

Inkshed

Volume 13, Number 1, October 1994

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Inkshed provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use. Subscribers are invited to submit informative pieces such as notices, reports, and reviews of articles, journals, books, textbooks, conferences, and workshops, as well as polemical discussions of events, issues, problems, and questions of concern to teachers in Canada interested in writing and reading theory and practice.

Inkshed is published five times during the academic year. The following is a schedule of submission deadlines and approximate publication dates:

15 September, for 1 October 1 February, for 15 February
15 November, for 1 December 1 April, for 15 April
Post-Conference: June-July

This newsletter is supported financially by the various Writing Programmes at York University. To become a member of the Inkshed organization, make cheques for \$27.50 (or \$17.50 for students or under employed) payable to Inkshed at NSCAD c/o Kenna Manos, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 5163 Duke Street, Halifax, N.S. B3J 3J6. Fees support the Inkshed Publishing Initiative and on-going organizational expenses.

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Greetings from the Editorial Board!

To introduce ourselves, we (James Brown, Mary-Louise Craven, Tom Greenwald, Jan Rehner, Leslie Sanders, Ron Sheese, John Spencer, and Gail Vanstone) are a motley collection of folks from various writing programmes at York University. Our work and interests involve writing and writing-through-the-curriculum courses, one-to-one tutoring and various forms of computer-assisted instruction. Some of us are known to you through Inkshed conferences, others look forward to a first meeting at the Calgary roundup. We are pleased, excited and somewhat nervous about taking on the task of editing Inkshed-we would appreciate some advice about the directions we'd like to take.

These are our ideas:

1. We propose to provide electronic access to Inkshed (see Mary- Louise Craven's discussion below).
2. We propose to begin a "media watch" for discussions on writing instruction, public outcries about 'literacy', and related issues. We are asking our readers to send us reports or clippings, which we'll summarize or reproduce in the

newsletter. Responses could be collective and collaborative, or from the singular outraged pen of a member. Inkshed then will also have a clipping file which will be useful in many ways.

3. We invite you to send us anecdotal material from your teaching experiences. These need not be long, and you need not provide commentary unless you wish. At Fredericton, many people commented that anecdote comprised the most telling and memorable parts of the papers that people brought to the conference. We also feel anecdote clarifies, and would like to make anecdotes a regular feature of Inkshed.

4. We propose to link the CASLL-L network and Inkshed by asking those of you on CASLL to report on interesting discussions. A preliminary response on CASLL to this idea suggests that people don't mind having their e-mails edited-in fact some people specifically said they don't mind being written up, but only if they are edited. Thus we ask that if you are following, or if you initiated, a debate that becomes lively and helpful, you take on the responsibility of editing it into a report or representative set of exchanges, and send it to us for the newsletter. Ground rules: please acknowledge everyone whose comments you include. In this way, we hope to begin to provide a link between those on e-mail and those who are not.

5. We are proposing several areas for Inkshed discussion:

writing in the workplace one-to-one tutoring
teaching science and technical writing electronic tutoring
writing instruction for "non-traditional" students (what a phrase-we mean by it
adult students and students from 'underrepresented groups').

If any of these topics engage you, please write us something.

6. We would like also to include software reviews and notices of research in progress.

We are particularly interested in suggestions for how we can encourage more people to write for Inkshed; we need to hear from writing folks from all sectors of the "writing community." Feedback, please!

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An on-line *Inkshed*? An *Inkshed* Archive?

Given the computing facilities now available to some of us, we (the editorial board), would like to propose that Inkshed be published on-line, in tandem with its print-based form. We clearly do not want to abandon our hard-copy version, but we think that there may be enough Inksheddors who would want to receive an electronic Inkshed that the extra effort will be worth it in terms of the savings on printing and stamps. We also think there are "political" advantages to having our newsletters on-line: if we publicize-on appropriate listservs-that our newsletter is now on-line, we may increase awareness of our Canadian existence! Some of us may worry that having the newsletter available on-line would mean that people wouldn't pay their CASLL membership if they could get the newsletter "free." I don't think this should concern us unduly: those who are committed to our Canadian professional organization will support us with their dues. (Of course, if they don't pay their dues they won't get the books which the Inkshed Initiative publishes.)

