

TEACHERS ON THE EDGE

The WOE Interviews, 1989–2017

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CHARLES BAZERMAN

Few scholars in the last 20 years have answered Richard Haswell's call to support RAD research (replicable, agreeable, and data supported) in the field of writing studies more than Charles Bazerman.¹ Since this interview was conducted in 1995, he has continued to research and write prolifically, producing 13 books and more than 40 articles, editing 11 books, and serving as the series editor for many seminal texts in his areas of expertise: genre theory, writing in the disciplines, and the rhetoric of science.

In *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science* (1988), Bazerman argued for textual analysis as a research method to investigate corpora produced by scientists. In *The Languages of Edison's Light* (1999), he traced Edison's development of the light bulb as a communicative act both within the scientific community and beyond. His companion sets, *A Rhetoric of Literate Action* (2013) and *A Theory of Literate Action* (2013), are testaments to Bazerman's continued work to situate writing studies as a social science. In *Theory*, he develops a model of rhetoric as a social construction based on communicative needs "rather than around rhetoric's founding concerns of high stakes, agonistic, oral public persuasion" (3). In *Action*, Bazerman outlines the means by which his readers can enact this theoretical stance, by providing "a way of understanding our writing situation and what we might do with it—not just how writing is generally done in these circumstances but how we might transform the circumstances through our participation" (4).

In addition to serving as a chair of CCCC, Bazerman has worked to cultivate a culture of research within the writing studies community by co-founding the Research Network Forum and the Consortium of Graduate Programs in Rhetoric and Composition. He has also collaborated with scholars worldwide to examine the social impact of writing, which led to the *Writing Across Borders* conference and the International Society of the Advancement of Writing Research. He founded Rhetoricians for Peace, which saw a period of robust activity during the Bush administration, and which he is currently trying to revive. He is the former chair of the Department of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

—Alison Bright

1 Haswell, Richard H. "NCTE/CCCC's Recent War on Scholarship." *Written Communication* 22.2 (2005): (198–223).

"Writing Is Motivated Participation"

Margaret Eldred

Spring 1995

WOE: What is the distinction between writing in the disciplines and writing across the curriculum? Can you clarify what you mean by the two terms and define writing in the disciplines?

BAZERMAN: When I first started teaching at City University, I got interested in writing within disciplines through thinking about undergraduate writing and the way undergraduate writing was related to reading. In the mid-'70s I started working on *The Informed Writer*. It was based on a research paper course that got me thinking about what we now call intertextuality. As I was finishing that book, I started to see how intertextuality was organized within disciplines—the practices were different, the kinds of literature were different. So I began studying disciplinary reading and writing. I particularly got interested in the sciences because as an undergraduate I thought I was going into physics. Also there was a fair amount known about the sociology of science, and I was already thinking about writing as socially organized.

Writing across the curriculum at that time was pretty much driven by the process movement and writing to learn—these terms were just emerging as buzzwords. Interesting things came out of that early period; however, the writing-across-the-curriculum model still worked largely within an English Department concept of what writing should be. It was driven by literary models of the self, of expressiveness, of essays, of evaluation and value.

As a result of my interest in disciplinary writing in the second edition of *The Informed Writer*, I added a writing-across-the-curriculum section. I tried not to be too taxonomic, reifying disciplinary differences in ways that didn't make sense. I didn't want to oversimplify distinctions among social science, sciences, humanities. I thought a lot about how to indicate the approach in the title of the next edition, and I came up with the phrase writing in the disciplines (WID), as opposed to across the curriculum (WAC). That's the origin of the term. I think WID tends to distinguish the attempt to have more writing everywhere in college (the WAC project, which continues to be a good project) from an attempt to understand what the disciplinary organization of writing is all about. WID tends to have more of a research orientation, although it obviously has its applied end.

