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Report on *College English*

*College English* was first published in October 1939, after completing its “transformation” from being the College Edition of the *English Journal* (“Front Matter”). It is one of the oldest trade journals for English teaching. *College English* is published by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and is currently edited by John Schlib from the University of Indiana at Bloomington. Schlib has been the editor since September 2006. The advisory board is made up of scholars and teachers from colleges and universities from the United States. *College English* is published bi-monthly: September, November, January, March, May, and July. Subscriptions are $12.50 for student-members of NCTE and $75 for nonmembers.

In its inception, *College English* represented the wide range of topics and concerns of a professor of composition or literature. The first table of contents includes articles about the proper uses of commas, Thomas Wolfe, “The Success of Freshman English”, and, my favorite, “Use of Phonograph in Teaching Shakespeare” (“Front Matter”). Since then, the journal has continued to represent theoretical and pedagogical concerns of the college scholar-teacher (“CE Homepage”). The current editorial policy lists “literature, rhetoric-composition, critical theory, creative writing theory and pedagogy, linguistics, literacy, reading theory, pedagogy, and professional issues related to the teaching of English” as its topics of interest for publication (“CE Submission Guidelines”). Issues incorporate book reviews, opinion pieces, and a “Comment and Response” section that publishes reader letters; each issue does not necessarily include all three.

*College English* has a long standing tradition of publishing topics of general interest, dating to Richard Ohmann’s 1966 editorial decision to “no longer publish critical articles or explications, except for those mainly calculated to have an impact on critical theory, curricular thinking, pedagogy, and so on” (qtd in Raymond 554). Ohmann cites his predecessor, James Miller, as part of his inspiration to put “emphasis...upon the professional interests of people who teach English” (Ohmann 44). According to James Raymond, editor in 1987, Ohmann’s decision prevented *College English* from becoming a journal of highly specialized articles but also caused it to be “perceived as a journal devoted to composition and pedagogy” rather than literature (554). While Raymond cited this perception to encourage more literature submissions from his 1987 readers, John Schlib, current editor, sees this continued focus on pedagogy as a strength. In his letter “From the New Editor,” Schlib wants to continue “to publish articles and reviews on a broad range of subjects” while maintaining “interest in certain subjects”: pedagogy of composition and literature, and professional concerns of English departments (9). Schlib’s vision for *College English* also involves being “a guide to emerging trends”—including new understandings of what a ‘text’ is in the 21st Century (9-10). Schlib echoes Raymond’s call for variety in submissions.
While the editorial mission tends toward general interest and applicable subjects, *College English* does sometimes feature collections of contributions about single topics. According to the issues listing on the JSTOR archive, the first special topic issue appeared in 1958 with the "Poetry and Professors" issue. Other special topics focus on specifics to the larger concerns of college English teaching. For its first special issue since 1990, *College English* featured a special issue called “Lesbian/Gay Studies/Queer Pedagogies” in September 2002. 2010 included two special issues on rhetoric: Chinese Rhetoric in March 2010 and Jewish Rhetoric in July 2010. Special topics are intermittent and at the discretion of the editor.

In his first editorial letter, Schlib advises future contributors to be familiar with the journal and its typical concerns, while keeping in mind that submissions cannot just be a close reading of a single work but must somehow “make clear the stakes for our discipline at large” (10). Submissions should “add new knowledge to what is already known, challenge received opinion, or simply inform a larger readership of the implications of scholarship and research that would otherwise be known only to specialists” (“CE Submission Guidelines”). He also welcomes submissions that might be atypical, as long as they relate to the overall mission of the journal. In a more recent editorial piece, Schlib shares the questions that he and his staff consider when choosing whether or not a piece merits being sent on to the blind reviewers; the reviewers then consider the same questions.

1. Why do you believe that this subject will or will not interest many readers of *College English*? Why do you believe or doubt that nonspecialists would find this article accessible?

2. To what extent has previous scholarship on the subject been acknowledged? What additions or deletions, if any, would you recommend?

3. What significant ideas does this article add to what we generally know about this subject? Why do you think future writers on this subject are or are not likely to cite this article?

4. How effective are the style and organization of this article?

5. Which of these actions do you recommend: accept, reject, or revise and resubmit?

These questions, as Schlib acknowledges, rarely solicit the same answer from all reviewers, but they guide the discussions and decisions of whether or not to include submissions (225). Contributors to *College English* tend to be assistant/professors of English, writing program administrators, department chairs, and a few graduate students.
In addition to the content considerations, the editorial policy webpage includes technical requirements for submissions. Manuscripts should not have been previously published or under consideration for publication. The length should be about 10,000 words (approximately thirty double-spaced pages). Writing should be free from references to the author’s identity and should follow MLA style guidelines. The editorial staff prefers submission via email. Manuscripts selected by the editor as having the potential for publication are submitted to blind review by external readers, with the final decision for publication falling to the editor. Publication decisions are generally made within sixteen weeks of submission. Submissions to the “Comment and Response” and Opinions sections are always welcome and the policy only states that they should be “brief” in length. “Comment and Response” speak directly to features published in CE and Opinion pieces should be about the profession in general or about the politics of literature, literacy, scholarship, or teaching. Book reviews are commissioned by the editor.

Works Cited:


