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# INKSHED

*Newsletter of the Canadian Association  
for the Study of Language and Learning  
(CASLL)*

*Volume 16, Number 1, December 1997*

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## *About Inkshed...*

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This newsletter provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use, particularly in a Canadian context. 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 interested in writing and reading theory and practice.

The next two issues of *Inkshed* are scheduled for publication in March and June, 1998. Submission deadlines are 15 February and 30 May.

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Please submit newsletter material to

**Janice Freeman and Amanda Goldrick-Jones**  
**Co-ordinating Editors**

Centre for Academic Writing  
University of Winnipeg  
515 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB Canada  
R3B 2E9

Fax: 204-774-4134

E-Mail: [jfreeman@io.uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:jfreeman@io.uwinnipeg.ca)

E-Mail: [goldjo@io.uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:goldjo@io.uwinnipeg.ca)

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*Inkshed* editorial consultants, past and present, include

Laura Atkinson, Manitoba Teachers' Association  
Phyllis Artiss, Memorial University  
Sandy Baardman, University of Manitoba  
Marcy Bauman, University of Michigan at Dearborn  
Neil Besner, University of Winnipeg  
Doug Brent, University of Calgary  
Richard M. Coe, Simon Fraser University  
Susan Drain, Mount Saint Vincent University  
Lester Faigley, University of Texas  
Russell A. Hunt, St. Thomas University  
Wayne Lucey, Assumption Catholic High School, Burlington Ontario  
Barry Nolan, University of Winnipeg  
Pat Sadowy, University of Manitoba  
Judy Segal, University of British Columbia  
Graham Smart, Purdue University  
Gail Van Stone, York University

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## Editors' Notes

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Submitted for your approval. . . Vol. 16, No. 1 of the Inkshed Newsletter, now stationed at the University of Winnipeg. The transition from Toronto to the Red River Valley occurred this summer. We had hoped to form an editorial collective in time to put an issue out in October-November. But it took us longer than we anticipated to gather our resources, find precious time, solicit copy and ideas for issues, put at least some material on the Web during the mail strike. . . oh, and decide whether we were going to format this thing on a PC or a Mac.\*

High standards have been established for us. Mary-Louise Craven, Margaret Procter, Doug Brent--just to name some of the most recent Inkshed editors--managed to put out four (even five!) provocative and thoughtful issues per year. When we agreed to take on the editorship of this newsletter, we believed we were in a position to produce provocative and thoughtful issues three times per year and make more material available on-line. The rising cost of paper and printing, the capriciousness of Canada Post, the formidable demands on the time of the pre-tenured and the parents in this world, and the increasing ease of communicating on-line were all considerations.

Thus, for now, we plan to produce two more issues in this volume: in March and June, 1998. For the next issue, we eagerly invite your submissions on the broad themes of writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID).

We do need your ideas, short articles, news, tid-bits, and reviews. The success of the newsletter as a forum for CASLL depends on people's willingness to send in copy, supply ideas, and offer help. The next deadline for submissions is

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Feb. 15; please see p. ii (About Inkshed) for more information.

Though it's been a long time coming, we hope you will enjoy this issue of Inkshed, which focuses on a form of computer-mediated communication called MOOing. Janice Freeman's "A MOO Primer" clearly explains the basics of MOOing and invites CASLLers to MOO till the cows come home (sorry!) in a virtual space called the "CASLL realm." As "In the MOO!" reveals, a number of Inkshed 14 attendees participated in a MOO held in the CASLL realm and experienced mixed reactions to what, for many, was their first experience with MOOing. In late November, a long conversation took place in the CASLL realm among some of these participants; some of this conversation is excerpted in "A MOO About the MOO, Part 1."

(If you'd like to try MOOing again, Janice and Amanda will be hanging out in the "Ink Shed" on Fri. Jan. 9/98 at 3-4 p.m. CST. We hope to see you there!)

Also in this issue: Hyacinth Simpson's exploration of how instructors in writing centres can use logs as a creative means to enhance students' learning; news about the 1998 Inkshed Conference; a brief survey on electronic communication designed for CASLL members; and a membership form--yes, it's time to renew for 1998!

~Janice Freeman  
~Amanda Goldrick-Jones

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\*A Mac, of course! No contest. . . AG-J

## 1998 Inkshed Conference News

### INKSHED CONFERENCE XV

Multiple Literacies: Ethics and Responsibilities  
May 7-10, 1998

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Oak Island Inn, Western Shore  
(between Chester And Mahone Bay) Nova Scotia

As usual, this year's theme grew from discussions at last year's conference, where the focus on reading technologies soon prompted ethical questions. We are, therefore, calling for proposals which address issues of ethics and responsibility in the literacies shifting around us. These issues might include intellectual property, privileged groups or discourses, authorship and anonymity on the net, behaviour codes in electronic environments, cultural assumptions and pedagogical responsibilities. We are also interested in sites of potential ethical conflict such as writing resource centres, tutoring programmes, or classes with teaching assistants. We invite you to consider other topics linked to the main theme of ethics and responsibility.

The conference will avoid the "talking-head-reading-paper format" by continuing the venerable Inkshed tradition of active participant involvement and unconventional approaches. We welcome poster boards and performances, work-in-progress, case studies, collaborative presentations, workshops, or interactive demonstrations.

All proposals should include the name, addresses, and phone numbers of the chief proposer and any co-presenters, a title and abstract (approximately 200 words), and a brief description of the mode of presentation. You should also explain how your presentation will relate to the conference theme. Please note that you may find yourself being invited to collaborate with another proposer. Remember, too, as Russ and Marcy pointed out last year, "This is not a traditional agonistic, competitive paper call. Your document will not be blind-reviewed by a reader eager to find a way to turn away two-thirds of the proposals. The organizing committee sees its job as including as many proposals as we can fit in."

Yes, we will continue with last year's wildly successful initiation of built-in reading time. In Orillia, the blocks of time to read provided diversity and a more relaxed pace, as well as the simple luxury of hours to read and mull over associated texts. Please start thinking now about what you'd like to bring (or send) for the reading table -- preferably three copies of short pieces. Entire books are fine, too, but it's more difficult for multiple readers to share discussion of these.

The 1998 Inkshed will be an anniversary conference, so please try to rustle up/hunt down those long-standing members who have not been able to attend recently. We promise lobster.

**Deadline for proposals:** originally November 30, 1997. Due to the postal strike, the deadline has been extended into December. But please submit as soon as possible.

Please see over for information on submitting proposals. . .