Let me assume that we go ahead and you indicate that you want to read Inkshed on-line. We could either mail you the newsletter (through an automatic mailing program that you would initially subscribe to; once the issue was ready, the text would be emailed to you), or you could retrieve the newsletter from York's gopher site or York's Web site). Let me look at each option. The email version would be a straight text copy (i.e., unformatted). When you printed it out, you would lose the look and feel of a "newsletter." For some, this loss may be important.

Alternatively we could notify subscribers (via the mailserv facility) that an issue is ready and supply the appropriate

addresses to get the documents via a gopher or through the Web. (To use York's gopher and Web, you have to have a gopher or Web client at your end, while every computer centre should have these available to its staff on networked machines; accessing and printing the documents at home might be a problem.) In any event, you would have to print out the text yourself. Please let us know if you would use this service: it may be more work on your part than you want to undertake. For just as you may reject the idea of scanning your own groceries at the supermarket, you may prefer others to print and collate newsletters!

As an additional point, I think it is important that we have a record of Inksheds. Even if now you receive paper-based issues, in the future, once we store the newsletters on-line, you can access the archive and refer back to earlier issues. From this perspective, I think, as a minimum, it's important to keep the issues on disk. Should the organization have a complete copy of all the paper-based issues of Inkshed? I am prepared to assemble this archive and then pass it on to the next Inkshed newsletter editorial group. I have many issues since 1986, but I do not have a complete set. Does anyone have a more or less complete set that I could "borrow" to xerox and then return?

Responses to these issues are welcome (in any medium!)

Mary-Louise Craven (mlc@yorku.ca)

Please email information to inkshed@yorku.ca **IF you are interested in receiving Inkshed electronically** letting us know whether you want the newsletter mailed to you or if you want to retrieve it.

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Call For Papers

Donald Lawrence and Will Garrett-Petts seek contributions to Integrating Visual and Verbal Literacies, a projected anthology. The editors intend the anthology to explore the proposition that recent developments in art theory, media studies, and cultural studies make discussion of purely verbal literacy highly problematic.

Proposals and submissions are welcomed in three areas:

- (1) The changing rhetorical situation: Arts Literacy in Canada; The Rhetoric of Visual Literacy; Spectator and Reader: the Changing Conventions of Viewing and Reading
- (2) Pedagogical Implications: Reggio Emilia, Pre-Schoolers, and an Integrated Arts Curriculum; Media Studies in Schools; Teaching Literature and the Visual Arts Together; Interdisciplinarity and the Universities
- (3) Image/Text Encounters: Essays on travel and tourism; Essays on the Documentary; Essays on "Prose Pictures"; Essays on "Visual Narratives"

Those wishing further information may contact the editors via e-mail (petts@cariboo.bc.ca) or FAX 604-828-5086. Substantially completed papers should be received by December 15, 1994. Please send all materials to W.F. Garrett-Petts, English & Modern Languages Department, The University College of the Cariboo, 900 College Drive, P.O. Box 3010, Kamloops, B.C., V2C 5N3.

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Call for CCCC Presentations

The Canadian Caucus of the Conference on College Composition and Communication will meet on Thursday, March 23, 1995, from 6:45-7:45 at CCCC '95 in Washington, D.C. Further details will be available in the conference booklet. The 1994 CC discussed Writing Programs in Canada; following that session there was general agreement that the 1995 CC would focus on effective writing instruction: innovative classroom work, exercises, assignments, collaborative projects, and so on. We have limited time for talk (one hour). People who wish to present at the session should send a brief (50 word) synopsis of their comments to:

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There will be NO selection process; all submissions will be accepted, but knowing who and how many will make planning a little easier. The deadline for submission is February 1, so that we can publish a list of the CC presenters in the newsletter.

Editor's Note: The following "aside" from Anthony followed this formal notice. We feel duty-bound to reprint it given the important news it contains about the tantalizing possibility of "free" wine at the Canadian Embassy!

