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A Discipline’s Composition: A Citation Analysis of Composition Studies

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Abstract
Citation patterns in the field of composition studies are analyzed and compared with patterns in other humanities fields. Results showed marked differences in citation patterns between composition studies and other humanities fields, including literary studies. Librarians can use this information to forge more productive relationships with composition studies faculty.


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Introduction
A relatively new discipline has emerged in higher education that straddles the line between the social sciences and humanities: composition studies. Often referred to in the same breath as “rhetoric” (rhetoric and composition), this discipline has emerged within the existing structures of university English departments. Its practitioners, however, are engaged in work that differs substantially from their departmental counterparts, who are generally involved with the study of literature. The composition portion of rhetoric and composition is a relatively new area of study; one that is still forming and refining its core theories. Composition studies is a unique discipline, and, just as other members of English departments are learning how to give them space and deal with them professionally, so must academic librarians, especially in the areas of collection development and collaborative instruction.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study is to provide insight into the research and publishing characteristics of composition scholars. To that end, it examines citations present in articles from major composition studies journals and citations from books published from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. The data show that citation patterns in composition studies are substantially different from those in other social sciences and humanities disciplines.

Librarians cannot reasonably be expected to engage the practitioners of a discipline about which they know little. The more librarians know about the discipline of composition studies, the more apt they will be to provide the necessary resources for composition scholars’ research, and effectively add their expertise in information literacy instruction to composition scholars’ capacity for writing and communication instruction. This study, joined with the overview of the development of composition studies as a discipline, provides a means for this process to occur.

Literature Review
It is not a far reach to make the connection between the research being done in composition studies and that being done by librarians whose interests lie in bibliographic or information literacy instruction, as has been shown by the authors of two very important additions to the recent body of library literature, James Elmborg and Rolf Norgaard. Elmborg and Norgaard have specific goals in mind to which the engagement of librarians and composition faculty would be the means of achievement. Norgaard is ultimately concerned with a fundamental change in the way the pedagogy of bibliographic, or information literacy, instruction, is
viewed, with librarians taking on certain pedagogical practices that result from theories recently put forth by composition studies scholars.

Elmborg focuses particularly on one theory that certain composition scholars have espoused: the idea of Writing across the Curriculum, or WAC. The idea here, succinctly described by David Russell and this author, is “to improve the quality of learning by making writing a part of a student's entire higher education experience. Writing in each discipline is different, but all share a common goal in attending to writing: improving learning.” Elmborg stresses that if libraries commit to working with WAC programs, these programs “can teach information literacy a great deal about being successful in working in the disciplines,” arming librarians with both a theoretical grounding and an awareness of what it takes, politically, to institute the types of changes needed in the university environment.

Elmborg and Norgaard have each written convincing calls-to-arms to academic librarians to engage their colleagues in the field of composition studies, and forge a working relationship whose end result would offer both pedagogies a better way of promoting information literacy to students. The present article is an extension of the endeavor that Elmborg and Norgaard have undertaken: it steps out of the exhortative and into the practical.

Although the first substantial study of the citation characteristics of composition scholars, the present article is by no means the first published study of the citation characteristics of humanists. The studies done by many of the previous researchers in this area bear out the fact that humanities scholars use monographs more heavily than journals. One of the chief contributors to the knowledge base of publication characteristics in humanities scholarship, specifically citation patterns in monographic literature, is a librarian named John Cullars. He has published studies of citation patterns of humanities scholars in the fields of philosophy, fine arts, foreign language literary studies, and British and American literary studies. This last study is the most important in terms of the current paper. Since earlier studies have focused on journals, Cullars’ approach has been to eschew citations found in journal articles and concentrate exclusively on monographic publications in each of the fields he examines.

Cullars notes that certain library and information science scholars acknowledge the value of citation studies only so far as they show “the shape of the literature,” and remain unconvinced of their accuracy as collection development tools. Nevertheless, such studies, in providing a sense of “the literature,” can be relied upon as indicators that, along with other means and methods, help librarians to more effectively provide adequate resources for their clientele. In another of his articles, Cullars eloquently stresses the need for academic librarians to possess “a heightened grasp of the shape of the disciplines entrusted to them in times of fiscal austerity.”

