines” 4) and a separate “speech clinic” (“English Department Sponsors” 4) for students who wanted to improve their writing and their speaking abilities. Students across the curriculum could, and did—with 759 visits in the first semester—voluntarily take advantage of the services and writing resources in the writing laboratory; the lab was open in the afternoons/evenings and was staffed by English instructors (“Students Take Advantage” 1). A description of the Writing Laboratory can be found in the 1939-1940 Bulletin of the University of New Hampshire Catalogue Issue (198). The speech clinic offered an option for students to come to the clinic voluntarily, though the primary intent of the clinic was for students who were found, through an entrance exam, to be weak in speaking ability. The speech clinic used recording devices to track students’ speech and to determine improvement. For a discussion of a similar speech clinic at the University of Minnesota, see Robert J. Sailstad, “Conversation Can Be Taught!” College English 2.4 (Jan. 1941): 380-4.

64 In a memo drafted by the English department to the Liberal Arts Policy Committee, the faculty described how they saw these remedial courses functioning in the university curriculum, stating that the English department was: co-operating with the departments of the University by offering English A, a remedial course designed to keep students deficient in the mechanics of English by giving them intensive work in writing fundamentals. This course is open to any student in the University, and it is the responsibility of all faculty members to recommend students for this course who they consider are inadequately equipped in self-expression (English Dept. Meeting Minutes, 8 April 1948).
created to support students across the university—in line with national trends for creating remedial writing labs and courses according to ability (called “sectioning”) during the 1940s.

In addition to the organizational structure of the 1940s Freshman English program itself, I will consider typical, standardized and particular practices employed in the UNH Freshman English courses of the 1940s. To do so, I discuss typical classroom practice as expressed in 1940s course catalogues, in alumni interviews, in the student newspaper and in the archival course materials of Freshman English instructor and Assistant to the UNH President Edward Eddy. Throughout the 1940s, the UNH English Department maintained two constant objectives for English 1 and 2: “The training of students to write correctly and with force and to read with appreciation and discernment the chief types of literature” (1947-48 Bulletin, 211). The subject of writing was taken up in the first semester, and the subjects of reading and literature (or literary analysis), in the second. Students were required to write relatively few themes during the first semester, ten short expository themes—five written in class—and a research paper (Letter from Jack Richardson to Instructors of English I).65

Through departmental and subcommittee meetings, the English Department made a concerted effort to standardize the Freshman English course; the department voted on and selected the main texts of the course,66 wrote policies about plagiarism, wrote guidebooks on “prerequisites for correct and effective writing,” “versification” and “the

65 In Thomas Newkirk’s CCC article “The Dogma of Transformation” (2004), he notes that UNH students in the Freshman English course of the 1930s wrote forty-four themes in a semester (254).

66 Some texts used for English 1 over time were the College Reader written by poet John Holmes and UNH Professor Carroll Towle (used in 1950-52), Toward a Liberal Education by Lott Gibson and Arms (mid-1950-early 1960s), Altick’s Preface to Critical Reading was “re-adopted.” Texts for 1950-51 were the Holmes-Towle College Reader, Harbrace Handbook, and a dictionary (English Dept. Meeting Minutes, 11 May 1950).
research paper.” (Edward Eddy Papers: English I & II). The department also developed a loosely conceived master schedule for the teaching of English 1, asking instructors to focus on particular topics, book chapters, or additional readings during particular weeks. For instance, instructors were asked specifically to conduct testing in the first week of class: a dictation exam to test students’ understanding of sentence structure, spelling and punctuation) and a written theme to determine students’ particular writing needs. These efforts to standardize major elements of Freshman English represented the department’s desire to ensure students received the same information in each section, especially since the English department faculty saw this course series fulfilling an obligation to the university and to the students taking the course. Not all aspects of the course were prescribed; instructors were able to add their own individual touches to the course (albeit in small doses) such as adding their own books to the departmental list of required “collateral reading.” While I did not find any evidence indicating instructors assigned particular topics for themes in English 1, the department did discuss providing annual topic lists for the required English 1 research paper to avoid the possibility of plagiarism and to help students focus their topics more quickly. For the most part, however, each facet of the 1940s Freshman English course, down to the weekly topics covered in class meetings, was planned out by the department.

---

67 Donald Silva, in our interview, described this dictation process: The professor read a passage three times, asked the students to add punctuation, and then the department used this tool to determine the students’ ability to spell and punctuate and form sentences.

68 Addressing the department’s ongoing interest in disciplinary definition, this standardization served as the foundational course for UNH English Majors. In the departmental meeting minutes, the faculty determined that “that because of the varying standards of achievement and the dissimilar programs of study in secondary school English, the best assumption upon which to base English major requirements is the common program of English offered college freshmen” (English Dept. Minutes, 7 November 1945).
What happened within the confines of the classroom may not have been so strictly defined, however, since the instructor's presentation- and teaching-style certainly shaped the classroom environment. For instance, while the curricular focus of the first-year course was on mechanical correctness, there is evidence that some instructors fostered a classroom environment inviting discussion of the content of student writing beyond punctuation and grammar. According to the Milne Special Collections and Archives website, Freshman English Director Lucinda P. Smith described holding class writing workshops, which suggests students were given the opportunity to respond to one another's work. Smith says students submitted their themes typed and "unsigned," giving their feedback in an open forum. In fact, Smith, in a personal experiment, submitted a theme of her own to be judged, and says, "If I had planned on instant and unqualified approval, I was disappointed. I wriggled and squirmed as my work was thoughtfully read, critically evaluated and finally pronounced 'fair with a tendency to sentimentality.' And they were right" ("The Way We Were"). Smith said of the experience "teachers can sometimes learn from their students," a statement that demonstrates her appreciation of students' knowledge in a way that the formalized Freshman English curriculum under her direction did not.

---

69 It is not absolutely clear that this writing workshop took place in a Freshman English course, but it is likely, as Lucinda Smith primarily taught this course. Even if this workshop took place in another writing course, it demonstrates that the writing classroom was not always teacher-directed, and that the faculty's attitude toward student writing was not always centered on mechanical correctness.

70 Assistant to the President and newly appointed Freshman English Instructor Edward Eddy was acutely aware of his students' ability and knowledge. In his letter to Mrs. Arthur S. Adams on October 5, 1951, he stated that "One of my great delights this year is my section of freshman English. I am just about one day ahead of the class and line in dread for the day when they will catch up with me. When that time comes, I will let them think they have distracted me into a non-academic bull session. You see, I am learning all the tricks" (Edward D. Eddy Papers, UA 2-2-3).
Particulate Practice: Individualized Instruction Through Teacher-Student Conferencing in Freshman English and Beyond

In addition to the class workshop, teacher-student conferencing had been a standard practice for all UNH writing (and several of its literature and speech) courses since the 1920s.\(^1\) This practice is significant to my study because it provides insight into a particular kind of teacher-student interaction and complicates the corrective view of the student presented by my analysis of Freshman English. That is, the purpose and approach to conferencing did not remain constant from course to course; rather, conferencing was intended to support and further the course’s objectives and pedagogical practices, and did, of course, change based on an instructor’s approach. Conferences for the Freshman English course, for example, focused on improving the grammar and style of a student’s paper. UNH Alumni Donald Silva described the conferencing approach of his Freshman English teacher Max Maynard in the following statement: “[During the conference] Max would hit every comma fouled, every run on sentence. Max wasn’t interested in the content. If he saw the form was really messed up, he didn’t want to deal with the content. He thought you should get the forms right.”\(^2\) In the Freshman English conference, the teacher marked errors on themes during the conference meeting itself. Students were not expected to revise the themes, but rather either avoid the errors in subsequent papers or make the corrections and list the grammar rule that was broken.\(^3\) With the primary

---

\(^1\) Teacher-student conferencing was referenced in over fifty articles in *College English* (1940-1949). The purposes for such conferences ranged from planning of themes, to grammatical instruction, to suggestions for refining the theme’s content. Also, in her study of course catalogs from fifteen institutions, Susan Miller notes that “throughout these catalogues course descriptions very frequently refer to ‘conferences’ and to individualized attention to students as the guiding pedagogy” (Textual 21).

\(^2\) Additional evidence exists in the English Departmental minutes indicates that the focus on error in the conferences for Freshman English was a common practice (See April 8, 1948).
objective of the conference being correction of error, the conference essentially extended
the evaluative function of the course and this top-down conferencing approach
emphasized the teacher’s authority and expertise in the conferencing situation.

While conferences for other UNH English courses remained teacher-directed, the
focus of the conferencing session turned more to content for upper level courses.\textsuperscript{74} In his
1937 \textit{TNH} article “Successful Writers,” Paul Dupell described Dr. Carroll Towle’s
approach to conferences for the “theme-a-day” advanced composition course by saying
that “Dr. Towle shows students specific ways to improve writings so that they will
approach the idea of ‘aliveness’ (3).”\textsuperscript{75} The conferences were, in this case, illustrative in
nature, extending the instructive classroom environment—which was in itself often a
series of lectures by the instructor—to the conference setting; in our interview, in fact,
Donald Murray called these conferences “individualized lectures.” Donald Silva, in
describing particular features of a conference with Dr. Towle, said that students
submitted their themes prior to the conference and Dr. Towle returned them in the
context of the conference. Silva said that conferences lasted about fifteen minutes\textsuperscript{76} and
that Towle would usually do a “cold read” of the theme (reading it for the first time
during the session):

\textsuperscript{71}I observed the latter practice by reviewing the papers that Liz Finnegan retained from English 1. Liz
corrected each circled error and listed the corresponding rule that explained her reason for this change. Her
instructor then reviewed these edits and her rationale to indicate how she corrected them.

\textsuperscript{74} Because so much was written and because the alumni I interviewed provided detailed accounts of Carroll
Towle’s conferencing practices, I focus my discussion here on Dr. Towle. However, conferencing was a
departmentally-supported practice and was employed for all writing courses as well as other courses in the
English department.

\textsuperscript{75} By the mid-1950s when Donald Silva took this course, the writing requirements had changed
significantly, becoming much less rigid, as Silva states here: “It was up to the student....The student had
the requirement of once a week passing in a piece of writing, any subject, any length.”

\textsuperscript{76} Donald Murray, in my interview with him, noted that Towle notoriously ran over time in conferences and
that students would often have to wait in the hallway for an hour or more.
Obviously in the beginning he would read a few lines, and he might read the beginning and he might read the end and eventually you could see that his eyes jumped. And then he would really ask you general questions...he'd say, "Well, what's the subject?" or sometimes he would say, "I really don't think you've found out what it is you really want to say."

Silva's description here differs from other descriptions of the conference setting being less conversational and more lecture-based. Silva said Towle read with pencil in hand to note (with small checkmarks in the margins) places he wanted to discuss, but as much as possible, he avoided making marks on a student's paper during the conference, choosing instead to talk to the student about the changes that might be made to the paper:

He was very reticent as far as making comments about a piece of writing. He always looked for the subject of the writer, with the emphasis on writer. He was unrelentening in finding out what was the true subject of the writer. You know, he really was good at that.

Although these conferences focused on improving the content of a theme, story or other piece of writing, students were not expected to follow through on Towle's revision suggestions. Silva said "It was up to the student whether he wanted to continue with that piece of writing, or go on and apply what he learned to the next piece of writing." The lessons learned in the conference were seen as transferable to all writing contexts that students would encounter. The intent of the conference was not to improve the final product of a given piece of writing, but to help the student writer improve in writing, to develop one's technique and to pinpoint areas for improvement. Donald Murray said, as a burgeoning writer, he was most encouraged in the conferencing context because he received individualized attention from the teacher. When Murray began to teach, he told me that he taught by conferencing because of his experiences with conferencing at UNH. While the 1940s conferencing approach was more teacher-directed than the conferences Murray later advocated as a teacher, the occasion of the conferencing setting allowed
students to engage with their professors in a less formal context than the classroom and provided an exchange about writing that could not occur in the lecture-oriented classroom.

Overall, despite the directive nature of some writing conferences, the tenor of the conferences seemed congenial and collegial; the UNH alumni I interviewed noted that the conference event itself, the individualized instructional setting and the one-on-one interactions with their professors was a significant moment in students’ literacy development and sense of themselves as writers. The conference made students feel esteemed by their teachers and that their writing was valued and taken seriously. In addition to the purposes of the conference, professors tended to take an interest in the academic success of their students.

Describing a particular conference experience with Dr. Carroll Towle, for instance, UNH Alumnae and biology major Lillian Richards, Class of ’46, said Towle used the conferencing moment to encourage Richards to persevere in writing. Since she had not completed a number of her assignments, Richards assumed that in her conference with Towle he would chastise her for the incomplete work.77 After looking at his office “crammed with piles of papers,” Richards prepared the excuse that Towle misplaced her work. However, in the conference, Towle never once raised the issue of the missing assignments, opting instead to express an interest in Richards’ studies and encouraging her in her writing: “He took a puff on his pipe [he was known for smoking a corncob pipe], smiled and told me how much he enjoyed my work that had been passed in.”

77 Richards took writing and literature courses from Dr. Carroll Towle and Dr. Gwynne Daggett, despite her science major “because writing was a natural—reading and imagination had always been a part of me.” Daggett and Towle provided an “introduction to a literature and writing that was new to me.” Although she didn’t go into specifics, she described their teaching methods as “completely different.”
Richards told me that he detailed what he liked about her writing and she was so encouraged by his words that she persevered in the course, writing prolifically after that conference. This interaction demonstrates a valuing of students and student writing not evident in the corrective structure of the Freshman English program or even in the conferences as I described them earlier. This attitude toward students is evident, however, in the extracurricular writing initiatives that I discuss in detail in Chapter four. The departmental disposition toward individualized teacher-student interactions translated easily into these more informal extracurricular contexts.

A Brief Look at Writing Instruction Beyond the First-Year Course

My discussion of conferences offers insight into teacher-student interactions built into the UNH English Department writing curriculum. An examination of additional writing courses offered by the department provides insight into approaches toward writing instruction for upper level students and the ways an institutional writing culture can be shaped by or even incorporate competing factors such as external and institutional pressures vs. departmental values or a conservative skills program such as Freshman English vs. more experimental upper level writing courses such as “Writing as an Art” or “The Writing Workshop.”

Susan Miller, in her book Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition, describes her study of course catalogues from fifteen colleges and universities between the years of 1920-1960 and argues that “university catalogue descriptions of English show the extent to which public forms of writing were institutionalized by new departments of English in their early decades, as they do the developing image of one universal freshman-level course” (66-7). As I have described

---

78 I describe “The Writing Workshop” course and its connection with the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference in Chapter five.
the “developing image of one universal freshman-level course,” depicting it as a conservatively constructed skills-based course, I suggest, through a brief look at additional writing courses offerings at UNH in 1947-48, that a broader consideration of the formal curriculum complicates the picture I have presented earlier of first-year writing instruction. I suggest, as my primary argument for this section, that these additional courses represented and developed contrasting and more favorable attitudes toward student writing and toward the student writer, a valuing of student writing that we will see in earnest (and explicitly stated) in the context of the extracurricular initiatives I discuss in Chapter four.

Susan Miller states that course descriptions and listings “create institutional definitions of composition and other kinds of writing instructions” (67). In a survey of the course offerings from the 1947-48 UNH course catalogue, I noted categories the English department created were intended to represent—and delineate between—sub-fields within the department79: from “Remedial Work” in writing, speech and reading; to upper level literature courses grouped by key literary figures, centuries/periods, and types (drama, fiction, English education, etc.); to additional speech, theatre and radio broadcasting courses. Though the majority of these courses centered on literary study, four courses specifically focused on writing (beyond Freshman English) are listed: Writing for the Newspaper, Writing of Technical Reports,80 and Advanced Composition and Writing As An Art (216-20). These writing courses existed outside the confines of the Freshman English program, were offered to students across the curriculum, and gave

79 While disciplinary divisions are highlighted in this and subsequent course bulletins, the course bulletins from the early 1940s listed all courses regardless of its disciplinary category.

80 Writing Technical Reports was “required of seniors in Agriculture and in Mechanical, Electrical, and Civil Engineering, and Building Construction” (Bulletin 1947-48 217).
students an experience of writing instruction that was either linked to a professional context or focused more directly on the form and content of writing than Freshman English.

The existence of these courses—as well as numerous references in the departmental minutes and student newspaper—suggest the UNH English Department held (at least) dual views of writing instruction for students. Writing was a skill to be mastered and an art/vocation to be fostered; the view of writing as a skill was addressed in the corrective curriculum of Freshman English, as I have detailed, and the view of writing as an art/vocation was attended to in upper level writing courses. In his 1937 article, TNH reporter Paul Dupell demonstrated that these dual approaches to writing instruction were present in the discourse of the department and were directly articulated to students in a progressive model of learning to write, from correction to creativity, deficiency to proficiency. In describing an advanced composition course, for instance, Dupell noted that the instructor, Dr. Carroll Towle “stresses that writing is alive, for correct form is already supposed to have been mastered” (4). While this brief overview of course listings can help us to see the story of writing instruction in the formal curriculum at UNH was more complex than just Freshman English, the existence of these advanced courses also hints at the interest in writing shared by some members of the UNH English Department faculty during the 1940s and provides another bridge between the otherwise conservative formal curriculum and the innovations of the extracurriculum initiated by these faculty members that I will discuss in the following two chapters. Finally, the presence of these courses in the catalogue also raise questions about what writing instruction looked like outside the confines of the Freshman English program and
whether these practices present a more complex picture of the department’s approaches toward student writers beyond the first year.

To compare and contrast 1940s Freshman English pedagogy with upper level writing courses offered at UNH during that time, I will briefly explore a few of the practices in these advanced courses. As the Director of Advanced Composition Dr. Carroll Towle primarily taught or oversaw these writing courses. Although these courses were taught by other members of the English Department, I focus on Towle because, in his administrative role, he had a key role in shaping the advanced writing program. This brief discussion also serves as an entrée to the following two chapters on the extracurriculum in which Towle plays a (if not the) central role.

Aspects of Towle’s writing courses resembled routine practice in other courses in the English Department in the 1940s. Towle taught his writing courses in a lecture format, focusing on illustrating principles of good writing. According to UNH Alumnus Donald Silva, who took three courses with Towle, a number of these lectures highlighted the importance of three key principles of language (theory) and eight related writing techniques (form/style). While Towle used established canonical literary texts for his lectures, in his great zeal for contemporary American literature he also drew from recent issues of the Atlantic Monthly or Harper’s to illustrate his points. However, Silva said Towle’s teaching style was not very explicit or direct and Towle did not usually clarify which technique a given example was illuminating. The third class meeting in a week was usually open to discussion or class workshops, described by Donald Silva here:

Towle had a shoebox and [...] when you finished a piece of writing, you brought your piece of writing to the library and you put it in the shoebox. And all that was required was the other students was to read your piece of writing before they came to class. Towle would shuffle quickly out of Murkland over to Hamilton-
Smith which was the library and pick up the shoebox. I can see it under his arm—I’ve seen him with it. He’d bring it back, open it up, and he hadn’t seen the pieces. But supposedly the students had read what you had written and Towle would take it out and he’d start reading it out loud and then he wanted substantial comments from the writers who had read your stuff. That’s what he wanted.

The student interactions and discussions of writing were the subject of this third class meeting each week. Donald Silva stated that Towle did not typically give writing assignments, but left this choice up to the student. In the 1947-48 course catalogue, the description for Towle’s “Writing as an Art” course, functioning as both a writing and a literary criticism course, states that the student had “freedom in selection and pursuance of writing interests” (216). *TNH* reporter Paul Dupell said the course served as “the last stage in formal instruction in creative writing at the University” and “no definite amount of writing is required from the student who may choose the type of writing he finds most congenial” (“Successful” 4). In a 1955 *TNH* article by Jack Paul, Towle cited his rationale for cultivating an open approach to writing instruction: “In my writing courses the students work independently, free to create what they want to, that way you can never tell what you’re going to get, and you’re always curious” (1). His rationale generated students’ investment in pursuing the writing as well as his own interest in the surprises that students’ creativity had, which, from his statements, he clearly enjoyed. In many of his public statements, Towle articulated his genuine esteem of UNH students’ writing abilities and talents, an esteem that led Towle to develop and extend current outlets for student writing in the extracurriculum.

With advanced writing courses contributing to the institutional writing culture of UNH, I argue that the shift in focus from correction to creativity in these advanced courses allowed English department faculty like Towle to see a quality in student writing
they did not see (or perhaps even look for) in the student writing for Freshman English. Because few writing courses were added to the curriculum, due to the literary focus of the English Major, the faculty provided opportunities for students to pursue their writing interests in the extracurriculum. This esteem of student writing translated to students’ positive perceptions about the quality and value of student writing on the campus.

Already, in 1937, Paul Dupell emphasized the sense of ownership and authority that UNH students felt about the quality of their writing and he noted that many students were actively writing though they were not enrolled in a writing course. In fact, advanced writing courses did not attract a great number of students, only seventy for Advanced Composition and eight for Writing as an Art. However, as Dupell argued “These figures do not tell the whole story, for there are many good writers on campus who are not English majors or members of the College of Liberal Arts. There is a widespread and vital interest among students in the art of self-expression through writing” (4). It is this story of “widespread and vital interest” in writing outside of the curriculum that I will explore in the following chapter.

**Conclusion**

In developing the concept of institutional writing culture, I have looked at the development of university culture from various perspectives. First I described the external factors influencing the *university's overall social and curricular culture* during the decade of the 1940s. Second, I described the *departmental culture* by presenting key disciplinary discussions shaping the core curriculum in the English Department. In the final section of this chapter, I explored aspects of the formal curriculum that contributed to the *institutional writing culture*—formed in particular by programmatic structures,
attitudes toward student writing and pedagogical practices employed in the writing
courses in the English Department. The conservative nature of the formal curriculum
provides one rationale for extending analysis of institutional writing cultures to the
extracurriculum, providing fuller portraits of writing cultures as they developed.

Although the primary concern of Freshman English at UNH remained correct use
of style and grammar, in the latter years of the 1940s, the course became more and more
focused on writing about literature, a shift representing changes in departmental and
disciplinary priorities.\footnote{As David Russell notes, this trend toward teaching the first-year composition course as literary study was a common trend. Russell argues that if the composition course survived abolition calls, “The English department taught writing as part of the one context in which it had professional interest and expertise: literary criticism. The single writing course that nearly always remained in the curriculum, freshman composition, was often taught as a course in imaginative literature” (182).} With the department embroiled in debates about the nature of English Studies, as I have discussed, other concerns related to the interests of particular faculty members languished or gained only an ancillary status within the department. This was true at least with regard to the major’s course requirements and main assessment tool, the comprehensive examination. With the English department’s secondary commitment to the university to offer skills courses, the faculty’s attention was taken up with these two primary purposes. However, a number of individuals within the department were concerned about what was being left out of the curriculum: creative and professional writing, writing for new technologies (such as radio or later TV), contemporary American literature and issues in popular culture. These faculty members developed extracurricular initiatives to fill these gaps. These initiatives became part of the vital extracurricular life of the university, a parallel or supplementary curriculum for those students interested in participating. In the following two chapters, I will describe
how the extracurriculum functioned in developing the institutional writing culture at the University of New Hampshire.

