

Chris and David's thoughts on strategic contemplation

Audio Transcript

Chris Denecker:

So, as we come to the end of this project, we'd like you to think of this portion of our webtext as more of a reflection than anything. I say, "we come to end of the project" because that's where we are physically in our work of preparing this webtext for C&C Online, but it's not necessarily the end-point, altogether, because we see tendrils of this moving forward into our work and out into other spaces. And I think that really connects to the notion of strategic contemplation that was the beginning point: taking the time to think about David's "Ask the Expert Project" and dwell with that project, not just look at it as something that is one and done. So, in dwelling in that project, we then moved forward to dwell in our project collaboratively, to not necessarily push it to an end point that was manufactured by some deadline but to be more organic about it and to see where the project led us. And, in doing so, it also impacted individual projects that David and I were doing during that time, and that space of strategic contemplation allowed us to see connections from our projects to other projects or applications or ways that those other projects might move forward. In my case, it would have to do with the Ohio Farm Narratives or also with the work I do with concurrent enrollment, and that brought me to yet another epiphany. So, it helped with those projects, but it also brought me to an epiphany, I think, of myself as a scholar, and that is my love for collaborative work. I really enjoy this egalitarian space where we work together and we share dialogue, and we exchange ideas, and those ideas spark new ideas, and some of those ideas are worked into this project, but others have led me into spaces that I wouldn't have entered if it hadn't been for this exchange with David. And, so that invitational rhetoric, that notion and dwelling in that strategic contemplation got me to these spots that I wouldn't have gotten to before. I also wanna point out that collaboration has not always been seen as distinctive or as being privileged within the academy, but collaborative work is hard work, and it's good work, and it's the kind of work that we expect in our composition classroom, so we should be expecting it in our scholarship, as well. And, yes, there's collaboration that always goes on behind the scenes. You know, we have editorial work; we have feedback from reviewers, but so many times the writing process, itself, or generating that composition is very isolated. To me, it's very freeing to work with somebody else, to invest in that person's ideas and have them invest in mine. And, so, as I work forward as a scholar, I expect to do additional collaborative work, and I think to thank those who have gone before us (we have Ede and Lunsford and Hawisher and Selfe and many, many others), but their footprint has been telling us for years that collaboration is this great, great thing, let's embrace it, let's do it, and I think David and I's work, we bring that, that comes to a fruition to us in personal ways, and, so, it's been a great experience.

David Maynard:

I also benefited a great deal from collaborating with Chris. Specifically, you know, as we've been nearing the end of this project, I've been thinking more and more of how this has changed, completing this project has changed how I see myself as a researcher and a scholar and how I look at scholarship in general. And, I think, specifically, you know, I've been thinking about how

a project, at some point, has to come to an end. And, originally, this project, we only planned on it taking maybe four months or so, and it's now taken a year. And we've both been working on a lot of different projects since we began this one, and I've also piggybacked on some of my research in this project to then go on and develop my thesis, in which I explore in more depth this question of government surveillance and its implications for, you know, digital technology in the writing classroom. And as my perspective started changing and I started accumulating more knowledge on that topic as I completed my Masters thesis for University of Findlay, I had to keep fighting this temptation to come back to this webtext and make changes and revisions to reflect that new knowledge. And thinking about it more strategically, however, I realize that that would really defeat the whole purpose of research because every product of research is a reflection of who you are as a scholar and where you are in the field at that moment, and if you keep trying to change it based on your new knowledge, you'll never get anything done. So, you know, ideologically it's important, I think, to, you know, accept where you are at that moment and embrace that even it's, maybe, different then where you will be in the future. But practically speaking, you have to get it done. And, I think at this point, through my collaboration with Chris, I've learned how important it is to give up a certain amount of control of one's research, and I think collaboration really helps to teach the importance of giving up that control, which isn't just true in collaboration, but it's true in even single-authored articles which are created for an audience, you know. And you're giving up control when you give that over to the audience, and you have to listen to what they think about you and your research, which I'm actually looking forward to. So, I think, through this collaboration, through thinking more strategically about my own research and my work as a writer and a scholar, I've definitely come to accept the importance of giving up that control, which I think is going to serve me well in the future.