The Graduate Reading Exchange

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### 1. Title: The Graduate Reading Exchange

**Abstract:** As graduate students acclimate to highly specialized disciplinary practices, they need to develop an array of equally specialized ways of reading (Geisler; Haas and Flower). Yet, graduate students often gain these skills more through happenstance than through direct instruction or metacognitive attention. **The Graduate Reading Exchange**—a collaborative, digital website—will support graduate students and instructors of graduate readers, by making perceivable the processes and practices graduate students use to engage texts and to wrestle with their acclimatization to disciplinary literacy. The website has 3 parts: an exploration of **disciplinary challenges** (and suggested readings); an **archive of process narratives** to materialize reading practices; and a **toolkit of practical resources, activities, and assignments**. Published as a team-authored website, we invite participants from any discipline to contribute by providing their own experiences as readers, developing resources, and by offering feedback and critical thinking on emerging ideas and materials.

### 2. Facilitator information:

**The Graduate Reading Exchange** draws across multiple institutional types and experiences. The four facilitators represent a range of institutions (From R1 to regional comprehensive) and have different administrative, research, and teaching focuses. Together, they bring a variety of literacy experiences (from K-12, to PhD mentoring) to facilitate a well-rounded and collaborative project that focuses on expanding our field's understanding and support of graduate student reading practices. Moreover, we collaboratively assemble needed but different skills for this project: Emily has experience developing and administering a digital collaborative space and is also a certified reading specialist; Michelle’s institution allows for a hosted site and she has worked extensively on social annotation and collaborative reading practices; Lizzie and Carolyne’s current research project on graduate student reading practices supports the overall thrust of the project and they also have current experience with supporting graduate student reading practices in their graduate courses and as mentors.

**Carolyne King (she/hers, Salisbury University,** **cmking@salisbury.edu****)**

Carolyne M. King (she/her) is assistant professor of English and the Director of First-Year Writing at Salisbury University. Her research on reading seeks to resist a primarily cognitive framework and instead privileges considerations of materiality and embodiment as structuring and constructing the meaning-making process. Her research interests include reading pedagogy, digital reading, and disability rhetoric, and her scholarship is published/forthcoming in venues such as *College English, CCC, Pedagogy, Composition Studies, Praxis* and *Prompt*. As the Director of First Year Writing, she leads the instructors who teach English 103 (Composition & Research) at Salisbury University, a regional comprehensive university with an MA in English. As she works closely to train graduate students as junior colleagues and teacher-researchers in their own right, she’s particularly focused upon the role of reading and the tension between the immediate and public community for graduate instructors (a facet of graduate reading, she has explored in a multi-institutional mixed method study with Lizzie Hutton).

**Lizzie Hutton (she/her, MIami University of Ohio,** **huttoneb@miami****oh.edu)**

Lizzie Hutton is assistant professor of English and director of the Howe Writing Center at Miami University, Ohio. Her research focuses on post secondary reading and writing practices in and across the disciplines and exploring both peer-to-peer and instructor-student forms of reading-writing support, especially by cultivating new conceptual understandings of how reading and writing operate and interrelate. Her scholarship has appeared or is forthcoming in journals including *College English, ATD, CCC, Writing Center Journal* and *WPA*. In her time at the Center for Writing Excellence where her writing center is housed, Lizzie has worked extensively with both graduate and undergraduate writing consultants as well as faculty and staff designing and running workshops and professional development seminars on academic reading and writing. She is currently exploring graduate reading practices and the connection between disciplinary literacy and community, in a multi-institutional mixed method study with Carolyne King.

**Michelle Sprouse (she/her, Bowling Green State University,** **msprous@bgsu.edu****)**

Michelle Sprouse is an assistant teaching professor in the Honors College at Bowling Green State University where she teaches courses in critical thinking. Her research interests include reading in the writing classroom, equitable assessment practices, and the transition to college. She has published with *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Language, Literature, Composition and Culture; Assessing Writing,* and *English Journal*, among other venues. Michelle piloted a social annotation project with the University of Michigan Press to bring readers, including graduate students, into conversations in the digital margins of open access books.