Adams and Benefiel make the assertion that bibliographers who work with interdisciplinary fields need to have “specialized knowledge of the field as a whole but also must be a generalist at ease with sources in a number of more-or-less related fields.” Delgadillo and Lynch, writing on historians’ information-seeking processes, found that subject bibliographers were looked to as valuable resources, able to assist in the research process, while reference librarians were viewed “as generalists unable to handle the level of some history queries.” These findings point to the necessity of subject bibliographers to have an adequate knowledge of the field of study of the disciplines under their purview, as well as the desirability for ownership of at least an abbreviated extent of the same knowledge by general reference staff. Wiberley adds to this conversation the point that librarians who are professionally unfamiliar with the humanities have much to gain from citation studies because they “will teach these librarians things they could only otherwise begin to learn by reading in the humanities or by taking courses in one or more humanities disciplines.” He also asserts, that, even for “veteran librarians, quantitative findings about types of scholarship will provide benchmarks for their thinking about what humanities scholars do.”

In 1975, Bebout, Davis, and Oehlerts put forth the hypothesis that humanists use books more than journals. Stone, in her 1982 study of the “information needs and uses” of humanities scholars, found this assumption to be provable. She also discovered that “having retrospective coverage may be more important to the humanist than having access to current material.”

Watson-Boone updated Stone’s study in 1993 and created a composite portrait of the typical humanities scholar, using a combination of meta-analysis and interview techniques. What she found caused her to
hedge on the topic of book use versus journal use much more than many of her contemporary researchers:

Humanities scholars continue to draw upon a wide range of subject literature in conducting their research, with the majority of works being in book form. Although the assumption holds true that books play a greater role than do journals, it needs to be tempered: the subjects and periods covered by the research topic determine whether the scholar will use a greater or lesser percentage of articles, and whether the monographic material will be the primary works of the individual(s) under study or the critical (secondary) literature.  

Stern did a citation analysis of the characteristics of literary scholarship. In her summary she notes that “reliance on materials in book form is still decisively prevalent,” even as the attention paid to the original text, or primary source, waxes and wanes depending on whether the focus of the research is textual study or literary theory. Stern also notes, importantly, that when the latter focus draws upon the “influences and characteristics” of the social sciences, there is greater usage of journals.

Budd notes in his citation study of American Literature scholarship that “in the humanities, more references are made to books than to journals.” McCain refers to Stone’s statement that humanities scholars depend heavily on monographs, and much less so on journals. Lindholm-Romantschuk and Warner hypothesize that in the humanities, “the intellectual impact of monographs is greater than that of journal articles.” Wiberley’s recent article cites John Cullars as showing that “the principal medium for communication in the humanities is the book.” Wolfe Thompson, in her 2002 citation study of scholarship in nineteenth-century British and American Literature, asks the question “Where does this [financial turmoil] leave the humanities, a field whose soul lies between the covers of a scholarly monograph?”

This knowledge of the relatively heavy use of monographs in humanities research has proven useful to subject bibliographers and others involved in financial-planning aspects of collection development in academic libraries, as the budget situation for acquisitions becomes ever more pressingly serious. Many collection development librarians have based their decisions to allocate more of their humanities budgets toward monographs in lieu of serials on this knowledge. But English departments, more and more, are becoming home to composition studies scholars, and the publishing characteristics of these individuals have yet to be as rigorously and definitively studied as those of their English department counterparts in literary studies. Thus it may be premature to assume that their reliance on books and journals are as heavy and light, respectively, as their literary studies colleagues.

Composition Studies Background

The history of rhetoric-composition or composition studies, and how it became a field of study, or discipline, is the focus of this section. Although there are numerous book-length histories of the field of present-day composition studies that approach the discipline in both a general sense as well as with regard to a certain focus or aspect, this article will refrain from discussing all but the most important points in the discipline’s background, relying on the writings of many of these very same composition studies historians.

In much earlier times, rhetoric was not saddled with its more recent partnering term, “composition.” Rhetoric, of course, has its origins in the classics, and has taken various pedagogical guises throughout the ages: persuasion (in the political and legal fields), expository writing, persuasive communication, both oral and written, and finally, in the late 20th Century and on into the present, a study of how language and communication is used to get ideas across in different contexts and arenas of discourse. Because rhetoric has at its heart the necessary principles leading to effective communication, it only makes sense that it would be joined with composition, or later, composition studies.

