Roe, Stephen C. and Pamela H. den Ouden. *Designs for Disciplines: An Introduction to Academic Writing*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2003. 87-112.

5 Proposals and the Formality of Scholarly Style

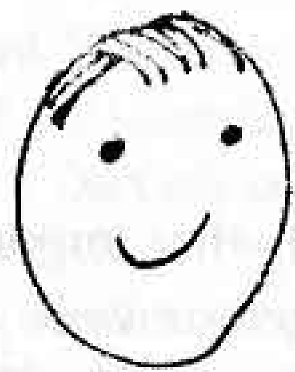
> Before you start your research, do not neglect another important resource: your professor. Schedule a conference or visit your professor during office hours. You may have little or no idea about what kind of paper you would like to write, but during the course of the discussion, something may occur to your professor or to you that piques your curiosity, that becomes the equivalent of [a] "burning question." Your conference may turn into a kind of verbal freewriting session—with several unresolved questions remaining at the end of the session—one of which may become the focus of your paper.
>
> —Leonard J. Rosen and Laurence Behrens, *The Allyn & Bacon Handbook*. 2nd ed.

As researchers move through the process of collecting information and securing a topic, the completion of a written proposal, accompanied by an annotated list of references, provides an opportunity to formalize plans, assess sources, and get more advice. Accordingly, this chapter comments on proposals and on the annotated list of references often associated with them. It also discusses some stylistic matters that might be overlooked by writers who are not yet familiar with discipline-based habits of expression.

PROPOSALS

Proposals are a common feature in the various disciplinary cultures of academic writing. "Seeking a place on a conference program, or a spot in a collection of essays that will be published on a particular topic, scholars answer 'Calls for Papers' with a proposal" (Giltrow,

2002, p. 381). Giltrow invites us to think of proposals as "bids" (p. 382), as research offers that may be accepted or rejected by those who monitor the production of knowledge. In college and university classrooms, that monitor is usually the instructor.



It's time to get some thoughts down on paper.

Instructors, like conference chairs or editors, evaluate the submissions they receive by using some criteria we are already familiar with. Those in a position to receive proposals will, for example, watch for clearly articulated, viable **topics** that involve focused **research sites** and **prestige abstractions** or Big Issues. They will also want to see that the person submitting the proposal is aware of previous research relating to the topic. Such research forms what might be described as a **tradition of inquiry**. Depending on the discipline or disciplines, proposals also tend to include other rhetorical features that we have not yet discussed at any length, features such as a **two-part title**, a brief presentation of **context**, **theoretical framework**, **definition of key terms**, **knowledge deficit**, **forecasting**, a description of **methods**, a **research question**, **thesis**, and a **statement of relevance**. Some of these terms should be self-explanatory, but brief descriptions might be useful at this point:

Two-Part Title: consists of an allusive phrase that indirectly relates to topic and an explanatory phrase that directly conveys topic.

Context: background information.

Theoretical Framework: consciously adopted assumptions that can be imposed on topic and influence a thesis claim.

Tradition of Inquiry: previous studies relating to the topic.

Topic: Research Site + Abstraction = Topic; or, Abstraction + Research Site = Topic.

Definition of Key Terms: define important concepts (e.g., the prestige abstraction).

Knowledge Deficit: a statement about what has not yet been covered by previous research.

General Forecasting: a structural comment that provides a broad sense of direction.

Specific Forecasting: more detailed structural comments that outline sections of the paper.

Methods: a description of procedures undertaken to generate knowledge.

Research Question: a central question that the research will answer.

Thesis: an answer to the research question (i.e., a knowledge claim).

Statement of Relevance: a comment about how the topic and/or thesis relate to broad social concerns.

Just as no two papers are identical, no two proposals are exactly alike. While the rhetorical features described above can be compared to building blocks used in the construction of knowledge, these blocks can be combined in different ways or even exchanged for still others. Thus, the precise architectural details of proposals will vary, but

informed designers understand that habitual, time-tested elements and patterns are at their disposal.

In a pragmatic way, it might actually be helpful to think of a proposal as a trial introduction for the paper itself. Proposals and introductions share basically the same rhetorical function, and, in turn, share many of the same rhetorical features. From this perspective, the proposal is not simply a make-work exercise: it constitutes a tentative beginning, one that can be adjusted on the basis of comments or recommendations. Given the overlap between proposals and introductions, it might be a good idea at this point to look ahead, and at least browse the more comprehensive description of introductory rhetorical features described in Chapter 6, without becoming overwhelmed. Presented with a range of options, academic writers need to make careful choices, choices that are rooted in their discipline and topic.

An annotated list of references does not always accompany a proposal, but your instructor may ask you to submit one as further evidence of the research that you have done thus far. We are using "list of references" as a generic term for an alphabetical list of sources, yet such lists assume different names, depending on the style of documentation that you are using (APA, MLA, Chicago, CBE, and so on). At this point, it would be worthwhile to take a preliminary look at the various styles of documentation and to consider which style is appropriate for your paper (see Chapter 7). You can refine your presentation of sources later in the term, but, even at this early stage in the writing process, you should have at least some idea of how to format your list. Your instructor may also ask you "to annotate" the items that you plan to use. In an annotated list of references, academic writers simply provide a brief summary of each source, after the details of publication.

