A Discipline’s Composition: A Citation Analysis of Composition Studies

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Available online 13 February 2006

Citation patterns in the field of composition studies are analyzed and compared with patterns in other humanities fields. Results showed marked differences in citation patterns between composition studies and other humanities fields, including literary studies. Librarians can use this information to forge more productive relationships with composition studies faculty.

INTRODUCTION

A relatively new discipline has emerged in higher education that straddles the line between the social sciences and humanities: composition studies. Often referred to in the same breath as “rhetoric” (rhetoric and composition), this discipline has emerged within the existing structures of university English departments. Its practitioners, however, are engaged in work that differs substantially from their departmental counterparts, who are generally involved with the study of literature. The composition portion of rhetoric and composition is a relatively new area of study; one that is still forming and refining its core theories. Just as other members of English departments are learning how to work with composition scholars, so must academic librarians, especially in the areas of collection development and collaborative instruction.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to provide insight into the research and publishing characteristics of composition scholars. To that end, it examines citations present in articles from major composition studies journals and from books published from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. The data show that citation patterns in composition studies are substantially different from those in other social sciences and humanities disciplines.

Librarians cannot reasonably be expected to engage the practitioners of a discipline about which they know little. The more librarians know about the discipline of composition studies, the more they will be able to provide the necessary resources for composition scholars’ research, and to effectively add their expertise in information literacy instruction. This study, joined with the overview of the development of composition studies as a discipline, provides a means for this process to occur.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is not a far reach to make the connection between the research being done in composition studies and that being done by librarians whose interests lie in bibliographic or information literacy instruction, as has been shown by the authors of two very important additions to the recent body of library literature, James Elmborg and Rolf Norgaard. These authors have each written convincing calls-to-arms to academic librarians to engage their colleagues in the field of composition studies, and forge a working relationship whose end result would offer both pedagogies a better way of promoting information literacy.
to students. The present article is an extension of the endeavor that Elmborg and Norgaard have undertaken: it steps out of the exhortative and into the practical.

John Cullars, a librarian who has authored many citation studies in various humanities fields, notes that certain library and information science scholars acknowledge the value of citation studies only so far as they show “the shape of the literature,” and remain unconvinced of their accuracy as collection development tools. Nevertheless, such studies, in providing a sense of “the literature,” can be relied upon as indicators that can help librarians to more effectively provide adequate resources for their clientele. Cullars also stresses the need for academic librarians to possess “a heightened grasp of the shape of the disciplines entrusted to them in times of fiscal austerity.”

Wiberley makes the point that librarians who are professionally unfamiliar with the humanities have much to gain from citation studies because they “will teach these librarians things they could only otherwise begin to learn by reading in the humanities or by taking courses in one or more humanities disciplines.” He also asserts that even for “veteran librarians, quantitative findings about types of scholarship will provide benchmarks for their thinking about what humanities scholars do.”

In 1975, Bebout, Davis, and Oehlert put forth the hypothesis that humanists use books more than journals. Stone, in her 1982 study of the “information needs and uses” of humanities scholars, found this hypothesis to be provable. Watson-Boone updated Stone’s study in 1993 and created a composite portrait of the typical humanities scholar, using a combination of meta-analysis and interview techniques. What she found caused her to hedge on the topic of book use versus journal use much more than many of her contemporary researchers:

Humanities scholars continue to draw upon a wide range of subject literature in conducting their research, with the majority of works being in book form. Although the assumption holds true that books play a greater role than do journals, it needs to be tempered: the subjects and periods covered by the research topic determine whether the scholar will use a greater or lesser percentage of articles, and whether the monographic material will be the primary works of the individual(s) under study or the critical (secondary) literature.

Stern notes in her summary of her citation analysis of the characteristics of literary scholarship that “reliance on materials in book form is still decisively prevalent.” Budd finds in his citation study of American Literature scholarship that “in the humanities, more references are made to books than to journals.” Lindholm-Romantschuk and Warner hypothesize that, in the humanities, “the intellectual impact of monographs is greater than that of journal articles.” Wiberley’s recent article cites John Cullars as showing that “the principal medium for communication in the humanities is the book.”