**Emily Sok (She/her, George Mason University, emille9@gmu.edu)**

Emily Sok (she/her) is currently a doctoral student in George Mason University’s Writing and Rhetoric program. Her research interests include composition pedagogy, post-secondary and K-12 reading practices, and reading identity. Her current dissertation work examines identity and inclusion in the treatment of reading in composition, in policy, scholarship, and practice. Drawing from scholarship in her previous education and reading specialist graduate programs, she recognizes identity as an important subfield of reading in composition studies. Her work makes clear the connections between language, institutions, and power, in a way that affirms the reading and literate identities of individuals. Emily is also a current collaborator and site administrator for a community writing project, and her expertise in building collaborative, digital projects is highlighted in the *The Graduate Reading Exchange* in relation to how to build and run a collaborative digital space.

### 3. Primary Contact: Carolyne King, cmking@salisbury.edu

### 4. Description (please include a Works Cited):

**The Need for Graduate Reading Support**

Especially over the last decade, scholars have increasingly focused on exploring the ways graduate writers learn--and continue to learn--how to write and the means by which this learning is best supported (Brooks-Gillies et al, 2015; Simpson et al 2016; Lawrence and Zawacki 2018; Madden et al 2020). For example, Madden, Eodice, Edwards and Lockett explore writers' lived experiences to trace how graduate writing development is especially shaped by faculty and peer relationships; Lawrence and Zawacki inquire into writing center support, through individualized consulting, boot camps and writing groups. Scholars have long noted, of course, that becoming a disciplinary expert involves the development of both reading and writing knowledge (Geisler; Haas and Flower). Yet the new influx of attention on graduate literacy learning rarely extends to considerations of how graduate students (continue to) learn to read as disciplinary specialists.

As graduate learners acclimate to highly specialized disciplinary practices, they need to develop an array of equally specialized ways of reading. Unfortunately, current examinations of reading focus only upon undergraduate readers: Carillo, for example, argues for the importance of helping undergraduate learners become more metacognitively aware of their reading strategies (Carillo); Bunn suggests that undergrads need to learn to “Read as a writer” (Bunn), and Carter emphasizes the importance of cultivating the “ways of knowing” by which experts approach reading. While, certainly, some of these practices are equally important for graduate students to gain, we must better attend to their specific contexts and needs if we are to help them to adjust to the rigors of advanced scholarly work.

**The Graduate Reading Exchange** responds to this gap in our field's understanding of graduate student readers and subsequent lack of support. Geared towards an audience of both instructors of graduate students and graduate students themselves, this collaborative project aims to make material the often invisible processes and practices graduate students use as they engage texts and wrestle with the acclimatization to disciplinary literacy. Intended to be published as a team-authored website, this project will thus center on developing new understandings of the challenges and complexities entailed in graduate-level reading and create an array of resources that help graduate readers and those who support graduate readers better navigate these complexities.

**The Graduate Reading Exchange** will also draw on the expert experiences of a range of conference participants, who themselves (we hope) will be both graduate students and instructors of graduate students. Bringing together these perspectives will help us to think through how existing scholarship on literacy/reading development and pedagogies (e.g. Carillo, Shannahan, Shanahan and Missichia, Wineberg) might apply to the specific challenges faced by graduate readers; how recommended practices for graduate writing support might be repurposed to support graduate writers; and finally how our own experiences as and with graduate readers can ensure that these resources remain inclusive and pedagogically sound. After all, literacies do not develop in isolation. Graduate students, moreover, are literacy learners whose practices and conceptions can (and often need to) change considerably across their experiences in graduate school (Micciche & Carr; Brooks-Gillies et al.). Yet because graduate students are expected to acclimate quickly and seamlessly into our field’s prevailing and highly idealized reading practices (Geisler), our pedagogies too often presume a model of linear progression whereby successful ‘novices’ develop almost automatically out of generalist habits and into the specialized norms of their chosen fields. Problematically, this vision of literacy acquisition ignores the many other affiliative relationships upon which graduate students draw as they make sense of new identities and practices. These affiliative relationships are precisely those that this collaborative project hopes to leverage.