In Chapter four in particular, I explore three types of extracurricular writing initiatives sponsored by faculty who were responding to curricular gaps. These initiatives covered subjects that didn’t “fit” into the strictures of the official English curriculum and showcased student writing and student writers in stark contrast to the ways the formal curriculum (especially Freshman English) seemed to construct the student writer. I argue that considering the ways in which the curriculum and extracurriculum overlap, respond to, and contradict one another provides a greater insight into the complex nature of an institutional writing culture, in theory and in localized practice.
CHAPTER IV

RINGS OF INFLUENCE: THE IMPACT OF THE EXTRACURRICULUM ON INSTITUTIONAL WRITING CULTURES

Those of us working in the University are constantly reminded of the close relationships between life here in Durham and life in every town of the state. These reminders have their origin through the home contacts of 2,000 students through the thousands of alumni, through the contacts of the extension service and experiment stations with home, farm, industry, and business, and through a growing body of citizens and its relationship to them. —UNH President Fred Englehardt, 1941 (Babcock v)

In his discussion of the emergence of the extracurriculum in American higher education, historian Frederick Rudolph argues that students reshaped American colleges “from the bottom up,” by “plant[ing] beside the curriculum an extracurriculum of such dimensions that in time there would develop generations of college students who would not see the curriculum for the extracurriculum” (137). Rudolph’s discussion of the extracurriculum primarily centers on student-initiated and student-run clubs, organizations, societies and athletic teams. In taking up Rudolph’s notion of the extracurriculum beyond the walls of academia, Anne Ruggles Gere, in her article “Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Composition” has applied the concept of the extracurriculum to literacy practices in other sites such as women’s groups, civic groups, and local community groups that share a common interest in writing. Unlike Gere’s discussion of the extracurriculum as separate from academic affiliations, my discussion of the extracurriculum at UNH returns the concept to its institutional context, as Rudolph describes it, though it still remains located outside of the
formal curriculum. In this chapter I consider the links that connect the extracurriculum with the curriculum—reasons why certain extracurricular writing initiatives originated within the institutional context of UNH and the people who participated in both curricular and extracurricular arenas. In particular, I argue that extracurricular writing initiatives established by UNH English Department faculty contributed to an alternate vision of student writing and student writers than that of the formal curriculum. This alternate vision was more favorable and became quite influential in developing a university-wide sense that student writing, at least as it became public through publication or writing awards, was to be valued; in fact, in much of the university literature—newspapers, newsletters and the like—in the 1940s, UNH was often referred to as having a longstanding tradition of excellent student writing and being a “writing university” (Towle and Webster v).

The extracurriculum at UNH in the 1940s complicated the curricular view of student writing and student writers and, in terms of this project, illustrates some of the ways that multiple perspectives about writing can, and do, co-exist in an institutional writing culture, sometimes even within the perspectives of the same person; this chapter also suggests that the multiplicity of views may be linked to its context—for example, that more positive views of student writing emerged because extracurricular initiatives were not limited by curricular strictures or university administrative/faculty agendas. I also propose that these extracurricular efforts did not remain wholly extracurricular—that the relationship between the curriculum and the extracurriculum was not separate or oppositional but reciprocal in nature, if only because these two arenas included some of the same key figures.
To illustrate my argument, I will present three extracurricular writing initiatives that were particularly influential in shaping alternate visions of student writing and student writers in UNH’s institutional writing culture during the 1940s. All three of the extracurricular programs that I discuss were well-established by the beginning of the 1940s and were featured prominently and frequently in university publications; in fact, there was a great deal of data on each initiative in the UNH Archives as well. This wealth of data allowed me to not only explore the general histories of each initiative, but also key decisions, programmatic structures, developing traditions, and impressions from those observing and participating in these programs.¹ As a brief overview of these initiatives, I provide the following summaries, in the order that I discuss them in the chapter:

1. **The Student Writer**: An annual student publication from 1928 to 1942 that was edited by the English Department faculty. Students from across the university were invited to submit their writing. This publication influenced the local sense that there was a longstanding tradition of excellent student writing at UNH. Publication of this journal ceased in 1942, due to the effort to conserve resources during World War II.

2. **Writing Contests**: Encouraged by UNH English Department faculty, students across the university entered yearly regional contests such as the Tri-State Conference (Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine), and national contests such as those sponsored by *Yankee Magazine* and *Atlantic Monthly*. This initiative influenced the regional and national reputation of excellent student writing at UNH.

3. **Folio Club/Creative Writing Workshops**: Informal reading and writing groups held weekly at the home of UNH English Professor Dr. Carroll S. Towle. In the Folio Club, students, faculty, community members and visiting professional writers discussed contemporary literature and popular culture. The creative writing workshops gave students and faculty an informal forum to share and critique one another’s writing.

¹ That there were so many references to these writing initiatives indicates to me that these initiatives were not limited to just a few students and teachers, but that they were well known and that they were a significant part of the writing culture of the university.
Since these extracurricular initiatives were created, in part, in response to gaps in the formal curriculum, I contend that the extracurriculum functioned as a supplementary curriculum for students interested in exploring the more marginalized sub-fields within the English Department.²

First, I briefly discuss some of the functions of the extracurriculum as they have been discussed by educational historians and composition scholars, like Rudolph and Gere, and then link this discussion to the local context, looking specifically at how the extracurriculum functioned at the University of New Hampshire. Next, I discuss UNH English Professor Carroll S. Towle’s role in orchestrating extracurricular writing endeavors and then discuss the three extracurricular writing initiatives in greater depth. I explore the influence of each initiative on the UNH institutional writing culture by analyzing the impetus for the initiative, fundamental practices shaping the initiative’s function and structure, and teacher-student relationships in the context of the extracurricular initiative.

**Functions of the Extracurriculum**

To return to the work of Anne Ruggles Gere, she points out, with regard to English studies in particular, the concept of the extracurriculum has been linked to its effects on the curriculum by both Arthur Applebee and Gerald Graff.³ Gere argues that “Each of these [i.e. Applebee’s and Graff’s] narratives positions the extracurriculum as a way-station on the route toward a fully professionalized academic department, thereby implying that the extracurriculum withered away after helping to institutionalize English

² Students who participated in these initiatives were not only English majors, however, and came from all majors to participate.

³ For instance, Applebee and Graff have both noted that literary societies “contributed to the development of English Studies” (Gere “Kitchen Tables” 79).
studies” (79). In contrast, the extracurriculum that I discuss in this chapter emerged and persisted because of the institutionalization of English Studies at UNH during the 1940s, in response to gaps created by the disciplinary winnowing of subjects to the eventual primacy of literary study. And, as I will show, while the practices in these extracurricular initiatives at UNH did not necessarily translate into changed curricular practice, they did significantly impact the university’s writing culture.

Other composition scholars have noted the generative quality of the extracurriculum for students. As Gere suggests, one of the functions of the extracurriculum is for students to respond to perceived gaps in their education; she argues that in their dissatisfaction with what the curriculum offers, students will “write outside and beyond us [composition classrooms] in an extracurriculum of their own making” (Gere 91). In his brief discussion of literary societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, David Russell provides a historical illustration of this extracurricular function. Russell notes that these student-run literary societies organized cultural activities, offered opportunities to write, read, and speak “about intellectual and artistic concerns, philosophical, literary, political,” and provided resources (e.g., libraries, etc.) that were not available or offered in the formal curriculum (44). Russell points out that the societies “played a central role in the education of students, and they did so by giving them a more creative and socially relevant outlet for the speaking and writing skills they were exercising in a less satisfying way in the curriculum” (45). In many ways, these descriptions of a “more creative and socially relevant outlet” fit the writing and reading activities of the extracurricular initiatives at UNH in the 1940s, though I do not mean to
suggest that they were directly modeled after literary societies and, significantly, they were not student-run.

Rudolph also describes the extracurriculum as primarily student-initiated and in terms of his purposes—students establishing rich social climate on campuses—it was. The extracurricular writing practices that I describe in this chapter came into being after the social climate of the UNH campus was firmly established and these writing practices originated with faculty who were motivated by their interest in diversifying the university’s educational opportunities—for both the students and for themselves. Though faculty were the main innovators, once these initiatives were in place, the students, by and large, supported and played a large part in contributing to their growth and development. At UNH, I see the extracurriculum functioning as the faculty’s effort to accomplish three primary objectives:

(1) Respond to gaps in the curriculum,

(2) Develop a university-wide view of student writing that was positive, and

(3) Motivate student writers to take their writing seriously and to see its potential.

To the above list of objectives, I add a fourth and fifth, assigning these objectives directly to the one UNH faculty member who figures prominently in the rest of this chapter, Dr. Carroll Towle. Invoking Gere who, at the end of her article, issues a call to composition teachers to think about their “roles as agents within the culture that encompasses the communities on both sides of the classroom wall,” I argue that Towle acted in such a capacity at UNH during his time there (90). Gere also argues that composition teachers should “insist more firmly on the democracy of writing and the need to enact pedagogies that permit connections and communication with the communities outside classroom
walls" (91). In his development and creation of extracurricular writing initiatives, Dr. Towle was arguing implicitly for "connections and communications" between the curriculum and extracurriculum. Since Towle was a primary influence on the extracurricular initiatives I discuss in the following two chapters, I begin my discussion of these initiatives by offering some insights first into Towle’s approaches to writing instruction, his attitudes toward student writers, and his dedication to creating opportunities for students to discuss and, as he saw it, to write contemporary American literature.

**Carroll Towle and Three Writing Initiatives in UNH's Extracurriculum**

Dr. Carroll Towle served as the Director of Advanced Composition at the University of New Hampshire between 1932 and 1962; in this administrative role, Towle was instrumental in championing the notion that student-writers should be considered as potential contributors to the emergent contemporary American literary sensibility and that student writing deserved esteem and due attention from faculty. Towle designed the Advanced Composition courses for the formal curriculum, though throughout the years, his administrative role focused more and more on the

---

4 I find it significant to note here that Dr. Towle was primarily responsible for "advanced" student writing. Hired in 1920, Professor Lucinda P. Smith remained in charge of Freshman English for most of her time in the UNH English Department (1920-1957). Smith was also involved in the extracurricular work of the department, working in the writing lab and serving on the editorial board of annual literary journal the Student Writer.

5 Over the years that Towle was at UNH, his title changed multiple times, each change illustrating department’s growing perception of Towle’s identity as a WPA and providing evidence of Towle’s promotions and shifting responsibilities for coordinating writing instruction at UNH. In the May 24, 1938 and September 27, 1938 issues of TNH, Professor Towle is first referred to as the university’s “coach of creative writing” (2, 1). Tracing his titles over time, I found that the 1938 UNH Summer Writers’ Conference brochures refer to Towle as “associate professor of English in charge of undergraduate writing at the university” (2). In 1946, “undergraduate” is dropped from his title, so that he is “associate professor in charge of writing at the University,” the implication being that he is in charge of all writing at the university. In just the following year, Towle was promoted to Professor of English and he was described as being “in charge of advanced writing at the University of New Hampshire” (1947 Writer Conference Brochure 4, italics mine).
extracurriculum; in fact, Towle had a hand in every extracurricular writing initiative that I describe in this chapter, from encouraging and mentoring students as they entered regional and national writing contests to hosting and leading writing and reading groups in his home.

Upon his arrival at UNH, Towle assumed the mantle of directing writing instruction from his predecessor Dr. Claude Lloyd. F. Douglas Bowles, in his 1947 TNH article “Meet Your Profs,” links the foundational work laid by Dr. Lloyd to Towle’s further development of the UNH writing culture:

His predecessor [Dr. Lloyd] had taught writing and UNH boasted one of the finest college magazines in the country [. . .]. [Towle’s] natural interest caused him to become fascinated by writing and he immediately respected NH’s writing tradition. Very shortly, Dr. Towle, UNH, and continuing successful writers were synonymous. (3)

By “respecting NH’s writing tradition,” Bowles is referring to Towle’s admiration of the student writing he encountered at UNH. In an interview for TNH, Towle praised the work of Dr. Lloyd in fostering the talents of student writers and noted that “When I took over Mr. Lloyd’s class in writing I got some of the best undergraduate writing I’d ever seen” (7). In many interviews of Towle throughout the years, he would almost always say that he was greatly impressed by the quality of student writing at UNH and that this work inspired many of the initiatives that he supported or implemented.

In addition to extending the writing culture established by Dr. Lloyd, Towle’s actions were motivated by his beliefs that students were the new generation of the American literary tradition and that a commitment to the study of contemporary American literature needed to be cultivated more than it was in the formal curriculum. Towle’s attitudes toward student writers were also shaped by his prior work as an
instructor at Yale University\textsuperscript{6} in freshman remedial consulting sessions, which he discussed at length in a 1929 \textit{English Journal} article "The Awkward Squad."\textsuperscript{7} This article revealed Towle's compassionate attitude toward students that can be seen in many of his words and deeds at UNH as well. Influenced by these various perspectives, Towle chose to supplement the formal education with multiple extracurricular initiatives.

As for students' response to and esteem of Carroll Towle as a writing teacher and administrator, I read many accolades of Towle's work in university publications and letter correspondences in the archives. I included some of these comments in Chapter three as evidence of his teaching style but the following comments speak to Towle's reputation for fostering positive writing environments for anyone who wanted to write, whether they were students in his classes or not. In his reflections on Carroll Towle, UNH Alumnus Dan Ford '55 wrote an article in the alumni newsletter to memorialize Towle after his death in 1962 and to herald his legacy as a writing teacher in the success of his students:

Dr. Towle was one of the nation's foremost teachers of creative writing (He never used this phrase by the way. He argued that all writing was creative) [...]. The final test of a teacher-of-writing, of course, is the writers he has produced. Among Dr. Towle's former students are Thomas Williams and Shirley Barker, two New Hampshire novelists who have achieved comparable success [...] And then there are others. Dr. Towle inspired a good many of us to the belief that writing is a bountiful occupation, that it is more rewarding to be an unsuccessful writer than to be a success at anything else. (15)\textsuperscript{8}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{6} Towle attended Yale University for his PhD, graduating in 1931.  

\textsuperscript{7} Specifically, Towle described Yale's pedagogical approach toward students who struggled in Freshman English and who were required to take a remedial consultation course; he argued that students selected for remedial instruction in writing needed to be given opportunities to express their concern about how they would be viewed by the university community (672). Considering Towle's later advocacy for student writing, what I find especially significant about the tone of this article is his express regard for students;  

\textsuperscript{8} Though Towle was a teacher of writing, he was not known as a writer himself. In my interview with Donald Murray, he said that although Towle had written a textbook on Renaissance Literature, Towle was "a professor of literature who became a teacher of writing." Towle did have a few other publications: as a student at Bowdoin, he published poems and speeches in the \textit{Bowdoin Quill}; as a graduate student, he}
That Ford calls Towle “one of the nation’s foremost teachers of creative writing” is of note to historians who have not yet seen his name linked to this movement, since it suggests that, at one time, he, and by implication many others like him, had some influence in the field beyond UNH, at least regionally. In his 1955 *TNH* article on Carroll Towle, Jack Paul highlights the many ways that Dr. Towle was involved with extracurricular writing instruction:

> Besides conferences and the usual teaching load, Professor Towle meets students informally at his home in the “Folio” and Poetry groups. For one eight-year span he advised *The New Hampshire* staff, adhering to a policy of no censorship. In the summertime he directs the New Hampshire Writers’ Conference, which he started in 1938. In short, writing absorbs his time and energy the year round. (3)

What the above quote illustrates and what is striking to note about Carroll Towle as a director of advanced composition is that much of the work that he did in this role was actually in addition to, or outside of the curricular structures of the formal writing courses in the English department, although, I would argue, the fact that much of this work was not officially sponsored by the university did not seem to be at issue with the department or with him. In fact, in announcing certain writing initiatives, Towle went to great lengths to emphasize their extracurricular positioning, stressing the importance of the initiative’s informality and vitality as an activity outside of the academic environment. It is possible that Towle’s emphasis in differentiating between curricular and extracurricular writing initiatives was intended to communicate a clear separation from the evaluative curricular environment and to generate greater interest in writing among students across the university. As the words of his students suggest, in the public arena, Towle cultivated a 

---

*Published with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.*
persona as the go-to person regarding writing at the University of New Hampshire, much of this persona existing because of his extracurricular work.

As I have noted, when Towle arrived at UNH in 1931, he extended and built upon a university writing culture that had begun under his predecessor, Dr. Claude T. Lloyd.9 This writing culture was shaped by a growing sense on the campus that UNH students were part of a writing tradition, as this 1935 TNH article by Alex Karanikas suggests in both his title, “Tradition for Good Writing Established,” and the quote that follows:

It is a matter of common knowledge on this campus and in this state, and to a great extent throughout the whole country, that the literary tradition of the University of New Hampshire ranks with the very highest among the colleges and universities of the United States. We who are enjoying the prestige earned for us by the diligence and persistent effort of past campus writers and faculty members should be proud of our standing in the field of collegiate creative writing. (2)

Karanikas speaks to the pervasiveness of this cultural sense gaining prominence as UNH students' writing was published in the Student Writer and other magazines, and as UNH students succeeded in winning regional and national writing contests. Though these initiatives were part of the university tradition when Towle arrived, as I will show, he went to great lengths to make them his own and to incorporate his own beliefs about student writers and student writing. His influences in extra-curricular writing were particularly apparent in the three student initiatives that I will describe in the pages that follow.

Initiative One: The Student Writer Establishes a University Sense of Tradition

[The Student Writer] is a collection of surprisingly competent student writing from one of the most alive and growing of all the New England institutions of higher education [. . .]. It does not smell of the classroom as

---

9 Lloyd had instituted the Student Writer in 1928, three years before Towle’s arrival and had encouraged students to enter writing contests, though not in the systematic, deliberate fashion that Towle did. Lloyd also established the practice of teacher-student conferencing that was used in the curriculum.
so often such collections do. These young men and women are not afraid to tackle anything. They rush into big subjects all the way from love through campus gossip and humor to Diesel engines, and they touch almost everything with common sense. They do not employ the formulas students are so fond of usually. –Review of the Student Writer by poet and Bowdoin Professor Robert P.T. Coffin (3)

The Student Writer was an annual publication of UNH student writing that existed at UNH from 1928 to 1942. When Dr. Claude Lloyd created the publication, his intent was to showcase student writing done in advanced composition courses. However, when Dr. Towle assumed the editorship of the journal in 1931, he intended the publication to highlight excellent student writing from contributors across the UNH curriculum. Through literary reviews from respected authors, alumni, and through the mention of this publication in other venues, such as the brochures of the summer Writers’ Conference and the Atlantic Monthly, the Student Writer gained national recognition as an important model of student writing; accolades often mentioned the length and quality of the publication as being unique in the category of student publications of its kind. In his 1937 TNH article, “Student Writer Made Possible By Loan of Late Pres. Lewis,” Paul Dupell suggests that President Lewis’ initial financial backing of the publication (in the amount of $200) provided the resources to create the publication, and that the Student Writer replaced a less popular publication called Daily Themes, a publication that “was not a true reflection of the entire student spirit” (1). Dupell suggests that prior to the introduction of the Student Writer in 1928, writing did not have the same prominence on

10 This review by Coffin was also printed in Yankee Magazine (Sept. 1938), a significant point in that it publicized this student publication in a public forum beyond the UNH campus.

11 Although, over the years, the UNH Bookstore’s sale of the Student Writer did not make a profit, or even break even most of the time, Dupell says that “the leading officials of our school agree that the interest and value to the student is reason enough for the continuation of the Student Writer” (“Student Writer” 1); the university administrators maintained their support and continued to finance the publication until its cessation in 1943, due to the paper shortage triggered by World War II.
campus that it held at the time of his writing in 1937, "there was little student interest in
writing except by a few who were taking courses in composition." He stated that the
intent of the new publication was to raise the awareness of good student writing on the
university campus and that, after nine years of the Student Writer's publication, this
objective had succeeded: "There is a growing interest among undergraduates and alumni
of the University, both as readers and writers, because there is a realization that such a
literary magazine can bring fame to the school just as great as can any athletic team" (4).

Though the students' sense of a writing culture at UNH may not be attributable to
the Student Writer alone, the publication was seen as significant on the campus and was
supported by students, faculty, prominent writers in the community and those writers
associated with the university. In their Introduction to a 1941 anthology12 showcasing
selected Student Writer publications, editors Carroll Towle and Robert Webster briefly
discussed the history of the publication, noting that prior to its beginning in 1928, many
other short-lived publications had attempted to highlight student writing at UNH. Yet,
this publication survived, the editors hypothesized, due to the growing interest in writing
on campus and the increased sense of responsibility on the part of students and teachers
to sustain the university's reputation for excellent writing, brought on by students'
consistent success winning national writing contests13 (vi).

At first, the Student Writer focused on student writing done in writing course and
included "25 to 40 of the best themes for the year" ("Closing Dates" 1); after Towle

12 To assemble this anthology, the editors read through 4,000 pages and selected 300+ pages, saying that
they had to leave out more excellent writers than they wanted to, and that "we could have included twenty
more [writers], space permitting, without lowering the standards we had set. In terms of bulk, the attempt
at least to write with imagination and power, New Hampshire has become a writing university" (v).

13 In 1930, for example, UNH students won first, second and honorable mention in the Atlantic Monthly
contest. As I show in the next section, this trend of success only continued.
assumed editorship from Lloyd, however, Towle opened the submission requirements to more students and varied types of writing, and the publication also included writing in the four genres, fiction, poetry, essay, and poetry, student illustrations and, in 1941 and 1942, block printing. To elicit student submissions each year, Dr. Towle invited students of all majors to submit their writing to the publication, usually through a January announcement in *TNH*. In the subsequent months, Dr. Towle repeated these open calls for submissions until the final deadline. When the manuscript was completed, Towle usually asked a famous writer like Robert PT Coffin or a former *Student Writer* author and UNH alumnus to review the publication for the student newspaper to generate university-wide interest in the journal. Students were invited to meet with Dr. Towle for a writing conference prior to submitting the work for consideration in the publication.\(^{14}\)

In 1941, UNH and the Record Press in Rochester, NH published *An Anthology: The University of New Hampshire, 1941* highlighting the excellence of writers that UNH had produced in the *Student Writer* over the previous decade and Towle and Webster, in their Introduction pointed out the great student achievement that this anthology represented:

> That so many who came here with little or no experience in ambitious writing have become not only more than competent writers but also intelligent and imaginative readers, seems to have justified the place of the art in the educational experiment. This anthology is a contribution to the record, and one way of recognizing achievement in the larger University circle. (vii)

The pieces appearing in *The Student Writer* were selected by an Editorial Board of English Professors, usually Carroll Towle, Robert Webster, Lucinda Smith, and other

\(^{14}\)Although students were invited to submit their extracurricular writing, in their Introduction to the *Student Writer Anthology* (1941), Towle and Webster note that some of the pieces in the *Student Writer* were originally written for certain classes and then revised for this publication: “interpretations in prose and verse which really began as term papers but become through sympathetic encouragement examples of ‘knowledge obtained without the loss of power’” (*An Anthology* vii). The “sympathetic encouragement” that Towle and Webster reference could be the writing conferences offered to students.
members of the English Department interested in joining the board in a given year. From 1939 until the end of the publication in 1942, a student advisory board consisting of senior English majors was added to the editorial board, with the responsibilities of “gathering material, passing judgment upon it and arranging it for the annual publication” ("Student Writer" 1). This addition of the student editorial board demonstrates the faculty’s interest in providing students with the opportunity to give input into the publication, creating a sense that the publication was created for and by students. Also, in considering the increasing population of student writers turned professional writers, this advisory board afforded students, often aspiring or published writers themselves, the professional experience of assembling a publication.\footnote{The addition of the student advisory board is consistent with university-wide trends over the previous three years to include students in various aspects of administrative and curricular decisions. For example, in 1936, President Fred Englehardt argued that students should become more involved in administration because “I think that student opinion is valuable, that the student viewpoint should be made use of in solving our common problems [. . .]. The firsthand knowledge of students and alumni would be of great value in considering an educational problem which this university faces along with the other institutions of higher learning throughout the country” (“President Sees Students Sharing” 1, 4). In addition, in the late 1930s to mid-1940s, efforts were made to include students in curricular decisions; in the College of Liberal Arts, Dean C. Floyd Jackson created the Dean Advisory Council comprised of an appointed group of the college’s seniors who contributed their thoughts about curricular changes in the College of LA (Dupell “With the Technicians” 502-504).}

In general, the pieces within the pages of The Student Writer throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s demonstrate student interest in writing about an array of topics and in a variety of forms. From year to year, each publication contained what I will call here the “usual suspects,” those writers who had proven their ability through publication, winning writing awards, or performing well in writing courses. UNH writers such as Paul Dupell, Shirley Evans, Margaret Brehaut, Paul Lyons, Harry Hatchell and Teresa Foley were featured from year to year until their graduation (and, after graduation, some were invited to review the upcoming Student Writer in the student newspaper). However, the
publication was not intended nor did it become a literary journal for an elite few students or a group of talented English majors. Towle, in his call for submissions, stressed that the invitation was open to students across the curriculum, and, as *TNH* reporter Rachel Morrison noted in 1939, several UNH students from all ranks and majors were successful in winning a place in the *Student Writer*: “The contributors are a representative undergraduate group, and are not necessarily students from writing classes or English majors. Some of the most talented writers have been engineering and pre-med students just using writing as a hobby. Even freshmen are offered a chance; three or four have work published every year” (1).

