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## RESEARCH WRITING

### PURPOSES, PRACTICES AND PEDAGOGIES IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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#### CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS AND DOCTORAL WRITING

The well-established claim that things have changed in higher education and research education (Boud & Lee 2009; Lee & Danby 2012) should – but rarely does – lead to an examination of implications for doctoral writing and how it is supported and developed.

In an increasingly competitive world market for researchers and research funding, doctoral writing outputs act as proxy measures of individual and institutional quality, build reputation, and help secure funding and job prospects (Aitchison & Guerin 2014; Thomson & Kamler 2013; Lillis & Curry 2010). Within institutions, pedagogies and practices of doctoral scholarship are altering; broadening out and destabilising traditional roles and responsibilities. Meanwhile the ubiquity of the Internet infuses every aspect of scholarly life, profoundly influencing the way writing is valued, promoted and practised.

In this chapter I explore the impacts of these changes by reviewing the role of writing in doctoral education – what it is, and what it does – for the institution, the supervisory relationship and the scholar. I then consider how contemporary pressures combined with new technologies for the dissemination, consumption and production of research writing and publishing are fundamentally altering possibilities for conceptualising, supervising, and doing doctoral writing.

Several other chapters in this volume discuss how the contemporary context of higher education, and doctoral education in particular, is shaped by competing forces for sameness and for difference. We can see these homogenising influences arising from national, transnational and international harmonisations, perhaps

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best signalled initially by the Bologna Process, continue to unfold across regions. The push for greater accountability, transferability and transparency, stimulated by governmental concerns for efficiencies and accountabilities activated through global policy borrowing, has brought about greater consistency between systems, programmes and curricula. There are common trends globally towards greater gender equity in doctoral enrolments, for more structured degree programmes with coursework and the development of competencies for industry employment (Evans 2014:208).

Paradoxically, however, as the doctorate is being internationalised and homogenised, at the same time there are counter-trends for diversification and difference. These are evidenced in the expanded diversity of forms of the doctorate – specifically the rise of professional doctorates, the PhD by publication and practice-based doctorates – all of which reflect an expanded conception of the purposes of doctoral study moving its function well beyond pure preparation for the academy. This repurposing of the doctorate has fuelled new models for the provision of doctoral education including cross-institutional, industry partnerships and trans-global arrangements with ever more diversified modes of delivery often mediated through the market. Globalisation has also brought more diverse student and supervisor populations often operating from quite different cultural, educational and linguistic perspectives (Manathunga 2014).

These homogenising and diversifying pressures rub up against each other in an environment that is intensely competitive and marketised. In this space we are seeing particular pressures coming to bear on doctoral candidates, their supervisors and institutions.

### **DOCTORAL WRITING AS OUTPUT**

I argue that these trends have an impact not only on doctoral education, but also on doctoral writing.

Students are expected to write more, and more often, and to give more public accounts of their research activity throughout and beyond their candidature. For example, students are more likely to be expected to disseminate their research in traditional scholarly publications or through newer alternative channels from the early stages of their research (Aitchison, Kamler & Lee 2010). The highly competitive nature of research funding means students are more likely to need to seek funding to support their own candidature and even for the research project itself. Auditing regimes mean funding bodies and sponsoring institutions require greater amounts of regular, written documentation of progress. Many projects now necessitate more

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extended ethics applications than were previously required. Increasingly, research bodies, mindful of funding and promotional obligations, expect researchers to maintain personal and/or team websites for the continual reporting of the research, while at the same time individual career-minded doctoral scholars are increasingly building and maintaining their own personal profiles online. All of these activities are textual.

Secondly, doctoral research outputs measured as completions and via publications are more audited and monitored than ever before. Institutions in Australia, like elsewhere, now have elaborate collection and recording methods to capture research publications. These collections are not benign – they are value-laden metrics that favour ‘hard science’ and traditional scholarly outlets. Despite the staggering growth in scholarly publication outlets (Lillis & Curry, 2010), as more and more people seek to get publications in high-ranking journals the competition gets tougher. The explosion in the number of scholarly publications is staggering. One example is the journal *Teaching in Higher Education*, which, by my count, when it started in 1996 had three issues (thereafter four) with 399 pages and, on average, each issue had 7–8 papers. In 2006 there were four issues with 525 pages and 7–8 papers per issue. There are now eight issues per year and in 2014 there were 979 pages overall with 8–12 papers per issue. Having more outlets doesn’t improve the chances of getting published, despite an increased rate of submissions overall and from more countries. For example, HERD Journal took submissions from nine countries in 2012 and from 20 countries in 2014, and their accept:reject ratio is 1:4 (18% accept, 82% reject) (HERDSA 2015).

