Constructing Belonging Through Sonic Composition

Chris Friend*

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Abstract

Traditional students spend about four years residing at their undergraduate institutions. During those years, commuter students visit campus mostly on an as-needed basis, limiting their opportunities to establish a sense of belonging. Exacerbating the physical separation between students and their schools, COVID-19-related lockdowns and closures challenged traditional means of community-building for institutions of higher education. A year without in-person classes in 2020–21 meant that in Fall 2021, both first- and second-year students, plus two cohorts of new employees, were new to campus facilities. Disbursing work and classes away from a centralized physical campus created a gap in experiential institutional memory. This article considers the problem of belonging within an urban-grant university community; shows how sound- and location-based digital composition projects preserve collective memory, provide forensic documentation of institutional legacies, and strengthen students' awareness of temporal context; and theorizes the role of soundwriting projects in creating a sense of belonging for college students.

1   Introduction

How do you know when you *belong* in a place? We spend our days in dedicated spaces such as the office, our homes, and those "third places" like coffee shops—places that "provide opportunities for important experiences and relationships," are "uniquely qualified to sustain a sense of well-being among its members," and where "people gather primarily to enjoy each other's company" (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982, pp. 268–69). We often share spaces with others, and we often occupy them only temporarily. Apartments are rented until the lease expires; administrative necessities can reassign cubicles or entire wings of buildings to different employees or departments; a colleague uses a lab or room once our class ends and we leave. Our ability to *be* in a space often has documentation to support it, but there's a less-tangible component to whether we *belong* in a space. Belonging is more a function of perception than of documentation. Leases and room assignments may declare our ability to use a space for a time, but we still have a settling-in

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period during which we know we are supposed to occupy a space, yet we may not feel like we fit in. At what point does a person's relationship with a place shift from novel, to familiar, to accepting, to expected? That sense of being expected in a place has material consequences for our institutions, as it is directly tied up with issues of recruitment and retention or tenure and promotion. What steps might we take to support and encourage a sense of belonging on our campuses?

My question about awareness of belonging was part of an effort to spark classroom discussion about the relationship between perception and location. I posed that question in a Writing for Digital Spaces course offered in both the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters. In those classes, we engaged in a multi-semester project for which students built a GPS-activated, self-guided walking tour of our main campus in Union, New Jersey. (The exigencies of this project will be discussed at length below.) With this tour, we hoped to provide current and future students a sense of the history and affordances of locations across campus, giving students a better sense of familiarity with the facilities available to them. It became obvious, through a multitude of conversations about things students learned through this project, that students at this school were generally unaware of available resources and the forces that shape and define the spaces they interact with on a regular basis. If the goal of our guided tour was to help students feel more familiar with campus spaces, we needed to rhetorically construct a sense of community conducive to fostering belonging, both for future listeners and for the students creating the tour.

Composition scholars have long been interested in the concept of *discourse community* (Bizzell, 1982; Porter, 1986; Swales, 1990). We understand how writing is used by these communities to help achieve shared goals, and we often think of constructing, composing, or changing communities through writing (Dean & Warren, 2012; Grabill, 2007; Harris, 1989; Hyland, 2011; Inoue, 2015). Education scholarship, for its part, has highlighted the importance of community in online and blended learning environments (Garrison, 2007; Rovai, 2002). Further, the open-education movement leans heavily on Dave Cormier's (2008) idea of community-as-curriculum in online spaces, emphasizing human connection over content. Of course, COVID-19 limited our ability to physically connect in person, yet the problem has often been viewed in terms of *people*, not *places*. When Tice et al. (2021) observed the effects of COVID on education—"lockdown undoubtedly increased the social separation between students and instructors" (p. 2)—they saw only a social separation, even though the root of the divide is a physical one. Omitting any discussion of the *locations* of these connections thus makes our analysis omit the buildings and spaces in which human relations take place. After two years of COVID-related lockdowns, taking gathering places for granted seems striking.

In *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*, long before the global pandemic, Nedra Reynolds (2004) asserted the importance of place in composition studies. "Particularly when revolutionary advances in technology have changed fundamentally the ways we compose as well as how we experience space, it becomes important to attend to the concrete, to the material, and to the geographic" (p. 4). I wish to offer a "yes, and" to her assertion: We must attend to the interactions of space and cyberspace, as well—the hybrid nature of modern life means we cannot divorce our physical spaces from our digital environments. For example, in autumn 2021, two hurricanes in as many months directly affected the land upon which my institution stands. Those back-to-back major storms created flooding that ultimately dam-

aged our network servers. Thus, regional weather caused the university to disappear from the global Internet. "Distance" learning suddenly felt very, very local.

Location is also essential for constructing human connections. Because composition scholars link composing practices to knowledge construction, they are well-positioned to examine and theorize the construction of community through texts. By studying how students compose their spaces, we can see how a sense of space and place plays a role in their efforts to form communal relationships. To be sure, students' need for human connection has been well-documented. Indeed, Felten and Lambert (2020) open *Relationship-Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College* asserting that "relationships are the beating heart of the undergraduate experience" (p. 1). Where they rightly emphasize the importance of interpersonal connections, I want to extend the work into analyzing students' relationships with their physical spaces, as well. To be sure, in-person teachers and classrooms manifest a unique environment, forming a time-limited learning community. But what of the larger, more diverse, and longer-lived idea of a whole campus community? Helping students feel like they belong to the overall school community can have a lasting impact on retention, graduation rates, professional networking, and even future donations to a school's endowment. This article explores the idea of belonging to a campus community and uses sound- and location-based digital composition projects as an avenue for exploration. I assert below that soundwriting projects preserve collective memory, provide forensic documentation of institutional legacies, and strengthen students' awareness of temporal context. Overall, I argue for the role of soundwriting projects in creating a sense of belonging for 21st-century college students.

Returning for a moment to *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*, Nedra Reynolds (2004) argues that "composition studies needs cultural writing theories and material literacy practices that engage with the metaphorical—ways to imagine space—without ignoring places and spaces—the actual locations where writers write, learners learn, and workers work" (p. 3). She encourages us to attend to the ways cultures construct their places and spaces through examining their writing. If we view a school's student population as a self-contained culture, giving students mechanisms for what Reynolds calls "sociospatial construction" fosters the development of both individual and shared community identity. Further, in *Opening New Media to Writing: Openings and Justifications*, Anne Frances Wysocki (2004) connects the spatial positions of modern education with the identity of student-authors, arguing that writing classes too often implicitly teach students acontextual writing practices.