In terms of the student writing in the journal itself, Thomas Newkirk provided the first look in his 2004 *CCC* article “The Dogma of Transformation.” Newkirk notes that in the early editions of UNH *Student Writer*, the writing was “outward looking, intensely descriptive, and rarely revealing of any personal crisis or transformation” (256). The primary genre of these pieces was the short theme, “genial commentaries [...] about smaller daily pleasures and irritations” (Newkirk 259). Throughout the 1930s, as Newkirk points out, there was a move to include “longer nonfiction essays,” a move that I posit may have coincided with the change in the journal’s editorship from Lloyd to Towle in 1931. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, the genres also began to diversify—moving from themes to creative writing genres such as fiction, poetry, satire, becoming, overall more experimental in nature.

Toward the end of the 1930s and especially in the early 1940s, the tone and style of the writing shifted as students became more aware of the gravity of world events and as more and more students interrupted their studies to serve in the military, providing a
daily reminder to students at home that the US was at war. Noting this shift in tone, Newkirk states that these later pieces in the Student Writer “break away from the more genteel and detached style of the earlier issues” and he suggests that this shift in tone may have been influenced by students’ extracurricular reading of “new literary models like Studs Lonigan” as well as the realities of war that I list above (261-2).

In an extension of Newkirk’s point, I suggest that another factor in the shift in tone (and genres) in the journal was because the journal began to include not only students’ curricular writing, but also students’ extracurricular writing; Towle’s open invitation to students across the university effectively changed the journal’s submission policy and students were free to submit writing they were working on in either context. As Marilyn Whitcomb states in her 1941 TNH report on the content of the later selections of student writing in the Student Writer Anthology, “A number of pieces are very expressive of the uncertainties, fears and pains of young people during the middle 30’s and at the present, as they contemplate the unsettled state of the world. In writings of this type are found the greatest fluctuations of style and power” (1). In this same article, Whitcomb interviewed Towle regarding his analysis of the student writing in the journal and Towle stated that it was “a truthful representative of what the younger generation is discovering and feeling as real and vital experience,” a statement that seems to acknowledge the presence of students’ perspectives and opinions in the writing (4, italics mine). Overall, in the early 1940s, the journal reflected more diversity in terms of genre, subject matter, inclusion of student opinion, as well as a broader vision of “good student writing.”
As examples of excellent curricular and extracurricular student writing at UNH, I provide a brief discussion of selections from the 1940, 1941 and 1942 editions of *The Student Writer*. These samples provide a productive contrast to the more limited views of student writers created by the college curriculum, as I detailed in Chapter three. The pieces I have selected for analysis include as connective threads the student opinion, commentary, and experimentation of genre that Newkirk noted were not present in earlier editions of the journal; most of my selections also include references to the specter of war. I include extended samples of this student writing, especially, because they represent what was possible in student writing outside of the more restrictive curriculum and they contributed to an alternate vision of student writing that became part of the writing culture at UNH.\textsuperscript{16}

In the 1940 *Student Writer*, the themes that predominate focus on representing college life and students' lived experience, and suggest that students were concerned with impending war, whether these themes appear in fiction, poetry, dramatic scripts, or nonfiction. Regarding the question of war, an essay by Teresa Foley entitled "The Green Apple" takes a philosophical stance, questioning the rationality of pacifism when one comes face to face with one's attackers. Flying in the face of the predominant isolationist perspective at UNH in 1940, Foley insists that she is "not a war monger" but says, in particular that "Because of geographical and economic circumstances it is easy to be a Pacifist here, and the reason the movement has a larger following in this country than in any nation abroad is due to the significant fact that America is a convenient, pleasant

\textsuperscript{16} I offer an extended discussion of student writing here in acknowledgement of the fact that these excerpts are the representative samples of student writing at UNH during the 1940s for this dissertation project—beyond the articles of student reporters of *TNH* (which are also important samples themselves). As I explain in Chapter two, there was little availability of 1940s student writing in the archive.
place in which to theorize. Picture a Pacifist in Germany! And the idea limps in England and France, too" (27, 29). Foley’s essay is argument-driven, including evidence in her quoting a Pacifist pamphlet and some generalized statements to present alternative views, and using pathos to develop her final point by bringing the war to the reader’s doorstep in this final statement: “here walks the armored fact right up to your front door. Are you willing to put the lives of your loved ones, your life, and all the loves and loyalties living involves, at its steel-gutted mercy? Think now, […] is it time for Passivism?” (30).

Through her short story “Night Ride,” Margaret Brehaut offers a subtle rebuttal to Foley’s arguments against pacifism, capturing a kernel of the debate occurring on the UNH campus at the time. Although the story is fictional, the war casts a shadow over the whole story, providing additional insight into the student anxiety about the war. Brehaut juxtaposes a scene of two people on a sloop during a tranquil night with the looming threat of war. The characters discuss their acute awareness of the war going on an ocean away, and their fear of getting into the war. As they swim in and look at the ocean, the characters reflect on the fact that this tranquil ocean connects them to a war-torn Europe:

Strange that that gleaming, crystal road out there reaches all the way to Europe. Somewhere out there captains of darkened liners are cursing the very brilliance of that silver lane; and the man-made sea monsters are thrusting periscopes up to the innocent light; and battle dragons are flashing signals from above their turrets […], signifying the death of men and their hopes and desires, signifying the anguish of spiritual and physical bereavement. (135)

The short story reads more like a thinly veiled argument for isolationism from the point of view of a college student, when Brehaut says, “What is to become of us […]? We know what we want. We want life, now that we’re old enough to know its potentialities. […]. Are we wrong to want to live and let live?” (136). This sentiment fits much more in line with the isolationist sentiments at UNH during 1940. At the story’s end, Brehaut
presents the complexity of choosing isolationism amid a desire to be compassionate
toward those engaged in the war,

Way over there somewhere, Monte, the sound of an airplane causes a major crisis
in the life of every human being who hears it. Eventually, you know, they must
all be mere shells, unable to think, unable to feel, behind those gas masks.
How long do we have before—
No, no, it mustn’t happen. Whatever its weaknesses, ours is the better standard.
They’re wrong. They’re so awfully wrong. (136)  

That Brehaut is writing from the perspective of the college student is clear in her
reference to the characters’ knowledge that they would be the ones to bear the burden of
fighting the war. And her definitive statement at the end resolves her momentary
consideration of an alternate view.

The 1941 *Student Writer*, published in April of 1941, marks a return to themes of
campus life, and while the themes avoid talk of war, several pieces include commentaries
on collegiate life. One piece in particular that illuminates life on campus and that
introduces a new genre to the collection is a satire by Elinor Sawyer called “Spring in
Durham.” In this essay, Sawyer presents the problem of spring fever and its “contagious”
effect on professors. The scene she paints is of students engaging in physical activities
outdoors, tennis, golfing, archery, and equestrianism in particular and she describes the
process in which professors “catch” spring fever:

The professors walked around with anxious looks. The poor harassed men
finished lecturing to a class of four or five faithful students, then on their way
home, found their renegades on the archery filed or tennis courts in blooming
health. It was just too much. Revolt set in. The loyal souls who went to classes
now found no prof in attendance. Daily it grew worse. The class buildings were
practically deserted now and then one found a prof in his office, clad in shorts,
and cooling off after a tennis match. (64)

17 Since the narrative has dropped out of the story, there is no true indication that the characters have
returned to shore, but that is the implication in this final line.
The professors’ revolt worsens until there are no professors seen indoors; except for one
day of grading at the end of the semester. Sawyer suggests that the professors “imitated”
students’ social activities and they

had picnics at Mendum’s [Pond], they sailed on Great Bay [. . .]. Cars were often
left behind, and groups of the faculty gathered at the corner in the early evening—
bumming to Dover. Renard’s was filled with them every night. The poor
benighted students could scarcely crowd in to be served.

Profs and their wives wandered around hand in hand. They monopolized
the bleachers and dug-outs. (64-5)

Although this essay as a satire is discussing professors’ social activities, it provides some
insight into the social activities of UNH students as well. That Sawyer can take such a
jesting tone and that the piece appeared in the annual publication of excellent student
writing seems to imply a measure of camaraderie among professors and students at UNH.
Overall, the 1941 edition contains more genres than in previous years, with the addition
of the satire and the dramatic script, and thematically, the focus is more on college life
and life in Durham rather than on the possibility of war which overtly appears in just one
piece—another anti-isolationist essay written by Ms. Teresa Foley.

In the final edition of Student Writer published in 1942, the tone turns decidedly
somber, in the direction of the war. With the US now involved in fighting WWII and
students enlisting, the student preoccupation with the war is natural and palpable. For
this edition alone of the three I’m discussing here,18 Carroll Towle elected to write a
Preface to introduce the collection. In the Preface, Towle discusses once again the fact
that student writers at UNH have become professional, published or habitual writers in
their lives after college, and that two writers in this publication had won national writing
awards. He says that the 1942 issue resembles previous years in that “it represents in

---

18 In his article “Student Writer Made Possible By Loan of Late Pres. Lewis,” Paul Dupell notes that at
least the 1936 issue of the Student Writer includes a Preface written by Dr. Towle (4).
some measure the great variety of experience possible for the American undergraduate" (5). He discusses the differences in this edition as well, in the layout through the “innovation” of eight pages of illustrations in the form of block printing, the significance of which is that “this 1942 annual shows the results of campus interest in two arts” (5). Most importantly, he discusses the topics and tone of the publication:

The work of the writers this year fell rather naturally into three divisions—college life, the life around us all, and American youth in a time of war. As one goes through the pages, he will discover groupings corresponding to these divisions of interest, though the exigencies of editing have prevented exact separation. In the fifty-odd pieces of prose and verse here printed, there is less of satire, as if satire were not the place to stop; less of merely realistic reportage. As for the war, it is good to be able to print such an essay as the one which, written late in 1941, is the first piece in the book; and doubly good to print one by the same author, written in 1942, to be read at the very end. A way of life was found good; now it must be fought for. Since the founding of the *Writer* in 1928, many of the phenomena of life have impinged on the imagination of student writers; but this is the first year that war has directly concerned the citizens of this annual. We like the temper of their steel. (5)

The sample pieces that I selected from the 1942 edition reveal students’ heightened concerns and anxieties about the war, each piece including direct references to the losses of war. The first piece, entitled “Send Off” by Bernard Rosenblatt tells the story of two friends saying goodbye before one, Warren by name, is sent to war because he has been drafted. The story begins in a diner, with the two men trying to sober up from a night of drinking. Warren asks his friend Jerry, “am I going to come back after this war?” Jerry reassures him that he will. Later, when Warren visits his girlfriend Edie, he repeatedly expresses his fears and says, “I don’t want to go away” (94). The story ends with Jerry assuring his friend that he would take care of things while Warren was away at war. This

---

19 In the Forward, Towle mentions that nine students contributed their art to the collection and that they worked under the direction of UNH Art Professor George Thomas in producing these pieces for the collection.
story is heart-wrenching in its telling; the author captured the sadness of the event—the inevitability of the leaving, and, in the repeated assurances, the uncertainty in the return of the one going to war.

The violence of war is also a theme that students explore in this volume, such as the poem by Richard Dent entitled “Willingham Road, Lincolnshire, Recently Bombed.” He reflects on the scene after the bombing by questioning what would happen if Christ walked on the street, a beautiful person among those in despair. In a somber tone, Dent concludes that the inhabitants of that street would remain in despair: “His passing would be known with silent dread/ That anyone so beautiful should come/ Between those houses where all joy is dead,/ And hate has stricken love and beauty dumb” (97). Dent’s tone and his determination that the Messiah could not save the people of Willingham Road suggests an implicit argument of the hopelessness of war.

In the short story “College Joys,” James Joyce, Jr. explores the idealism of war by presenting a college student taking a few courses required for his enlistment in the Navy. Joyce describes his main character Jack as a disinterested student who is marking time in his final math class until he can join the “sleek warships, and the welcoming blue ocean” (98). Jack looks forward to the fight, when he will be one of “the heroes, the boys ‘over there’ making the world safe for democracy,” though Jack expresses concern about the post-war moment when he will be out of work (a clear reference to the plight of WWI veterans after the war). Although he reflects wistfully for a moment that he would like to remain in college, he thinks that “college for me will have to be postponed or probably...
canceled” (98). The story ends with Jack hitching a ride to Boston, and singing a line from Anchors Aweigh, “Farewell to college joys, we sail at the break of day” (99). This use of “college joys,” while it directly alludes to a song, is also ironic in the sense that Joyce’s main character is disinterested in school and pessimistic about whether he will return to college after the war. This story in particular illustrates one take on the attitudes of UNH men choosing to enter the military—believing they are ready for the fight, wanting to fight for their country, and yet concerned about their futures once the war is ended.

Carroll Towle believed firmly in the value of this publication—of its benefits to student-writers, to raising awareness about the quality of student writing in the university community and beyond. Yet due to paper restrictions during World War II, the Student Writer’s final edition was the 1942 edition, though there were calls after the war to resume the publication. In a December 1945 TNH article entitled “NH Student Writer May Be Resumed,” Carroll Towle announced that a discussion had begun to resume the publication. In this announcement Towle both informed an audience unaware of the publication of its existence and history and reminded those who remembered the publication of its significance. Specifically, he argued that the publication was “essential [...] in order that the university may continue to uphold its reputation in the field of writing” and suggested that “New Hampshire is among the seven or eight leading universities in this field in the country” (2). Towle also brought his argument to the local institutional level as well, saying that such a publication is “the only local way of presenting to other people the talent of our students” and that it provides “prestige” for the writers (2, italics mine). He also argued that since the publication was stopped, there
had been a great loss on the campus, especially in student recognition of excellent student writing and in the university’s recognition that UNH was a national leader in writing. In a sense, he was expressing concern that the loss of this publication meant a chipping away of the culture of writing at UNH; consequently, Towle argued that “the opportunity to become acquainted with and to recognize the accomplishments of their fellow students should be given them as soon as possible” (2). Each of these arguments provides insights into the ways that Towle saw this publication contributing to the institutional culture of writing at UNH as well as its reputation beyond the campus. Although the article ends on an optimistic note, “now is the time to go ahead with this project and make the 1946 issue the best ever,” the publication was never reinstated, perhaps due to Towle’s ambitious plan of filling a four year gap in student writing.²¹

One year before this article, in a December 14, 1944 Editorial “UNH, a Literary Leader,” the student editors expressed concern that the institutional memory of the publication was being lost and they introduced the publication to students who may not have been aware of its existence and its prominence: “This periodical attracted national attention and copies found their way to various sections of our land” (2). What begins as a call to reinstate the publication of the Student Writer becomes a description of UNH’s literary achievements, from a mention of the UNH students’ success in winning writing contests to a mention of the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference, a shift that I find significant as it suggests that each of these initiatives were seen as contributing to UNH’s

²¹ Since, in its fifteen year existence, each issue of the Student Writer had included “the best student writing” since the previous issue, Towle’s hope was that this new issue would contain four years’ worth of student writing to cover the gap; he also hoped that the inclusion of student artwork would be possible, and suggested that perhaps it was time to rename the publication to launch it anew.
role as a “literary leader,” or, as I term it, to UNH’s writing culture. In the end, the editors declare that UNH students must maintain “our role as one of the leaders of American collegiate writing” and they call for UNH students to enact a “renaissance of writing, if we are to recognize the value of writing and its importance in our civilization” (2). That the Student Writer contributed to this university sense of literary responsibility two years after its cessation signifies its key role in shaping institutional attitudes toward student writing.

Initiative Two: Writing Contests Establish a National Reputation

Check [...] the national Atlantic Monthly contest results. There you find more New Hampshire writers mentioned in the winner’s list than those from any other college or university in the country. You discover that New Hampshire is the only school to have won first place in two of the three competitive categories (short story, essay, poetry). Dr. Towle’s students accomplished this feat twice in 1938 and 1945. —Jack Paul (“Legend of Accomplishment: Professor Towle Has Propelled Student Writing for 24 Years.” TNH 15 April 1955)

Like the Student Writer, the participation of UNH students in regional and national writing contests was first encouraged by Claude Lloyd, a practice continued by Carroll Towle when he assumed responsibility for writing instruction at UNH in 1932. Each year, UNH students entered the Atlantic Monthly writing contests, and often had success; five signature years in which UNH students won multiple categories centering on particular genres were 1930, 1938, 1944, 1946, and 1949. In 1946, for example, Joyce Douillette received awards in two categories, first prize for her essay, and a “merit award” in poetry, and Barbara Ellis won the fiction categories; what makes these wins so significant is the size of the contest itself, as reported in the 1946 TNH article “UNH

---

22 The editors also credit Dr. Towle with the success of student writing on the campus, saying that his “able and inspiring leadership [and] firm conviction that ‘young people can do it’ has served as an encouragement and aid to struggling writers” (2). They continue their praise of Towle by calling him “a master of technique, thoroughly familiar with the mechanics and intricacies of the art of writing” and by citing the Atlantic Monthly’s proclamation that Towle is “the man who makes English sing at the University of New Hampshire” (2).
Coeds Take Literary Awards: “In the essay contest students from 82 colleges submitted 366 essays; in the fiction contest students from 73 colleges submitted 371 stories; and in the poetry contest students from 59 colleges submitted 420 poems” (2). Other contests that UNH students entered were often sponsored by magazines and journals such as Mademoiselle, Yankee and Story Magazines, or clubs such as the Pan-Hellenic Society and the Vermont Federation of Women’s Clubs or publishing companies such as Reynal and Hitchcock. In addition to the prestige that came with publication in a journal, students often received monetary awards ranging from fifteen to over one hundred dollars and they often received dual publication in the journal and the Student Writer. Other bonuses included trips to New York or the Bread Loaf conference and additional write ups in the student and local newspapers praising their accomplishment. Each of these benefits contributed to both a university and external sense of UNH’s success in writing.

As with the Student Writer, Towle announced writing contest opportunities in the student newspaper and he emphasized that these contests were open to all UNH students,23 saying, for instance, in this 1941 TNH article, “I urge everyone who thinks that he possesses any ability to give serious attention to the thought of contributing one or more entries” (“Literary Contests” 4). In each announcement, Towle offered his help in conferencing with students and he encouraged students to revise at least once, “I shall be glad to talk with or assist anyone in putting his manuscript in readiness for competition. I have found in the past that first drafts reconsidered and rewritten [. . .] produce the best results” (“Literary Contests” 4). Students wishing to enter writing contests often visited

---

23Towle’s confidence in UNH students’ prospects for winning these contests comes through in the TNH article “Towle Announces Writing Contests,” when the reporter notes that “He wishes to emphasize the fact that the success in the past of undergraduates here on this campus has been so marked that no one should feel that there is no chance for our students in these contests; on the contrary, there are very excellent opportunities” (2).
Towle’s office in Murkland Hall to find out more details on the writing contests and to conference with Dr. Towle prior to submitting their work. As an *Atlantic Monthly* contest winner, Donald Murray credited Towle’s enthusiasm and encouragement in the conference as the reason why he entered and won the award:

I got an *Atlantic Monthly* award. It was at [Towle’s] doing [. . .]. He was enthusiastic and bouncy [. . .]. It was great because he was exciting and excited by you and excited by your work and so you’d feel like someone was taking you seriously. He read your poems and criticized them. (Personal Interview)

While Towle was known for devoting hours in his office conferencing, he both encouraged and *required* this hands-on input. Although his open invitation above suggests that conferencing for contest submissions was entirely voluntary, Towle did require that students submit their writing to him or to another English professor, often Robert Webster, prior to entering the writing contest in which UNH students tended to be most successful—especially the annual New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine Tri-State Writing Contest and the *Atlantic Monthly* contests. After meeting with students, a committee made up of English professors, or sometimes just Towle himself, would select the top few submissions to be sent to the writing contest. As *TNH* article “Literary Contests Approach Deadline” describes, in 1937, Dr. Towle selected three student essays, two poems and two short stories written by different authors to the Tri-State Contest, “ten essays and five poems to the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine and one story to the magazine ‘Story’” (“Literary Contests Approach Deadline” 1).

My sense is that Towle was not trying to prohibit autonomous submissions to writing contests; the rules of the contest sometimes stipulated that the English

---

24 Murray did not recall which year he won the award, or which award he won. I searched for announcement of the award in the student newspaper and in the *Atlantic Monthly*, but could not locate further information.
Department of a given university create a pre-selection process, selecting only the best student essays to forward to the contest. In addition, once UNH students had successfully won writing contests year after year, Towle also became invested in cultivating—and possibly protecting—that national reputation of excellent student writing at UNH as a means of furthering the cause and prominence of American literature, as an implicit argument that student writers were the future authors of American literature and Americana, and as a means of showcasing the writing as a model of the level of writing instruction that was possible at UNH. In 1955, Jack Paul certified that, at least on the UNH campus, Towle accomplished these goals because of his cultivated reputation as writing coach and because of his joint efforts with students: “For the past 24 years, writing at the University of New Hampshire has revolved around the dynamic figure of Carroll S. Towle, Professor of English Literature [. . .]. Student writers, propelled by professor Towle’s energy and keen instruction, have penned a remarkable record” (1). Towle, in answer to Paul’s question about “why New Hampshire students do so well in national contests,” attributed their success to hard work, or, “Elbow grease. I work hard and the students work hard.”

As Paul’s article indicates, one outcome of UNH students winning so many writing contests is that UNH itself gained a regional and in some cases a national reputation for producing professional and creative writers. In the April 1955 *TNH* article entitled “UNH Authors—The List Grows” included a listing of nine published authors including journalist Donald M. Murray who had won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing the previous year, novelist and poet Shirley Barker ’35 who as a student had won several writing contests including the Yale Series of Younger Poets, and George Abbe
’33, novelist and instructor at various institutions including Mount Holyoke College and the University of Iowa. The reporter points to the significance of such accomplishments, given the fact that “University does not have a so-called ‘school of writing.’ There are only four courses offered for writers in the English department and yet the University’s students continue to amass honors” (3). The culture of writing at UNH, the fact that student writing was esteemed (rather than scorned) by UNH faculty, and the attitude toward writing as requiring hard work, or as Towle put it “elbow grease,” on the part of the writers and the teachers, made it possible for students to imagine themselves as writers writing within and beyond the university setting. Towle and Webster, in discussing the history of writing at UNH, contend that UNH students’ marked success in writing contests developed, in the student body, a sense of confidence, responsibility and a desire to carry on the tradition of writing excellence:

Henceforth there was needed only the careful nurturing of student confidence as the proper complement to instruction in the art itself. The young people had a good tradition to support and extend; they had discovered that youth really have much to say and could learn to say it powerfully; that writing knows no special locality, and that older readers were not merely kindly or patronizing in their interest. The story of writing here […] is one of steady growth in interest and confidence; intelligent application and very capable performance. (An Anthology vi, italics mine)

This attitude toward student writing emphasizes that the extracurricular culture of writing at UNH was student-centered and that student writing was valued, to the point that students felt authorized to write, often long after leaving UNH. As Dan Ford notes, “There is more than one recluse who is toiling at this difficult art in the face of all contrary evidence save that of his pride—and the memory of a Conference in Murkland Hall” (15).
In addition to building a confidence and respect for student writing and writers, the structure of the contests did, in a small but important way, influence the curriculum. Though most contests had no submission restrictions, one key stipulation preventing students from entering certain writing contests was the requirement that contributors had to be using the contest-sponsoring publication in class; here is one example of the extracurriculum affecting the curricular environment, as instructors adopted these journals for their courses in order to allow students access to the writing contests. An additional curricular effect of these writing contests was that UNH composition teachers at all levels began to allow their students to write essays intended for submission to specific contests, as this 1941 *TNH* article suggests: “The members of the two classes in advanced composition and many freshmen in English 2 will be aided as much as possible, even to the extent of permitting would-be contestants to write for these contests in which they are eligible while at the same time receiving credit in the course” (“Towle Announces Writing Contests” 2). In addition to this curricular support and to increase the visibility of this effort, Dr. Towle established a “writers’ corner” in the library that held both extracurricular and curricular purposes, being “of interest and aid to contestants and students in composition” (2). Because the success in writing contests continued to build a reputation of excellent student writing at UNH, the faculty’s desire to foster student interest in these contests clearly contributed to an alternate vision of student writing on the campus and extended the influence of the contests beyond just a few individual student winners. As a final and significant result of this writing contest tradition, the faculty was able to draw upon the institution-wide recognition of student writing to develop new writing initiatives such as the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference, a
development that I discuss in greater detail in Chapter five. In sum, the success of UNH student writers in national and regional writing contests built brought an alternate vision of student writers into the institutional writing culture and built a regional and a national reputation of excellent student writing for UNH.