The increased pressure on doctoral research writing can also be seen in the real-time intensification of knowledge and how it is disseminated and communicated. Maheu, Scholz, Balan, Graybill and Strugnell (2014:195) talk about the heightened requirements for technology-mediated doctoral education communication skills in “spatially extended and intensively communicative webs and sites of knowledge production”. Like many academics, I regularly receive swathes of publication-related communications including legitimate journal alerts and reviewing requests, but I also receive numerous unsolicited invitations to read and write and review for journals and scholarly outlets of all kinds. It would appear the explosion in academic publishing outlets isn’t all good either, with accounts of some less desirable activities (Brown 2015). Adding to this heightened publication information frenzy, academic journals now also supplement traditional dissemination with social media, such as tweeting about publications.

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This very real, unrelenting and everyday focus on producing research output characterises the working lives of many doctoral scholars and supervisors. This is a focus on writing as product or output – or in market terms as commodity, a commodity that has high symbolic and cultural capital value. Published research is also deeply utilitarian with a high exchange value in the market; it functions as currency for job seekers and funding bodies as well as building status and reputation for authors and institutions.

### **DOCTORAL WRITING AS PROCESS**

A focus on doctoral *writing as process*, rather than product or commodity, throws up different things – enabling a recognition and valuing of the labouring of writing and its functions. For example, a conceptualisation of writing as process recognises doctoral writing as knowledge-creating, not just recording: as ‘a means of funding, constructing, evaluating, displaying and negotiating knowledge’ (Hyland 2004:5). Many have written about this epistemic function of writing where meaning is constructed through the processes of writing for self and others. (See, for example, Barnacle & Dall’Alba 2013; Thesen & Cooper 2014). Attention to the processes of writing privileges pedagogic practices and normalises teaching and learning exchanges around and through text. Writing viewed in this way realises the transformative, experiential and subjective characteristics of the activity and acknowledges that doctoral writing is challenging, emotional, embodied, performative and gendered. (See, for example, Aitchison & Mowbray 2013; Bendix Petersen 2012; Burford 2015; Cotterall 2013).

A focus on process legitimises attention to the labouring of writing and the oft-hidden practices of producing, sharing, giving and receiving critique, of revising and crafting writing through iterations. Thus the interrelational characteristics of text work can be foregrounded. When scholars engage as producers and consumers of writing over time they enter networks of scholarly discourse communities of interrelated readers, reviewers and writers. They build relationships, and, importantly, learn how to manage complex levels of intertextuality in their own writing, constructing and testing out individual writerly identities over time.

This view brings supervisors into the dynamic, positioning them as legitimate co-workers engaged in formative practices. Doctoral writing is thus an artifact of and for supervision (that is, it has a teaching and learning function that is deeply relational), and it is a vehicle for identity formation and display (that is, personal purposes of becoming a certain kind of scholar and pragmatic value for profile and career

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building). Attention to the processes recognises time as a factor in the development and tracking of ideas, attitudes and skills.

In this way, product-focused and process-focused views of writing connect what Kamler and Thomson (2014) call 'textwork' and 'identity work' to the real 'hard work' of writing.

### EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE

It is possible to argue that with these expanded dimensions, expectations, purposes and functions, doctoral writing has never before been so scrutinised, so monitored and measured. But more paradoxes arise too if we dig into this contention.

On one hand, doctoral writing is the object of new pressures, new attention and expectations. Barbara Evans says the number of stakeholders in doctoral education has increased dramatically (2014:209). On the other hand, scholars argue that doctoral writing remains largely invisible, marginalised, taken for granted (Aitchison, Kamler & Lee 2010; Starke-Meyerring, Paré, Sun & El-Bezre 2014). Although integral to the business of being an academic, writing is "a present absence in the landscape of doctoral education" (Kamler & Thomson 2014:vii), both "everywhere and nowhere" (Aitchison & Lee 2006:96).