The sample proposals that follow are accompanied by lists of references that demonstrate different styles of documentation (Samples B through D were written by students). Some of the lists are annotated; some are not. Rhetorical features in the first proposal have been highlighted so they are easy to identify. As you proceed through the rest of this chapter, block and label features that appear in the other proposals, and note the subtle differences in styles of documentation.

Sample A: MLA Style

Steve Roe

"The Poet of our Survival": Images of the Mad Trapper and Attitudes Toward Masculinity

[Two-Part Title]

In early January, 1931, in the Mackenzie Valley of the Northwest Territories, an unidentified white male shot and killed an RCMP officer. Throughout the remainder of January and most of February, this so-called "Mad Trapper" became the object of what remains the largest manhunt in Canadian history. On February 26, 1931, the Mounties finally got their man. The emaciated and frost-bitten figure whom they were chasing was riddled with bullets after he had crossed the Richardson Mountains on snowshoes and entered the Yukon. Although the Mad Trapper is sometimes referred to as Albert Johnson, the identity of the bullet-ridden corpse has never been confirmed, intensifying the mysterious quality of someone who has become a Canadian legend. [Context] This essay will present a sustained analysis of cultural responses to Canada's most famous criminal. [General Forecasting] In particular, I examine popular images of the Mad Trapper as an index of shifting attitudes toward masculinity. [Topic] My survey follows a two-part, chronological order. First, I will consider material from 1931 to 1957, emphasizing supposedly realistic depictions of Albert Johnson in journalistic and biographical-historical texts. Second, I will consider material from 1958 to the present, emphasizing overtly imaginative treatments of Johnson in poetry, fiction, and film. [Specific Forecasting]

Investigations into cultural images of the Mad Trapper did not begin until the late 1970s. In 1978, Rudy Wiebe, who was then working on both a short story and a novel about the Mad Trapper, published an essay entitled "The Death and Life of Albert Johnson." Wiebe's essay considers previous accounts of the Mad Trapper and provides the basis for my own study. Rather than asking "Who was Albert Johnson?" Wiebe asks, "What has the imagination made of him?" Subsequent studies by Jennings (1987), [Tradition of Inquiry]

Bailey (1985), and Howell (1984) reconsider Wiebe's sources and carry his study forward by considering Wiebe's own fictional accounts of Johnson. Building on this tradition of inquiry, I will argue that accounts of the Mad Trapper, since the 1930s, demonstrate changing conceptions of masculine ideals: whereas Johnson was originally vilified as an outlaw, his renegade status has increasingly become a badge of nobility. Indeed, today, the Mad Trapper is frequently represented as an embodiment of besieged selfhood.

Thesis

Works Cited [annotated]

Bailey, Nancy. "Imaginative and Historical Truth in Wiebe's *The Mad Trapper*." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 20.2 (Summer 1985): 70–79. Bailey argues that Wiebe romanticizes Albert Johnson by embellishing the factual record of the manhunt.

Callaghan, Morley. "Shoot-Out." *Edmonton Bulletin*. Feb. 16, 1931. Evening Edition. C1. Callaghan describes a meeting between the Mad Trapper and the RCMP as a confrontation between an evil outlaw and defenders of social order.

Carter, Wilf. "The Capture of Albert Johnson." Copyright Gordon V. Thompson, n.d. (See Wiebe, "The Death of Albert Johnson," 227–228). Carter's song again valorizes the Mounted Police.

Jennings, John. "The Mad Trapper in Literature and Film." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 5.2 (1987): 55–66. Jennings discusses the Mad Trapper film, manhunt, and two recent Mad Trapper novels by Rudy Wiebe and Thomas York respectively. Jennings argues that all three representations represent the Mad Trapper as a hero.

Howells, Coral-Ann. "Silence in Rudy Wiebe's *The Mad Trapper*." *World Literature Written in English* 24.2 (Autumn 1984): 304–312. Howells argues that Wiebe portrays the Mad Trapper as a strong, silent male who resists oppressive government authority.

Hutton, Doug. "Rat River Trapper." *Scarlet and Gold* [memorial album to celebrate the RCMP centennial in 1974]. Bulrush Music, 1974. This song reinscribes the Mad-Trapper-as-Villain position.

Kroetsch, Robert. "The Poem of Albert Johnson." *The Stone Hammer Poems*. Toronto: Oolichan Books, 1975. In one of the most romantic treatments of the Mad Trapper to date, Kroetsch sees Johnson as "the poet of our survival."

O'Hagan, Howard. "The Man Who Chose to Die." *Wilderness Men*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1958. O'Hagan celebrates Johnson as "a new figure of loneliness" in the Canadian imagination.