> The way school can seem separated from other institutions (the ones that constitute the "real world") can keep the work of classrooms from seeming that it has any value or purpose outside the class or the requirements of a degree schedule, and people in writing classes can, for that reason among others (like the architectural isolation of classrooms and campuses from other social spaces), often feel that they are writing by themselves, as isolated, separated, individuals with no particular, social, cultural, or historical location. (p. 4)

Clearly, location is important in the study and practice of composition. By allowing students to reconstruct the physical designs of our institutions

through soundwriting, we create opportunities for agency, involvement, and sociospatial construction that give students more control over the ways they engage with, and define themselves within, the spaces they occupy. As Wysocki (2004) states, we can "help [students] see—through what they write–their particular locations in time, and place, and hence how they are shaped by but can in turn shape those locations (and themselves) through textual work" (p. 4).

The project discussed in this essay leveraged the affordances of virtual technologies to give students the opportunity to define and shape the locations of our campus's built environment. To do this work, the classes used the Echoes platform (http://echoes.xyz) to publish and host our tour. At its most basic level, the platform uses the location services of a user's mobile device to trigger playback of audio files keyed to specific places on a map. For instance, when someone on the tour approaches a building, they could hear a spoken greeting that provides information specific to the building in front of them. For this project, students created audio that includes a basic introduction to each building, the services students can find inside, and each building's significance in campus history. Because the tour is self-guided, it relies on exploration and curiosity more than a script—people on the tour choose their pace and direction and learn about locations as they approach, following paths that make sense to them and helping to create an overall concept of the campus layout. This is different from a traditional guided tour, in which the sequence of stops is determined by the guide, imposing a predetermined order that can lead to sequential recall— "Oh, that was the place we went to after lunch. How do we get there again?" Our self-guided approach allows users to construct their own concept of campus layout based on their own experience, however that brings them to navigate the space.

This article begins by placing the site of study into a specific geographic, political, and institutional context. I review the role of urban universities as uniquely community-invested, working with proximal stakeholders to create hyperlocal applications of scholarship. Continuing the overview of urban universities, I discuss the unique challenges faced when establishing shared values within populations of commuting students. Next, I introduce a soundwriting project that addresses issues of identity and community, presenting it as well-suited to particular recruitment and orientation challenges presented by COVID-19. The section that follows theorizes soundwriting as a means of composing belonging through combining collective memory, institutional legacies, and temporal contexts. I close by asserting the value of location-specific soundwriting as an opportunity to build shared identity and collective experience within a university community. To get there, I first need to establish some institutional context.

2   Student Authority in the Urban Commuter University

Speaking to a gathering at City College New York, Clark Kerr (1968), then director of the Carnegie Study of Higher Education, laid out his vision for the successor to America's well-regarded land-grant university system. Those well-established land-grant universities, he claimed, are driven by "a spirit of concern, of responsibility and of service" because the federal government established them specifically to address the needs of farmers and the nation's burgeoning agricultural sector (p. 5). Land-grant institutions worked to solve problems and drive progress in the American heartland, providing opportunity for large numbers of (almost exclusively white) World War II veterans through the

G.I. Bill. Using the familiar idea of a successful land-grant university as a foil, Kerr introduced the idea of an "urban-grant" institution, for which, he said, "the city itself and its problems would become the animating focus" (p. 6). In other words, these institutions would serve the specific local communities in which they were established. This hyper-local attention calls for a tight integration of local efforts and institutional scholarship in the name of service to the (otherwise underserved) community.

In his assertions about the purposes of these institutions, Kerr (1968) adds that "the urban-grant university should be concerned with the urban environment in its totality, its architecture, its space use, its cultural programs and recreational facilities" (p. 11). While rhetoricians may not contribute much to the design philosophy of urban architecture, we do have a role to play in understanding, or perhaps even shaping, how the users of institutional campuses construct their concepts of place, space, and belonging. Further, when students have authorial roles in such projects, they can construct and define the institution in such a way as to meet their (and their peers') needs, enhancing their familiarity with, and connection to, their school. This co-construction directly supports the integration of individual with local community that Kerr envisioned urban-grant institutions would address.

By attending to the needs of our immediate communities, we can help students better understand the communities in which they operate—a slight twist on the managerial mantra that if one takes care of one's employees, those employees will then take are of one's customers. I for one am ready to dispense with the metaphor of student-as-customer and welcome the opportunity to build teams of students ready to serve the community. Indeed, the project introduced in this essay—the self-guided audio walking tour—provides just such an opportunity for students, enabling them to serve the campus community by helping to define its shape and its history.

It is easy to speculate on the effects of failing to prioritize humanistic traditions in today's higher education. In an observation that seems plucked from news reports in 2022, not a speech delivered over half a decade ago, Kerr (1968) shared these thoughts:

> There are strong indications today of a widening gulf between our universities…and the general public. Some view the universities as elitist institutions apart from the every day problems of the community. Many resent the criticisms of society that originate on university campuses. Others see the universities as sources of new ideas that are changing peoples lives in ways they fear or don't understand or approve. What we need is more contact, not less, between the people and the universities. We must bridge the gulf between the intellectual community and the surrounding society. (p. 13)

Bridging that gulf will require concerted, deliberate work, through both explicit scholarship and deliberate rhetoric. Writing about the history and rhetoric of the urban university construct, Carol Severino (1996) examined the roots of the American trend toward xenophobia and metrophobia—a trend made all the more relevant and obvious in the past decade through the global political drift toward fascism. As I wrote in 2021, "we need to find new tools to combat the rapid, persistent move toward extreme-conservative presentations of news, media, and truth" (p. xiii). For one potential approach to this essential work, I turn now to the concept of an *engaged university*. By becoming engaged with their related communities, today's ur-

ban universities can help shape the local news narrative and create knowledge on its own terms, relying on a foundation of research and reality to combat trends toward populism.

2.1   The urban university of today

In a 2001 report, the Kellogg Commission asserted that the engaged university "must put its critical resources (knowledge and expertise) to work on the problems the communities it serves face" and challenges institutions to become more "sympathetically and productively involved with their communities" (pp. 13–14). Merely building an institution in an urban environment is no guarantee that the school will serve the surrounding community. Such an orientation of mutual benefit must be intentionally cultivated, requiring administrative support for establishing connections to, and working relationships with, community resources and groups. By making those connections, institutions can help faculty direct their research work toward supporting and benefitting the communities in which they operate.

As mentioned above, the institution where I work serves a predominantly local student population—in other words, our students are a part of the very communities the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities calls us to serve. Addressing student needs in a way becomes a hyper-local form of community engagement. Indeed, as I will argue below, as campus communities themselves include thousands of members, projects that apply the work of scholarship to the enrichment of a campus resource becomes its own form of community engagement. When universities discuss conducting research to benefit local stakeholders, they generally mean community partners *outside* the gates of the institution. But what could be more local than

on-campus stakeholders? And what could be more community-minded than strengthening the bonds formed among students on campus? Considering the institution itself as a beneficiary of the work done in the space, while certainly not appropriate in every situation, gives students a unique opportunity to become invested in both the production of materials and their implementation, as students themselves are the beneficiaries of what they produce.

