

*Literacy in Composition Studies* Special Issue  
Tracing Generative AI in the Lives of Marginalized Writers

Writing Studies scholars have considered the implications of working with so-called AI writing assistants for some time (McKee and Porter 2017; Reymon 2017; Gallagher 2018; Hart-Davidson 2018; Adams and Simpson 2020; McKee and Porter 2020; Duin and Peterson 2021; Hart-Davidson et al. 2024), but the widespread access to generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) products like large language models (LLMs) have created new urgency to study these products and strategize where our discipline can intervene in their proliferation in our universities and classrooms. Critiques of artificial intelligence in general reveal algorithmic bias, which has helped inform how we can understand GenAI product's limitations in the content they generate (Buolamwini 2023; Chun 2021; Benjamin 2019; Noble 2018). Recently, the discipline has evolved such critiques into judging the practical and pedagogical role of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in writing specifically (Ranade and Eyman 2024; Jiang 2024) as well as taking more critical stances of refusal (Sano-Franchini, McIntyre, and Fernandes 2024). As we interrogate this moment in literacy history, however, we believe qualitative research on *marginalized writers' experiences* with GenAI products and the texts these machines create are essential for understanding the GenAI's theoretical implications for critical digital literacies.

*Literacy in Composition Studies* invites feature-length articles, multimodal submissions, autoethnographic essays, counternarratives (Martinez 2020), and book reviews that examine the triangulation of marginalized writers' social histories of literacies, social critiques of GenAI products and the texts they create, and how machine-generated texts circulate in and out of their literacy practices and workflows (Lockridge and Van Ittersum 2020). We have two purposes for this special issue.

First, we hope the pieces featured in this special will advance scholarship that traces texts' movements and meanings as they mediate human activity and relationships, as inspired by Suresh Canagarajah's guest editorial for *College English*. In the introduction of that issue, Canagarajah writes,

the text is made up of expansive resources (material, semiotic, social) that need to be traced for meaning; the text is made up of unending traces of its travels through time and space; we must follow the thread in order to find directions, with

meanings constructed by weaving the text; and the *where* is important for the *what*, as in performativity (24).

Here we think about trace in both its verb and noun form: to find, investigate, discover meaning; to draw over (invisible) lines of an image's meaning; a residual leftover that suggests some meaning once existed in the world. We know that texts move across geographic borders, time and space, and often attach to material forms like t-shirts. Understanding this crucial feature of literacy and applying trace as a metaphor to GenAI literacies, we ask the following broad questions that lead to the aforementioned triangulation of ideas: What needs to be discovered about what GenAI means to marginalized people and their literacy practices? What lines are invisible in dominant thinking about GenAI text, literacy, and meaning? What can we learn from the past – recent and decades ago – that illuminates our current wrestling with what could be no more than a bubble waiting to burst (Zitron)?

Our second purpose is to represent an intersectional view of GenAI and writing (Crenshaw). We know that marginalized people's view of what literacy means for themselves as they live under oppressive social institutions has informed and destabilized the dominant view of literacy. Marginalized writers' unique perspective on the meanings and travels of GenAI's texts, materials, labor exploitation, and precious environmental resources to literacy performances can provide new theories and interventions in literacy theory and education that will resonate with readers of LiCS and potentially shape dominant public discourse on GenAI products. This special issue aims to collect empirical research, narratives, and critiques that demonstrates how GenAI and the texts it produces inflects marginalized people's practices with writing.

For this special issue, we define "marginalized" to encompass all underrepresented social identities across race / ethnicity, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and ability. Thus, when these submissions are taken together, the special issue will present GenAI literacies across the realities of marginalized writers, to show how GenAI products and texts move in their lives (or not). Doing so advances ongoing interrogations of the legacy of the dual consequences of digital literacy: liberation and oppression. To this end, submissions in this special issue apply our disciplinary values such as, among others, linguistic justice (College Composition and Communication 1973; College Composition and Communication 2021; College Composition and Communication 2020), agency (Cooper 2011), process (Emig 1971; Murray 1973; Kent 1999), and rhetorical sovereignty (Lyons 2000) to highlight how GenAI and writing participates in the matrix of domination

(Collins) and what measures of response exist from those subject positions. Submissions in this issue will ultimately demonstrate ways to “address questions of social inequity and social justice from a more systemic and intersectional standpoint” (Rhodes and Alexander 481) as it relates to these emerging writing technologies.

