DEVELOPING AND MANAGING COLLABORATIVE SCHOLARLY PROJECTS

Sandra Jamieson and Rebecca Moore Howard

MANY ASPECTS of collaborative scholarship are discussed in this collection; however, features of collaboration not covered elsewhere in this collection also merit discussion: namely, the challenges and benefits that come with the differences between coauthors. We believe that for many people those differences can be generative, leading to greater intellectual stimulation and better writing. In this essay, we draw on our own experiences working together and with others and on recommendations from other collaborative teams. The first two sections deal with questions you should ask before committing to a collaborative project, whether that be collaborative research, writing, or scholarly editing. You may not have definitive answers before your work gets underway, and circumstances will inevitably change, but having considered the questions in advance and keeping them in mind as you work will help keep the project afloat. The third section focuses on things to do once the work is underway—the nuts and bolts of collaboration. The final section of this essay discusses strategies for dealing with changes and problems you may encounter during the collaboration. We recommend that you review this section before you start writing and consider how you might deal with these and other situations should they arise. Many successful collaborations have survived a variety of disruptions. We wrote our first collaborative project, *The Bedford Guide to Teaching Writing in the Disciplines*, while we were both on the job market. Halfway through drafting that manuscript, Sandra moved to a new position in a different state. Lacking the technologies we now take for granted, we exchanged chapters on CD-ROMs by way of FedEx and discussed revisions in phone calls for which we paid long-distance phone charges by the minute. Yet we made our deadline. We began developing many of the strategies we discuss here during that early 1993 project and have been honing them since, sometimes with other combinations of coauthors.

Before Committing to a Collaborative Project

Why Write Together?

The veteran coauthors Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford begin their article "Why Write . . . Together?" with a detailed list of their behavioral and intellectual differences, from how they drink their coffee to when and how they prefer to plan and draft their writing. The implied question—"Why would two such different people write together?"—is answered in the fond way they discuss what must at times be profoundly frustrating differences. All successful coauthors can generate such lists, and we are no exception. Those who decide to collaborate a second time do so because it is those very differences—in style, approach, perspective, background, and knowledge—that create a stronger, richer, deeper, and more nuanced project. You don't have to start out as friends or as colleagues at the same institution or rank; you do have to respect each other enough to trust the

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https://doi.org/10.17613/nypm-8e23

value of your differences and to be willing to change or compromise some of your ideas, and this applies to all team members if the group is large.

Write together because when you talk to each other you find yourselves responding to issues in the same way or expanding each other's responses in ways you find stimulating. Write together because you both care about a particular topic. Because as a team you explored a similar question or gathered the same data. Write together because it will energize and motivate you and potentially teach you a lot.

Why Write This Piece *Together?*

If the idea of writing collaboratively appeals to you, the next step is to find a good project for collaboration. Not all topics will be equally interesting to you and your prospective coauthors, and even if they are, your schedules may not align to make collaboration on them possible. Ede and Lunsford publish separately as well as together. So do we. In contrast, the feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have published almost exclusively together (although Gilbert has also published poetry and creative nonfiction on her own). You might find someone you'd like to write with sometimes, but it doesn't have to be your next project or the one that's been on your back burner for a while. And yet a stalled project often comes to life with a fresh perspective. We recommend developing a first project together, and, if that works, consider bringing your coauthor on to other projects. Or not. A collaboration is not a marriage. Some projects will need to be solo, while others will need to be collaborations with others. The conversation you need to have is why *this* project. What can each coauthor bring to it that none of you is able to do alone?

Why—or Why Not—Write Together Now*?*

A conversation about logistics can help determine whether this is the time to write together or whether it would be better to delay the project and write together at another, more opportune time. Review your current and upcoming projects, commitments, and responsibilities and sketch a timeline for this project, from planning to publication. Look at other essays in this section to get a sense of the tasks ahead of you if this is your first project. Other scholarly commitments, upcoming committee assignments, tenure or promotion, job searches, weddings, pregnancies, and child- or eldercare will not derail the project if you plan around them—all scholars, even the most productive, have lives outside academia. The trick is transparency and planning.