Positioning an institution's campus and student body as a "surrounding community" may seem at best like a stretch and possibly like blatant disregard calls for engaged campuses. Yet according to Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (2001), the stated goal of an engage university is to be "productively involved with their communities, *however community may be defined*" (p. 13, emphasis mine). By choosing to define community locally, we can, through our composition pedagogy, teach students both how to address the needs of a specific external (though admittedly familiar) audience, how to create texts (broadly defined) for a non-classroom audience, and how to connect the theoretical work of the classroom with practical external application. For the purposes of a composition classroom, I assert that campus community is functionally indistinguishable from any other "surrounding community" because both would be subject to the same audience analysis, needs assessments, and contextual interrogations. Indeed, for an undergraduate-level class, treating the campus community as a public audience provides an excellent opportunity to develop rhetorical-analysis skills while reducing the extra hurdle of deeply understanding a truly unfamiliar audience and the risk of more-public failure should a project experience significant initial challenges. For composition classes, the campus com-

munity serves as an effective bridge between class-room learning and the idea of a public audience.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this hyper-local focus gives students an unusual degree of empow-erment, allowing them to feel the importance of their work as they create it. From a rhetorical standpoint, the hyper-local focus allows students to occupy the position of rhetor and audience in-terchangeably, positioning them as more qualified to address decisions of style and content than the teacher. Because the instructor does not represent the intended audience, expectations and guide-lines must be created organically by the students in a grassroots approach to standards, assessment, and quality control. This student-driven approach aligns with what Friend and Morris (2013) asserts about student self-empowerment: "Students must have the chance—and the compulsion—to experi-ment in their thinking and with their work." Cre-ating content for an audience of future peers al-lows students to experiment with their approach, content, and style, discovering what works best for them in a given context. Attending to their own needs and expectations as people intimately familiar with the intended audience affords un-precedented opportunity for co-creation, as stu-dents reach out to other members of the campus community to uncover knowledge heretofore kept buried. Students discover and create community simultaneously.

It is possible to consider scholarship for the pur-pose of benefitting the campus community as a form of public scholarship. This perspective par-ticularly applies in the case of state-funded pub-lic education. Public-serving, publicly funded in-stitutions should produce research that benefits the public—specifically the public that supports it and/or the broader public. To be sure, major fund-ing agencies have adopted this approach, requir-ing grant recipients to publish research openly (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014; National In-stitutes of Health, 2021; National Science Founda-tion, 2015). When the outcomes of public schol-arship apply to the community that houses a uni-versity, the production of that public scholarship fulfills the mission of the modern urban-grant uni-versity. Further, when our research work responds to an obvious need found within our local com-munities, our institutions can be seen as respon-sive to their communities, and the results of our work more obviously benefit the people who sup-port the institution. This reciprocal benefit ad-dresses the concerns discussed above regarding the gulf between the university and the public. Re-sponding to immediate local needs also draws at-tention toward practical applications of scholar-ship and away from academics for the sake of aca-demics. As Mia Zamora et al. (2021) state when explaining the virtues of public scholarship, such work can loosen the "problematic binds that come from institutional structures" by allowing for "iter-ative and emergent learning design." Considering from where such designs emerge again places em-phasis on students and the communities of which they are a part. Indeed, hyper-localized soundwrit-ing projects help students, as Fancher and Mehler (2018) explain, "learn how composition can be an opportunity for deeper engagement with the spaces and people in their communities."

At the risk of oversimplification, urban-grant universities are integrally linked with their local communities in two ways: in terms of both in-put and output. The student body comes primarily from the local (in-state) community, and their re-search efforts focus on the local community. This dual linkage creates a learning environment that is responsive and practical in ways that students can easily see and appreciate. The GPS-activated au-dio tour of campus discussed in this article pro-vides a specific example of one such project that is

essentially responsive to the very community that created it. In this way, the project demonstrates a commitment to engaging with the local community by applying scholarly pursuits to a perceived need among a specific set of stakeholders. Kerr (1968) advocated for this attention to the needs of an institution's surroundings: "I have seen faculty members who would work on an international problem...but not on the problems of their own city, because they regarded such work as somehow beneath them" (p. 11). Because students were both the creators and the beneficiaries of this project, their perspective and experience gave them specific expertise and audience awareness. Because students had experienced being confused, overwhelmed, or lost on campus, they understood the needs of our intended audience and could tailor their work to address audience needs. Their expertise also served to remove me from the traditional role of arbiter of quality: Students knew when their work met their standards in ways that I, the outsider, could not. This approach put students at the center of our work and demanded that they make decisions on their own regarding expectations for quality and stylistic norms. Creating their own norms and standards helped students buy into the project and hold themselves accountable for success, perhaps due to an enhanced sense of value, a concept I will return to in the "Collective Memory and Institutional Legacies" section below. First, though, additional information about the site of the classes and campus will help establish the need for, and context of, the soundwriting project discussed in this article.

2.2 A sense of place for commuters

Fully 53% of my school's masters-level students are part-time (Kean University Office of Institutional Research, 2021). The problem of building campus culture is particularly acute for a campus situated only thirty minutes from New York City. Compelling students to remain on campus outside of class time is no small task. Further, urban universities present a degree of environmental invisibility by virtue of existing in spaces designed specifically to *not* be noticed. As Michael Bull (2012) explains, "urban citizens frequently ignore the physical environment through which they move. The mundane journeying through the city invariably does not evoke the 'tourist' gaze, with city dwellers rarely mentioning the spaces that the daily pass through. City spaces are, rather, experienced as habitual, not meriting mention" (p. 199) Urban universities, thus, face a multi-layered challenge at the intersection of often-transient people occupying often-unremarkable spaces.

A discussion of challenges related to campus residency followed from the question that opens this essay ("How do you know when you belong to a place?"). I asked that question in class one day because students had talked about several instances of not knowing where things are on campus or not knowing how to get particular services or information. I wondered whether students actually felt like they were included in this campus where we all spend our time. The answer was a resounding "no."