This project also takes seriously the need to develop understandings and support systems inclusive enough to recognize the diversity of perspectives, aims, and experiences that different graduate students bring to their reading as much as to their writing. Even as graduate students are negotiating new identities and practices, they are doing so in institutionally mediated spaces and attendant assumptions about normative language and literacy practices. Inoue has called us to grapple with our expectations of reading, too many of which, he argues, are steeped in a white supremacist tradition. Particularly, he asks us to prioritize and honor students’ interpretive practices: “how they come to understand [the] text in the ways they do” (1), and to include in this account the structural and political forces that can support and yield different forms of meaning and standards for evaluation. Building on Inoue, this project seeks to both explore how graduate readers come to develop identities and skills required for specialized disciplinary contexts and to materialize (through process narratives and other reading-aloud recordings and literacy reflections) what graduate students actually do as they read and develop these identities and skills. Finally, we hope to build a toolbox of activities and resources (e.g. how to build a reading guide; how to lead discipline specific reading discussions; how to perform a reading audit on oneself) that will help graduate readers and their instructors attend more explicitly to all that is required for the many forms of specialized meaning-making demanded by the multiple contexts of graduate education.

**Overview of The Graduate Reading Exchange: What it does & Who it Targets**

The form of this digital project takes its inspiration from the *Accessible Syllabus*, a digital project created by Anne-Marie Womack that concisely guides instructors in creating more accessible resources (starting with the syllabus) for their students. Much as the *Accessible Syllabus* encourages instructors in immediately actionable redesigns of materials, we hope for this digital collaborative project to similarly enact a concise attention to graduate reading via responding to a specific need for “how” graduate students and instructors alike can better understand and trace their reading practices. As such, the project responds directly to several needs of its audience of both graduate students, but also instructors of graduate students.

The design of this project is tripartite, as the image below represents. When first opening the website, audience members would be able to choose from 3 separate focal points for engagement based on their needs and interests. 

First, and in order to promote attention to graduate student reading, we will have a webpage that describes and taxonomizes the various challenges of graduate student reading and literacy development (“Disciplinary Challenges”), introducing readers both to the consolidated scholarship and to some of the lived experiences and concerns of the contributing authors. Second, and to focus productively on graduate student practices without idealizing a singular kind of reading practice, we will create materials that seek to make perceivable both the activity of graduate level reading and the development of disciplinary literacy. A main goal of this section will be to generate and archive accounts of graduate and disciplinarily specialized reading (e.g. through process narratives, recorded and modeled reading/talk-alouds, etc.). These materials will allow instructors and students to analyze, discuss, and compare the practices and textual interactions captured. Third, we will create a “toolkit” of learning support resources for instructors and graduate students to peruse. For instructors, we envision this as a selection of class-based activities, assignments, and lessons for instructors; for students, we hope to produce a selection of materials and suggested tools they can adopt to their own needs and purposes (e.g. protocols for reading guides, reading logs, social annotations, etc). While the original materials will be created by the participants at Watson, we also hope that the literacy archive (“Materializing Reading Processes”) and the Toolkit can act as inspiration for ongoing additions (similar to [the DALN](https://www.thedaln.org/#/home), or Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives). In this way, we hope our webpage can continue to highlight graduate student voices and graduate students' diverse and changing reading concerns by encouraging these learners to share their practices, experiences, and advice, whether concerning different specialized genres, reading tools and platforms, or graduate reading contexts.

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### 5. Annotated schedule:

**The Graduate Reading Project** focuses upon creating a collaborative website to support instructors and graduate students in interrogating and developing reading practices. To that end, we are broadly structuring our time as follows:

**Pre-Conference (2 hours)**

Participants will be asked to complete about 2 hours of work (reading plus personal reflection) prior to attending the conference. This project uses a collaborative google drive, and participants will be asked to complete some brief reflections on their personal interests and experiences, and to post this to the collaborative space, a week before the conference (thus allowing participants to review each other’s submission and begin by “virtually greeting” each other).  As part of introducing the project and its goals to participants so that they understand the “why” for the personal reflection on reading, the facilitators will also share the “shell” of the website so that collaborators can begin to envision the project as they prepare.