Just in case people are wondering who the hell I am to be bossing you around, let me remind you that it has been INKSHED (CASLL) tradition for the newsletter editor to submit a proposal for and chair the CC at CCCC. Since I was still editor when the proposal was due, I submitted it. (Well, actually, I didn't, but that's another story. You should know, however, that Canada owes a debt of gratitude to Lester Faigley.) As my last official duty, I will organize and chair the CC at CCCC '95. I'm also looking into a possible reception for us at the Canadian Embassy, where we can recover some of our tax dollars in the form of wine and cheese. (Probably American wine.)

See you there. Anthony Paré

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Blank Page Or Scribbled Page: Intertextuality And The Fear Of Writing

I meet many students in secondary school and university composition classes who confess that they do not know what to write. They tell me that they stare at the blank page and intimidated by it, write nothing. I reply that I wish the page really was blank. I tell them that I fear the scribbled page. I admit that one of my most common experiences as a writer is the sense of wavering confidence that gives birth to questions like, Do I really have anything worth writing? Why do my words and ideas so often seem second-hand? Why would anybody want to read anything I write? Does the world really need more written words? I hear the voices of other writers. They are a choir whose voices fill the air, and my voice--a tiny murmur--cannot be heard.

In commenting on Stéphane Mallarmé's anxiety about the influence of well-established writers, Barbara Johnson observes that "impotence is thus not a simple inability to write, but an inability to write differently. The agony experienced before the blank page arises out of the fact that the page is, in fact, never quite blank enough" (269). The romantic notion of autonomous individuals expressing themselves, their personalities, their voices in unique texts fails to acknowledge the intertextual quality of all writing. As Johnson explains, "'intertextuality' designates the multitude of ways a text has of not being self-contained, of being traversed by otherness" (264). Every text bears traces of other texts: citations, references, structural codes, allusions, phrases, images, generic conventions, themes.

Consider my poem "O":

I was on a toboggan, standing up,
like a California surfer, like Frankie Avalon
flying straight out down Lynch's Lane
all the way from Old Man Downey's house
riding the blue-white snow, over the first
boy-built bump, rope tied tightly
around my mitt like a bronco buster's grip,
and Cec shouting words I thought were curses
because he'd never made it from the top
and I was going to,
the hill and snow and toboggan and me
all one like a postcard from Austria,
over the last bump, bracing for the sharp bend
where Lynch's Lane twists into Bannister's Road
shooting through the air with a grin
frozen on my face, the letters E-S-S-O
growing bigger and bigger until I dived into the
O
a perfect bull's eye, and woke up the next day
singing Old MacDonald had a farm
EIEIO
and Cec said he was glad I wasn't dead,
but I knew darn sure he was just glad
I was stopped by the truck
and not still surfing all the way
through the O and around the world.

"O" is an uncomplicated poem that is always fun to share with others, but for all its relative simplicity it is intertextually connected to many other texts. I grew up in a Newfoundland milltown. Until I was fifteen years old, I had never traveled out of Newfoundland. Yet "O" is traversed by the texts of California beach movies I saw during Saturday matinees, the televised Calgary Stampede and Zane Grey western novels, a postcard from Austria, Cec's words of warning and commiseration, an industry logo, a popular children's story, and even hints of Alice in Wonderland. Moreover, the poem is part of the tradition of reminiscent writing which recalls the antics and mishaps of childhood, perhaps with a hint of exaggeration or heightened drama. In addition, the editor of one literary journal rejected the poem with a note that she liked "O," but wished that I had written it in a more poetic and less narrative way. While I was hardly jubilant about the rejection, I was pleased that the editor recognized that the poem challenges the conventions of lyric poetry by foregrounding the story element.

