The intersection of literacy and technology represents a vast expanse of study where many scholars address, and critique areas of concern in digital rhetoric and how these issues may or may not impact writing. Much like rhetoric, digital rhetoric has no clear and generally agreed upon definition. With many different definitions there are various similar and conflicting approaches to digital rhetoric studies. Current scholarship provides a large amount of attention to defining digital rhetoric, understanding what it means, and developing theories based on these definitions and understandings. The abundance of theories has led to a limited and limiting number of scholarly work in application. There exist numerous appeals to scholars to critically address and think about the role of technology in the classroom, its social use and the implications of both in our daily lives and writing. Digital rhetoric can no longer to afford to primarily focus on theory, and/or build upon preexisting theories. As a subfield of Rhetoric & Composition it must (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

This paper aims to identify the various definitions of digital rhetoric and the pedagogical practices linked to them by categorizing them into three separate epistemologies. The categories will then be linked to current pedagogical practices commonly associated with them,

**Research Questions**

1. How do the various definitions of digital rhetoric affect composition pedagogy and approach to digital literacies in the field of rhetoric?
2. What theories in digital rhetoric need to be applied and incorporated in assignments?
3. What types of assignments, and platforms allow for an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and application?

Continuing work that focuses on theory and not application can lead to what Wysocki, and Johnson-Eilola, J. refer to as an attempt to use literacy to “give others some basic, neutral, context-less set of skills whose acquisition will bring the bearer economic and social goods and privileges” (p. 352). In their article “Blinded by the Letter: Why Are We Using Literacy as a Metaphor for Everything Else?” they criticize the approach to literacy as a skill that equals the playing field for all. Doing so does not address systemic issues, as it is an assumption that to be literate in any area is to have a set of skills that are both desirable and beneficial. Without applying digital rhetoric theories, or devoting more scholarship to the application of these theories there is a high likelihood that curriculum in composition will approach digital rhetoric as an area for students to become literate in working in digital spaces without exploring the relationship between the user and the technology.

**Purpose (insert panic gif here)**

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**Lit Review**

Outline

Definitions

1. Lanham
2. Losh
3. Handa
4. Zappen
5. Eyman

Theories/Calls/Movements

1. Selber
2. Bawden
3. Selber

Richard Lanham coined the term digital rhetoric in his *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts.* While he does not supply a specific definition he introduces the concept of a computer as a “rhetorical device as well as a logical one” in use. He notes that the computer is seen as logical, but not rhetorical. He views the electronic word as a means to electronic expression and as such it fits within the Western Arts & Letters. Lanham attempts not only to legitimize the electronic word, and electronic expressions, but also create the space for the work that follows under his term of digital rhetoric. He focuses more on the manipulation of text and the results of moving text to the screen from the page, which is understandable given that this piece first appeared in 1992, and again in 1993. It is important to include Lanham’s work because he coined digital rhetoric. Lanham’s contribution goes beyond coining the term digital rhetoric.

Equally as important was his view of the computer as a rhetorical device, which allowed for scholarship to be done in digital rhetoric. The scholarship done in the field of digital rhetoric varies, and as such several different approaches to the study of digital rhetoric exist resulting in several different working definitions and understandings of digital rhetoric.

Zappen (2005) in “Digital rhetoric: Toward an integrated theory” attempts to differentiate between traditional and digital rhetoric. He defines digital rhetoric as “traditional rhetorical strategies function in digital spaces and suggest how these strategies are reconfigured within these spaces” (p. 319). Zappen addresses the difficulty of applying traditional rhetoric to digital media. He situates his understanding of digital rhetoric within the digital space the writing and communication take place. This definition thus occupies itself more in the realm of the technology used to write and communicate than the strategies used. There is the suggestion that the strategies may be used differently in a digital space.

Ian Bogost, prefers to view digital rhetoric as procedural rhetoric. In his 2009 book Bogost defines procedural rhetoric as “the art of persuasion through rule-based representations and interactions, rather than the spoken word, writing, images, or moving pictures” (p. ). This definition is closely linked to the procedural computational practices of using a computer. Bogost views these practices as equally as persuasive as verbal and visual forms of communication. However, rather than the persuasion done in alphabetic text or multiple modes with a knowledge of language and images it is achieved as a result of the procedural nature of computer code. The code may appear to us in forms we know, but it is essentially the result of code. Therefore, to compose media within a computer is “the art of using processes persuasively” (p.).