WAC-WID is still a useful distinction to make. Even though the university is organized by discipline, undergraduate writing is not simply a translation of professional disciplinary practices. Undergraduate education has its own dynamics. And that needs to be understood. As the writing across the curriculum movement has recognized the importance of writing in the disciplines, there has been a tendency to simply take writing across the curriculum into disciplinary training and say that we have no particular need for freshman composition, that we should go into professional practice in writing as early as possible. That does not make sense to me because every undergraduate is not headed towards a career in the academy.

WOE: And many freshmen don't know what they're going to major in.

BAZERMAN: There's a lot of development they have to do; there's a lot of personal, social, economic work that happens in the undergraduate years. Kids have moved out of the house, they've moved away from the kind of high school curriculum (and I do not mean this pejoratively) that is directed towards providing people the knowledge they need to get around in society. It's not the high school's task to give them an intellectual way of looking at life that makes them question everything. College does that, and, insofar as students take that aspect of college seriously, they start to explore a whole lot of things.

So there's a kind of college discourse which is really important. Some of that discourse is across the curriculum. It bears interesting relationships to writing in the disciplines, but it shouldn't just simply march headlong into very narrow professionalized discourses. Insofar as the critics of writing in the disciplines and writing across the curriculum sense a headlong rush toward narrow professionalization, they do have a point. But I think they miss the boat in dismissing the importance of disciplinary discourses, both the social importance and importance as sites for individual and group development. Disciplines have grown up as communal projects among people trying to do things, and individuals can find these remarkable fields in which to develop themselves and their own understanding. In certain disciplines and professions, you really don't gain by thinking about your own discipline in nondisciplinary ways. Critics also miss the ways in which those specialized knowledges and specialized discourses can be very interesting challenges and resources for somebody who is not even in those fields.

I just completed the manuscript of a new freshman textbook that addresses some of these issues.

WOE: Doesn't it address both the role of the freshman writing course in terms of learning about a particular discipline and learning about academic discourse generally?

BAZERMAN: It is a welcome to college directed toward first-term freshmen. Whatever passed for competence in your high school, whatever fulfilled the demands, the communicative tasks, you did it. Now there's a different kind of discursive realm you're entering which is largely organized by discipline. But this realm has a lot of rote reproduction. So you shouldn't look down on summary tasks; in fact, a lot of what you're doing is taking discourses and getting them at your fingertips, for your own needs. It's important to locate why you're memorizing this stuff, and it's also very useful to find the most efficient and effective ways of articulating the knowledge that you get. But over the long run, it's much more important for you to understand the meaning this stuff has for *you*, what you think about it, what you would want to use it for, and then to acquire critical abilities of your own.

A couple of opening chapters set the stance of the book and talk about rhetoric, but the first regular chapter is about journals. Then come two chapters: on writing to learn things and writing to reproduce what you learn. From there, the book starts making connections between illustrations and general principles, analytic writing, writing about complex situations, problem-solving writing. It ends with argumentation. Rather than having a full-scale research orientation, the book just introduces those discourses as part of the continuum of how you deal with and talk about knowledge.

WOE: So it sounds like you're trying to get students to look at knowledge not just as a collection of facts but as the way it's all put together.

BAZERMAN: That's right—I want to orient students towards a college experience. I want them to see education as something that they have a stake in and that they're full participants in.

WOE: Which is something that freshmen don't always feel.

BAZERMAN: That's why it's important for them—even with the rote learning they often experience—to see that learning is their decision; they won't do very well unless they discover their stakes. The key trope is involvement. The book is called *Involved: Writing for College, Writing for Yourself*. There's a lot of talk about why students choose particular majors—not just the differences between majors but the kind of engagements that students may have with them—and how these majors have to always sit behind your writing. Writing is motivated participation.

WOE: You mentioned a couple of reasons why it's worth studying the writings of specific disciplines in your essay "From Cultural Criticism to Disciplinary Participation." Can you expand on these reasons a little bit?