Writing studies have found the meaning of texts and technology to serve digital colonialism and legitimized the neo liberal function of writing technologies. As computer-supported writing instruction became widespread in the 1990s, the discipline realized how interface design was, and still is, so deeply entrenched in Western political ideologies, conceptions of office spaces and materials, and who works in those spaces. By representing Western work, race, and gender on desktops, digital literacy itself becomes a border international students must cross (Selfe and Selfe 1994). These interfaces also travel across borders into other countries, such as China where desktops and folders make less sense in Asian workplaces that have different materials mediate digital literacy practice; a cross-cultural design of technology adapted to local contexts, however, would better situate the literacies of these users (Sun 2012). This adaptation most likely would undercut the economic interests of the political Global North.

GenAI products continue this legacy of blending sophisticated technology with political and ideological philosophies. Taken together, they shape what kinds of literacies emerge (or don't emerge) for marginalized writers. When we think about traces of GenAI, we think about how GenAI extends the Global North's ongoing extraction of data, labor, and materials from the Global South. While Western writers in workplaces and classrooms prompt LLMs for efficiently completed tasks and swift answers, enslaved Black women and children in the Congo mine raw minerals that power these platforms (Crawford; Sovacool). As Western writers order outputs from LLMs, an army of well-educated workers in Kenya, Uganda and India filter out offensive content at the risk of their own mental health (Perrigo). This relationship is a contradiction, as colonial perspectives embedded in those same GenAI systems reject the legitimacy of the Global South's linguistic and literacy practices (Owusu-Ansah). When we think about traces of Gen AI, we think about how GenAI may help international students access American academies and other social institutions, yet not help these students embrace their right to use the expressive power of their repertoire of linguist practices. We also think of how “racial capitalism” operates to whitewash traces of diversity when we interact with GenAI (Kynard, 2023). Finally, when we think about traces of GenAI, we think about people with disabilities: when they encounter AI-generated stories about disability, people with disabilities “identify a precise and nuanced taxonomy of harmful language

characteristic” that would be useful for annotation guidelines when designing large language models (Gadiraju 213). Their encounters with machine-generated text lead to authentic critical literacies that transform the design of an aspect of large language models.

These examples across identities – international laborers, multilingual students, race / ethnicity, and disability – serve to highlight that interacting with GenAI in different domains of life are literacy events (Heath 1982). These events can be analyzed for how power and relationships with social institutions unfold in marginalized writers’ lives (Barton and Hamilton 2000). While GenAI invites participation in a distributed network of oppression that constitutes an “AI Empire” (Tacheva and Ramasubramanian 2023), they also activate new values, beliefs, and activities with and about literacy (Bedington et al. 2024 ), often evoking social justice and ethical concerns (Aguilar 2024).

We hope that the metaphor “tracing literacy” will inspire proposals for advancing what GenAI means for marginalized people in different literacy events. We’re particularly excited that perspectives on GenAI from different subject positions will place GenAI in the context of interventions in oppression and inequality, to describe a nuanced accounting of the relationship among writing, identity, GenAI, and power. Ultimately this issue documents critical GenAI literacies with special attention to the marginalized lives most impacted by these tools.

We ask proposers to consider the following questions: What happens when we trace GenAI as technology and its texts in our sociocultural and material literacy practices? What do we discover in this moment of marginalized communities’ literacy history? Proposals may include investigations on asset-based literacy practices, critiques of GenAI, and accounts of resistance to engage GenAI for ethical and justice informed reasons, among other perspectives that center power and access. We can think about tracing GenAI in marginalized lives in some of the following non-exhaustive themes:

- Access and Inclusivity
- Representation and Bias
- Impact and Usage
- Power Dynamics and/or Power Structures
- Migration
- Labor

**Below is a tentative timeline:**

- **200 - 500-word proposals due: April 15, 2025** at [LICSgenai@gmail.com](mailto:LICSgenai@gmail.com)
- Acceptances Sent: May 15, 2025
- First Drafts Due: August 15, 2025
- Editors send the manuscripts for peer reviews: August 2025
- Peer Reviews due: Oct. 1
- Editors send revision requests to authors: By October 15, 2025
- Revisions due to editors: December 15, 2025
- Launch: March 2, 2026

Questions / inquiries may be sent to Antonio Byrd and Alfred Owusu-Ansah at [LICSgenai@gmail.com](mailto:LICSgenai@gmail.com) before the proposal deadline.

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