As Connors points out in his chronicle of the decline of rhetoric, it fell from grace in the late 1800s and early 1900s, from a highly respected academic tradition to a devalued, journeyman-like academic occupation that became the province of overworked instructors who became known as “composition teachers.” The underprivileged status of the rhetorician who now also found himself saddled with the title of composition instructor meant a much heavier workload and a trend towards inescapable “low-paying jobs.” As
such, the teaching of rhetoric-composition became an academic underclass populated by those instructors who, for whatever reason, were not “upwardly mobile” in the academic sense.24

The Germanic model of higher education in the 19th Century was so popular among American scholars that, as Connors points out, between 1860 and 1885, Americans by the hundreds (Connors’ italics) brought doctorates in [many] subjects back from Germany. And wherever a congregation of doctorates could be established, there was the germ of a university department […]. But what of rhetoric, which had been so important in the American college? Why were there no departments of rhetoric? The answer is simple. There were no departments of rhetoric because there were no German PhDs in rhetoric.25

In the meantime rhetoricians, who lacked the PhDs and the academic camaraderie of those influenced by the German model, were nevertheless invaluable members of the academy, as they had answered the post 1875 call for “basic instruction in correct writing and speaking in colleges.” The problem was that nobody knew precisely where rhetoric fit. “It could not be buried and it would not go away, but neither could it be saved as ‘real scholarship’.”26 English Departments, meanwhile, encompassing the studies of philology and literature, sprung up widely at the end of the 19th Century. And these became the obvious – although often less than welcoming – home for rhetoricians: the discipline-less, doctorate-less holdovers from an earlier era of American higher education. As a result, for the greater part of the 20th Century, rhetoric-composition suffered as a weak cousin to the academic discipline of literary (and to a lesser extent, philological) study.

Any theories that rhetoric-composition could call its own were arrived at during the years 1870-1910, and remained largely static from that time until the 1960s. After 1910, the body of developed theory appeared mainly in textbooks to which composition instructors had access but no ability to critique or augment it. Journals specific to the field didn’t appear prior to 1912, so the developers of the aforementioned theories weren’t able to publish the fruits of their intellectual work in a format that would allow for a continuing scholarly conversation. In fact, as Connors notes, “[t]he journals that existed to serve writing teachers (and before 1948 there were only two, English Journal and College English) were well intentioned but small in circulation and pragmatic in outlook.”27 This “modern rhetoric-composition” was pedagogically successful but increasingly stagnant in terms of intellectual growth.

Several phenomena occurred mid-century that planted the seeds for change in composition, the most important being the inception of the post-World War II GI Bill, which created an upheaval in higher education. More students than ever before were attending colleges and universities and not only were the numbers of doctoral degrees being granted greatly multiplying, but the overall student body (and eventual teaching body) was becoming decidedly more populist; thanks to the GI Bill, the lower-middle-class was helping to strip away the “rarefied and elitist nature of the American professoriat.”28 Along with the teaching of post-18th Century literature, often considered distasteful before now, the new cadre of professors was more than willing to take on the teaching of composition, instead of viewing it as an apprenticeship-like chore, to be cast off as soon as possible.

These enthusiastic composition pedagogues openly discussed their ideas concerning their chosen area of teaching with each other and, according to Connors, “composition teaching, the essential assignment for all new instructors, was suddenly being reexamined with an intensity not seen for half a century.” As a result of all the professional discussion, a landmark organization was formed: the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1949. What it lacked in membership, it made up for in energy throughout the 1950s, and in the early 1960s became the crux of the rebirth of composition as a viable field of study. Connors notes that in 1960 the official journal of CCCC, College Composition and Communication, was concerned with “endless debates on logic, usage, and structural grammar,” while the 1965 version of the journal “seems essentially modern in both tone and content.” The reason for this monumental change, most composition studies historians agree, was the 1963 CCCC conference, and its rediscovery of rhetoric as a field of knowledge from which to draw on as a means of improvement and growth in their own field. In fact, an organization called the Rhetoric Society of America was formed in 1968, and according to Connors, this
society’s meetings became “the salons of choice for news about the most interesting work being done in the field of composition.” Thus, composition studies gave back to rhetoric a certain amount of academic prestige that it had been long missing, and in turn, the term “rhetoric” gave “more cachet” to “composition. While rhetoric and composition were now more than ever inextricably linked, the term “composition studies” started to take hold as well.