BAZERMAN: Communicating is one of the essential things that people do, and it's the stuff out of which disciplines are made. There's a material practice, of course—doctors dispense medicine and so on—but an awful

lot of what surrounds those material practices is communication, particularly written communication, because that's what endures. It's a basic tool of what we do. It helps to understand what your basic tools are, how you're using them, which ones are available—not only so you can use them more efficiently but also to reflect on what your practice is. You can't see what the profession is doing until you uncover its great hidden understructure.

WOE: So your approach would make accountants a little bit more reflective about their own language use and would make teachers more reflective about how to teach those accountants and about the way they use language?

BAZERMAN: Let's take the case of accountants because there's all kinds of communicative practices accountants engage in. Most of them learn on the job, and they learn by looking at models, responding to situations with the tools at hand. But they don't necessarily learn to think whether they want to respond to a particular situation in an alternative way, or what the consequences are when making this or that choice, or how different alternative choices all coordinate, or how a decision can be made more efficient or effective. Those are the kinds of considerations that lead to the ability to make practical decisions about what your field does. If you're the teacher and guiding students down those pathways to those sets of practices, you need to be aware of what those practices are, how they work, what it takes to participate well within them, and what the range of options is—I think that's probably the biggest thing. Most people will find some way of surviving within the discourse. But they won't see the range of choices, and they won't have the tools for reflecting on the range of choices; they'll just do what seems to make sense at the moment. And of course if you have more choices, you open up the possibilities of what you can accomplish.

WOE: Can you say something about the Landmark Essays collection, *Writing Across the Curriculum*, that you did with David Russell? What does classical rhetoric teach us about what we're doing now?

BAZERMAN: Well, one of these things we argued in that introductory essay was that classical rhetoric has had a hard time with specialized languages because for various historical reasons it developed as a general *techné* in the agora. It wants, in a sense, to make every place be like the agora. Classical rhetoric has only made very sporadic attempts to discuss specialized languages. In the eighteenth century there was a movement towards rewriting rhetoric, both to encompass the new thinking about being human and to notice that discourse was now being organized into spheres, some of which were professional spheres.

There hasn't been any *organized* thinking about writing in the disciplines until recently. There was no reason for the eighteenth century to do it. As

David has documented in several places, technical writing and business writing arose in the early part of this century. Also the cooperative movement, before World War I, was a precursor to writing across the curriculum, encouraging a lot of writing, but without any special awareness of distinctions among discourses.

I think the study of specialized discourses is extremely important. It is something that we have not done at all seriously until recently; classical rhetoric has been one of the resistances to this. However, given what sociologists call the differentiation of society, with the rise of multiple institutions (even though we're maybe remixing them right now) and the specialized practices and the flow of communications in specialized channels to do ever more complex and specialized tasks, we need to understand specialized discourses to understand how our society works. Assuming that we are moving into the information age and that this information is going to be complexly organized and accessible to different people within different networks, we've got to understand how our society is going to work. Unfortunately, the history of rhetoric has not been all that helpful in this endeavor until recently. So I'm very proud to be part of getting this initiative going. And I think it's getting an enormous amount of momentum.

When I started working on this topic, a variety of things, like the rhetoric of science, had been studied on a philosophical basis, but without much substantive examination. In the field of communications there were large studies of who reads what articles, but without any detailed attention to language and what goes on in discursive workings. Nobody really studied what this skilled behavior is all about. Some linguists were very interested in scientific writing; I linked up with them early. There's been a lot of research on spoken language in sociology and linguistics in the last twenty years. In fact, when you're among the applied linguists, discourse in the professions largely means the spoken word, but there were a couple of people interested in writing, like John Swales. Now there seem to be increasing numbers of people interested in this topic, and they are bringing more and more tools to bear on it. Whatever ideas ultimately may emerge as most useful, just gathering the information, trying to find ways of describing it, and having a lot of interaction with students and professionals who are doing this writing have been valuable. But I do believe that in the long run something big is going to emerge out of this work.