Another issue to consider is the value of collaboration at your institution. If you are pretenure at a research-intensive institution, you may need solo publications early in your career. Or you may be at an institution that values collaboration. Check with your department chair or relevant committees as you consider this question.

What Might Go Wrong?

We recommend that all potential coauthors read the section "Managing Author Relationships" carefully and talk through each issue candidly before they find themselves needing to address it. A careful analysis of these and other potential problems will make it much less likely that you will have to deal with them; and if you do, you will have conversations from when you were more levelheaded to look back on.

https://doi.org/10.17613/nypm-8e23

A Note about Power Dynamics

Whereas most issues of collaboration are best discussed directly, the issues arising from power dynamics need to be considered and treated carefully and may be the most important issues to consider. Junior faculty members or graduate students may achieve professional advancement by agreeing to collaborate on a project; senior faculty members may want to provide that opportunity, especially as deserving colleagues seek publishing opportunities and as editors of long-running textbooks look for new authors to take over. However, some senior faculty members may be looking for someone to do most of the work in return for the promise of advancement, and some junior faculty members and graduate students may want the advancement but not be willing or able to do the work even if it is divided equitably. In considering collaborations across professional levels, decide whether you are looking to provide or receive the kind of mentorship and direction offered in graduate school or whether you imagine a more equal partnership.

If you are a junior member of a collaborative team, gather as much information as you can about how your potential coauthor imagines the relationship. Consult a trusted mentor as you weigh the costs and benefits of the project. How will you react to doing more than what you consider to be your share of the work or about deferring to the ideas of your coauthor? What do you expect from your coauthor? If you are the senior member of the team, consider your motives for collaboration and also the extent of mentoring you are willing or able to do as part of it. How frustrated will you be with a writing partner who does not know how the publishing process works? How will you react to challenges to long-held beliefs and practices?

Before the Collaborative Project Begins

If you have determined that now is the time and place for collaboration, there are more questions to be answered before you get underway. Many of these are good questions to ask before launching any writing project. With collaborative work, however, addressing them early takes on added importance. When a collaboration is well underway is no time to discover that you don't agree on issues such as those discussed in the following sections.

How Will You Handle Authorial Order?

We urge you to agree on authorial order before you start work. Doing so is a safeguard against ugly strife that can arise among the best of us and potentially derail or diminish the project once it is underway.

A common way to determine order of authorship in the humanities is to quantify the work. But quantity is slippery; a few sentences can be all it takes to transform a project, and prior publications on the topic also add context and insight. Also consider whose idea the project was initially, who brought it to fruition, and who will do the major drafting of the manuscript.

In the sciences, it is customary for the project leader to be listed first, even if that person did very little drafting or revision. This often occurs, too, when faculty members in any discipline publish collaboratively with students. Often the project leader or faculty member is also the best-known of the coauthors, so having that person's name appear first can also catch the attention of potential publishers and readers.

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In the humanities, sometimes, the person who stands to benefit most from being listed first is given first-author status. That person may be coming up for tenure or promotion or may teach at an institution where only first-author status counts. This is a delicate matter and should be considered carefully, especially if that person would not be listed first in other circumstances.

Some coauthors opt for alphabetical order. This is one way to resist a perceived institutional or disciplinary drive to quantify faculty members' labor and cultural capital. It is also a system that, if adopted early in the collaboration, prevents changed circumstances and different balances of labor from creating hard feelings or constant renegotiations of authorial order. If you and your coauthors are producing multiple publications, you may want to take turns on authorial attribution in the sequence of your publications, which is what we do in our two-person collaborations. In most of our projects, our workload is about equal, although we often shift primary roles. By the time one of our works goes to publication, we typically can't remember who drafted which passage; we have a "Rebecca-Sandra" voice that takes over everything we write. So alternating names seems a practical and ethical choice for us. A word of caution: some publishers ask authors to submit initial abstracts using a web interface, and we have found that once an account is started, changing authorial order can involve multiple layers of approval and frustration—another reason to finalize the decision of authorial order early on.