## 1998 Inkshed Conference News

### Send proposals to:

Susan Drain  
Department of English  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
Halifax, NS  
Canada B3M 2J6

Phone: 902 457 6220  
Fax: 902 457 6455  
Email: Susan.Drain@msvu.ca

### Other members of the conference team:

Dr. Kenna Manos, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design  
(kenna@nscad.ns.ca), 902 494 8133

Jane Milton, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design  
(jmilton@nscad.ns.ca), 902 494 8133

### More about . . .

The Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning  
and  
INKSHED CONFERENCE XV  
May 7-10, 1998

Formalized in 1993, the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning was the outgrowth of ten years of conferences and newsletters (both called Inkshed) among Canadian scholars of writing and reading, rhetoric and literature. CASLL's aim is to provide a forum and common context for discussion, collaboration, and reflective inquiry in discourse and pedagogy in the areas of writing, reading (including the reading of literature), rhetoric, and language. Our members include teachers and researchers in schools, colleges, universities, and corporations. The Inkshed conference is the annual meeting of the discipline in Canada.

Inkshed is a working conference. Formal papers and research reports are presented, and workshops are conducted, just as they are at other scholarly conferences, but we also include unconventional presentations and active participant involvement. We welcome poster boards and performances, work-in-progress, case studies, collaborative presentations, workshops, or interactive demonstrations. The conference group works together on a central issue, which is usually one that has emerged from the previous conference.

One of the special features of the conference is the amount of writing ("ink-shedding") we do during the conference. Some of the individual and all of the collaborative inksheddings are published during the conference; inkshedding furthers discussion in a focused way rare in conferences. Another special feature is built-in reading time for recommended articles and books.

The 1998 conference will take place at Oak Island Inn on Nova Scotia's storied South Shore. Visit our conference website for more information:

<http://www.stthomasu.ca/inkshed15/>

## “In the MOO”: Excerpts from the Inkshed 14 Session

The following is a series of excerpts from an extremely lengthy transcript of the MOO session that took place at Inkshed 14 in May. The excerpts from this transcript generally focus on how participants were feeling about the MOO experience, as well as on relationships between MOOing and writing.

Occasional editorial comments [in square brackets] are meant to provide some orientation to what's going on in the MOO environment. All other text is generated either by the MOO (such as descriptions of “places”) or by the participants. Please note that typos have not been corrected; this helps preserve some of the “flavor” of MOOing.

~~Edited/condensed by Amanda Goldrick-Jones

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\*\*\* Welcome to Connections \*\*\*

Connections is a virtual learning environment. Classes of all kinds and all levels can make arrangements to use this space; so can those wishing to set up or participate in other kinds of learning projects. Information on Connections, as well as various kinds of help for both guests and regular users, is available at <http://www.ucet.ufl.edu/~tari/connections/connections-home.html>

[ED: When you log onto Connections, you find yourself at the Top of the Big Hill.]

*The Top of the Big Hill* You're at the top of a big hill overlooking a small village. The path down the hill to the village lies to the south.  
-> walk to CASLL

[ED: To get anywhere in this MOO, you must enter the command "walk." A vivid description of the village and surrounding area (not included here) scrolls past you on the screen before you arrive at the CASLL. By the way, the “CASLL realm” and “Courtyard” environments were created by Janice Freeman, and the “Ink Shed” and “Coffee Pit” by Amanda Goldrick-Jones.]

*The CASLL* As you stand on the border, you feel that you have entered a realm of infinite possibilities. To the west you see a large expanse of grasslands with high craggy mountains behind them. The faint sounds of surf suggest oceans nearby, but you can see none from where you stand. To the east is a great forest, behind which rises a bank of fog. When you look to the north, you see a large grey castle in the distance. A deeply rutted pothole-filled road leads towards it. You see a weathered signpost that reads 'Go over the Drawbridge to the CASLL Courtyard'  
-> You have arrived.  
-> drawbridge

*The Courtyard* You are in the courtyard of a large medieval castle. High stone walls seem to surround you on three sides, but as you look more closely, you notice weathered wooden doors leading in several directions. Behind you is a lowered drawbridge through which you can see the rutted road over which you just travelled. There are wide comfortable benches scattered throughout the courtyard and large tubs containing small shade trees and a myriad of spring flowers. It is a warm spring day and you feel like sitting on the benches in the sun and chatting with friends. You see a Discreet Sign here.  
-> west

*The Ink Shed* Once you push open the weathered western door, you are pleasantly surprised to find yourself in the perfect place to shed ink. What do you need? Ergonomic chairs? Little tables for group work? An overhead projector? Computer connections? Fresh cold water? Clean washrooms with no line-ups? Lots of paper and pens? A wall to post inksheds? It's all here. You see a Welcome Message and a Sign on the Wall here.

RussH is here, distracted. You're ready to shed some ink.

[ED: Whenever "you" enter a command, you see an arrow -> followed by what 'you' have actually typed. Then a line or so below, you see your own quote appearing as others in the MOO actually see it. So your own quotes are always repeated. To save space, I have omitted the -> lines.

The 'you' refers to Amanda. When Russ edited the Nov. 29 MOO transcript, he substituted 'Russ' for 'you,' which is what Amanda should have done too, but didn't. Is anyone confused yet?]

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**Excerpt # 1:** Greetings and an Immediate Identity Crisis.

You say, "Hello Russ!"  
RussH says, "Amanda?"  
RussH says, "It's Marcy. At the moment."  
RussH says, "Betty says hi."  
RussH says, "So does Henry."  
You say, "Marcy? Russ? confused"  
RussH says, "I feel really weird."  
RussH says, "Yeah, me, too."  
You say, "Wait. Who's who?"  
RussH says, "Russ is connected, but I'm taking over his character."  
RussH heh heh heh  
You say, "My poor head."

[ED: Amanda (the 'you' in the lines above) is confused about which real-life (RL) person is actually speaking with her. It takes her a while to realize that there are only two on-line terminals at the conference; that people are taking turns using them; and that "RussH" is simply the user i.d. for one of these terminals. "Lobby" is the other.]

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**Excerpt # 2:** Attempts to Get Serious.

Lobby (guest) says, "Okay, guys, what are we going to talk about?"  
You say, "Take it away, Doug."  
JanF whispers to you, "thanks"  
RussH says, "dispersed commnities???"  
DougB (guest) says, ""Well=="  
JanF whispers to you, "It's going about as well s I'd expected."  
RussH says, "Marcy says, How bout them wings?"  
DougB (guest) says, "How many people have tried using some form of hypertext writing or reading with their students?"

[ED: When Guests connect to the MOO, they can give themselves real names if they want. (Amanda is finding real names much easier to cope with in this conversation). If a person just wants to drop in and not choose a permanent character and password, then the word (guest) appears after the real name.]

