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BEAM: A Rhetorical Vocabulary for Teaching Research-Based Writing

This article argues that writing teachers can encourage students to adopt a rhetorical perspective toward research-based writing by characterizing products of research in terms of how writers use them in their texts. It maintains that the standard nomenclature for treating sources (primary, secondary, tertiary) is anti-rhetorical and proposes an alternative: Background for materials a writer relies on for general information or for factual evidence; Exhibit for materials a writer analyzes or interprets; Argument for materials whose claims a writer engages; and Method for materials from which a writer takes a governing concept or derives a manner of working.

Over the past several decades, composition scholars have put forth a number of valuable proposals for improving the teaching of research-based writing.¹ Some have focused on the social, institutional, and discursive contexts within which research and writing happen. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, for example, argue that research should be regarded not as a sterile exercise in recovering what is already known but as a socially embedded act of inquiry that aims to further the collective understanding of a particular discourse community. Doug Brent similarly holds that if students are to appreciate the “intricate rhetorical dance” strong research-based writing entails, they must be taught to view reading as an active exercise in “knowledge construction” (105). Others have focused on the research paper as a genre, either dismissing it outright or proposing various alternatives. Richard L. Larson condemns it as a “Non-Form of Writing.” Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, among others, champion the research argument; Ken Macrorie gives us the

“I-Search Paper”); Bruce Ballenger celebrates the research essay; Robert Davis and Mark Shadle advocate a hybrid form they call “multi-writing” (434).² All of this work endeavors to counter what David R. Russell has described as a “blindness to the rhetorical nature of academic writing” (10) that accompanied the rise of the German research model in American universities at the end of the nineteenth century and that finds preeminent expression in the conventional research paper.³

Yet influential as it has been, this work carries us only so far, because it leaves largely unexamined our manner of conceptualizing the myriad products of research that Larson characterizes as “data from outside the author’s own self” and identifies as the “substance” of many forms of writing (813). Larson’s choice of words is apt, for whenever writers incorporate such materials into their texts, they encounter a version of what Kenneth Burke calls the “Paradox of Substance” (21). As Burke explains, although the word *substance* is commonly “used to designate something *within* the thing, *intrinsic* to it, the word etymologically refers to something *outside* the thing, *extrinsic* to it” (23). To be successful, writers must regard their materials in both of these ways, as intrinsic elements of the texts they write and as extrinsic things that exist outside of those texts. But as teachers, we often struggle to cultivate this dual perspective in our students. Consequently, we should not be surprised that they sometimes treat research as a special chore they have to do for one particular assignment (Larson 814–15) or that they sometimes forget what they have learned about drafting and revision when they take their research and try to “write it up” (Fulkerson 26–27).

We struggle in no small measure because our standard way of classifying sources—the “substance” of most of the research-based writing students do in composition classes—is fundamentally antirhetorical. Rhetoric, Stephen Mailloux has recently observed, concerns the “effects of texts,” construed broadly as “objects of interpretive attention, whether speech, writing, nonlinguistic practices, or human artifacts of any kind” (40). Yet when we classify sources as *primary*, *secondary*, and (in some versions of the scheme) *tertiary*, we attend not to their rhetorical functions or effects but to their relationship to some external point of reference: Primary sources emanate from or are coextensive with some researcher’s topic or object of study; secondary sources discuss these primary sources; tertiary sources summarize or synthesize these secondary discussions. Like the conventional research paper, our standard terms for sources reflect what Russell calls the “ethic of scientific objectivity” characteristic of the late-nineteenth-century academy (11). When we use them unselfconsciously, we risk perpetuating a positivist legacy that composition as a discipline purports to disavow.