Students in that class were mostly commuters, which means their presence on campus is largely task-oriented—typical of so many commuter schools, most students here engage in a transactional relationship with the campus: They drive to school, they get/attend what they need, and they leave. That task-oriented approach to campus means commuters operate with a narrow focus, attending to their coursework while potentially limiting their peripheral knowledge of activities, events, and campus life. As Fancher and Mehler (2018) note when discussing an audio project at the University of California, Santa Barbara, "most

students come and go with relatively limited opportunities to address some of [their community's] problems." Once their initial, post-admission orientation is over, students have little reason to explore campus and discover where services or even non-classroom buildings can be found. David Riesman, of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, observed in 1975 that it is "difficult to know how to reach and to teach those commuter students who are the first in their families to attend college, who generally work part-time, and who rarely spend more than class time at the college" (p. 149).

While connecting commuter students to campus resources certainly presents challenges, residing on campus does not automatically ensure a sense of belonging. Though only 12% of our undergraduate population and a mere 1% of graduate students live in on-campus housing (Institutional Research Office, personal communication, June 29, 2022), casual conversation with students, involving direct questions about their affinity and comfort suggests this small population, too, remains relatively unattached to the campus space. They give the impression of living here out of necessity, rather than desire, with little sense of any intrinsic benefit. Residential students' associations with buildings are temporary, lasting only as long as their residency, which often ends during finals week. Their control over the environment is similarly limited. Dormitories are notoriously institutional and impersonal, with students unable to select distinctive furniture or have a sense of personal space. They have very little say in the creation and composition of their space, relying on institutional furniture in institutional accommodations with minimal input on institutional decisions. This lack of ownership of, and control over, their own surroundings deprives students of what Norton et al. (2012) suggest is "a fundamental human need for effectance—

an ability to successfully produce desired outcomes in one's environment" (p. 454). They assert that "when people imbue products with their own labor, their effort can increase their valuation" of those products. By giving students the opportunity to construct their own campus environment (and its shared history), soundwriting projects like the campus walking tour can increase the value students perceive in collective institutional memory.

Several common means of building institutional memory vanished when COVID-19 lockdowns took hold. Gatherings that had previously been normalized disappeared almost overnight. Long-lasting shelter-in-place orders highlighted isolation at the expense of community belonging. At best, gatherings migrated to mediated spaces such as Zoom. But a mediated space cannot stand in for the physical, embodied environment. Lockdowns, crowd limits, and distancing rules eliminated standard class meetings. Those restrictions also meant that group campus tours became logistically infeasible, if not impossible. And campus tours are a special case, where spatiality is the subject of the gathering—they are fully incompatible with mediated alternatives. No matter how good a virtual tour is, students will need to re-orient themselves upon arrival in the real, physical space. Consequently, the global pandemic eliminated opportunities for creating local familiarity. At my institution's main campus, lockdown protocols moved all operations fully online for the entire 2020–21 school year. That meant the entire freshman and sophomore classes—more than half of the student population—were brand-new to campus when it reopened in September 2021. Employees hired in Fall 2020 also did not go to campus until Fall 2021. My cohort of new hires, who started in Fall 2021, was the largest at this school in over a decade. Notably, ongoing COVID-19 restrictions meant our interview process did not include a campus tour. All

told, more new people than ever arrived on campus in September 2021 having little to no familiarity with the spaces because they lacked the traditional introduction and orientation to campus.

Thus, Fall 2021 was the first time in seventeen months that this school's classes had met in-person. Faculty, staff, students, and administration alike were excited to share space together once again. One of my classes that semester was Writing for Digital Spaces—a course that was more poignant than normal due to the then-familiar constraints of the pandemic. This class was uniquely positioned to address concerns of digital solutions to problems in physical spaces. I proposed the development of a GPS-activated self-guided walking tour of campus. Through this project, students produced audio content that introduces listeners to the buildings and features on campus, as well as the student services available in each. We sought to create a product that could help address the shortfalls in communal knowledge and individual familiarity with spaces and places on campus. Students in my Writing for Digital Spaces classes saw the opportunity we had to recreate that familiarity using new approaches that have become more commonplace through the pandemic—namely, individualized, on-demand audio products (like podcasts) and remote/virtual interactions (like Zoom calls and telehealth). The class decided to employ those commonplace tools to create a guided audio tour that introduces visitors and new arrivals to our campus, as through the perspectives and priorities of current students.

Beyond an audience of current students, the self-guided tour project draws on students' past experience as new arrivals on campus. As each of them has their own stories of frustration to share, they can quickly imagine themselves in the position of needing the exact assistance this tour is designed to provide. Indeed, rarely a day of class discussion went by without someone in the room confessing they didn't know where something was or that something existed, prompting a common refrain: "That's why we need this project!" Students also suggested this could easily be a tool for recruitment and retention, making it simpler for people to get better acquainted with campus than is possible during the traditional whirlwind onboarding tour during new-student orientation.

As a new arrival to campus myself, I was able to share my own frustrations with learning building locations and share the experiences of new faculty. At the same time, anything I learned about the campus or its history became relevant news to share with students. In this situation, students were quite literally the resident local experts, and I had to learn from them what was important, relevant, mundane, or unknown. What most surprised me was the amount of institutional knowledge that had *not* been preserved over time—people who worked in spaces across campus were unaware of those spaces' histories. It was as though most employees interviewed by students were unaware that spaces and places on campus change over time—that things have not always been as they presently are. While this may seem an insignificant issue, given the size and complexity of a university campus and the inability for any one person to know where everything is, a bit of historical knowledge can help bring contextual awareness to many situations. For example, I know who used to occupy my assigned office on campus. This basic knowledge allows me to better assist students who might come to my door expecting to find someone else. I know the story and timing of the previous occupant's retirement and can direct students to a different office for related assistance. That small piece of knowledge helps me understand institutional change and in turn help students navigate through it. Our guided-tour project had a

similar goal: To provide a repository of location-based knowledge for the institution so newcomers can benefit from the contexts and histories of the spaces around them. In order to create that repository, we first had to understand the affordances and constraints of the medium we chose to use.

2.3 Constructing Authority in Time and Space

The acoustic properties of an environment carry into recordings, allowing listeners to feel situated where the recording was made. This location encoding could help address the challenge suggested in the previous section of connecting commuters to their campus spaces. By recording atmospheric sounds in bustling spaces, or by presenting the aspects of campus spaces they find noteworthy or memorable, students can construct the narratives surrounding campus spaces, giving those spaces added significance not just as points of interest but also as shared points of reference and conversation. Shared reference points and histories help students feel connected to one another and encourage the development of casual, familiar speech among members of a community much like those found in what Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) call "third spaces"—those places where people gather for camaraderie and social support outside home and work locations. College campuses are in a prime position to become third spaces, especially for commuter students. When students construct the narratives or legends surrounding campus spaces, they do necessary work in establishing the significance of campus environments through speech. As Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) explain,

> this kind of speech is idiomatic and steeped in local heroes and local

tragedies, in gossip and romance. It ties people to places and yet removes them from the little schemes and strategies of self-interest. It gives individuals a sense of continuity. Always, it evolves from the people themselves. (p. 272)

While the gossip and romance of a college campus certainly have their own circulation, the legendary heroes and tragedies that tie people to place might not, being the stuff of lore more than current events. Who on a campus tells the story of the hero and recounts the tale of local tragedies? Who bears the institutional memory associated with the place, and how do those legends and heroes get established? Creating an audio tour of campus allowed students to tell those stories and establish the legends they deemed important.

