



[Kyle Jensen](#) (English, University of North Texas) “Toward an Uncanny Writing Studies: Frederic Myers and Automatic Writing”

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Traditionally, Frederic Myers is not listed among the most important theorists in writing studies. Yet, his research on automatic writing provides one of the most sophisticated and capacious engagements with how human consciousness, cognition, and writing technologies intersect. At the turn of the twentieth century, automatic writing was defined primarily in terms of spiritual mediumship. The medium would cede volitional control to a spirit guide who communicated messages from the great beyond by taking control of his or her writing hand. In an attempt to understand how this curious process unfolded, Myers began a seven-year study guided by a comprehensive evaluation of automatic writing case studies. Over the course of four extensive papers, he proposed a new theory of how minds non-consciously work on one another during the act of writing. In the process, he invented the term *telepathy* and hypothesized a new theory of human cognition. In drawing attention to Myers’s path breaking writing research, this presentation advances three important arguments: [1] Myers’s research encourages the scholars to look for uncanny instances of writing research that exceed academic instruction in university systems; [2] Myers’s research participates in, and in substantive ways augments, ongoing debates about how writers affect one another; and [3] Myers’s research proposes a future for writing research and instruction by employing new technologies for studying the evolution of writing processes. In each argument, this presentation connects Myers’s automatic writing research to the historical debates that have shaped rhetoric and composition studies and thereby cultivates new ways of approaching its most foundational questions.