Julia Kristeva's understanding of intertextuality, that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (66), encourages me as a writer. I am intertextually connected to the writers who have written before me, as well as the writers who are presently writing, and even the writers who will write. When I face the blank page scribbled in convoluted lines of overlapping and intersecting text, I recall John Barth's advice:

We should console ourselves that one of the earliest extant literary texts (an Egyptian papyrus of ca. 2000 B.C., cited by Walter Jackson Bate in his 1970 study *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*) is a complaint by the scribe Khakheperresenb that he has arrived on the scene too late:
Would I had phrases that are not known, utterances that are strange,
in new language that has not been used, free from repetition, not an
utterance that has grown stale, which men of old have spoken. (206)

By citing Barth who cites Bate who cites Khakheperresenb, I enter into a chorus of text-making that is already about four thousand years old, and not unlike a chain letter, I invite my readers to continue the intertextual connections by citing Leggo who cites Barth who cites Bate who cites Khakheperresenb who (of course) was complaining about the unavoidable necessity of citing others.

As it stands, this essay is a patchwork quilt of traces from many other texts. All my writing is "traversed by otherness," including television, movies, advertising, newspapers, newsmagazines, Popular Mechanix, the Bible, Winnie the Pooh, school textbooks, National Geographic, the several thousand books on my bookshelves, all the texts I have ever read or heard or watched or written. James E. Porter points out that "the writer is simply a part of a discourse tradition, a member of a team, and a participant in a community of discourse that creates its own collective meaning" (35). I mostly agree. Porter concludes that "the writer is simply a part of a discourse tradition." However, being part of a discourse tradition implies enormous complexity. In writing this text I am intertextually connected to Porter's text, but I am not only repeating Porter's text. I am retextualizing it by placing it in a new text and by modifying it. I am entering my voice into a discourse community where Porter's voice is already declaiming with vigor.

Jacques Derrida regards all of his texts as grafts, as insertions into the textual flow. He describes his books as "unique and differentiated textual operations" in an "unfinished movement" with "no absolute beginning" (3). For Derrida writing is the process of grafting texts in the margins, the spaces, the gaps of others' texts. "Above all it is necessary to read and reread those in whose wake I write, the 'books' in whose margins and between whose lines I mark out and read a text simultaneously almost identical and entirely other" (4). Only through this process, "this interweaving, this textile, is the text produced. . .in the transformation of another text" (26). Derrida emphasizes his conception of writing as grafting in *Glas* where each page is divided into two columns with a text of Husserl on the left and Derrida's text on the right. In "Dissemination" he grafts his text onto Phillippe Sollers' novel *Numbers*. Jasper Neel observes:

Without Sollers (or Husserl, or Freud, or Rousseau, or Nietzsche, or Shelley, or whichever text he has chosen to write in) Derrida has no text. Like Derrida's texts, however, whichever host text he invades also exists in the spacing of the texts it invades, as do those texts too, and the ones before them, and so on. (129)

I am encouraged by these notions of writing as intertextual grafting and inserting and interweaving and transforming. And in the dynamic spirit of intertextualizing as a process without beginning or ending, I interrogate Neel's expansion of the grafting metaphor to describe writing as invading. To invade a host text suggests doing violence to the host text, violating the host text, crashing the party, usurping the throne, showing up where you are not expected or welcome. But intertextuality can be understood in other ways. To conceive of my writing as entering into an intertextual relationship with a discourse community, a world of textuality, suggests that my voice recalls or convenes the voices of absent predecessors and present presenters, our voices, in effect, calling to one another and echoing one another. Instead of metaphors of war I like to understand intertextuality as communal and social and collaborative and conversational.

Therefore, I question Owen Miller's assertion that "intertextual studies. . .are, above all, reader-oriented. . . . It is the reader, then, who establishes a relationship between a focused text and its intertext, and forges its intertextual identity" (21). Miller is intent on refuting all claims of authorial intention (21-23), but, as I indicate by ascribing intention to Miller in the first clause of this sentence, I regard the effort to prescribe exclusive rights to the reader as unproductively restrictive. More useful is an approach that acknowledges the roles of readers and writers in connecting texts intertextually to the Text. Intertextuality extends beyond all efforts of readers and writers to contain it, but that does not mean that both readers and writers cannot be consciously (as well as unconsciously) seeking and producing and recognizing intertexts.