This knowledge of the relatively heavy use of monographs in humanities research has proven useful to subject bibliographers and others involved in financial-planning aspects of collection development in academic libraries, as the budget situation for acquisitions becomes ever more pressingly serious. Many collection development librarians have based their decisions to allocate more of their humanities budgets towards monographs in lieu of serials on this knowledge. But English departments, more and more, are becoming home to composition studies scholars, and the publishing characteristics of these individuals have yet to be as rigorously and definitively studied as those of their English department counterparts in literary studies. Thus, it may be premature to assume that their reliance on books and journals is as heavy and light, respectively, as their literary studies colleagues.

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**BACKGROUND OF COMPOSITION STUDIES AS A DISCIPLINE**

This section focuses on how rhetoric-composition, or composition studies, became an academic discipline. Although there are numerous book-length histories of the field of present-day composition studies that approach the discipline generally, as well as with regard to a certain aspects, this author will refrain from discussing all but the most important points in the discipline’s background, relying on the writings of many of these very same composition studies historians.

In much earlier times, rhetoric was not saddled with its more recent partnering term, “composition.” Rhetoric has its origins in the classics; its modern focus is mostly the study of how language and communication are used to get ideas across in different contexts and arenas of discourse. Because rhetoric has at its heart the necessary principles leading to effective communication, it only makes sense that it would be joined with composition, or later, composition studies.

As Connors points out, the Germanic model of higher education in the 19th century was so popular among American scholars that between 1860 and 1885, Americans by the hundreds (Connors’ italics) brought doctorates in [many] subjects back from Germany. And wherever a congregation of doctorates could be established, there was the germ of a university department […]. But what of rhetoric, which had been so important in the American college? Why were there no departments of rhetoric? The answer is simple. There were no departments of rhetoric because there were no German PhDs in rhetoric.

In the meantime, rhetoricians, who lacked the PhDs and the academic camaraderie of those influenced by the German model, were nevertheless invaluable members of the academy, as they had answered the post-1875 call for “basic instruction in correct writing and speaking in colleges.” The problem was that nobody knew precisely where rhetoric fits. “It could not be buried and it would not go away, but neither could it be saved as ‘real scholarship.’” English Departments, meanwhile, encompassing the studies of philology and literature, sprung up widely at the end of the 19th century. And these became the obvious – although often less than welcoming – home for rhetoricians: the discipline-less, doctorate-less holdovers from an earlier era of American higher education. As a result, for the greater part of the 20th century, rhetoric-composition suffered as a weak cousin to the academic discipline of literary (and to a lesser extent, philological) study, and rhetoricians, who were
saddled with the additional task of composition instruction, found themselves carrying a much heavier workload.

Any theories that rhetoric-composition could call its own were arrived at during the years 1870–1910, and remained largely static from that time until the 1960s. After 1910, the body of developed theory appeared mainly in textbooks to which composition instructors had access but no ability to critique or augment it. Journals specific to the field did not appear prior to 1912, so the developers of the aforementioned theories were not able to publish the fruits of their intellectual work in a format that would allow for a continuing scholarly conversation. In fact, as Connors notes, “[t]he journals that existed to serve writing teachers (and before 1948 there were only two, English Journal and College English) were well intentioned but small in circulation and pragmatic in outlook.” This “modern rhetoric-composition” was pedagogically successful but increasingly stagnant in terms of intellectual growth.

Several phenomena occurred midcentury that planted the seeds for change in composition, the most important being the inception of the post-World War II GI Bill, which created an upheaval in higher education. More students than ever before were attending colleges and universities and not only were the numbers of doctoral degrees being granted greatly multiplying, but the overall student body (and eventual teaching body) was becoming decidedly more populist; thanks to the GI Bill, the overall student body (and eventual teaching body) was becoming decidedly more populist; thanks to the GI Bill, the lower-middle-class was helping to strip away the “rarefied and intellectually successful but increasingly stagnant in terms of intellectual growth.”

