

CCCC Promotion and Tenure Guidelines for Work with Technology

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This document is intended for promotion and tenure committees, and candidates for promotion and tenure. Its purpose is to provide some general principles to promotion and tenure committees and candidates to ensure that candidates' work with technology is explained accurately and evaluated fairly.

This document consists of three parts: general statements about technology and its potential impact on the promotion and tenure review processes, specific guidelines for promotion and tenure committees; and specific guidelines for candidates for promotion and tenure.

In preparing these guidelines, we have tried to address the fact that at this moment in our profession, the pace of technological change in unprecedented computer-mediated communication (CMC) is reconfiguring the ways in which scholarly knowledge is produced and disseminated. New forms of scholarship are beginning to emerge in electronic environments. Electronic scholarship mimics print scholarship in some important ways, but it also differs from print scholarship in important ways. Several sources which speak to the evaluation of work for which there is a print counterpart already exist. (See, for example, the MLA Guidelines for promotion and tenure for work with technology [<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/mla.guidelines.html>], or the Rutgers guidelines [<http://www.rutgers.edu>].) It is the intention of this document to provide guidance for departments in evaluating work with technology for which there is not a convenient print analog. Thus, we offer general principles for evaluating such work, bearing in mind that the rapid pace of technological change means that each case will need to be decided on its own merits, and each case is in a sense precedent-setting. In order to evaluate a candidate's work with technology for purposes of promotion and tenure, departments need to take into account several features of technology-related work:

As is the case with much work in composition, work with technology is often collaborative. It is not uncommon for teachers on different campuses to link their courses, for example. It is also not uncommon for people working with technology to work closely with others in different areas of campus, such as the computing support personnel or the librarians.

Work with technology is very time-consuming. People who work with technology in the classroom must spend a portion of their time learning and teaching new software to students and possibly colleagues. They often find themselves providing technical support to students and colleagues outside of class and office hours, sometimes taking on responsibilities which would not normally fall under their purview.

Additionally, they may find themselves taking on a disproportionate number of committee assignments as expertise with technology becomes increasingly important to the life of a campus. People who work with technology in their research, particularly in composition, must also keep abreast of a field that is changing rapidly as the technology itself changes.

CMC technology, particularly the world wide web, is blurring the distinctions between the traditional areas of evaluation for promotion and tenure, i.e., research, teaching, and service. For example, developing web pages for class, department, university, or global use might fit all three categories.

CMC technology is affording new venues for learning about candidates' work and of assessing the candidate's role within the profession. For example, a person's web page may offer outside reviewers a wider lens through which to view a candidate's research. Similarly, a candidate's sustained and careful participation on discussion lists related to their areas of scholarly expertise can have an impact on the profession. Promotion and tenure committees who try to find ways to account for such contributions will serve their candidates best.

Guidelines for the Promotion and Tenure Committee

It is important that tenure and promotion committees work with departmental hiring committees to insure that expectations for work with technology and online scholarship be communicated to prospective new hires. Further, prospective hires should be informed about whether and how work with technology and online scholarship will be considered in the tenure and promotion process.

It is vitally important that tenure and promotion committees work flexibly to find ways to acknowledge technology work done by candidates for promotion and tenure because the rapid pace of technological change makes it impossible for any set of guidelines to account completely for the ways the technology (and thus the work done with it) is making an impact on our profession.

It is important that the candidate's work be evaluated in the medium in which it was produced. Printing off web pages, for example, is a poor substitute for evaluating those pages online.

For the purposes of promotion and tenure, work with technology is often described as administrative or placed under the category of service. However, often technology-related work has additional dimensions which are more appropriately reviewed under the categories of teaching or research as well. It is important for committees to consider a candidate's work with technology in as many categories as possible in order to provide the fullest description of it and thus ensure the fairest evaluation of it. It is important that the candidate's work be evaluated by persons knowledgeable about the use of computer technology. If qualified reviewers are not available on the candidate's home campus, it is appropriate to solicit outside reviewers, particularly for work that is not normally offered as part of a candidate's tenure file, e.g., course web sites, instructional software, MOO spaces, or personal or institutional home pages. (This list of examples is intended to be suggestive of the possibilities rather than exhaustive; we expect that new technologies will make possible written genres that do not currently exist.) Review of such materials in addition to the materials normally included in an external dossier can provide valuable additional perspectives from which a candidate's work can be viewed.

At the same time, it is important that members of the promotion and tenure committee educate themselves about the candidate's work; the burden of understanding the technology, the candidate's specific uses of it, and the importance of such work rests jointly on the committee and the candidate -- it is not carried by either party alone.

It is important that the candidate's work be evaluated with respect to local conditions on campus. For example, early adopters of technology on a campus generally face more obstacles than those who come later. Similarly, on campuses where support for technology is limited, it is more difficult for people to work with technology.

For more information, see the "Tenure and Promotion Cases for Composition Faculty Who Work with Technology" Web site at <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/committees/7cs/tenurepromotioncases>.

Guidelines for the Candidate

It is important that in the hiring process, when candidates first negotiate for their tenure track jobs, they ask about whether and how credit for use of technology and online scholarship will be awarded in the tenure and promotion process.

It is important that, as early as possible in the probationary period and on an ongoing basis, candidates find ways to tell others on their campus about the work they do. If a promotion and tenure committee is aware of the candidate's work and its implications well in advance of the time when it must decide on the merits of such work, the committee will be better informed and more able to reach a fair decision.

It is important that candidates find ways to explain their work in terms of the traditional areas of teaching, research, and service, and also to explain carefully the ways in which their work overlaps or redefines those categories. The burden of understanding the technology, the candidate's specific uses of it, and the importance of such work rests jointly on the committee and the candidate -- it is not carried by either party alone.

It is important for candidates to find others on campus who also work with technology, and to network with those people. The presence of people on campus who can attest to the value of work done by the candidate is extremely important with respect to technology; knowledgeable local colleagues can help to contextualize the work in terms that are important to the campus as a whole.

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