The stakes may be higher than ever before and the scrutiny more public, but is doctoral writing receiving the attention it deserves? And what kind of attention; from whom? This is what I wish to explore now: Who is interested in doctoral writing and why? Who are the stakeholders?

### STAKEHOLDERS IN DOCTORAL WRITING

#### Government as doctoral writing stakeholder

Globally, as we have seen, there is intense competition among national governments – on behalf of those newcomers who wish to enter the doctoral space and by those already well established to protect their privileged places (Nerad & Evans 2014). Evans (2014:21) says that "countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, are aggressively trying to catch up, with extraordinarily ambitious and largely unrealistic growth goals for their universities".

With the growing importance of research outputs for competitive positioning globally, governments in some countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, China and the Middle East are taking direct measures to boost doctoral candidates' publication outputs.

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For Chinese doctoral students to graduate, the government in mainland China requires a minimum of one Science Citation Index (SCI) publication, but it is not uncommon for institutions to add additional requirements. Lei and Hu (2015) reported such additional requirements of up to three papers – to which some supervisors added even more demands.

In 2013 I wrote a blog about the different financial incentives paid to international students for publishing during their candidature, in which I reported:

... one of the students said she had received approximately \$AUD2 500 from the Indonesian government for each article she published in an international journal, and \$AUD2 000 for publishing locally. Another student, from the Middle East, said he too received similar reimbursement from his government for publishing. The Australians, on the other hand, were aghast – none of them stood to personally receive any financial benefit from publishing in scholarly journals (Aitchison 2013).

These kinds of government and institutional imperatives spawn a variety of practices – and consequences. Imagine the impact on the scholar and the supervisor of being told one day that doctoral candidates will not graduate until they have published one or more articles in high-ranking scholarly journals. Imagine what happens to a supervisor's availability when they are told they must publish five scholarly journals annually. I know of cases where this has occurred. And how much greater is the pressure when those targeted by such policies do not have English as a first language, and have little prior experience of scholarly publishing, and may not possess the kind of cultural and linguistic capital that smooths an already difficult process? Casanave (2010), writing about a Japanese institution, describes the extraordinary personal imposts for doctoral students and academics trying to fit publishing into their already hugely busy lives. We know that many academics in developing countries also already take up extra employment to supplement inadequate academic salaries.

These kinds of structural imperatives constrain the conceptualisation of writing as countable output, intensifying pressures, skewing student-supervisor relationships and seriously limiting the kind of learning that can occur through the processes of doctoral writing. The epistemic value of writing is squeezed out by such policy imperatives that stand at odds with the benefits of slow writing, of slow candidature, of coming to know and coming to be through multiple iterations of writing, feedback and rewriting through a developmental, supportive and deeply relational pedagogy.

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### The institution as doctoral writing stakeholder

Clearly, government policy has an impact on institutional practices vis-à-vis doctoral writing. But are institutions simply the handmaidens of government policy? What are the prevailing institutional discourses that shape behaviours, attitudes and practices in regard to doctoral writing? I wish now to speak to these matters by considering some institutional stakeholder behaviours.

In a recent study of Canadian graduate schools, Starke-Meyerring and colleagues examined institutional websites and public documents and found that graduate schools always referred to writing as a product rather than as a process and that support for thesis writing tended to be framed as “advice ... dispersed generously, but ... it was largely inconsistent and conflicting ... and none of it was based on research” (Starke-Meyerring *et al* 2014:17).

In recent years I have had cause to look at institutional policy documents in regard to doctoral writing and supervision. It would seem the findings of the Canadian study are not dissimilar from the situation in many Australian universities. In five workplaces I found surprisingly little about doctoral writing at the institutional policy level, and, where it did exist, it was largely concerned with thesis preparation and risk management. Typically there are policies and guidelines about the examinable doctoral text; rules about submission processes and thesis presentation; form, format, size and so on. Many institutions have policies and/or guidelines on co-authorship with varying degrees of specificity, and all that I viewed had something about intellectual property rights. And I am aware that since a dramatic media scoop on large-scale university student plagiarism in late 2014 (McNeillage & Visentin) many institutions are re-examining their policies and guidelines on research integrity.