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### Excerpt # 3: Shapelessness and Jaundice

Lobby (guest) says, "Hey, Roger!"  
Roger (guest) says, "Yo"  
You whisper to JanF, "I hope that's a good thing!"  
Roger (guest) says, "I have"  
RussH says, "Yo?"  
Lobby (guest) says, "Shape to this discussion! Already I feel restricted, confined, and...  
offended."  
RussH says, "get over it"  
DougB (guest) says, "Never mind, shapelessness will prevail"  
JanF whispers to you, "I sense some enthusiam. Maybe we can keep it going..."  
Lobby (guest) says, "Over and out."  
RussH says, "Many honourable members, here, here"  
Lobby (guest) says, "Actually, an incomprehensibly complex shape is still shape."

[ED: By the way, a "whisper"-command (*mu* in the Connections MOO) allows two people to send private messages without the rest of the participants hearing. Jan and I are whispering about how we think this discussion is going so far.]

Lobby (guest) says, "Two thirds of this Inkshed group (a total of 24) raised their hands when asked whether they had NO experience with the web. And the rest of us are jaundiced."  
Roger (guest) says, "Hi betty"  
You say, "Why jaundiced?"  
Roger (guest) says, "Their screens have gone yellow"

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### Excerpt #4: Writing and Technology

JanF says, "Actually, I had no experience with MOOs until the beginning of March."  
DougB (guest) says, "HT is useually thought to be totalluy user-controlld but really the shape is heavily dictated by the links one chooses to author"  
Lobby (guest) says, "Rob and Dennis from the U of T use their web resources more for information distribution...we have enough problems getting our engineering students to use text, let alone hypertext, effectively"  
JanF says, "I set up the CASLL castle in about two hours, including tutorial time."  
Roger (guest) says, "Well, Ive seen both kinds of control exercised"  
You say, "Sorry Doug, whatdoyou mean by 'chooses to author'? Is author a verb?"  
DougB (guest) says, "Yup"  
JanF says, "I think of MOOs as living inside a hypertext..."  
DougB (guest) says, "I,m interested in detting students using ht as a writerly mode, not just to read"  
DougB (guest) says, "I also wish I could backspave"



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**Excerpt # 5: MOOs and Students**

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RussH says, "(Russ here). I think there's something wrong in thinking that we can get studentt o use it as a writerly mode because reqading is absolutely central to the writingt."  
Roger (guest) says, "Hmm I think the moo is a better place to write than a hypertext link, although I like the Hyperhnews for writing"  
DougB (guest) says, ""Depands on the purpose for writing. If you want to say something semipermanent, a moo is not the place."  
JanF says, "I don't think any of us has used MOOs with our students, but I'd like to start."

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**Excerpt # 6: Trying to Write Eloquently in a MOO**

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You say, "What's sacrificed in a MOO is the 'control' of normal f2f conversation, monitoring each other etc. In h-t, what's sacrificed is linearity."  
Lobby (guest) says, "A crooked or wiggly or curved line is still a line."  
JanF says, "Have any of you walked around here an seen some of the neet things students have craeted?"  
RussH says, "(Russ) I don't know about whether the mOO is a better place to write; I always feel a kind of pressure to say something immediately, and some haste to get past the editing problem. so stuff gets out I didn't want to say."  
Roger (guest) says, "npe"  
Lobby (guest) says, "Like my comment about my butt earlier. (Dennis)"  
DougB (guest) says, ""a moo is sort of a place to \*talk\*, which is not the same as writing."  
You say, "Yeah, there is pressure in a MOO to get it out quickly. I found that a bit intimidating my first few times. Helps to be with friends!"  
JanF says, "But you can move back & forth from a draft and cut& paste into it with a group on a MOO."  
Roger (guest) says, "That takes some experience, Jan"  
DougB (guest) says, "Maybe a moo fills some of the interpersonal space of commaborative writing. It supplies the negotiation around a text"  
RussH says, "I'm not so much concerned about the intimidation. It's something to do with feeling a pressure to be fast that I don't feel in an oral conversatin."  
JanF says, "Not too much. I'm strictly a user, and I do it in Win 3.1."  
You say, "It really doesn't take that long to learn MOO basics, any more than it takes to learn basic info retrieval on the web. If I can do it, anyone can."  
Lobby (guest) says, "Lurking is fun. One thing that I find a new experience is the time lag caused by typing. Although I've been told I'm a pretty good typvasdf ist ald ouch. Typist."  
JanF says, "I'm pretty slow at the keyboard,"  
DougB (guest) says, "mooing isn't hard in itself. But there's something strange about talking by writing. The best of both world s or the worst?"  
Roger (guest) says, "I don't jknow--I'm not feeling too pressured right now to type fast--and I just sit and read some too"  
JanF says, "MOOing is motivating me to work on speed and accuracy,"  
Lobby (guest) says, "Who would stop to read a well-prepared paragraph on something that has scrolled off the screen long ago? We got paragraphs... paragraphs coming out of your butt. (Hey, I just type what the Lobby says)"

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**Excerpt # 7: Being Rude and Taking Offense**

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Lobby (guest) says, "This is an illuminating experience. I am not this rude in public. Only in a MOO. People behind me are challenging me, since I (Dennis) claimed that I was not

rude in a moment when the people here behind me weren't looking. I attempted to escape group identity for one moment. And they are quite upset. Sorry, Lobbyites."

Roger (guest) says, "talk about multiple identity problems"

Amanda grins and sez "Lots of possibilities for gender-bending here too!"

JanF says, "Those of us not there didn't have a chance yet. Could you post them on your web site?"

Lobby (guest) says, "This Lobby has a multiple identity problem. Or, perhaps, a single typist problem. "

Roger (guest) says, "Russ and Cathy and I and another person worked on a document this way, but the moo was a good place for hashing out ideas rather than "Writing" them, per se"

JanF says, "I think it could work for collab writing, but I haven't tried it."

RussH says, "O.K> a first and final substantila remark . . . I've heard in many quarters . . . I guess its in Lester Faigley's book too, that students conversation in these sorts of chat rooms can degenerate in really unfortunate ways, The anonimity that shelters the shy student is also a haven for the obnoxious or even obscene . . ."

Legion (guest) says, "the typist tried to contribute to Legion's comment, and his comment was forced out of the comment. The typist is now being berated for having no conviction. The typist is offended."

[ED: The conversation up to this point has more-or-less managed to stay focused on writing in virtual spaces, interspersed with playing around and silliness. Now, in the last few minutes of this MOO session, the silliness. . .well. . .takes over. Sorry.]

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#### **Excerpt # 8: Postmodern Virus**

RussH says, "This computer is beeping at me."

DougB (guest) says, "And you can't even disconnect the typist"

JanF says, "Amanda and I both build room at DaMoo and Marcy and I have met in my room."

RussH says, "Oh, Captain, we're losing power!!"

You say, "The typist-function! Foucault invades the MOO!"

RussH says, "I dinna kannna hold her, captain!"