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These enthusiastic composition pedagogues openly discussed their ideas with each other and, according to Connors, “composition teaching, the essential assignment for all new instructors, was suddenly being reexamined with an intensity not seen for half a century.” As a result of all the professional discussion, a landmark organization was formed: the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1949. What it lacked in membership, it made up for in energy throughout the 1950s, and in the early 1960s became the crux of the rebirth of composition as a viable field of study. Connors notes that, in 1960, the official journal of CCCC, College Composition and Communication, was concerned with “endless debates on logic, usage, and structural grammar,” while the 1965 version of the journal “seems essentially modern in both tone and content.” The reason for this monumental change, most composition studies historians agree, was the 1963 CCCC conference, and its rediscovery of rhetoric as a field of knowledge from which to draw on as a means of improvement and growth in their own field. In fact, an organization called the Rhetoric Society of America was formed in 1968, and according to Connors, this society’s meetings became “the salons of choice for news about the most interesting work being done in the field of composition.” Thus, composition studies gave back to rhetoric a certain amount of academic prestige that it had been long missing, and in turn, the term “rhetoric” gave “more cachet” to “composition.” While rhetoric and composition were now more than ever inextricably linked, the term “composition studies” started to take hold as well.20

Philips, Greenberg, and Gibson21 find that in 1965, after the CCCC-centered turnabout, what was known as composition studies was still fundamentally based on literary studies; most of the appearances of “rhetoric” and “composition” in College Composition and Communication still referred back to “style in the canonical literature,” in other words applying those terms and the theories that they reference to the texts of canonical literary works, rather than towards current studies in composition. The authors note, however, that the number of articles published in CCC after 1965 concerning “the pedagogical application of theory” grew, while those dealing solely with concerns of a literary nature decreased. Thus, disciplinary self-reference had become an important part of the literature. Between 1980 and 1993, in fact, there were no fewer than nineteen articles published in CCC on the sole topic of the field of composition studies itself.22

Donald McQuade asserts that “a surge of first-rate research and scholarship on student writing charged the listless state of composition pedagogy in the late 1960s and early 1970s.” Scholars such as Francis Christensen, James Kinneavy, and Ken Macrorie were key figures in creating a base of theory to be built upon, and, later in the 1970s, Mina Shaughnessy’s seminal book, Errors and Expectations, forever changed how composition studies saw itself.24 According to McQuade, her book “exemplified the professional dignity of scholarship and research in composition, underscored what is at stake in that work, established a scholarly standard for it, and set a direction for a great deal of the scholarship and practice that followed it.”

Composition studies became increasingly professionalized as it moved through the 1980s and into the 1990s, and continued to “broaden and deepen gradually,” as McQuade puts it. Evidence of the extent to which the field has grown in stature within the humanities is provided by the rising numbers of “first-rate graduate programs,” research facilities, monographs published by highly selective and prestigious presses, and newer peer-reviewed journals. Not everything in composition studies was rosy, however. Philips, Greenberg, and Gibson, in their 1993 summing-up of the discipline to that point, assert that, at the time the article was being written, just as in a 1960 Committee on Future Directions report, “opinions on the state of the art and craft range from reassuring to bewildered to frustrated to downright damning and suggest little consensus regarding our current or future status as a discipline.”25 Still, as McQuade aptly summarizes, “there is clearly no shortage of outstanding – and significant – manuscripts on virtually every aspect of composition studies.”

Despite the accolades, McQuade acknowledges an intellectual and professional rift that still exists between literary studies and composition studies.28 It is not this author’s intention to examine any political turmoil that might exist between these two fields, but some of the broader differences between the way scholars in these two fields approach research should be made clear. John Schlib points out some of these differences out in an essay geared towards literary scholars attempting to understand the nature of composition studies. Literary scholars, notes Schlib, generally view their roles as professors of literature and producers of scholarship as disparate functions, while for composition scholars, the scholarship depends on their function as instructors. Schlib makes the point that while both types of scholars write primarily about texts, this is where most of their similarities...
end: the literary scholar studies texts that belong to a (ever-widening) canon; the composition scholar studies texts created by the very students that (s)he is teaching. Although the latter scholars refer time and again to the same names in their bibliographies, these referenced writers’ works are not used in the same way as are literary works referenced by a literary scholar. They do not constitute a canon. Literary scholars study texts that are finished pieces of writing; composition scholars pay as much attention to the end product as do they to every draft along the way—they are interested more often than not in the process of writing. Composition scholars also present their textual analyses as case studies, something largely foreign to literary scholars, and often display what Schlib refers to as an “interventionist slant” in their published research, meaning that “composition scholarship aims to determine appropriate future action,” while “literary criticism winds up confirming the power (positive or negative) of whatever works it analyzes.”