Wiebe, Rudy. "The Death and Life of Albert Johnson." *Figures in a Ground*. Ed., D. Bessai. Saskatoon: Prairie Books, 1978. Wiebe examines poetry and short stories on the Mad Trapper, ranging from the work of Wilf Carter to that of Robert Kroestch. Wiebe anticipates my preliminary thesis that the Mad Trapper has been transformed from villain to hero, but he offers little in the way of critical commentary upon this development.

_____. *The Mad Trapper*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980. Although Wiebe's portrayal of Johnson is complex and somewhat ambivalent, Wiebe appears to regard Johnson as a hero.

Sample B: A Variation of CBE Style

Julie Nixon Vander Linden

The Extermination of the Fort Nelson Bears

In just two days in September 1997, in the small, northern B.C. town of Fort Nelson, sixty-five black bears were exterminated. They had been frequenting the local garbage dump and roaming through the town itself, in a quest for an easy meal. The bears had become habituated both to human food and to humans (BC Environment 1997). Indeed, these

bears would approach vehicles that arrived at the dump, not even allowing the human occupants enough time to unload their garbage (Parker 1999). Concern about the Fort Nelson bears increased in August 1997, when two people were killed by a black bear approximately 300 kilometres to the northwest. After the August attack, the Fort Nelson bears were regarded as an immediate threat to public safety. These bears were eating human food, but they were still, after all, wild carnivorous animals, inspiring a combination of awe and fear.

This paper focuses on the 1997 extermination of the Fort Nelson bears. First, I will explore the problems of habituation. Second, I will examine how aversive conditioning can sometimes be used as a solution to the problem of habituation. Finally, I will apply these concepts to the circumstances in Fort Nelson, to determine if aversive conditioning would have been a viable alternative to extermination. Thus, my essay asks this question: was it necessary to kill the Fort Nelson bears? I suggest that the extermination of the Fort Nelson bears may, in fact, have been necessary because the possibility of aversive conditioning was negated by human error in the way the landfill was managed.

Managing bear behaviour through aversive conditioning is not a new concept. Studies dating back to the 1970s show that beekeepers have tried both foul-tasting and illness-inducing ingestives, and electric shock (Gilbert and Roy 1973), while bear-chasing hound-dogs have been employed in Minnesota (Donelly 1999). The national parks of both the USA and Canada have used ingestives as well as rubber bullets and buckshot (Herrero 1985; Leonard and others 1990). Nevertheless, knowledge of aversive conditioning among wildlife managers remains limited. It is my hope that the information on aversive conditioning provided here will help to promote future alternatives to extermination.

Since written information on habituation and aversive conditioning is hard to access, I conducted telephone interviews with conservation officers, biologists, and wildlife advocates. To maintain accuracy when using information from any of these interviews, I have contacted the person again to confirm that the quote or paraphrase is correct. I also have used a disproportionate amount of research on grizzly bears, rather than black bears, simply because most studies tend to focus on grizzly bears, given their threatened status.

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Donelly E. 1999 Mar 16. Bear Watch representative. Telephone interview.

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McCarthy TM, Seavoy RJ. 1994. Reducing nonsport losses attributable to food conditioning: Human and bear behavior modification in an urban environment. Int Conf Bear Res and Manage 9(1):75–84.

McCullough DR. 1982. Behavior, bears, and humans. Wildl Soc Bull 10:27–33.

My name was withheld for a reason. [letter to the editor] 1997 Oct 1. Fort Nelson News.

Paige C. 1998 Nov-Dec. Bear busters. Montana Outdoors:24–29.

Parker D. 1999 Mar 5. Senior Conservation Officer. Telephone interview.

Schmidt K. 1999 Mar 12. Conservation Officer for Swan Hills, Alberta. Telephone interview.

Schmidt K. 1999 Apr 15. Telephone interview.

Wind River Bear Institute. 1999 Mar 25. Faxed information letter. 2 p.

Wooldridge DR. 1980. Chemical aversion conditioning of polar and black bears. Fourth Int Conf on Bears:167–173.

Zukewich M. 1999 Apr 16. 1 page fax.

Zukewich M. 1999 Apr 13. Conservation Officer, formerly posted in Fort Nelson, BC. Telephone interview.

Sample C: APA Style

Kendra Hunter

"Box Office Poison": Misogyny in Luc Besson's Portrayal of Joan of Arc in *The Messenger*

The basic biographical details of Joan of Arc's life comprise a generally accepted historical record. Joan of Arc was born in Domremy, France, in 1412, as a member of a peasant family. At the age of nineteen, she was successfully able to lead an entire army of men to victory. Joan claimed that she heard the voice of God, and that God had a personal mission for her: to save France. Initially, King Charles supported Joan by providing troops in the victorious battle to free Orleans. However, Joan's alliance with King Charles led to her betrayal and death. Eventually, she was sold to the English for 16,000 francs, charged with heresy and witchcraft, and burned at the stake. While the general outline of Joan's life is relatively clear, efforts to understand her character involve interpretation and speculation. Nevertheless, many assumptions have been made, and Joan has become a familiar icon in Western culture. Indeed, Joan's life has been the subject of numerous Hollywood films, including *The Messenger* (1999), directed by Luc Besson.