WOE: Your first major academic success was *Shaping Written Knowledge*, and from my point of view it seems very innovative. You were looking at certain issues in a way other people hadn't. Did this innovation cause you problems?

BAZERMAN: I didn't know what a rhetoric of science would look like. So I was very self-consciously trying to discover how to talk about scientific writing.

Every day I'd read a short article and then start describing it and come up with different things to say about it in a notebook I kept. The first extended piece I did was a review of the literature, "Scientific Writing as a Social Act." It preceded my writing of "What Written Knowledge Does." That was my first attempt to really do a piece about the rhetoric of science. I was very aware that I was making it up, so I went through a fair amount of revision; there were aspects of it that I just got wrong—false starts. But that set me upon a certain kind of path (at least for a while) of using both exegesis and a sociological framework to talk about social action.

WOE: So the sociology of science was one of the things that helped point you in a good direction.

BAZERMAN: Yes. That and thinking about speech acts, although I didn't have the concrete way of translating these ideas to written texts that I have recently found. Speech acts was a very strong metaphor anyway, to try to get away from simply meaning and into social action. Along that line, Vygotsky and activity theory were very important to me.

WOE: Right now you're continuing to work on scientists. You're working on Edison and you've done work on von Guericke and Priestley. How do you choose who to write about?

BAZERMAN: When I finished *Shaping Written Knowledge*, I was aware that I didn't know enough of the detail and the context of science. I was trying to look for certain macrostructural things, using genre as an attempt to see how these framing devices developed over time. Nonetheless, I thought there'd be a lot gained by studying an area where I could reasonably know something. So I picked electricity and just started reading. I thought originally I might do a book on the emergence of electricity as a discursive phenomenon. I was very interested in the whole question of the material basis of scientific discourse. People were still arguing very crudely for a radical relativism and I was arguing for a more pragmatist orientation. In the same way that I started out looking at physics partly as a challenge to showing that science is rhetorical, I wanted to look at a phenomenon that would make my point. If you could talk about something which is as clearly generated—made up—as modern electricity is and still talk about its material basis, it would be a challenge that would make the point. So the idea was to learn something about electricity. In 1600, electricity was nothing. The term existed but referred only to a static charge. If you rubbed amber, chaff would adhere to it. That was electricity.

It was by accident that I studied Priestley first. Looking at a rare-book library one day when I had a couple hours free, I came across this real oddball book, an enormous compilation of his. Why would he write that book in what looks to us like such an idiosyncratic way? That experience got me into the project.

Then as I read more about electricity I wanted to focus on something earlier, something that was outside the mainline scientific development. Von

Guericke was a very odd-looking character in that respect. In fact, he was thematic for what I was writing about—what scientific results look like outside the life of science.

It was also by accident that I wrote about Edison. While working on von Guericke I used the Burndy Library in Connecticut. It had some Edison papers that I looked at one day; then I started to realize how massive the Edison materials were, especially with the Edison microfilms coming out. At that time I was living in New York near the South Orange National Site where the Edison papers reside. I started looking at some of the Edison material and said, "Oh, there's a book here!" The point at which electricity emerged was a moment when technical discourse was escaping from the small community out into the world. And it wasn't just electricity coming through the walls. Electricity started pervading every other discourse.

WOE: Edison certainly didn't seem in the mainstream of science; in one way, he was an outsider.

BAZERMAN: He was outside, but he was working in the world. He had visions of social reformation, not in social terms but in technical terms—in changing the technology of society. The Edison papers go from lab notebooks to patents to newspaper articles—they cover a large part of the discourses of the world. I wanted to think about the interaction between scientific and technical discourses and larger ways of life; that interaction has become the theme of that book. I'm exploring the multiple discourses in which the electric light gets played out, going a bit into the histories and social dynamics of these discourses. Getting houses wired up is a very large discursive activity—to convince people that they ought to be financing electric lights and making them and patenting them and wiring houses with them. All the discourses of the world enter in.