Amanda ROTFL again

Legion (guest) says, "RussH, Legion can hear you (so to speak... or so to type...)"

RussH boos Foucault.

RussH derides Derrida

RussH cans Lacan't

Roger (guest) says, "Russ H has another beer"

RussH is not himself today.

Amanda impressed with RussH's alliterative powers.

Legion (guest) says, "Some of the Legion is complaining of having neck strain."

RussH bows.

JanF [to you]: Hand me a glas of that wine, please.

RussH says, "Are the legionnaires taking turns typing?"

DougB (guest) says, "sex that was supposed to be 'sez who' but maybe a Freudian slip. Or Lacabnian"

Legion (guest) says, "Others are complaining of brain strain. Mainly on the plain?"

You [to JanF]: "It's Manitoba's best Red River vintage!"

RussH says, "We have been reading a lot of Turkle, DOug, so that may be appropriate."

JanF says, "I didn't know we grew wine there."

[ED: Note that the command for saying something to someone (*to*) isn't the same as whispering to someone; everyone could see Jan's and my exchange about the fine wines produced in the Red River Valley during flood season.]

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**Excerpt # 9:** Suddenly, "Talent Night"

RussH bursts into song, accompanied by Stan.

Roger (guest) says, "hey, is Henry there or is he still being a Luddite?"

JanF says, "What's the song, I'll join in."

RussH says, "Our brains are unpeeled like the layers of an onion."

RussH says, "We're doing My Fair ady now."

RussH says, "Lady, even." Legion (guest) changes eir name to Henry (guest).

RussH says, "But we can switch to west side story if you like."

RussH waves to Henry.

Amanda sings "ALL I want is a MOO somewhere, far away from the cold night air. . . . ."

RussH says, "With one enormous chair . . ."

Henry (guest) says, "Roger, I'm here, simply confirmin that all the worst that I've been concerned about is being proved true."

RussH says, "Oh, wouldn't it be udderly . . ."

Amanda sings "Aaaoh woouldn't it be virtually!"

JanF says, "I'm not in the MOOd for this."

Roger (guest) says, "REally, henry its not like this all the time"

DougB (guest) has disconnected.

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### **Inkshedding About the Inkshed 14 MOO**

Doug Brent

The Inkshed 14 MOO certainly wasn't much to speak of as an academic exercise. Everyone was totally giddy and suffering end-of-day burnout, and I understand that there was hand-to-hand combat for the keyboard. But that is to apply the wrong criteria, I think. MOOspace is more social than academic, although it can be made to fit academia rather loosely. When people are more used to the system, some of the giddiness gets worked out of them, but they still tend to play and or socialize at least as much as they ask and answer Important Questions. Having just participated in two MOO sessions this month, plus one semi-synchronous webchat, I have found that only rudimentary ideas can be exchanged. This doesn't mean that MOOspace isn't a good medium--it's just that we have to figure out the place for rudimentary ideas and much play.

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Rob Irish

Frankly, I thought the MOO was an exercise in frustration. It privileges the fast of finger, caters to the one liner rather than significant thought. Significant communication in a large group is difficult face to face as well. I guess this form just privileges a different participant, the typer instead of the speaker.

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Janice Freeman

The Inkshed 14 MOO gave me a chance to participate in the conference in a very small way. During the MOO, I was in a cyber cafe in Victoria trying to concentrate as those at the workstations around me played loud interactive games. I imagined the room in Orillia in which my colleagues at Inkshed were sitting was in some ways equally chaotic, which gave me the sense of "being there." The MOO itself was my first opportunity to communicate virtually in real time with my Canadian colleagues. I found it invigorating because I had been unable attend the conference, but was still able to touch base with valued friends and colleagues. The element of play seemed totally consistent with my experience of an Inkshed conference. I hope future conferences will include some kind of electronic involvement for those of us who cannot attend. MOOing seems to be an effective way for us to do so.

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Laura Atkinson

It was an evening session and I was a bit late coming in. At first I couldn't figure out what was happening. The big meeting room was in darkness except for the lighted computer screen projected onto the display screen at the front of the room. Russ Hunt was in front of the screen, standing, hunched over and typing, at what looked like a media cart. All around him in the darkened room, the other Inkshedders were sitting and watching and most of them were relieving their boredom by commenting on his performance. At first I thought, by the tenor of their remarks, that whatever he was trying to do was not working. Anyone who tries these days to put on a conference using advanced media has to endure those moments when you're in front of a crowd trying to get something to work; the gods of technology are not cooperating, and everyone has something--usually something caustic --to say about it. It was not the first time during the conference, nor the last time either, that I had occasion to admire Russ' savoir-faire. But after watching for a bit I realized that whatever he was doing, WAS working. The messages that he was typing on the lap-top keyboard at the media cart were appearing, first in a small dialog box at the bottom of the projected computer screen, and then--once he had entered or sent them--further up on the screen as part of an ongoing, but rather disjointed dialogue. After watching a bit more I realized that the conversation was disjointed because it was being carried on by several people, each one in a disparate location.

Russ was taking part, and we were all watching him take part, in an Inkshed MOO, in a special location in cyberspace, a newly constructed CASLL with an attached Inkshed space. Marcy had even put up on the wall of the Inkshed a delightfully cheeky OED-style definition of the work "inkshed." Eventually we had Roger Graves in Illinois, Doug Brent in Calgary, Amanda Goldrick-Jones in Winnipeg, and Jan Freeman in Victoria, all virtually milling around in the space, taking part in the conversation, even at times trying to talk intelligently about what we were doing and what it meant. (There was also a rather noisy group out in the lobby of the building at Geneva Park, participating at only a slight remove from the main location.) We were all interested in what was happening, trying to imagine what it would be like to do this as an individual, what this kind of set-up could do for us professionally, and how it might be usable in the classroom.

Since Russ was the only participant in our room who was officially booked into the conversation, we all had to take his place in turn at the keyboard in order to experience the MOO. This was one cause of confusion. Another was the public way that we each had to compose and type our messages and the added confusion of not knowing the simple

commands for addressing, composing, and sending remarks. But beyond the confusion, the uncertainty, and self-consciousness of the “public” performance, there was the sheer wonder and excitement of talking to so many people at once who were speaking (or writing) from so many different parts of the continent. . . .

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### “A MOO About the MOO”: Edited Excerpts from a November Conversation

Why did Inkshedders have such mixed feelings about this conference MOO session? While Janice and Amanda at first invited reactions by e-mail, Marcy Bauman suggested that it would also be appropriate and interesting to have a MOO about the MOO.

We therefore present some excerpts from the MOC about the MOO on Sat. Nov. 29/97. Our topic of conversation was “What happened at the Inkshed 14 MOO, and why?” Those who volunteered about an hour and a half of their time to participate in this MOO were Laura Atkinson (her first time in a MOO!), Marcy Bauman, Doug Brent, Janice Freeman, Amanda Goldrick-Jones, and Russ Hunt.

