

Call for Proposals

Theme: Creative, Embodied, and Activist Approaches to Archival Research: Fostering a More Inclusive Future

Guest Editors: Romeo García, Gesa Kirsch, Keola Kinghorn, and Muath Qadous

Email: romeo.garcia@utah.edu or creative.embodied.archive@gmail.com

Journal: *Writers: Craft and Context*

This special issue invites scholars both to extend the meaning of archives and what it means to do archival research. Specifically, we invite contributions that feature creative, embodied, and activist approaches to archival research, drawing on concepts such as *critical imagination* (Royster; Royster and Kirsch), *poetic inquiry* (Faulkner; Tarabochia), and *archival imaginings* (Rohan). *Critical imagination* invites participants to think through, around, and beyond archival materials when sources are hard to locate and when voices have been deliberately silenced or omitted from historical renderings. *Poetic inquiry* foregrounds voices, text fragments, and other evidence in creative/ poetic ways—such as found poetry, pantoums, and fragmented poetry—thereby highlighting the language/ writing of those we study (Powell). *Archival imaginings* invite the production of new texts/ genres/ artifacts that can enrich our understanding of the lives we study, such as a scrapbook built from materials/ fragments left behind. Centering these three concepts, this special issue focuses on creative, embodied, and activist approaches that invite scholars to write with/ through/ alongside historical subjects, highlighting their voices (not ours), foregrounding their language (not ours), thereby enabling us to unsettle the (sometimes unintentional) extractive, colonial approaches to archival research.

In keeping with the mission of *Writers: Craft and Context*, we aim to enact an anti-racist stance by both foregrounding a praxis of unsettling racist ideas and actions in this special issue and intentionally and meaningfully collaborating with scholars of color and other marginalized and minoritized groups. This special issue aims to highlight how to create, embody, and foster diverse voices/perspective when archival materials are sparse, fragmentary, or missing. Our call for creative, embodied, and activist approaches to archival research is grounded in a commitment to diversify the stories/ voices/ perspectives that have been circulating (stories-so-far, Massey, see also García) in order to imagine and amplify a much wider range of narratives, histories, and legacies (the possibility of new stories, Rohrer, see also García). We invite contributors to foster, highlight, and amplify underrepresented voices/ perspectives to ongoing conversations and work with archival materials in ethically, socially, and culturally responsible ways. In short, we envision this special issue “as a site for inclusion activism” (see “[Our Commitments](#)” *WCC Journal*).

We invite contributions from scholars across academic fields such as writing studies, cultural studies, feminist studies, creative writing, as well as from “community experts outside academia, including program leaders, activists, volunteers, artists and others who see, support, and do the work of writing [and archival collecting, curating, and interpreting] in non-academic contexts” ([WCC Home](#)).

We welcome a diversity of genres, including “traditional and creative genres including research articles, reflections on methodology, pedagogy pieces, collaborative or multi-voice works, collages, essays, creative nonfiction, interviews” as well as poetic inquiry, archival imaginings, photo essays, textile-based artwork, and other creative expressions that don’t “fit neatly elsewhere.” ([WCC Home](#)).

Contributors to this special issue may wish to consider the following:

- We invite creative, illustrative, and descriptive examples of archival approaches.
- How can creative, embodied, and/or activist approaches to archival research foster, highlight, and amplify underrepresented stories, voices, and perspectives?
- How might critical imagination, poetic inquiry, and/or archival imaginings function as best practices and nuance archival research?
- What are the affordances and limitations of creative, embodied, and/or activist approaches to archival research?
- How do creative, embodied, and/or activist approaches call attention to ethically, socially, and culturally responsible ways of working with archival materials?
- How might we unsettle and thus re-envision both the meaning of archives and what it means to do archival research?
- What are the challenges today of enacting an anti-racist stance?

Proposed Timeline

Proposals Due: September 15, 2025

Notification of Acceptance: October 31, 2025

Manuscripts Due: January 15, 2026

Editorial Feedback: March 10, 2026

Final Manuscripts Due: June 1, 2026

Estimated Publication Date: August 1, 2026

Proposal Format: Please submit a 500-word proposal explaining how your work addresses the theme of the special issue. Explain your topic, approach/methodology (creative, embodied, activist), archival materials you explore, and the genre of work. romeo.garcia@utah.edu or creative.embodied.archive@gmail.com

In keeping with *WCC* policy, please provide some context about yourself as a writer, researcher, artist. In addition, given *WCC*'s commitment to inclusive publishing practices, we invite you to share your demographic information, including race, educational experiences, languages, identity, pronouns, etc. [[WCCJ About page](#)]

Works Cited

- Faulkner, Sandra L. "Poetic Inquiry: Poetry As/in/for Social Research." *The Handbook of Arts-Based Research*, New York: Guilford Press, 2017, pp. 208-230.
- García, Romeo. *There is No Making it Out: Stories-So-Far and the Possibilities of New Stories*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2025.
- Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. Lond: SAGE Publications, 2005.
- Pillay, Daisy, Inbanathan Naicker and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan. "Writing Academic Autoethnographies: Imagination, Serendipity, and Creative Interactions." *Academic Autoethnographies: Inside Teaching in Higher Education*. Editors Daisy Pillay, Inbanathan Naicker and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016, pages 1-17.
- Powell, Malea, "Dreaming Charles Eastman: Cultural Memory, Autobiography, and Geography in Indigenous Rhetorical Histories," *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, edited by Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan, Southern Illinois UP, 2008, pages 115-127.
- Rohan, Liz. "Archival Imaginings of the Working-Class College Woman: The 1912-1913 Scrapbook of Josephine Gomon, University of Michigan College Student." [*Unsettling Archival Research: Engaging Critical, Communal, and Digital Archives*](#), editors Gesa E. Kirsch, Romeo García, Caitlin Burns Allen and Walker P. Smith, Southern Illinois UP, 2023, pages 187-211.
- Rohrer, Judy. *Staking Claims: Settler Colonialism and Racialization in Hawai'i*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones and Gesa E. Kirsch. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy Studies*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Tarabochia, Sandra. "Becoming Researcher Poets: Poetic Inquiry as Method/ology for Writing (Through) the Lifespan." *Improvisations: Methods and Methodologies in Lifespan Writing Research*, edited by Ryan J. Dippra and Talinn Phillips, WAC Clearing House, UP of Colorado, 2024, pages 305-324.