

*Book Review*

**Kim, M., & Carpenter, R. (2017). *Writing studio pedagogy: Space, place, and rhetoric in collaborative environments*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (225 pp., hardback \$70.00, paper \$35.00, eBook \$33.00).**

Janine Morris  
Nova Southeastern University

Mario D'Agostino  
Nova Southeastern University

Matthew Kim and Russell Carpenter's (2017) edited collection, *Writing Studio Pedagogy: Space, Place, and Rhetoric in Collaborative Environments*, applies writing studio pedagogy (WSP) to a range of teaching and learning contexts. The editors characterize WSP as paying "attention to space and place in the development of rhetorical acts by focusing on the ways in which they enhance pedagogy" (p. 1). Space, place, and rhetoric are three controlling themes of the collection and each contributor emphasizes how the interaction of these concepts can enhance collaboration, communication, and student learning "in the design of academic learning environments," particularly those that are not designated as studios (p. 3). Throughout the collection, contributors examine how WSP is enacted across disciplines (e.g., STEM, music, history, composition, and language arts), spaces (e.g. middle and secondary school, multiliteracy and writing centers), and with varying degrees of access (to personnel, technology, and infrastructural resources). This multifaceted approach to space and place is useful for communication center practitioners because it showcases the value of collaboration for building and sustaining relationships across different contexts. In addition, because "oral communication skills are linked to critical thinking and [because] communication centers are, consequently, an important part of that learning process" (Atkins-Sayre,

2012, p. 14), the contributors' emphasis on rhetorical flexibility is particularly important for individuals in the business of enhancing students' communicative abilities.

The editors encourage readers to see three threads emerge across the ten-chapter collection, though the chapters are not organized explicitly in these ways. The editors also encourage readers to identify others (as Kalmbach does in his Afterword). The threads Kim and Carpenter offer include *space* (chapters 2, 6, and 9), *place* (chapters 3, 4, and 5), and *rhetoric* (chapters 7, 8, and 10). For Kim and Carpenter, *space* involves the interactions, relationships, and design of particular learning environments. *Place* goes beyond the environment to explore issues of inclusivity, democracy, and equity for all students in those spaces. Finally, *rhetoric* "builds on space and place" to encourage critical reflection and "intellectual dwelling" informed by larger contexts (2). Overall, Kim and Carpenter's collection introduces readers to a "range of [interdisciplinary] theoretical and practical applications" concerning WSP (p. 3).

Kim and Carpenter's introduction defines WSP, explores both the history and interdisciplinary influences of WSP, and contextualizes the trajectory of the collection. Following the introduction, chapters 2-5 each explore how a studio pedagogy mindset applies to a range of disciplines and contexts. Kitalong's "Technological adaptations in firstspace"

(Chapter 2) focuses on Michigan Tech's Multiliteracies Center (MTMC) and demonstrates how adaptability has been necessary for sustaining the Center through institutional change. By focusing on the evolution of online consultations in the MTMC, Kitalong explores how "[t]hinking of the MTMC as surrounded by permeable boundaries would allow—even encourage—staff to be responsive to emerging needs within the institution, whether they were articulated or merely perceived" (p. 37). The theme of permeability and malleability in response to outside pressures in traditional classrooms also characterizes Hensley et al.'s "Using writing studio pedagogy to transcend teaching spaces," which focuses on the impact of adopting WSP in middle and second language arts classes to complement common core requirements (Chapter 3). Alwis' "Keeping history alive" (Chapter 4) differentiates WSP from project-based learning and explores how WSP can function in the history classroom to enhance play and cultivate creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and student agency. One of the most unique contributions to the collection is J.H. Kim's "enacting writing studio pedagogy in the music studio" (Chapter 5), which explores how non-verbal communication and play in music classes can increase student agency, especially for students with learning disabilities.