Moreover, there is a certain slipperiness to this nomenclature that can make it difficult for students to apprehend. Because the standard terms indicate only an abstract order or priority, they preclude students—as a more descriptive set of terms would not—from relying on their everyday understanding of words to make initial sense of them. Writing teachers are thus forced to offer elaborate and potentially misleading explanations. There is a curious asymmetry in the way writing handbooks generally introduce the standard terms. They offer thumbnail definitions of both primary and secondary sources—say “original” materials on the one hand and “commentaries on” these materials on the other (Hacker 561–62)—but they provide lengthy lists of examples only of primary sources.⁴ One popular handbook states, “**Primary sources** are original documents such as letters, diaries, legislative bills, laboratory studies, field research reports, and eyewitness accounts” (Hacker 561). Another asserts, “Primary sources consist of information and ideas in their original (or close-to-original) form: historical documents, works of literature, e-mail resources, letters, tapes of interviews, survey data, videotapes, raw statistics, and other kinds of basic information that contain little or no interpretation by the observer or gatherer” (Anson and Schwegler 564). While such statements can help students develop a working grasp of a hard-to-define term, they can also be problematic—even when they explicitly assert criteria that make sources primary. Because of their form (“Primary sources *are* . . .”; “Primary sources *consist of* . . .”), such statements can seem to suggest that sources belong to one of the standard categories *by virtue* of their genre or kind. But this interpretation would be a mistake. As Booth, Colomb, and Williams note in *The Craft of Research*, “If a researcher quoted your research report to support his argument, your report would be his secondary source. If, on the other hand, he were writing your biography, your paper would be a primary source” (76). The standard classifications are not absolute but relative. Change a researcher’s focus and you potentially change the classifications of the researcher’s sources as well.

The situation becomes yet more complicated when we acknowledge that academic researchers and writers work not simply as individuals but as members of specific disciplines and professions, all of which have their own customary ways of classifying their materials. In a recent conversation, a reference librarian at my institution noted that students often become perplexed when they learn that materials considered primary in one discipline may be considered secondary in another. They become perplexed when classifications they had taken as absolute turn out to be context-dependent. Finally, the standard nomenclature reflects a hierarchy of values at odds with the goal of teaching writing. It may serve the purposes of certain disciplines to distinguish between materials in their “original” or “close-to-original” form and “commentaries” on such materials, but the practice of labeling the first class *primary* and the second class *secondary* also

subordinates the core intellectual work of writing—the work of interpretation, argumentation, and communication—to the work of research.⁵

An Alternative Vocabulary that Emphasizes Use

If we want students to adopt a rhetorical perspective toward research-based writing, then we should use language that focuses their attention not on what their sources and other materials are (either by virtue of their genres or relative to some extratextual point of reference) but on what they as writers might *do* with them.⁶ We should adopt terms that allow us to name, describe, and analyze the different ways writers *use* their materials on the page or, equivalently, the various *postures* toward their materials that writers adopt. To this end, in my own teaching, I employ an alternative vocabulary that my students have dubbed “BEAM.” I still teach the standard classifications, but I also teach students to construe their materials in terms of the functional roles they play: as *background*, *exhibits*, *arguments*, and *methods*.

I use the terms *background* and *background source* to refer to materials whose claims a writer accepts as fact, whether these “facts” are taken as general information or deployed as evidence to support the writer’s own assertions. Writers regard their background sources as authoritative and expect their readers to do the same. Because writers sometimes treat information gleaned from their background sources as “common knowledge,” they may sometimes leave these sources uncited.

I use the terms *exhibit* and *exhibit source* to refer to materials a writer offers for explication, analysis, or interpretation. Materials used as background, argument, or method sources tend to be prose texts, but anything that can be represented in discourse can potentially serve as an exhibit. The simplest sort of exhibit is the *example*, a concrete instance offered to illustrate some more general claim or assertion. Examples often require little additional explication, but complex exhibits can demand extensive framing and interpretation. My term *exhibit*, I wish to emphasize, is not synonymous with the conventional term *evidence*, which designates data offered in support of a claim. Exhibits can lend support *to* claims, but they can also provide occasions *for* claims. Rich exhibits, however exhaustively they are examined and analyzed, will retain their “mystery” in Davis and Shadle’s sense of the word. Understood in this way, the exhibits in a piece of writing work much like the exhibits in a museum or a trial. Good writers, like good curators and lawyers, know that rich exhibits may be subjected to multiple and perhaps even conflicting “readings.” They know they must do rhetorical work to establish their exhibits’ meanings and significance.

I use the terms *argument* and *argument source* to refer to materials whose claims a writer affirms, disputes, refines, or extends in some way. To invoke a

common metaphor, argument sources are those with which writers enter into “conversation.” In professional academic writing, there is a strong correlation between the genres in which writers work and the genres of their argument sources, but this correlation is weaker in student writing. In the ordinary practice of their professions, historians generally write articles and books that engage articles and books by other historians; neuroscientists generally write research reports that engage research reports by other neuroscientists. Students are not regularly asked to write papers that engage other student papers. This “genre gap” may be a significant reason students sometimes fail to apprehend the dialogic nature of academic argumentation.