My recent investigations show there is often surprisingly little explicit detail about supervisor responsibilities vis-à-vis doctoral writing. Apart from advising supervisors of their responsibility to provide ‘regular feedback’ (undefined) to students and to ensure the thesis is ready for examination, websites and policy documents typically provide very little practical guidance. With colleagues in Australia, I am working on a national research project to map university provision of supervisor training on student writing. We expect to show there is little going on (Walker *et al* 2015).

### Supervisors as doctoral writing stakeholders

But we do know that doctoral writing matters to supervisors in that it features large in the daily work of doctoral supervision. Doctoral student completions, and increasingly student publications, have an impact on the reputations of supervisors

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and their departments, with direct implications for promotional opportunities and capacity to attract research funding. It also matters because supervision of writing takes so much time and energy (Aitchison, Catterall, Ross and Burgin 2012). More cynically perhaps, Kamler and Thomson say supervisors are required to keep audit trails “primarily to avoid student complaints and litigation” (2014:9); there is no doubt that supervision is an intense and demanding task which is increasingly a less private affair and more open to scrutiny.

And yet we know that there is considerable unhappiness in the supervisory space. A number of studies have pointed to the lack of confidence, skill and expertise supervisors feel in regard to developing and supporting the writing of their students. A major study of Canada’s top universities revealed a near unanimous concern about doctoral student writing, but also an absence of institutional discussion of this concern and “almost no institutional writing support either for students or supervisors” (Starke-Meyerring *et al* 2009, cited in Paré 2011:61). In 2007, Lovitts reported that “the quality of doctoral students’ writing – came up so frequently that it deserves special attention. Faculty ... had something to say about it – and it was not complimentary” (2007:48, cited in Maher, Feldon, Timmerman & Chao 2014).

Other studies have reported that supervisors struggled to help their students in part because they (the supervisors) lacked the necessary skills and meta-language to talk about writing (Paré 2011). A number of studies have pointed to inadequacies and problems around doctoral-level feedback (Guerin & Green 2015; Kumar & Stracke 2007). Other studies point to the extraordinary emotionality and frustrations felt by both students and supervisors (Ross, Burgin, Aitchison & Catterall 2011) and how supervisors often work intuitively, mostly alone, without support and without reference to the scholarship on writing and rhetoric. There appears to be a widespread absence of pedagogical training and support for supervisors in doctoral level writing.

The present absence again.

### **Writing and learning centres as doctoral writing stakeholders**

On the other hand, there has been, even if belatedly, some extension in the spatial and material provisioning of writing, and academic literacies more broadly, in higher education. Most first world Anglophone universities, especially those with international students, now have places dedicated to supporting writing. But as Starke-Meyerring *et al* (2014) found, many of these centrally funded units are located away from the disciplines alongside health facilities, the chaplaincy and so on, and further, as Kamler and Thomson claim, their assistance “is not readily available to most doctoral researchers ... is often framed as remedial ... and removed from other

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forms of research education” (2014:10). The expertise of academic literacy lecturers and writing teachers is still too often, unfortunately, called upon in times of crisis to ‘fix’ writing problems (Aitchison & Paré 2012).

Notwithstanding these limitations, there appears to be a demand for writing-related support amongst researchers and supervisors. Increasingly, institutions are investing in such departments and personnel, as well as offering the suite of generic and specialised writing support to students in the form of workshops, courses, masterclasses and the like (Kamler & Thomson 2014).

Interestingly, too, these centres and their practitioners are proving incredibly productive; informing the sector through research and practice, publications and associations – despite often being underfunded and poorly regarded within the institutions they service. Last year, for example, the Association of Academic Language and Learning in Australia held the first national symposium on doctoral writing. And there is a growing online presence of these experts via associations for collegial exchange, such as the Consortium on Graduate Communication (<https://gradconsortium.wordpress.com/resources/workshops-institutes/>), off-spring initiatives from Conferences such as the blog: Doctoral Writing SIG (<https://doctoralwriting.wordpress.com/>) and from Writing Centres such as Rachael Cayley’s hugely popular blog Explorations of Style (<http://explorationsofstyle.com/>).