Because even this edited/condensed version is over ten pages long, we’ve split this document into two parts. Part 2 will be printed in the next newsletter. The entire edited/condensed version is on the web at <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/inkmoo.htm>

Please note--as in the Inkshed 14 MOO excerpts, typos produced by participants haven't been corrected in order help convey the flavor of MOOing. If you'd like to read the entire unedited transcript, you can find it (thanks to Russ) on the Web at <http://www.stthomasu.ca/hunt/ink14/>

~~Edited/condensed by Amanda Goldrick-Jones

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**Excerpt #1:** refers to a MOO that Doug arranged so his students could be “visited” by a well-known writer. He considers this experience an example of a “good” MOO.

Doug says, “Did Russ tell you that I had my class in the MOO with Heather Menzies on Tues? Russ dropped by looking for the tues cafe and dropped in, stayed for a bit. It made quite an interesting discussion.”

Russ says, “I thought it was one of the better uses of MOOing I've seen.”

Amanda [to Doug]: “Sounds wonderful--I like Menzies' writing.”

Russ says, “Did you log it, Doug?”

Doug says, “I logged it and put it on my web page at [http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dabrent/623\\_97/menzint.htm](http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dabrent/623_97/menzint.htm)

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**Excerpt #2:** mentions some people's impatience with the process at the Inkshed 14 MOO.

Russ says, “I was struck again by how easy it is to strike a “jaundiced” attitude -- I think it requires less and is more socially, um, acceptable.

Amanda says, “I'll see about dumping the whole ms on the web as a link to the excerpt.”

Doug says, "i have been struck several times by the fact that MOO sessions usually feel to me as if nothing much is happening. I can't process that fast. But when I look at logs I find that some quite interesting things got said after all."

Russ says, "I like 'the whole ms' . . ."

Amanda says, "Damn keep hitting returns! it might take me a couple of weeks to get around to doing that. The whole ms is too long to put in printed form in a newsletter."

Russ says, "It's a lot like inkshedding that way, doug."

Russ says, "You have to read past the noise and the throat-clearing and stuff to get to the places where the process actually does elicit some ideas."

[\* \* \*Laura and Marcy arrive and are welcomed\* \* \*]

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**Excerpt #3:** we talk about the peculiar nature of MOOs.

Amanda says, "To those who just arrived; we're talking about how you often have to read past a lot of 'jaundice' and 'throatclearing' to get to the ideas in a MOO transcript. Those terms are Russ's."

Russ already made that joke.

Doug says, "Maybe it says something about text that it's easier to read past that stuff after the fact when you look at logs."

Amanda says, "And just a quick reminder that I posted edited excerpt from Inkshed 14 MOO session on <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/~caw/amanmoo.htm>

Russ says, "Yeah, in the process you pretty well have to read it all, and at the same speed."

Doug says, "I never feel that very much happens at the time because it happens too quickly."

Russ says, "Like a conversation. Problem is that I find logs of convrsations *harder* to understand."

Marcy says, "Says something about the expectation of response, Doug . . . I always read looking for an answer to what I just said."

Marcy nids Doug about it happening too quickly.

Doug says, "They seem harder to understand until you really pick through them."

Marcy nods.

Russ says, "Nids?"

Doug says, "Editing the log of the Menzies MOO really showed me that some good stuff got said only it was all broken up and discontinuous."

Marcy says, "What was the Menzies MOO?"

Russ says, "Yes, I've had the same experience going back through Tuesday Cafe MOOs."

Doug says, "Maybe I'm not postmodern enough to appreciate it until I straighten it out."

Amanda says, "I have to say I was pleasantly surprised when I *did* go thru the transcript of Inkshed 14 MOO about how much really GOOD stuff was there. I admit I culled it out to include in the excerpt and left a bunch of other stuff behind. But good and interesting things kept arising."

Russ says, "Marcy, the Menzies MOO was a class Doug held on the MOO with Heather Menzies."

Marcy says, "Well, I think we have to make distinctions besides MOO/not MOO."

Russ says, "Like what?"

Marcy says, "WE can't think of ALL MOOs as being the same beastie, I mean."

Doug says, "The menzies MOO happened Tuesday. I had my class in Connections at the Media\_Cafe with Heather Menzies as guest. Russ happened by by accident and joined the discussion. See [http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dabrent/623\\_97/menzint.htm](http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dabrent/623_97/menzint.htm)

Russ says, "OK. You mean in terms of software or in terms of social agenda & participants?"

Marcy says, "I think the purposes to which a MOO can be put differ from circumstance to circumstance."

Amanda [to Marcy]: "do you mean different purposes, topics, situations produce different MOOs?"

Doug says, "Certainly there are social MOOs and less social MOOs."

Russ says, "Sure seems so to me, amanda. Look at the Inkshed one and then look at this."

Doug says, "Its a totally dumb place for a lecture but not a bad place for a 'meet the author' event."

Amanda [to Russ]: "Yes, this is obviously a much more focused discussion with people who are used to MOOing and tolerant of its weirdnesses."

Marcy says, "Yeah, I agree with Russ. It's a bit like saying that you know all about what rooms are like because you went to a ballroom once."

[\*\*\*Jan arrives and is welcomed\*\*\*]

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**Excerpt #4:** more about "weirdness" and hostile reactions.

Doug says, "Its not just tolerance either. I think the Inkshed MOO was a little crazy because people were new to it and having fun, which is the way to start."

Doug waves at everyone.

Jan waves to Doug.

Marcy says, "I also think the INK14 MOO was weird because there were many ppl but only 2 keyboards."

Marcy says, "Russ was certainly behaving strangely, too."

Amanda says, "Laura, no worries; one wierdness is that when you finally type something, the topic has changed. One sort of gets used to it."

Doug says, "And it was late in the day and I suspect the wine bottle had gone around a few times."

Russ says, "yes, but you know, looking through it a lot of the fun ad inkshed 14 was sort of freefloating jaundice and hostility toward the technology."

Doug grins.

Jan says, "I can't imagine the chaos."

Marcy says, "Doug, really. What made you think so?"

Russ says, "I hadn't touched a drop. Can't speak for my alter egos, though."

Amanda says, "What would cause 'hostility'?"

Doug says, "Every time someone started a line of dicussion it petered out after one or two exchanges."

Russ says, "Well I don't know that it was 'cause' exactly, but I think I see it in that transcript. To the technology."

Marcy says, "I think that's because it was Communication by COMmittee."

Russ nods Marcy.

Doug says, "This suggested to me that noone was 'on task'--which they probably shouldn't have been because the 'task' was to have fin and explore."