One example of a local legend first came to my attention during new-hire orientation. Another member of my cohort stage-whispered to me as we entered a particular building on a brief tour, "I wonder if they're going to show us the table." I soon learned that he was referencing the locally legendary story of a $250,000 high-tech conference table installed in a sixth-floor room with a view of Manhattan skyline. The purchase of the table made local headlines when it happened, and it remains a sore point of discussion among many employees on campus. That table has become a symbol of wasteful spending and poor relations between management and employees under the previous administration. For employees, that table and the controversy surrounding it are a part of our institutional legacy and part of the narrative we construct about the school. Yet most students came to campus long after the controversy settled in the off-campus public discourse. In fact, the student who created the audio recording for that building did not know about the history of that table prior to his work on

this project. Once he learned of the controversy, he was excited to present, factually and rather dispassionately, the once-scandalous information in his final work. The student understood that he had the ability to construct the legends of our campus and define the institutional memory surrounding that facility.

Another student learned about a nearby hotel that was destroyed by fire in 1987, on land that is now part of main campus (UPI Archives, 1987). The hotel displayed several decorative statues along its façade. Those statues survived the fire and have since been placed along the sides of a tree-lined path near an on-campus creek. What had previously gone unnoticed for seeming mundane has, through historical awareness, gained significance in the student's eyes—she excitedly reported her findings and was eager to create additional audio recordings to present her new knowledge to the public. In other words, as she made connections regarding the history of a space on campus, she took a more active role in the construction of that space's history.

Similarly, a student who commuted to campus daily via train was excited to research and present information about, and the history of, our on-campus transit station. He went so far as to interview train conductors for their take on the history of the station, and the student made sure to note how a fanciful sign at the station's entrance refers to the line's former name—a signal of shifting priorities and a changing local landscape. By including current and historical perspectives on what seems a permanent campus feature, this student was able to construct a dynamic narrative of the school that shows how our facilities change over time to reflect the surrounding local communities. Observations such as these can help students see how the university is a part of—not apart from—its surroundings. And by presenting these findings in an audio tour,

students worked to create a current image of the institution built within the context of its history and location.

The dynamic character discussed above is a specific consequence of a campus walking tour's use case. Unlike the digital sound maps studied by Ceraso (2013), a self-guided campus walking tour serves not to archive the past but to enhance the present. By creating recorded artifacts that only replay when the listener enters a specific space, engaging with this tour requires a greater degree of interaction than is typical for a traditional archive. Listeners must navigate a physical, outdoor space in order to access and make sense of the recordings. Whereas in a digital sound map recordings "serve as more of an archival resource as opposed to a fully interactive sonic environment" (Ceraso, 2013, p. 164), recordings in a guided walking tour serve as an interactive sonic enhancement of the existing environment. To be sure, other location-based sound projects (notably Mark Shepard's Tactical Sound Garden) allow listener-users to contribute to the sound environment, creating a dynamism for the participant. The walking tour, by contrast, allows dynamism in content *retrieval* (listeners choose what to hear based on where they go) and demands dynamism in content *production* (student-authors must recreate content to reflect current institutional changes). Indeed, the dynamic nature of a college campus means the project itself must continually be renewed. For example, the semester after this project completed, three school-level organizational units and one campus building changed their names. While these changes do mean our work becomes dated and inaccurate in short order, that challenge necessitates responsiveness and attention to currency. In effect, much like our audio recordings foreground the temporal contexts of the students' recordings, the overall project represents a specific temporal

context of the entire campus. As our institution changes, the project must likewise change, requiring an iterative and dynamic composition and revision process.

3 Composing Belonging

Ceraso (2013) saw the importance of students building agency and the opportunity for soundwriting as a tool for aiding the process. She asserts that "students need to cultivate practices that can help them design and compose their worlds rather than having those worlds designed for them" (p. 173). Projects like the self-guided walking tour give students experience composing their worlds, creating content that shapes how they and others experience the campus space. Producing content for a project that serves as a documentary artifact introducing (and thus defining) the history and importance of campus buildings allows students to determine what matters, establishing shared values through narrative discourse. These practices help students develop agency over their sense of the space and how others familiarize themselves with the shared environment. While students may not have control over the design or naming of buildings, soundwriting a tour at least allows them to compose and control the narratives told about their world. In this way, students can, as Hocks and Comstock (2017) emphasize, "notice how the soundscape constructs our sense of being in the world" (p. 136). Students write themselves into the history and lore of the institution.

Our online self-guided tour of campus allows people, by installing an app on their mobile device, to explore campus buildings and spaces at their own pace, hearing introductions to each feature as they approach and getting instructions for how to learn more about each one. For instance, a student voice would say, "Welcome to the library. To learn more about its history, move toward the benches to the left of the entrance. To hear about the services available inside, move toward the planter on the right. Please be mindful of patrons entering and exiting and keep the doors accessible." These instructions and the audio triggers created in the platform's map interface had to be tested in the real world to make sure the instructions were sufficiently clear to follow and the target areas were sufficiently sized to trigger audio recordings at the right times. Through this process, students began to integrate the product we created, their identity as tour guides, and their sense of a built sono-physical environment—a space that is at once defined by the pre-existing buildings and the added layer of their audio recording. Students created soundwriting products that engaged in dialogue with an audience in the future, suggesting courses of action and responding to the choices audience members made.

