The evolution of technology influences rhetoric and rhetoric studies in a number of significant ways. Select one or two (if two, they should be interrelated) topics from the list below and discuss how we’ve seen their concept/role/practice shift and how writing and rhetoric instruction has changed (or not) along with it.

Practice Comp Exam

The evolution of technology plays a significant role in the approach to rhetoric and composition in a vast amount of ways. Baron (1982), in “Pencils to Pixels” establishes the link between the two 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). Advancements and changes in technology shift our views and approaches to both the teaching and understanding of rhetorical strategies. The evolution of technology changes the way we think, and use that technology. It also changes the way we approach, teach, and research literacies, and composition practices. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the ways in which advancements in technology influence scholars, and instructors of composition to shift how they conceptualize, understand, and teach arrangement, and delivery through the work of Barron, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Stuart Selber, and Sarah Arroyo.

The connection between rhetoric, composition, and writing studies and technology is on going. The evolution of technological tools influences the field of rhetoric and composition because comp/rhet reacts to advancements in technology, as they tend to affect literacies. Researchers and instructors in composition must concern themselves with the ways in which technology affects literacies, but also in how to use technology to further develop these literacies.

As technologies continue to evolve, and develop, so do literacies. Yancey (2004) in “Not Only in Words” declared the field to be in a most important moment. Throughout that address, the call to move away from alphabetic text only compositions is clear. Yancey (2004) through Daley presents the argument that “the screen is the language of the vernacular” (305). If it’s the language of the vernacular, then the approach to teaching, and using arrangement and delivery need to reflect that. The delivery of the content, or message the author attempts to convey, must express that delivery was part of their composing process. As Yancey points out, “we are digital already” and our students move from one medium to another. In doing so, they also change the way they arrange and deliver. Yancey (2004) continues by stating that the “potential of arrangement is a function of delivery, and what and how you arrange -- which becomes a function of the medium you choose -- is who you invent” (318). The role, and function of arrangement can’t be separated from delivery. Without thought, and practice going into the arrangement of a multimodal assignment, something not only in words as Yancey urged in 2004, then, the delivery of the message within the assignment will not be successful. Arrangement can’t exist outside of delivery, and delivery will not be successful without arrangement. In addition to rethinking of the canons, instructors must understand elements vital to other forms of composing. The two are closely related, and dependent upon each other for the student to successfully complete the learning objectives of digital multimodal assignments. These assignments rely heavily on arrangement, and delivery.

This call from Yancey, and similar observations about the role of technology, specifically the computer and the growing involvement of the Internet in our daily lives, leads to a shift to include the production of multimodal compositions in to composition curriculums. The developments in technology also lead to a similar call from Selber in 2004. In Multiliteracies for a Digital Age, Selber urges scholars to help develop students’ multiliteracies by changing their approach to using and integrating technology in the classroom. He believes to do this we must commit to moving beyond the functional level, and assist students in reaching a critical, and rhetorical level. The theoretical framework Selber provides helped to establish that students should be questioners of technology (critical literacy), and rhetorical in the way that they understand the implications of technology. Civic engagement has long been a learning objective, or byproduct of the curriculum found in composition classrooms. With the many shifts in technology, and their implications for society, 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 must be different than what is taught with the alphabetic text essay. The learning objectives, and elements taught must be different, or else the student only learns how to transfer an essay to a different genre, or format. Attention must be paid to arrangement, because it relates to design and anything visual demands elements of design be taught, in addition to bringing delivery to the forefront along with content.

The urging of Yancey, Selber, and other scholars resulted in the inclusion of multimodal assignments. These assignments are typically in digital form. Assignments that aim to move the field of composition away from only teaching, and writing in alphabetic text causes instructors to rethink the ways in which the canons are taught, and/or used in composing, in addition to teaching other elements, such as arrangement, that are closely linked to multimodal composing. The evolution of technology influenced the types of assignments taught in composition classes. With new assignments came updated learning objectives. The NCTE Statement--"Multimodal Literacies and Technology" addresses some of these concerns. It is of no surprise that elements of arrangement and delivery are apparent in the statement.