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Schlib also talks about the specifics of scholarly publication, calling composition studies “predominantly article-driven,” as opposed to literary studies’ penchant for publishing book-length scholarship. While this has been the case up to the 1990s, Schlib acknowledges that the professionalization of composition studies has resulted in more composition theory books being published (both alone and as parts of newly formed series), as well as dissertations that become fodder for potential book publications.

The following study will put into quantifiable terms the unique publishing characteristics of recent and current scholars in the field of composition studies.

**Methodology**

In Cullars’ citation analysis of publications in the field of British and American literary studies, he makes the logical step of moving from the examination of citations in the journal literature to examining citations present in the monographic literature, thus establishing a link between what is cited so heavily and what gets cited in those publications—a way to more effectively examine patterns in scholarly communication in the humanities. This author has followed Cullars’ lead by examining the citations contained in monographs as well as in journals.

For this study, the monograph samples were chosen first. A subject search on “composition studies” in WorldCat was used to identify relevant books, and these books were then sorted in terms of library holdings. Books with the highest number of holdings whose authors were found, via identification through university and academic department Web sites, to be composition scholars working in English departments which subsumed composition studies (rather than in composition studies departments separate from English) were selected for use in the study. This methodology largely replicates the one used by Wolfe-Thompson; the most notable difference is her use of Choice’s lists of outstanding academic books to choose her monograph samples. WorldCat was used in this study instead of Choice because the interdisciplinary nature of composition studies was not adequately addressed by the latter. A decision was made to limit the number of examined books from each period to: five single-author monographs and five collected essay books, since the amount of books with a considerable number of holdings was small, and the author’s intent was to provide a representative sample of the core monographs in this discipline.

The journals used in this study were chosen in a different fashion, and in fact stemmed from the book-selection process. Web of Science (selecting both Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences) was used to determine which journals contained the most articles citing the selected books, in order to provide a representative sample of the journal literature that made the most use of the core monographs in the field. Five journals were clearly the heaviest citers of these books, and these journals are the same as those mentioned by Lillian Bridwell-Bowles in her guide for beginning composition researchers as being the core journals of the profession. The fact that the books and the journals chosen for this study are connected via citation frequency makes the study more meaningful, since the authors of these books and journal articles are obviously engaged in scholarly communication with each other.

An observer of the data collected for this study will realize straightaway that the intervals for the monographs are greater than those for the journals. The decision was made to study each issue of the five journals in every odd numbered year from 1989–2003, but only examine the monographs in three evenly spaced intervals: those published between 1990–1992, 1996–1998, and 2002–2004. More longitudinal weight was given to the journal article citations since this is the primary scholarly outlet for composition scholars and most directly affects the overall scholarly communication process in the field. Thus, there are only three temporal intervals for the monograph samples. The numbers of volumes studied at each interval (five) are equivalent, whether journal, monograph, or essay collection, firstly because, as mentioned earlier, the five journals were named as core journals by an expert in the field and were independently found to be the highest citers of the chosen monographs. Secondly, as was also mentioned, selecting any more than five books in each of the periods ran the risk of using a book with so few library holdings as to be not sufficiently representative of core composition studies scholarship. The number of library holdings according to WorldCat can be found in Appendix A alongside each title.

