Inkshed

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

What's New...

1. Canadian Caucus at CCC in Milwaukee in March, 1996

About 25 Canadian writing instructors--some who are teaching in the States--met in the early evening of the second day of the CCC Conference in Milwaukee. While there was no formal agenda, the opportunity did allow us to introduce ourselves, and do some collective whining about the status of writing programmes in Canada. This informal coming together (and our most congenial meals afterward) helps to strengthen our ties that are so crucial if we are all to survive. It was a good opportunity for me to meet "new" faces: Dave Banninga (University of Windsor), Rob Irish (U. of T.), Kevin Brooks (Iowa State), Christine Skilnik (State College, PA), Heidi Jacobs (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Joann Zimmer (Sheridan College, Brampton), Donna Lee Smith (McGill) and JoAnne Farell (McGill). (Copies of Inkshed are being mailed to these folk who aren't already members, in the hope that they will formally join our organization).

One outcome of the meeting was an undertaking that all jobs opening up in the area of composition and rhetoric would be posted on the CASLL listserv (as well as in the more traditional job market sites, like the *CAUT Bulletin*).

2. Canadian Web Sites of Interest to Inkshedders:

**York University's Computer-Assisted Writing Centre's Web Page:

A reminder that all the *Inkshed* newsletters since September 1994 are now on this Web server. Go to http://www.writer.yorku.ca and click on "resources". Also check out the on-line "Strategies" program: techniques for generating ideas for essays.

[At the CASLL meeting at the May Inkshed 13 conference, we will be discussing the various ways we can add to this site--we could for instance include a list of all Inkshed members' with activated email addresses which would allow you to email from the Web page. Links to Inkshed members' Webpages could easily be set up, etc. A report on what was decided at the Business meeting will be included in the summer *Inkshed* issue.]

**The University of Toronto's Writing Programmes:

CASLL members may be interested in a new Canadian Web site about academic writing. Writing at the University of Toronto [website: http://www.library.utoronto.ca/www.writing/] backs up the far-flung writing-support operations at U. of T., which now extend from tutoring undergraduate students in the colleges to consulting with faculty in professional programs. Besides giving information about services and teaching available, the site includes about 20 student handouts developed at U of T and a "mirror" of 100 more from the Purdue OWL. They cover such matters as using documentation systems, writing book reviews, avoiding wordiness, and checking punctuation. A search button allows users to find specific topics easily. Students can use the site too as a starting point for exploring other writing-related sites, including inventive ones for practicing English as a second language and some giving leads for creative writing.

A distinctive feature is the inclusion of material for faculty who use writing assignments as part of teaching their subjects. A number of files give annotated lists of guidebooks about writing in specific disciplines; others list books and articles about the teaching and learning of writing, both in the disciplines and as a subject in itself. Soon to come will be advisory material on setting assignments, coaching students through the process, and commenting effectively and efficiently. Margaret Procter (procter@epas.utoronto.ca) wrote the text for this site; Will Buschert, a graduate student in Philosophy and a writing tutor at Erindale College, designed it and did the HTML. Comments are welcome, especially suggestions for other links.

**Will Garrett-Petts' (and others') Web site on Earle Birney:

In a recent communiqué on CASLL, Will wrote:

Those of you who were present at the last Inkshed Conference may remember our panel on "Visual and Verbal Literacies." Well, we've had an opportunity, recently, to put some of the theory discussed there to the practical test: with the help of 10 students here at University of Cariboo College, another faculty member and I have constructed a web site http://www.cariboo.bc/ae/e_birney/home.htm which, I think, begins to implement an integration of the visual and the verbal. Sponsored by the National Library (and funded by Industry Canada) we've created a site designed to introduce high school & first-year university students to the work & criticism of Earle Birney. My students & I would welcome any feedback: suggestions, additions, bouquets.

**University of Ottawa's web site on Hypergrammar:

[Information about this Web site was found on the Computers and Literary Studies listserv]

A new version of Hypergrammar, an on-line English grammar and workbook is available: http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/

The University of Ottawa's Writing Centre's main page provides links to other Internet resources for French and English wiring and grammar. David Megginson, notes that Hypergrammar is mostly complete, but that there are a few missing links and nodes. He asks for comments sent to dmeggins@aix1.uottawa.ca.