In Elizabeth Losh’s 2009 book *Virtualpolitik : An electronic history of government*

*media-making in a time of war, scandal, disaster, miscommunication, and mistakes* she

provides a comprehensive four-part definition of digital rhetoric that encompasses several aspects of scholarship within digital rhetoric. The definition she provides touches on digital genres as a means of discourse, public rhetoric/political messages distributed through networks, the computer generated media becoming objects of study in their own right, and the use of mathematical theories of communication within information science to gauge linguistic exchanges. Losh states that the fourth definition ultimately influences practices occurring in the first because it (#4) influences the ideology behind practices that occur when people enter discourse in digital genres. I plan to use this definition to chart the difference in approach and understanding of what digital rhetoric is, what it can do, and ultimately how it is interdisciplinary.

Carolyn Handa’s book *The Multimediated Rhetoric of the Internet: Digital Fusion* defines digital rhetoric as:

“simply (or maybe not so simply) traditional rhetoric applied visually as well as textually. It is not another form of rhetoric. We do not switch from digital to traditional rhetoric. All of the components we are accustomed to discussing in traditional rhetoric, especially having to do with style and arrangement for the purposes of conducting logical, discursive, persuasive arguments, are elements that can occur visually” (p. 18).

This definition attempts to link traditional rhetorical practices to those in digital spaces. Doing so tends to give more attention to the elements of persuasion due to the fact that this definition keeps in line with Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric.

Doug Eyman in Chapter 1 of *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice* (2015) makes a connection between digital rhetoric and visual rhetoric, based on “the sense that a focus outside of the tradition of written and spoken argument broadens the available opportunities to apply rhetorical theory to new objects of study.” Eyman continues by linking visual and digital rhetoric by writing that “visual rhetoric also draws on theory from art and graphic design as well as psychology (gestalt theory), bringing rhetoric into these spheres even as they contribute to the overall rhetorical methods,” and that since digital rhetoric includes visuals “it can align itself with these fields, as well as other technical fields—such as computer science, game design, and Internet research—that don’t usually take up rhetorical theory.” This approach continues to incorporate and promote interdisciplinarity.  
 Eyman’s definition of digital rhetoric also accounts for the performance of composing and distributing, using a method of delivery that is not only based on speaking or writing, The implications of digital spaces suggests a reliance on the visuals used and perceived, that also find themselves closely related to methods of delivery. This attention to the visual and delivery is similar to Ian Bogost’s *Persuasive games: The expressive power of videogames* (2007). His work in procedural rhetoric pushes scholars to move beyond the view that the technologies we use are simply tools available to us. He puts procedural rhetoric under the umbrella of digital rhetoric because of the “practice of using processes persuasively,” due to the nature of the digital spaces we compose in, and inhabit, it is impossible to separate any understanding of digital rhetoric from the processes we engage in to accomplish communication.

Bogost differs from Eyman in that he focuses on the process users go through to communicate, and not the visual elements that assist delivery. Bogost attempts to expose the process that makes the technology assist us in composing, much like the scholarship in digital rhetoric that wishes to expose technology that is otherwise hidden. Bogost is not concerned with the visual in the same way Eyman is, because the process to him is more important than the visual. The procedures give the writer the power to write in the digital spaces, therefore his ethos comes from the practices, and not the delivery. Delivery under Bogost’s definition of digital rhetoric is attributed to the performance of working within, or through the procedure.

Porter (2008) argues against this procedural view of digital rhetoric. He argues:

“techne of digital rhetoric required here must be of two types: (1) Productive how-to knowledge — i.e., the art of knowing various technological options, and knowing how to use them to achieve various rhetorical effects. (2) Practical judgment, ethical phronesis,” **To keep or not to keep?? Find connection??**

Porter believes that this “productive knowledge about making and practical knowledge about doing (and the ethics of doing) should work in conjunction to guide writing/communication practice” (p. 25). Here there is a combination of the digital rhetoric research that focuses on the implications of the technology and its impact on humans’ writing. This differs from Bogost’s work because it leans more on the human as the actor, than the exchange between the human and the machine.

**LITERACY**

**Baron Pencils to Pixels? (1st or 3rd? Chronological or idea?)**

**Wysco & Friend**

**Selber Multilteracies!**

Baron (1982), in “Pencils to Pixels” establishes the link between technology and the classroom when he states that the computer “promises, or threatens to change literacy practices, for better or worse, depending on your point of view” (p.7). Developments in technology account for new literacies to be learned, but agreeing upon how to do that is tricky at best. Yancey (2004) in “Made not only in words: Composition in a new key” declared the field to be in a most important moment, and urges the field to move away from only composing and teaching composition that consists of alphabetic text. Yancey states “the screen is the language of the vernacular” (305), and despite this not being a new assessment in 2004, she proclaimed that “we are digital already.” Around the same time Stuart Selber also addresses where curriculum should go in *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*. Selber argues “if students are to become agents of positive change, they will need an education that is comprehensive and truly relevant to a digital age” (234). This comprehensive education differs from the traditional approaches associated with alphabetic text. It is no coincidence that following these strong statements in support of moving away from alphabetic text, and relying upon interfaces and digital spaces for communication that some in digital rhetoric focus more on the technology than the persuasive practices.