The year 1989 was chosen as the starting date for the study because, as has previously been discussed, composition studies is still a nascent academic discipline, and the 1980s was the decade in which multiple theories concerning the discipline came into being and the very identity, nature, and relevance of the discipline were being questioned both from within and without. These circumstances created the scholarly discussion that, in turn, changed the nature of composition studies into what it is today, and thus the body of literature responsible for documenting and being the catalyst for current composition studies lies in the pages of the journal articles, book articles, and monographs that were published in the field starting in the late 1980s. This author chose books that were published in
two-year ranges surrounding each of the years chosen for the examined journal titles for two reasons. First, limiting the scope to one year did not provide an adequate sample; secondly, the fact that books take longer to be published and may be more aptly placed in the scholarly conversation of a certain year even though it was published a year (or two) after the fact must be taken into account.

For the five journals published between the years 1989 and 2003, and the thirty monographs published between the years 1988 and 2004, the format of each publication cited (journal article, book article, or monograph, or other format) was recorded.

**RESULTS**

The first two tables in this study show a breakdown of the percentages of the citations in composition studies journals and monographs, respectively, according to the format of the material they cite: books, journals, book articles, and other materials. Here, “book articles” refer to specific essays or chapters that were cited within a particular book, as opposed to citing an entire book. “Other materials” was a catchall for formats and forms of publications that did not fit sensibly into any of the other major categories. Dissertations, theses, unpublished manuscripts, government-published pamphlets, Web sites, and e-mails made up part, but not all, of this category.

Table 1 shows the number of citations from articles that were published in the top five composition studies journals in each odd-numbered year from 1989 to 2003. The high-point of citations to journal articles occurred at the beginning of the run, in 1989, with 37.1 percent, and showed a consistently downward trend through the subsequent years (29 percent for 2003), save for an anomalous spike in 1995, where the percentage of journal articles cited was 36. Citations to books showed no ultimately ascendant or descendant trait; instead, they jumped up and down between 1989 and 2003, without ever straying very far from the mean percentage of 43.1, except for 2001, where the number of citations to books jumped to 46.2 percent. Citations to book articles jumped up and down initially, spiking up from 15.6 percent to 20 percent between 1989 and 1991, but finally evening out in the late 1990s and early 2000s at about 19 percent. The materials that come under the heading of “other” never rise above 10 percent, but they do show a markedly consistent increase from 1989 (3.5 percent) to 2003 (8.1 percent). The final two columns represent simply the addition of the percentages of two individual columns in the same table: the sum of the percentages of citations to journal articles and book articles, and to books and book articles, respectively. The latter is displayed to give the reader a sense of the total amount of books being cited, whether the citation is to a book as a single unit, or to a book by way of citing a specific piece of material published within its pages. The former percentage is given to show the reader how many articles-length publications are being cited, since it is this author’s contention that a journal article (in composition studies as in the general humanities) is not very different in terms of length, style, or intellectual depth from a chapter or essay in an edited monographic collection. Depending on how citations to books are defined, the percentage could differ from, roughly, 15 percent to 22 percent (see Table 2) in this study.

Table 2 shows the number of citations from books. Two kinds of books are examined here: (1) single-author monographs, or books that are authored entirely by one person; and (2) edited collections, or books that are edited by one or more scholars, and contain essays by numerous other scholars in the field. As with the citations to journals in Table 1, the percentages of citations to journal articles in both types of books examined here show a decreasing trend. It should be noted, however, that the percentage of journal articles cited in edited collections started at a higher level than single-author monographs in the two-year period of 1990–1992, and ended at a lower point in the two-year period of 2002–2004. Contrary to the journal citation trend, at least for the edited collection, citations to books rose steadily from 1990–1992 to 2002–2004. The overall fourteen-year range saw citations to books rise very slightly in single-author books, but there was a tremendous spike in the 1996–1998 percentage: the number of citations to books rose 8.8 percent from 1990–1992 to 1996–1998, and fell back down by 6.7 percent in the 2002–2004 period. Percentages of book articles were largely equivalent to the percentages shown in Table 1, but with slightly more variation over the years. (Indeed, a notable decrease in citations to book articles occurred in single-author monographs during the same period that citations to books spiked upwards.) The percentage of citations to “other materials” remained under 10 percent, as it did in Table 1, but its trajectory over the set span of time is inversely related: where it went up by 4.8 percent from 1989 to 2003 in journal citations, it went down in both types of...
book citations, albeit by a much smaller amount. Tables 3, 4, and 5 give an overall view of the breakdown of citations from the journal, single-author monograph, and edited collection samples, respectively.