**Initiative Three: Folio Club/Writing Workshops Create Community Conversations**

Since 1932 the Folio Club has met at Dr. Towle’s home on Monday evenings at 8:00 o’clock with current writing as its main interest. The evening includes reading and discussion. The evening is not restricted to writing but also includes anything striking in the fields of music, art, drama, or movies. Folio is an unusual group in that it has no dues and no officers except a librarian, who keeps track of all books borrowed from Folio library. This is a temporary library located at Dr. Towle’s house. It consists of about thirty or forty books donated by various people for a period of one year.

As there is no continuity between the successive Monday nights, all interested people, including townspeople, are invited to attend any or all meetings. Students aid in planning the informal programs. —“Folio in 14th Year Under Dr. Towle” *TNH* 29 November 1945 (1)

Beginning in 1932, the Folio Club did, as the quote above describes, offer students with an informal opportunity to discuss literature. What this brief description leaves out is the context and content of the meetings themselves which I will provide here. Formed by Carroll Towle, the club met bi-weekly in Durham at the Towle home, usually on Monday evenings in at 8 p.m. Not only did students and faculty attend the Folio club, but it was also open to the Durham community, famous published writers—some local authors, and others who were UNH Alumni or those associated with the Writers’ Conference who were known to drop by the meetings. In the following October 1939 *TNH* article about the Folio Club, Dr. Towle discussed the purpose of the club,

This is not a departmental club, nor is it open to any single class, for any student of the University interested in the reading of current literature may become a member. The Folio club is not a work-shop group, as the meetings are carried on in an informal and friendly manner, and opportunities to do creative work are encouraged. An intra-club lending library is also enjoyed by members.
The only condition for acquiring membership in the club is interest, and any person who is interested, is cordially invited to see Dr. Towle, who will give further information about the club's activities. ("Folio Club Holds Initial Conference" 1)

As the above quote indicates, donations from the Folio Club members allowed for the development of a lending library for the club housed in the Towle home and administered by a student librarian. In the October 21, 1942 Folio meeting announcement in *TNH*, the purpose of Folio was extended to include both print genres and other cultural media, and was stated simply "to cultivate an interest in new books, movies, poetry, and other cultural subjects of interest" ("Dr. Towle Will Be Host At First Folio Meeting" 2). In an October 28, 1943 interview for *U.N.H. News*, Dr. Towle highlighted the club’s purpose once again, demonstrating that it had not changed significantly over the years, though the types of readings that were selected did change. Also in 1943, Towle noted that “one of the main ends of Folio” was “discussion,” and he issued an invitation to “anyone who is interested or curious to drop in any time after eight. ‘Folio is not an organization,’ he always adds. ‘It simply is and always will be there for the people who want to meet and read, and talk together’” ("Folio Has Meeting" 2).

The topic of the evening was typically focused on contemporary American literature and non-fiction, sometimes connecting or comparing newer stories with older pieces of literature, such as one meeting’s comparison of Robert Ayer’s “Story” with Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* ("Folio Club Holds Regular Meeting" 1). Prior to each

---

25 Although Towle doesn’t use the term “conference” in connection with the Folio Club, it is interesting to note that the reporter connects the Folio Club with the conferencing model, implying that there may have been a similarity between the two or that this was the language that best described the club activity, from the reporter’s perspective.

26 In an effort to conserve paper during World War II, *The U.N.H. News* became the main university publication, replacing other faculty and student publications during the war. The publication lasted for two years, from 1943-1944, and was a collaborative writing and publishing effort of UNH students, faculty and staff.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
meeting and like the other initiatives he sponsored, Towle posted an announcement in the student newspaper, always repeating the purpose of the club and the meeting’s place and time for potential newcomers and including a listing of the text(s) would be discussed that week. At times, the texts chosen would fit into an ongoing theme, but often, the criteria for choosing texts was simply that it was fairly contemporary American literature or popular nonfiction writing. For example, at one point, the group studied a series in “the new magazine Life [on] the general theme ‘America’ as it has appeared to recent writers” (Towle, “Letter” 2), and at another point, they met to discuss the texts they’d read over the summer months (“Folio Club Holds Initial Conference” 1).

To offer a personal look into the significance of the Folio Club, and the role of these clubs on the campus at the time, I offer a partial transcript of my interview with Donald Murray:

DM: We had a poetry club at his [Carroll Towle’s] house every other week, and that was an important part of everything. Clubs were a big thing then, in school.

KT: Were they often focused on curriculum, or, focused on [. . .] school? They were still school-oriented in some way or another?

DM: They, they wouldn’t count for anything. It was just those people interested in poetry gathered and the club was a big thing. And then the alternate weeks they had something called, ah, Folio [. . .]. And that was, that was about writing. The teacher brought us, essentially, things to read, he read to us, and we discussed good writing.

KT: OK, so that was more a reading, discussion kind of group? The Folio Club?

DM: Yeah, the other one was really a workshop, in the sense that we all presented our poetry and people criticized it.

In this excerpt, Murray presents these university clubs as vital educational experiences for the students, even though participation in the clubs was voluntary and not connected
in any way to the formal curriculum. In Murray’s case, he said that the students interested in writing adopted a similar model to Folio and the creative writing workshops in their own student-led writers’ group meetings. During the summers, for example, Murray described a group of student writers, himself included, who traveled to Goose Rocks Beach near Biddeford, Maine to write and to study writing; about the group, Murray said that “It was a very tight knit group of people who were seriously interested in writing, and took themselves dreadfully seriously.”

In my interview with Murray, he also discussed one particular instance that, though it was atypical of the discussion model usually employed, shows something of Towle’s interest in addressing contemporary issues as they arose. Murray described one of the “most moving” Folio Club meetings during which Towle read John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* recently published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. In describing this night, he said that

[Towle] came in one evening and started reading John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* which was the whole edition [*of the Atlantic Monthly*]. A lot of us were there to see this. There was no discussion. He just read the whole thing. But greatly moving. A lot of us realized we didn’t have a picture of what this [the bomb dropping] was [like]. I didn’t hear any of what had gone on.

Contrary to the usual discussion that ensued after a Folio reading, Murray said that the room was silent, the students stunned by the reality of the piece.

Like the Hersey piece discussed above, Towle typically selected the texts to read and discuss, however contemporary issues or other texts were always open for discussion. For instance, in March 1944, Towle selected and read American author Eudora Welty’s

---

27 In an interview conducted by Michael Michaud on November 2, 2002, Donald Murray described the role of the university club during his time at UNH: “If you were back in the 30s and 40s and earlier you would see Universities filled with clubs. These were entirely voluntary. There was just people interested in these subjects.”
"The Wide Net," O. Henry prize winning story and in addition, "new style history texts, which have recently brought forth much comment in literary and academic circles, were discussed incidentally" ("Folio Club" 4). Other texts that were read over time were The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck, poetry by John Holmes (often with him present), and stories by UNH writers such as those published in The Student Writer or UNH alumni such as Shirley Barker or George Abbe who were successful professional writers.28 The meetings were not limited to reading published works alone, as student writing-in-progress were also discussed. For example, in a report of the Folio’s activities on November 10, 1939, TNH reported that "members continued reading and discussing manuscripts written by the students. Dr. Towle read and the club discussed a recent story by Stephen Benet" ("Folio Club" 10 November 1939 2). Towle’s commitment to exploring contemporary American writing was connected to his belief that writers needed to understand current trends in writing as they practiced writing themselves and that readers should read this literature if they were to understand current nationalistic viewpoints. Even if students had access to and were reading these contemporary pieces on their own,29 the Folio club provided a space for students, professors and other guests to discuss them together.

Over the years, the Folio club grew to include cultural interests beyond literature such as the arts, and moving beyond the printed page to radio, dramatic performances, and movies. In several newspaper announcements, the Folio Club is depicted as being as much a social event as it was an intellectual pursuit; Mrs. Towle provided refreshments,

28 As I mentioned in Chapter Three, Towle also used these texts and the writing of other UNH students in his composition classes as well, as models of excellent student writing.

29 I mention this question of access for two reasons: 1. Students may not have had the finances to purchase contemporary literature (and Folio had a small library) and 2. No courses were offered in the formal curriculum where students could discuss this literature.
debates were heated and students developed close friendships, as Roger B. DeHayes reported in his 1945 *TNH* "Folio Club Begins Thirteenth Year," "During the years, Folio has contributed to the forming of many friendships—even romances. While Dr. Towle does not promise romance, he does promise an evening of enjoyment and information" (1, 4). DeHayes also points out that this club was not intentionally or in practice exclusive to English majors when he says that "students from the three colleges participate" in the Folio Club. In 1945, DeHayes notes that Folio was viewed as "one of the leading organizations on campus" (1).

One reason that Folio became such an institution at UNH throughout the 1940s was that it was one of the only clubs to survive the war's impact on the campus, meeting uninterrupted throughout wartime, as DeHayes reported in *UNH News*:

> Throughout the turbulent years, Folio has remained and has grown into a respected institution. And, during these trying times when so many of our usual activities are nonexistent, Folio gallantly carries on—a constant source of expert knowledge and opinion, and a boon to hard-pressed students who have little time to devote to reading, but are anxious to be familiar with literature and all the sociological and political problems that literature involves. (DeHayes "Folio Club" 3)

In his unpublished Notes on the History of the UNH English Department given to me by Donald Murray, he noted that in 1947, the Towles moved to a new home that included a room designated especially to the Folio Club meetings—a testimony to the club’s importance in the Towle’s lives and to its meeting in their home.

Towle also sponsored weekly Poetry and Short Story Workshops. These writing workshops were first constituted in 1938, a few years after the Folio Club had begun its weekly tradition. These meetings were also held at the Towle household, meeting bi-weekly on alternate Thursdays, and they were held, in particular, to focus on writers’
writing. In the September 27, 1938 *TNH* article “Workshop Meetings to begin on Thursday,” a statement appears that differentiates the mission of the workshops from that of the Folio Club (a statement that was quite likely developed by Dr. Towle):

The new groups will be different from Folio Club in that they will be definitely workshops rather than for the purpose of discussion alone. In each group are three allied interests: the theories of fiction and poetry writing, the analysis of representative pieces, and the writing of original short stories. (1)

For the writing workshops, once again the invitation was to all UNH students, university-wide, as seen in the following invitation published in *TNH*: “Any student with an active interest in the writing of poetry [short stories] is invited, no prerequisite being necessary.” Although this description implies that membership in the workshops was as open as Folio Club membership, there was a stipulation for membership in the workshops connected to the formal curriculum, “Professor Towle says that several students have already been admitted to one or both groups and that any student wishing to join should get in touch with him. To join the short story group, except in special cases, a student must have had English 8, which includes a preliminary study of short story writing” (“Workshop Meetings” 1). Since there was no specific curricular prerequisite cited for admittance to the Poetry Workshop as there was for the Short Story Workshop, it is possible that Dr. Towle wanted to meet with students to determine their interest in writing poetry and to make the workshop size manageable.

In the Folio Club as well as the Short Story and Poetry Workshops held at the Towle household, published authors were often on hand to talk with students about writing and sometimes to provide feedback as well. For example, in the first Thursday meeting of the Poetry Workshop in 1938, Shirley Barker—UNH Alumni (Class of 1934)
and published author of poetry and short stories attended the meeting “to confer with students” (“Poetry Workshop”1). In his article focusing on the Folio Club’s history, Roger DeHayes lists several visitors to the Folio Club, noting first that alumni formerly associated with the club “would deliberately extend their week-ends to participate in the Monday evening gatherings and to hear Dr. Towle, sitting in an easy-chair and puffing enthusiastically at his pipe, read from some piece of literature” (“Folio Club Begins” 1). DeHayes also lists the famous writers visiting the club such as UNH writer and editor Mrs. Ella Shannon Bowles, or UNH librarian David Jolly “who took over the direction of Folio in 1941 when Dr. Towle took his sabbatical leave,” Tufts College poet and teacher John Holmes and Bowdoin College professor and writer Robert P. Tristram Coffin “have often dropped in to add their knowledge and ability to the discussion (1).”30

One such repeat visitor was UNH Alumnus and novelist George Abbe, ’33. Abbe received his Masters in Creative Writing from University of Iowa where he also become an instructor. Though there are several writers’ visits to Folio that I could discuss in-depth, Abbe’s visit in December 1938 illustrates my argument about the development of a distinctive institutional culture of writing at UNH, providing an analysis of this culture from an insider’s perspective and providing a bridge to my subsequent discussion of the UNH Writers’ Conference.31 During Abbe’s visit, the group asked Abbe questions about his first novel, and the second novel soon to be published. But as the 1938 TNH article “Folio Hears Abbe Speak on Writing” notes, the significant point in the meeting was

---

30 In the next chapter, I discuss these visits as part of a faculty exchange program inspired by the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference.

31 Abbe was on the staff of the UNH Writers’ Conference in 1941, and in other years he visited the conference for brief visits to talk with conferees about writing. Fellow writer and alumnae Shirley Barker ’34 also attended this meeting and quite likely added some of her own insights into the writing culture at UNH as compared with Radcliffe.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
when Abbe discussed the disparity between undergraduates’ attitudes toward writing at UNH and at the University of Iowa (UI).

Though he said that at UI there was great interest in writing at the graduate level, Abbe was surprised to find that “there was really very little interest among the undergraduates in comparison with that shown here [at UNH] and that the results were decidedly inferior to [at UI]” (1). As “one of the charter members of Folio,” Abbe hypothesized that perhaps one reason why students at UNH were more interested in writing well was because of the existence of groups such as the creative writing workshops and Folio Club and he “seemed convinced that such group interest and mutual encouragement as found in Folio and the workshop groups was extremely important” to developing a strong interest in writing (1). And yet, as the article points out, while Iowa did actually have extracurricular writing groups, Abbe felt that the undergraduate commitment to writing was not present in the same way as it was at UNH. Abbe emphasized, too, that Iowa lacked publication venues such as the Student Writer and that such a publication “is an additional incentive” to developing one’s writing as students at UNH had the opportunity to do. Although he speculated on the causes, Abbe clearly observed a difference in the writing culture at the Iowa campus, that this climate did not foster the confidence and interest in undergraduate student writing that existed in New Hampshire. The article presents Abbe as being puzzled by this disparity; Iowa did, after all, have some student writing groups, and has had a longstanding tradition of cultivating creative writing at the graduate level.32 Yet perhaps these worlds remained separate at the

---

32 It’s significant to note that Abbe was at the University of Iowa during the time of Norman Foerster’s tenure there, and that Abbe was still disappointed with Iowa’s writing culture, at least in terms of its undergraduates, possibly suggesting that the focus on creative writing remained at the graduate level alone. I view this as significant too, since D.G. Myers and others regard Foerster as the creator of “creative
University of Iowa, rather than influencing one another. Part of what I'm suggesting in exploring these multiple extracurricular endeavors at UNH is how they intersected and influenced one another to form a unique culture of writing. Each of these extracurricular initiatives was well-known, its benefits shared and its successes celebrated by faculty and students at UNH and beyond.

**Conclusion**

With each of these initiatives, there tended to be an emphasis on the informality of the writing event—the Folio Club, the Workshops were often described as “informal,” and a student’s submission to a writing contest, though there was an institutional procedure to follow, was still, for the most part, left up to the student’s enterprising spirit and interest in writing. Although some of the initiatives had some small requirement to gain access, such as the conversation with Dr. Towle in order to join the creative writing workshop, most of these initiatives placed few restrictions, if any, on membership or participation. In all cases, the themes and topics discussed focused on the present moment—offering participants an opportunity to create, to write, to discuss writing-in-process with peers, professors, and published writers, to provide feedback to other writers, to study popular culture, and to read texts that were not yet “appropriate” in the formal curriculum. The emphasis on informality, open access and contemporary themes seem to be features that differentiate these initiatives from the formal curriculum at UNH in the 1940s. And yet, as I have mentioned earlier, the extracurricular initiatives did not seem to be viewed by the students, faculty or administration as wholly disconnected from the curriculum; some of these initiatives had direct connections to the curriculum such as writing as a university discipline” (124). Myers asserts this fact by dismissing other efforts to include creative writing in the university setting as “haphazard” efforts, and by noting that Iowa’s program “was a deliberate effort carried out for an articulate purpose in a single place” (124).
students writing pieces for writing contests in the composition classroom. And all of these initiatives garnered enough support as to imply that their existence was not seen as an intrusion or a distraction from the formal curriculum. Through the extracurriculum, professors and students were engaged in a pursuit of a writing and reading life that was richer than the canon presented in the English Department’s curriculum (due to what needed to be covered). Students who were not English majors and who shared these interests were given access to discussion and writing forums that they might otherwise have been precluded from, given their chosen field of study.

Much of this extracurricular work made its way into the formal curriculum as faculty attempted to encourage and foster continued student success in writing (at least publicly), though a cursory look at the formal curriculum would not illustrate this fact; to find instances of the extracurriculum impacting the curriculum, one must look, as I have, on the fringes, beyond the official record, or even departmental meeting minutes, to archival records and student and university publications announcing key literacy events or achievements. In addition, since all of these initiatives were directed by Carroll Towle, there was inevitably some overlap or cross-over in topic and in practice. For example, several Folio Club meetings were devoted to discussing pieces by UNH students or alumni who had won writing contests, or who been published in the Atlantic Monthly or The Student Writer. The interconnectedness of these initiatives come into focus in Chapter five.

33 Except for a modest stipend given to Dr. Towle for the Writers’ Conference, English professors did not get paid extra for directing these initiatives. In fact, Donald Murray noted that Sylvester Bingham the department head for much of the 1940s believed that faculty members should not be paid any more than $4000 per year; in his words, Murray said that Bingham felt a greater wage would be “unseemly.” Murray pointed out that Bingham was independently wealthy, and did not view the faculty position as a means to earn a living, hence his criticism of Dr. Daggett’s choice to take odd jobs in the summer to supplement his yearly income (Personal interview).
In the following chapter, I extend my discussion of the extracurriculum further by considering its generative and reciprocal function. In particular, I examine how certain aspects of the curriculum and extracurriculum at UNH contributed to the creation and structure of a new writing initiative, a summer writers' conference held on the UNH campus between 1938-1962. My discussion shifts from a focus on student writing and student writers to a wider circle of writers, teachers and community members who met each summer to write and to talk about writing. I consider the ways in which this new writing initiative contributed to the UNH writing culture, promoted regional conversations about writing extending beyond its temporal and physical borders, and developed professional networks among writing instructors in New England.
CHAPTER V

ADDITIONAL RINGS OF INFLUENCE: EXTENDING A WRITING CULTURE
BEYOND THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Writers' Conference has become an established annual event, with a special staff of leading American writers providing instruction and advice for young writers and teachers of writing. —Donald Babcock (The History of the University of New Hampshire 293)

What might be called a legitimate [writers'] conference is, first of all, not a slightly expanded book fair. A conference is a work session with lectures, seminars, private conferences, covering a period of time—several days a few weeks. It is not a series of brief appearances by big-name people who talk ad lib from five minutes to an hour and then, having done their stint, disappear. —Carroll S. Towle “Directing a Writers’ Conference” Writers on Writing (291)

From the start of this dissertation, I have been working to complicate the field of composition’s prevailing historical depictions of the 1940s and its emphasis on current-traditional pedagogies as the primary approach to writing instruction during this decade. I have argued that historical accounts of this period reach this conclusion, in part, because these studies focus on particular writing courses (e.g., the first-year composition course) or particular writing textbooks and I argue for the lens to be widened to include the study of institutional writing cultures. While studies of institutional writing cultures, as I have illustrated in this project, do incorporate considerations of the formal curriculum—the writing courses and pedagogical approaches used—as partial contributions to shaping a writing culture, my discussion of the extracurriculum in Chapter four demonstrates that focusing on the formal curriculum alone limits our understanding of the diversity of beliefs, practices and attitudes toward writing and toward student writers that co-exist
within one institution. In this chapter, I explore the productive and reciprocal nature of an institutional writing culture by examining the creation of a new writing initiative. I illustrate the generative power of an institutional writing culture by examining the elements of the UNH writing culture that contributed to the creation and shaping of a summer writers’ conference at UNH (1938-1962), specifically those elements of the existent writing culture gave rise to and shaped the conference. I also argue that the writers’ conference itself, as it gained prominence, influenced the writing culture that had produced it and influenced regional conversations about writing. Through my discussion, I argue that this extracurricular initiative—an event taking place wholly outside of the formal curriculum but still located on the university campus—exemplifies the dynamism of writing pedagogies in the 1940s, contrary to other, more static historical descriptions of this period. In particular, I assert that the writers’ conference’s place outside strictures of the formal curriculum provided its staff with the freedom to create a flexible programmatic structure in which to experiment as they worked with writers. At the same time, the conference’s physical location on the university campus prompted the staff to draw upon UNH’s reputation as a “writing university” and to build upon and refine some of the innovative writing initiatives already existing on the campus (i.e. Towle’s conferences, writing contests, Folio Club) (Webster and Towle v).

In the first section of this chapter, I briefly situate the writers’ conference as an American tradition emerging from curricular and extracurricular sources, and then argue for the significance of the local context in shaping the UNH Writers’ Conference. In the second part of this chapter, I build this argument by analyzing the origin, mission and structure of the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference and by analyzing the conference as
an extracurricular initiative that incorporated curricular and extracurricular practices at
the university. In the third part of this chapter, I argue that the conference had a rippling
effect, in that it influenced regional institutions in New England, including UNH. This
influence was fostered by the interactions between conference staff and conferees
throughout the year—in annual conference reunions, letter correspondences,
collaborative publications and frequent faculty exchanges to one another’s campuses.

Situating the Summer Writers’ Conference in National and Local Contexts

Five years ago a writers’ conference was almost an oddity. But today, 24 years
after the first conference was started at Bread Loaf, Vt., they have proven not only
that there is a need for such gatherings, but that they are a worthwhile
organization. They have grown from four conferences in 1938, the year the
University of New Hampshire Writers’ Conference was started, to about 20 this
summer. —Frank W. Barndollar, “University Writers’ Conference Produces Large
Number of Published Works,” 1949 (6).

National Contexts

In this section, I position the concept of the summer writers’ conference in its
national context and then consider the importance of local context in shaping the
practices and mission of these conferences. As the above quote by Barndollar points out,
although writers’ conferences were rare in the late 1930s, they were not a new concept in
1938, the year that UNH’s conference began. D.G. Myers, in his book The Elephants
Teach: Creative Writing since 1880, points to the private writers’ retreats that were
popular by the turn of the century as one source of inspiration for such writers’
conferences; the rationale or philosophy behind these conferences was an attempt on the
part of the writer to live the writing life, to avoid having to teach or engage in other work
in order to survive (77-78). The first major private writers' colony that Myers cites is an artists’ retreat in Carmel, California, established by businessman and poet George Sterling in the early 1900s, a small community of artists and writers who were attempting to develop their craft on as few resources and with as few distractions as possible. Myers suggests that although this private colony was disconnected from an academic environment, later writing retreats “sought a compromise between a bohemian retreat and an academic program,” and he suggests that what emerged was the summer conference model of writing instruction (82-3).

In her book *A History of Profession Writing Instruction in American Colleges*, Katherine Adams connects the writers’ conference more directly to academic institutions, suggesting that the impetus for the writers’ conference tradition emerged as a result of the extracurriculum moving onto college campuses. As professional writers secured teaching jobs in academia throughout the 1920s, Adams points out that they drew on the “off-campus tradition” of the writers’ workshop to develop creative writing courses, “creating on campus versions of critique sessions” that they were familiar with (93). These writing classes became the harbingers of the creative writing movement in academia and Adams argues that the process of a writer “progressing” from weekly conferences meetings with an instructor to small group work as the writer improved—a process seen in the 1939 summer graduate seminars of Edwin Piper at the Iowa Writers' Workshop—represented a kind of “model for other writers’ workshops and conferences” elsewhere (96).