Focusing more on institutional concerns, chapters by Apostel and Apostel (Chapter 6), Dvorak and Crawford (Chapter 7), and Head (Chapter 8) involve case studies of different studios that emphasize the importance of communication, adaptability, and collaboration in response to institutional change. For example, Dvorak and Crawford's "Cross-institutional collaborations and writing studio pedagogy" (Chapter 7), illustrates the importance of working together to challenge institutional perceptions in cultivating the growth of a

secondary and college-level writing studio and writing fellows program at the same institution. Their writing fellows program, which "connect[s] peer writing tutors to specific writing intensive courses" (p. 111), can serve as a model for how communication centers might build sustainable partnerships with faculty and programs across campuses. As Dvorak and Crawford note, the writing studio "mindset can be more important than an actual physical location when implementing WSP" (p. 113).

The final two chapters in the collection emphasize the importance of spatial design and WSP for cultivating reflection, critical thinking, and learning. Gierdowski's "The flexible writing classroom as a site of pedagogical reflection" (Chapter 9) situates results of a qualitative study on 'flexible' composition classrooms within WSP. Gierdowski argues that reflection needs to be a significant component of WSP, particularly when instructors are taken out of their traditional learning environments. Likewise, Sabatino's "Fostering writing studio pedagogy in space designed for digital composing practices" (Chapter 10) examines the various design decisions performed during the renovation of UNC Greensboro's Digital ACT Studio. Sabatino calls for attention to "the rhetorical and aesthetic elements of design" (p. 177) and the collaborative decisions made when creating innovative spaces that foster digital composition and critical thinking. Kalmbach's Afterword highlights four additional themes weaved throughout *Writing Studio Pedagogy*: engagement, dialogue, community, and rhetorical learning.

The strength of this collection is in its multidisciplinary inclusivity. Because the collection features WSP enacted across academic units, levels, and spaces, its reach goes beyond those in writing,

communication, and multiliteracy centers alone. Furthermore, while the collection does emphasize the importance of flexible environments and access to technology to some degree, many of the contributors demonstrate the adaptability of writing studio pedagogy to those with limited resources. The examples provided in the chapters are accessible and clearly organized. The one limitation to the collection would be its repetition of WSP definitions and histories. Kim and Carpenter provide both of these in their preface and introduction, yet WSP is defined and historicized again in multiple chapters. While it is useful to see certain aspects of the definition emphasized by the authors, the focus on definitions takes away from the larger contribution some of the authors make. Despite this limitation, the editors have done excellent work to ensure the applicability of this collection to a wide audience of individuals (both instructors and administrators) invested in teaching and learning.

While technology, spatial design, and the material configurations of different studio spaces feature prominently throughout the collection, what comes through more strongly for us is the necessity of a WSP *mindset* when the ideal technologies, personnel, and physical spaces are unavailable. We characterize this mindset as involving communication, adaptability, and a willingness to collaborate. We believe that this mindset is what ultimately sustains and allows for growth and flourishing in challenging educational landscapes. Each chapter in some way demonstrates how, for a studio environment to be successful, individuals within that environment have to be willing to talk to and work with others, and remain flexible as pressures change. While the collection focuses in part on a variety of communication center-like environments

(such as multiliteracy and writing centers), its strength comes from its applicability to other contexts. As communication centers search for ways to extend their reach and relevance in higher education (Martin, Apostel, Strawser, & Martin, 2017), adopting a WSP mindset (especially one that takes into consideration space, place, rhetoric, communication, adaptability, and collaboration), can serve these spaces well. Kim and Carpenter's collection thus offers best practices (especially in chapters by Apostel and Apostel; Dvorak and Crawford; and Gierdowski), renderings of different studio spaces (through drawings, diagrams, and images), and different resolutions to the issues of "resources, technology, and space" that communication (and writing) centers both face (Schweitzer 2017).

## References

- Atkins-Sayre, W. (2012). Speaking our minds: Communication centers and critical thinking. In E. L. Yook & W. Atkins-Sayre (Eds.), *Communication Centers and Oral Communication Programs in Higher Education: Advantages, Challenges, and New Directions* (pp. 13-22). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
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- Schweitzer, L. (2017). The de-centered center: Embracing a space that is nowhere and everywhere. *Communication Center Journal*, 3(1), 147-56.