Tables 6 and 7 compare the findings in this study to the findings in the most recent citation study of publications in the field of literary studies—Wolfe-Thompson’s examination of the citation characteristics of monographs and journal articles in nineteenth-century British and American literature scholarship.

Table 6 shows a comparison between this study’s findings relating to citations in composition studies journals and Wilfoe-Thompson’s findings in her examination of citations in British and American literature journals. Wolfe-Thompson examined four journals (this author used five), and limited her study to journals published in 2001, thus the table only compares her results to this author’s results for that particular year. Because Wolfe-Thompson first separated the publications she examined into primary and secondary sources and only then showed the percentage of citations to each format, her data have been aggregated to provide percentages of the total population of the citations. In this way, meaningful comparisons can be made between the two sets of data.

In terms of journals published in 2001, the amount of citations to journal articles in the present study surpasses those in Wolfe-Thompson’s by almost 10 percent, whereas the percentage of citations to books in Wolfe-Thompson’s study is greater than the percentage in the present study by a difference of slightly more than 20. Citations to book articles are comparatively higher in the present study, but not enough to make the total percentage of citations to books (including books and book articles) differ greatly in comparison between the two studies. Citations to other materials were significantly greater in the present study.

### Table 2

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<th>Total Number of Citations</th>
<th>Journals % (n)</th>
<th>Books % (n)</th>
<th>Book Articles % (n)</th>
<th>Other Materials % (n)</th>
<th>Journals + Book Articles % (n)</th>
<th>Books + Book Articles % (n)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1990–92</strong></td>
<td>1541 (541)</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>39.2 (604)</td>
<td>18.1 (279)</td>
<td>7.6 (117)</td>
<td>53.2 (820)</td>
<td>57.3 (883)</td>
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<td><strong>1996–98</strong></td>
<td>2342 (706)</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>40.8 (955)</td>
<td>23.0 (538)</td>
<td>6.1 (143)</td>
<td>53.1 (1244)</td>
<td>63.8 (1493)</td>
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<td><strong>2002–04</strong></td>
<td>1847 (506)</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>46.8 (864)</td>
<td>19.1 (353)</td>
<td>6.7 (124)</td>
<td>46.5 (859)</td>
<td>65.9 (1217)</td>
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<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>1910.0 (584.3)</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>42.3 (807.7)</td>
<td>20.1 (390.0)</td>
<td>6.8 (128.0)</td>
<td>51.0 (974.3)</td>
<td>62.3 (1197.7)</td>
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### Table 3

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<td>Journals</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>1281.7 (415.7)</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>1410 (449)</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>1017 (310)</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>1418 (488)</td>
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<td>1994</td>
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<td>1410 (449)</td>
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### Table 4

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<th>Citations from Single-Author Monographs</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Journals</td>
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<td>2002–04</td>
<td>1847 (506)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>1910.0 (584.3)</td>
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Table 7 shows the results of a comparison between the results of an examination of citations found in composition studies books and those found in American Literature studies books (Wolfe-Thompson’s study). Similar problems to those concerning the data in Table 6 arose when attempting to display data that could be compared meaningfully side-by-side. Wolfe-Thompson’s modus operandi was to examine two sets of books – four each from 1995 to 2001 – while, as previously discussed, this author examined sets of ten books (five single-author monographs and five edited collections) that were published within two-year periods in 1990–1992, 1996–1998, and 2002–2004. Since Wolfe-Thompson did not differentiate in the presentation of her data between the two sets of years, this author thought it best to take the averages of the results from the periods 1996–1998 and 2002–2004 (including all ten books from each period), thus making a comparison between the findings of the two studies as meaningful as possible.