WOE: You assert someplace that scientists are beginning to examine their writing more.

BAZERMAN: I say this about social scientists. Experimental psychology still continues much in the way it has. But anthropology has been examining itself for a long time. In sociology, there's been a number of books written on this subject, and now there's a newsletter called *Writing Sociology*. It's a fairly straightforward, plain-writing newsletter that comes out four times a year and exhorts everybody to write plainly. It publishes funny passages from other people's writing.

WOE: So it's directed towards professionals and not students?

BAZERMAN: That's right, for sociologists. A number of psychologists have also been looking at their field, people like Kenneth Gergen, who espouse constructivist positions. In economics, Donald McCloskey has done much the same thing and has had an enormous impact within the field. At a recent conference on economics and literature, the economists all approached the topic through an examination of discourse. Reflectivity is a major endeavor in the social sciences.

In the other sciences I would say that what is happening is simply a recognition that writing is important. I'm not sure that there is a lot of reflective examination of the practices of writing. There's nothing comparable to the fundamental questioning you've been getting in economics and anthropology, rethinking the basis of the discourse entirely on epistemological or political grounds.

WOE: Did you use some of your theoretical ideas in the classroom when you were teaching technical writing at Georgia Tech?

BAZERMAN: Most of the students had a lot of experience within organizations. Georgia Tech had a very strong internship program, and I saw students in their junior or senior year, which is also when they were doing field projects and design courses. A lot of them had work experience, so they were ready to start thinking about the social situation of writing because they were thinking about organizational writing and the importance of getting their technical reports accepted by the right people, of understanding the path by which their documents would flow within the organization, understanding the tastes of the people to whom they're writing and the function of their documents. They were very receptive to talking about their own role in creating organizational realities.

WOE: Because they had had that outside experience.

BAZERMAN: Yes. The kind of resistance I would mostly encounter is the response, "I just want to do my engineering! And I don't want to be bothered by these people who are ignorant of my specialty." But others in the class would say, "No, no, you'd better pay attention to this." If you talk about the necessity of argument and the function of various kinds of articles, most students are not at all resistant to thinking about these issues. They all think strategically about publication.

In the rhetoric-of-science movement, just as in the social-studies-of-science movement, some people came in with a real chip on their shoulder—"it's just words." For a variety of reasons, they felt that in order to make their sociological rhetorical arguments, they somehow had to dethrone the authority of science and in fact establish the authority of their field in place of it. And that if you allowed anything like a scientific account of what science does, then there wouldn't be any place for their kind of work. That never was my view. There were plausible ways of thinking about all those issues without taking simplistic stances on any of them. But people wanted to pick those fights, so that's what they did.

WOE: I want to know a little bit about your own influences and practices as a writer. How did you learn to write?

BAZERMAN: There are a lot of moments in learning to write. I used to say to my classes when I was younger—this struck me as funny—that learning to write was a race against senility. Now that I am almost fifty, I no longer find that quite so funny! I was remembering one of those moments this morning, in fact. When I was an undergraduate at Cornell, I had one of my most

boring and uninspiring teachers for a course in classic literature in translation. He didn't do any teaching except that every week he would assign us a five hundred-word paper to write. And I just had to pound it out. When we came into class everybody would read his paper, but the teacher wouldn't have any comments. Doing the papers was wonderful, however, because I realized that I could just sit down and write a paper. Up until then, paper writing was accompanied by a lot of moaning and groaning, deep angst, staying up all night, and three weeks of turmoil and headaches.

I remember something else. When I was in junior high school I was doing a lot of experimentation and imitation, so that I'd rarely hand in the regular assignments. I hated the five-paragraph essay; I was rebelling against it. But in seventh or eighth grade, I saw the movie *The River* [with poetry by Vachel Lindsay], which had these long, rolling, Whitmanesque lines. On the social studies exams we were asked to talk about a flood, so I wrote my exam in these long, flowing, Whitmanesque lines.