Marcy raises a glass and says "To the technology."

Marcy says, "Which is about how it went, eh?"

Russ says, "Yeah, and there wasn't really 'task,' eh?"

Doug says, "If you take this stuff too seriously you're in the wrong medium."

The Canadian guest [Laura] says, "the hostility came form anxiety about being such a neophyte or such neophytes."

Jan says, "Hey, what's on tap in this pit?"



Amanda says, "The reasons above also make sense to me. I wasn't 'there' in RL, and I was in a quiet room with a keyboard all to myself and was used to MOOing; I found it fun."

Marcy says, "I think it's extremely important for people to get a chance to play before they think about using this space seriously."

Russ says, "The best uses of this I've been involved with have had really pretty explicit tasks. I think Laura's right, too, about people feeling less, um, competent. Try this instead."

Doug says, "When I had my class with Menzies I had a pre-session that was pure play time."

Marcy says, "And real explicit reasons for using this place and no other."

Amanda [to Marcy]: "Yes, I completely agree about having a chance to play first."

Russ says, "We've got decaf cappuccino, Jan . . ."

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**Excerpt #5:** concerning the kinds of tasks that might help give MOOs more structure.

Jan says, "Russ, could you describe some of those tasks?"

Doug says, "Then when we got on line with our Famous Authour we could mix work and play."

Jan says, "Thanks, could I have a cup?"

Doug says, "What sorts of reasons can you think of Marcie?"

Marcy says, "I just did the Famous Author gig in a room where the FA couldn't hear most of the backchat."

Russ says, "Well, one of the tasks Doug will remember; we were planning how to organize a review of a program."

Amanda [to Russ]: "Yes it makes sense to have as tight a focus as possible or at least a definite task."

Russ says, "And Marcy and I were involved in organizing attendance at a conference in Utrecht once: it was precisely the place and the medium to discuss that kind of practical but still social stuff."

Marcy says, "Reasons: there's a timeliness to a task that precludes e-mail. Like, revising a program proposal at the last minute. And there's distance involved. And you want a transcript."

Jan says, "I think that at IS 14 our task was to introduce the MOO."

Marcy says, "That's all we could do, Jan."

Russ says, "Yes, Jan, and my view is that that kind of thing's always a problem -- it's like teaching writing rather than using the writing to get something done."

Amanda says, "What Jan said--yes, and that probably inevitably meant a lot of chaos, but perhaps no one was prepared for that."

Marcy says, "And hope that ppl could determine a way or reason to use it for themselves if they liked it."

Doug says, "I agree. There was another agenda floating--to have a scholarly discussion--that really wasn't appropriate. As soon as we stopped worrying about it the MOO started working like it was supposed to."

Jan says, "I think we wanted, also, to discuss Doug's presentation, but didn't get far with that."

Russ nods Doug.

Marcy says, "There's a developmental issue here, too, which is: how much can ppl absorb at one swell foop?"

The Canadian guest [Laura] says, "I need to say hello to everyone to Fruss and Marcy and Doug and Amanda before I can think about these other things."

Doug says, "Helo Laura!"

Marcy says, "Hiya, Laura."

Jan says, "But Russ, Laura's here because of that session, so it worked for her."

Amanda says, "Laura, did you get a decaf cappucino yet?"

Russ says, "sorry, I didn't mean to suggest it didn't work -- I'm trying to account for the freefloating jaundice."

Marcy says, "If we had really thought about it, we could have organized the MOO so that we *could* have discussed the presentation."

Jan says, "Yes, I can understand your position."

Marcy says, "Maybe not with inkshedders, and maybe not on Saturday night . . . it would've involved a lot of social control."

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**Next issue. . .** A MOO About the MOO, Part 2--the rest of this conversation!

## A MOO Primer

Janice Freeman  
University of Winnipeg

### **The Birth of the CASLL MOO**

In April 1997, three CASLL members--Amanda Goldrick-Jones, Marcy Bauman, and Janice Freeman--attended a virtual conference at DaMOO. After Marcy attended her own session, they met in Janice's room for a chat. During that conversation, one of them came up with the idea of building a room in a MOO for the Inkshed 14 conference. Marcy had been encouraging virtual presentations for that conference, and she was confident that she could organize a MOO session to include the virtual presenters. Janice was on sabbatical, and took on the responsibility of finding a MOO that would allow us to set up a suitable room for Inkshed. Marcy organized the hardware and software for conference participants.

Janice contacted Tari Fandarclai, administrator of Connections MOO, and requested space for CASLL members. She also defined the realm (the CASLL castle) and built the courtyard. Amanda added an Ink Shed and a Coffee Pit, and we were ready to MOO at Inkshed 14.

### **What is a MOO?**

The acronym MOO stands for Multi-user Dungeon, Object Oriented. Multi-user dungeons were originally used primarily for Dungeons and Dragons-style role-playing games until teachers began to see their pedagogical usefulness. MOOs are text-based virtual realities where people can communicate in real time through "characters" who interact with other characters and the MOO environment. MOOs have various themes and purposes. Diversity University MOO is an educational MOO set up to resemble a university campus. Teachers can use virtual seminar and lecture rooms as well as such objects as slide projectors, white boards, and notice boards when conducting virtual classes. Connections MOO, on the other hand, is an educational MOO that attempts to move students out of the real life classroom into a more imaginative virtual space. Teachers are allotted realms which students can build in according to class themes. One class has built a zoo, while others have created an agora and a wintery realm.

### **Why should CASLL members be interested in MOOing?**

MOOs seem especially attractive to writing teachers, who use MOOs for class discussions, tutorial sessions, and virtual office hours. Because all MOO communication takes place through writing, students get lots of practice as they interact on the MOO. For example, they can work on essay drafts in small groups and log the session so they have a record of suggestions and changes that their peers or their teachers make. The log can then be printed out or published on a web page for the whole class to see.

Building in a MOO is part creative writing and part elementary programming, but most MOOs have excellent reference guides to help students get started. Tari Fandarclai at Connections MOO has one of the best MOO tutorials on the web; within a few minutes of working on her tutorials, most newbies have created a room of their own. (First, contact Tari Fandarclai ([tari@ucet.ufl.edu](mailto:tari@ucet.ufl.edu)) and request a character. Be sure to tell her that you're a CASLL member.) Tari also answers questions personally and helps newbies solve their programming problems.

Above all, MOOing is fun, and who among us doesn't want our students to have more fun in their classes?

Another good reason to learn to MOO is so more of us can get together virtually from time to time. Doug Brent, Marcy Bauman, Amanda Goldrick Jones, Russ Hunt, and Janice Freeman have met at the CASLL castle in Connections MOO several times since Inkshed 14. We've had a range of conversations from the serious to the absurd, but we've always had fun touching base with those people whom we otherwise would talk to only a few times a year. MOOing is much more informal than responding to a discussion list, but good ideas do emerge in the course of these real-time conversations.