The present study shows a much higher percentage of citations from books to journal articles than Wolfe-Thompson’s study, and an even greater difference in the opposite direction concerning citations to books. Wolfe-Thompson’s study shows a significantly lower percentage of citations to book articles than the present study, making the difference of citations to books in total (books and book articles combined) not quite as vast as with books alone, but still considerable. The difference between the two studies in terms of citations to other materials is negligible, at less than 2 percent.

**DISCUSSION**

Wolfe-Thompson makes a case, in her study, for the importance of the monograph in the humanities, with the ultimate intent of bringing about a discussion of new ways to accommodate the consistent need for traditional monograph publishing, or analogous alternatives, in the face of existing scholarly publishing crises. To that end, she also stresses “the need for careful evaluation of collection policies in the humanities in order to preserve and to attempt to restore the status of the humanities monograph in the collections.”

Careful evaluation of collection policies is also essential to ensure that the needs of composition scholars do not fall through the cracks. As noted earlier, composition studies scholars have a tendency to use journals as citable resources to a significantly higher degree than their colleagues in other humanities disciplines, particularly, and most importantly, literary studies. The data in the present study bear out this assertion, and general comparisons with earlier studies also give credence to this thesis. Budd’s study compares his own findings in American Literature studies (64.00 percent citations to books, and 23.00 percent citations to journals) with those of other humanities citation studies (Heinzkill, English Literature, 74.90 percent to books, and 19.90 percent to journals; Frost, German Literature, 78.13 percent to books, and 21.12 percent to journals; Vaughan, Music, 69.50 percent to books, and 25.30 percent to journals). Cullars, in his study of citations from 30 books from the period of 1976 to 1983 in the area of British and American literary studies, found that an average of 72.2 percent was to books, and only 14.5 percent was to journals.

While the studies done for this paper, in and of themselves, do not show that journals are cited more than books by composition studies scholars, when viewed in comparison with other citation studies of humanities scholars, it becomes quite evident that journal articles are used to a much greater degree.
Perhaps the extent to which journal articles are cited more heavily and monographs less so by composition scholars is due to the sheer strength of the top journals in the field and their commanding role in shaping the discipline from the 1950s at least through the late 1980s. Because of the enormous role that the journals played, composition scholars grew accustomed to publishing their research in those venues.

The upward trend of citations to books in both journal and book publications from 1988–2004 might be explained by the growth (in terms of numbers and professional respectability) of the composition studies field. The professionalization of the field means that more and more composition studies scholars will be or will recently have been required to meet the standards for academic tenure, which by and large still requires book publication. Add to that the increasing amount of composition studies graduate students who are completing dissertations as part of their PhD requirements, dissertations which very often are reworked and submitted for publication as scholarly monographs. The nature of composition studies, which is as much about the practical application of theory as theory itself, may be one reason why, as Connors notes, university and much about the practical application of theory as theory itself, may be one reason why, as Connors notes, university and many graduate students develop their writing abilities. Indeed, many of the citations to journal articles in this study denote the fact that they were found via the ERIC database, or, in other cases, were singular publications denoted as ERIC documents. It is no surprise, then, that the style with which they present their research shows a marked similarity to the way much research is presented in the social sciences, and that their use of cited material would be more in line with that of a social science publication. (John Budd quotes Broadus and Baughman’s citation study of social science publications: in 1953 Broadus found that 53.70 percent of citations were to books and 46.30 percent were to journals; in 1974, Baughman found that 51.72 percent of citations were to books and 38.54 percent to journals.) Thus, the points that Wolfe-Thompson makes (through other writers whom she cites), which characterize humanities scholars as being interested in a “more subjective, than empirical, approach to study,” do not necessarily apply here. The results shown in this study lean as much towards the results of social science citation studies that Budd quotes as they do towards those shown by Wolfe-Thompson and others who have performed citation studies of humanities publications. In sum, the results speak to a unique, interdisciplinary, and, most importantly, growing, field of study whose scholarly needs, from a librarian’s perspective, must continue to be monitored closely.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This is only the first step in discovering, from a library/information science perspective, the workings of scholars in the area of composition studies (at the risk of making these scholars sound like rare birds in the field). More can, and should, be published in library literature on this topic. A citation study of dissertations written in the field of composition studies could point to trends in research characteristics of a new generation of faculty members in that field. Within the present paper alone, there are many stones left unturned (most of which will be uncovered in a future paper): citation frequency of certain journals and of certain books published by certain publishers, citation frequency of specific authors, and a further longitudinal study comparing the present findings to new ones at an appropriate future interval. Citation studies, however, are but one avenue of approach to finding out about the characteristics of a specific discipline. Surveying faculty and graduate students to discover how they use the library’s physical collection and how online resources could provide more insights into their field could be another useful paper, as could a controlled inquiry into library assignments given by composition studies instructors. Another idea for future research has its seed in the article recently published on the topic of “the research practices and library needs of contingent, tenure-track, and tenured faculty” respectively; a similar article could be written comparing these needs and practices with those of composition studies faculty.