Katherine Adams states that after World War II, summer writers’ conferences proliferated in American colleges and universities, though she does not substantiate this

---

1 Myers does point out that such writing colonies were not unique to turn-of-the-century writers, since, medieval poets were often “vagabonds” who stole or begged for their subsistence in order to devote their lives to their craft (89-90).
claim (96). In one effort toward substantiation, then, I cite Herschel Brickell, who, at the close of his edited collection *Writers on Writing* written by the UNH Writers' Conference staff, lists eighteen active writers' conferences in 1949; of the eighteen conferences listed, fifteen conferences are listed in connection with (or as he says "under the auspices of" or "sponsorship of") colleges and universities. These conferences spanned the country and this listing includes three conferences in Vermont, two in Kansas and Colorado, and one in Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Washington and Utah (299-309). Although some of these conferences focused on specific genres or had practices unique to that conference, Brickell generalizes that these "writers' conferences follow very much the same pattern the country over; namely, classes in all phases of writing; clinics, or the discussion of actual manuscripts; individual discussions of writing submitted by contributors; and more or less formal evening lectures by staff members and others" (299).

While the procedural pattern that the UNH Writers' Conference followed is quite close to, if not exactly, what Brickell describes, the philosophical approach toward these writers' conferences differed depending on each conference's mission and local context. For example, while many of the conferences in Brickell's list placed creative writing as their focal course of study, the UNH Writers' Conference took a more inclusive approach to the study of writing, including as fair game any topic that might be considered related to writing or of interest to the conferees and staff. Because writers, teachers, and non-writers alike attended this conference, topics of interest included creative writing, writing

---

2 There are certainly some omissions from this listing, but as I will show later in this chapter, Carroll Towle had a very clear definition of what a writers' conference was and was not. Workshops that would have been linked too directly to a school environment, the Iowa Writers' Workshop for instance which offered college credit to students, would not have been considered true writers' conferences from Towle's perspective.
pedagogy, writing theory, emergent writing genres or fields, current issues in American literature, publishing, bookmaking, writing and technology, and even writing in various disciplines. The conference overview that I provide below describes some of the nuances and traditions of the UNH Writers' Conference, as shaped by the local university context and by the existent institutional curricular and extracurricular writing culture; in particular, I explore how certain distinct features of the UNH Writers' Conference emerged because of its physical locality. This overview provides a context for my later discussion of the factors influencing the conference mission and structure and presents crucial facts about the conference that give a clearer picture of the staff, conferees, and the overall tone of the conference.

Local Contexts: A Brief Overview of the UNH Writers' Conference

_Side by side, at bull sessions [roundtables], talks, sprawled on lawns before dormitories, in drug stores, and in dormitory rooms at night are boys of high school age and college age with white-haired, bespectacled college professors and housewives—all hobnobbing, all with one thought in mind, the problems that beset the tribe of writers, young and old, wise and inexperienced._

_‘The thing we have in common,’ Prof. Towle asserts, ‘is a love of writing and a desire to write better.’—Robert F. Denvir and Sheila Ann Denvir. “Writers Give Away Best Secrets: Conference Smooths Out Rough Spots” The Boston Daily Globe, 1955 (48)_

The University of New Hampshire’s Summer Writer’s Conference met for the first time in July 1938 and thrived for twenty-four years until 1962. UNH English Professor Carroll Towle served as the Conference Director for the duration of the conference, and, as it often happens in writing program administration, the mantle of the program was not taken up after Towle’s death in 1962; the program ended while still in

---

3 In some ways, this open approach to topics related to writing resembles a professional conference on writing that served a number of different constituencies: the professional writer in a variety of fields (creative writing, journalism, science, juvenile, radio/TV), the beginning writer, the teacher, and the editor, to name a few.
its prime. In fact, in the year that the conference ended, the *Saturday Review of Literature* had ranked the UNH Writers' Conference as one of what they called "the Big Four" of summer writing conferences, the others being the Bread Loaf Conference, the Rocky Mountain Conference and the Indiana University Conference. The UNH conference gained such national prominence and recognition in part because it was one of the earliest successful iterations of a summer writers' conference in American colleges and universities. *New Hampshire Sunday News* reporter Frank Barndollar explained in his 1949 article that the UNH Writers' Conference was "about the third oldest conference still operating. It is preceded only by the original writers' conference at Bread Loaf [established in 1926], and by the Rocky Mountain Conference at the University of Colorado [established in 1930]. Another was started at Olivet College but has been discontinued" (6).

The majority of the UNH Writers' Conferences were held annually during the middle two weeks in August, with conferees and staff residing in campus dormitories and meeting in academic buildings. From year to year, the conference averaged between 135-150 participants and conferees ranged in ages between seventeen through eighty-plus years old. Conferees were not only professional writers, but also teachers, librarians, scientists, editors, homemakers, military personnel, religious clergy, doctors, nurses, publishers, etc. Initially, many of the conferees hailed from New England, but over time

---

4 For the conference's origin, I refer to Herschel Brickell's rationale in his chapter "A Guide to Writers' Conferences" that while the Rocky Mountain Writers' Conference was "an outgrowth of the Writers' Colony, once conducted at Indian Hills and holding its first session in 1927 [. . .], the conference as now organized did not start until 1930" (308).

5 While this average reflects the conference size in general, registration reached a high of 192 in 1947 (Jack Paul 1).
and through concerted publicity campaigns, registrants came from across the nation, even other countries. As a specific snapshot of the clientele of the 1944 conference, *Boston Herald* reporter Alice Dixon Bond noted that 125 conferees between the ages of seventy-seven to seventeen came from "thirteen states, Canada and England. Among them was a British sailor whose ship was in port, an Air Corps sergeant from Missouri and a bishop." (4).

In the first years of the conference, the majority of the conference staff, too, originated from the surrounding New England states, but as word of the conference spread through professional circles, staff members came from across the country, many who were involved in other summer writers' conferences as well. The staff was comprised of professional writers in various fields, university professors, editors, publishers, and others involved in some way with the enterprise of writing. Many staff members faithfully participated in and promoted the conference year after year, some for nearly the duration of the conference. In 1940, the conference staff members were given the official title of "leader" to represent the conference's philosophical stance as a non-academic event, a point I will discuss later in this chapter. The term "leader" was an attempt to avoid the implication that the staff was intended to instruct, as the conference mission was to provide an informal environment for writing and talk about writing among all those involved with the conference.7

---

6 While some UNH students participated in the conference, the majority of participants were not students, nor were they affiliated with the university. Since the conference was not considered to be part of the university curriculum, students could not receive college credit for the course.

7 The 1950 Writers' Conference Brochure states that the leaders *guided* discussions about writing, "They appear, not as formal teachers, but as leaders in the discussion of mutual problems" (1). The terms *leader* and *mutual* here suggest an attempt at equalizing potential divisions between staff and conferees. This staff description supported the conference mission, and allowed for, as the brochure continues, "the informal and
As the conference was decidedly non-academic in its tone, its atmosphere was purposely informal in nature. Throughout conference week, a loose schedule of events included discussions about writing issues and social events intended to build a community among conference staff and participants, such as an opening staff reception (open to conferees) and a closing banquet held on the final evening of the conference.

The Staff Reception was held during the first night of the conference and Boston Herald reporter Alice Dixon Bond’s 1944 “Book Chat” article highlights the social feature of the conference by describing this reception in particular. Bond says that after a conference dinner and a lecture on science fiction writing, the evening “ended in the small hours with a wonderful party at the lovely home of Dorothy and Carroll Towle” (4). Bond portrays this party as informal and relaxed, implying that potential hierarchical divisions among staff and conferees were downplayed as much as possible to create a mutually respectful and friendly atmosphere. Bond also portrays Carroll and Dorothy Towle as the leaders of the conference, noting that they worked as an administrative friendly exchange of opinion regarding good and bad writing, problems of publication and criticism, current opportunities in publishing, and the problems of the individual writer” (2).

I discuss this conference philosophy in further depth when I discuss the conference mission, but in brief, the conference literature made a clear distinction between a conference versus a school environment.

The final banquet featured a special guest lecturer and provided a forum for scholarship and awards to be presented. Two scholarships available were the Carroll Towle Scholarship created in 1944 by the conferees to honor Towle’s work as director and the Dorothy Towle Memorial Scholarship created after her death in 1954. There were numerous writing awards given, one of note being the annual Durham Chapbook poetry publication contest in which one conferee would be selected to publish his/her poems.

To promote the inaugural event in 1938, Towle invited well known New England authors to the first banquet, including Gladys Carroll, Robert Frost and John Holmes. Although only novelist Gladys Carroll was able to attend, Towle’s invitation garnered the participation of the other two authors in other ways: Frost elected to attend and informally present at the conference earlier in the week, and Holmes became a fixture on the UNH Writers’ Conference staff in subsequent years. The closing banquet became a signature event for the conference and a means of generating the interest of other writers in joining the staff in later years.
team “everywhere at once, unobtrusive, helpful and always worth listening to” (4). In addition to hosting parties in their home, the Towles organized living and travel arrangements for staff, invited staff and conferees to the conference, organized a yearly conference reunion every Spring in both Boston and New York, and fostered close relationships between publishers, editors, writers and the conference.\textsuperscript{12}

The UNH Writer’s Conference held no direct curricular connection to the university—especially since UNH students could not receive college credit for attending the conference. However, the conference philosophies, structure, and traditions developed by UNH professors, especially Dr. Carroll Towle as Director, were naturally influenced by their understanding and experiences teaching writing.\textsuperscript{13} As I have noted, the UNH Writers’ Conference was an initiative that was housed within the university, existed outside of curricular structures, and was shaped by curricular and extracurricular influences connected with the university. In the next section, I illustrate some of the ways that existent cultures of writing at UNH gave rise to the summer writers’ conference and how these cultures shaped certain aspects of this new writing initiative, especially its overall mission and structure.

\textsuperscript{11} Dorothy Towle filled various official and unofficial roles for the UNH Writers’ Conference until her death in 1954, that of social host, accomplished writer, administrative assistant, conference leader and manuscript reader, and an advisor on current opportunities in the field of writing. As a testament to her work, an anonymous donor honored her memory by creating a conference scholarship in her name, beginning in 1954 through the 1950s.

\textsuperscript{12} To illustrate the Towles’ central role in shaping the tone of this conference, I turn to Herschel Brickell’s introduction to the book \textit{Writers on Writing} written by the UNH Writers’ Conference Staff (1949), “This is the best place I can think of to say that the fine spirit of the Conference is the result of the warm and friendly attitude on the part of Carroll and Dorothy Towle, whose Conference it is, toward students and teachers” (viii).

\textsuperscript{13} I will note here that I present this chapter as an overview of certain aspects of this writers’ conference in this chapter to further my argument regarding institutional writing cultures, the UNH Archives has gathered an extensive record of the conference proceedings. My discussion is not intended to be an in depth or comprehensive exploration of the conference, but rather an introduction to this conference and a suggestion to the potential for further study.
Shaped by An Institutional Writing Culture:  
The Origin, Mission, and Structure of the UNH Writers’ Conference

The Origin of the UNH Writers’ Conference

*If group study of the art of writing, and group exchange of opinion have proved of value, it is felt that no more appropriate spot for such activity can be found than the campus of a university which has now for several years been a centre of literary development and which has attracted nation-wide attention by the energy and success of its undergraduate writers, success which they have been able to repeat after graduation. The university literary annual, The Student Writer, has become a leader among college literary periodicals. New writers among the students of the university won two national awards in the spring of 1938.* –1939 UNH Writers’ Conference Brochure (5)

As the above quote from the 1939 Brochure notes, the university writing culture was shaped at that time by a sense that it was a “centre of literary development” and that it had a national reputation of producing successful (student) writers. With this reputation still growing, members of the UNH English Department and Carroll Towle in particular saw an opportunity to establish a summer writing conference on the campus and to extend the culture of writing—through the writers, teachers, and others participating in the conference—beyond institutional borders. Essentially, the UNH Writers’ Conference originated due to three supporting factors: creative inspiration, an administrative directive, and a sense of philosophical purpose or mission.

In terms of the creative inspiration for the conference, I turn to Director Towle himself for insight. In his chapter “Directing a Writers’ Conference,” Towle states that

“When in 1938 the Writers’ Conference was organized at the University of New Hampshire, we had behind us a tradition of writing. Undergraduates of the university had won many writing awards, regional and national; some had gone on writing after graduation, and with increasing success. (292)"14

---

14 Sources outside UNH also acknowledged the link between UNH’s excellent student writing and the conference. A May 20, 1938 UNH article refers to a letter from “Mr. Berran of the Atlantic Monthly company” to Carroll Towle saying that, “I am delighted to send you the Atlantic’s congratulations and to
Looking at the official literature of the first Writers’ conference, we see that Dr. Towle indeed publicly credited the accomplishments of UNH student writers as one of the main reasons for this university to develop such a conference:

The University of New Hampshire’s interest in contemporary letters found its first expression in the activities of its undergraduates and younger graduates during the last ten years. First in the annual Student Writer and then in other publications and in nationwide competitions, several of these young people have gained recognition. (3)

The two descriptions above make it clear that the quality of student writing and the public recognition of its quality generated the interest in starting a writers’ conference at UNH. While Towle certainly saw quality student writing in the advanced writing courses that he taught, this national recognition of excellent student writing at UNH had at its center the extracurricular initiatives of student publication and the writing contests that I discussed in Chapter four; these extracurricular efforts, then, played a significant role in the creation of another major extracurricular effort. As a secondary rationale for the creation of this conference, the 1938 Brochure referred to the increased national interest in writing overall, noting in particular the proliferation of professional writing groups.15

With both of these creative inspirations being rooted in the extracurriculum, I would say that Towle was pointing to the vitality of the extracurricular writing environments that inspired him to develop the conference.16

---

15 I want to raise here again the point made by Adams and by Myers about the influence of the creative writing movement and/or professional writers on the creation of summer writers’ conferences.

16 Also, Towle’s choice to invoke extracurricular writing initiatives may have been Towle’s deliberate choice to align the conference with writing events outside of the formal curriculum; as I will discuss in more detail later, Towle insisted on separating the writers’ conference from a connection to “school.”
Since a crucial factor in any new university initiative is administrative support, the creation and implementation of the UNH Writers’ conference was also made possible by the wholehearted support of then UNH President Fred Englehardt. As an educational theorist, President Englehardt was known for effecting influential changes in both the university’s curriculum and extracurriculum.\textsuperscript{17} For the Writers’ Conference, Carroll Towle noted that President Englehardt’s support for this conference arose out of the president’s desire to cultivate the students’ interest in writing and to herald their success in winning competitive writing contests; in fact, in his chapter on directing a writers’ conference, Towle credited the president with making the suggestion to create “a conference on lines similar to those of Bread Loaf and Colorado, the best known and established of the conferences at that time” (292). In addition to his desire to encourage continued student writing, President Englehardt was interested in extending education to new constituents in the state; he believed that the university had a responsibility to educate its residents. The following comment demonstrates his commitment to finding or creating educational experiences beyond the more structured formal curriculum:

\begin{quote}
The state university of today [1937] is functionally conscious of its place as a public service institution in many fields of human endeavor [. . .]. The university does not deal in books alone, nor are its researches carried on solely in the library and the laboratory; for in reality it finds its laboratories and classrooms in many parts of the state. (qtd. in Babcock 303)
\end{quote}

In local institutional contexts, programs often launch and fail based on administrative and financial backing. The Writers’ Conference was established in a time when the university was gearing up to celebrate its 75\textsuperscript{th} anniversary, when the university climate was hopeful \textsuperscript{17} In 1941, UNH would celebrate its 75\textsuperscript{th} anniversary, and in anticipation of this event, President Englehardt encouraged specialized study by implementing several new summer institutes like the Writers’ Conference. He also developed professional development courses for graduate students (Sackett 111) and he invited national and regional conferences across the curriculum to celebrate UNH’s 75\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary by holding their conferences on the UNH campus.
and optimistic and programmatic expansion was a matter of course. As historian Donald Babcock put it, in the early 1940s, there was a sense that UNH was heading “into the unknown but unmistakably new day” (vii). The idea for this Writers’ Conference came at the right time, during the right administration for this type of extracurricular conference to be established. That the conference began a few years prior to the US involvement in World War II was also crucial, since the conference had already established a national reputation by 1941 and its success allowed it to continue without interruption, even through the lean war years, for the twenty-four years of its existence.

**Local Context Shapes the Conference Mission**

_I wish first to call attention to who you are in the midst of where you are. [...] But we will not follow academic lines. This morning when I suggested that I would not go academic on you, even the college graduates among you were sympathetic._

_They say that no good writers of any stature can come out of college; and yet here we are, in a reading room of a college library on a college campus, at a Writers’ Conference composed of a group somewhat mixed as to education._

—Carroll S. Towle, Discussion in UNH Hamilton Smith Library, Aug. 6, 1942 (Writers’ Conference “Lectures and Speeches” File, UA 17-6 B.1 F.1).

The mission of the UNH Writers’ Conference was shaped by its local context and its source of creative inspiration. Since, historically, the UNH Conference was the third oldest summer writers’ conference, its location directly on a college campus represents one difference from the writers’ retreat models of the two older conferences. These conferences—Bread Loaf and Rocky Mountain—had institutional affiliations with Middlebury College and the University of Colorado respectively, but they were located some miles away from the campuses.\(^\text{18}\) The UNH Writers’ Conference took place in the

\(^{18}\) D.G. Myers, in describing the origins of the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, says that it “grew out of a summer school in English language and literature [instituted in 1920] held at a rambling three-story inn on the slopes of the Green Mountains about twelve miles away from Middlebury College” (88). The location of the conference, then, was also due to its particular affiliation with the summer school and the summer
university’s classrooms, lecture halls, dining hall, dormitories, lounges and grounds. In their correspondence with Dr. Towle, several conferees noted that one benefit of the university setting for the Writers’ Conference was the access to its resources: the library, the cultural activities offered by other summer institutes, and the residential and recreational facilities. These resources allowed the conference staff to offer options they might not have had if the conference were located off campus. More importantly, the conference’s location on the campus allowed more UNH faculty, staff and students to be involved in the conference, increased the visibility of writing on the university campus, and generated support for the conference among local community members.

While the conference occurring on a university campus brought some benefits to both the conference and the university, the mission of the conference was decidedly intended to be separate from academia. In shaping the conference’s overall mission, Towle from the very beginning took a clear stand to ensure that the conference environment remained “informal”; Towle argued that his choice of the word “conference” was deliberate, that the annual conference was not be seen as a “school” or an “institute” and that the conference should maintain an “elastic” schedule:

Routine and its deadening effects will be avoided, reduced to a minimum. Every effort will be made to make this a conference, not an institute or school. Thus personalities and minds may have freer play in the give-and-take of discussion at the will of the staff and those who will enroll. The schedule will be elastic. Paramount will be the interest in allowing time

---

19 One influence on Towle’s thinking here may have been his extended experience developing the open approach to the Folio Club and the Writing Workshops at UNH. Since some of the conference traditions that emerged resemble the practices of these extracurricular groups, it’s possible that Towle wanted to capture some of the spirit of these groups in the writers’ conference environment. I offer this possibility as an example of an institutional writing culture shaping the pedagogical practices in a newer writing site.
for individual conferences and meetings in small groups. (UNH Writers’ Conference Brochure 1938, 4)

The above description, or a comparable version of the above description, remained consistent in every annual brochure of the Writers’ Conference, demonstrating a strong commitment to this particular vision of a writing conference; although it is not completely clear from this description what Towle saw as constituting a writing “school” or an “institute,” he clearly distanced the conference from these formats. During the summer months, UNH played host to several special interest institutes, often with strict or packed schedules to fill the week(s); Towle’s distancing of the conference from an institute, then, might be related to the fact that he wanted to, and did, allow time in the schedule for the conferees and staff to confer with one another in what he called a “give and take” manner. What we know of the English Department’s propensity toward lecturing in the classroom and of the climate of the formal curriculum at UNH may lend some insight into why Towle intended to avoid the implication or imposition of curricular structures in the conference. Also, in contrast to the master-apprentice approach of other writers’ conferences, the UNH conference mission was more egalitarian and collaborative, owing, in part, to its attempt to remain “non-academic.”

---

20 As I have shown in Chapter three, the formal curriculum did not allow for the open approach that Towle is referring to here which may be his reason for distinguishing the conference from a “school.” In a 1942 TNH article, Towle clarifies one particular difference between an institute and the conference, saying that an institute is offered for credit, and the conference was never intended to be offered for credit “Writers’ Conference Here” 4).

21 While there were scheduled evening lectures given by staff comprised of published writers and publishers, these lectures were not the main feature of the conference. As I discuss later, these lectures were still structured in the spirit of the conference mission, as they included opportunities for discussion.
In conjunction with the overall mission of the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference, the Conference Objectives or Aims\textsuperscript{22} centered on what I’ve identified as three overall principles:

1. That the conference was open to any person interested in writing, i.e. writers, teachers, readers, publishers, etc.\textsuperscript{23}
2. That the conference be seen as an egalitarian space where staff and conferees could engage in a mutual exchange of ideas and
3. That the conference maintain an informal atmosphere and a flexible schedule in order to allow writers time to write, to converse about writing, and to confer with writing staff on their manuscripts.

To address the first principle of an open door policy, the conference fees remained low to allow a greater number of people access to the conference. And, since conferees could register as either “contributors,” (those who submitted writing for private consultations with staff) or as “auditors,” (those who did not), the conference was structured to invite the participation of writers and non-writers alike.\textsuperscript{24} In his chapter on directing writers’ conferences, Towle explains the philosophy driving this open approach toward conferees by saying that, “The university was interested only in affording a means for getting interested folk together” (293). Towle’s use of the term “interested folk” does not distinguish between writing staff and conferees, the implication being that both staff and

\textsuperscript{22} The conference brochures alternate between referring to this section as “Objectives” or “Aims” of the conference.

\textsuperscript{23} In the first conference brochure, one of the conference objectives illustrates the open spirit of the conference: “The University regards itself as the agent for bringing together at this conference writers old and young, experienced and inexperienced, for mutual profit through manuscript reading and informal discussion.” (4). That this quote refers to “the university” suggests that this policy received institutional approval and it also highlights the university sponsorship and support of the conference.

\textsuperscript{24} I will further explore these writer/non-writer, contributor/auditor roles of conferees later in this chapter.
conferees were all “interested folk” who want to talk together about writing. This term addresses the second principle of the conference as an egalitarian space, a point Towle emphasizes when he describes the purpose of the conference, “for the informal and friendly exchange of opinion regarding good and bad writing and all the problems a writer encounters” (293, italics mine).

Before I address the third principle—the informal conference structure and schedule—I contextualize this discussion by considering the conference’s depictions of conferees, as seen in the roles they could hold and in the opportunities they were given to gain recognition for and to talk about their writing. As I have mentioned, conferees could select one of two tracks for their conference experience: contributor or auditor.

Generally, auditors referred to those who were interested in writing but were not writers themselves (or did not want to be considered so for the conference), and contributors were those writers intending to work on their writing in private consultation with staff—a popular feature at many writers’ conferences.25

Auditing allowed for a larger registrant base and allowed tentative writers to test the waters of the writers’ conference environment; this policy fit well with the conference objective to remain open to all interested parties. The 1938 brochure for the UNH Writers’ Conference clarifies this point further, stating that another primary reason for providing the auditor option was to expand the audience of the conference to those who were interested in writing but who did not consider themselves “writers” per se: “The auditor arrangement is provided for those who have for one reason or another an active

25 The labels of auditor and contributor were not unique to the UNH Writers’ Conference; other writers’ conferences, certainly the nearby Bread Loaf conference, used these categories for conferees. I am interested, though, in presenting the localized rationale motivating this particular structural choice for the UNH Conference.
interest in writing, though not themselves engaged in the art—notably teachers and students of literature” (1938 UNH Writers’ Conference Brochure, 4-5). This description seems to make the assumption that teachers and students of literature are not, or are not necessarily, writers—a dichotomous distinction that may not have been intended. This distinction may have been intended to convince the teacher or student of literature who self-identified as a non-writer to take part in the conference without reservation, though its implicit assumption had the potential to dissuade the teacher-writer or literature student-writer from enrolling in the conference.