**Thursday (4 hours)**:

Broad Goals:

* Develop collaboration/communication plan
* Describe project/website and 3 sub-groups
* Brainstorming materials to produce for sub-groups

During the 4 hours of project time allotted, we will work to discuss reading more broadly and the ways that graduate students need to read (as well as challenges of this). We will also use the participants’ posted reflections to start to collectively develop themes as to the ways that reading is viewed and used by graduate students and in/for graduate disciplinary literacy development.

However, before we can focus upon reading and developing the digital project, our first order of business (after welcoming participants, and describing the overall impetus of the project and its development as a collaborative website), will be to develop the communication norms for guiding collaboration. We will do this for both verbal/in-conference work, but also, establish procedures for the shared google doc and how to “finalize” materials. We will also discuss and further adjust the collaboration/authorship/credit document for the website based upon participants suggestions.

After these necessary collaboration plans are finalized, We will then get down to the business of supporting Graduate Student Readers by designing this website. We will start by reviewing “goal/charge” of the group for creating a collaborative “graduate reading focused” website to encourage attention to grad reading, as well as to offer support, gather narratives/reading descriptions, and generally, to provide ‘starting points’ for pedagogical inclusion to address the gap in the field. Facilitators will overview the 3 “subgroups” that will structure the work of the website, and the rationale for each part in helping to address graduate reading support:

* a “graduate reading and challenges” framing document (Definitional and descriptive in nature),
* Process narratives/accounts of reading, used to illustrate and model a variety of approaches to reading and its challenges
* Teaching and Reading Resources: a combination of lesson plans, suggestions for collaborative and individual reading focused attention (rhetorical reading guides, workshop exercises, social annotation use, etc.)

As part of creating opportunities for collaborative creativity and ways to bring in the intersectional identities of the participants and their diverse experiences, we will then move into a facilitated, collaborative brainstorming session around topics and questions and challenges each of these subgroups pose. This brainstorming will be both content/topically based, but also include ideas for process and products that the subgroups might engage or produce. The day will end with participants ranking their interest in working on each of the subgroups (Thursday evening, facilitators will divide the groups so that each subgroup has diverse perspectives and skills associated with it).

**Friday (6 hours)**:

Broad Goals:

* Brainstorm and produce drafts of materials in sub-groups
* Develop and give feedback via jigsaw on materials/plans for materials

The 6 hours of working time on Friday are when the groups will perform the greatest amount of collaborative production for the materials and text appropriate to their part of the website. While we do not envision the website being fully functional/created by the end of the Watson conference, we do hope that groups will substantially finish documents that they will post into the Shared Google Drive by the end of the work sessions on Friday. With this goal, the day will be broken into both work time and also review/sharing guided activities, so that even though participants will be focused upon the resource they are creating, they will have the opportunity to learn and to give feedback and thus to shape the other groups materials as well.

The day will start with a debrief of what was accomplished and the brainstorming for each “subgroup” project.  The AM session for each group will include a “deliverable” to the larger project of an outline for “what” material/information they’d like to put together as well as its organization (obviously, this varies greatly between the subgroups). Once each group has a plan they agree upon, they will then develop the planned materials as much as possible.

Facilitators will also be circulating to support and encourage critical engagement with designing accessible materials (e.g. designing with a concern for neurodivergence by chunking, for materiality by using images and color as well as fonts, and for making materials screen-reader friendly). The day will end with a “jigsaw” style activity, where subgroup participants will be remixed into smaller breakouts, so that they can see and share each work in progress and receive feedback. They will then return to their larger sub-group, and collectively discuss and plan for how to use the feedback.

**Saturday: (90 minutes)**

Participants will have an hour to make use of the feedback from the jigsaw collaboration, and to continue their work on their planned materials. We will then come back together as a larger group, identifying and planning for the project presentation to the Watson conference attendees. Facilitators will make sure to review materials in the Google Drive for inclusion.

