CHAPTER 5: MAKING OUR FILM AND VIDEO WORK COUNT FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION

When discussing their process for publishing *Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times*, Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher explain that they apply the term "born digital" to the book because its use of video and audio makes it so that it "cannot be fully, or even adequately, rendered by only print on a page. This project, in fact, has taken us several years to produce, in part, because there were no real models for similar scholarly texts" (197). Just like we learn the filmmaking process through trial and error, publishing and distributing our work and making arguments for its value as scholarship requires a lot of ingenuity as well.

As Selfe reports, publishing in the Humanities is undergoing a significant transformation. While publication expectations have been rising at institutions around the nation, university presses have reduced the number of Humanities titles they publish in response to budget cuts (Lee and Selfe 53-54). Krause concurs, stating that "[t]he economic realities of academic publishing point to a future where academics will either have to be willing to embrace the obvious advantages of electronic publishing, or they will have to acknowledge that there will soon be not nearly as many places for academic conversations" ("My CV"). The advantages of digital venues are plentiful. As Selfe argues, they include faster and less expensive publication, better accessibility, and wider readership (Lee and Selfe 54). In spite of these benefits, digital scholarship and its publication venues are often interpreted as part of the problem in departments that are deeply rooted in print culture. Even more complex is negotiating the value of non-peer-reviewed modes of distributing our films and videos in departments and institutions used to more traditional scholarship. In this chapter, I discuss how the principles of feminist filmmaking can help us make arguments and develop strategies to make our filmmaking work count in various ways.

Luckily for us, the push toward using moving images as part of our scholarship is not limited to Rhetoric and Composition. Selfe and Hawisher assert that "[o]ver the last decade and more, scholars in a number of humanistic disciplines ... have advocated using both digital video and audio to record interviews and other kinds of research observation" (195). As Judith Green and David Bloome argue, video "affords a means of examining social, cultural, and linguistic processes and practices" (1) in ways that alphabetic writing by not letting us see and hear participants cannot. In spite of the richness it provides, film and video faces the same issue as other digital scholarship. Catherine Braun explains that "digital media scholars must often do their digital work on top of more traditional work. This has the effect of shutting down or postponing a lot of potentially innovative or important work while individuals create the scholarship that their departments will value" (96-97). As I will show here, however, there are ways to use particular film and video projects toward both traditional and nontraditional scholarship.

Filmmaker and academic Marie Ullrich says that she teaches her students that "there's a level of hustle that you just can't learn until you get on a professional set, but I try to prepare them to succeed if they get there ... I encourage them to be creative problem solvers" (Hidalgo "Ullrich"). Hustling and creative problem solving are vital to making our films and videos count as scholarship. I have shown in previous chapters that filmmaking is an arduous and complex undertaking, so the key to adopting it as a scholarly medium is to make sure projects count in more than one way. My documentary "PERFECT" has screened at four film festivals and at two universities. I presented about it at two academic conferences and published an article on *Enculturation*, where I analyze the participants' rhetoric and showcase scenes from the film. I have also been invited to various courses to speak with students after they've seen the film. Making the film was a lot of work, but I've been able to make it count in multiple ways over a substantial period of time, with the latest festival screening being five years after I completed the film. While not all moving-image work will lend itself to as many avenues as I found for "PERFECT," there are a number of possible outlets for our films and videos. It's definitely a hustle, but it can be a fruitful one if done well. Let's look at the various:

MODES OF FILM AND VIDEO SCHOLARSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT We'll begin with:

Conference Presentations

Like many rhetoricians, lifers and casual offenders present in-progress work at conferences. In my experience presenting on and attending panels that showcase moving images, audiences react positively to the medium, in part because it provides a break from presenters reading their alphabetic writing. However, kyburz explains she has "been publicly humiliated by some high profile scholars at my presentations; thankfully, many younger scholars write or chat with me on the backchannel to confirm the validity of the work" ("Interview"). Since kyburz was one of our field's film and video pioneers, she may have fallen victim to the fear of the digital I discussed earlier, but the possibility does exist for our colleagues to attack our choice of medium.