In an effort to explain my personal response to Besson's film, I have turned to Susan Faludi (1991), who claims that film-makers in the twentieth century are producing movies that denigrate independent women, making them appear weak or even psychotic (pp. 112–114). Faludi cites films such as *Fatal Attraction* (1987), which is about a married man who has an affair with a single woman. When the affair takes place, the man's wife is out of town. When the time comes that the man must return to his wife, the single woman suffers a mental breakdown and tries to commit suicide. Such behaviour shows that she is weak and unable to survive on her own. Drawing on Faludi's theoretical frame, this essay examines misogyny in Luc Besson's *The Messenger*. I will argue that Besson's film reveals a misogynistic backlash against twentieth-century feminism.

List of References [annotated]

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review. 1999. Brunette criticizes the historical inaccuracies in the film.

Faludi, Susan. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. New York: Doubleday. Faludi, as noted above, believes that twentieth-century film shows a backlash against feminism.

Maxwell, Ronald. (2000, Apr.). Review of *The Messenger: Joan of Arc. History Today*. pp. 52–53. Maxwell argues that Besson's portrayal "is founded on a lie": "a true story of love and sacrifice, of dedication and faith is turned to a false one of hatred, bitterness, fury, and revenge."

The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc. (1999). Directed by Luc Besson. Columbia Pictures. The movie provides Besson's creative interpretation of Joan's life and death.

Sample D: APA Style

Sarah Filmer

Re-envisioning the "Three R's":
Teaching Strategies for Students with Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a neurologically based learning disability that hinders language acquisition and processing. This disorder is characterized by a difficulty learning to read, write, spell, and in some cases, problems in mathematics (Jordan, 1977, pp. 1–4; Sawicki, 1997, p. 1; Wadlington, 2000, p. 2). Dyslexia is not a result of insufficient motivation, sensory deficits, inadequate instructions, or a poor environment. Individuals coping with this disorder have a difficulty with language, not intelligence (Wadlington, 2000, p. 2). Robert Sheppard (1998) believes that dyslexia is the most common form of learning disorder, and may affect as many as 730, 000 school-aged Canadians (p. 2). Nevertheless, Elizabeth Wadlington (2000) suggests that many teachers have not received the training necessary to meet the needs of these students. Thus, teachers are unsure of the definition and characteristics of dyslexia and may not even recognize the symptoms. Moreover, the manifestations of dyslexia vary from child to child, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe (p. 1). These factors make it difficult for the teachers to serve the needs of students with dyslexia while meeting the needs of all of the other pupils in the class.

Accordingly, this paper examines appropriate teaching strategies for students with dyslexia. First, I will explore the common effects and characteristics of dyslexia. Second, I will discuss types of instruction most appropriate for dyslexic students and the contributions that these teaching strategies may make to the academic success of dyslexic individuals. Finally, I will discuss my own personal struggle with dyslexia.

Dyslexia has prompted extensive scholarly interest and research. Numerous treatments and/or cures have been explored, involving disciplines ranging from computer science (Chenausky, 1997, p. 1) to neuropsychology (Robertson, 2000, p. 3). Despite such research, dyslexia remains a controversial issue. Today, experts may have an understanding of how dyslexia manifests itself, but there is still disagreement regarding effective treatment. In this paper, I will demonstrate that there is a range of potentially effective teaching strategies for students with dyslexia; however, the implementation of these strategies involves both a process of trial and error and a strong network for student support.

List of References [not annotated]

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Jordan, D.R. (1977). Dyslexia in the classroom. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.

Miles, T.R., & Pavlidis, G. (1981). Dyslexia research and its applications to education. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Riccio, N.M. (2000). Understanding dyslexia. *Current Health* 2, 30–31.

Robertson, J. (2000). Neuropsychological intervention in dyslexia: Two studies in British pupils. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 33,* 2, 137–148.

Sawicki, S. (1997). Understanding dyslexia. *People,*149–153.

Sheppard, R. (1998). Why kids can't read. *Maclean's, 111,* 36, 40–48.

Skottun, B.C., & Parke, L.A. (1999). The possible relationship between visual deficits and dyslexia: Examination of a critical assumption. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 32,* 2–5.

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Tonnessen, F.E. (1999). Options and limitations of the cognitive psychological approach to the treatment of dyslexia. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 32*, 5, 386–394.

Upbin, B. (1995). Rose-colored glasses. *Forbes*, 294–298.

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If you have been asked to prepare a proposal and working list of references for your own research project, consider the samples presented here as potential models.

THE FORMALITY OF SCHOLARLY STYLE

As we collectively move deeper into academic writing, it might be worthwhile to pause for a moment to consider the peculiar formality of scholarly discourse. Most of us would probably agree that the expressions we encounter in academic writing sound different from the expressions that we are used to in our everyday lives, as we converse with friends and family members. For this reason, academic writing often sounds unnatural. Confronted with a page of academic prose, we might feel as though we have suddenly parachuted into an alien country. The dialect, idiom, or accent is not quite what we are accustomed to.