We will also review the

**Post conference:**

The Facilitators will update the website with the curated materials. Once appropriately accessible, the website will be shared through social media and the WPA-L listserv. The facilitators will meet on a bi-monthly basis to discuss the project and ongoing issues related to website management, updates and new ideas for the project, etc. As needed, collaborators will also be invited to scheduled Zoom meetings/digital work-days to develop materials and to engage in peer feedback as part of contribution.

### 6. Modality:

Please indicate one preference.

1. In-person (Mar 7-9)

### 7. Number of participants:

We are assuming 12-20 participants would work best for this project, although we could go as high as 24. Especially with the subgroup focused upon instructional resources and materials, we can have many collaborators, since this subgroup will be further broken down into pairs and smaller groups to create these guidelines/resources.

We assume that we will need 4-6 people for the “Disciplinary Challenges” statement group. We will need 4-8 people for creating the process/descriptive narratives on reading. Our third subgroup, focused upon resources/toolkit, is flexible in terms of size, and we can easily use anywhere from 6-12 participants to help develop these resources.

### 8. Participant background:

Ideally, we will attract a range of participants, but all who share an interest in learning more about reading and themselves as readers. We are interested in participants from a range of disciplinary backgrounds in addition to rhetoric/composition/writing studies (especially education and social sciences). Because participants will be asked to reflect on their own (current or previous) graduate training and literacy acquisition, we desire participants from a range of institutional types, social classes, and language backgrounds to represent as many identity positions as possible (and that they are comfortable describing or sharing). Participants are not required to bring extensive knowledge about reading scholarship to this collaboration, although they should have interest in learning more about this topic. Participants will be given the opportunity to explore together some of the fundamental concepts of advanced reading, and to create resources in small groups that consolidate this new knowledge with their own interests in and pedagogical commitments to supporting graduate students more generally as learners.

We are particularly interested in participants (graduate students or instructors) who identify in their research interests as reading scholars or as reading/literacy specialists. These interests, especially, might be represented in participants from various disciplinary backgrounds, from rhet/comp, tech-comm, and education especially. We would also like to prioritize faculty who work with graduate students (broadly defined) and current graduate students. For faculty, this could include working with graduate students in administrative roles, in traditional graduate seminars, or through the writing center or faculty/teaching groups, or writing center practitioners. For graduate students, we hope to gather students at various points in their educational journeys (from first year MA to final semester and defending in the PhD) and whose research interests span the discipline. That said, we are also seeking participants with a strong interest in collaborating on open-source resources that will be made available in digital form. This means participants should enjoy working with colleagues by sharing and developing new ideas, perspectives, and resources. Additionally, participants should enjoy working with people from a range of backgrounds and should be interested in creating final products that will be accessible to a wide audience, both in terms of formatting and prose style. All this said, prior experience designing digital resources and/or Google Docs/WordPress  is not needed to participate.

### 9. Preparation:

Prior to the start of the conference, participants will be asked to complete about 2 hours of work (reading plus personal reflection). This project uses a collaborative google drive, and participants will be asked to complete some brief reflections on their personal interests and experiences, and to post this a week before the conference (thus allowing participants to review each other’s submission and begin by “virtually greeting” each other. The facilitators will also share the “shell” of the website so that collaborators can begin to envision what the final project will look like as they prepare.

### 10. Final-day deliverable:

Our final day deliverable will be a collection of resources and final drafts for webpages on **The Graduate Reading Exchange** website. We also will share a plan for how these drafts will be posted onto the website, including how author attribution will be given. These resources will be collected in a shared google drive. Most generally, these resources will contribute to three categories: 1. A description of the challenges of specialized disciplinary (graduate level) reading, which will consolidate key scholarship and personal experiences of the participants, and an overview of our project’s mission; 2. A collection of reading process narratives, accompanied by a guide for how future readers of the website can create their own reading process narratives and submit them for possible inclusion; 3. A toolkit for supporting graduate reading, including heuristics for creating reading guides, scaffolding social annotation projects, developing pre semester reading surveys, and implementing reading progress logs.

