For the English department, this statement describes the philosophy behind its newest undergraduate degree track: the editing, writing, and media (EWM) major. Launched in the fall of 2009, the EWM major “re-conceives the English major for the 21st century.” With an increasing number of college students interested in editing and publishing careers, English department faculty recognized a need to prepare students for the new challenges in writing careers brought on by the rise of digital technologies and the web. The EWM major is proving to be a successful response to this need. In its first semester, 100 students picked the editing, writing, and media track as their major, and the department expects that number to increase to around 300 by the end of 2010. To put those numbers in perspective, the English department as a whole had 1,604 undergraduate majors in the fall of 2009.

The EWM track is specifically designed for students with career interests in writing, publishing, editing, and electronic media. Unlike a journalism degree and the department’s graduate Certificate in Editing and Publishing, the new program provides students with a rhetorical framework that is useful for analysis and creation of text and gives them an overview of the relationships between various technologies and texts. In addition, the EWM major helps students expand their writing repertoire, introduces them to various publishing practices, and gives them an opportunity to gain practical work experience.

Kathleen Yancey, the department chair and director of the graduate program in Rhetoric and Composition, loves the EWM major because “it’s a signature FSU program: as far as we know, no one else in the country offers anything like it, and we think that it will showcase the talents of our students in new ways.”

To complete this major, students must fulfill four components. The first involves taking three core courses that the department considers to be fundamental in the study of textual fields: Rhetoric; Writing and Editing in Print and Online; and History of Text Technologies. For the second component, students have the freedom to pick and choose nine credit hours from a list of advanced courses including History of Illustrated Texts as well as Editing: Manuscripts, Documents, and Reports. Components three and four consist of an internship in editing and publishing and a senior seminar about the nature of textuality, respectively.

From Fall 2009 to Spring 2010, the English department plans to offer 12 courses for the new major, including the internship and senior seminar. After two years, faculty members will meet to assess and re-examine the major with the hope of expanding it even more to better meet the needs of students. The English department would also like to set up a website that showcases the work of EWM students. Ideally, the major will continue to evolve as technology and the impact it has on writing careers keeps changing.

So why should students choose the EWM major over, say, the Creative Writing Program or even the Certificate in Editing and Publishing? Kristie S. Fleckenstein, an associate professor and director of undergraduate studies for the English department, feels the EWM major is a great option for students because it “provides an excellent foundation for professional careers in writing, publishing, and editing and for advanced work at the graduate level in rhetoric, composition, and/or history of text technologies.”

The EWM major also combines the aspects of editing, publishing, and writing within a humanities framework. This framework, says Fleckenstein, allows students to gain “knowledge of what texts they might compose, edit, or design for different audiences and media...as well as the critical and rhetorical knowledge to make effective and ethical choices about texts, audiences, and media.”

Alex Delgado, an EWM student, likes the new major because of its relevance to modern culture. “It incorporates many of the programs and practices used in things like magazines and newspapers today,” Delgado explains.

Other students such as Joe Purdy picked the EWM major to prepare for the job market. “If you are thinking about majoring in English and want to pursue a job in a professional sector like editing or technical writing, then EWM is definitely the route to go,” says Purdy.

Students who would like additional information about the EWM major can contact Fleckenstein or visit the English department website at english.fsu.edu/ewm/index.html.

Any students interested in declaring editing, writing, and media as their major should see Stephanie Cameron Kennedy in the English advising office.