Philips, Greenberg, and Gibson find that in 1965, after the CCCC-centered turnabout, what was known as composition studies was still fundamentally based on literary studies; most of the appearances of “rhetoric” and “composition” in the journal *College Composition and Communication* still referred back to “style in the canonical literature,” in other words applying those terms and the theories that they reference to the texts of canonical literary works, rather than towards current studies in composition. The authors note, however, that the number of articles published in CCC after 1965 concerning “the pedagogical application of theory” grew, while those dealing solely with concerns of a literary nature decreased. Thus, disciplinary self-reference had become an important part of the literature. Between 1980 and 1993, in fact, there were no fewer than nineteen articles published in *CCC* on the sole topic of the field of composition studies itself.

Donald McQuade asserts that “a surge of first-rate research and scholarship on student writing charged the listless state of composition pedagogy in the late 1960s and early 1970s.” Scholars such as Francis Christensen, James Kinneavy, and Ken Macrorie were key figures in creating a base of theory to be built upon, and, later in the 1970s, Mina Shaughnessy’s seminal book, *Errors and Expectations*, forever changed how composition studies saw itself. According to McQuade, her book “exemplified the professional dignity of scholarship and research in composition, underscored what is at stake in that work, established a scholarly standard for it, and set a direction for a great deal of the scholarship and practice that followed it.”

The 1980s saw composition studies become increasingly interdisciplinary in nature; composition scholars recognized the need to turn to other disciplines to better “understand the specific needs and resources of inexperienced writers,” according to McQuade. This entrance into other disciplinary areas in terms of research, besides providing the spark for the “Writing across the Curriculum” movement discussed earlier, led composition scholars to use materials in the social and hard sciences as well as the humanities as resources for their published scholarship.

Composition studies became increasingly professionalized as it moved into the 1990s, and continued to “broaden and deepen gradually,” as McQuade puts it. Evidence of the extent to which the field has grown in stature within the humanities is provided by the rising numbers of “first-rate graduate programs,” research facilities, monographs published by highly selective and prestigious presses, and newer peer-reviewed journals. Not everything in composition studies was rosy, however. Philips, Greenberg, and Gibson, in their 1993 summing-up of the discipline to that point, assert that at the time the article was being written, just as in a 1960 Committee on Future Directions report, “opinions on the state of the art and craft range from reassuring to bewildered to frustrated to downright damning and suggest little consensus regarding our current or future status as a discipline.”

Still, as McQuade aptly summarizes, “there is clearly no shortage of outstanding – and significant – manuscripts on virtually every aspect of composition studies.”

Despite the accolades, McQuade closes his essay on a more somber note, discussing the intellectual and professional rift that still exists between literary studies and composition studies. It is not this author’s intention to examine any political turmoil that might exist between these two fields, but some of the broader differences between the way scholars in these two fields approach research should be made clear. John Schlib does an admirable job of pointing out some of these differences out in an essay geared toward literary scholars attempting to understand the nature of composition studies. One of the main differences noted is that literary scholars generally view their roles as professors of literature and producers of scholarship as disparate functions, while for composition scholars, the scholarship depends on their function as instructors. Schlib makes the point that both types of scholars write primarily about texts, and then concedes that that is where most of their similarities end: the literary scholar studies texts that belong to an (ever-widening) canon; the composition scholar studies texts created by the very students that (s)he is teaching. Although the latter scholars refer time and again to the same names in their bibliographies, these referenced writers’ works are not used in the same way as are literary works referenced.
by a literary scholar. They do not constitute a canon. Literary scholars study texts that are finished pieces of writing; composition scholars pay as much attention to the end product as they do to every draft along the way – they are interested more often than not in the process of writing. Composition scholars also present their textual analyses as case studies, something largely foreign to literary scholars, and often display what Schlib refers to as an “interventionist slant” in their published research, meaning that “composition scholarship aims to determine appropriate future action,” while “literary criticism winds up confirming the power (positive or negative) of whatever works it analyzes.”

Schlib also talks about the specifics of scholarly publication, calling composition studies “predominantly article-driven,” as opposed to literary studies’ penchant for publishing book-length scholarship. While this has been the case up to the 1990s, Schlib acknowledges that the professionalization of composition studies has resulted in more composition theory books being published (both alone and as parts of newly formed series), as well as dissertations that become fodder for potential book publications.

The following study will put into quantifiable terms the unique publishing characteristics of recent and current scholars in the field of composition studies.

Methodology
This author owes a tremendous debt to Jennifer Wolfe-Thompson, who wrote an extremely useful article, and to John Cullars, author of numerous citation studies focusing on various disciplines in the humanities. The methodologies present in these articles and others, cited by Cullars and Wolfe-Thompson, helped to shape this author’s own methodology for the unique purposes of this study, and their observations proved equally useful for contextualizing the findings.