I use the terms *method* and *method source* to refer to materials from which a writer derives a governing concept or a manner of working. A method source can offer a set of key terms, lay out a particular procedure, or furnish a general model or perspective. Like background sources, method sources can sometimes go uncited, for at least two reasons. It is not unusual for writers to acknowledge their most important method sources only obliquely, by deftly dropping a recognizable name, using a particular terminology, or adopting a prose style or mode of exposition that affiliates them with a particular school of thought. Likewise, especially influential concepts or methods may enter into the general parlance of disciplines or professions and so lose their ties to specific sources.

While the standard classifications and my alternatives are based on very different criteria, they do display a loose correlation: Tertiary sources are generally used for background; primary sources are generally treated as exhibits; secondary sources generally serve as arguments but in certain contexts can furnish background or methods. BEAM’s main advantage over the standard nomenclature, again, is that it allows us to describe writers’ materials straightforwardly in terms of what writers do with them: Writers *rely on* background sources, *interpret* or *analyze* exhibits, *engage* arguments, and *follow* methods. But BEAM has a number of other advantages as well. First, it is more ecumenical than the standard nomenclature, not only because it emphasizes function but also because its terms possess a grammatical flexibility the standard terms lack. Like the standard terms, the terms in BEAM can be used as adjectives to modify some general noun like *source* or *research*, but they can also be used as nouns themselves. Therefore, while both nomenclatures suit disciplines such as history or English, BEAM also suits disciplines in which researchers do not customarily refer to their materials as *sources*. BEAM is clearly applicable to literary criticism, but it can also be applied to primary work in the sciences.⁷ Second, BEAM accommodates both of the perspectives involved in what I have described as the Burkean paradox of research-based writing. Such questions as *What are your primary sources?* or *What are your secondary sources?* conceive of sources only as

things external to writers' texts, not as intrinsic parts of those texts. But the roughly parallel questions *What are your exhibits?* or *What are your argument sources?* can be construed in either sense depending on context. Third, because the categories named by BEAM shade into one another, they map a whole domain of ways writers might use their materials. For this reason BEAM allows students to make finer discriminations of function than are readily possible with the standard nomenclature.

BEAM as a Framework for Reading

Many composition scholars have argued that strong writing depends on strong critical reading.⁸ BEAM can support critical reading not only by providing clear labels for the different postures writers might adopt toward their materials but also by enabling students to track shifts in these postures over the course of a text. I will illustrate BEAM's utility in this regard by applying it to three very different texts: an autobiographical piece by essayist Richard Rodriguez, an article by historian Eric Foner, and a one-page research report by entomologists John E. Losey, Linda S. Rayor, and Maureen E. Carter. Rodriguez's essay, "The Achievement of Desire," appeared in his 1981 book *Hunger for Memory* and is a staple text in composition classes. Foner's article, "American Freedom in a Global Age," was originally delivered as his presidential address to the American Historical Association in January 2001. Losey, Rayor, and Carter's report, "Transgenic Pollen Harms Monarch Larvae," appeared in the journal *Nature* in 1999.

I come to my first text through David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's popular composition reader *Ways of Reading*. In an assignment on Rodriguez's essay, Bartholomae and Petrosky ask students to examine Rodriguez's treatment of his only external source, a chapter on the "scholarship boy" from Richard Hoggart's book *The Uses of Literacy*. They ask students to "[l]ook closely at Rodriguez's references to Hoggart's book" and to draw connections between the seemingly "technical matter" of how Rodriguez deploys these references and his claims to interpretive "authority" (581–82). BEAM is well suited to helping students execute this sort of assignment. In the first two of his essay's four numbered sections, Rodriguez uses a concept provided by Hoggart to make sense of his own early school experiences: "I found, in his description of the scholarship boy, myself" (qtd. in Hoggart 564). Rodriguez positions Hoggart's chapter as a method source and takes his own experiences as exhibits.⁹ In his third section, Rodriguez starts to challenge Hoggart's ideas. After quoting Hoggart's unflattering portrait of the scholarship boy as an "expert imbiber and doler-out" who "rarely feels the reality of knowledge, of other men's thoughts and imaginings,