One way to potentially circumvent that issue is to practice the ethics of interdependence with the audience and preface our work by saying that we are seeking their help in shaping the piece with their comments and questions. With that preface we can usually turn the tone of criticism into something constructive. Another approach is to share our allotted conference time with the audience. At her 2015 Conference on College Composition and Communication presentation, Shewonda Leger screened a few minutes of her documentary about black women's relationships with their hair and then asked the audience to discuss their own experiences regarding hair. By practicing the ethics of interdependence she created

a space where every audience member had a chance to share their story—and they all did—eliciting a passionate, fruitful discussion.

Another hurdle regarding conference presentations is equipment. Halbritter explains that he is "used to showing up at academic conferences that are ill-equipped ... for the sort of media I will be presenting" (viii-ix). As a precaution, he travels with a "digital projector, speakers, and extension cords" (viii-ix). For our 2015 CCCC presentation, Jody Shipka, Erin Anderson, and I practiced the ethics of interdependence, not only for writing the panel description, but for handling equipment. One of us brought the computer, another the dongle, and another the speakers. By sharing the task, the equipment was not a burden to any of us.

Showcasing our film and video work at conferences not only lets us get feedback but it makes the project count as a presentation. After reworking the piece, we often seek to transform it into:

Peer-Reviewed Publications

As I discussed in Chapter 3, film and video scholarship can be published as standalone or supporting video. While those options require a digital journal for hosting our moving images, we can also use alphabetic writing to examine the filmmaking process and publish our work in print venues, kyburz used her filmmaking practices and the French New Wave to argue for a redefinition of Composition in Composition Studies, while Kendall Leon and I discussed our experience teaching a service-learning course where students made podcasts and videos in *Interdisciplinary Humanities*. This approach can also be applied to print books, such as Sarah Arroyo's Participatory Composition, which explores the intellectual and cultural implications of sharing our video work through sites like YouTube, and Halbritter's Mics, Cameras, Symbolic Action, where he shows how filmmaking can enrich students' writing practices. Publishing in print presses and journals about film and video production limits what we can do, since people can't experience the medium we're discussing, as you can here. However, it is an excellent way to bypass departmental fear of the digital and it increases the number of journals where we can publish, with some of those venues having established reputations that some digital journals lack.

With Kairos, the first Rhetoric and Composition digital peer-reviewed venue, having been founded in 1996, all online venues are relatively new. However, what they lack in longevity they make up for in innovation and willingness to publish our work in the ways we envision. For article-length pieces there are a number of digital journals within Rhetoric and Composition. They are: Kairos, Enculturation, Computers and Composition Online, College Composition and Communication Online, Peitho, Present Tense, Harlot, Itineration, Across the Disciplines, and The Writing Instructor. There are also digital journals in related fields that publish the work of lifers and casual offenders, such as Technoculture, Connexions, Currents in

Electronic Literacy, Hybrid Pedagogy, the Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy, and Communication Design Quarterly. For book-and-feature-length projects we currently have four main venues: Computers and Composition Digital Press, Enculturation Intermezzo, the #writing series at WAC Clearinghouse, and the Digital Rhetoric Collaborative at the Sweetland Center for Writing.

Even digital venues may not have editors and reviewers who are familiar with the filmmaking process. When Krause tried to publish "Video in [Re]view," his *CCC Online* reviewers "suggested revisions that ranged from easy (such as changing the speed of the text rolling by) to impossible (such as reshooting scenes from the movie)" ("Amateurs"). Scene reshoots are not impossible. It is a standard film studio practice. However, for rhetoricians working with limited time and funding, reshooting is hard. Whenever I submit my documentaries to a journal, I include a memo explaining what I can change (such as titles, sound levels, music, and clip order) and what I can't (such as lighting, sound quality, and the depth or tone of participants' answers). I see this practice as having a two-fold effect. First, it makes it easier for editors and reviewers to evaluate my work, and second, it uses the feminist principle of mentorship by showing them what kinds of changes they can reasonably request from other lifers and casual offenders.