## **A Few Moo Websites**

### **MOO clients**

The first step in MOOing is to download a good MOO client. They are free and generally take up little space on a hard drive. Although any telnet client will allow users to connect to a MOO, a MOO client makes participating in a MOO much simpler.

Pueblo multimedia virtual world client

<http://www.chaco.com/pueblo/>

Pueblo is a powerful client that will work with Windows 3.1 and Windows 95. It has many features that few educational MOOs support, but it comes with good documentation.

MudWin

[ftp://ftp.microserve.com/pub/msdos/winsoc/zipped\\_files/mudwin.zip](ftp://ftp.microserve.com/pub/msdos/winsoc/zipped_files/mudwin.zip) This is one of the smallest MOO client available (72k); it downloads quickly and takes up little space.

Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be much documentation about it.

MacMOOSE

<ftp://pub/asb/MacMOOSE/MacMOOSE1.0b1.sea.bin>

This is a reliable and compact client for Macintosh users; it requires System 7 and MacTCP (or FreePPP).

Virtual reality in education: Education and Moo, Mud, Mush

<http://www.cris.com/~angus1/index.html>

These pages contain links to several free MOO clients for both Windows and Macintosh systems. A real bonus is the clear instructions for downloading clients.

Computer Writing & Research Labs' Mush & MOO page

<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/moo/clients.html> Not only does this page contain links to some of the most popular MOO clients, it also has links to FAQ pages, tutorials and references. Find out how our colleagues at the University of Texas use MOOs in their classes.

### **MOOs to Explore**

Connections

<http://www.ucet.ufl.edu/~tari/connections/connections-home.html> This is the home of our very own CASLL realm as well as the Netoric International Park. Read these pages for an introduction to Connections, for logging on information, for great tutorials, and the quick reference guide to MOO commands. Netoric's Tuesday Cafe meets Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m. EST.

Diversity University  
<http://www.du.org:8888/>

DU is one of the most highly-developed educational MOOs. Here's how they describe themselves: "Diversity University MOO campuses are Internet locations for serious experimentation in network-based, interactive teaching, learning and social services." DU administrators give free lessons in MOO basics and will assist teachers bringing classes to the MOO for the first time. DU is the home of the Online Educator's Resource Group, which meets every Sunday at 8:00 p.m. EST.

## MOO Resources

The Lost Library of MOO  
<http://lucien.berkeley.edu/moo.html>

This is a useful site for those who want general information about MOOing as well as access to research papers and resources.

MOO Central

<http://www.pitt.edu/~jrgst7/MOOCentral.html> Although slightly out of date now, this page is a good introduction to the different kinds of MOOs and their uses. It contains a useful list of educational MOOs and a description of each one as well as links to clients and other MOO resources.

Bibliography of Electronically Available Sources: MOOs, MUDs, MUCKs, and MUSHs  
<http://www.cas.usf.edu/english/walker/bibliog.html> Janice Walker has put the MediaMOO bibliography in MLA format on her website. This is a particularly useful site, as the entries are annotated. Although it hasn't been updated since June 1996, this site is worth a visit.

LinguaMOO MOO Teach main page

<http://home.earthlink.net/~d3davis/mainpg.htm> For those who want to MOO with their classes, this page is essential reading. It contains links to classroom activities, a monthly colloquium, MOO teaching resources, and the LinguaMOO e-journal.

## Quick Reference for Connections Commands

These instructions were written by Connections administrator, Tari Fandarclai, and are reproduced here with her permission. They may be viewed on the web at <http://www.ucet.ufl.edu/~tari/connections/shortlist.html>.

### Logging in

Use telnet or your mud client to connect to this address: [connections.sensemedia.net](http://connections.sensemedia.net) 3333  
connect <your character name> <your password> -- connect to your character  
connect guest -- connect to a guest character

### Communication commands

|                       |                                                            |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| say <message>         | speaks aloud to everyone in the room                       |
| "<message>            | speaks aloud to everyone in the room                       |
| to <person> <message> | speaks aloud, directing your remark to a particular person |
| <person>, <message>   | speaks aloud, directing your remark to a particular person |
| emote <action>        | shows yourself doing an action                             |
| <action>              | shows yourself doing an action                             |

mu <person> <message> whisper privately to someone who's in  
the room with you  
page <person> <message> page anyone who's logged in

### Moving around the MOO

<@exits> find the names of the exits from the room you're in  
<exit name> go through the exit whose name you give  
walk to <room name> walk to the room whose name you give  
join <person> walk to the location of the person you name  
home go to your home (will get you out if you get stuck in a  
room)

### Looking around

look here look at the room you're in  
look <name of person or object> see the description of the  
person or object you name  
exam here get detailed information about the room you're in  
exam <person or object> get detailed information about a  
person or object

### Miscellaneous

@who see who's logged in  
help help get an explanation of the in-MOO help system  
help <topic or command name > get help with a particular  
topic or command  
@describe me as <description> put a new description on  
yourself  
  
@doing me is "<message>" (for owned characters) set your @doing message  
@doing me is "" get rid of your @doing message  
@name <newname> (for guests) put your name on the guest  
character you're using

### Logging out

@quit disconnect from Connections

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## The Writing Instructor's Log as a Pedagogical Tool

Hyacinth Simpson  
York University

The words "writing centre" or "writing workshop" sometimes conjure up images of remedial writing and slow students with language handicaps that are a far cry from the reality of the work and purpose of writing instruction. Many of us who tutor in writing centres have had experiences with students who come to one-on-one appointments to have their essays 'proof-read' or to have the instructor tell them if their answer is right or wrong. Such attitudes indicate that students too have absorbed the negative perception of writing centres as places where they go to "bring themselves up to acceptable standards" instead of a service which helps them to become more aware of the techniques of effective writing and which encourages them to identify and take control of their learning goals.

One of the ways in which the myths of writing centres can be corrected lies in writing instructors making their pedagogical practices clear to themselves, their students and the academic community (lecturers, markers, academic counselors, etc.) which they serve. The writing centre can significantly enhance the work of the classroom if it is seen, and used, as a collaborator in the learning process. The following is a description of one writing instructor's attempt to bridge the gap between the writing centre and the classroom and transform passive instruction into active learning.

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Shortly after I began working in the Centre for Academic Writing at York University, I began to reflect on the benefits and drawbacks of some approaches to writing instruction. I was concerned about the extent to which my instruction helped students acquire the necessary skills for effective writing and measure their rate of progress. I found that treating each writing task as a project unto itself - brainstorming the question, fine-tuning the thesis statement, working through drafts with students - often produced good papers but did not necessarily make them any more capable of accomplishing the task on their own than when they made the first appointment. Usually, the process had to be repeated, almost to the letter, for each writing assignment. Students sometimes felt that a paper that was written with help from the Centre was a guaranteed 'A' and were very disappointed if they received a lower grade. Feedback from some professors indicated that they too expected writing instruction to transform a B+ potential into an A, or a C+ into a B within the two weeks between handing out the assignment and its due date. It soon became obvious that this approach focused too much on the product and not the process.