WOE: What did the teacher think?

BAZERMAN: Well, fortunately, I was rewarded for this. All through my school years and in undergraduate years, I used to do weird things with writing. And I think doing this helped a lot—to experiment and try things in different ways.

WOE: Was there any one teacher who influenced you, besides the one who just made you write?

BAZERMAN: In graduate school my dissertation advisor was James V. Cunningham. He talked very directly to me; he wrote very sparsely and he really reined me in. He taught me to get a sense of what it was to talk sense and to the point. He was a very strong influence on me, as he was on many of his students. He was a terrifying figure in many people's lives!

WOE: Right now you're in a research position and have more time to write. What did you do earlier in your career? You taught composition early on, didn't you?

BAZERMAN: I taught composition for twenty years at CUNY. I was hired on something called the SEEK program, which meant I was given this specific charge to pay attention to open admission students and to basic skills. At that time teaching in a literature program didn't make an awful lot of sense to me. For twenty years my main task was to teach developmental and freshman comp. I took that seriously because I taught elementary school for two years during the Vietnam era—I was in the class that lost its graduate deferment. Teaching elementary school seemed like a useful way to spend my time. It got me really thinking about literacy. I still think of myself as a writing teacher. I prefer teaching composition to teaching literature courses.

WOE: What attracted you to composition?

BAZERMAN: After my first year in graduate school, I was unsure what the profession of literature was all about. Like most people, I had been drawn to

literature because it spoke to certain personal issues. It gave me the chance to read books and to talk about things I wanted to talk about. Then I went to grad school, and I wasn't quite sure what it was all about. I guess I was starting to have premonitions about what we might call now a cultural studies orientation towards literature. Then, deferment removed, I found myself teaching inner-city elementary school, first grade and third grade, and literacy made a great deal of sense to me. It was something that an adult could do with his life and feel he was doing something useful. I wound up going back to graduate school because the life of an inner-city schoolteacher wasn't very good, and I wasn't going to become a victim. I saw that there were limits to what you could accomplish in that situation at that time. But I went back to graduate school with very much of an interest in literacy. My dissertation was not literacy oriented but it was trying to place practices of the literary within time and place; now I think we'd call it a new historicist dissertation. I wrote about occasional verse, which nobody then took seriously because it wasn't good literature. But I was learning how literary acts were socially situated; I was trying to understand literature as a communicative system among certain classes and certain times and places.

Then I was hired into the SEEK position, where I was very happy to teach writing. It was very compelling work—dealing with freshmen coming into college. I don't know why people have this distaste for it; it's real teaching! Freshmen are at a major transition point in their lives; they're about to discover (if one's institution lives up to its promises) all kinds of exciting things and head into interesting lives. They're having new thoughts, they're ready, they want to be inspired. And you're providing tools that can help them deal with all of this. I can't think of a better teaching situation, so I love it.

WOE: It sounds like you miss it.

BAZERMAN: Oh yes. It's fortunate for the Writing Program here at UC Santa Barbara that it is now independent of the English Department. But my being in the English Department means I can't teach in the Writing Program, and I find that personally unfortunate. I'm working with graduate students who are doing some TAing, but I'm working with them as graduate students, not as TAs within the Writing Program; they have their own training within the Writing Program. I'm trying to help orient them to the teaching of writing as part of their professional opportunity. But this is not anything like a full training in rhetoric. As you know, nowhere in the University of California is there anything like training in rhetoric and the teaching of writing.

