George Pullman, **Writing Online: Rhetoric for the Digital Age**, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2016, 190 pp., $20.00 (paper).

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I am not sure what I was expecting when I asked to review George Pullman's latest work, **Writing Online: Rhetoric for the Digital Age**. The title caught my eye, and as someone who has had her whole career teaching and designing in the digital space, I was looking for something to fill the space that I felt was missing in the discourse on "being digital." This book comes amazingly close.

This book marks a trilogy (my concept, not the author's) beginning in 2013 with the publishing of *Persuasion: History, Theory, Practice*, followed by *A Rulebook for Decision Making* in 2015. Dr. Pullman, a professor of rhetoric and director of the Center for Instruction Innovation at Georgia State University self-proclaims on his GSU biography page that "he is especially interested in how rhetoric is changing as a result of algorithmic interventions in communication processes" (Georgia State University, n.d., para. 3). Each of his previous works, intended or not, has been building toward this work. Persuasion and decision making are both keys to the ideas that Pullman offers in his latest effort. From the time of the early Egyptians, early Chinese, and early Greeks, among others, rhetoric (the art of persuasion), together with grammar and logic (or dialectic), create the trivium, three of the seven liberal arts noted by Martianus Capella (2007) in his *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. Elements of each of these components of discourse can be found in this book.

A wonderful chart is located in the Introduction (p. xxiii), which Pullman postulates would be better on a digital open access Web platform (Pullman is correct in that claim). The chart is a marvelous at-a-glance representation of the movement of rhetoric over time from pre-Homer to our current world of computers and browsers. Pullman notes that this chart was "to get you thinking about how the oral, literate, and digital rhetorical epochs differ and overlap . . .; [however], **you need to start making your own understanding of digital rhetoric**" (p. xxv, emphasis in original).

If you were thinking this is just another book (cue comfy chair and warm beverage), think again. From the first words noted in the book, Pullman asks you not to read this book but to use it. He goes on to suggest that "this isn't a book about how to follow a recipe so much as it is about how to think and learn and compose and communicate, in digital ways, and searching the Internet and making useful sense of what you find is a primary skill" (p. xiv). He goes on to suggest that he is being "intentionally disruptive" in how he has structured the chapters and content, using (in addition to other prompts) **bold lines** dispersed through the chapters. Why, you may ask? He suggests that many users (deliberately chosen as a descriptor of the reader, to encourage use of the book) skim digital works versus reading in the more traditional sense.
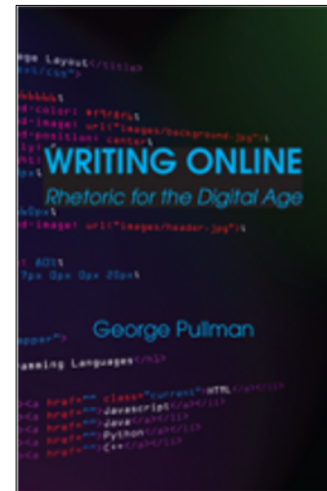
Hence you can "review" this book by skimming the bolded sections, and it highlights the key sentence or phrase that Pullman wants you to take away from the section.

His introduction is quite long—31 pages—but it is necessary to lay the land for the reader/user. Without this context, the book is a quirky mashup of theory, personality, and practical technology coding examples. With the context, the book takes on another, deeper raison d'être. It becomes a conversation between the user and the author—musings, philosophies, offerings, and visions of how to both practically and thoughtfully move toward the digital literacy that the present and future is offering, interspersed among that code.

The other reason that the Introduction is so robust, I believe, has to do with his choice in the chapters (and there are 7 of them, and an excellent glossary at the very end), to jump into code, so that the user starts at the beginning, literally, to find their digital self, through the language as well as the actual mechanics. Chapter 1, "Hello World," titled in reference to the first words a coder is often tasked with creating in that code, is devoted to the user understanding the key ideas and concepts of domain names, Web-hosting accounts, CSS, a landing screen, and among other items, a project plan. As Pullman notes at the end of the chapter, "**Theory without practice is noise**" (p. 36).