Cullars has published many articles that examine the citation characteristics of humanities subfields. The one that deals with the subfield most closely related to composition studies is a study of British and American literary studies. In this study, he makes the logical step of moving from the examination of citations in the humanities journal literature to examining citations present in the monographic literature, thus establishing a link between what is cited so heavily and what gets cited in those publications – a way to more effectively examine patterns in scholarly communication in the humanities. This author has followed Cullars’ lead by examining the citations contained in monographs as well as in journals.

For this study, the monograph samples were chosen first. A subject search on “composition studies” in WorldCat was used to identify relevant books, and these books were then sorted in terms of library holdings. Books with the highest number of holdings whose authors were found to be composition scholars working in English departments which subsumed composition studies (rather than in composition studies departments separate from English) were selected for use in the study. This methodology largely replicates the one used by Wolfe-Thompson; the most notable difference is her use of Choice’s lists of outstanding academic books to choose her monograph samples.

WorldCat was used in this study instead of Choice because the interdisciplinary nature of composition studies wasn’t adequately addressed by the latter. A decision was made to limit the number of examined books from each year to ten – five single-author monographs and five collected essay books, in order to maintain equity with the number of journals that were also being examined.

The journals used in this study were chosen in a different fashion, and in fact stemmed from the book-selection process. Web of Science (selecting both Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences) was used to determine which journals contained the most articles citing the selected books. Five journals were clearly the heaviest citers of these books, and these journals are the same as those mentioned by Lillian Bridwell-Bowles in her guide for beginning composition researchers as being the core journals of the profession. The fact that the books and the journals chosen for this study are connected via citation frequency makes the study more meaningful, since the authors of these books and journal articles are obviously engaged in scholarly communication with each other.

An observer of the data collected for this study will realize straightaway that the intervals for the monographs are greater than those for the journals. The decision was made to study each issue of the five journals in every odd numbered year from 1989-2003, but only examine the monographs in three evenly spaced intervals: those published between 1990-1992, 1996-1998, and 2002-2004. More weight was given to
the journal article citations since this is the primary scholarly outlet for composition scholars and most directly affects the overall scholarly communication process in the field. Thus there are only three temporal intervals for the monograph samples, although the number of volumes studied at each interval (5) are equivalent, whether journal, monograph, or essay collection.

The year 1989 was chosen as the starting date for the study because, as has previously been discussed, composition studies is still a nascent academic discipline, and the 1980s was the decade in which multiple theories concerning the discipline came into being and the very identity, nature, and relevance of the discipline were being questioned both from within and without. These circumstances created the scholarly discussion that, in turn, changed the nature of composition studies into what it is today, and thus the body of literature responsible for documenting and being the catalyst for current composition studies lies in the pages of the journal articles, book articles, and monographs that were published in the field starting in the late 1980s. This author chose books that were published in two-year ranges surrounding each of the years chosen for the examined journal titles for two reasons. First, limiting the scope to one year did not provide an adequate sample; secondly, the fact that books take longer to be published and may be more aptly placed in the scholarly conversation of a certain year even though it was published a year (or two) after the fact must be taken into account.

For the five journals published between the years 1989 and 2003, and the ten monographs published between the years 1988 and 2004, the format of each publication cited (journal article, book article, or monograph, or other format) was recorded.

Results

The first two tables in this study show a breakdown of the percentages of the citations in composition studies journals and monographs, respectively, according to the format of the material they cite: books, journals, book articles, and other materials. Here, “book articles” refer to specific essays or chapters that were cited within a particular book, as opposed to citing an entire book. “Other materials” was a catch-all for formats and forms of publications that didn’t fit sensibly into any of the other major categories. Dissertations, theses, unpublished manuscripts, government-published pamphlets, websites, and emails made up part, but not all, of this category.