on his own pulses,” Rodriguez condemns this characterization as “more accurate than fair” and offers a competing analysis: “But he would not be so bad—nor would he become so successful, a *scholarship* boy—if he did not accurately perceive that the best synonym for primary ‘education’ is ‘imitation’” (577). Rodriguez here starts to engage Hoggart’s chapter as an argument source. In the final section of his essay, he continues to question Hoggart’s claims, but he also questions the power and authority of his governing concept: “According to Hoggart, the scholarship boy grows nostalgic because he remains the uncertain scholar. . . . This analysis, however, only partially suggests what happened to me in my last year as a graduate student” (578). Rodriguez here fully engages Hoggart’s chapter as an argument and begins to ponder its limitations as a method source. Over the course of the essay, Rodriguez goes from using Hoggart’s chapter to guide his own reflections to disputing its conclusions and explanatory force. By giving students language to describe this shift, BEAM can facilitate the kind of careful critical analysis Bartholomae and Petrosky call for.¹⁰

I come to my second text through my own teaching, having used Foner’s article for the past few years in my first-year writing class. Foner’s main argument is that academic historians must begin to give more attention to the global contexts of the events they study (52), but he supports this argument by developing another of more general import: that the meaning of the term *freedom*, so central to American political rhetoric, has continually been inflected by America’s “global embeddedness” (58). When students first encounter this article, they can be daunted by the sheer number and variety of its sources. It has thirty-seven footnotes, most of which give multiple citations. But BEAM enables students to group these sources into a few distinct categories based on the roles they play in the text. When I assign Foner’s article, I ask students to annotate the text by marking each of his major sources with a “B,” “E,” “A,” or “M.” Students quickly see that despite their diversity, the majority of Foner’s sources serve as exhibits supporting one of his two arguments. He cites monographs in history that exemplify the kind of scholarship he endorses, and he develops his claim about the changing meaning of *freedom* by analyzing a succession of exhibits that runs chronologically from the late eighteenth century through the late twentieth century. Once students recognize the serial structure of Foner’s argument, they also notice that he modifies his posture toward his sources as his argument progresses. Specifically, they notice that as his exhibits become more contemporary, he begins to treat them more like arguments.

Early on, Foner discusses a group of nineteenth-century American historians—men like Walter H. Prescott, Francis Parkman, and George Bancroft—who take up and develop a theme they find in David Ramsay’s 1789 *History of the American Revolution*: that America is uniquely destined “to

enlarge the happiness of mankind” (qtd. in Foner 61). Later, Foner discusses Ronald Reagan’s pronouncement that the American people have been chosen “by some divine plan” to serve as “the beacon of liberty and freedom to all the world” (69–70). Foner connects these exhibits by asserting that Reagan intentionally drew on “rhetoric that echoed back at least two centuries,” but he adopts distinctly different stances toward each of them (69). Commenting on his group of nineteenth-century historians, Foner observes, “These writers were fully aware of the global dimension of American history, but their conviction that the United States represented a unique embodiment of the idea of freedom inevitably fostered a certain insularity” (61). He is critical of these figures in the sense that he probes their underlying assumptions, but he also withholds overt moral or political judgment. His attitude is one of scholarly disinterest. When Foner turns to Reagan, in contrast, his posture becomes more oppositional. After lamenting that “Americans still live in the shadow of the Reagan revolution,” Foner makes the following observation: “Once the rallying cry of the dispossessed, freedom is today commonly invoked by powerful economic institutions to justify many forms of authority, even as on the individual level it often seems to suggest the absence of authority altogether” (70). This statement is not about Reagan but about Reagan’s topic—which also happens to be Foner’s own. Its grammatical subject is “freedom.” Consequently, the statement’s status in Foner’s argument is suggestively ambiguous. It can be taken as a highly critical gloss on Reagan’s pronouncement, but it can also be taken as an explicit counterclaim. Foner’s stance is simultaneously analytic and agonistic. He treats Reagan’s pronouncement as both an exhibit and an argument. Using BEAM, my students have been able to describe this shift in Foner’s posture toward his sources and to draw inferences about its connection to his own political commitments.