The NCTE statement supports the inclusion of arrangement and new attention paid to delivery as a result of the multimodal assignment. The multimodal assignment is a direct result of the shift in technology. It also reflects the move away from alphabetic text that Yancey called for in 2004. The NCTE states “All modes of communication are codependent. Each affects the nature of the content of the other and the overall rhetorical impact of the communication event itself” (). In an assignment that incorporates visual elements, as is the case with a multimodal assignment, each element used to compose, and thus convey the message of the composer equal attention must be given to every decision made by the composer. The mixing of modes in a multimodal assignment requires students to negotiate the manner in which the modes are put together. The arrangement of the modes impacts delivery. Delivery is not only the means, a blog, website or youtube for a video essay, used to deliver a message, but the arrangement of the modes that reflect how the message is constructed. Delivery can’t be separated from arrangement. The NCTE statement recognizes that “Certain conventions of design are more effective than others for visual, aural, or multimodal texts,” and as a result “teachers will need to become more informed about these conventions because they will influence the rhetorical and aesthetic impact of all multimodal texts.” Design relies, in part, on arrangement. This does not call for composition instructors to teach all elements of design, but it does require the field to understand the role, and impact of arrangement in design.

Arrangement can be the conventions of design that instructors must be aware of, and incorporate into their teaching. The multimodal assignment brings in elements of remixing, which demonstrates the ways in which arrangement and delivery can’t be separated. According to Palmeri (2012), “the critic would strive to sort art works into genres and periods, the remixer would seek to creatively recombine disparate materials--to make a new composition by juxtaposing samples from radically disparate artistic traditions and periods” (p. 13). Through remixing, the genres are not separated by movements, but are arranged together to deliver the message of the composer. Arrangement and delivery can’t be separated. Delivery is ineffective and unsuccessful if arrangement is not given equal attention as content. The shifts in technology bring renewed attention to the rhetorical canon of delivery. If the reader and writer have moved from the page to the screen, then the multimodal assignment that seeks to move the field beyond alphabetic text only needs to reflect the importance of delivery in the visual world society finds itself immersed.

 Yancey (2004) addresses the shift in public writing “the members of the writing public have learned-in this case, to write, to think together, to organize, and to act within these forums...” (301), and this observation of Yancey supports the importance of delivery. For the public to recognize and interact within these forums, then the writing must be delivered to them in a form, and forum they understand. Technological advances, and their inclusion into the daily lives of students, account for their place in composition classes. For students to make use of the networks that the Internet, and social media have created for them, they need to know how to write specifically to them. This isn’t only about content anymore, although content is, and always will be an important, if not the most important, element of composition. However, due to the visual nature of multimodality, and remixing, arrangement and delivery move up the hierarchy in importance. The reason for this is not just the technological advancements, but the social nature of the networks created. Arroyo (2012) discusses participatory composition, and the connectedness of students that alters composition classes. If, as she writes, “the commands of our online world relentlessly promote participation, encourage collaboration,” then students must also know how to deliver their work in the best, or most effective way possible to promote that continued collaboration and participation. Hocks had similar thoughts on participation as a result of the networks created by the Internet. According to Hocks (2003), writers “engage in what Porter calls "internetworked writing"-writing that involves the intertwining of production, interaction, and publication in the online classroom or professional workplace as well as advocating for one’s online audiences (12)” (631). The network technology creates forces rhetoric and composition to rethink delivery.

Delivery, in this sense, seems simple as addressing or appealing to the intended audience, but with the screen replacing the page, delivery becomes more complicated. The screen, as a visual and now interactive technology, requires students in composition classes to be aware of which method of delivering a multimodal assignment is most effective, but also how their modes should be arranged so that they are understandable, and appealing to their audience. These elements would not be addressed in composition classrooms if the field remained entrenched in alphabetic text, and without continuous shifts and advancements in technology there would be little need to move away from alphabetic text and towards multimodal compositions, or similar assignments that promote the development of multiple literacies of our students.