Standard dictionaries attach different meanings to the word "formal." According to the *Oxford* paperback dictionary, "formal" can mean "prim," "stiff," or "perfunctory." It is associations like these that give academic formality a bad name. Reading published research articles, we might, for example, get the feeling that some authors take themselves and their subject too seriously.

On the other hand, there may be ways of justifying the formality of scholarly style. The *Oxford* dictionary also defines "formal" as "precise" and "explicit." Hence, when two people want to make sure that they understand each other, they might be inclined to write up a *formal* agreement. Academic writers, as people who deal with knowledge, share this desire for precision and explicitness. For academic writers, then, formality may actually foster clarity. Viewed in this more positive light, mannerisms that strike us as elevated may reflect the needs of knowledge-making communities. In sum, we should probably avoid blanket judgements about formality in academic writing. The style of an individual researcher needs to be judged on its own merits, based on how effectively it handles knowledge, the commodity of academic communities.

The subheadings that follow touch on some general aspects of style that academic instructors often comment on as they evaluate student writing. It is worth keeping these stylistic considerations in mind, from the proposal stage through to the final draft.

Grammatical Correctness

Most of your instructors will expect grammatical correctness. We are using the term "grammar" loosely, to include spelling, punctuation, subject–verb agreement, clear pronoun reference, effective transitions, and so on. While English instructors may pay special attention to grammatical correctness, it will also be a concern for instructors in other disciplines, even if they choose not to mark errors. There is, in fact, a cultural presumption that the ability to write grammatically correct prose is a prerequisite for university-level courses. Therefore, proposals and papers should be carefully checked.

Short Exercise

Identify grammatical problems in the following sentences. There may be more than one type of mistake in each sentence:

1. In the introduction to *Travels in Western North America*, Hopwood states that when he was two, Thompson's father passed away, leaving him, his mother, and his younger brother.
2. The intentions of the founders of the school, were to "educate poor children in the principals of piety and virtue and thereby lay a foundation for a sober and Christian life" (2).
3. This ominous doctrine gives the Kremlin the right to charge any reporter for conducting investigations. Except perhaps those who

only cover "the truth" as the government sees it, such as official anti-Chechen rhetoric.

4. In March of 1995; Silken Laumann and her Canadian teammates faced hardship when Pan-Am officials, in Argentina, stripped them of their gold medals.
5. Laumann states that Victoria Rowing Club physician Dr. Richard Backus had recommended the drug after coming down with the cold shortly before the Pan-Am games.
6. Women in most ancient civilizations were considered property and were used primarily to make babies to carry on the bloodline. The women of ancient Egypt were considered privileged because they had the same rights as men and were allowed to rule as men did.
7. To this day, the study of dreaming still remains a mystery as to what purpose dreams serve. Many studies have been done that reveal the daily lives of people reflect in their dreaming periods at night.
8. This illustrates the belief that people create their own reality in order to find purpose for their lives, Lois's purpose is to search for Lucy yet it is the loss of Lucy that gives her purpose.
9. A study by C.J. Carpenter (1983), is convinced that rules or guidelines in play, encourages long-term behaviour that is not creative, the child will always try to fit into someone else's idea of accepted behaviour (p. 142).
10. According to Bancroft and Hollyfield, (2002) the results were not surprising: when the company investigated it's own procedures no accounting errors were discovered (p. 111).

Colloquialisms

Informal speech is full of casual expressions and clichés, the meaning of which is readily understood in informal contexts (for example, "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"). In academic writing, however, your instructor might object to colloquialisms. In all likelihood, the instructor will understand your intended meaning, but that meaning may involve unexamined assumptions, figurative expressions, or word combinations that call for loose or inexact readings. Given the value placed on exactness in conducting and presenting research, such colloquialisms should be replaced by more precise or literal language.

Short Exercise

Identify colloquialisms in the following passages and explain how such constructions create ambiguity. Rewrite each passage in more precise language.

1. Since the dawn of time, human beings have sought metaphysical principles that would structure their lives.
2. Since the beginnings of Canadian history, Canada and the United States have had a relatively amicable relationship.
3. In 1975, the death penalty was banned completely on Canadian soil, even though many American states continued to dish it out.
4. For example, if Archie doesn't have enough money for two gifts, he will use all his money on a gift for Veronica, and he will claim that it is okay because Betty doesn't mind not getting anything (*Archie*, December 1999, pp. 3–5). However, the reader knows better. Guess you could say that even cartoon characters have their faults.
5. A great deal of Winston Churchill's life was directed by fate.
6. Along the same lines, I will argue that Tupac Shakur was not necessarily a great artist nor an artistic failure: he did make mistakes and struggled with pride, but, most importantly, Shakur had a good heart.
7. Even though Mary Rowlandson and her family made it to North America seemingly no worse for the wear, their travel was far from over.
8. Margaret Atwood's characters have a rocky relationship. Sure, Rob gives Lois everything she wants (116), but Lois is not genuinely happy.
9. One source of error was that the measuring scale could have been off.
10. The reason the data may be as they are is because of the fact that the crucible may have absorbed moisture during cooling.