Table 1 shows the number of citations from articles that were published in the top five composition studies journals in each odd-numbered year from 1989 to 2003. The high-point of citations to journal articles occurred at the beginning of the run, in 1989, with 37.1%, and showed a consistently downward trend through the subsequent years (29% for 2003), save for an anomalous spike in 1995, where the percentage of journal articles cited was 36. Citations to books showed no ultimately ascendant or descendant trait; instead, they jumped up and down between 1989 and 2003, without ever straying very far from the mean percentage of 43.1, except for 2001, where the number of citations to books jumped to 46.2%. Citations to book articles jumped up and down initially, spiking up from 15.6% to 20% between 1989 and 1991, but finally evening out in the late 1990s and early 2000s at about 19%. The materials that come under the heading of “other” never rise above 10%, but they do show a markedly consistent increase from 1989 (3.5%) to 2003 (8.1%). The final two columns represent simply the addition of the percentages of two individual columns in the same table: the sum of the citations to journal articles and book articles, and to books and book articles, respectively. The latter is displayed to give the reader a sense of the total amount of books being cited, whether the citation is to a book as a single unit, or to a book by way of citing a specific piece of material published within its pages. The former percentage is given to show the reader how many article-length publications are being cited, since it is this author’s contention that a journal article (in composition studies as in the general humanities) is not very different in terms of length, style, or intellectual depth from a chapter or essay in an edited monographic collection. Depending on how citations to books are defined, the percentage could differ from, roughly, 15% to 22% (see Table 2) in this study.

Table 2 shows the number of citations from books. Two kinds of books are examined here: (1) single-author monographs, or books that are authored entirely by one person; and (2) edited collections, or books that are edited by one or more scholars, and contain essays by numerous other scholars in the field. As with the citations to journals in Table 1, the percentages of citations to journal articles in both types of books
examined here show a decreasing trend. It should be noted, however, that the percentage of journal articles cited in edited collections started at a higher level than single-author monographs in the two-year period of 1990-92, and ended at a lower point in the two-year period of 2002-04. Contrary to the journal citation trend, at least for the edited collection, citations to books rose steadily from 1990-92 to 2002-04. The overall fourteen-year range saw citations to books rise very slightly in single-author books, but there was a tremendous spike in the 1996-98 percentage: the number of citations to books rose 8.8% from 1990-2 to 1996-8, and fell back down by 6.7% in the 2002-04 period. Percentages of book articles were largely equivalent to the percentages shown in Table 1, but with slightly more variation over the years. (Indeed, a notable decrease in citations to book articles occurred in single-author monographs during the same period that citations to books spiked upwards.) The percentage of citations to “other materials” remained under 10%, as it did in Table 1, but its trajectory over the set span of time is inversely related: where it went up by 4.8% from 1989 to 2003 in journal citations, it went down in both types of book citations, albeit by a much smaller amount. Tables 3, 4, and 5 give an overall view of the breakdown of citations from the journal, single author monograph, and edited collection samples, respectively.

Tables 6 and 7 compare the findings in this study to the findings in the most recent citation study of publications in the field of literary studies – Wolfe-Thompson’s examination of the citation characteristics of monographs and journal articles in nineteenth-century British and American literature scholarship.

Table 6 shows a comparison between this study’s findings relating to citations in composition studies journals, and Wolfe-Thompson’s findings in her examination of citations in British and American literature journals. Wolfe-Thompson examined four journals (this author used five), and limited her study to journals published in 2001, thus the table only compares her results to this author’s results for that particular year. Because Wolfe-Thompson first separated the publications she examined into primary and secondary sources and only then showed the percentage of citations to each format, her data have been aggregated to provide percentages of the total population of the citations. In this way, meaningful comparisons can be made between the two sets of data.

In terms of journals published in 2001, the amount of citations to journal articles in the present study surpasses those in Wolfe-Thompson’s by almost 10%, whereas the percentage of citations to books in Wolfe-Thompson’s study is greater than the percentage in the present study by a difference of slightly more than 20. Citations to book articles are comparatively higher in the present study, but not enough to make the total percentage of citations to books (including books and book articles) differ greatly in comparison between the two studies. Citations to other materials were significantly greater in the present study.

Table 7 shows the results of a comparison between the results of an examination of citations found in composition studies books and those found in American Literature studies books (Wolfe-Thompson’s study). Similar problems to those concerning the data in Table 6 arose when attempting to display data that could be compared meaningfully side-by-side. Wolfe Thompson’s modus operandi was to examine two sets of books – four each from 1995 and 2001 – while, as previously discussed, this author examined sets of ten books (five single-author monographs and five edited collections) that were published within two-year periods in 1990-92, 1996-98, and 2002-04. Since Wolfe-Thompson did not differentiate in the presentation of her data between the two sets of years, this author thought it best to take the averages of the results from the periods 1996-98 and 2002-04 (including all ten books from each period), thus making a comparison between the findings of the two studies as meaningful as possible.