The facilitators will edit and post the resources on the website shortly thereafter, and participants will have the option of continuing to collaborate on the project if they wish. As mentioned above, the facilitators will continue to meet (digitally) and to monitor the website and project email for contributions

### 11. How will participants get credit?

Participants will be listed as contributing authors of the larger website, and they will have the option to also attach their name to the specific resources they helped to create (although they can also leave these anonymous, if they wish). Participants can name themselves as contributing authors to the *The Graduate Reading Exchange*, with a “title of webpage” that they contributed to, on their CV. We will also have an extension “about” page on the website that explains the process of attribution and the nature of the collaboration for the project.

### 12. What happens after the conference?

The facilitators will take the role of editor-designers of the website after the conference is over and final drafts of the resources are created. Facilitators will vet and edit all possible postings according to the shared style guide that will be developed during the conference. Facilitators will post the created, edited resources once final edits have been made. More specifically, facilitators will ensure the final product is coherent, consistent in terms of style, inclusive in its language choices, and adheres to current accessibility standards (e.g. using colorblind friendly colors and high contrast for visibility; composing alternative text (image) descriptions that read aloud for visual support; including clear headings and descriptions on pages to ensure ease of access; and formatting for mobile, tablet, and laptop viewing).

It is also the facilitators' hope that this website will continue to grow in years to come, as visitors to the website will be encouraged to submit their own process narratives and further resources for possible (but not guaranteed) inclusion in the website.To this end, the website will include a place that describes how to contribute and the project’s email address (monitored by facilitators).

***The Graduate Reading Exchange*** will be hosted via a WordPress site through Bowling Green State University. We will also be licensed via Creative Commons licensing. We anticipate that participants will choose the  [**CC BY-NC-SA**](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) **licensing.**  As noted above, participants will have the option, but are not obliged, to continue to collaborate on these resources, on editing, or on website design after the conference. Either way, participants will get credit on the website as contributing authors to the website.

### 13. Working and learning environment:

We hope to create public facing resources that reflect the complexity of graduate level reading from a variety of perspectives. As such, this project will be inherently collaborative--we are resolutely not looking to develop or forward a single, narrow argument about reading. Instead, this project hopes to make material and visible the varied ways that reading works and might be better supported in graduate students’ academic lives. We will organize the production of **The Graduate Reading Exchange** around an ethos of inclusivity and of developing new understandings of reading and reading support that take clear accounts of all the different ways graduate readers read, and the different interests, goals and disciplinary demands that different graduate level readers can bring to their reading.

An early exercise will be a group discussion in which we together develop a participation and collaboration “contract” for our time together and to help us meet our project goals in ways that are inclusive, kind, focused on shared goals, and grounded in rhetorical listening. We will practice what we preach as scholars of reading who take seriously the socio-constructive nature of knowledge production, and as instructors and administrators who believe that we understand best what we understand together.

We will also bring best pedagogical practices into the way we run our small groups and their production of specific resources. Each small group will be run by one or two facilitators, and we will organize jigsaw-ed sharing of project drafts and consistent process check-ins between these small groups. We will support group members in producing a set of clear goals (the resources they will create), allocate tasks in ways that reflect participants’ interests, and check in frequently to make sure all participants feel they are being heard.

### 14. (IN-PERSON PROPOSALS ONLY) Space and material needs:

We feel that this project can exist across various kinds of spaces--both traditional classrooms spaces (providing, desks are movable) or digital/hybrid workspaces with shared “projection screens” that are intended for group collaboration.

During the shared work time, we anticipate that participants will be on their own devices, and we will be using a collaborative Google Drive for producing/organizing materials and drafts. However, we also want to ensure that participants can work in a range of spaces and bodily positions that make this time productive and comfortable. Thus, we would ask for a work-space that might include multiple types of seating and table arrangements. As we will be working both as a “full group” but also in various sub-groups and partner/small group settings, we would do best in a space with mobile desks/tables that can be rearranged to suit the ongoing activity and needs of participants. It might also be useful to have some separate small-work rooms, so that participants can work in quiet(er) environments as needed.

While needed supplies will be primarily digital, we would ask for access to some drawing materials (white board/markers or chalk/chalk board) as well as for access to printers (especially, so that participants can work or offer feedback in paper-mode to avoid eye strain of so many hours on digital devices if they prefer to do so).