

Call for Proposals : Special Issue of *Computers  
and Composition*

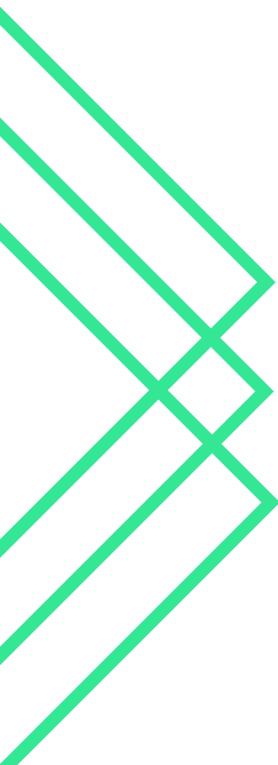
# RHETORICS OF DATA:

**COLLECTION,  
CONSENT,  
& CRITICAL  
DIGITAL  
LITERACIES**



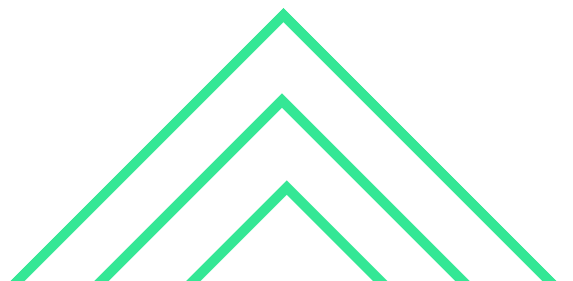
Guest Editors:  
Les Hutchinson and Maria Novotny

Given the extent of regular breaking news coverage of user privacy violations (such as the recent whistleblowing on the Facebook and Cambridge Analytica collaboration or the 2017 Equifax data breach), **Rhetorics of Data** presents an opportunity for rhetorical action in regard to ethical questions about data collection, consent, and the need to acquire critical digital literacies as response. This special issue draws on the journal's history of scholarship that has defined critical digital literacies with regard to data collection.



Our special issue specifically extends the critical conversations in the field by attending to the correlation between **consent** and **data**. We work in concert with the forthcoming *Computers & Composition* special issue *Composing Algorithms: Writing (with) Rhetorical Machines* by Aaron Beveridge, Sergio C. Figueiredo, and Steven K. Holmes. In their CFP, they argue that “We need to better understand the problems posed by algorithmic mediation, but we also need to get involved in making algorithms and studying them through computational and digital methods.” Our own special issue addresses this need by reflecting on the new scenes, methods, and pedagogies required for modeling critical digital literacy practices that promote user agency and consent surrounding rhetorics of data, which is often mediated through algorithms.

We offer this special issue as a designated space for contributors to both **identify** and **understand** how data operates rhetorically, but also that contributors offer **action and response** to issues concerning data collection. Data is more than a stagnant object; it is personal information collected through complex algorithms (Beck, 2015; Gallagher, 2017; Edwards, 2018) that often function without user knowledge, but is then commodified and appropriated across networks by political and corporate giants, and their unknown third-party affiliates. As Amidon and Reyman (2015) argue, user contributions are the very content that “‘writes’ the social web into existence,” and thus create enormous value.



We define critical digital literacies as critical methods of inquiry that 1) **identify** ethical concerns or issues within a technological infrastructure, 2) **understand** the rhetorical implications of these concerns or issues for how they impact people (users and non-users), and 3) **respond** with a range of tactics that promote more ethical outcomes for use of these technologies.

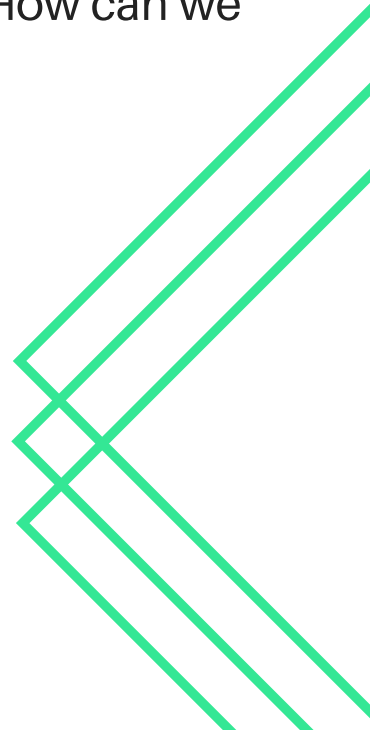
Contributions to this special issue will extend and forward these scholarly conversations by emphasizing the role of consent when enacting critical rhetorical action--response--in the classroom, in communities, and in our public sphere.

## Examples of such responses could look like

- the redesign of Terms of Service/Conditions and Privacy Policies to support user consent;
- research gathered from community-based workshops that educate others on a particular privacy issue to promote critical digital literacy;
- consensual website or app design;
- service-learning assignments where students collaborate with a technological company to user test online safety of a digital product;
- collaborative discussions regarding the creation of online spaces that promote intersectional resistance to marginalization and oppression;
- and other critical, creative actions to ethical concerns surrounding data collection.

**This special issue seeks to build off of conversations in *Computers and Composition* by asking questions such as:**

- How do we take up issues of **data collection and ethics** in our theories, teaching, research, and politics?
- What **theories** can guide our pedagogies and research to implement critical digital literacies responses in our writing classrooms?
- Where do we **locate the impetus** for critical digital literacies outside the university and in our communities?
- What ethical approaches to data collection can we adopt to better **protect others** while we educate and research?
- How are other fields examining and teaching critical digital literacies and what may rhetoric and composition learn and/or apply from such methods?
- What role does data collection play in online writing environments, including (but not limited to) social media spaces and composing platforms like Google Docs?
- How does the design and language of Terms of Service and Privacy Policies **affect** users of online technologies and platforms? What do users need for these policies to be more accessible? How can we teach these practices in our writing classrooms?



# Timeline\*

Proposals due: **March 15, 2019**

Preliminary decision on authors: **May 15, 2019**

First drafts of 6,000-7,000 words (not including bib/works cited) due: **January 15, 2020**

Feedback from editors on first drafts returned to author/s: **March 15, 2020**

Article revisions due: **June 15, 2020**

Article sent out for blind review: **June 30, 2020**

Feedback from blind review returned to author/s: **September 1, 2020**

Second article revisions due: **January 1, 2021**

Ready for copyediting: **February 1, 2021**

Publication: **Fall 2021**

\*\*Our timeline provides the time and space for contributing authors to design classes to incorporate these foci for this upcoming academic year and/or obtain IRB for new research if needed. This is intentional as we understand our call, emphasizing response, may require additional research time.



## Submission and Contact Details

Individuals, co-authors, or collectives should submit a **250-500 word proposal** that clearly identifies an ethical, rhetorical issue concerning data collection and consent, proposes an engaged response for addressing this issue, a brief address of contribution to the field(s), and an overview of the article.

Proposals should be submitted as .doc or .docx files to Les Hutchinson and Maria Novotny at [rhetoricsofdata@gmail.com](mailto:rhetoricsofdata@gmail.com)

The editors enthusiastically encourage those interested to contact us for information or with any questions prior to submitting a proposal. Considering the special issue's focus on response, we are happy to think through ideas together to ensure the success of the proposal.