**University of Victoria's Writing Programmes Web Site:

Under the direction of A. Keller (akeller@sol.uvic.ca), the University of Victoria's Writing Programmes has its own Web Page:

http://webserver.maclab.comp.uvic.ca/writersguide/welcome.html

The notice on the Home Page states: "Originally prepared for students in the English Department at the University of Victoria, the Guide is an introduction to the process of writing and to the study of literature. We're pleased to make its hypertext version available to writers and students of literature across the World Wide Web. We hope you find it helpful whether you're just starting the big job of writing an essay or need only to check a small point."

Please let us know of other relevant Home Pages!

3. Articles in this Issue

This is a short issue of Inkshed--providing an overview of the sessions that took place at the Canadian panel of the CCCC in Milwaukee, a preview of the session titles at the May 1996, Inkshed 13 conference, and notification of the presentations sent in to the CCC Conference organizers for the 1997 conference to be held in Phoenix. (Since the deadline for this panel presentation had to be in by April 19, 1996--and the topic for discussion was only decided at the March conference--there wasn't enough time to get the call for papers out to everyone via the Inkshed newsletter. However, it's not to late to be included: if you would like to be considered for the panel, please write Roger Graves, 1607 Sanderson Court, Normal, IL, USA 61761 (or email: rgraves@condor.depaul.edu).

4. New Co-editor

Margaret Procter from U. of T. has kindly agreed to help out on the editorial front of this newsletter. You may be familiar with some of her publications--which make her highly qualified for the job: "How to 'nudge' without being obnoxious" and "If you can survive as a Writing Programmes Co-ordinator, you can do *any* job."

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WAC/WID And Writing To Learn In the Canadian Context

1996 CCCC Convention: Roundtable Session LS, March 29, 4:30PM

This roundtable explored the differences that characterise the Canadian academy in its treatment of writing and in the resulting emerging WAC and WID programmes. To a large extent, these differences exist because the Canadian academy has never invested heavily in firstyear composition programmes. It also explored some of the political, logistical, and pedagogical strategies that capitalise on these differences.

Presenter 1: Henry Hubert, University College of the Cariboo

The Canadian Context: An Overview
This overview reported on current AC/WID programmes in AngloCanadian colleges and universities. Following a brief statistical review based on Canadian regions and size of institution, the presentation categorised the programmes by administrative approach as well as by political concerns.

Presenter 2: Philippa Spoel, Laurentian University

The Rhetoric of Writing Competency
This presentation explored the consequences of competency testing on a WAC programme. I proposed a Burkean rhetorical analysis of the term competency within my university's context as a way of understanding the term's complex meanings, values, and functions, especially in relation to the competing ideal of writingtolearn. This analysis developed a basis from which to consider not only the tensions and boundaries, but also the opportunities for fruitful

interaction, between the founding ideal of competency and the growing ideal of writing-to-learn.

Presenter 3: Catherine Schryer, University of Waterloo

Faculty Workshops in the Canadian Context
This presentation offered some practical strategies for developing faculty workshops in the Canadian context. It suggested strategies for assisting WAC and WID instructors with large classes to design and evaluate graded and ungraded writing assignments, and concluded with a discussion of ways to use faculty workshops to develop the institutional longevity of WAC programmes.

Presenter 4: Jim Bell, University of Northern BC

Writing in the Disciplines Workshops: A Worthwhile WAC Activity?
Given the traditionally low priority of composition teaching in Canadian universities, starting Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs is particularly difficult, even at a new university which is developing all programs from scratch. Consequently, WAC supporters cast about for stopgap measures and viable alternatives to a full-fledged WAC program. Would a wellorganised series of Writing in the Disciplines (WID) workshops be worthwhile? In the Fall '95 and Winter '96 semesters, the University of Northern British Columbia offered a series of workshops in which faculty spoke to, and discussed with students, two questions: 1) How do you go about writing an article for publication in your field? and 2) What do you look for in student writing? After I briefly described the context and the workshops, I reported in some detail the extensive evaluation we conducted.