Mentorship is also key to helping fellow lifers and casual offenders publish their work. At Michigan State, for example, I started the Film and Video Research Cluster, where faculty and students interested in film and video production come together to receive and give feedback on works in progress from the formative preproduction stages to full drafts. Besides shaping the piece itself, we provide mentorship on where to publish and how to explain what can and cannot be done and/or revised in a film or video to editors and reviewers. Discussions of copyright, technology procurement, and the other topics I discussed in Chapter 4 are also key to mentoring fellow lifers and casual offenders.

I have been mentored by my colleagues Jeff Grabill and Bill Hart-Davidson throughout the process of writing this video book. It was Jeff who suggested that I have a skype conversation with Selfe and Hawisher. In that conversation I explained that, given how time consuming it is to create the mediated versions you're experiencing, reviewers should look at mediated sample chapters but review the transcripts alone for the rest of the video book. Once I made the changes reviewers suggested to the transcripts, I submitted the mediated versions for further review. Not only did reviewers and editors have to undergo an extra step of review for this video book, they were also asked to imagine the accompanying images and music during one round of review. The hustle and creative problem solving Ullrich discusses extends to those editing and reviewing our work. Practicing the ethics of interdependence as we relate to those who are publishing and reviewing our films and videos by having conversations where we all

collaborate on how the review process should unfold is a good way to end up with publication practices that everyone involved is satisfied with.

Let's now look at:

Grants

As I discussed in Chapter 4, lifers and casual offenders are often awarded grants in order to purchase equipment or to complete their projects. Unlike some alphabetic writing projects, the expenses related to filmmaking can be easily broken down and presented on grant applications, giving the applications of filmmaking rhetoricians a good chance of being funded. Receiving grants not only helps us complete our projects but also has the added benefit of counting as scholarship when making arguments for the value of our work. It can also allow us to practice the ethics of interdependence by hiring students and professionals to work on our films and engaging with them in ways that allow them to have a formative impact on the project and to pay them for their work.

Another approach is:

Film Festival Screenings

Film festivals are an additional peer-reviewed outlet for those making generalinterest documentaries and experimental work. There are various benefits to film festivals. Unlike peer-reviewed publications, films can be screened at as many festivals as they get accepted into. In schools with film, art, or music programs, there are already artistic screening evaluation guidelines in place that we can borrow from. This is what the Bylaws and Elections Committee did in my department when trying to decide how to count my own festival screenings. Besides consulting what other departments were doing, the committee asked fellow Michigan State lifer Halbritter and myself for input on the changes before bringing them up to our department for a vote, which passed unanimously. By engaging in the ethics of interdependence with filmmaking faculty and seeking mentorship from other departments, the committee created bylaw changes that fit the university's general policy and that the department at large was satisfied with.

There are also drawbacks to film festivals. The main one is the cost of submitting. which can be anywhere from \$15 to \$100 per festival. There is a small number of submission-fee-free festivals we can submit to if lacking funds. The other issue is actually getting into festivals. Unlike journals, which work with authors to get a promising piece ready for publication, film festivals reject work that doesn't meet their needs, making it harder for lifers and casual offenders, especially those who are still honing their craft, to get in. Because there is a substantial number of niche festivals that support the films of and about women, queer people, and people of color, following the feminist filmmaking principles of diversity and addressing social justice can help our work get into those festivals, where the competition is not as fierce because there are fewer submissions.

Besides festivals, we can also have:

University, Classroom, and Community Screenings

Although not peer-reviewed, university and classroom screenings can count toward scholarship, especially if one is invited to visit a campus for a post-screening Q&A and accompanying lectures or workshops. In the fall of 2015, I visited Washington State University for a screening of *Vanishing Borders*. In the spring, I will visit Bridgewater State University and New York University also for screening the film. I use those visits as proof of the documentary's value to the field and of my rising profile as a scholar in my merit, tenure, and promotion arguments. Films that follow the feminist principles of diversity and addressing social justice are likely to have a better run at universities because they can satisfy the needs of various departments and organizations seeking to provide students with events that address gender, race, sexuality, and ability. The more departments involved in sponsoring a screening, the more likely it will be to get funded and the larger the potential audience.