Miller asks: "Does there exist a way to speak of a notion of intertextual identity which mediates between an overly text-oriented and an overly reader-oriented approach?" (33) He argues for conceiving intertextuality as "a relational concept, not a monologue but a dialogue, not a solo but a duet" (36). For Miller this dialogue is an ongoing process of successive actualizations of the text by readers. The intertextual identity is not only in the text or in the reader, but in the productive dialogue between the two (33). But where is the author and the socio-cultural-historical contexts of reading and writing and production and distribution of texts in Miller's duet? Instead of the metaphor of dialogue to

signify intertextuality, I prefer the notion of a group discussion where texts, readers, authors, and socio-cultural-political contexts are all integrally involved in intertextual relationships of meaning-making which knows no end.

In my intertextual response to Miller's text I illustrate some of the common operations that comprise the codes of academic writing. I claim that in his support for a reader-response orientation Miller disavows authorial intention. I bounce off Miller's ideas in a counterargument, a type of discourse not unlike children's vociferous debates about whose parent is the strongest and biggest and smartest. I ascribe intentionality to Miller, and it wouldn't surprise me if, given the opportunity, Miller might suggest that I had misconstrued him. Perhaps he would moan, "That's not what I meant at all." He might perceive my foray as an invasion, a hostile take-over, an arrogant display of bravado, a gladiatorial conquest, when what I really wanted to do is convene and converse with Miller, and other writers, too. Is that a likely story?

The writer is not sequestered in a sterile chamber producing texts isolated from the texts of other writers. The writer is guided, constrained, and influenced by the norms and expectations, the models and discourse types of other writers.

For Mikhail Bakhtin writing is "a living mix of varied and opposing voices. . . developing and renewing itself" (49). He argues that "verbal discourse is a social phenomenon--social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors" (259). Bakhtin stresses that the way individuals impress their individual voices on language is always other-voiced:

As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (293-294)

Bakhtin's understanding of language use as integrally and inextricably related to social discourse suggests that every writer is part of a community, a participant in a chorus of voices, drawing on its resources to perform that which is both new and not-new, thereby replenishing the resources of the community. But I am concerned with the suggestion of theft and appropriation, a tone of colonializing vigor, in Bakhtin's words. In connecting my text to Bakhtin's text, I am not eager to appropriate his text in the sense of taking his words and making them mine. Instead I wish to express my gratitude since he eloquently expresses a view that I want to express and explore. If Bakhtin and I could get together, I would offer him a café mocha at Starbucks, and we could converse about language use and intertextuality.

Are there other metaphors for conceiving writing that avoid some of the invasive and contestative significances? If my grade eleven English teacher had understood writing as participation in a discourse community, as convening the multiple voices that comprise that community, as seeking intertextual connections and resemanticizing the texts of others, as dynamically engaging the universe of textuality, perhaps she would have been more reluctant to pass me back a fiction assignment with the proclamation, "Carl, you will never be a writer." For too long writing has been regarded as the product of genius, inspiration, authenticity, creativity, and originality, the preserve of a privileged few who have inherited, genetically or culturally, gifts for effective language use. Beginning writers need to be initiated into these discourse communities. They need wide exposure to the texts of others.

Confronted with the blank page which, in fact, is not blank but is scribbled and scratched from top to bottom, writers does need not be unnerved by "the anxiety of influence" nor by the fear that they have nothing new to write. To insert or disseminate a text into the textual field is to acknowledge that the field is in constant flux. Porter valuably summarizes the tension between the freedom of the writer and the constraints on the writer:

Writing is an attempt to exercise the will, to identify the self within the constraints of some discourse community. We are constrained insofar as we must inevitably borrow the traces, codes, and signs which we inherit and which our discourse

community imposes. We are free insofar as we do what we can to encounter and learn new codes, to intertwine codes in new ways, and to expand our semiotic potential--with our goal being to effect change and establish our identities within the discourse communities we choose to enter. (41)

Is the writer a borrower? a plagiarist? a collector? a member of a team? a participant in a chorus? Is writing like putting a jig-saw puzzle together? Is writing a patchwork quilt of fragments? Is writing a weaving? Is writing akin to Newfoundland yard art which involves collecting driftwood and parts of old cars and moose antlers and transforming them into a colorful, if unlikely, collage of eye-catching shapes and arrangements?