**Connection to DR and More recent theories/approaches**

Scholarship in digital rhetoric influenced and/or informed by Bogost tends to begin to break way from Aristotle’s rhetoric, and the result of that pushes digital rhetoric in other directions. As digital rhetoric focuses on the technology, and not the rhetorical strategies it ventures into other theories and fields. Cressman (2009) in “A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogenous Engineering & Translation” gives an overview of actor-network theory (ANT). In doing so he writes about the attempt to “open the black box of science and technology by tracing the complex relationships that exist between governments, technologies, knowledge, texts, money, and people” (p. 3). This pushes the field of digital rhetoric to view the technology, often the computer or the word processor when applied to composition classes, as an actor in the network. This again moves digital rhetoric closer to engaging with, and thinking through the role and purpose of the technology, before addressing how it impacts writing.

Lori Emerson (2014) in *Reading Writing Interfaces: From the Digital to the Bookbound* calls attention to the blackbox technology in iPads and iPhones, which influence how students read and write. The interfaces of these devices are viewed as “magical,” and presented as “something that allows us to perform magic tricks” (11). Understanding that an invisible technology exists behind an interface approaches delivery from a different perspective. Delivery shifts from a one-way transaction. The technology behind whatever device used to write, or communicate also has a method of delivery, and the ethos associated with it stems from its ability to work as expected.

Digital rhetoric scholarship approaches this other perspective in the form of researching the glitch. In “The Rhetorical Question Concerning Glitch” Casey Boyle describes glitch scholarship as “models for expanding our current, critical approaches to rhetoric, especially as those practices concern mediation” (p. 12). Glitches expose what design and interface work to keep hidden, and this makes their technological delivery transparent. Boyle pushes for the result of the glitch to become an assignment in composition classes, because it “seeks not to error-check but to produce error” (p. 22), which allows for students to engage with the technology that is now exposed, and disrupt conventional methods of delivery and ethos.

At times the field of digital rhetoric concerns itself with a large amount of theory. The potential problem stemming from this occurrence results in how to merge this theory with the practice of applying it in the form of composition classroom curriculum. With several different definitions of digital rhetoric informing the theories implementing them can cause complications. Does curriculum reflect scholarship in revealing the black box technology and the active role of the technology as discussed in work with ANT? Or, should it reflect the practical nature of helping students develop skills in communicating in digital spaces?

**Pedagogy**

Point to/Explore the Gap?

My understanding of digital rhetoric is based on several definitions that address different aspects of scholarship in the field digital rhetoric. In Carolyn Handa’s book *The Multimediated Rhetoric of the Internet: Digital Fusion* she defines digital rhetoric as “simply (or maybe not so simply) traditional rhetoric applied visually as well as textually. It is not another form of rhetoric. We do not switch from digital to traditional rhetoric. All of the components we are accustomed to discussing in traditional rhetoric, especially having to do with style and arrangement for the purposes of conducting logical, discursive, persuasive arguments, are elements that can occur visually” (p. 18). This definition attempts to link traditional rhetorical practices to those in digital spaces. It also accounts for the ways in which communicating and writing in these spaces impacts our writing. However, what this definition does not do is take into account the way these digital spaces change more than our writing. Everything is digital. As writers, we have been coding and engaging with digital spaces for longer than we typically think. These digital spaces that our literacies play out in one form or another have existed for decades. In this sense we are not only dealing with how our ability to actively use these digital spaces to compose and the effects they have on our writing. Our experiences with the technology that is in the digital space allows us the ability to change these spaces and the technologies change us.

Zappen (2005) distinguishes between traditional and digital rhetoric. He urges that the two be separated due to the constraints of permanently linking rhetoric with persuasion. He defines digital rhetoric as the ways in which “traditional rhetorical strategies function in digital spaces and suggest how these strategies are reconfigured within these spaces” (p. 319). Digital rhetoric thus represents not a move away from persuasion, but the ability to address communication as a collaborative effort between the composer/writer and the technology. The collaboration, I think, moves us beyond persuasion, and allows for digital rhetoric to account for the role and/or purpose of the technology used to communicate.

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