What Working Relationship Do You Imagine?

Once you have a potential project, you need to discuss the more delicate question of how you plan to work together. This will be determined by your personalities, status, and areas of expertise; however, unless you are close friends, only your respective areas of expertise will be obvious as you begin considering collaboration. Regardless of prior acquaintance or experience, this is a conversation we recommend for everyone on every project. No two projects are the same, so even if you have worked together before, it is helpful to have the conversation for each project rather than risk making any incorrect assumptions.

Will one person be in charge? Will all the coauthors have equal voice in the shape of the project? Will anyone have veto power? How will you handle disagreements? Navigating hierarchies is always complicated, especially when there are uneven power relations between coauthors—for instance, when one is a professor and another a graduate student, one a native speaker and another a nonnative speaker, one a senior faculty member and another a junior faculty member, when coauthors have a different status in the discipline, or even when their institutions have different reputations. Hierarchies also exist between colleagues and friends, even good friends, and it is better to talk them through before you start work, just as you would with a stranger. It is wiser to identify differences early and if necessary agree not to work together than it is to discover critical differences when the project is well underway, when those differences can imperil either the project or personal or professional relationships.

How Will the Work Be Divided?

This will to some extent be determined by the number of coauthors and the type of project you are undertaking. If there are several of you, you might divide the work into discrete sections of the manuscript, with one person or several people drafting each part independently. This is an efficient approach, but the intellectual benefit of collaboration comes when you read each other's material and work together to revise and to develop a single voice. Failure to do that leads to something more like committee writing, which is rarely stylistically inviting.

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Collaboration goes beyond drafting and writing to include the various administrative tasks associated with the project. We have learned—the hard way—the importance of listing all the necessary tasks and deciding who will do which. Some, like reviewing galleys, can and probably should be shared; others are better handled consistently by one person, with the others copied on correspondence, of course. Other essays in this section give a sense of specific tasks involved in publishing.

How Will You Manage the Logistics of Working Together?

Some writers still prefer to work side by side, traveling to each other's homes during breaks or setting aside time to write at academic conventions. Such bursts of focused writing can be more productive than distance writing, which provides less accountability and is more easily interrupted. On the other hand, drafting separately allows each coauthor to write at different times, accommodating different writing habits, time zones, and schedules—and the complexities of other professional and personal responsibilities. Talking these options through before you commit to a collaborative project allows you to establish a reasonable timeline and to seek institutional support for any technology you might need.

Many other responsibilities need to be assigned, from the literature review to responding to reviewers to adherence to a publisher's specified style sheet.

Even with only two authors, your collaboration needs an identified project manager, someone who's good with schedules, deadlines, and the big picture and who can keep track of communication, distribution and completion of tasks, and deadlines. A plethora of software can help with project management and related communication. Large groups may find a closed communication network such as *Slack* to be a useful way to organize and share focused messages and ensure that threads do not get lost. Some use a shared *Google Calendar* to set work or meeting dates and deadlines. Others rely on some combination of email, text, *WhatsApp*, and direct messaging. The "keep it simple" philosophy that guides our own work was learned from participating in projects that included so many ways of communicating that we lived in fear of missed messages.

What Is the Ideal Placement for This Publication?

The question of where collaborative work should be published may need to be determined or revisited later in the project, but it is important to have an initial conversation about it. Is this project geared toward scholarly publication? Will it be used as a textbook? Is it aimed at the public? These are broad questions that are probably easily answered in the early stages of the project.

