

Researching for the GWRJ

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Since we know our approach to everyday—or grassroots—writing research might be pretty unfamiliar to a lot of people, we have developed some questions to get you started on your writing research and to show you how we see people approach writing research in the GWRJ.

Getting Started on Writing Research
GWRJ Approaches to Writing Research
- Investigating my own writing practices
- Investigating others' writing practices
- Investigating a genre in use

Getting Started on Writing Research

What might you write about?
Ask yourself: "What is it about writing in the world that is interesting or meaningful to me right now?"

How might you narrow your focus?
Ask yourself: "What kinds of genres are people writing in? Where? When? How? What specific writing practices are visible or invisible in this situation?"

How might you begin with your story?
Ask yourself: "What previous experiences do I have with this writing practice or situation? Where was I? When? Who else was there? What tools was I using? How did I feel?"

Who else has written about this before?
You can visit the GWRJ Past Issues webpage to find a link to the GWRJ Tags that you can use to search our past issue archive for articles by topic and writing terms and concepts. From there,

you can locate existing GWRJ articles to see how people have shared their own stories about similar kinds of writing practices and situations.

What might you research?
Ask yourself: “What can I unpack and/or learn more about this writing practice or situation?”

How might you do your writing research?
Ask yourself: “What would I need to do in order to unpack and/or learn more about this writing practice or situation?”

What if you’re not sure how to do writing research?
You can think about all kinds of research: things you have done in the past, things you may have been asked to do in school, things you may have done to research things other than writing, and things you have heard about but haven’t practiced before.

Some potential research methods include:

- Narrative writing: telling stories about past and/or present writing experiences to make meaning out of your understanding of writing practices or situations.
- Survey or interview: asking other people questions about their experiences to expand your understanding of a specific writing practice or situation.
- Creating an archive: collecting writing texts to look at patterns or practices across different people, times, places, media, or situations.
- Memory work: using your memory of personal experience to do narrative writing, make lists, or map out something you’ve done in the past.
- Mapping or drawing: creating visual maps or drawings to figure out some of the complexities of a writing practice or situation.

Who else has done this kind of research before?
You can visit the GWRJ Past Issues webpage to locate existing GWRJ articles to see how people have done their own writing research, whether they’re writing about writing practices and situations that are similar to yours or not.

You can also search for writing research beyond the GWRJ, to find other published research about writing practices. You can consider popular and academic sources of information that you find online and bring in other kinds of writing terms that can be relevant and accessible to a wide range of readers.

How might you plan to do your writing research?

Ask yourself: “What will I need to do to help my research be credible and reliable?”

Depending on your research method, consider what you will need to write or collect, what you will need to talk to people about and when, what you will need to do and where, and who you will need to ask for research support.

GWRJ Approaches to Writing Research

Investigating my own writing practices

- How do I produce specific kinds of writing for specific situations? Using what tools? For what purposes?
- Who do I make these kinds of texts for? How do people use them? Where and when?
- Where am I when I do this kind of writing? When?
- How do I feel when I am doing this kind of writing? Why?
- How have I learned to produce this kind of writing for what kinds of situations?
- How have I used writing as a tool to do specific kinds of research? How does my research impact my writing practice?
- How has my writing for this kind of situation changed over time?
- How do I use this kind of writing across different situations?
- How does this writing practice allow me to participate in specific cultures and communities?
- What cultural norms and practices do I have to understand in order to produce this kind of writing?
- What are the limitations around this writing practice?

Investigating others’ writing practices

- How do other people participate in specific kinds of writing practices? Using what tools? For what purposes?
- Who do people make these kinds of texts for? Where and when?
- How does this writing practice allow people to participate in specific cultures and communities?
- What cultural norms and practices do people have to understand in order to produce this kind of writing?
- What are the limitations around this writing practice?
- How do different people participate in this writing practice differently? Why?
- What can I learn about this by observing people participate in this writing activity?

- What can I learn about this by asking people about their participation in this writing activity?
- How have different people learned to produce this kind of writing differently? Why?
- How do people use this writing practice to generate ideas for research and for writing? Or to revise their writing?
- How do people use this writing practice as a tool to conduct research?
- How has people's participation in this writing practice changed over time? Why?
- How do people use this kind of writing differently across different situations? Across cultural, linguistic, and/or geographic boundaries?

Investigating a genre in use

- What do I already know about this genre? How?
- How do people create texts in this genre? Who are they? What tools do they use? Why do they make texts in this genre?
- What kinds of distinctive features does this genre have? How do people recognize these features as necessary for this genre?
- Who uses texts in this genre? How do people use them? Where and when?
- How do writers learn how to produce texts in this genre?
- What are the technological and/or social implications of this genre?
- Where does this genre sometimes begin? Where does it go?
- How has this genre changed over time?
- How do people use this genre in different writing situations? Across cultural and/or geographic boundaries?