So, although still uneven and often vulnerable to funding and structural machinations, institutions do seem to be making provision for centrally funded doctoral writing support (Carter & Laurs 2014).

#### **The student as doctoral writing stakeholder**

In some ways it goes without saying that students are stakeholders in regard to doctoral writing, and yet in this too, there are major paradoxes and conflicting discourses. On the one hand there is an unspoken expectation that scholars come to doctoral study already knowing how to write. In fact, in a marketised sector, if institutions were to admit that their students – or supervisors – experience difficulties with writing, this could be a serious competitive disadvantage, potentially damaging to reputation. This false notion of the already skilled writer inhibits students and supervisors from seeking ‘help’ lest they be considered needy, or lacking. And perhaps worse still, this perspective creates a pall of secrecy and shame as if all should already be expert. In reality of course, even capable, well-published, native speakers of English report anxiety and lack of confidence in their capacity as research writers.

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Writing for doctoral students is a high-stakes endeavour whether the major written output is a ‘big book’ thesis or publications across candidature. In a market that is arguably over-supplied with research graduates (Group of Eight 2013) a PhD plus a strong publication track record is high-value currency. Students recognise this; they don’t need governmental or institutional policies to know that they need to write and publish in order to be competitive on the job market.

We know that many students have frustrations with the kind of writing support they receive. One recent study indicated that Chinese doctoral students sought detailed and explicit direction, management, and textual oversight of their writing from their supervisors – but relatively few reported receiving it (Lei & Hu 2015). We know there is sometimes a disconnect between what students want and what supervisors consider they have responsibility (skills or disposition) to provide. The literature has reported areas of frustration around feedback, supervisor pedagogical practices, concerns about ownership and authorship, differing expectations in regard to institutional, supervisory and student rights and responsibilities and so on (Maher *et al* 2014).

There is no question that the written word displays the ‘doctoralness’ of the student researcher. In some ways these outputs can even eclipse the actual research itself – long after the field or lab work is done, the textual accounts remain as the vehicles of knowledge production and exchange. And where there is no oral viva, textual accounts of the research project hold even greater sway in determinations of suitability for conferment of candidature. In this global knowledge economy then, students are the key, perhaps the primary, stakeholders in the doctoral writing project, and as such success or failure in doctoral writing has lasting consequences.

### **The market as doctoral writing stakeholder**

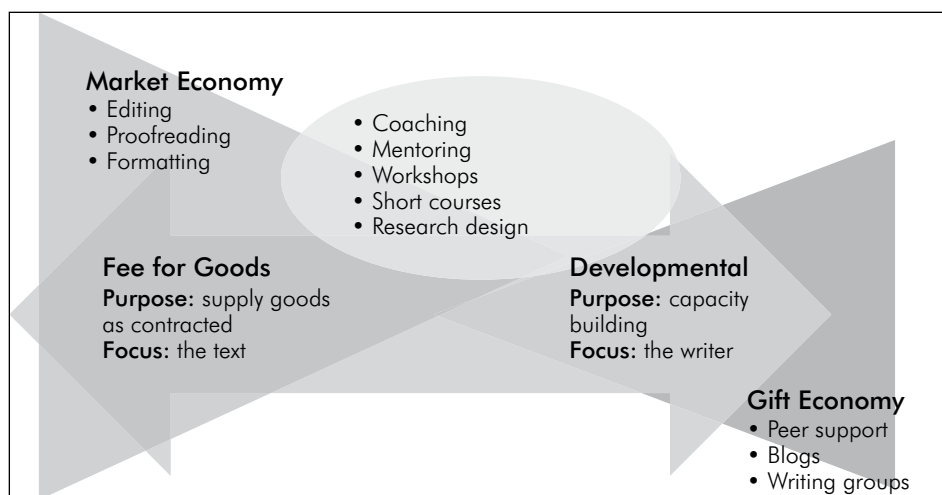
We have seen that doctoral writing is a high-stakes issue that matters to many stakeholders: governments, institutions, supervisors and students. And into this space we have a confluence to two critical and seductive players: the market and the online platform in which our writing and our consumer lives operate.