You also need to consider potentially more complex issues, such as these: Do you want royalties from the publication? If you are self-publishing, which Creative Commons license will you use? How dedicated are the coauthors to open-source publication? Will you publish in a venue where the authors must make financial contributions to the publication? Will you publish with a press that doesn't make free online access available? Will you publish with a press known for setting prices far too high, thus making your work accessible only to those with money or access to a research library? With what urgency does each of you view the timetable to publication? If some coauthors are facing a job search or promotion decision, they may feel greater need for speed and thus want to choose the first willing publisher rather than hold out for the most prestigious one.

https://doi.org/10.17613/nypm-8e23

As the Collaborative Project Gets Underway

Publisher's Requirements

If you have a publisher before you begin writing, or if you have a desired publisher or publication in mind, all the coauthors need to be clear about deadlines; manuscript format; the process of manuscript submission; limitations on images, tables, and figures; and other contractual details. All of these should be kept in mind by all coauthors as you draft. If the publisher wants MLA style and one coauthor is drafting in APA, it makes onerous work for the person who, before manuscript submission, must assure whole-manuscript adherence to the house style.

Deadlines

Know each other's schedules, both quotidian and through the life of the project. Will one of you be traveling? Does one of you have commitments that will take you away from the project before it's finished? How will you work around these things honestly? If one of you will be unavailable during a key aspect of the project, especially at the end, is the other willing to pick up the additional work? Or is this perhaps not the right time for you to enter into a collaboration?

Writing

Especially if they don't already know each other well, coauthors need to expect and accept different styles of communication and different rhythms of work. For example, Sandra prefers to write into the night, while Rebecca is up and writing only a few hours after Sandra falls asleep. Our productive hours begin to overlap at midmorning, so that is when we review each other's work and come together virtually or in person to talk through issues or questions that arose in our solo-hours' work. Sandra needs silence to write, while Rebecca prefers to write with carefully selected music. We try to accommodate each other's routines or ideas about productivity while not gnarling our own routines and ideas. It is the very differences between coauthors that produce the best work.

We recommend that coauthors work hierarchically, with one person drafting and both (or all) revising together. It is in the conversations surrounding this revision that the magic of collaboration occurs and the coherence of the piece emerges. Knowledge is generated, expanded, transformed, and articulated in ways that no individual author could do alone. And in the best of cases, the energy of these conversations is transferred to the text, making it more engaging for readers. The downside is that most of the work of this kind of collaboration will be done after the draft is completed.

Other tasks are best completed synchronously. This applies especially to outlines and introductory materials. The progress may be slow, but if everyone agrees on a provisional draft, it is easier to then separate and work hierarchically. This synchronous work should also be allowed to slip into more general conversation at times, especially if the coauthors do not know each other well. When coauthors feel at ease with each other, they are better able to talk through concerns or propose revisions.

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Revising and Rewriting

The revision stage adds so much to collaborative scholarly projects. If you don't know your coauthors well, or if your power relationships aren't balanced, revision may be a gradual process. It is always stressful to have others read and revise your work—something all coauthors should remember. Adding explanations for changes in marginal comments may help, but the revision and rewriting stages should include a lot of direct talk as well. And everyone needs to work to keep their egos tamed. Coauthors need to feel comfortable making radical revisions to each other's drafts, but in the process all manner of power relationships come into play. If there are only two of you, we suggest that you make a copy of the text in its current draft and then freely revise that copy. If you are working in a program such as *Google Docs*, the software saves each version of the text, so you won't have to make a preliminary copy.

Once a draft is complete, everyone should read it carefully without editing and then schedule time to talk (ideally face-to-face, but if not then in video chat so you can see each other and pay attention to body language and facial expression). Start by reviewing the direction the piece has taken, the ways the parts go together, and moments that seem particularly strong. Even longtime collaborators appreciate a little praise. Then discuss, and agree on, what needs to be added or cut and divide up the revision so each section gets at least one set of new eyes.