Complex Terminology

Most writing handbooks discourage complex terminology, which often goes by the name of "jargon" or "technical language." The assumption seems to be that words or phrases readily understood by the general populace are almost always better than words or phrases

that are not (the simpler, the better). Academic writers, in particular, are criticized for their use of "professional slang." Malcolm Cowley, an advocate of standard English, makes the case:

> . . . a vast majority [of academics] write in a language that has to be learned almost like Esperanto. It has a private vocabulary which, in addition to strictly [discipline-specific] terms, includes new words for the commonest actions, feelings, and circumstances. It has the beginnings of a new grammar and syntax, much inferior to English grammar in force and precision. So far as it has an effect on standard English, the effect is largely pernicious.
>
> Sometimes it misleads the [academics] themselves, by making them think they are profoundly scientific at points where they are merely being verbose. (as cited in *The Broadview Reader*, 1987, pp. 23–24)

From this perspective, complex terminology amounts to verbosity: academic writers use a "barbarous jargon" that "fuz[zes] up the obvious" (Cowley, as cited in *The Broadview Reader*, 1987, p. 23). Ironically, though, we suggest that Cowley's own prose demonstrates the pattern he's discussing. Esperanto? Pernicious? Verbose? Cowley himself is very much a part of an academic culture that uses language in peculiar ways. Nevertheless, the popular bias against what some view as academic snobbery is evident in a recent headline in the *Edmonton Journal*: "Professors who resort to jargon discredit society" (Simons, 1999, Jan. 10, p. A8).

Simple language, however, is not always the best solution in academic writing. Because academic writers often challenge our common sense, they may, at times, require uncommonly complex language that enables them to refine or revise our habitual understandings of the world. Accordingly, this text takes a more tolerant view of complex terminology. We believe that "big words" and even some discipline-specific jargon can be effective tools in academic writing, but we advise writers to use these tools responsibly, with careful definitions.

Needlessly Complex Wording

Reduce these phrases to something simpler without changing the meaning:

Observational data	food item
individual food item categories	abundantly found food constituent
given the fact that	in this day and age
for the purpose of	in spite of the fact that
was of the opinion that	as a result of

In the following sentence, highlight the simple subject and the two main verbs. In essence, the sentence is telling us that a "move" "brought" something and "marked" something. However, the subject-predicate pattern is packed with phrases and clauses that obscure meaning.

> The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relationships in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power. (as cited in Simons, 1999, p. A8)

Wording That Is Not Complex Enough

In the next example, complex terminology makes the statement more concise.

> This essay examines Ambrose Bierce's hatred toward people who were different from him.
>
> [or, more effectively:]
>
> This essay examines xenophobia in the writings of Ambrose Bierce.

Effectively Complex Wording That Occurs in a Larger Context of Definitions

> First, I will explore the problems of habituation. Second, I will examine how aversive conditioning can sometimes be used as a solution to the problem of habituation. Finally, I will apply these concepts to the circumstances in Fort Nelson, to determine if aversive conditioning would have been a viable alternative to extermination.

> Dyslexia is a neurologically based learning disability that hinders language acquisition and processing.

> I will argue that Luc Besson's *The Messenger* reflects a misogynistic backlash against twentieth-century feminism.

> In relation to Monica Storrs' descriptions of landscape, it is worth noting that the terms "sublime" and "picturesque" were used throughout the nineteenth-century British exploration of Canada.

The tendency toward complexity in scholarly wording can be explained at a grammatical level through a phenomenon called "nominalization" (Giltrow, 2002, pp. 213–218). When a sense of formality weighs heavily on us, we often encounter language that is packed with long noun phrases (see Chapter 9).

Objectivity

Delving more deeply into the formal qualities of research articles, we might take a preliminary look at the scholarly concern for patterns of communication that ensure reliability. Whereas personal essays and letters tend to convey *subjective impressions* (that which is true for one person), research articles tend to seek *objective knowledge* (that which is empirically verifiable). In academia, "knowledge" denotes a particular kind of truth: knowledge is founded on claims that can be validated on the basis of testing. It is important to remember that this academic turn of mind does not stem from some arbitrary devotion to certainty. To the contrary, insofar as universities are research

institutions, they are in the knowledge-making business, and this means that knowledge itself is a valuable commodity, a product that bestows money and power on those who create it. In fact, advancements in the state of knowledge are intricately bound up with tenure, promotion, and research grants. Ideally, of course, universities generate knowledge for the well-being of society as a whole, but the relationship between knowledge and power means that the knowledge-making industry of academia also serves its own interests.