I come to my third text through Cary Moskowitz and David Kellogg’s recent article endorsing the use of what they call “primary scientific communication”—texts written by scientists to present original research to other scientists—in first-year writing courses (310). Moskowitz and Kellogg convincingly demonstrate the rhetorical sophistication of Losey, Rayor, and Carter’s brief report, but they offer no comment on its use of outside materials, even though the report has nine separate footnotes, three of which appear in its first sentence. BEAM, however, allows us to take these notes into account in a way that opens up unexpected interpretive possibilities. Notes 2 through 9 simply document claims the report’s authors accept as fact, which is to say that they provide background references. Note 1, however, has a more complex function. This note appears after the opening clause of the report’s opening sentence, which reads:

Although plants transformed with genetic material from the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (*Bt*) are generally thought to have negligible impact on non-target organisms¹, *Bt* corn plants might represent a risk because most hybrids express the *Bt* toxin in pollen², and corn pollen is dispersed over at least 60 metres by wind.³ (214)

Because it documents a proposition the report goes on to contest—that *Bt* plants “have negligible impact on non-target organisms”—note 1 cannot be a background reference. It must therefore be doing some other kind of rhetorical work. Two possibilities suggest themselves. We could take the note as offering an illustrative exhibit in support of the assertion that the disputed proposition is “generally thought” to be true. Alternatively, we could take the note as identifying a specific argument source the authors mean to challenge. Which of these possibilities we embrace depends on how seriously we take the authors’ representation of the disputed proposition as a commonplace. If we accept this representation at face value, we must opt for the first. If we discount this representation as a rhetorical gesture demanded by the genre of the scientific report, we can opt for the second, with interesting results. It turns out that the note refers not to another piece of primary scientific communication, as one might expect, but to a sixteen-page guide touting the benefits of *Bt* corn and advocating its use. The guide follows a question-and-answer format foreign to primary work in the sciences but appropriate for its intended audience of “growers, crop consultants, cooperative extension educators and industry personnel” (Ostlie, Hutchison, and Hellmich, inside cover). Its language is not the language of science but the language of agriculture and business. The guide’s title, *Bt Corn & European Corn Borer: Long-Term Success Through Resistance Management*, telegraphs its argument. The guide celebrates *Bt* corn as “one of the first tangible fruits of biotechnology that has practical implications for U.S. and Canadian corn farmers” and explains how this “innovative technology” can be deployed “for long-term profitability” (2). By interpreting this guide as an argument source, we situate Losey, Rayor, and Carter’s report within a debate that has technological, environmental, and commercial—as well as scientific—dimensions. Just as BEAM can be used to link Rodriguez’s and Foner’s “technical” handling of their sources to their substantive arguments and themes, so it can also help students recognize the full stakes of Losey, Rayor, and Carter’s report.

BEAM as a Framework for Writing

The features that make BEAM so useful as a framework for critical reading also make it useful as a framework for writing. Writing handbooks often urge

students to consult as many sources, and as many kinds of sources, as possible.¹¹ Such exhortations are not necessarily unsound, but we lead students astray if we lead them to believe that the mere number or variety of their sources is more important than how well they use them in their texts.¹² In my own writing assignments, therefore, I rarely require students to cite a minimum number of sources. Instead, I require them to deploy their materials in one or more of the four ways delineated by BEAM. (Which and how many depend on the aims of the assignment.) The conventional requirement treats the number of sources as a surrogate for more important but less tangible qualities, such as rigor of research or rhetorical competence. My requirement has the advantage of focusing students' attention directly on what they should be doing with the materials they introduce into their texts.

BEAM can be a great help to students as they work to develop viable research and writing projects. It is now a commonplace of writing pedagogy that students need to turn "topics" into "problems" or "questions," and many guides to research-based writing offer suggestions intended to facilitate this transformation. Much of this advice rests on the presumption that students must begin by identifying well-defined topics. As a writing teacher trained in the humanities, however, I find this presumption a bit problematic. I tend to value writing that creates novel conjunctions or raises surprising questions or resonates with implications for a range of fields, and I worry that if students settle on—or for—their topics prematurely, they will miss opportunities to do interesting and creative intellectual work. I therefore guide my students to proceed not by picking topics at the outset but by pursuing the often unexpected lines of inquiry that emerge from their encounters with concrete sources.