Technology

Over twenty-five years of long-distance collaboration on both essayistic writing and mixed-mode qualitative research, we've used a variety of technologies. Some were wonderful; some didn't work for us. We've learned to keep the technologies as simple as possible. *Google Docs* and *FaceTime* are our current go-to programs, allowing us to talk with each other and see each other while the two of us work simultaneously on a single version of a single document. When we asked colleagues on social media what they used for collaborative writing, we found *Google Docs* the overwhelming response there too. There was less agreement about how to talk while writing (which not everyone does). *FaceTime* helps the two of us approximate a face-to-face writing experience. Larger groups use *Zoom* or other commercial conferencing software that allows all participants to be seen in individual windows. Sandra is currently working successfully with a team of more than two dozen faculty members across a dozen countries using a combination of *Zoom* and *Google Docs*.

Before the project begins, test any unfamiliar technologies the team is planning to use. Most collaborative teams using image-processing, sound-recording, corpus-based, or statistical software wisely designate one or two members to assume technical responsibility, but we recommend that all coauthors feel comfortable using the selected software or that all are familiar enough with it to explain the method and output. This also applies to resulting data if they are reporting data-driven research. Everybody who will use selected software should practice in advance.

Storage

Storage is the one area that researchers generating large data sets, corpora, or multiple texts agree is a problem, and there seems to be no ideal solution on the horizon. You will need to decide where to store drafts, data, and PDFs of sources you gather. We used Sandra's institutional network until it ran out of space, then a commercial

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web- and data-hosting service, and now *Google Docs* and *Dropbox*. For a multiauthor project we have underway, we use *Sync* and store screen-capture videos on *YouTube*. Technologies are constantly changing, but the trick to this aspect of successful collaboration is to find what works for your writing style and stick to that for the entire project. An index document can also be helpful, especially when it includes links to subdocuments and drafts.

Talking

One of the joys of collaborative writing is the ongoing conversations about the project. We have found it empowering to talk while we write, even though we're seldom in the same place these days—sometimes not even on the same continent. For the production of this essay, we met at and after the MLA convention and worked together in person to brainstorm and draft an outline. We talked about what we wanted the essay to accomplish, and we talked to other coauthor teams to get ideas and cautionary advice.

This kind of talking keeps us collaborating. We might begin a conversation with few ideas or little focus, but we generally end it energized and ready to write. From all our previous collaboration, we've learned that even though the outline changes as the project develops, early outlining helps everybody see and agree on where the piece might go and how they might contribute to it. The actual writing of this essay occurred long-distance with some solo drafting, but mostly we were both online, on *FaceTime*, while we drafted in a shared *Google Doc*. Much of that time we weren't even talking, but whenever a question or issue came up, we could pause and talk it through. The clatter of each other's keyboards has become the soundtrack for our writing. And working simultaneously, virtually face-to-face, keeps each of us from wandering off to do the laundry, grade papers, or binge-watch TV.

As the Collaborative Project Concludes

Communicating with Publishers and Submitting the Manuscript

We recommend that only one member of the team communicate with the publisher while copying communications to the other members (unless there are reasons to proceed otherwise). The publisher needs to know who to write to, and they also need a crisp line of communication with that one person—not a variety of emails exchanged with a variety of coauthors. Whichever coauthor has the duty of communicating with the publisher should be the person who submits the finished manuscript.

Final Editing and Citation Style

One coauthor should take responsibility for the final editing of the manuscript before it goes to the publisher: line-editing the manuscript for grammatical correctness, cohesive style, correct punctuation, and similar concerns.

Someone must also take responsibility for the manuscript's adherence to the publisher's specified style sheet. Logically, that will also be the person who aligns the citations with the bibliographic entries. Schedule these two tasks while allowing sufficient time for coauthors to review and revise the editing.

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Responding to Reviewers, Determining What Changes to Make, and Coordinating Revisions

While most publishers try for a quick turnaround on reviews, the reviewers themselves aren't always cooperative. Reviews come through the editor and back to the authors in their own good time, so it's hard to anticipate when the postreview work can be done. Nevertheless, one person needs to be ready to take the lead on managing the revisions, even if that work arrives at a very inconvenient moment in the semester.