The distinct styles of the personal essay and the research article (which in turn point to apparent distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity, between impressions and knowledge) are evident in passages from two essays on related subjects. Both passages describe an aboriginal world-view, explaining how native people perceive nature and their relationship to it. In this sense, both passages essentially say the same thing or make the same point, yet they do so in very different ways.

The first passage is taken from a personal essay by Leah Idlout-Paulson, entitled "Wonderful Life" (1993):

> I can be a cloud . . . way up in the sky where I can see you first, then everyone and go everywhere with all kinds of colors: hanging low or high, in the North, South, West, or East. . . . But, when clouds are crying the people won't like it for me to cry for them; so I wish I was a big moon with a big, big, smiling face that everyone can see. But, the moon is always changing into different forms . . . [and] I would only appear with a wide smiling face, so I wish I was a sun who is keeping warm and making everybody warm too at the same time. But, the people would always ask me to keep shining and keep them warm and when it is getting too hot for them, they would look for something to cover themselves from me or to hide from me where they can have more fun without me. So I wish I was a star, but I don't know which one. . . . So I wish I was a tree, but trees don't move around at all to go with the others. So I wish I was an animal. . . . (pp. 57–58)

Idlout-Paulson's essay was first published in *Inuit Today*, a monthly magazine devoted to Inuit culture.

The second passage, previously cited in the discussion of summarizing, is taken from a research article by Shelagh Grant (1987), entitled "Myths of the North in the Canadian Ethos":

> There are many cultures and subcultures among the Indian and Inuit of northern Canada, but they share similar attitudes toward the land, derived in part from the long experience of survival in what many southerners consider a hostile environment. The image of the north as "homeland" is essentially a southern expression for the intensely spiritual concept of land held by northern natives. . . . Prior to European contact, everything within the Inuit's natural world had a spiritual connotation, a sanctity which must be respected. The infinite space and majestic grandeur of the Arctic gave northern man a special awe for the might and majesty of the world, impressed upon him his own insignificance, and made him both mystically-inclined and humble . . . Any life form or inanimate object which had a sense of permanency was thought to have a spirit or soul, a belief which explains his profound respect for nature.[12] He was not a separate entity arriving on earth; he was always there, at one with, and a part of the natural world. (p. 122)
>
> 12. See *Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English*, ed., Penny Petrone (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 202–203.

Shelagh Grant teaches history and Canadian Studies at Trent University, and her article was published in *The Northern Review*, an academic journal.

The authorial voice in the first piece describes personal *feelings*: there is little or no distance between what is being written and the writer herself. Accordingly, Idlout-Paulson gives free expression to her emotions. As a personal essayist, she bares her soul, deriving content from her own felt experience of the world. By contrast, the authorial voice in the second piece is more detached and analytical. If Idlout-Paulson wants to describe how life is for her, Grant wants to describe how life is for other people. Thus, whereas Idlout-Paulson uses "I" frequently, the first-person pronoun does not appear at all in Grant's passage, which investigates phenomena external to the authorial self. We do not mean to suggest that "I" *never* appears in academic writing (see Self-Disclosure in Chapter 6), but the absence of "I," in this case, contributes to the impersonal tone of Grant's writing. Some readers might even characterize the Grant excerpt in unfavourable terms, as comparatively cool or dispassionate.

Nevertheless, Grant's impersonal way of writing serves the knowledge-making values of her discourse community. As an academic, Grant is supposed to concern herself with objective truth, and her way of writing helps to satisfy this expectation. That is, Grant's style helps to create an impression of impartiality: she presents herself as an unbiased, logical expert, as someone who knows her subject through rigorous study. In addition, Grant inserts a superscript numeral (see the raised "12"), which, in context, refers the reader to an endnote, which in turn refers to an anthology entitled *Inuit Writing in English*. Grant cites this anthology to support the claims she is making, and it is probably safe to assume that several of the writing samples in the anthology bring us full circle, back to Idlout-Paulson's more personal approach. Curiously, Grant employs personal narratives such as Idlout-Paulson's as *evidence* for academic claims.

For aspiring academic writers, the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity may be a useful one, but it is also important to remember that this distinction is largely a matter of presentation. Indeed, although a professional academic writer like Shelagh Grant attempts to secure her claim to objective truth by heeding matters such as tone and evidence, her position is still very much a personal one. It is Grant herself, after all, who has decided what to focus on in her work, how to interpret the data before her, and how much to emphasize the significance of some data over the significance of others. Put another way, Grant's account of northern myths in the Canadian ethos cannot help but reveal something about Grant herself, even though she may not overtly refer to herself in her own work. Grant's description of the "homeland" myth, for example, may indirectly reveal an authorial disenchantment with Euro-Canadian attitudes toward nature. Thus, in describing native world views, Grant may be idealizing attitudes that provide a desirable alternative to her given reality. In this sense there may, in fact, be some hidden wish-fulfillment in Grant's piece, too. Ultimately, then, Grant's academic objectivity might be regarded as an illusion sustained by particular stylistic gestures.