Beginning writers need to read widely in order to encounter an extensive range of models. They need diverse writing experiences. They need liberating experiences in school that nurture exploration and experimentation. They need frequent opportunities to write across the curriculum in order to learn the codes and conventions of different discourse communities.

Writers are not seeking to imitate an Ideal Text. They are not mimics who try to impersonate the voices of others with clever accuracy. Writers find themselves awash in a sea of textuality. They are being written and they seek to control, as much as possible, the experience of being written by writing themselves.

In spite of all my conviction about writing as intertextual, and the blank page a scribbled page, and the necessity for writers to acknowledge their complicity and collegiality in a communal chorus, I still ask myself, Who else should I have read about intertextuality? Who else should I have quoted? Should I analyze the ideas of Kristeva and Bakhtin and Johnson and Derrida more? Do I have any right to interject my voice into the chorus? Who will listen to my murmur? I have a long way to go before I learn that the Text and textualizing are not the preserve of a privileged few, before I learn that in my text-making I am not engaging in a game of monarch of the hill, seeking to depose the reigning queen or king, before I learn that I have as much right to write as anyone else, and as much chance to write right as anyone else. As the Hebrew Teacher wrote a long time ago, "Of making many books there is no end" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). The Teacher suggests a sense of weariness with the apparent futility of human lived experience, but I prefer to read the observation as an encouragement that word-making proliferates and disseminates across a scribbled page which always has space for more scribbling.

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This is a brief update on plans for Inkshed 12 in Calgary.

The first call for proposals was mailed directly to everyone on the Inkshed mailing list in September. We had to do this early so that we could get more developed proposals in time for SSHRC applications.

As with Inkshed 11, we are trying to make this Inkshed a "full participation" conference. We are also trying to make it self-reflexive, putting ourselves through the same sort of process that many of us put our students through and then reflecting on the meaning of that process.

Consequently, we stated that everyone who comes to Inkshed 12 must contribute to a collaborative presentation. We have now received preliminary proposals from almost fifty Inksheddors, have organized them into tentative groups (when they did not already present a proposal as a group), and mailed the complete set of proposals back to everyone who submitted one. Our criteria were compatibility of research agendas, suggestions from the proposers, and an attempt to create a mix of old hands and neophytes. We have not attempted to put together people by geographic location unless requested to, since this is an experiment in long-distance collaboration.

The first part of the conference will be devoted to final preparation of group presentations: this may be the first opportunity some groups have had to meet face to face. The second part will be the delivery of those presentations.

We are now very close to the maximum number of people that the site can accommodate. If you haven't submitted a proposal by now, theoretically you are out of luck. However, if you still want to be considered, send us a note to that effect and if we can find room we'll try to squeeze you in. We'll send you a synopsis of the proposals received so far (if you haven't already seen them on CASLL-L) and you can see where you might fit in.

If you did send in a proposal and you haven't received anything in the mail yet, it may mean that our fax machine, e-mail or overcrowded desks ate it. Get in touch with us and we'll count you in.

The Conference Plan

The Dates: Friday May 12 - Monday May 15, 1995

The Venue:

Kananaskas Guest Ranch, about 45 minutes from Calgary. It features trail rides, hayrides and other Western paraphernalia. Bring your boots. (A Western barbecue is, of course, mandatory, but if everyone promises not to tell, we'll supply an alternative to beef.)

Accommodation cost is projected at \$76/night double and \$96/night single, including three meals and coffee. (Allow for room tax and GST on top of that, of course.)

Registration:

Submitting a proposal is a necessary but not sufficient condition for attending. Once we have finished haggling with Kananaskas over nickels and dimes, we will send out a Call for Money--not nearly as much fun as a Call for Proposals, but an inevitable part of the process.