While Towle enthusiastically encouraged non-writers to take part in the conference in part for the reasons I’ve listed above, he viewed the contributors—the writers of the conference—as engaging with the central activity of the conference. Two other conference objectives listed in the 1940 conference brochure expressly stated that the conference existed to help writers improve by whatever measure they wished and that the staff intended to sponsor conferees’ writing by helping (a) “to secure the public recognition” of a writer’s “talents” or (b) “to further the intelligent application of the writer’s talents” (7). These two points illustrate Towle’s interest in developing ways that the conference could benefit the writer.

---

26 There was, for example, an attempt to address the potential and actual audience of teachers, and since a significant portion of the leaders and some conferees were also teachers, Towle included several mentions of teaching in the conference brochures. As I mention above, Towle addressed the possibility that teachers may simply want to attend the conference, given their interest in the topic of teaching writing, even if they did not consider themselves “writers.” To that end, brochures express an intent to discuss pedagogical concerns regarding the teaching of literature: “The relations between literature and education obtain fitting and reasonable emphasis, by means of a scheduled discussion concerned with the teaching and criticism of literature, headed by a panel of authors themselves” (1944 Brochure 9).

27 Towle expresses his esteem for teachers in his chapter by describing them (and librarians) as those who “want a deeper understanding of what the artist is trying to do, and who want to be able to bring to others some conception of the problems of writing in general” (290). In opening this conference to teachers, Towle implied that the conference had pedagogical implications for teachers to bring back to their schools; in this sense, then, the conference had writing instruction at its center, but in its function as a means to teach teachers of writing/literature, I would consider this conference to be a teachers’ conference as well.
Because Towle believed that one facet of gaining public recognition was for writers to first become familiar with contemporary literature to understand current writing trends, he and the conference staff assembled a conference book exhibit\(^\text{28}\) with an extensive collection of recent writing. According to the 1942 conference brochure, this collection included over three hundred American periodicals as "a very important outlet of American writing [...], the many [recent] interpretative books about America [...], books about writing and attendant arts, and books written by members of the staff" (8).\(^\text{29}\)

Not long after this tradition began, the exhibits also included conferees' publications.\(^\text{30}\)

In the 1943 Brochure, Towle explained that the staff's decision to include the writing of all those involved with the conference was "another step in making the work of all mutually known and respected" (9). The commitment to this book exhibit also extends Towle's interest in exploring and advocating for the importance of developing a stronger sense of an American literary tradition, as seen in his extracurricular work in the Folio Club, and his interest in including newer or current writers in that tradition. In the 1942 Brochure, he described the book exhibit as an "integral part of our plan" for the conference (8).

\(^\text{28}\) In 1938, Towle hired the Stephen Days Book wagon, an external book exhibitor, but by 1942, the book exhibit was run by members of the conference staff.

\(^\text{29}\) The sampling of letter correspondence in the Archives suggests that the staff kept in close contact throughout the year and that they kept track of one another's upcoming projects and publications. Towle in particular tried to keep up with the staff's newest publications so that he could mention them in the conference publicity and include a copy of the publications in the book exhibit. The staff also knew that keeping the director informed about recent publications was advantageous for the writer, as it offered free publicity for the book and recognition from the conference staff and participants.

\(^\text{30}\) In addition to the book exhibit's attempt at equitable representation of writing, another such initiative was the "conference bibliography," listing important contemporary American works as well as publications by all those involved with the conference. Especially between 1942 to 1945, the conference staff and participants assembled this bibliography, "with the idea of ultimately issuing it in some form" (9). While the bibliography was never published, it was made available to conference participants and served the additional purpose of enhancing the diversity of pieces within the book exhibit, enhancing as well the perspective that the writers themselves were part of or contributing to the emergent contemporary American literary tradition.
The conference commitment to help conferees publish was likely shaped in part by Towle’s observations of UNH students’ success in writing contests and his work in bringing student writers into the public eye through publications such as *The Student Writer.* In an attempt to secure such “public recognition” for conferees, Towle provided many opportunities for conferees to learn about publishing, especially talking with book editors and magazine publishers about the newest writing trends as well as how to get published. In addition, publication opportunities arose out of the conference setting itself. For example, *American Weave*’s Loring Williams and *Rewrite*’s William E. Harris, both staff members of the UNH Writers’ conference for several years running, created a publication opportunity in the form of an annual poetry contest that was intended only for UNH Writers’ Conference registrants; conferees submitted their work for consideration at some point during the conference and the prize winner (or in some cases, winners) would have a chapbook published showcasing a sampling of their poetry. These chapbooks were part of what was called the *Durham Chapbook Series.*

To illustrate one application of the staff commitment to further “the intelligent application of the writer’s talents,” I return now to consider one aspect of the third principle I outlined earlier, the “informal atmosphere” of the conference that gave writers the opportunity to talk about their writing with the staff. In particular, I analyze one

---

31 Certainly, to have a conferee publish writing after attending the UNH Writers’ Conference could only benefit the reputation and prominence of the conference.

32 This series of chapbooks was directly connected to the UNH Writers’ conference and published annually from 1945-1960. Each book was a collection of poems written by 1-3 conferees, and the prize winner was selected by some members of the UNH conference staff. A full set of these chapbooks can be found in both the UNH Library Stacks and the UNH Archives. I suggest that these chapbooks warrant further study as a product of the UNH Writers’ Conference context. Additional writing prizes sponsored by the conference were added over the years—small cash prizes for each genre and other external prizes offered specifically to the UNH Conference.
feature of the conference's structure, the private consultation. Although it is probable that both auditors and contributors produced writing while at the conference, private consultations with staff were reserved for the contributors who paid a slightly larger registration fee for the right to submit their work for feedback from the staff. The 1938 UNH conference brochure suggests that private consultations were intended to be a standard and central feature of the conference and while this brochure does not describe the nature of the private consultation setting, it does describe the procedures for submitting work.

Contributors were given the option of submitting their writing at the beginning of the conference or prior to the conference; in either case, the staff read manuscripts ahead of time and provided their feedback during individual conferences. To make this process more manageable, given the large number of contributors per conference, six "conditions" were placed on all manuscript submissions:

(1) No contributor should offer more than one manuscript of book length;
(2) All contributors should select manuscripts with care, and offer at most only a chosen few;

33 While the Writers' conference literature and Director Towle refer to these meetings as both "private consultations" and "individual conferences," I use the term "consultation" in this section to clarify references to the individual meetings and references to the UNH Writers' conference as a whole.

34 Because contributor status required more investment on the part of the conference staff in terms of time and labor, this additional registration fee was used to compensate the staff for their time. While this fee was not much higher than the auditors' registration fee—usually a matter of $5-10—it may also be one reason why some conferees registered as auditors. From 1944 on, scholarships were offered to help writers defray the cost of the registration. Related to financial provisions for the conference, veterans were able to attend the conference through the federal monies provided by the GI Bill, because of its university affiliation.

35 Multiple sample photos of these writing consultations can be found in the UNH University Archives. While they were often posed photos for publicity of the conference, the emphasis on such photos—given that they were plentiful—demonstrates that this element was a key feature of the conference.

36 In his chapter on directing a writer's conference, Towle notes that two consultations were scheduled for each manuscript submitted and that staff benefited from the consultations as well because they "learn to put their half-conscious theories further into good language and clarify their own philosophy as they examine manuscripts and talk with the conferees. All of our staff are practicing writers; and because they themselves are producing, they find these conferences often have unexpected values for them as writers" (295).
(3) All material must be legible, preferably typewritten;
(4) Material will be accepted at any time, if accompanied by $5.00 as registration fee, and will indubitably receive the benefit of more acute criticism when handed in early;
(5) All manuscripts must be given to the staff by August 1, the opening date;
(6) Unfinished work, if it is of sufficient magnitude, will be accepted for consideration and advice, but the Director recommends that the practice be wisely limited (1938 Writers’ Conference Brochure: 5).

These conditions are fairly pragmatic in nature—limiting the number of submissions to a manageable number for the staff to handle, providing a guideline for the form that the submission should take and providing a reasonable time frame for the staff to become familiar with the texts. These conditions do provide some insight into the philosophies and procedures behind the practice of conferencing during the summer program.

The first two points imply a view of the contributors as serious and prolific writers who would need to be selective about which manuscript to submit. The third, fourth and fifth conditions are essentially submission guidelines to aid the staff in reading manuscripts. I am most interested in the sixth condition, as it regulates the state of the writing to be submitted; “unfinished work” could have multiple connotations—that the piece does not yet have a conclusion or that the piece is “unpolished” or not edited.

Returning for a moment to the curricular conferencing approach used at UNH, we recall that pieces submitted ahead for teacher-student conferences or for class workshops were usually complete, edited drafts. If Towle was drawing on his conferencing experiences in the curriculum to construct this policy, a point I will argue in a moment, then this sixth condition was likely intended to avoid receiving manuscripts that were not complete or edited.  

37 While these drafts were complete and edited, conferees often revised after the conference or workshop.
manuscripts needed to be finished does not suggest that they the manuscripts were intended to be revised after consultations, as other conference materials suggest.\footnote{Evidence for these revisions can be found in a few sample manuscripts in the archives, as well as Towle's newspaper interviews and correspondence between the writers' conference staff throughout the year discussing the progress of conferees' work during and after the conference. Also, conference literature states directly that each manuscript submitted could receive at least two conference meetings with a writing staff member, an implication that writers then revised and resubmitted their manuscripts during the conference.}

The emphasis on private consultations was one of the initial and fundamental structural decisions that Carroll Towle made in developing the summer writers' conference. As I suggested earlier, Towle's inspiration for making private consultations a central and esteemed feature of the conference was rooted in his curricular experiences with conferencing. Towle says, quite directly, in his chapter "Directing a Writers' Conference," that:

Through years of teaching what people like to call 'creative' writing I had come to the conclusion that the teacher and the writer can hardly come to the best of mutual understanding without individual conferences. So we [the staff] wanted to have as much time as possible during the session for manuscript reading and subsequent personal conferences. (293)\footnote{Towle did not particularly like the term "creative writing," as he felt that all writing was creative; this is one reason why his courses referred to either "composition" or "writing" (Silva, Personal Interview).}

Though Towle acknowledges that this approach was used in other writers' conferences, the above quote emphasizes that it was the conferencing he did as a writing teacher that convinced him that the UNH Writers' Conference should be built around this practice as well; Towle organized much of the rest of the loosely structured conference schedule around individual consultations to ensure its central role. This curricular influence demonstrates another way that the institutional writing culture at UNH played a significant role in the formation of a new writing initiative within the institution.
Conference Structures: UNH Writers' Conference Open Schedule

One feature of the conference is that no two type sessions are held at the same time. With this arrangement people interested in more than one type of writing may attend all the discussions on all types of writing. Nor is this all. A number of conference attendants managed to sandwich in some writing with all the other activities: bull sessions, informal talks, personal conferences and the like. And it is quite possible that some of the things written at the conference in the dead of night or on the lawn in the quiet New Hampshire afternoons may soon find their way into publication. It has happened before at this conference. Light sleepers often awakened to the sound of tapping typewriter keys.


The open schedule of the conference allowed for a more diversified conference experience for conferees and allowed the staff to experiment with different topics and new writing trends that they could not try in curricular contexts. In this section, I briefly describe two other key features of the conference, the lecture series and roundtable meetings, to consider how those involved with the conference contributed to the development of the conference structure and how they developed working relationships with one another. With regard to the lecture series specifically, I argue that the structure of the lecture series permitted more of a give-and-take discussion than lectures in the formal curriculum did and how the lecture series extended conversations about writing beyond the conference setting to the wider community. I also show how the daily roundtables fostered and supported the interests of conferees and staff. And finally, I suggest that the relationships developed among staff members laid the groundwork for regional exchanges both in the professional writing world and in one another’s classrooms.

The evening lecture series was one of the consistent and most “formalized” features of the conference. Lectures were given by conference staff and special guests.
every other evening during the two-week conference, usually six to eight lectures in all

Though conference literature calls the lecture series "formal," the 1950 conference

brochure notes that the informality of the conference environment extended to the lecture series as well, "These lectures are followed by informal gatherings for questions and discussion" (8). Each year, Towle sent out news releases publicizing the lecture schedule to the university and local communities. These news releases highlighted the fact that guests from the university and surrounding communities who were not involved with the conference were welcome to attend (for an admission fee) and that guests could attend any lecture in the "series" because the lectures were not thematically or topically "continuous." The 1944 lecture schedule clarifies that the diversity of lecture topics

allowed for an open audience:

The members of the staff who give these talks speak of literary and many other matters as they would to any general audience, confining their technical interests to the intra-Conference programs. In effect, therefore, their talks form a series by men and women who happen also to be here for a special interest; thus many who are not regularly attending the Conference have the opportunity of hearing some good talks of a considerable variety. ("Programs and Schedules")

The lecture was a "series" in that the conference itself created the occasion for a number of lectures. In reaching a larger audience, conference organizers also hoped to generate a greater interest in and support of the conference itself; and, since Towle built informal discussion time into each lecture, non-conference audience members were, in some ways, given a glimpse into the tenor and mission of the conference.

The wide range of topics covered during the lectures emphasize the staff's desire to open these conversations to the public as well as the conference goal to explore as

---

40 For those not involved with the conference, small admission fees were charged for each lecture from 1938-1944 when the lectures became free of charge.
many facets of writing as possible—form, genre, trends, theoretical and pedagogical approaches toward writing. Generally, lecture topics depended on the lecturer’s area(s) of expertise and preferences. Since there was no specific theme connecting the talks from year to year, the topics ranged from specialized genres to writing technologies to contemporary literature, etc.\textsuperscript{41} Letters to Carroll Towle in the University Archives indicate that lecturers usually conferred with Director Towle regarding the appropriateness of the topic for the conference. For example, Yale professor and drama critic Walter Pritchard Eaton, in a letter to Towle, provided two options for his 1944 lecture, either “Fifty Years of Theatre Going” or “something more definitely technical [called] Writing for the Machines (i.e. radio, screen, television, etc). But I prefer the former” (Letters to Carroll Towle).\textsuperscript{42} The lecture schedule for the 1944 Conference shows that Towle approved Eaton’s preferred topic choice. Other, similar letter correspondences demonstrate that the staff also communicated with Towle and with one another about the types of events that should be added to the schedule, such as John Holmes’ suggestion to Towle to add poetry readings to the 1945 conference schedule because “the conference members expect it and like it” (Letter to Carroll S. Towle). In essence, the conference structure and schedule was based on a series of negotiations among the staff members and the director. These letters gave the staff opportunities to

\textsuperscript{41} To illustrate the range of topics that writers selected, the types of writers selected for the lecture series, and the lecture series topics before/after WWII, I have included the specific lecture schedules from the 1942 and 1947 Writers’ Conferences (See Appendices C, D).

\textsuperscript{42} While the approval of the first topic over the second may seem out of place for a writers’ conference, it is important to note that Towle, in his extracurricular writing initiatives, did not separate the study of the arts from writing. Other reasons why this choice might have prevailed is that Eaton was one of Towle’s mentors while Towle was at Yale, and that at UNH, Dramatics, as it was called, was still located in the English Department and was thus under the purview of English Studies.
articulate future ideas for the conference and allowed the staff to develop a rapport with one another throughout the year.

In addition to evening lectures, the conference’s days included several round table discussions. In the 1938 Program, Towle wrote that for each daily discussion on a given genre, “one or more members of the staff will be present at each meeting [...] no rigid course is intended for any type of writing” (1). Describing the role of the staff in these discussions signifies the effort Towle made to emphasize the “give-and-take” intent of the roundtable format.43 The 1950 Brochure describes the roundtable practice in detail, “Group meetings during the day have leaders with two or more members of the staff in attendance to participate in the give-and-take discussion. The so-called types of writing are given consideration in accordance with the size of the group and the needs of individual members” (8). While several of these roundtables were organized around discussing “types of writing,” many other topics represented more specialized writing interests, such as publishing, radio or TV writing, juvenile writing, science writing and topics representing contemporary concerns, such as the 1942 and 1943 special sessions on “Writing and the War.” The 1950 Brochure notes that the rationale for this variety of topics was to emphasize “topics of special interest to contemporary writers” (8).

Like the lecture schedule, the daily roundtable schedule was open to suggestions and additions from the staff and the conference participants, prior to and during the conference. For example, the 1943 “Writing and the War” session was brought about by conferees who had written to the director to request a “group collaboration on a project stimulated by the war. The thinking of the director during the next two months will not

43 In some ways, this format harkens back to the extracurricular Folio Club and Creative Writing Workshop formats that I described in Chapter four.
neglect the possibilities of such a project, and he will welcome all suggestions, specific and general" (*1943 Conference Brochure* 10). This approach illustrates another attempt to make the conference less hierarchical in nature and to avoid a set curriculum.

In addition to aspects of the conference schedule being open to topic suggestion, conference literature suggests that formal lectures and roundtables were often subject to change in order to accommodate additional writers, editors and publishers who often traveled to Durham during the conference weeks to visit and/or contribute their expertise. When these noted visitors would stop in, Towle added impromptu lectures, afternoon discussions about a certain genre, and additional writing consultation opportunities. The open schedule even accommodated writers who made a mistake in the date they were scheduled, which was the case with Robert Frost's impromptu visit in 1938, related through a letter to Towle by John Holmes: “Mr. Frost [...] just told me how he had driven to Durham and mistaken the date, but spoke anyway” (Letter to Towle, August 13, 1938). Overall, this open door policy for visiting professionals would not have been possible if Towle had designed a more rigid conference schedule and this additional influx of writers offered many benefits to conferees, especially related to extending the conversations about writing beyond the conference setting.

---

44 The war figures in to some correspondence between staff members. At the close of a letter to Dr. Towle dated May 5, 1951, Ms. Margaret Coit offers this question in her post script, “Does conference come under G.I. Bill of Rights?” (UA 17-6 B.1 F.3 “Letters to Carroll S. Towle from Margaret Coit”). This question had been answered in the 1947 UNH Conference Brochure in a line appearing only once in the brochures, “Note: Veterans may attend the Conference under the G.I. Bill” (8). In addition to correspondence, the 1942 Brochure also notes that staff was limited in attending the conference due to added writerly and teaching duties. For instance, leader David Woodbury could not attend the full conference because he was “engaged in research and writing connected with the war” (2), and Robert Coffin could only attend the conference for two brief visits “because of special wartime teaching at Bowdoin” (4).
Overall, the open schedule allowed for a wide breadth of topics and genres to be covered—offering more opportunities for writers to engage with the current issues about writing. This open schedule also allowed more writing professionals to participate in the conference, giving them the flexibility to choose when to attend the conference; with their busy teaching, writing, publishing schedules, many writers would simply not have been able to attend the conference otherwise, especially if they were required to commit to the full two weeks. These writers would often locate a gap in their personal schedules and spontaneously arrive in Durham, willing, and wanting, to contribute to the conference conversation. Finally, Towle’s open invitation to writers generated an enthusiasm for the conference among writers and developed strong professional networks among a larger number of writing professionals than just the official staff alone.

As I have shown, the conference schedule remained as Towle intended it, “elastic,” open to additions or changes as expressed by the staff, conferees, or the unexpected guest writer, publisher or editor who needed a forum to present or discuss his or her work. In contrast to the formal curriculum, the open schedule of the writers’ conference allowed for a diversified staff and a diverse set of approaches to talking about and theorizing about writing. This rich environment created a desire among conferees, staff and guests to extend these conversations beyond the two-week conference. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss some of the ways that those involved with the UNH Writers’ Conference extended their conversations about writing and explore how these conference associations extended the work of the conference to other settings outside of the conference.
Regional Influences: The Staff Extends Conversations about Writing Beyond the Conference

[The UNH Conference Staff will include] America’s leading writers in the various kinds of writing. Also present will be visiting friends from business companies and literary agents and as usual casual visits of leading authors [...]. The staff will be selected by the following criteria: his interest in people, both as writers and as teachers; must be interested in helping other people write and should have had some experience in reading and criticising [sic]; the ability as a group to be interested in various kinds of writing—“Writers’ Conference Here August 3-14: Staff Again Made Up of Prominent Writers” TNH February 20, 1942 (4).

As they returned to the Durham campus summer after summer, the UNH Writers’ Conference’s staff, those who were official staff members and those who were visiting, developed strong working relationships that extended throughout the year. In this section, I consider how their work intersected beyond the conference setting, how the rapport between members of the Writers’ Conference staffs impacted the institutional writing culture of UNH and especially how these relationships resulted in a widening of the circle of conversation about writing, producing rings of influence beyond the context of the summer conference.

In a letter that he wrote in 1948 to then UNH President Adams, UNH Writers’ Conference staff member and poet Rolfe Humphries provides some insight into the close professional relationships of the conference staff. Humphries states that

The staff is very hard-working, and we know each other’s ways, from long association, so that there is no more friction than reasonable to expect among human beings working at pretty high tension, and, in fact, a good deal of mutual understanding and comradely give-and-take.” (Letter from Rolfe Humphries November 1948)

Despite his reference to potential friction, Humphries’ description of the staff demonstrates his sense that they worked well together and that the conference provided an opportune occasion for “comradely give-and-take.” The “long association” that
Humphries refers to emphasizes the fact that many of the staff knew one another well, which was not only a result of the staff's annual congregation at the conference itself. Herschell Brickell, too, in his Introduction to *Writers on Writing* said in 1949 that, "For more than a decade a number of us who practice the profession of letters have gathered in August to talk informally about what seems to us the most important subject in the world, communication by way of the written word" (viii). Brickell emphasizes that the staff were all engaged in some way with the writing profession and that the occasion of the conference provided a space for these professionals to engage in sustained conversation about writing.

Once members of the writing conference staff had engaged in lively conversations about writing in the conference setting, they naturally began to contribute to one another's professional lives as writers, teachers, publishers and editors. Herschell Brickell describes the bond among staff members as developing over time and through their work:

> As is the way with all people who are happy in their professions, we have talked much about writers and writing, about agents and publishers, about art [...]. We have wandered often into each other's classes and have, I am sure, learned a great deal from what we have heard there. In other words, the association is one all of us cherish as a previous part of our lives [...]. Naturally enough, we have talked a great deal about the teaching of writing, since we are deeply engrossed in what seems to us a significant and peculiarly American experiment in education. (viii-ix)

The close professional and personal relationships that Brickell describes were fostered not only during the conference but also during the year as they supported one another's work through various collaborations, sponsorships, and exchanges. Several letters in the Archives from staff members over the years suggest that the staff was keenly interested in encouraging and hearing updates about one another's writerly projects and that they often
collaborated on or supported one another in thinking through ideas for the teaching of writing.

Two such collaborations among the UNH Writers' Conference staff led to publications intended as writing resources in extracurricular and curricular contexts. The first publication, which was most directly linked to the conference, was a how-to writing book based on the many varied topics covered in the conference setting entitled *Writers on Writing: By the Staff of the University of New Hampshire Writers' Conference*. Edited by Herschell Brickell and published in 1949, the main purpose of the book was to provide writers, teachers and administrators with theoretical and practical advice about writing in various genres, publishing in the current market, and how to direct or locate a writers' conference. While I will not explore the theories about writing that staff espoused in newspaper articles and in the book *Writers on Writing*, I note that the staff was constantly exploring their own perspectives about writing—what they'd learned from their own craft and what they'd learned from teaching in various contexts. The other significant collaborative text to emerge from the UNH Writers' conference associations was the *Holmes-Towle College Reader* (1950), an anthology of literary works from the four genres for first-year composition courses edited by John Holmes of Tufts College and Carroll S. Towle of UNH. This text had a direct impact on the curriculum at UNH, since it was adopted as the reader for Freshman English in 1950. In their Acknowledgements,

---

45 While an in-depth analysis of this text is not appropriate for this particular project and for the focus of this chapter, I acknowledge that a study of this text and texts like it would provide some further insights into theoretical and philosophical perspectives about writing that might have been discussed during the small group sessions and lectures of this and other such conferences. In addition to this book, several folders in the UNH Archive include brief interviews with Writers' Conference staff regarding their writing theories and pedagogies, see for example: File UA 17-6 B.1 F. 18 “Lectures and Speeches” and File UA 17-6 B.1 F.13 “News Releases” an unedited WHEB radio broadcast transcript between Dorothy Towle, Rolfe Humphries and John Holmes. See also, Mildred Mikkanen “Want to Write? Ten Established Authors, at New Hampshire University Conference, Tell Us the Secrets of What Makes a Writer Click.” *Worcester Sunday Telegram* 9 November 1952: 3-4.
Holmes and Towle refer to the fact that some contemporary literature had been included in this anthology, especially the writing of Boylston Professor of Oratory and Rhetoric Archibald MacLeish who revised his "Self-Portrait" for the anthology and they thank some of the members of the Writers' Conference who helped them to locate texts or important information for the anthology.⁴⁶

In addition to writing together, UNH conference staff worked together to extend the vision and reach of the conference. First, Carroll Towle offered annual Spring conference reunions in New York and in Boston to allow conference participants and conference staff to reconnect, to talk further about writing, and to invite people who might be interested in attending the summer conference as a participant or as a leader. These meetings, then, acted as a means of developing established relationships and forging new ones; usually the schedule for this reunion, a one-day event, included a cocktail hour, a small book exhibit, opportunities to talk with other writers and publishers, a dinner and a lecture/discussion with a professional writer—in essence a mini-version of the longer summer conference.

