

[This is a pre-print transcript of the video, "From Chalkboards to Film: A Lit Review," from the Palmeri & McCorkle webtext "A Distant View of English Journal, 1912-2012," published in Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy, 22(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/22.2/Topoi/palmeri-mccorkle>]

## **Transcript From Chalkboards to Film: A Lit Review**

[Intro music. Handwriting on screen reads, "Dear audience-- The name of this story is..."]

[Title slide: From Chalkboard to Films: A Lit Review]

**Narrator** (Jason Palmeri): The teaching of writing has long been a technological act. Today's digital writing instructor can learn much by revisiting the long history of technological instruction in both K-12 and university classrooms. For example, Steve Krause (2000) related the fascinating story of how the chalkboard moved from a supposedly transformative innovation in 19th century pedagogies to a "natural," taken-for-granted piece of equipment in nearly all classrooms. Krause showed that the naturalization of the chalkboard occurred largely because it supported pedagogical approaches that were already dominant at the time, most notably the lecture. In a similar vein, Dennis Baron (2009) recovered the complex ways that the pencil and the eraser moved from contested new technologies to naturalized classroom writing devices. Reflecting on teachers who worried that the ability to erase would destroy literacy as we know it, Baron drew connections between past arguments about the pencil and contemporary debates about the use of computers in the writing classroom.

[Transition music]

Moving from pencils to typewriters, James Kalmbach (1996) explored how K-12 teachers in the 1930s moved beyond formulaic typewriting instruction to engage students in using typewriters for collaborative learning activities and for composing texts for audiences beyond the classroom. Kalmbach both celebrated this movement and also demonstrated the ideological forces that caused it to quickly fade away.

**Woman in Instructional Film:** In order to become an expert typist, it is essential to master the correct typing technique. How you type is more important than what you type.

**Narrator:** In the end, Kalmbach sounded a cautionary warning that "our current uses of computer-supported classrooms are both predated by the typewriter-supported classrooms in the 1930s and framed by similar pedagogical arguments about the role of technology in education" (p. 66). We think Kalmbach is right on about how much we have to learn from past failed K-12 media experiments. And, as we peruse all this footage of women typing, we're reminded too of Liz Rohan's (2003) and Janine Solberg's (2007) work that has revealed how gendered constructions of typewriting continue to influence how contemporary students and teachers engage with computer technologies.

[Transition music]

Turning to the history of instructional film, Kelly Ritter's (2015) recent book, *Reframing the Subject*, recounted the problematic ways in which 1940s and 1950s K-12 English educators employed film viewing to promote "current-traditional" models of correctness in both writing and social behavior. For example, Ritter analyzed the classist and sexist literacy assumptions of such instructional films as this one about social letter writing.

**Girl in Instructional Film:** I see that there are different letters for different purposes, and I think I know the purpose of mine. It's a thank-you letter for a visit.

**Boy in Instructional Film:** Mmm-hmm.

**Girl:** But, uh, well, that's what I tried to write, but it's not very good.

[Girl hands letter to Boy; Boy rustles paper.]

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**Boy:** On notebook paper. And torn out. Written in pencil! Hey, you'll want it neater than that.

[Boy hands letter back to Girl, exasperated.]

**Boy:** And you better check that spelling, too.

**Girl in Instructional Film:** Read it, please!

**Narrator:** The history of mansplaining is very old indeed. Importantly, Ritter argued that the classist and sexist legacies of instructional film live on in some contemporary approaches to MOOCs that employ video lectures in similarly problematic ways. Although Ritter focused exclusively on teacher-centered approaches to instructional film in the 1940s and 1950s, our webtext seeks to offer a broader view of how English teachers have employed both film analysis and film production for a range of progressive and conservative ends.

[Outro music. Handwriting on screen reads, "This is the end!" ]