The present study shows a much higher percentage of citations from books to journal articles than Wolfe-Thompson’s study, and an even greater difference in the opposite direction concerning citations to books. Wolfe-Thompson’s study shows a significantly lower percentage of citations to book articles than the present study, making the difference of citations to books in total (books and book articles combined) not quite as vast as with books alone, but still considerable. The difference between the two studies in terms of citations to other materials is negligible, at less than 2%.

Discussion

Wolfe-Thompson makes a case, in her study, for the importance of the monograph in the humanities, with the ultimate intent of bringing about a discussion of
new ways to accommodate the consistent need for traditional monograph publishing, or analogous alternatives, in the face of existing scholarly publishing crises. To that end, she also stresses “the need for careful evaluation of collection policies in the humanities in order to preserve and to attempt to restore the status of the humanities monograph in the collections.”

Careful evaluation of collection policies are also essential to ensure that the needs of composition scholars do not fall through the cracks. As noted earlier, composition studies scholars have a tendency to use journals as citable resources to a significantly higher degree than their colleagues in other humanities disciplines, particularly, and most importantly, literary studies. The data in the present study bear out this assertion, and general comparisons with earlier studies also give credence to this thesis. Budd’s study compares his own findings in American Literature studies (64.00% citations to books, and 23.00% citations to journals) with those of other humanities citation studies: (Heinzkill, English Literature, 74.90% to books, and 19.90% to journals; Frost, German Literature, 78.13% to books, and 21.12% to journals; Vaughan, Music, 69.50% to books, and 25.30% to journals). Cullars, in his study of citations from 30 books from the period of 1976 to 1983 in the area of British and American literary studies, found that an average of 72.2% were to books, and only 14.5% were to journals. While the studies done for this paper, in and of themselves, do not show that journals are cited more than books by composition studies scholars, when viewed in comparison with other citation studies of humanities scholars, it becomes quite evident that journal articles are used to a much greater degree.

Perhaps the extent to which journal articles are cited more heavily and monographs less so by composition scholars is due to the sheer strength of the top journals in the field and their commanding role in shaping the discipline from the 1950s at least through the late 1980s. Because of the enormous role that the journals played, composition scholars grew accustomed to publishing their research in those venues.

The upward trend of citations to books in both journal and book publications from 1988-2004 might be explained by the growth (in terms of numbers and professional respectability) of the composition studies field. The professionalization of the field means that more and more composition studies scholars will be or will recently have been required to meet the standards for academic tenure, which by and large still requires book publication. Add to that the increasing amount of composition studies graduate students who are completing dissertations as part of their PhD requirements, dissertations which very often are reworked and submitted for publication as scholarly monographs. The nature of composition studies, which is as much about the practical application of theory as theory itself, may be one reason why, as Connors notes, university and specialty presses like Southern Methodist University Press, the University of Pittsburgh Press, the SUNY Press, Erlbaum, Ablex, and Greenwood have all picked up composition studies monographs after 1980, joining mainstays like the NCTE Press, Oxford University Press, and Southern Illinois University Press, who had already been publishing these types of books. As the body of composition studies literature grows to encompass more and more monographs alongside the long-standing body of journal literature, it only makes sense that these books will, in turn, be cited more often. But there is no evidence to indicate that journals will be used less as sources as a result.

Part of what makes composition scholars unique is that their research is not completely encapsulated within the disciplinary realm of the humanities. The nature of much of what they study and write on falls into the area of education, if not sociology: the dynamics of the social structures in which students develop their writing abilities. Indeed, many of the citations to journal articles in this study denote the fact that they were found via the ERIC database, or, in other cases, were singular publications denoted as ERIC documents. It is no surprise, then, that the style with which they present their research shows a marked similarity to the way much research is presented in the social sciences, and that their use of cited material would be more in line with that of a social science publication. (John Budd quotes Broadus and Baughman’s citation study of social science publications: in 1953 Broadus found that 53.70% of citations were to books, and 46.30% were to journals; in 1974, Baughman found that 51.72% of citations were to books, and 38.54% to journals.) Thus, the points that Wolfe-Thompson makes (through other writers whom she cites), which characterize humanities scholars as being interested in a “more subjective, than empirical, approach to study” don’t necessarily apply
here. The results shown in this study lean as much towards the results of social science citation studies that Budd quotes as they do towards those shown by Wolfe-Thompson and others who have performed citation studies of humanities publications. In sum, the results speak to a unique, interdisciplinary, and most importantly, growing, field of study whose scholarly needs, from a librarian’s perspective, must continue to be monitored closely.

Suggestions for Future Study
This is only the first step in discovering, from a library/information science perspective, the workings of scholars in the area of composition studies (at the risk of making these scholars sound like rare birds in the field). More can, and should, be published in library literature on this topic. A citation study of dissertations written in the field of composition studies could point to trends in research characteristics of a new generation of faculty members in that field. Within the present paper alone, there are many stones left unturned (most of which will be uncovered in a future paper): citation frequency of certain journals and of certain books published by certain publishers, citation frequency of specific authors, and a further longitudinal study comparing the present findings to new ones at an appropriate future interval. Citation studies, however, are but one avenue of approach to finding out about the characteristics of a specific discipline. Surveying faculty and graduate students to discover how they use the library’s physical collection and online resources could provide more insights into their field could be another useful paper, as could a controlled inquiry into library assignments given by composition studies instructors. Another idea for future research has its seed in the article recently published on the topic of “the research practices and library needs of contingent, tenure-track, and tenured faculty” respectively; a similar article could be written comparing these needs and practices with those of composition studies faculty.

Conclusion
Academic librarians involved in collection development have always had a duty to know enough about the general field of study of the scholars in the disciplines for which they are bibliographically responsible to be able to provide a core collection that will satisfy their teaching and research needs. Not many academic librarians involved in collection development are limited to this area anymore, however. Most also have to wear the hats of reference librarian, instruction (or information literacy) librarian, and be involved in faculty outreach; each area of librarianship informs the others. Given the multifaceted nature of academic librarians’ jobs, then, they can use the results of the citation analysis in this article to better provide for the composition scholar’s research needs in terms of library holdings and access.

The field of composition study is certainly one that is still growing and creating its own place among the other academic fields in the humanities and social sciences, often engaging with them in a productive interdisciplinary fashion. Academic librarians can now see that composition studies scholars provide a unique opportunity for them to reassess and improve their approach to the teaching of information literacy, both by example and in direct collaboration. Peary and Ernick’s 2004 article shows just how effective a partnership between librarians and compositionists can be. They describe an optimal teaching situation where a librarian and a composition instructor worked as team members in teaching research skills. The librarian was not inserted into the existing structure, nor did the instructor back away to allow the librarian to “do her thing.” Instead, they co-created a space where library instruction “was treated as a discipline in and of itself,” instead of simply being inserted “into the spaces created for it by the discipline.”

This article functions as the first step towards providing the academic library community with concrete knowledge of the way composition scholars do research in their field. It also provides librarians with a general background of how the research, publication, and citation characteristics of composition scholars were formed over the last half of the twentieth century. The coupling of data and narrative gives librarians the tools to effectively engage composition scholars on their own terms, and, rather than simply “team-teach” or “guest-lecture,” take the challenge put forth by Elmborg and Norgaard and create an entirely new pedagogy that is somehow more than the sum of information literacy and process writing.
Appendix A: List of Samples of Edited Collections and Single-Author Monographs

Edited Collections
1990-92

1996-98

2002-04

Single-Author Monographs
1990-92
1996-98

2002-04

Appendix B: List of Journal Samples Used

1. *College Composition and Communication*
2. *College English*
3. *Journal of Advanced Composition*
4. *Research in the Teaching of English*
5. *Written Communication*

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1 For the bulk of this article this author has consciously removed the term “rhetoric” from its common coupling with “composition,” since the article focuses on what has become the field of composition studies (which, nevertheless, is inherently based on rhetorical principles). That stated, there are occasional references in the “Composition Studies Background” section to *rhetoric* and *rhetoric-composition* to illustrate certain historical points.


5 Elmborg, “Information Literacy,” p. 69.

13 Ibid., p. 123.
16 Stone, “Humanities Scholars,” p. 296.
25 Ibid., p. 178.
27 Ibid., p. 203.
28 Connors, *Composition – Rhetoric*, p. 204.
29 Ibid., pp. 205-7.

35 Ibid., pp. 504-5.
37 McQuade, “Composition,” p. 509.
38 Ibid., pp. 510-17.
43 See Appendix A.
45 See Appendix B.
48 Ibid., p. 133.
49 Budd, “Written Scholarship,” p. 207.
53 Budd, “Written Scholarship,” p. 205.
54 Note: studies of citation age distribution were not attempted in this paper, given the relative youth of the field, and the general tendency of authors in the field to cite only within the last thirty or so years.