Second, several conference staff members also worked at other summer writers' conferences and, no doubt, brought the vision of the UNH conference with them. For example, several UNH Writers' conference staff worked on the staff of the Fairleigh Dickinson⁴⁷ College Writers' Conference which began in 1954. Robert PT Coffin, writer,

---

⁴⁶ Holmes and Towle also thank the undergraduate students who helped them with versions of the anthology: the Tufts undergraduate students who conducted research for the text and the students at UNH who "listened to our preliminary drafts of the several prefaces and their reactions guided us in revision" (xviii). Noting the benefits of students' participation in this project, they say that "we cannot help feeling that this year's students in our respective colleges have learned something about the making of an anthology, and we are thankful for their patience with our enthusiasm" (xviii).

⁴⁷ Fairleigh Dickinson, a junior college in New Jersey, was established by Peter and Sally Sammartino in 1942. The college became a four-year institution in 1948 (Fairleigh Dickinson Historical Timeline).
poet and UNH Writers’ Conference staff member for sixteen years by 1954, described his pivotal role in establishing this conference in a letter to friend George H. Morris, “I am helping my friend President Peter Sammartino, of Farleigh Dickinson College, Rutherford, N.J., incorporate at brand-new (Summer) School of Writing. Lots of my friends to be teaching there with me. And, of course, [there’s] the U. of NH Writers’ Conference in August” (Special Collections: Robert P. Tristram Coffin, Collection 46, Box 1). The Fairleigh Dickinson conference’s philosophy proved to be similar enough to UNH’s conference that when the UNH conference ended in 1962, many staff members committed to the NJ Conference, a move that former UNH staffer James H. Rinker called “a transference from Durham to [...] New Jersey” (Letter to Margot and Lorus Milne May 7, 1962). In addition to developing professional and extracurricular connections surrounding writing, the staff supported one another’s teaching pursuits as well—whether staff members held faculty positions in higher education institutions or whether they held positions in brief writers’ workshops in other contexts. The conversations over the two weeks of the conference, in letters, and during the reunions generated an even greater interest in sharing resources and expertise about writing.

In addition to those few UNH students who benefited from attending the summer conference, students at UNH and at regional colleges and universities benefited from the professional relationships built between writer-teachers at the UNH Writers’ Conference. Published writers and editors who served on the writers’ conference staff began to offer additional opportunities for undergraduate students to gain recognition for their writing; these writers, seeing the quality of writing among conferees and students, created new

48 In the letter correspondence in the UNH Archives, there is evidence that writer-teachers from the UNH Conference often used their colleagues’ writing in their teaching. Staff also sponsored one another’s employment in colleges and universities, as Robert PT Coffin did for Francgon Jones at Bowdoin College.
writing contests and new publications through their connections with journals and publishers, some contests being college contests, others like the *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* contest offered in 1955 including a specific track for the UNH Writers’ Conference, as explained in the 1955 brochure: “Anyone enrolled in the 1955 session may participate. The best story from the Durham group will receive a cash prize of $25; the next three places earn an annual subscription” (7). Although not all of these contests had such a direct connection to the UNH Writers’ Conference, what I find significant about these new contests is that they were created, in part, due to a specific staff member’s connection to the conference.49

For those writing staff who were faculty members, relationships forged in the extracurricular environment soon translated to the academic environment through a practice of regional teaching exchanges. During these inter-campus visits, the visiting teacher-writer remained on campus for 2-3 days and participated in some combination of the following activities, scheduled and announced prior to their visit: lecture, teach undergraduate classes, conference with students on their curricular or extracurricular writing, consult with students on institutionally-sponsored publications, and attend extracurricular activities related to writing or literature, such as the Folio Club or creative writing workshops.50 ("Visiting Professors To Be Used By English Dept” 1). At UNH in particular, although there is evidence that a few professional writers and professors at other institutions presented at convocations, visited English classes, and a few Folio Club

49 Also significant, given the conference’s location on the UNH campus was that many of these contests were intended for college and university students.

50 The fact that there was no differentiation between curricular and extracurricular writing contexts implies that any forum in which writing instruction could take place was seen as appropriate for these faculty exchanges.
meetings prior to the Writers' Conference, these campus exchanges proliferated after the creation of the Writers' Conference, at least as a yearly occurrence, and often more frequently than once per year. A 1941 TNH article credits Carroll Towle and John Holmes with beginning this tradition and states that they “hope the visits of these writer-teachers to stimulate and instruct writing on other campuses outside of their own” (1).

Procedurally, when teachers did campus exchanges, they took over one another’s various classes—both writing and literature—according to their expertise. In a two-day visit from John Holmes during March 1941, in what this TNH article called “an exchange visit between Tufts and UNH,” Holmes taught an Advanced Composition and a Modern American Poetry course, in addition to visiting the Folio club meeting, conducting a session where he played recordings of poets from the Harvard Vocarium, and holding conferences with students (1). In a follow-up article on March 21, 1941,

51 For example, Robert P.T. Coffin came to campus to give a lecture for a convocation sponsored by the Folk Club, American Association of University Women, Women’s Guild, and Women’s club in March 1937. Though this convocation was not sponsored by the English Department, perhaps one reason why Towle was able to recruit him as a leader for the Writers’ Conference in the first and several subsequent years was due to Coffin’s recent familiarity with the campus, and due to Towle’s being an alumnus of Bowdoin College, where Coffin taught.

52 While there is much evidence in TNH and Writers’ Conference staff correspondence to confirm that these visits persisted throughout the 1940s, I will add here that in my interview with UNH Alumnus Donald Murray ’48, he noted his remembrance of several famous writers, especially John Holmes, visiting the Folio Club during his time at UNH.

53 From the Harvard Library website: “In the 1930s recording pioneer Frederick C. Packard in collaboration with Harvard’s Poetry Room, the Harvard Film Service, and the Department of English launched the Harvard Vocarium label and began producing audio recordings of authors reading their own works [. . .]. The collection, which was to be used for the "appreciation of literature," grew to include unique recording of dozens of poets and writers including Tennessee Williams, W.H. Auden, Robinson Jeffers, Marianne Moore, Archibald MacLeish, Theodore Roethke, Muriel Rukeyser, and Robert Lowell and is in continuous use by students and researchers” (“Library of Congress Selects”).

54 In a letter from Robert Coffin to Carroll Towle, Coffin notes that he would like Towle to not only teach Coffin’s composition course though the students in the course were “going fiction just now [. . .] and that, I know would be up your street” but he also wanted Towle to teach an American literature course of another English professor in the Bowdoin College English Department during his visit, which extended these exchanges to faculty not associated with the UNH Writers’ Conference (“Letters to Carroll S. Towle from Robert P.T. Coffin” UA 17-6 B.1 F.2).
Towle is quoted as saying, “I am convinced that these exchange visits are worthwhile and I hope to have at least one, if not two, other people doing the same thing before the close of the year” (“John Holmes Makes Interesting Visit” 4). The faculty clearly saw the professional benefits of inter-campus exchanges, as they were able to continue discussions with their colleagues, meet with students from an institutional culture different from their own, and learn about extracurricular initiatives and curricular approaches on other campuses, to see writing theory and pedagogy in action. These collaborations, too, allowed the faculty to share knowledge and resources, especially in institutions without advanced writing programs; rather than waiting for their individual colleges and universities to allot resources or hire people with expertise in various writing genres, these teachers, inspired by the rich conference environment they’d just been part of, shared resources cross-institutionally. And the students clearly benefited from this curricular exchange, meeting with writer-teachers from regional campuses, receiving additional instruction in writing, and in some ways, getting a taste of the writers’ conference environment in a few days’ time.

In these exchanges, most writing teachers acted on their own initiative and interest in collaborating with other teachers. They arranged these visits through a series of letter exchanges and were not typically compensated for these trips. In talking about a series of exchanges between Robert PT Coffin at Bowdoin and John Holmes at Tufts, Coffin says in a letter to Carroll Towle that “John has been here and he is to be here

55 In addition to its deliberate design as an exchange visit, this lack of stipend demonstrates one key difference between the keynote lecture or a scheduled reading and these exchange visits.

56 Coffin also extended this type of exchange visit to other colleges and universities across the country. In addition to his busy scheduled readings, Coffin conducted visits in the format of the exchange visits—including lecturing, teaching a class, conferencing with students and visiting their extracurricular clubs—at Florida Southern University, Indiana University, and The Taylor School in St. Louis, Missouri.
again—with more of the exchange motif in mind [. . .]. We got started so late in the year that it has been hard to find a chance to work in all the dates we should like to. And we have had to find out own way, largely, financially,” an arrangement that Coffin calls a “Dutch treat” (Letter to Carroll Towle March 7, 1940). In this same letter, Coffin does tell Towle that he’d secured funding for travel expenses from the Bowdoin President for Towle’s visit (Letter to Carroll Towle, March 7, 1940). In addition to Holmes, Coffin and Towle, the other people consistently involved in these exchange visits were Wilbert Snow of Wesleyan, David Morton of Amherst College, 57 Frederick C. Packard and Archibald MacLeish of Harvard University, Eric Kelly of Dartmouth, Phillip Booth of Wellesley and Robert Lowell of Boston University, among others. 58 Overall, these exchanges, originating from associations formed during the UNH Writers’ Conference and extending to those teachers and students not connected with the conference, influenced regional conversations about writing among teachers and students. These exchanges also allowed some of the conference atmosphere and practices to filter into the curricula of multiple regional institutions, including the University of New Hampshire.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the complexities of the UNH writing culture of the 1940s by focusing on one initiative—the UNH Writers Conference—that emerged from

57 While Snow and Morton were not directly listed as UNH Writers’ Conference staff members, it is possible that they participated in the conference in guest speaker roles, since these visits were not always listed in the program. In any case, those who were associated with the UNH Writer’s Conference staff proposed the idea to both Morton and Snow. A letter from John Holmes to Carroll Towle in 1957 notes that MacLeish had also joined these exchanges. In 1957, for instance, Holmes states that MacLeish went to UNH for an exchange, but was not able to keep the exchange date he’d made with Tufts due to a commitment in Europe.

58 Other exchanges were not as consistent or were not repeated. In this letter, John Holmes lists others who came to Tufts, though some of these writers were always not connected to a college or university, e.g., WS Merwin and Donald Hall.
that local institution; my discussion of the UNH Writers’ Conference illustrates how an institutional writing culture shapes and is shaped by such new writing initiatives. The new initiative generates its own rings of influence, rippling out to other institutions— influencing other teachers, students and administrators beyond its borders—and influencing the culture of the original institution as well. This study of one writers’ conference illustrates another way that the extracurriculum and the curriculum intersect to create an institutional writing culture. The conference created a community, a set of traditions, and beliefs about writing that extended beyond this institutional context, as teachers and students returned to their universities and high schools, as editors and publishers returned to their offices, as writers returned home.

As I have mentioned, though it ended in 1962 due to Towle’s death, this conference, and others like it, gained attention in many different circles of the writing profession and garnered the notice of the Saturday Review of Literature as one of the “Big Four” and the Atlantic Monthly editors as well. The conference, as it expanded its list of areas covered, focused a great deal of time on conversations about new trends in writing, contemporary literature, publication, writing as a profession, and teaching writing, looking and functioning in some ways, more like a professional conference than a creative writing conference.  

Yet as I looked through archival materials on this conference, I questioned whether these conferences penetrated the consciousness and conversations of composition studies. Since some of the staff members had associations with the New England College English Association, MLA and CCCC, I imagined so, at least

---

59 Looking at a current conference program for CCCC or NCTE, for example, we can find many of the topics discussed at the UNH Writers’ Conference.
regionally, but in my search for evidence, I found one specific reference of interest. In a 1962 CCC article entitled "Summer Workshops in Writing, Annual Meeting, Chicago, 1962," the report discusses a workshop in which presenters and participants considered the ways that the CCCC organization might learn more about summer workshops in composition, creative writing, and linguistics and to "make this information available" to members of CCCC's (76). When the presenters discussed the writers' conferences "with which they were familiar," the UNH Writers' Conference was one of the primary conferences discussed, though in the article the conference was named the "Durham" conference (76). About writers' conferences in general, the presenters agreed that "summer writing programs are of the greatest value when participants have much writing to do, when they have opportunity for personal conferences with the instructors, and when they can present their work before an audience competent to criticize it" (76). The UNH conference, while a bit less formal than this description, included each of these activities in its loosely configured schedule.

In some ways, this summer conference, while forgotten in the history/archives of the institution, prefigured and paved the way for other, more recent versions of summer conferences at UNH, like the literacy institute created by Tom Newkirk in 1980 and running still. For a description of this more recent conference, I turn to Bonnie Sunstein's study *Composing a Culture: Inside a Summer Writing Program with High School Teachers* (1994):

The summer writing program is a ritual itself. The community makes fellowship by telling stories, sharing artifacts, enacting practices and rites of passage, honoring its elder tradition-bearers, establishing a lexicon, a set of symbols, and a system of beliefs that each year forms a new identity for the people who enter,

---

60 Martha H. Cox from San Jose College gathered materials on programs at 650 institutions on their summer programs in these three areas of concentration.
while it conserves a core of its own. And each year, the summer writing program, although full of its former tradition, reinvents itself. (11)

I submit that this excerpt could be applied to the culture shaped by and shaping the UNH Summer Writers' Conference of the 1940s and that it too is indicative of an institutional writing culture as well—there is a sense of tradition, a sense of belonging to a given group, a sense of expectations and beliefs about writing and writing instruction, and a sense of being a part of a tradition and making something anew.

In the Conclusion that follows, I discuss the implications of this study. Specifically, I discuss the historical, theoretical, pedagogical and administrative implications of my study and then discuss the role of legacy in the study of institutional writing cultures. Finally, I consider the legacies that continue to influence the institutional writing culture at the University of New Hampshire.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

Introduction: A Map of An Institution

We used these thousands of words to keep the family feeling.  
To Dorothy in England, to Warren in India,  
To Robert Frost, to Carroll Towle, to Dave Morton, to Ted Packard,  
Asking in New Hampshire and Vermont and the Berkshire country  
About books, health, children, visits, poetry.  
Here's Beal in Madison, Ciardi in Kansas City, part of me gone away  
And the long lines out from name to name, saying  
Don't forget me, Keep on thinking about me, Tell me. Tell me. (To Footnote 44)

(FN 44) Dorothy Gordon and Warren Thomas had been undergraduates at Tufts  
with me. Carroll Towle was and is professor of English at the University of New  
Hampshire, and Director of the Writers Conference there, and I was for eight  
years on the staff of that Conference. Later on, he edited with me A COMPLETE  
COLLEGE READER. David Morton is the poet, then professor of English at  
Amherst College. Frederick Packard is Professor of Speech at Harvard  
University and director of the Vocarium, the recorded poetry of living poets.  

--An excerpt and explanatory footnote from John Holmes' poem "Map of My  
Country" (Part VIII)

In the poem "Map of My Country," excerpted above, John Holmes presents an  
autobiographical sketch—a verbal map\(^1\) of the people and places that have figured  
prominently in shaping his "country," (or life), especially in the development of his  
literate and professional life. In the excerpt above, the people and places named by  
Holmes are his fellow teaching colleagues and writers; his descriptions evoke his clear  
affinity for his literary compatriots and emphasize the local contexts that Holmes

\(^1\) In some ways, this poem explores creatively what Nedra Reynolds explores theoretically in her discussion  
of mental mapping, "We have mental maps of our hometowns or the most familiar places of our  
childhoods; we have mental maps of our current neighborhoods or campuses [...], a particular form of  
'imagined geography' that illustrate the complex relationships between the social and the spatial" (82, 84).
associates with them: New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts. Throughout this
dissertation, I have suggested that local context, whether in historical, archival research
or in the study of writing instruction, plays, or should play, a crucial role in our attempts
to tease out the complexities of an institutional writing culture. Holmes’ poem points to
other complexities, the layering of literate histories that influence just one person. And
yet, as I have illustrated in this dissertation, an institutional writing culture is comprised
of many people, many perspectives and many complex factors that contribute to its
creations and evolutions.

Summary, Implications, Future Research

In this dissertation, I have examined how the study of an institutional writing
culture extends our understanding of various theoretical perspectives and pedagogical
approaches toward writing existing in a given institution, at a given time. I have joined
Robin Varnum and other composition scholars in arguing that linking a writing pedagogy
such as current-traditional rhetoric to a historical period, or periodization, while serving
its function as a discursive construction shaping the discipline, can effectively limit our
understanding, promote over-generalized historical accounts, or discourage further study
of that period. This study demonstrates that localized investigations of writing instruction
enrich and complicate our present narratives about the 1940s by offering additional
insight into the ways that external, administrative, departmental, curricular and
extracurricular factors intersect to shape writing theory and practice in context. In
particular, by providing an examination of the curricular and extracurricular history of
one institution, I have shown that this approach troubles the field’s current depictions of
1940s writing instruction as being stagnant and affirms the need for further studies into this decade.

While my investigation of the formal curriculum at UNH in the 1940s suggests that there was indeed a limited view of student writers and student writing in the curricular context, my investigation of the extracurriculum offers alternate visions of student writers and establishes the sense that in the 1940s, UNH administrators, faculty and students saw themselves as part of “a writing university.” In exploring four extracurricular initiatives, I drew together strands of influence contributing to the creation of these initiatives and illustrating the initiatives’ influence on the institutional writing culture. The existence and promotion of the journal the Student Writer encouraged students from across the university to write and fostered a university-wide recognition of excellent student writing. Extending this influence further, the success that UNH students enjoyed in winning regional and national writing contests encouraged other UNH students-writers to continue the tradition, provided university, regional and national recognition of student writing, and inspired the UNH Writers’ Conference. In addition, the Folio Club and Creative writing workshops afforded students an opportunity they would not otherwise have had to join in the literary tradition of contemporary American Literature as both readers and writers.

Finally, the UNH Summer Writers’ Conference opened writing conversations about writing and the act of writing along with the study of contemporary American literature to a wider community and created regional connections that impacted the curriculum. A final function of the extracurriculum that I explored was its reciprocal nature—how an initiative is created, shaped and/or informed by existent writing.
programs and perspectives within an institutional writing culture and how this new
initiative then shapes perspectives within and beyond the university setting. In the end, I
argue for the study of institutional writing cultures as a productive means of
understanding and analyzing contradictions, connections and intersections among various
sites of writing in a localized context. The implications of that argument and of the
evidence I've presented are far-reaching, extending from the historical to current
theoretical, pedagogical and administrative issues in the field of composition studies. I
will outline each of these implications in the sections that follow.

**Implications for Historical Study**

As one of its major contributions to historical study, this dissertation adds a much
needed historical narrative to the few focused and extended studies of 1940s writing
instruction that exist, like those of Robin Varnum or Thomas Masters. In arguing for
more focused and local histories to complicate the broader narratives of Berlin and
others, Charles Paine states that, “composition historiography needs more [...] narratives
that shave off smaller, more manageable and analyzable, cross-sections of composition
and of culture, but that are thus able to examine those relationships more thoroughly”
(34). In its scope, localized site, and discussion of institutional writing cultures as a
means of analyzing relationships between “cross-sections of composition and of culture,”
my study addresses some of the concerns Paine raises. At its core, my study offers a
series of stories illustrating one institution’s negotiations of the various external,
administrative, departmental and individual factors influencing writing instruction in the
curriculum and the extracurriculum. For instance, in terms of external factors, I discuss
the ways that shifting student demographics, wartime conditions, and changing social climates influenced curriculum at UNH in the 1940s.

In my analysis of the dissonance, intersections and interplay between the curriculum and the extracurriculum, my study also challenges the field’s more generalized descriptions of writing instruction in the 1940s. As I have shown, composition scholars have tended to portray writing instruction in the early twentieth-century as a time devoid of innovation, often citing a product-oriented, grammar-based pedagogy as the central concern. Part of the reason for this depiction is due to a focus on the first-year composition (FYC) course as indicative or representative of trends in writing instruction during that period. My examination of the FYC course at UNH in the 1940s does little to dispute this characterization of writing instruction but my discussion of the extracurriculum suggests that there is more to the story. While the FYC course is certainly one part of the story of writing instruction during that period, my study joins the work of David Russell, Anne Ruggles Gere, Katherine Adams, Neal Lerner and others in exploring other sites of writing instruction to provide a better understanding of the ways that writing theories and pedagogies overlap, intersect, contradict and co-exist in a given time or space. I argue that looking at multiple formal and informal sites of writing within or in connection with an institution helps us to avoid over-generalized historical narratives.

Connected to this argument, my work contributes to the historical work of composition studies by providing an argument for widening the lens of historical investigation to institutional writing cultures as a measure of analyzing pedagogical innovation and beliefs about writing and student writers. In particular, I have shown
through writing the history of writing instruction at one institution that multiple
influences in the curriculum and extracurriculum shaped the institutional writing culture
of the University of New Hampshire during the 1940s. In Chapters three and four, for
instance, my study of the curriculum and extracurriculum provided contrasting views of
the student writer as deficient and proficient. As my study demonstrates, focusing on just
one site of writing instruction at UNH or on the formal curriculum alone would not have
provided a full enough picture of the complex and competing attitudes about writing at
UNH during the 1940s. I want to acknowledge here that my argument to “widen the lens”
of institutional study is not an argument against a sustained focus on one site of writing
instruction in an institutional context(s) such as Varnum’s study of English 1-2 at
Amherst. I see both courses of study as vital contributions to the historical landscape of
composition studies and I see the potential for these studies to inform one another and to
suggest potential areas for additional study.\textsuperscript{2}

Third, while this study focuses primarily on one institution, I have also made
connections to regional conversations about writing in an effort to extend my study
beyond one’s institution’s practices and to consider how one institution’s writing culture
can influence other writing sites or other institutions. In Chapter five, I discussed the
series of faculty exchanges that developed through the Writer’s Conference. While this
initiative was just one of the many connections developed among the Writer’s
Conference staff, my study offers new insights into the origins of this regional practice in
particular and suggests the potential for further study of the ways that writing theories

\textsuperscript{2} For instance, we might find connections among various institutions’ writing cultures, shared pedagogical
approaches or professional relationships among faculty, as in the faculty exchange program that I outlined
in Chapter five. Related to Varnum’s study of Amherst College, the faculty exchange program at UNH
included David Morton—referred to above in Holmes’ poem—who taught at Amherst during the 1940s.
and practices are shaped through regional connections. Although local institutions may not have had a wide ranging impact on the field, studying their writing cultures can complicate and deepen our understanding of writing instruction in a given period and can suggest regional connections that warrant further study.