Chapter 2 is devoted to "Digital Rhetoric." Pullman opens the chapter by referring back to his chart from the Introduction, which presented a definition of rhetoric: "**Rhetoric refers to a set of practices and intellectual habits that develop in a person the capacity to think clearly and communicate effectively in the dormant medium, leading to a level of civic engagement and social significance commensurate with a person's aspirations, abilities, and opportunities**" (p. 37). In this chapter he talks about the upheaval that can take place intellectually when the transition begins from what was to what is coming. The difficulty in moving from old ways to new ways can (and often does) disrupt those committed to the old. He declares the need for change and the need to move from print to digital. His summary of the chapter speaks to "the fundamentals of digital citizenship and the guiding principles of digital rhetoric" (p. 69). Again, you leave the chapter with practical manifestations of your digital self.

In chapter 3, "Invention," Pullman uses invention as "the name given to any process designed to generate content" (p. 71). Looking for ideas, information to share, and ways to build new digital assets all are hallmarks of this chapter. It begins having you consider the design of the digital location that you wish to write within. It also has you considering how to build that environment. Once more, at the end of the chapter there is a list of the physical online objects that you may have built while exploring the chapter.

In "Arrangement," chapter 4, he talks "about optimizing the order of information based on an understanding of the audience's state of mind, intensity and nature of interest, and knowledge of the subject" (p. 86). He focuses on (1) navigation, which includes linking your files, menus, and segmented hypergraphics; (2) layered design pattern, including hooks for headlines; (3) dynamic arrangements including narrative in the digital age; (4) random and passive arrangements; and (5) designing your portfolio. As he summarizes the chapter, he suggests that "digital arrangement is about providing exactly the right amount of information for a specific user as quickly as possible . . . the rhetorical canon of arrangement has become navigation in the digital epoch" (p. 109).

Chapter 5, "Memory," focuses on the shift from oral cultures (cultures that "had highly elaborate methods for remembering information . . . a memory palace") to digital cultures where "digital memory consists of any of the electronic devices, hardware and software, that you might use to create a sharable database of digital assets—text, images, video, anything that can be digital . . . data base [as a] collection [of that memory, versus] a content management system . . . an interface between the users and the database" (p. 110–111). Pullman explores ways to create a "digital memory palace" (p. 112) via content management organization. More philosophical than the previous chapters (without straying from the practical, for those using this book to build their digital rhetoric presence), Pullman looks at how we used to share our memories, our experiences; then he queries, Does "a well-stocked memory [matter] in the digital age"? (p. 130).

Chapter 6 is "Style." For Pullman, style in the traditional rhetorical space "has always been about fitting in while standing out . . . someone who belongs, has the right to be there and knows it;" while in the digital space "style has two meanings. There's the prose style and there's the way in which information is displayed on the screen" (p. 132). As you might surmise by now, Pullman focuses on the latter style in this book. With respect to prose, he does offer that using plain language and keeping prose clear, direct, and brief, has "an interesting side effect . . . your work can be more readily translated by machines like Google Translate, making your work available to the world outside of your primary language. The more idiomatic, not to say idiosyncratic, your prose style, the less well it travels" (pp. 132–133).

The final chapter is "Delivery." In rhetorical delivery, it is about "stance, tone, volume, modularity, accent, pronunciation, gesture, pace, humor, responding . . . to current conditions, being present and aware" (p. 146). In digital delivery, the focus is on two things: universal design (or UDL—universal design for learning, in my instructional design world) and dynamic visualization. When you have a UDL-understanding core to your delivery, "anyone regardless of limitations in equipment or physical ability . . . should be able to get the same information from a site" (p. 146). With respect to the dynamic visualization, delivery encompasses the need to include "sophisticated graphics and imagery" (p. 147) to improve and encourage understanding. Other key ideas in the chapter pertain to responsive design and usability when moving toward the delivery of your ideas and the creation of your digital self.

Overall, Pullman's work has much to offer. You can get lost in the code, as it is not for all. However, if you skim past the code (or go back to it when you are ready) and ponder his ideas woven well throughout the code, you will find a good space upon which to rest your digital self and reexamine your place within that space. For those willing to go further, a companion website has been designed to offer you "a unique opportunity to discuss what is gained and lost as literacy goes digital" (Pullman, 2019, para. 2).

In the final pages of his book, in his short Conclusion, Pullman looks at rhetorical practice revised for the digital age and asks you, after you have studied his thesis, "To what extent do you consider yourself digital now?" (p. 157). An excellent question to ponder!

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