To create the audio tour, students selected one or two buildings to research. Each student was responsible for learning the histories of those buildings and contacting any departments or offices that operate within the space, in most cases asking to interview representatives from those offices. Interviews were audio recorded on students' personal devices (typically mobile phones) for later editing. After gathering historical and contemporary information about the buildings they studied, students crafted and peer-reviewed scripts for audio two informative segments of roughly 2½ minutes and one orientation segment less than 1 minute long. The orientation segments serve typical tour-guide functions of greeting people upon their arrival to a building's vicinity, then further directing them to find additional information. Students introduced each building and pointed out landmarks (such as benches or alcoves) people could walk to they

wanted to hear more information. Students agreed that the informative segments needed to be presented separately so people could choose whether to hear material about a building's history, the student services available inside it, or both. General consensus, especially after completing their research, was that both kinds of information were valuable, but that people wouldn't necessarily wish to digest one kind of information (say, a building's history) if they specifically needed a different kind (to know what was inside, for instance). Throughout the process of constructing audio segments, students consistently referred to the needs of an imagined, future audience. I supported their work by reminding them of their familiarity with that imagined audience. Any time a student asked what they should say or what a segment should sound like, I reflected the question back to them and asked what they themselves would prefer to hear. If ever a student were genuinely unsure, a nearby colleague who overheard the question would offer their perspective, and the matter would resolve. Students learned genuine authority and authorship simultaneously, and that audience expectations matter when (sound)writing. Further, students learned through experience that they have the ability to imagine themselves as a member of that audience and as a result make appropriate rhetorical decisions.

3.1   Positioning Soundwriting

In their introduction to *Soundwriting Pedagogies*, Courtney S. Danforth and Kyle D. Stedman (2018) provide a thorough-yet-approachable context for the meaning, use, and history of the term *soundwriting*. Their work draws on the quintessential *Sound in/as Composition Space* issue of Computers and Composition, edited by Ball and Hawk (2006), as well as landmark work from Cindy Selfe (2009),

Steph Ceraso (2014) and indirectly Kathleen Blake Yancey (2004). Through it all, Danforth and Stedman call for an engaged process of making meaning and influencing audiences that relies on the affordances of non-alphabetic, embodied communication systems. And as Danforth asserts, "when students record their own voices and produce the recordings for soundwriting projects, they're positioned as powerful rhetors working in a mode that they intuitively understand—because they do it every day." The familiarity of sound as a medium of communication helps make work in the medium resonate with students. Yet the desire to help students develop efficacy in soundwriting also helps develop students' senses of identity and agency. Hocks and Comstock (2017) highlight "a need to pay closer attention [to audio] in order to notice how the soundscape constructs our sense of being in the world" (p. 136). Further, they argue, "the digital technologies we choose to employ might also help us to expand our perceived sense of agency" (p. 137).

What Hocks and Comstock (2017) call "campus and public event soundscape assignments" help students learn to analyze both environmental and composed soundscapes. These activities prompt students to engage in cultural and contextual analysis, uncovering the situated meanings embedded within the world around them and within their own projects. A soundwriting project wherein students create content for a campus community holds tangible benefits for the institution, the students themselves, and the classroom environment. Using sonic composition in class creates a situation in which students must reconsider many of their usual assumptions regarding process, content, and audience expectations. Indeed, composition studies often focuses on—and thus students feel more comfortable working with—alphabetic texts. With the preponderance of audio-visual content in today's

media landscape, this focus can at times seem ill-advised. As VanKooten (2016), paraphrasing Dunn (2001), explains, "our field has a tendency to ignore ways of knowing and being that are outside of the written, to our and our students' disadvantage" ("beginnings"). In the next sections, I will address soundwriting's connections to authority, identity, and voice, showing how the digital and aural affordances of soundwriting provide ways of knowing and being that are both tangible and meaningful for students.

The opportunity to create a digital artifact that exhibits diverse student identities through their recorded voices speaks directly to a challenge offered by Erin Anderson (2014). In "Toward a Resonant Material Vocality for Digital Composition," she asserts a need for "more explicit attention to the role of technology in producing our experience of and relationship to voice in contemporary digital environments." Specifically, she warns, we need to avoid our typical "attachment to voice as a function of authorship, personhood, and identity" and instead attend to "questions of *vocality* (voice)" and the possibilities afforded by digital audio technologies. The campus-tour project highlights possibility that student voices can form connections among personhood and identity, both communal and individual. Within this project, students' voices establish the identity, history, and importance of campus spaces while simultaneously making manifest the diversity of our student body through spoken word. Perhaps these practices rely on the "attachment to voice" that Anderson (2014) wishes to move away from. However, this project complicates the relationship between identity and voice. Students learn to establish a position of authority when creating audio artifacts. Students know they speak as a representative of the institution and as a qualified source of knowledge after gathering research on their assigned spaces. Through this process, then,

students express their individuality, assert their authority, and establish their position within the institution's identity. Thus, this project takes what Anderson understandably sees as a liability and uses it as a vehicle for enhancing student agency.

3.2   Identity Composed Through Sound

Students stand much to gain through working with audio, as sound helps make plain matters of voice in textual compositions. Further, voice is temporally and biologically specific, linking sound to a specific time, person, and voicing style (Aboumrad & Krulwich, 2007; Boutsen, 2003; Karpf, 2006, pp. 33–47). A campus can, in a very real sense, be "brought to life" through a layer of audio content (Chung et al., 2022; Ong, 1982, p. 31), reviving both the spaces and the people who inhabit them, however temporarily. By creating a self-guided audio tour of campus, students become part of the institution's legacy, constructing recorded knowledge about the place and space. Future students taking the tour learn the campus in terms of its relationship to, and representation by, the students who came before them. The student population at this urban-grant institution has a reputation for being diverse. With this project, my classes aspired to accurately reflect the diversity of our university's population. That meant ensuring students sounded distinctly like themselves, reflecting the local accents and speech patterns indicative of various geographic regions and ethic groups contained within New Jersey.

By developing a sense of authorial voice through soundwriting and dialogue with an imagined future audience, students developed self-awareness and an ability to self-assess. Students often struggle to determine whether—or articulate why—a text is better or worse than expected. Helping students identify and articulate how voice influ-

ences the distinctions between an author's intent and a text's effect addresses a longstanding challenge in composition education (Huot & O'Neill, 2008; Inoue, 2015; CCCC Committee on Assessment, 2009; Yancey, 1999). Efforts to help faculty and students align their expectations for writing assessment start with shared vocabulary, and "voice" can be particularly problematic. In her introduction to *Voices on Voice: Perspectives, Definitions, Inquiry*, Kathleen Blake Yancey (1994) notes the frequent use of "voice" as a topic of discussion, feedback, or aspiration within student writing. She also notes the lack of agreement on the *meaning* of the term, identifying three distinct uses that in some ways conflict with one another: specifically, as a means of composing text and audience, revealing a culture's epistemology, or enacting the author's authentic self (p. vii). Admittedly, I use the term more loosely here than perhaps Yancey would wish. I have found that, through soundwriting, students' voices create text through imagining a specific listening audience, reveal the class's epistemology, and reveal the identity of the speaker-author. It is specifically because these three aspects of voice intertwine in a single project that gives the project its significance.