Page Proofs

Page proofs may look great at first glance, but authors usually find a number of things that need to be changed at this stage. Especially if the project involves a book-length manuscript, working with page proofs is a substantial job. Before those proofs arrive, know who will be responsible for going over them line by line.

Indexing

Another substantial job is indexing a book or an edited collection. An index is a boon to readers, making your book much more navigable and useful. However, many publishers require the authors to do this labor. Identify which members of your team will do this work.

Acknowledgments Section

Acknowledgments in collaborative projects can take a variety of forms. Usually a collaborative book has one set of acknowledgments for the combined team. Sometimes, though, collaborative authors choose to have a series of acknowledgments—a paragraph per person, for example—in which the authors acknowledge their individual supporters and loved ones.

Publicity Material, Front Matter, Cover Art, Font, and Style

Sometimes authors have a voice in issues such as publicity material, front matter, cover art, typeface, and citation style. Will all of you debate each one of these and abide by a majority vote, coin flip, or compromise? Will just one person be commissioned to make these decisions, and is everyone comfortable with that scenario?

Managing Author Relationships

Trust

In a successful collaboration, coauthors trust each other enough to devote time and intellectual labor to the project, and this is another place where talking—and listening—is essential. Disparate power relationships underlie most collaborative projects. One coauthor is a professor, and the others graduate students. One is well known for previous publications; the other is new to publishing. Five of the coauthors know each other well; the sixth is "new in town." The list expands exponentially as issues of native language, race, class, disability and

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ability, and gender come into play. Everyone on the team must work to create a space where power, voice, and representation are as well distributed as possible. Those holding the most power have the most responsibility for this, but there is no room for bystanders.

Make space for getting to know each other not just as scholars on a project but as whole people. When we began writing together, we were colleagues in the same department, but we didn't know each other well. Now we live in different states, but we know each other's pets, homes, families, and culinary preferences. We also know all the signs when someone is falling behind in her work on a project, and we know the best ways to intervene and support her, rather than just gripe about or at each other. It took us several decades to get here, but sensitivity to and respect for each other are both goals and benefits of collaboration.

Evolving Argument or Argument Not Supported by Data or Literature

As writing projects progress, they inevitably evolve, often in directions not imagined by the authors. Additional textual research or data may suggest an argument is no longer sustainable; or submissions for an edited collection may suggest a different organization or overarching narrative. When the coauthors or coeditors are in agreement, the project slips into the new direction or form, even if it takes significant conversation to get there. When the coauthors or coeditors have substantial disagreements—for example, about the interpretation of a text, the significance of data, or the quality of contributors' chapter drafts—take the time to reach consensus or majority vote before proceeding.

Ownership

Sometimes a project will include unmarked collaboration by graduate students, librarians, or other colleagues. It is customary to acknowledge the assistance of the latter two, but with students it is sometimes more complicated. A research assistant should be thanked, but anyone who generates text that appears in the final version is an author and should be identified as such in the list of authors.

Ownership of material is complicated in other ways, especially when one or more members of the team have also published independently on the topic. Sometimes a collaborative article may contradict what one of the authors has written elsewhere. If it reflects a changed opinion, that might be noted in a footnote; if not, the team needs to find a solution that retains the integrity of the piece and the author in question. Disagreements happen and in many ways elevate a collaboration above solo authorship, because they challenge us to rethink or rearticulate beliefs. We two have had our share of disagreements, some quite energetic, but most ultimately generative.

Go into your collaboration knowing there may be disagreements, and some of them may be worth fighting over. So check your passive aggression at the door, fight fairly, and don't be mean. Speak up. And listen. This is your project. But it is theirs too.

Evolving Roles

Collaborations work best when one coauthor is always ready to back up another. With all the life issues that can derail the best-laid plans, try to ensure that no aspect of the project—data management or literature review, for example—can be done by only one person. The more complex the project, the more each coauthor should have a potential understudy.