CONCLUSION

Academic librarians involved in collection development have always had a duty to know enough about the general field of study of the scholars in the disciplines for which they are bibliographically responsible to be able to provide a core collection that will satisfy their teaching and research needs. Not many academic librarians involved in collection development are limited to this area anymore, however. Most also have to wear the hats of reference librarian, instruction (or information literacy) librarian, and be involved in faculty outreach; each area of librarianship informs the others. Given the multifaceted nature of academic librarians’ jobs, then, they can use the results of the citation analysis in this article to better provide for the composition scholar’s research needs in terms of library holdings and access.

The field of composition study is certainly one that is still growing and creating its own place among the other academic fields in the humanities and social sciences, often engaging with them in a productive interdisciplinary fashion. Academic librarians can now see that composition studies scholars provide a unique opportunity for them to reassess and improve their approach to the teaching of information literacy, both by example and in direct collaboration.

This article functions as the first step towards providing the academic library community with concrete knowledge of the way composition scholars do research in their field. It also provides librarians with a general background of how the research, publication, and citation characteristics of composition scholars were formed over the last half of the twentieth century. The coupling of data and narrative gives librarians the tools to effectively engage composition scholars on their own terms, and, rather than simply “team-teach” or “guest-lecture,” take the challenge put forth by Elmborg and Norgaard and create an entirely new pedagogy that is more than the sum of information literacy and process writing.


### APPENDIX A. LIST OF SAMPLES OF EDITED COLLECTIONS AND SINGLE-AUTHOR MONOGRAPHS, AND THEIR HOLDINGS IN WORLDCAT

#### A.1. Edited Collections

**A.1.1. 1990–1992**


4. Tuman, Myron C. *Literacy Online: The Promise (and Peril) of Reading and Writing with Computers*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992. *(n = 746)*

**A.1.2. 1996–1998**


**A.1.3. 2002–2004**


#### A.2. Single-Author Monographs

**A.2.1. 1990–1992**


**A.2.2. 1996–1998**


**A.2.3. 2002–2004**


**APPENDIX B.**

**List of Journal Samples Used**

1. College Composition and Communication
2. College English
3. Journal of Advanced Composition
4. Research in the Teaching of English
5. Written Communication

**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. For the bulk of this article, this author has consciously removed the term “rhetoric” from its common coupling with “composition,” since the article focuses on what has become the field of composition studies (which, nevertheless, is inherently based on rhetorical principles). That stated, there are occasional references in the “Composition Studies Background” section to rhetoric and rhetoric-composition to illustrate certain historical points.


8. Ibid., p. 123.


16. Ibid., p. 178.


18. Ibid., p. 203.


32. See Appendix A.


34. See Appendix B.

37. Ibid., p. 133.
38. Budd, “Characteristics of Written Scholarship in American Literature: A Citation Study,” p. 207.
42. Budd, “Characteristics of Written Scholarship in American Literature: A Citation Study,” p. 205.
43. Note: studies of citation age distribution were not attempted in this paper, given the relative youth of the field, and the general tendency of authors in the field to cite only within the last thirty or so years.