The last of Yancey's uses of *voice* does prove particularly relevant to this project's context. I have found that, for students in an education-English dual major program at a low-cost urban public school, discovering an authentic self while simultaneously engaging with the discourse of a discipline presents enormous challenges. Learning the concepts of the field, as well as acclimating to academic discourse in general, distracts students' attention away from learning the subtleties of individual voices they read. As they learn to edit recorded voices—theirs and those they interviewed—students learn to make rhetorical choices that materially affect the finished prod-uct in ways they can easily identify. As Halbritter and Lindquist (2018) said about the work of producing audio, "the resulting recorded voice—the collaborative vocal product—is indexical of the embodied [speaker], it is at the same time a rhetorical identification. This voice—the sleight of ear that belongs to no single person, but that sounds as though it does—is the product of authorial/editorial choice." Working with audio, students learn to craft their authorial voice in deliberate and tangible ways. They learn to present themselves consciously, aware of how the words they choose and the articulations and inflections they use help shape the way future listeners perceive them.

Being able to hear how their voice compares with their peers' work helps students attend to language patterns that perhaps fail to hold up when voiced by a colleague. These comparisons occasionally happen through peer-review workshops if students choose to read their content aloud. When students create an audio product, the sound of their words moves from being incidental to being central to their critiques. As Adriana Cavarero (2012) explains, "the typical freedom with which human beings combine words is never a sufficient index of the uniqueness of the one who speaks. The voice, however, is always different from all other voices, even if the words are the same" (p. 522). Soundwriting makes evident distinctions in style, tone, and voice that might go unnoticed with written texts. Indeed, spoken texts highlight language use in ways written texts cannot. By drawing students' attention to those differences, we can help students develop discernment regarding the style of their words, separately from their content. Faculty and students alike benefit from hearing, rather than exclusively reading, student voices because the richness of inflection makes plain both the student-author's distinctive style and their level of confidence. Attending to these distinctions should be

a routine component of composition classes. Collaborative audio projects can help facilitate efforts to address challenges of teaching and strengthening student voice by highlighting changes or differences in voice in literal, visceral ways. In the case of our guided tour of campus, students understood the need to balance competence and collegiality through their expressions. In the Fall 2021 semester, students identified three characteristics of effective guided-tour recordings: confidence, clarity, and authenticity. Each student created several iterations of their recordings before they were satisfied with the tonal balance they struck. By creating materials in the inherently expressive medium of audio, students naturally attended to matters of voice that often go unnoticed in text.

To be sure, scholarship on sonic rhetorics has addressed these often-unnoticed matters of voice for some time. For instance, authors have discussed the rhetorics of sound (as separate from voice) (Edwards, 2013; Goodman, 2012; Hocks & Comstock, 2017), of voices used in song (Stedman, 2013; Vogel, 2015), and of voice-as-sound (Halbritter & Lindquist, 2018; Selfe, 2009). Notably, Crystal VanKooten and Rochester (2018) and Erin Anderson (2014) discuss the potentiality of voice as more than, yet still related to, language. VanKooten asserts that "voice involves both words *and* the physicality of experience" (emphasis in original), saying that voice is "much more than tethered to language or in service of language only" (p. 46). Similarly, Anderson says that voice is "more than the sum of the language it carries" and warns us against being limited by an "attachment to voice as a function of authorship, personhood, and identity." Ultimately, Anderson calls us to explore "the role of technology in producing our experience of and relationship to voice in contemporary digital environments," focusing on sonic rhetorics more broadly, beyond a mere attachment to voice.

The soundwriting project discussed in this essay brought matters of voice-as-rhetoric to the foreground in many class discussions. Students understood that their role as guides on a campus tour gave special weight to their voices. Students' voices needed to not just convey information clearly or present the speaker professionally. Their voices served to audibly represent and reflect the campus community. Because that community prides itself on its diversity, we agreed to foreground the diversity of voices in the project. The third of the student-generated characteristics of effective recordings, authenticity, served to not just *allow* but to *expect* students to "sound like themselves" when recording. In a society where nationwide mass-media expectations favor white, midwestern accents (which this author/instructor possesses), the class paid careful attention to allowing students' ethnicities and geographies to inflect their voices and make obvious through sound that the voices heard on campus are every bit as diverse as the skin tones seen in our marketing materials. Thus, while Anderson (2014) rightly directs attention away from a narrow focus on authorial voice, creating content for the audio walking tour helped each student acknowledge and indeed rely on the ability of their embodied voice to assert their authorship, address their personhood, and promote their identity. The digital technologies we selected helped emphasize the importance of students' voices as an integral component of the project. Students learned to attend carefully to their voices, in multiple senses of the term.

When students attune their listening to these details, they become, as Hocks and Comstock (2017) explain, "more empathetic and sensitive to the effects of tone, pitch, and vibration, a language that makes them attentive to resonance within their various soundscapes" (p. 144). In other words, students become more aware of the sound of their

voices, the sounds of their environments, and how the former fit into the latter. An example helps illustrate how attention to the affective character of voice helped one student build his own sense of belonging on campus. This student, a daily commuter via rail, created the content for the on-campus train station. The segment starts with a train's whistle—both an obvious solution and an essential one, considering the nostalgic and emotive effects that sound can elicit. His narration allowed him to practice establishing authority in an area where he already felt familiar and comfortable. And by interviewing train conductors, he became more sensitive to both his role within the environment and the contextual history of the campus within the regional rail history. He learned why the sign leading to the station incorporated a model train bearing nomenclature different from the modern signage on the station itself. The rail line name changed when the route—and thus the line's terminus—changed, yet the original sign remained unchanged. That knowledge added significance to the artifact and a hint of wonder to the sound of his narration. Different yet related vocal affects inflected the sound of the conductors' voices. The transit employees sound both proud of their work and profoundly regional. Their voices distinctly carry the local dialect and pronunciations. Those aural characteristics brought into sharp relief the student's deliberately affected, educated, upper-middle-class speech patterns with Asian-pacific undertones, hinting at his family history and further marking him as a commuter from elsewhere. His work on this project allowed him to leverage his lived routines to build localized credibility alongside the voices he included which sound distinctly as being from *here.*

3.3 Collective Memory and Institutional Legacies

Julie Drew (2001) notes that "students pass through, and only pause briefly within, classrooms; they dwell within and visit various other locations, locations whose politics and discourse conventions both construct and identify them" (p. 60). By creating soundscapes that apply to spaces outside the classroom but within the environment in which their daily lives take place, students begin to connect their academic and extracurricular identities. By using classroom space as an invitation for students to help craft the identity of their campus in a digital space, we can encourage greater engagement with the spaces and resources designed for students while simultaneously giving students more experience with identity-defining discursive moves. By contributing to a collaborative project that creates a representation of campus in a digital space, students practice balancing individual voice with shared conventions, learning how identity is both created and shared. Student-driven co-creation projects such as these help faculty "construct a politics of place that is more likely to include students in the academic work of composition, and less likely to continue to identify and manage students as discursive novices" (Drew, 2001, p. 60). Further, students work to navigate the cultural rhetorics of academic competency, gaining from their peers both credibility and social authenticity, showing themselves to be "real" students (as opposed to the unfamiliar "scholar" identity), a critical distinction for students using education for upward social mobility.