I apply this bottom-up approach differently at different levels of the curriculum. When teaching my institution's first-year composition course, a course with little explicit disciplinary inflection, I generally tell students to work outward from specific exhibits. I find that this advice, unlike the clichéd admonition to "narrow your topic," helps them to produce grounded papers without implying that big questions are off limits. Conversely, when teaching advanced disciplinary courses, I encourage students to develop writing projects by exploring networks or constellations of argument sources. When I work with graduate students, this encouragement comes close to insistence, because I want these students to understand that participating in a discipline as a professional means entering into that discipline's ongoing debates, not merely writing on certain sanctioned topics.

The best academic papers are generally those that analyze specific exhibits in order to further conversations embodied in specific constellations of argument sources. Students who develop projects around exhibits and students who develop projects around argument sources will therefore face reciprocal sorts of

challenges. Those who start from exhibits risk producing papers driven by what investigators associated with the Harvard Study of Undergraduate Writing call the “complexity thesis.” As one of these investigators, Faye Halpern, explains, this kind of thesis merely “announces that something . . . is not as simple as it may first appear” (136). In my terms the danger is that students will perform intricate and perhaps brilliant analyses of particular exhibits but fail to bring these analyses to bear on any larger questions or problems. Students can avoid this danger, as many commentators have pointed out, by positioning their analyses as contributions to specific, ongoing intellectual conversations. In my terms this means finding and engaging argument sources relevant to their exhibits. Conversely, students who start from argument sources risk producing papers that merely rehash what others have already said. It is of course possible to further a conversation by ordering and commenting on the arguments of others (in other words, by writing a review essay), but when used to excess, this strategy leads to writing that has a distinctly second-hand feel. A better strategy is to bring something “new” to the table by introducing into a debate an analysis of some yet-to-be-considered exhibit. This reciprocity gives rise to a powerful rule of thumb: *If you start with an exhibit, look for argument sources to engage; if you start with argument sources, look for exhibits to interpret.*

Students who begin with background or method sources face both sorts of challenges. In both cases the sheer openness of the rhetorical situations such students create for themselves can be debilitating. Students who develop writing projects from background sources run the risk of writing mere vanilla reports. If they cannot move beyond these sources, they can do little else. Students who begin from method sources begin with procedures or perspectives in search of applications. They begin with nothing in particular to write about and no one in particular to write for, to, or against. They therefore risk producing papers that display little sense of exigency or that seem contrived or forced. Students who find themselves in one of these situations may have to do significant preliminary or exploratory work just to get to the point where they can develop projects around exhibits or arguments.

Finally, BEAM can aid students in revision. Much of what I might say on this point is already implicit in the foregoing discussion, and so I will restrict myself to a few brief observations. BEAM can serve as a critical vocabulary in written comments, workshops, and student conferences, but it can also work as a checklist for assessing drafts. Since students’ papers will generally be stronger if they address specific exhibits and engage specific arguments, simply asking students to verify that they are not missing either of these elements can be all the stimulation they need to make thoughtful and substantial changes to their work.

BEAM's Contribution

In closing, I would like to reflect again on the body of scholarship with which I began. In his touchstone 1982 article "The 'Research Paper' in the Writing Course: A Non-Form of Writing," Larson argues persuasively that because research practices vary so dramatically across fields and because research can inform almost any sort of writing, "English" teachers should stop teaching the "research paper" as if it were a universal genre. While I agree with Larson on this point, the wider lesson I take from his article is that writing teachers have a special obligation to teach research-based writing. If, as Larson asserts, there is no form of discourse or writing "which cannot incorporate the fruits of research, broadly construed," then writing teachers had better be able to tell students something about how to use these "fruits" effectively (814). Larson himself acknowledges that students must learn to "identify, explore, evaluate, and draw upon appropriate sources as an integral step in . . . the composing process" (811). But because he fails to distinguish between the teaching of *research* and the teaching of *writing* that incorporates the products of research (however conducted), he also seems to believe that these lessons can be taught substantively only by specialists in various disciplines.

Developments within composition since the writing of Larson's article show that he was, if I have not misunderstood him, too pessimistic on this point. Over the past twenty-five years, composition has become increasingly attuned to what Larson calls the "distinctive" qualities of different disciplines, but the result has not been a retreat from the teaching of research-based writing (815–16). On the contrary, we have developed course structures and classroom practices that lead students to view both research and writing as motivated acts of inquiry and knowledge production, and we have developed innovative alternatives to the conventional research paper assignment. As an integrated set of terms for classifying writers' materials in terms of their rhetorical functions, BEAM complements these macrolevel advances. Because it can be used to illuminate the local rhetorical choices involved in any form of research-based writing, BEAM can help students negotiate the heterogeneous academy that Larson and his successors jointly celebrate.