In an effort to acknowledge the inherent subjectivity of all human perceptions, some academic writers have tried to put the writer back into the writing. "I," for example, frequently appears in academic articles from the humanities and social sciences. Some writers go a

step further and embellish "I" by discussing their backgrounds and their relationships with their topics. Alice Carlick (1995), for example, in her essay on the importance of a girl's puberty rites in Tagish and Inland Tlingit society, briefly refers to her own personal investment in and experience of her research site: "As a First Nations person hearing and reading First Nations stories," Carlick writes, "I interpret such stories using both my personal experience and my academic training" (p. 34). In a follow-up comment, Carlick continues to situate herself in relation to her topic by elaborating on the nature of her academic training: "Because my studies at university have included literature as well as anthropology, I will combine both perspectives to discuss how Mrs. Sidney's story 'The Girl and the Grizzly' helps us understand social customs surrounding the training of young women" (p. 34). Paradoxically, then, for scholars such as Carlick, part of academic objectivity now seems to entail acknowledging one's subjectivity. Indeed, in other instances, the autobiographical impulse in academic writing results in more lengthy moments of self-disclosure (see Chapter 6).

While clear-cut distinctions between objectivity and subjectivity are ultimately hard to maintain, the *ideal* of objectivity still exerts a powerful force on academic writing. This is particularly evident when one examines the extent to which academic writers employ other voices. Academics use other voices whenever they invoke someone else's written or spoken words, yet this does not mean that academic writers must always agree with the voices they employ. In "American Crime Comics as Villains: An Incident from Northern Canada," Jon Swainger (1998) refers to post-World War II newspaper editorials with which he disagrees. In this instance, certain voices are employed only to be discredited. Nevertheless, by presenting other voices as foils, Swainger attempts, among other things, to situate his topic in a real historical world. The editorials, which happen to be colourful and flamboyant, press upon the reader with dramatic immediacy, becoming verified points of view if not reliable statements of fact. Thus, the presence of other voices is part of an empiricist style that *seems* to place checks on the personal perceptions of the author, guarding against what the academic community would regard as the danger of errant subjectivity. Hence, academic writers rely on supporting voices in an attempt to ground research articles in actual rather than imagined realms.

IDEAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Block and label the rhetorical features in the following proposal:

Dallas Bartsch

"Survival of the Fittest": Gender Imagery in Media Coverage of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race

In late January, 1925, a diphtheria epidemic broke out amongst the children of Nome, Alaska. Five lives were lost and the closest medicine was over 1,000 miles away, in Anchorage, Alaska. Although there were planes in Fairbanks, they had been dismantled for the winter. The only hope was to get the life-saving serum to the remaining victims by dogsled. A plan was made and with the help of twenty dog mushers who formed a relay from Nenana to Nome, the diphtheria medicine reached the stranded children in a record five days and seven hours. In 1973, Joe Redington founded the Iditarod Dog Sled Race in memory of the Alaskan dogs who ran the life-saving relay. This race covers 1,151 miles, by dog team, from Anchorage to Nome.

The Iditarod Sled Dog Race is one of the few sports where both men and women compete against each other. Accordingly, this essay examines gender imagery in media coverage of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race. First, I will consider media coverage of the race from 1985 to 1990, years of great success for female competitors. Second, I will look at how the media portrayed female racers from 1991 to 2001. My primary sources include promotional videos, Internet interviews, and newspaper articles. Gender stereotyping by the media is a familiar practice in the sports industry. Pamela Creedon (1999) states that the media denies sportswomen the power and prestige that should be theirs. In other studies, Alexander (1994), Miller and Levy (1996), and Koivula (1999) investigate gender conflicts and how the media depicts them. Building on these and other works, I will argue that the media has portrayed women in the Iditarod as having little if any value compared to the male competitors.

2. Check out the periodical shelves at your library or a periodical database that offers full-text articles. Read through an article or two for examples of scholarly wordings. Are such expressions used effectively?

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6 Front Matter and Scholarly Introductions

Introductions are known to be troublesome, and nearly all academic writers admit to having more difficulty with getting started on a piece of academic writing than they have with its continuation. The opening paragraphs somehow present the writer with an unnerving wealth of options: decisions have to be made about the amount and type of background knowledge to be included . . . about the winsomeness of the appeal to the readership . . . and about the directness of the approach.

—John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*

Our analysis of topic proposals has indicated that introductory material in academic writing requires special handling. Our goal in this chapter is to look more closely at introductions to research papers in the humanities and social sciences and to elaborate on the patterns that can be found in them. Many of these features are common across the disciplines, but some (such as a Methods section) are reserved for special kinds of disciplinary knowledge-making. At the outset of the discussion, we need to make a distinction between the kind of attention-getting introductions that we encounter in, say, personal essays, and the more formal, knowledge-making introductions that we encounter in academic writing. The introductions to personal essays are **anecdotal** in the sense that they often tell a story, describe something, provide a quotation, etc. Indeed, countless composition handbooks provide student writers with a neat set of strategies for beginning what are really pre-disciplinary essays. Such strategies are supposed to function as "hooks" that engage readers. On the other