This authenticity, developed in the context of a project designed to benefit the campus community, helps shape and reinforce institutional identity, as well. Student-generated projects designed to serve

the institution give students the tools and opportunity to construct and shape that institution's identity. These contributions, while beneficial to the campus community as a whole, can have an outsized influence on the importance students place on the project. Norton et al. (2012) explain this influence as what they have dubbed "the IKEA effect": the extra attachment people feel to the inexpensive furniture purchased at a warehouse but—critically—assembled by hand at their own homes. People value IKEA furniture more specifically because their assembly efforts imbue the pieces with added value. As show, "labor alone can be sufficient to induce greater liking for the fruits of one's labor" (p. 453). By contributing to a product's construction, a person values that product more than if it were made by others. As noted above, commuter students commonly see their university campus as holding little value, using it primarily for attending class and little else. Projects like a GPS-enhanced self-guided tour intertwine a student's developing sense of voice and identity with the addition of value to a space. This extra "IKEA effect" helps students discover the value within the spaces of their institutions.

Ultimately, by engaging in collaborative soundwriting projects, students compose their individual identities within the context of a discourse they themselves help create. In effect, students work to compose an individual identity and a collective identity at the same time. Brown and Duguid (2002) assert the importance of identity-building as part of the learning process for students: "The identity they are developing determines what they pay attention to and what they learn. What people learn about, then, is always refracted through who they are and what they are learning to be" (p. 138). This dual-layer approach can help students understand the value of an independent voice within the need to meet discursive expectations. Indeed,

when identity development and incorporation become explicit elements of investigation in class, students begin to take on the role of researcher. "By including students in our research—not as objects of study, but rather as coinquirers—we stand a better chance of locating and understanding the multiple discursive pedagogies at work in both classroom and other spaces" (Drew, 2001, p. 60). Using projects that ask students to create knowledge and build expertise within a discursive tradition of their own creation allows students to be not just coinquirers but also world-shapers, constructing the very spaces they inhabit.

Projects like these encourage student empowerment and self-sufficiency. As Friend and Morris (2013) said in their argument that faculty should listen to students, "learners must invent—not just the products of their knowledge, but also their own learning." By researching the history of the buildings they studied, students became present-day experts in their respective facilities. As discussed previously, spoken-word recordings provide documentation of living activity at a specific time and place (Ong, 1982). Serving as the vocal representative of a portion of campus elevated students' composing authority and, in effect, enters their voice into the historical record of campus development. Traces of the institution help students build their connections to the institution's past as they work to reach out to students of the future, positioning them within an historical context and giving them a sense of belonging within the narrative of institutional development. As Fancher and Mehler (2018) noted in their discussion of sonic microhistories, hyper-local soundwriting "valorizes the uniqueness of all voices situated in embodied, historical contexts." These soundwriting projects contribute to the authorial development of students and the identity development of the institution. By creating the sonic elements of campus, students

construct a product which reifies the concept of a campus through their active, creative participation. At the same time, during the development process, students fluidly navigate among the positionalities of expert and learner, author and listener, designing for the needs of an imagined future audience that is, for all practical purposes, just like them when they first arrived on campus.

4 Conclusion: Sonic Compositions Construct Place, Identity, Temporality, and Belonging

In her 2004 piece "Composition in a New Key," Kathleen Blake Yancey argued for an expanded understanding of writing and composition programs—notably, to include audio and other multimedia works. In the nearly two decades since that presentation and publication, our field has certainly worked toward that expanded understanding of composition, viewing "text" as more than merely print-based, alphabetic writing and providing increasing opportunity for soundwriting projects. Yancey also lamented how online communities that encourage incredible amounts of engagement and composition do so without the oversight or involvement of composition instructors. In effect, she wondered whether we could bring that community-focused energy into our class assignments. Community-building soundwriting projects (such as the guided tour introduced above) exist as tasks with obvious extrinsic motivations, as their benefits to the world outside the classroom become the motivation for completion and the standard for assessment. In fact, the project described in this article, created across three course sections and two semesters, was never graded. Students created their audio projects because they wanted to create the audio

tour, not because they wanted a score. What Yancey presented as a warning—"the members of the writing public have learned-in this case, to write, to think together, to organize, and to act" (p. 301)—in the case of undergraduate service learning is actually a strength. Students learned to write, to organize, and to act largely without my instruction. But they created audio texts with my enthusiastic encouragement. Their learning became something we could spend class time discussing, unpacking, and connecting with relevant theories of rhetoric and composition. Our class project provided fertile ground for conversations about developing what I assert are the hallmarks of soundwriting: place, identity, and temporality. Those characteristics combine to create a functional, embodied sense of community, both among and surrounding the students who created the tour.

Ten years after Yancey's challenge, Steph Ceraso (2014) argued that students need to consider "how the embodied and contextual aspects of sonic experience—which play a major role in sonic composition—figure into the sonic composing process" (p. 114). Composing sound for a self-guided tour allowed students to consider the contextual influences of their roles on campus, in class, and in the project. They learned how affect—and the embodied aspects of their compositions—played an outsized role in the rhetorical effectiveness of their work. They discovered, in ways inaccessible through written text alone, how the sound of their voices makes real and apparent traits of language use which had previously been mystifying or unfamiliar. Soundwriting draws unmistakable attention to matters of authority, identity, and agency in the composition classroom. And because the project served to create a narrative about the functions and histories of the school they attend, students were able to see themselves as part of a larger

community. They identified how they belonged to the campus by composing themselves into its spaces, stories, and histories.

Obviously, a GPS-activated self-guided walking tour of campus will not fit the current needs or situations of all campuses—though the "post-pandemic" educational and recruitment environments might justify some consideration. However, the real value of this project comes not from the technical side but from the humanist side: Students learned to empower themselves, to apply their authority, to strengthen their authorial voice, and to respond to audience needs. They did all these things while creating a product that benefits the campus community at a time when community-building faces significant challenges. Faculty, particularly those at urban-grant institutions, need to consider their own campus communities as sites for service-learning projects. Exploring our communities through the lens of digital rhetoric provides opportunities to combine scholarly analysis with creative production and create purposeful projects that benefit the local community, including the students who build them.

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