My study also contributes to the growing list of historical studies recovering the place of writing program administrators in the early twentieth-century. I add Dr. Carroll S. Towle’s name to the list and suggest other names for future study. In her article “Finding Ourselves in the Past: An Argument for Historical Work on WPAs” Barbara L’Eplattenier notes that “historical work in Rhetoric and Composition has, for the most part, ignored the administrative aspects of writing programs” partly due to the “invisibility” of writing program administration, or the lack of knowledge of these programs beyond institutional or regional borders (133). Some WPAs in the early twentieth-century came to the fore and are often cited today because they gained the field’s notice through their own publications or because historians such as Albert Kitzhaber or James Berlin certified their place in our historical consciousness. Some writing program administrators, too, have gained fame through the writings of those who worked with them such as Walker Gibson’s reflections of Theodore Baird’s English 1-2 program at Amherst in John Brereton’s collection Traditions of Inquiry. While it was not my primary purpose, this study, in my discussion of Towle as a writing program administrator, takes up Barbara L’Eplattenier’s call for further investigations of WPAs in

---

3 I would argue that the University of New Hampshire’s regional and national influences on writing theory and practice have, until now, not gained a place in histories of composition due to the ways that institutions have typically gained prominence in composition’s historical landscape—usually gaining notice through articles or through a reference to them in foundational historical or primary texts (Kitzhaber, Berlin, Connors, Brereton, Crowley, Johnson, etc.)

4 L’Eplattenier also notes that WPAs in the early twentieth century did not always have a title indicating their position or role; as Director of Advanced Composition, however, Dr. Towle did hold such a title.
the early twentieth century and adds evidence to her argument against Corbett’s claim that there were no WPAs prior to the mid-1940s. While I connect with themes in L’Eplattenier’s and Lisa Mastrangelo’s recent edited collection *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration: Individuals, Communities and the Formation of a Discipline*, my study extends their collection’s focused study of WPAs acting primarily in curricular contexts by discussing Towle’s actions as a WPA who fostered an extracurricular writing life for his students as well. As I have shown, Towle’s efforts in the extracurriculum fostered a university-wide sense of admiration for student writing and established regional connections that, in turn, influenced the university writing culture. This discussion of Towle working in the extracurriculum suggests the need for further study into the extracurricular initiatives that were undertaken by WPAs including an exploration of the origins, rationales, support and influences of such initiatives.

Though I have mentioned a few implications for further research, I’ll address a few additional implications for further historical study that this dissertation suggests. While this study focuses on the writing cultures sponsored by the university administration and the English Department at the University of New Hampshire, another study might complicate this institutional picture even further, considering the writing practices and instruction in another specific discipline or college—or, crossing boundaries to study pedagogical connections established among regional universities and colleges or between the university and area schools. As there are many places in a university where writing cultures thrive, the possibilities are limited only to a researcher’s time, research design and methods. I hope, then, that my study will inspire additional
historical studies of institutional writing cultures to enrich and complicate the historical record about writing instruction in the 1940s.

Implications for Localized Theories of Writing

Throughout this dissertation, I have used the term *institutional writing culture* to represent the ways that complex and seemingly disparate strands in a university setting interweave to form localized beliefs and attitudes about student writing and about writing instruction in general. I illustrate how, depending on the context being considered (e.g. Freshman English, advanced composition, an extracurricular initiative), an institutional writing culture encompasses multiple complementary, competing or contradictory perspectives about writing, student writers, and teaching writing. Throughout this study, I explored contexts of writing instruction at UNH by shifting the site of historical study—from the formal curriculum to extracurricular initiatives linked to teachers and students. In Chapters four and five, I intentionally used the title “rings of influence” to imply that the directionality of this influence is reciprocal or recursive—a series of connections impacting one another. Rather than beginning at a central site and moving progressively outward, like a circle diagram, however, I envision these cultural arenas overlapping to form an institution’s writing culture, more like a web in which each strand supports and links to other parts of the web. The notion of the circle diagram that I mentioned would suggest a progressive model of an institutional culture, one that begins with a central or foundational inner circle and moves outward. One might say, for instance, that some historical studies that center on first-year composition could imply or be read to imply—whether or not this implication was intended—that an institutional culture of writing builds from this focal point outward. In fact, as we sometimes talk about the FYC as
foundational (as a requirement of all students, as a first-in-a-series of writing courses) could also imply a model of progression in shaping an institutional writing culture. However, my conception of an institutional writing culture is not intended to be, as my study illustrates, progressive in nature, or at least is not progressive from one source. Instead, my study suggests that the factors influencing institutional writing cultures are generative and reciprocal in nature.

Overall, I offer the concept of the institutional writing culture, or writing cultures, as a productive way of reading or analyzing institutional priorities about writing instruction. First, in not limiting our scope to one area of writing instruction in an institution, we can look across multiple arenas within a university to find threads in common. My use of the term "common" here isn't meant to imply commonality, but to suggest selecting a common theme and interrogating how it is applied in different contexts within the institution. For instance, we might compare depictions of student writers in the formal curriculum and in the extracurriculum as I have throughout this study, or contrast pedagogical practices such as teacher-student conferencing in two difference contexts such as Freshman English and Advanced Composition courses.

Second, the concept of institutional writing cultures allows us to consider points of influence or origin. For instance, we might be able to recognize aspects of one writing initiative that influenced or contributed to the creation of a new one, as I did in locating the student writing contests as the primary impetus for the UNH Summer Writers' Conference. This lens also helps us to understand influences or events contributing to a change in an existent practice, such as an administrative shift coinciding with a policy change. Third, the concept of the institutional writing culture helps us to read across
writing initiatives for points of convergence/intersection, such as extracurricular writing initiatives such as the Folio Club electing to read the published writing from UNH student writers or the UNH Writers' Conference staff visiting one another's classrooms. Because institutional writing cultures are fluid, not static, always evolving, I offer these multiple ways of reading an institutional writing culture built through my work with the concept throughout this historical study. While my study of institutional writing cultures was historical, I could see this concept being developed and applied productively in other research contexts as well.

**Pedagogical Implications**

I also see my study providing a productive extension of the work being done studying writing practices outside of institutional contexts, with important pedagogical implications for our composition classrooms and other centers of writing on our campuses. I agree with Anne Ruggles Gere when she “propose[s] that we listen to the signals that come through the walls of our classrooms from the world outside” (76). I believe that as writing teachers, we learn a great deal from the writing that students do when they are not in school. Composition scholars have, in recent years especially, been looking to the literacy practices outside of the classroom as those that greatly influence and impact people's attitudes, approaches, and conceptions of writing, perhaps more than in educational contexts (Dyson, Gee, Gilmore, Heath, Newkirk). As Gere discusses and as my study shows from an historical viewpoint, rich literacy events occur beyond the formal curriculum or sit at the edges of the curriculum. As I have shown, Carroll Towle and his contemporaries in the UNH English Department, in offering the extracurricular initiatives that they did, were tapping into contemporary discussions in a way that was
not accepted in the formal curriculum during the 1940s; in doing so, they fostered a richer
culture of writing than that offered by the curriculum and developed several writing
communities at UNH and beyond. Their initiatives show the vitality of tapping into
current and emerging trends in writing and of looking to these emergent trends to
understand the literacy experiences of our students. While these initiatives highlight the
importance of looking to emergent writing trends, I acknowledge that their location in the
extracurriculum and the significant time investment that Towle devoted to them is
problematic for present-day composition faculty. Some faculty do, of course, devote
administrative time to edit student publications but, what I’m suggesting here is how we
might foster an institutional culture of writing within curricular contexts (while certainly
encouraging or initiating extracurricular initiatives whenever possible).

Because curricular changes are quite slow, the curriculum is usually seen by
students, and in my study, certainly by the writing and speech faculty, as quite
conservative or traditional. The curriculum is also constrained by institutional pressures,
disciplinary definitions and departmental values. Due to additional constraints such
budgetary and technological limits (often related issues) or administrative expectations
regarding writing instruction, cutting edge technologies and other writing innovations
often remain at the edges or wholly outside of the curriculum. Cutting edge or emergent
sites of literacy are often connected with new technologies such as blogs, wikis, or other
online publications. They also incorporate and coordinate multimodal—visual, audio and
textual—modes of communication, as webpages, video games or video literature often
do. These sites of literacy are sometimes tapped by technologically savvy teachers, but
more often exist just beyond educational contexts, in students’ individual initiatives, in
student organizations, writing and reading groups, workplaces, and varied collaborative writing contexts. Those students today who have access to the newer technologies often sponsor their own literacy events, but we too can sponsor such events; I see sites such as writing centers, for example, as excellent generative spaces—both physical and virtual—to encourage and offer rich discussions of texts, of language, and of sharing, harnessing and critiquing the technologies intended to enhance our literacy practices.

**Administrative Implications**

The investigation of a local university archive and institutional writing culture has many administrative implications, especially for a writing program administrator. As Ruth Mirtz points out, writing program administrators can benefit from knowing an institution’s curricular—and I would add *extracurricular*—histories in order to write the stories of their institution’s writing culture, to recover lost stories and key figures in writing instruction, and to understand the origins of current curricular, extracurricular university programs. If we can draw links to our writing pasts, institutionally, we gain a sense of being part of a larger tradition. At UNH, for instance, understanding that the tradition of conferencing extends back to the 1930s helps us to understand or at least provides one rationale for the department’s continued commitment to this practice today. Even without this sense of history, instructors new to the UNH English Department quickly learn of this commitment to conferencing as a practice rooted in a longstanding tradition. But knowing the history allows us to provide these new instructors with an additional rationale for the practice.

Knowing the history of our writing programs can also help administrators develop rationales for restarting programs that are now defunct, for returning to programmatic
missions for existent programs, or for developing a new writing initiative as part of an institution’s longstanding approach to writing instruction. In learning the origins of certain pedagogical practices, a writing program administrator could argue for change, noting that some pedagogical practices made sense in a given moment, but that the moment has passed (due to changing demographics or new technologies). And lastly, my study suggests the importance of knowing who came before us in our local institutions and of understanding the role of legacy in developing institutional writing cultures, to find out more about the people who established the departments in which we work, who developed the programs that we’ve inherited, who designed the courses that we teach (in some form), who influenced generations of writing teachers before us. Considering my study, again, in its local context, it is this question of legacy that I will take up in the final section of this dissertation.

**On Legacy: Mentorships and Changing Curricular Cultures**

In the lore of composition studies, the University of New Hampshire has been considered as Lad Tobin says “one of the bastions of process pedagogy,” with UNH Alumnus Donald M. Murray ’48 as its primary advocate (8). Often the emergence of process pedagogy has been depicted as an innovative approach arising out of nowhere, another discursive construction, to be sure. If we think of the students of the forties being the writing teachers of the fifties and sixties, this emergence is less sudden and more of a process. What we see by looking at the multiple and overlapping contexts of the curriculum and the extracurriculum are these writers/teachers-in-training gaining tools to help them to write and to teach, to critique reductive pedagogies and to develop new pedagogies in the future.
In this dissertation, I have suggested that the extracurriculum and curriculum had a reciprocal influence on one another. A given moment in an institution's history becomes embedded or is imparted to the people who encountered and engaged with it in some way. Yet the formal curriculum of the 1940s did not shift structurally or philosophically in response to the extracurriculum, but seemed to have smaller influences. As Donald Murray told me in my interview with him, little had changed in the formal curriculum from the time he'd been at student at UNH in the 1940s to the time he returned in the 1960s to teach. However, in the 1960s, as the formal curriculum began to shift toward process pedagogy per Murray's influence, in courses such as Freshman English, I can see how Murray and others might have drawn upon the spirit or ethos of the extracurricular writing culture of the 1940s: its student-centeredness, its interest in new trends in writing, its fostering of relationships between writers and teacher, its valuing of student writers. This study suggests a possible link to an earlier time, a legacy of the 1940s institutional writing culture and those who shaped it.

In thinking about those who shaped the writing culture, I have shown that English professor Carroll S. Towle played a significant part in building this writing culture during the 1940s. Yet at UNH today, few people recognize Towle's name and even fewer people have heard of his signature, most publicly known achievement—the UNH Summer Writers' Conference. I titled this section “on legacy” in part to reference Towle's forgotten achievements and in part to herald the unwritten legacies of the men and women like Towle at many institutions. My study points to the importance of writing these stories, first to tell the stories themselves and second to consider how beliefs about writing—instilled in students and teachers at a given moment in the university—can fan
out to other educational sites. These legacies are hard to see, as Walker Gibson points out in his discussion of Theodore Baird’s influence on Amherst students and teachers, saying that “it is a curious sort of influence; it cannot readily be documented; it exists largely by word of mouth” (147). Such teachers are the hidden innovators of the past and mentors of future innovators.

Many of Carroll Towle’s students, who had worked with him in the writing initiatives I discuss in this study, became future innovators. As one of Towle’s students, Donald M. Murray, in his article “A Landscape of Words” credits his experience at UNH as a formative time for him as a writer:

I carried little with me but the dream of becoming a writer -- a dream that seemed so wonderful, so removed from the ordinary person I was, that I imagined it to be impossible. Yet in Durham, I found professor Carroll Towle, who seemed to think my dream possible. Gwynne Daggett, Sylvester Bingham and others demonstrated lives lived in the landscape of language. Just as important, I joined a community of pilgrims who followed the same impossible vision.

I remember no moment of grand illumination, but in four semesters and two sessions of summer school, my dream became a vocation. I left UNH a writer and have, ever since, lived a life of words. It might have happened somewhere else, but I doubt it. (13)

It’s clear through this quote that the people, including Towle, Daggett and Bingham, who built the writing culture of the 1940s, left a lasting impression on Murray. Although in other contexts, Murray has highlighted his work as a journalist as shaping his writing life, this quote highlights the importance of UNH in shaping him as a writer.

**Epilogue**

In the spring of 2007, at the site of my study at the University of New Hampshire, a final reflection on legacy seems both appropriate and poignant as we face the year without Donald Murray. On December 30, 2006, Don was visiting a friend in Beverly, Massachusetts when he passed away, at age 82. The memorial services for Don that were
held at UNH a few weeks later and at CCCC in March spoke to Don’s legacy to writers. Journalists, creative writers, education and composition scholars, editors, teachers, English professors, community members, faculty across the curriculum and those he’d knowingly or unknowingly mentored all gathered to remember Don and to pay him tribute.

At CCCC 2007 in New York City, two memorial services were held, one by the creative nonfiction writers and one by composition scholars who’d been affected in some way by Don’s life and work. I was able to attend the second memorial. Person after person shared stories of Don’s individual attention and encouragement of their writing and of their professional lives. Cinthia Gannett, in particular, spoke about Don’s extensive influence on those of us engaged, in some way, in writing or teaching when she said, “We are here this evening to offer testimony to all the ways [Donald Murray] shaped us as writers, teachers, teachers of teachers, and creators of programs—to acknowledge the way his presence animates and infuses so much of the way we are.”

Like Carroll Towle, Don inspired writers of all ages from many professions to persist in the daily project of writing. For my part, as I wended my way through my Masters and PhD Programs at UNH, I'd often meet Don in the Bagelry coffee shop in Durham and he'd ask me how it was going and leave me with some small nugget of wisdom that offered me hope and that spurred me on in my work. I was honored when he agreed to be interviewed as part of my dissertation research.

We may never fully grasp the power and extent of Don’s legacy. This legacy, amid the loss of Don, lives on. But I want to thank those who encouraged Don to write and then to teach. They gave us a great gift. We can remember that we carry the lessons we’ve learned with us, that we are part of a long network of legacies, and that we can
resolve to live each day fostering our own legacies in the pieces that we write, in the students we teach, and in the cultures of writing that we build.


"Army Unit Leaves this Month After Varied History on Campus." TNH 21 December 21 1944: 4.


Barndollar, Frank W. "University Writers' Conference Produces Large Number of Published Works" New Hampshire Sunday News. 21 August 1949: 6.


*Bulletin of the University of New Hampshire Catalog Issue for 1940-1941.* Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, 1941.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Dupell, Paul. “Student Writer Made Possible By Loan of Late Pres. Lewis.” TNH 18 May 1937: 1.
-----. “Successful Writers” *TNH* 19 October 1937: 3.


“Folio in 14th Year Under Dr. Towle” *TNH* 29 November 1945: 1.


“LA College Adds Three New Courses.” TNH 27 September 1945: 3.


McQuillen, Maurice. “Former UNH Student Portrays Peacetime Campus—Pfc. Maurice McQuillen Shows Change Which War Has Brought” *UNH News* 2 December 1943: 1.


Mirtz, Ruth M. “WPA’s as Historians: Discovering a First-Year Writing Program by Researching its Past.” *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher*. 119-130.


Murray, Donald M. Interview with Michael Michaud. 2 November 2002.


Murray, Donald M. Personal Interview. 22 July 2005.


"NH Student Writer May Be Resumed." *TNH* 13 December 1945: 2.

"Ninety Veterans Enroll Among 505 Freshmen: Total Enrollments 1,278; Ratio Stands at 436 Men to 842 Women." *TNH* 27 September 1945: 1.


"President Sees Students Sharing in Administration." *TNH* 29 October 1937: 1+.


Richards, Lillian. Written Interview. 5 September 2005.


"Rudolf Honkala is First NH Man Under ‘G.I.’ Bill" *UNH News* 24 August 1944, Summer Issue: 2.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Silva, Donald. Personal Interview. 11 July 2005.


“Student Veterans’ Club Holds Meeting in Murkland” *UNH News*, 27 July 1944, Summer Issue: 1.


“Students Take Advantage of Writing Laboratory.” *TNH* 1 March 1940: 1.


"UNH Authors—The List Grows." *TNH* 15 April 1955: 2.

"UNH Coeds Take Literary Awards" *TNH* 17 October 1946: 2.

University of New Hampshire English Department Meeting Minutes, 1945-1951. English Departmental Archives. English Department. Durham, NH.


"Veterans Complete Orientation Course" *TNH* 27 September 1945: 4.

"Visiting Professors to be Used in English Dept." *TNH* 18 Oct. 1940: 1.


“Workshop Meetings to Begin on Thursday.” \textit{TNH} 27 September 1938: 1.

“Writers’ Conference Here August 3-14: Staff Again Made Up of Prominent Writers” \textit{TNH} 20 February 1942: 4.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: WRITTEN INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What years did you attend the University of New Hampshire? What was your major?

2. Why did you decide to attend the University of New Hampshire? Did you attend college directly after high school, or did you pursue other jobs or activities first? What was your course of study or goal in attending university?

3. What story or stories could you share about your writing instructor(s), their practices, their assignments, and/or their interaction with students (A memorable or influential moment)?

4. What do you remember doing in writing courses such as Freshman English or other writing courses? (Ex. What types of writing did you do—themes, argumentative essays, research essays? What sorts of materials did you read/write in these courses? What types of feedback did you get from the professors or fellows students and in what formats (workshops, conferences, written comments)? How were grades assigned to papers (would the grades change if you revised)?)

5. How do you think these composition courses helped or influenced you, if they did, in the writing you did for other college courses across the university? In your later professional lives or endeavors?

6. What kinds of writing did you do in courses other than English and how were writing assignments given, and/or graded?

7. If you were at UNH during World War II, what role do you think the war playing in shaping or affecting student life? In shaping course curriculum (especially with respect to student writing)?

8. Do you have any course materials or student essays that I could review or that you would be willing to send me? If so, what materials do you have? (essays, assignments, class notes).
APPENDIX B: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

1. What years did you attend the University of New Hampshire? What was your major?

2. Why did you decide to attend the University of New Hampshire? Did you attend college directly after high school, or did you pursue other jobs or activities first? What was your course of study or goal in attending university?

3. Describe your experiences in student clubs (such as the Folio club, or a fraternity/sorority, etc.) during your years at UNH. If you were a member of a specific club, what do you remember about the meetings, the students involved, or the advisors?

4. Did you take a writing placement exam prior to attending UNH? If so, what do you remember about the exam—its structure, the environment in which the exam was given, etc?

5. What do you remember doing in writing courses such as Freshman English or other writing courses? What types of writing did you do—did you write themes, argumentative essays, research essays? What sorts of materials did you read/write in these courses? What types of feedback did you get from the professors or fellows students and in what formats (workshops, conferences, written comments)?

6. What stories could you share about your writing instructor(s), their practices, their assignments, and/or their interaction with students? If you took more than one English course, how would you compare the styles of the different English professors at UNH?

7. Did you hand in early drafts of your writing? Were you expected to revise, and if so, what kinds of things did you do to improve the essays you wrote? How were grades assigned to papers (would the grades change if you revised)?

8. How do you think these composition courses helped or influenced you, if they did, in the writing you did for other college courses across the university? In your later professional lives or endeavors?

9. What kinds of writing did you do in courses other than English and how were writing assignments given, revised and/or assessed?

10. Do you remember many changes in the curriculum and/or student population while you were at UNH? If so, how did these changes affect the university culture? If you were at UNH during the war, what role do you think the war playing in shaping or affecting student life? In shaping course curriculum (especially with respect to student writing)?
11. How would you say that your experience with writing at UNH influenced your attitudes toward writing? How did your writing courses at UNH influence your writing throughout your college and professional career?

12. What other stories could you tell or campus events could you share that might provide insight for me as I work on this study of writing innovations at UNH in the 1940s?

13. Do you have any course materials or student essays that I could review or that you would be willing to send me (I would incur copying/mailing costs)? If so, what materials do you have? (essays, assignments, class notes).
Announcement of Public Lectures and the New England Dinner

The seven annual public lectures given by the staff of the Writers’ Conference are designed to be of general interest, somewhat in contrast to the intra-conference sessions. In addition, the 1942 program offers unusual variety. For a single admission the price thirty-five cents; a season ticket sells for $1.65. All lectures save one will be given in Murkland Auditorium beginning at 8:00 p.m. The exception is that of Professor Packard, which will begin at 8:00 p.m. in the Reading Room on the lower floor of the Library. Season tickets are obtainable at the door.

The annual New England Writers’ Dinner, concluding event of the Conference, will be held in the University Commons at 7:15 p.m., August 14. Reservations should be made in advance through the Director. Distinguished New England authors are guests at the dinner. The program, beginning at about 8:30 p.m. will have as principal speaker Robert P. Tristram Coffin. Admission to the program alone is twenty-five cents; tickets for the dinner and program are $1.00.

Lecture Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday, August 4</th>
<th>Eric Kelley: National Background for Literature—the Slave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, August 6</td>
<td>Esther Forbes: Historical Fiction and Paul Revere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, August 7</td>
<td>Millen Brand: My Book Became a Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, August 9</td>
<td>Frederick Packard: The Poet’s Voice (with numerous Harvard recordings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, August 10</td>
<td>David Woodbury: Writing a Book in Wartime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, August 12</td>
<td>John Holmes and Rolfe Humphries: “Poetry is Tough.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, August 13</td>
<td>Writers in Wartime—(A Forum)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[signed] Carroll S. Towle [typed] Director

--From, UNH Writers’ Conference File UA 17-6 B.1 F.12. “Programs and Schedules,” University of New Hampshire Archives, Durham, NH.
APPENDIX D: UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE WRITERS' CONFERENCE
LECTURE SERIES, 1947

WRITERS' CONFERENCE—UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
Annual Evening Lectures—Tenth Session (1947)

The annual evening lectures of The Writers' Conference will be given in
Murkland Auditorium at 8:00 P.M. on the dates given below. There will be no charge for
these evening lectures.

The speakers will talk on subjects of their own choice, and with the general public
in mind. Thus the lectures are not continuous, and everyone is welcomed at any or all of
them.

Tuesday, August 12 — Robert P. Tristram Coffin: Yankee Coast
Wednesday, August 13 — Eric Kelly: The Making of an Historical Tale
Thursday, August 14 — Barbara Frost: The Perils of Mystery Writing
— Ella Shannon Bowles and Dorothy S. Towle: Adventures in Cook Book Writing
Friday, August 15 — Loyd Haberly: Indian-loving Catlin
Monday, August 18 — Robert Neal: The Firm Freedom
Tuesday, August 19 — Edmund Gilligan: The Story of the Grand Banks
Wednesday, August 20 — John Gould: The Lisbon Enterprise Speaks the Truth

--From, UNH Writers' Conference File UA 17-6 B.1 F.12. "Programs and Schedules,”
University of New Hampshire Archives, Durham, NH.
March 22, 2005

Tirabassi, Katherine
English - Hamilton Smith Hall
28 Bramber II
Rochester, NH 03867

IRB #: 3406
Study: Revisiting the "Current-Traditional Era": Innovations in Writing
Instruction at the University of New Hampshire, 1940-1949
Approval Date: 03/15/2005.

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Expedited as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 110.

Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period, you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects in this study. If your study is still active, you may request an extension of IRB approval.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects. (This document is also available at http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/IRB.html.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie-simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Manager

Research Conduct and Compliance Services, Office of Sponsored Research, Service Building, 51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585 * Fax: 603-862-3564

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.