Of less weight but still valuable to our scholarly profile are skype and in-person visits to discuss our films and videos with students who have watched them as part of their course assignments. These have the same weight as any class presentation in our CVs. Here diversity and addressing social justice again make our work applicable to a wider range of courses.

We can also organize community screenings by partnering with local organizations to sponsor and spread the word about the screening to their members. Although it is hard to make a case for community screenings to count as scholarship proper, they constitute community engagement and outreach. Not all universities value it the same way, but community engagement and outreach does matter to most institutions and can be used in our tenure, promotion, and merit arguments as we prove that our work has value outside the ivory tower. These screenings represent a bridge between our work and people outside academic spaces that is harder to create with traditional alphabetic-writing scholarship.

Another way to make our moving images count is by having them featured by the:

Press

One benefit of having screenings is that they can lead to press coverage. For university screenings it is good to contact the school's press office. Community organizations can also provide press contacts that we can reach out to through phone calls and press releases. To date, my community and university screenings for *Vanishing Borders* have been featured in two separate NPR interviews, on local

papers, and on larger outlets like the Associated Press, Fox News Latino, and Yahoo Noticias en Español. Press for film festivals is more elusive, as it depends on whether journalists and reviewers at the festival decide to cover our work. As with community screenings, press doesn't directly count as scholarship but it helps us argue for the value of our work to the culture in general and gives us a sense of prestige as scholars. Also like community screenings, press helps us reach populations outside academia. Since interviewees often ask questions about the filmmaking process, we are given the opportunity to discuss feminist filmmaking with the general public.

Another approach is:

Crewmember Work

Of all the ways we can make our work count, crew work may be the least exercised. While at CCCC 2015, Leger and I filmed each other's panels. In my case, I wanted the footage as B-roll for this video book. In hers, she wanted it for her documentary series on how people relate to their hair. We had fun filming each other and then traded footage. On the flight back, I decided I would give her "additional photography" credit on the video book chapters featuring her footage of my presentation.

As I considered the option, however, I knew that it wasn't enough for me to mention it here. She also needed to list it on her CV. I propose that lifers and casual offenders add a "Crewmember Work" section to our vitas, where we list the projects we've played a crew role in, mention the role, and briefly discuss the project's trajectory. In Leger's case, she'd write that this video book was published by CCDP. That part is simple enough. What will be harder is making arguments for the value of such work. Lifers and casual offenders need to exercise the ethics of interdependence and mentoring as we create these arguments and try them out before our particular departments. We need to depend on each other to make these practices count. Luckily for us, there is a hierarchy to filmmaking roles to draw from. Even under the ethics of interdependence, where everyone's work is valued, there is a sense that the producer and director have more responsibility for the project than those doing additional photography. I am eager to see how this practice develops and to fill the "Crewmember Work" section in my own vita with collaborations on many exciting projects like Leger's.

Let's now discuss:

Online Distribution

Kira Cochrane argues that "[t]he internet has ... transformed the circulation of feminist ideas. Where once it could be difficult to access feminist writing ... the storm of feminist blogs and voices online has changed all that." However, there is risk involved with expressing our views in online spaces, with responses to feminist

activism in particular leading to, as Cochrane asserts, "[P]eople anonymously expressing attitudes once considered synonymous with serial killers." Jamie "Skye" Bianco explains that based on her own experiences as a filmmaking scholar, when asking students to make moving images she and her students discuss "how forms of video, such as narrative, journalistic/event, documentary, and advocacy/argumentation distribute exposures differently and that these exposures are cultivated and public. We discuss at length the questions of semi-permanency and the de/contextualization of media capture." These discussions are useful to have with our students and with fellow lifers and casual offenders. One of Arroyo's students made a video titled "WTF MRA?: Men's Rights Activism" for a Digital Rhetoric course. Arroyo explains that the video "already has over 1,000 views on YouTube and has spawned some nasty and pointed commentary" ("Interview"). The video now has over 25,000 views and more than 1,600 comments, many of them brimming with hatred and sexism. When posting our work online, we need to be aware of these dangers.