In the last five to ten years in particular, there has been an explosion of writing-related resources targeting doctoral student writers, and, more recently, supervisors. The market for books alone is indicative of a huge and largely unmet demand as is the rapidly growing online provisions. Some of these services are collegial, free and open (such as many of the websites and blogs by students and for students) but the vast majority of providers are in the market selling services for financial gain. This isn’t surprising as neoliberal markets frame and define so much of our lives – and education is not immune. In fact, along with other services previously seen as

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the business of governments, education – and higher education and research – is increasingly marketised. The provision of goods and services in the sector involves numerous overlapping ‘quasi’ and ‘free’ markets, operating in competition, often evolving, transnational and unregulated. Many services once considered core business of educational institutions are being outsourced and casualised as cash-strapped institutions must adopt entrepreneurial practices to survive (Meagher & Goodwin 2015).

At the last Postgraduate Supervision Conference I had just commenced a research project looking at writing help for doctoral students provisioned externally from the conferring university. That small study has produced some very interesting data about the kinds of services that are available for students (and supervisors and institutions) seeking writing support. As is shown in Figure 3.1, we envisaged these services as on a continuum – those with a focus on developing the writer offered services such as peer support, mentoring and coaching, workshops, courses, programmes and programming at the one end, and those that focus on servicing the written artefact (eg editing, proofing and formatting services) at the other.



**FIGURE 3.1** External writing help for doctoral scholarship

We see in this illustration, the doctoral writer (and their supervisor and institution) is positioned as consumer and the doctoral text(s) as commodities. In this market the doctoral scholars, supervisors and institutions are seeking to buy/pay for services, services that revolve around the production of text(s).

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In our study we were interested in identifying the kind of help doctoral students might be able to secure via the Internet (Aitchison & Mowbray 2015). We were surprised by what we found – the extraordinary numbers of providers, and the hugely varying quality of what was being offered. This is a market that appears to be totally under-researched, and unregulated, and yet, by all accounts, it is growing exponentially. Our study indicated the desperate preparedness of some students to pay for writing help that would deliver a polished product, no matter the cost. It is more than likely that many here today will have students who have availed themselves of some of these services: the good, the bad, and the ugly. Some of you may have facilitated the acquisition of such services by buying in external consultants or purchasing writing-related programs for doctoral scholars. Some of us may be providers in this market.

That may sound rather scary, but it is the future that has arrived. These kinds of self-help responses arise from both push and pull factors. We've seen that dominant institutional discourses position writing and the writer in very limited and limiting ways, and that this focus on outputs can create unhealthy tensions and practices that undermine the epistemic purposes of writing. On the other hand, external market-mediated responses may well have benefits – delivering financial efficiencies especially for smaller institutions, consolidating, professionalising and disseminating expertise that some supervisors and institutions may lack. There may be benefits too for time-poor supervisors whereby quality external assistance can be harnessed to support and complement supervisor responsibilities. It may also signal student agency and healthy autonomy in a broadening pedagogical space.

In our edited book on writing groups, Cally Guerin and I found an extraordinary propensity amongst students and supervisors to find their own solutions to writing problems (Guerin & Aitchison 2014). Many students are proactive; the stakes are too high for them to fail or languish, they won't, or can't, wait for their institutions to help them with their writing. Any why should they – when the Internet beckons?

## **AT THE INTERFACE OF THE INTERNET AND WRITING TECHNOLOGIES**

Yet the Internet is a platform through which we can access not only paid services; the online environment infuses doctoral writing practices in many more subtle ways on a daily basis. I want to turn now to consider how the changing technologies influence our writing lives and the implications for doctoral writing and supervision.

The interface of new writing technologies and the Internet bring about new sets of material practices for doctoral writing. The Internet is a platform for both the production and consumption of our research outputs. Apart from their empirical work, the Web is the source of most of the information our doctoral students

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gather. It is the new library. The Internet can provide a means for storing, sharing and accessing data and for monitoring the whole research project. It also offers extraordinarily wonderful mechanisms for communicating and disseminating research to scholarly communities and between supervisors and students – and to ever-widening audiences, instantly and constantly. It is the new publication outlet.

