

## Book Review Editor

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### RADIANT FIGURES

Visual Rhetorics in  
Everyday Administrative Contexts



Rachel Gramer, Logan Bearden, & Derek Mueller, eds.

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## ***Radiant Figures: Visual Rhetorics in Everyday Administrative Contexts***

Rachel Gramer, Logan Bearden, and  
Derek Mueller, Editors

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Reviewed by Morgan D. Beers

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**R***adiant Figures: Visual Rhetorics in Everyday Administrative Contexts* presents various approaches to the use of multimodality within the context of Writing Program Administration (WPA). Throughout the volume, scholars make a case for moving from purely textual approaches in program design toward embracing visual representations. Available in a digital format on the press's website, the twelve-chapter book utilizes text, images, color, and design to organize information for readers. Furthermore, the editors divide the chapters into seven "paths" to create a dynamic reading experience that can be linear or dictated by reader interest.

Chapter One, "Thinking Through Data Visualization: Leveraging the Exploratory Power of Figures to Create WPA Knowledge" by Julia Voss and Heather Noel Turner, challenges nihilistic views of programmatic data collection, urging administrators to be proactive in collecting and displaying data to push programmatic agendas. In Chapter Two, "Silhouette of DFWI: Census Pictographs as

Social Justice Heuristic," Derek Mueller critiques current institutional treatment of data about D, F, Withdraw, or Incomplete (DFWI) students. Infographics, Mueller explains, create more humanistic representations of DFWI students by providing depth to the connections between people and their data.

Ryan J. Dippre examines visuals as counterstory in Chapter Three, "Visualizing the Role of Small, Stubborn Facts: Changing Stories of Writers and Writing," engaging the pervasive story that "students can't write" (para. 2). Relying on Latour's Actor-Network Theory, Dippre discusses "small, stubborn facts" that stand up in the face of dominant narratives (para. 4). Dippre recognizes visuals as a translation of the program's work, recognizing how images productively challenge dominant stories. In Chapter Four, "WPA Responsive Genre Change: Using Holographic Thinking to Unflatten a Celebration of Student Writing," Kate Pantelides, Jacie Castle, and Katherine Thach Musick examine map usage during a writing event using holographic thinking and the concept of occluded genres to challenge the flatness of identities in 2D maps. In Chapter Five, "Diagram as Boundary Object: Incorporating Visuals into WPA Practice" David Swiencicki Martins describes implementing a comprehensive Writing Across the Curriculum program. Martins turned to visual representations of data as a form of "boundary encounter," creating two diagrams that demonstrate the current and proposed models of curriculum to inform and persuade administrative stakeholders (para. 10). Chapter Six, "Designing to See, Mean, and Act: Giving Shapes to Programmatic Goals," by Laurence José follows the author's use of visual programmatic representation to promote a new minor in Digital Studies. José views design as integral to administrative work, using Saussure's theory of semiotics to describe how visual programmatic materials function.

Chapter Seven, "Is Teaching Just a List? Toward Feminist-Humanistic Visual Representations of Being a Writing Teacher," by Rachel Gramer, critiques limitations within visual representations. Gramer explores methods of humanizing graphical visualizations to represent pedagogy more accurately to graduate students. In Chapter Eight, "An Ecological Heuristic for Programmatic Curricular Revision and Transformation," Natalie Szymanski adopts a scientific image to illustrate writing programs' complex ecologies through interconnectedness, fluctuation, complexity, and emergence. Szymanski connects a program's assessment practices to decomposition, suggesting assessment practices should nourish the program's future. In Chapter Nine, "Networks of Discourse: Using

Network Mapping to Examine the Influence of Institutional Histories and Program Missions on Students' Writing Development," Jacob W. Craig and Chris Warnick explore how the Charleston Bridge Program impacted student perceptions of writing. The authors practice mapping-as-analysis to address a disconnect between the programs and the importance of visuals as institutional critique.

Chapter Ten, Jamie White-Farnham's "Visualizing Fairness: A Critique and Revision of Placement Practices for International ESL Students," critiques placement practices within her program which led to an overrepresentation of international ESL students in basic writing. White-Farnham draws on Norbert Elliot's heuristics to create a graphical representation of the current placement process to alter assessment and placement practices. In Chapter Eleven, "Maps, Stamps and Plans: Using Visual, Interactive Course Documents to Promote Student Autonomy and Engagement," Andrew Lucchesi brings gamification into the writing classroom through his game board syllabus that allows students the agency to create their own success paths. In Chapter Twelve, "Graphic Re-Imaginations: Curricular Revision With/in/Through Programmatic Representations," Logan Bearden discusses design, curricular revision, and programmatic representations. Bearden mobilizes Anne Beaufort's domains of writing knowledge and spiral curriculum to reimagine her institution's first-year composition curriculum as overlapping, interconnected, and continual.

The editors organize the twelve chapters into seven paths through which readers can navigate the text. Each path engages a theme, highlighting potential points of interest for administrators and other program faculty. The editors invited prominent scholars within the field of writing program administration to read and respond to each path's theme. The paths provide methods for utilizing multimodal data visualization of particular relevance to administrators and faculty in technical writing programs interested in creating more humanistic visualizations of programmatic/classroom data or engaging in reflective curricular revision. While not new to visual data representation, those within technical, professional, and scientific writing will find new, critical, and reflexive ways to present data to those in- and outside the discipline.

The first path, "Mapping in/as Administration," explores how three chapters (Four, Five, and Nine) utilize mapping to "re-think, re-see, and re-envision" the complexity of writing program administration (para 1). Featuring a response by Louise Wetherbee Phelps, Path One is pertinent to readers interested in utilizing multimodal data

representations to conceptualize their current program, move toward curricular or programmatic revisions, or translate programmatic knowledge to stakeholders.

Path Two, “Visualizing Complexity and Simplicity” (Chapters One, Three, Seven, Eight, Nine, and Ten), featuring a response from Diana George, examines the use of visualizations to express the complexity of writing programs and provides strategies to simplify program needs to communicate with stakeholders. Path Two caters to readers interested in multimodality as a tool for curricular revision and to better visualize complex programmatic data, including making the implicit relationships between program actors explicit.

In Path Three, “Visualizing Change,” the chapters (Three, Five, Six, Eleven, and Twelve) consider the potential for visualizations to represent and enact change. Featuring a response from Kathleen Blake Yancey, Path Three provides useful information for readers interested in employing visual representations to challenge the status quo of existing program structures, including curriculum and placement practices.

Path Four, “Visualizing Program Data,” (Chapters One, Two, and Nine) demonstrates how humanistic data visualization can positively impact students, instructors, and programs. With a response from Amy Ferdinandt Stolley, Path Four provides beneficial information for program administrators who value social justice and creating more equitable connections between data and program faculty, students, and stakeholders.

Path Five (Chapters Two, Four, Eight, Eleven, and Twelve), “Visualizing Inventive Play,” and respondent Jason Palmeri, discuss the potential for visuals to invoke “generative, inventive, and even playful” engagements with programmatic data through reflection, reevaluation, and invention (para 1). Readers interested in engaging with the visual to re-examine their current programmatic and curricular practices and imagine new ones should follow Path Five.

Path Six, “Visualizing Advocacy,” (Chapters Two, Seven, and Ten) demonstrates how WPAs can utilize visuals to advocate for those within their programs. Featuring a response from Heidi Estrem, Path Six assists readers dedicated to humanistic, equitable approaches to program administration, curriculum, and data visualization.

Path Seven, “Program Visibility,” (Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Twelve) features a response from Annette Vee and discusses how program administrators can use visuals to represent their program to stakeholders. Readers interested in using visuals to better translate programmatic information to outside stakeholders will find Path Seven

useful.

*Radiant Figures* presents a worthwhile glimpse into relationships between program administration and visual representation. The heuristics and suggestions put forth throughout provide valuable tools for critically examining aspects of technical writing programs, including curricular revision, humanistic data representation, programmatic representation, and the presentation of crucial information to stakeholders.

### **Author Information**

**Morgan D. Beers** is a second-year PhD student in Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy at The Ohio State University. Her research areas include digital rhetoric, digital media studies, social media studies, and technical communication. Her research explores the circulation and rhetorical effect of COVID-19 misinformation on social media and the impact of inequity on marginalized communities in digital spaces.