Presenter 5: Roberta Lee, University of New Brunswick St. John

The Role of Writing Centres in WAC/WID
I discussed the role of the professionallystaffed Writing Centre in developing and sustaining WAC/WID in the small Canadian university. Because of their unique interdisciplinary perspective, Writing Centre instructors can play an important leadership role in WAC/WID. As they take on this leadership role, however, they may find it difficult to maintain a balance between emphasising a strong institutional framework for WAC and promoting an energetic commitment to WAC at a grassroots level. I raised questions and made suggestions about preserving a creative tension between these two emphases.

Presenter 6: Margaret Proctor, University of Toronto

Finding the Right Reasons for a Writing Program
Our university is looking for ways to save money and do more with less. It is also proud of its history as a bastion of liberal education and its reputation as a training ground for professionals. Should we feel suspicious or encouraged that writingsupport programs have received new funding at a time of budget cuts? We keep both possibilities in mind as we participate in curriculum changes and work with old and new ways of teaching.

Presenter 7: Robert Irish, University of Toronto

Writing in Engineering at Toronto: Initiatives and Experiments
For writing instruction, Engineering at this university is an empty vessel . . . with a lid. The opportunity here is vast; little has been done. The lid is a widely held faculty perception that anything done about writing is "remedial." What is required before real progress can be made facultywide is a significant culture shift, an understanding that writing actually equips these engineers for the world of work. This shift is being initiated by working with individual professors who are willing to see their courses in new ways.

Philippa Spoel
Laurentian University

Canadian Contexts for Writing in the Disciplines: Past, Present, and Future

(preliminary panel submitted to CCC 1997 Conference Organizers)

This session, sponsored by the Canadian Caucus, builds on the roundtable that our caucus sponsored at the Milwaukee CCCCs. Last year's roundtable was very important for Canadian members of CCCC because it gave both presenters and audience members a chance to hear about programs at a variety of institutions from across Canada. Writing instruction at Canadian universities is, of course, quite different from writing instruction in the United States (see Hubert, *Harmonious Perfection* for a historical perspective, and Graves, *Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities*, for a contemporary perspective). Writing in the disciplines programs are distinct in status, administrative connections to academic disciplines, and funding. The roundtable proposed here seeks to build upon last year's meeting by continuing the conversation about new developments in writing in the disciplines (WID) and writing across the curriculum (WAC) programs. In addition, the roundtable proposed here seeks to add two new dimensions to the discussion. Speaker #1 will provide a historical overview of the educational movements and social developments that prevented and encouraged WID/WAC programs in Canadian universities. The other new development will be contributed by Speaker #4 who will share insights into the ways disciplines are formed and enacted. An understanding of that process should provoke some interesting comments and insights from the audience as they reflect on their responsibilities as program administrators and as teachers of writing in the disciplines.

Individual Presentations

David Russell's *Writing in the Academic Disciplines, 1870-1990: A Curricular History* details the educational movements and social pressures that have at various times prevented and encouraged writing instruction across and in the spectrum of university disciplines in the United States. Speaker 1 will apply Russell's historical framework to the history of university education in Canada, noting similarities in educational movements but different developments socially and politically in the two countries. [Kevin Brooks, Iowa State]

Speaker # 2 will describe how one social sciences division in an Arts Faculty is introducing mandatory first-year "foundations" courses that include a writing component. The courses are taught in this format: two hour lectures (in large lecture halls) and two hour seminars (with a maximum enrollment of 30 students per seminar). This presentation will describe these courses and the nature of the writing done in them. [Mary-Louise Craven, York University]

Speaker # 3 will begin from the premise that most writing instruction in Canadian universities is indirect. That is, it takes place in courses in the disciplines, and students distill it from remarks in class, assignment instructions, and course grades. Writing instructors and tutors need to help students interpret what faculty say about writing, and--even more--what they do not say. This presentation will analyse discussions with students and faculty in an effort to bridge the gap between teacher talk and student understanding. [Margaret Proctor, University of Toronto]