Conference Theme: Institutional Contexts of Writing

How does the process of writing vary across its various contexts: dedicated "composition" classes, writing centres, disciplinary academic writing, writing in the workplace?

How can these various contexts be co-ordinated: do they, or should they, have anything to do with one another?

In what ways do any or all of these contexts facilitate writing and in what ways do they hinder it?

What is the teacher's role in preparing students for these different contexts?

We hope that this conference will turn out to be quintessential Inkshed: chaotic, overcrowded, stressful, and tremendously exciting. From the look of the proposals, I doubt that we will be disappointed.

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An Excerpt from "Software to Support Writing Instruction"

A number of people at the University of Toronto have asked about instructional software to aid student writers and those who teach them. This report outlines my investigation of programs gathered by attending conferences, visiting developers, and requesting sample copies from publishers. My experience has been mixed. Some programs are inventive and amusing, but many contain dismaying flaws in content or technical quality. Even among the better programs, none exactly matches the needs of our students or could stand alone to facilitate learning. Some might, however, have specific uses as part of courses or adjuncts to instructional services. My descriptions attempt to indicate these possible functions.

People's main hope has been that computers could help students learn grammar (that is, correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics.) Though neither research nor linguistic theory supports the efficacy of drill exercises for such a purpose, publishers of composition textbooks have created a number of on-line workbooks offering review and practice in language skills. The workbooks tend to be primitive, measured against either the technical sophistication of word processors or the pedagogical flexibility of other kinds of programs. Many have awkward interfaces and even stylistic errors in their texts. Few explain the "rule" adequately, especially not for students working on their own and lacking knowledge of terminology. All tend to be unduly rigid in applying the rules they set out. Few make any accommodation for the special needs of students learning English as a second language (L2). All are subject to the criticism that their use takes students' time away from creating and editing their own writing. Given the demand for such programs, however, I have attempted to describe a number in detail.

Software developers are now most interested in the capacity of computers to encourage revision of students' own writing. The most advanced software concentrates on enhancing the process of writing: prewriting prompts, on-line handbooks, editing guides, and, most recently, networking programs that let instructors and students share messages and comment on drafts. This technology offers the promise of stimulating students' ideas and their sense of audience, as well as encouraging them to edit their own work. These programs, however, are limited not only by the hardware required but also by the product envisaged, the general-topic essay required only for composition courses.

... (The description of the software is not included here; see below for information about access to the full report).

Margaret Procter,
Coordinator, Writing Support,
University of Toronto

u Editor's Note: The CATTW Bulletin (Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing) will publish Margaret's full report in the January issue. Cathy Schryer, (the CATTW Bulletin editor), will gladly send you a copy of the Bulletin.

(email: cschryer@WATARTS.UWATERLOO.CA or c/o The Rhetoric and Professional Writing Program, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, N2L 3G1).

As well the report is available on-line from the U. of T.'s Centre for Computing in the Humanities by two routes:

Via gopher to gopher.epas.utoronto.ca ("gopher" at the epas-prompt)

under Centre for Computing in the Humanities

Other academic resources by discipline

English

language instruction

via anon-ftp to ftp.epas.utoronto.ca

in /pub/cch/english/misc/

as writing_software.procter_report

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"Here's a Toast<"

< Thanks to the Managing Editors of Inkshed Publications (Laura Atkinson, Sandy Baardman, Neil Besner, Pat Sadowy, and Stan Straw) for their fine production of Contextual Literacy: Writing Across the Curriculum, a collection of papers given at the Contextual Literacy conference at Laurentian University; and to the editors, Catherine Schryer and Laurence Stevens for their skill in pulling it all together.

< Congrats to Henry Hubert who has just had his book, Harmonious Perfection: The Development Of English Studies In 19th-Century Anglo-Canadian Colleges published by Michigan State University Press.

It's time to renew your subscription to Inkshed. As a result of a decision made at the last CASLL Annual General meeting, subscriptions will now run from September to August to reflect the academic year, not the calendar year. Thus, this year's fees will cover the period from September 1995 to August 1996.

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