In spite of the risks, as Ryan Skinnell asserts, YouTube has become "a means to introduce and substantiate claims and concepts in public discourse." The question is whether we can make our voices heard in the midst of the haphazard cacophony that is YouTube. For Alexandra Juhasz the answer is no. She explains, "Even the most moving of videos needs to be connected to something ...—people, community, ideas, other videos to which it has a coherent link—if it is to create what education does best: action over distraction, deep knowledge instead of free-floating ideas, connection over the quick link, community instead of the isolated individual." And vet, as Henry Jenkins states, much of the work we post on YouTube does not get consumed on the site itself. While the goal of media outlets once was to create "stickiness" so that viewers would not go to the competition, Youtube, as Jenkins explains, encourages "spreadability... a term which emphasizes the active agency of consumers in creating value and heightening awareness through their circulation of media content." Filmmaker Naomi Beukes-Meyer explains that for "I'm Still Down Here," "I knew a target audience was the LGBT community and this put me in contact with the online video sharing platform *One More Lesbian*. The first episode was shown there and has had over 170,000 views... For me, it was really about getting my work to an audience and online was the most viable option."

As with community screenings and press coverage, online distribution can help us reach non-academic audiences but as with them, success online doesn't yet have a clear claim as scholarship. It can, however, be used to argue for influence in the culture outside the university. One way to argue for the value of our videos published on YouTube and Vimeo is by using the sites' analytics to provide viewing data. Because my channels have a substantial number of viewers from around the world, I am able to argue that the work I publish online has international reach, helping raise my global profile as a faculty member and filmmaker. Online publication of our moving images can be used to strengthen our case when

accompanied by peer-reviewed publications and/or festival screenings. The hustle and creative problem solving I've been discussing throughout this section does not only apply to how we get our work into the world but also to how we argue for its value as scholarship.

One way to help our case is by:

FOSTERING MORE DIGITAL-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS IN OUR DEPARTMENTS AND BEYOND

As Michael Day, Susan Delagrange, Mike Palmquist, Michael Pemberton, and Janice Walker assert, "For more than two decades, scholars working in digital or 'new' media have not only been making arguments about how their work fits into traditional guidelines for tenure and promotion but also explaining how—and why—those guidelines need to change" (187). They explain that in spite of CCCC and MLA reports providing guidelines for the value and evaluation of digital work, "the burden of proof of the quality and intellectual impact of digital scholarship has rested largely on the candidate" (190). While it is still vital for lifers and casual offenders to know how to argue for the value of our work to the field and the culture at large, it is also key to shape our departments and universities into places that value digital scholarship.

Valerie Lee and Selfe co-wrote an article detailing how the English Department at the Ohio State University, which Lee chaired at the time, made changes to become more open to digital scholarship. As Lee recounts, "The large cohort of digital media faculty members banded with other senior faculty members who had shifted their emphases to digital composing and sent the Executive Committee ... a manifesto" (52). The committee quickly agreed "to revise the phrase 'a published book' to a 'published book or equivalent body of scholarship" (52). The manifesto went on, however, "chipping away at conjunctions, adverbs, adjectives, and all manner of innocent-looking nouns in the document that exposed biases that those who work with print culture had normalized" (52). Lee, noticing committee members were starting to resent the proposed changes, turned to Selfe, whom she describes as "someone known for collaboration and synthesis" (52) and they negotiated the requests in a harmonious manner. The crux of the manifesto was to keep "an emphasis on peer review" while also accounting for "electronic citation counts, hits, online reviews and print reviews, and awards" (55). The latter set of criteria is vital because, as Braun explains, "Even if they are open to accepting alternative forms of output, many [academics] simply have no experience assessing such work ... which can be devastating for untenured faculty, in particular" (16). Providing evaluative criteria is key to making departmental transformations possible.

Lee and Selfe's article shows the ethics of interdependence at work. Instead of individuals asking for changes that would benefit them in particular, the digital scholars in the department worked to craft a document that would suggest changes

beneficial to all. By coming together, they also had a stronger chance of succeeding. Moreover, Selfe's reputation for collaboration is what helped Lee select her as the point person for the discussion. Practicing mentorship, they then published their article to share their strategies with others seeking to follow suit. As Day et al. argue, untenured faculty members are in a vulnerable position, so making changes will require "able leadership from those who already enjoy the benefits of tenure" (204-205). Of course, departments are only the first stop on the road to tenure and promotion. The universities themselves also need to be transformed. Here, too, the mentorship and action of senior faculty, who better understand how the institution works, is key.

