

We find collaboration itself an act of excess, and necessarily so. Any authorial collaboration tries to find a voice among the many varied interests and possibilities that its collaborators bring together. But in our experience, thinking and writing collaboratively has typically generated for any one project much more text than we can use. This excess text sometimes finds itself in digital trash cans, and sometimes generating other projects collectively and individually. Our collaboration has come to depend on the availability of that excess, on the meeting of minds with numerous thoughts and desires that become entangled with one another in the production of thoughts and texts that could not otherwise exist individually. But collaboration is also necessarily queer in its excesses, in that successful collaboration breeds more collaboration with more parties, not just the tightening of an initial collaborative relationship, though often that too. That is, good collaborators are often promiscuous, even as they enjoy their intimacy with one another. In learning to collaborate with each other, we have also learned to collaborate with others, and we eagerly embrace the pleasures of multiple relationships, stepping out on each other to play with others, while always knowing we have a home with the other.

While not everyone in the field will jive with our sexual metaphors, we believe they offer a glimpse into why many of us value collaboration. It feels so good. But often shy away from encouraging it in our students, lest they become too promiscuous. Many of us worry incessantly into the promiscuousness of students with their texts—with plagiarism marking the very worst kinds of textual relations students can have. However, we insist on a certain promiscuity—because the promiscuous, both as both metaphor and a kind of excess, gestures toward the illicit, the approach to the taboo.

Yes, students need awareness of intellectual property and appropriate citation. But thinking and designing promiscuously shouldn't be forgotten in the rush to set appropriate boundaries around relationships among texts. The promiscuous challenges us to think in and through multiplicities—of texts; of different kinds of texts; of the identities of those who produce and read texts; of the many disparate desires that we have for the production and consumption of texts.