There's an enormous need in California to have somebody training the teachers of writing, not just for the UC campuses but the Cal State and the community college system as well as all the other colleges here. It's an enormous opportunity to improve higher education, which is being missed. I think there are some very fine teachers of writing, many of whom have educated or are educating themselves. As I understand it, there are some M.A.

programs in rhetoric and composition at a couple of the Cal State campuses, but for the most part the teaching of writing is learned almost entirely on the job at all levels of California higher education. There's nothing like a core space, a research component; there's little formal training.

WOE: Since we're talking about the lack of training, do you have any advice for someone trained in literature who's assigned to teach writing in the disciplines, or writing across the curriculum?

BAZERMAN: My advice would be to take seriously the discourses, whether they're professional or undergraduate. The students engaged in them may not be very reflective about their language use, but they certainly have their reasons for wanting to do what they do. People in the English Department make certain choices for certain things and often against others. You may find yourself in situations where you're in contact with a field that you earlier chose not to engage with. But these discourses are what intelligent people interested in certain things have developed for themselves. They're very interesting if you take seriously what these people are trying to figure out. Then, using your knowledge of language and writing, you can say useful things that support the development of that kind of writing.

But you've got to take it seriously, and take seriously the students' desires to enter into those discourses. Over the years I've found that some people in English keep trying to save the souls of students who are in other fields. They're not recognizing those virtues that students have within their fields. When I taught at Baruch College, there were many very hardworking, decent students who wanted to be accountants. They had an *ausful* time in their writing courses and their English Department courses, where their instructors were looking to save them from their fates. The students had made a perfectly reasonable choice: they wanted to be accountants! There's nothing immoral about it; it's a useful function. And they had a certain way of thinking—they were learning to think like accountants. There are certain kinds of writing that they will be very good at if you allow them to think like accountants and not try to make them think like English majors.

Once you get to know them, you may want to help students gain a critical distance so they can make choices about their discipline. But that's very different from having a distaste from the top for what the students are doing and for those discourses. When you get into professional discourses, they're as fascinating as any other complex discursive activity. Certainly in the literature department we've learned to love the weirdest stuff from the farthest corners; in fact, we pride ourselves on being able to recover these strange artifacts that nobody knows the meaning of or appreciates. It shouldn't be so hard, then, to come to appreciate what the sociologists or economists or accountants are doing. They're not so different in time or place; they are part of our world. And we should be able to recover what it is that those discourses are trying to accomplish.

WOE: What changes have you seen in the composition classroom?

BAZERMAN: In the last couple of years I've been amazed at the changes that have occurred in the teaching of writing since I entered the field. I'm just so proud of the field—even those people who I might have been at odds with or not been so interested in what they were doing. The changes have had an enormous impact on teaching everywhere, right down to elementary school.

During my first term in Georgia, I asked the students in one of my classes (as I always ask my freshman students) about their writing histories: whether they did drafts and how many papers they wrote last year. After class a young woman from a very rural part of Georgia came up to me and said in this very, very thick accent, "I was very confused by what you said about drafts; isn't it a natural part of the writing process?" This is now a naturalized fact in rural Georgia! I remember that I used to write everything one off as an undergraduate, and certainly when I first began asking students these questions nobody had ever heard of a draft. This has been an enormous change, and there's lots of other things like this. We have changed; whether we get respect as a profession or not, it's a much better situation now than it was. I'm just so proud of the many ways in which we have intervened in this culture and moved it along in very positive ways. I have had complaints—and there are obviously approaches I think are misguided—but as a whole the field has just been doing great stuff.

WOE: After you finish your work on Edison, do you know what direction you want to pursue next?

BAZERMAN: I'm turning lots of things over in my mind; I'm not quite sure. One possibility—I have several partial manuscripts pushing in this direction—is some kind of larger theoretical work that tries to tie together some of the genre theory that I've been working on with some social theory. But I also want to do something which talks about the organization of society today from a discursive standpoint; I don't know the right vehicle to get into that. And I also keep saying that I'm not going to do any more historical work. But I was reading microfilms this morning, and I was enjoying looking over this old stuff. . .