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You may find, though, that a member of the collaborative team is simply not pulling their weight, for whatever reason. Don't let this drag on indefinitely; address and remedy it as soon as possible.

Changing Circumstances and Roles

A number of issues may arise that put long-term pressure on the system you and your coauthors have set up. Someone may find themselves on the job market, starting a new position, moving to another institution, taking on new family responsibilities, or experiencing illness or injury. That person may be a key participant—the one who maintains the database and spreadsheets, the one crafting the first draft of the manuscript, or the one who is coding the visual data. Each of these scenarios is a game changer that has to be negotiated on its own terms. Yet we do have some strongly held general views on how to proceed. This advice applies at all times but becomes particularly important when the collaborative project hits an obstacle:

If you hide from your coauthors because you are feeling overwhelmed or guilty because you have missed a deadline, you're endangering the project and potentially wasting their outlays of human or economic capital. So answer or at least acknowledge your project-related messages and emails. Check in to the project site regularly and responsibly. Answer questions people are asking you, or tell them when you will. If you're feeling overwhelmed and can't even manage this, don't disappear from sight. Write to everybody and say you have to take a break.

And then get yourself back in the pack as fast as possible. Don't let a forced absence lead you to drop out of the project or just blow off your coauthors. Keep the absence as confined as possible. And no matter what, keep checking the project site and answering messages, even if that's all you're doing.

Equally important, no matter how frustrating it can be, all coauthors need to cut each other some slack. Be cognizant of the fact that the person who meets all the deadlines may be experiencing fewer personal distractions than the one who does not. Even if you don't know what is going on, believe the coauthor who needs a break. Maintaining respect for each other is essential.

More Serious Interpersonal Issues

Some problems are not situational but personal, and usually they are less surprising in hindsight than at the time they occur. Interpersonal problems may arise as a result of a specific event, a misunderstanding, or a gradually emerging pattern of behavior that eventually becomes untenable. The problem might initially seem insignificant or par for the course, and you may be able to address it with the help of others on the team or in your professional network; however, sometimes it is best for your mental and physical health to walk away from a project, whether you make a public exit or find an excuse that keeps it private.

Pay attention to any discomfort you start to feel about working with your coauthors, and, equally important, pay attention to discomfort you or others in the team may be causing. If you hear an apparently offhand comment that disrespects a coauthor or a group with which that person identifies, don't just let it go. Take the speaker aside and suggest a more respectful behavior, and check in with the person who may have felt disrespected. Too often those of us with one or more privileges of race, gender, class, age, ability, nationality, language, or status are unaware of the microaggressions others face every day. Collaboration is more successful

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when we pay attention to the experiences of those with whom we write—an attentiveness that should inform all aspects of our lives.

While microaggressions and passive-aggressive behavior often occur in plain sight, too often, offensive behavior does not take place in front of witnesses, and even when it does, coauthors may not always recognize problematic interactions. Don't knowingly put yourself in an unnecessarily stressful or risky situation—and don't remain in a toxic or dangerous collaboration. If you have discussed exit strategies before the project began, you may need to revisit them. If you feel you can't communicate with your coauthor or group, seek professional support or simply withdraw. A contract may need to be renegotiated. Bridges may be burned. If you are a junior member of the team, you may prefer to document your experience, ask others to corroborate it, and walk away. These situations may be rare, but they are probably much less rare than we might like to think.

When a coauthor drops out of the project completely, you may be faced with a range of decisions, from changing authorial order to renegotiating the distribution of royalties in your contract. Both tact and candor will serve you well as you navigate these waters. We are ourselves long-standing practitioners and advocates of collaborative research and writing. Over the years we have collaborated with dozens of other scholars, more successfully at some times than at others. We have learned to respect and account for the challenges and the benefits of collaboration and for the work that goes into making collaboration successful.

Recommended Reading

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https://doi.org/10.17613/nypm-8e23