Don Unger believes that "successful tactics" for supporting digital scholarship at the departmental and university levels "need to be passed along from one institution to the next." As Krause asserts, "many different types of institutions—ironically, more often than not the ones that are not generally thought of as 'important' or 'innovative' research schools...—seem willing to embrace a variety of different approaches to scholarship" ("My CV"). Eastern Michigan University, where he works, uses a point value system for both traditional and nontraditional scholarship, allowing both to count even if at different levels. Geoffrey Carter explains that Saginaw Valley State University "is open to publishing in unconventional formats. I received high marks on my scholarship in various reviews, and I only have two articles that appear in traditional print-based form...The work I've done for Kairos, Enculturation, and Currents in Electronic Literacy has all been valued." Arroyo had a similarly positive experience: "My first video in Kairos counted as a peer-reviewed publication in my tenure file when I was granted tenure. My university recognizes all publications that are peer reviewed. It is really that simple" ("Interview").

Unger believes it is important to also make changes at the graduate school level: "you still can't submit multimedia work as a thesis or [dissertation] ... I can write the paper version AND make the video, webtext, etc. Joy." There a have been a small number of multimedia dissertations, like Christine Boese's 1998 ethnographic study of fan culture around *Xena: Warrior Princess*, but the practice is still rare. In May 2015 Leger presented a documentary film as her Masters thesis in my department. She was able to do so because in 2014 fellow members of the Graduate Committee and myself rewrote the handbook to allow for the medium of theses and dissertations to be up to the student and their committee. We suggested having two written companions to non-alphabetic writing dissertations: a project synopsis, where issues like theoretical framework and methodology are discussed, and a plan for the artifact's preservation, detailing how others can access the work in the future. We used the ethics of interdependence to draft these guidelines by having various digital scholars work together to make sure the needs of all digital media were met in what we wrote.

Even though departments and universities will no doubt become more open to digital scholarship, we will continue to have to explain our process to others who don't work in the same medium as we craft our tenure, promotion, and merit narratives. Explaining the time commitment involved, the technologies utilized, and the kind of collaboration we engage in will help our work be valued. The embrace of digital scholarship is inevitable, but we can make sure it comes sooner—and on our own terms—by collaborating with fellow digital scholars as we transform our departments, universities, and the field into digital-friendly spaces.

Now let's turn to Chapter 6 for some concluding thoughts on the future of film and video production in Rhetoric and Composition.

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NOTE

Unattributed footage throughout the chapter by Alexandra Hidalgo. Additional photography by Nathaniel Bowler, Jefferey Ivey, Shewonda Leger, Cecilia Rodríguez Milanés, Megan Grabill, Peter Bowler, Kristin Bowler, and Gustavo Cardier.

Behind-the-Scenes footage of Vanishing Borders by Michelle Mueller.

Thank you to NCTE and to participants at 2015 Conference on College Composition and Communication, at the 2015 HASTAC Conference, and at the 2010 Watson Conference. I filmed footage featured here at those conferences. I also feature the following presentations: Jennifer Sano Franchini's and my own 2015 HASTAC presentations, Shewonda Leger's and my own 2015 CCCC presentation, Sarah Olivas's, Yazmín Lazcano-Pry's, and Paul Kei Matzuda's 2010 Watson Conference presentations.

Thank you to Jennifer Sano Franchini, Shewonda Leger, Erin Schaefer, Kristin Bowler, Lindsey Spitzley, Matilda Washington, Gina Washington, Shane Wynn, Fiovdaliza Volenik, Heather Fallis, Priyanka Lobo, Yoelis Rivas, Nathaniel Bowler,

and Than Thein for letting me film them camera in hand. Thank you also to Sarah Shaw, Peter Johnston, and Natalie Gotko who appear here editing.

Sound editing by Alexandra Hidalgo and Sarah Shaw.

SOUNDTRACK

"Pink Blossoms" and "Primastone"

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