Adopting the role of an evaluator - reading student's drafts and suggesting changes, pointing out patterns of error, etc.- also had its limitations. While conscientious and detailed feedback helped students improve their drafts, they were not actively engaging in the act of evaluating their own writing. They were not being taught how to be self-conscious, self-reflexive writers. I also felt that I was doing little more than replicating the role of the marker/grader. At other times, I would ask students questions about the writing task at hand to nudge them into seeing flaws and to improve their cognitive skills. Depending on the student, it sometimes worked wonderfully and at other times it did not. I also felt that it was important that students learn to identify the questions they need to ask of their writing instead of relying on me to articulate them.

I started my search for a method of instruction that would maximize the benefits and minimize the disadvantages of the approaches outlined. I started my log first as a means of helping me keep track of my students and the advice I was giving them. It soon evolved as an instructional tool of benefit to my students. The log has the basic entries: names, a record of appointment dates, courses taken, assignments, grades received and marker's comments. I expand on each of these entries in ways I hope will encourage independent and effective learning. For example, at the beginning of the year, I establish a "contract" with my students. Based on the information given in their course schedules, we decide on appointment dates two weeks before the due date of each assignment. A student can have more appointments if my time is not booked by other students (York's Writing Centre allows each student one one-hour appointment per week), but these stand as dates we must keep with each other. The benefits of this arrangement soon become obvious. It helps students organize their time around their writing assignments and sends the message that good writing is about having adequate prep time. It thus discourages the "quick fix" approach to writing. Of course, this means that students need to have course schedules which give the due dates for assignments.

Under the entry marked "courses", I record course titles and make a note of any explanations/instructions given in course outlines. Providing clear, detailed course descriptions and outlines is one way in which course directors can cooperate with writing instructors in facilitating learning. I ask my students to read through the course description and outline with me and together we try to identify patterns - themes, methodologies, recurring questions/issues, etc. - specific to each course. This information is then written down as "course brief". Sometimes I ask the student to word the brief. The student learns that effective writing comes from having a good overview of the course and its contexts. It helps them prepare for their writing assignments even before they know what the question will be by making them alert to course emphases. The brief encourages active reading and effective note-taking, both necessary prerequisites for writing. When they know what the course is about, it becomes easier for them to formulate the right questions when reading and to sift through content for the information which will help them answer those questions. I give my students a print-out of the brief and keep a copy for my files.

As students learn more about course content, I suggest they update and expand the brief in light of their new knowledge. I act as a "sounding board" as they work through the implications of what they are reading. I have found this exercise makes it easier for students to brainstorm the assignment question themselves and construct more interesting thesis statements. Drawing on the combination of critical skills - reading, thinking, note-taking - taught through this log entry, students are better able to identify the assumptions contained in the wording of an assignment or the nature of the task that must be undertaken. Students' conceptual development is also enhanced. I continue to provide support in several ways, such as reminding them that a thesis statement must be provable and sustainable throughout the length of the paper and helping them fine-tune their arguments. The writing of the brief is not the only way in which these skills can be exercised. I advise my students to use the approach to writing the brief to prep for lectures, tutorials, seminars and exams.

This part of the log works best when my students and I have a good course outline to start with. In the absence of such or where only very sketchy information is provided, we have to work from the opposite end. That is, students have to cover pieces of reading assignment first, then we try to discern patterns based on students' summaries of readings. This process is admittedly more tentative and the possibilities of misreading are greater. It depends heavily on students' comprehension skills instead of allowing for the development of this skill. In these instances, I fall back on the dictum which says it is best to treat each case as special, allowing the circumstances to dictate the best method of instruction.

The "assignments" entry allows me to monitor each student's rate of progress under the following headings: ability to compose clear and effective thesis statement; sequencing and logic of arguments; syntax, sentence structure, grammar. The task of the professor is to assess the clarity and effectiveness of thesis statements in assigning a grade. My job is to help students identify what goes into making effective thesis statements and have them put this knowledge to work. I make a habit of recording each thesis statement composed by my students (including those from first drafts that are later revised). At the end of each semester, I show them to my students and note improvements. We compare our own assessment to comments made by graders. Students are greatly encouraged and motivated by this small act and the "ingredients" for a good thesis statement are reinforced. I repeat the process for syntax, grammar, etc. Based on my assessment of students' areas of strength and weakness (usually I can make a fair assessment by the time the student has completed the first assignment), I tailor my instructions to meet individual needs. For example, when students' papers are difficult to read because they do not understand the importance of paragraphs and topic sentences, I explain these concepts and often make use



of examples from essays I keep handy for this purpose. When the grader returns the assignment, I go through the comments with my students paying particular attention to the areas we worked on. This exercise is most beneficial when markers attach a grading sheet with the evaluation criteria used in marking to their overall comments. Fortunately, from a survey of the papers I have seen over the last three years, more markers are making their evaluation criteria known to students. Students feel less confused about grades and I take note of these criteria in my instructions to students.

There are many ways in which the log can be adjusted and improved, some of which are just becoming clear to me. For now, I am concentrating on making the most of its benefits. At the end of each year, I have a detailed learning profile for each of my students. This information is confidential - the student and I are the only people who see it - but the information distilled from these profiles can help teachers understand how learning, and writing in particular, can be taught and improved. This is the future I envision for this instructional tool.

My first log was written up in a scrap-book I bought for the purpose. It was tedious and cumbersome to make entries by hand and lug an over-sized book around. I now input my entries on the computer which allows me to give my students print-outs or isolate and print areas of the log when needed. I save my files on a diskette (not on the Centre's hard drive!) so students do not have to worry about confidentiality. The Writing Centre at York is now working towards placing a computer on the desk of each writing instructor. This move made possible my shift from paper to byte. It also means that my colleagues at York (and instructors in other computer equipped writing centres) can try this approach with any adjustment they see fit. I am in the process of seeking the advice of software experts on the best package for mounting my entries. I foresee another article on the benefits and drawbacks of software choice on the effectiveness of the log.

My students are not the only ones who have benefited. The log has functioned as a tool for self-training and self-evaluation. When I review my students' learning profiles half-way through and at the end of each academic year, I am prompted to ask :Are my methods and modes of instruction working? What do I need to improve/change? I have been made more aware of my role and responsibilities as a writing instructor and am better able to teach because of it. I see myself using, reflecting on, and improving the log for a long time to come.