Notes

¹I thank Joseph Janangelo, Benjamin Miller, Cary Moskovitz, Catherine Savini, and Nicole Wallack for their comments on drafts of this article and Richard Fulkerson and Anne-Marie Hall, the readers for this journal, for their helpful reports. I also thank the many instructors in Columbia's Undergraduate Writing Program who, since 2003, have used the terminology I present here in their own classes.

In this article I use the term *research-based writing* to refer broadly to writing that draws on outside materials of any sort, whether or not these materials are the direct products of the writer's own research. For example, I regard papers on assigned texts as a form of research-based writing, even though such papers may require no research from the student writers themselves.

²I follow Davis and Shadle in naming Booth, Colomb, and Williams; Macrorie; and Ballenger as representative figures. Davis and Shadle perceive an explicit historical and logical progression in this succession of forms, which they view as enacting "a movement away from the templated discourse of the research paper and into an increasingly complex world of rhetorical choices" (427).

³Russell states emphatically, "One genre has defined extended student writing in mass secondary and higher education: the documented essay (or research paper or term paper)" (78). For his account of the genre's development, see 78–92. See also Davis and Shadle 423–27.

⁴This asymmetry reflects the fact that primary sources vary far more widely across disciplines than do secondary sources. Secondary sources are usually prose arguments of some kind, but any artifact or representation can potentially be a primary source. I make a similar observation with respect to my terminology below.

⁵In making this statement, I am not ignoring the rich recursive relationship between writing and research, nor am I denying that research itself can be a kind of "intellectual work," a phrase I take from James F. Slevin. I am noting that the priorities informing the standard nomenclature are not those of most writing teachers.

⁶My goal in this article is thus similar to Joseph Harris's in his recent book *Rewriting: How to Do Things With Texts*. Like Harris, I want students to regard writing as a process of (to borrow Harris's borrowing of J. L. Austin) "doing things" with their materials. But despite this affinity, our specific focuses differ. Harris identifies and explains four interpretive "moves" academic writers often make with sources: *coming to terms*, *forwarding*, *countering*, and *taking an approach* (4). I offer a vocabulary for describing writers' materials in terms of their functions in texts.

⁷In literary criticism, passages offered for interpretation are exhibits, competing interpretations of other critics are argument sources, and texts that establish context or the critic's approach are background sources and method sources respectively. In scientific work that follows the IMRAD format, the introduction provides background and perhaps introduces competing arguments, the methods section describes the researchers' methods and procedures, the results section presents the researchers' data or exhibits, and the discussion section explains the significance of the exhibits and perhaps engages other arguments. John C. Bean reports in personal correspondence that he has used a version of BEAM in several writing-across-the-curriculum workshops at Seattle University and that it can be applied to almost any field.

⁸This view is generally associated with the "Pittsburgh" school of composition theory, in which reading is understood as a "hermeneutical conversation" between reader and text (Salvatori 182). But it is also held by rhetorically minded scholars such as Brent, who treats reading as a mode of "rhetorical invention," and Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor, who remark that "[s]tudents clearly need more exposure to argumentative texts, need to learn how to read and evaluate them, and need to learn how to write them" (99).

⁹Larson notes that "even an ordered, interpretive reporting of altogether personal experiences and responses can . . . be a reporting of research" (813). Rodriguez's essay is a case in point.

¹⁰For Bartholomae's own reflections on teaching Rodriguez's essay, see his article "Wanderings: Misreadings, Miswritings, Misunderstandings."

¹¹One such handbook asserts, "As a research writer, you should attempt to obtain as many primary sources as possible so that you can come to your own conclusions about your issue" (Palmquist 118). Another states, "You should always review more than one source . . . and usually more than one

kind of source” (Maimon, Peritz, and Yancey 215). In a short article for students, Fulkerson puts this standard advice more pithily: “How many sources do you need? All of them” (23).

¹²Brent, for example, tells the story of a student in an undergraduate history class who cited over twenty sources in a paper but received a comment from her professor suggesting that she needed a “more extensive bibliography.” The professor had misdiagnosed her inability to deploy her sources effectively as a lack of reading (110–12).

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