When we do writing on our computers, at the same time via the Internet, we can share writing and editing, we can infuse texts with images and graphics, we can embed knowledge found on line, we can import the words of others. In this medium we can be consumers and producers of research writing, simultaneously. With the tap of a finger we can instantly write over the words of others, rewriting even published texts. We can take the words of others and reconfigure them, endlessly restructuring and reworking them into our own. We can write communally over time and space obliterating the separation of production and consumption. Writing and ownership have never been so plastic and never so inter-textual. This brings freedoms but also potentially disrupts ideas of textual construction, writing appropriation and authorship – where is the boundary between yours and mine? Is it in order to outsource writing? Is it only a matter of degree? Does the answer differ for different purposes? How differently do ‘digital natives’ view these matters and how can we move more traditional notions of scholarship, writing ownership and authorship into the digital future?

I am going to play devil’s advocate: I would like to suggest that the market – via the Internet – potentially offers our students everything they need to get a PhD, and it doesn’t necessarily require lots of money. Buying online is ubiquitous – it satisfies every aspect of human life – why wouldn’t it be available for doctoral writing and research? You can buy sex on line, why not text? There is a plethora of sites and e-books on writing a PhD; apps for monitoring and improving writing productivity; apps and sites for learning and correcting grammar, spelling and punctuation. You can buy legitimate writing coaches and mentors, pay for editing, proofing and formatting; you can also secure the services of a ghost writer. You can attend online researcher courses and workshops run by international experts; you can get personalised help doing your research from ‘expert’ supervisors. And of particular significance: students can find and build genuine community online as we’ve seen by the extraordinary growth of on-line PhD blogging and social media communities.

Our research into external provisions found that many of these providers offered students the kind of help that they found lacking in their institutions: “We do what their supervisors don’t” (Aitchison & Mowbray 2015). To paraphrase Inger Mewburn, this easy and voluminous availability of resources for doctoral writing and

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candidature requires us to ask, “What then is the value-added that supervision can offer?” (Mewburn 2014).

### **RETHINKING PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITIES FOR DOCTORAL SUPERVISION AND WRITING**

So, what might be the possibilities for supervisors wishing to support their doctoral students as they write and commune with numerous and unknown intrusions into the doctoral landscape? As a first-world scholar, I am aware of the chasm between my relatively privileged experiences and the challenges of other scholars, especially those who don’t have English as their first language and who have restricted access to technology and the affordances of the Internet. Nevertheless – I tentatively propose that this elastic and dynamic online-mediated space requires new pedagogical plasticity from supervisors and institutions, new inventiveness at the local level and preparedness to interact with the global via the online environment.

Knowledge of available sources of writing support and expertise locally on campus, as well as globally, is invaluable. It is good for students and expands the pedagogical repertoire of supervisors, releasing them from sole responsibility for the development of their students’ writing.

There is a growing body of scholarship and provision on supervision and writing. We need to take advantage of such expertise, prioritising writing in our supervisory practices, legitimising it and bringing it into the discourses of doctoral education. We cannot operate alone, nor simply – no matter how expertly – only within our own backyards. The contemporary context demands writers ‘write out’ into a bigger world than can be provided by any one supervisor or institution. Those who cannot, or choose not to, become international in their practices will fall behind. Students who are faced with resistant or ignorant supervisors will simply find their own way online. By contrast, connected supervisors – those who bring students into their international networks and collaborations and those who learn from their students about *their* online communities and activities – prepare their students for successful participation in a truly global future.

This is an exciting time for writers. The technologies and communities that enable writers to make and share text are growing and morphing continuously. There are new threats and possibilities unfolding.

If we continue to prioritise output-focused renditions of doctoral writing and value metrics and counts above the hard work of textwork, of scholarly identity formation and ‘coming to know’ through the processes of writing; if we insist on only single-

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authored, English language doctoral outputs, then perhaps we can't be surprised by the positioning of doctoral writers as consumers – and doctoral texts as commodities – in the 24/7 global doctoral writing commodity market.

Our challenge is to re-imagine supervision as a writing-rich, technology-mediated exchange built on, and for, communities of scholars in ways that honour the processes of writing – not just the written output. As students will struggle more and more to secure employment after gaining their PhD, we have a responsibility to ensure they have been enriched through productive engagements in writing and have outputs that demonstrate their contributions to knowledge – and their writing competence.

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