Speaker # 4 will examine the second key term in Writing in the Disciplines: disciplines. Based upon experiences moderating an e-mail listserv on Canadian literature, this presenter will reflect on the ways this list created a shared discipline called "Canadian Literature." In the course of sending and receiving over 1000 messages in eight months, this group rehearsed many of the central issues and critical perspectives that together create a discipline. Lessons from the way this group created or enacted a discipline and the role of writing in that process will be used to draw out implications for writing in the disciplines. [Will Garrett-Petts, University College of the Cariboo]

Roger Graves
DePaul University

The Changing Faces of Literacy

Gull Harbour Resort, May 2-5, 1996

While a full report on the conference will be published in the June *Inkshed*, here's a listing of the speakers and their

topics submitted by Pat Sadowy:

**Richard Coe: The other end of the "Literacy Gap"
**Doug Brent: Reading and Writing on the Web: What Would Plato Say?
**Marcy Bauman: Authority on the World Wide Web
**Margaret Procter, Dena Bain Taylor, Cynthia G. Messenger, J. Barbara Rose: Changing Literacies in the Health Sciences
**Rebecca Cameron: Shared Frontiers: Student-centred Learning in Basic Literacy Programs and University Writing Centres
**Rhonda Schuller, Gloria Borrows, Joanne Horwood, Fay Hyndman: The Rhetoric of Literacy
**Leslie Sanders: Literacy and Desire
**Pat Sadowy, Laura Atkinson: "Scars on other Hands": Requisites for Teachers of Writing
**Roger Graves: Online Documents: Computerized Books or Complex Texts
**Mary-Louise Craven: Aspects of Literacy: Searching and Browsing (from Print to Hypermedia)
**Jaqueline McLeod-Rogers: A Story about Researching Gender Patterns in Writing: Deciding Whether and How to do it and What it Means
**Amanda Goldrick-Jones: The Ribbon and the Rose: Reading new Symbols of Gender Difference
**Ann Beer: Traditional Texts and Unfamiliar Worlds: Research Engineers (re)learning Writing in a Canadian Graduate Program
**Barbara Schneider, Jo-Anne Andre, Geoff Cragg: The Role of Writing Competency Tests in Developing Academic Literacy
**Russ Hunt: Genres of Dialogic Discourses in Electronic Discussions
**Kenna Manos and Susan Drain: Buying in or Selling out? Institutional Literacy and Institutional Survival

Carrying, Converting, Creating: Ideas For Assignments In The Disciplines

Publishers' displays are as useful as the oral presentations at some conferences. At College Composition and Communication meetings, the book displays always take up a huge room and much of my time. For the last few years I have gone to them to load up on books about writing in the disciplines. I come home with sore shoulders from carrying extra luggage, but each time I hope that my bags include just the right material to show people back home. Perhaps, finally, some readable, sensible, and convincing handbook will set out the principles of designing assignments that every student will want to write and every professor will be eager to assign and read.

Three weeks after CCCC96 in Milwaukee, my shoulders are a little better but my hopes are still unmet. The books I brought home this time stand on my top shelf, along with my collection from past years. I will refer to this shelf when faculty workshops loom, probably carting off with me the classic book of advice by Barbara Walvoord (*Helping Students Write Well*, 2nd ed., MLA, 1986) and the study she wrote with Lucille P. McCarthy (*Thinking and Writing in College*, NCTE, 1990). Some visitors to my office will be attracted by such titles as *Write to Learn* (Margot Soven, South-Western, 1996), *The Critical Writing Workshop* (Toni-Lee Capposela, Boynton/Cook 1993), and *Improving Student Writing* (Andrew Moss and Carol Holder, Kendall/Hunt, 1988). Some will pick up my dog-eared copy of *Teaching Writing in All Disciplines* (C. Williams Griffith, ed., Jossey-Bass, 1982) attracted by such ideas as the "microtheme." Some will even look at Toby FulwilerÕs *Teaching With Writing* (Boynton/Cook, 1987), though most Torontonians balk at his reliance on journals. When I visit appropriate departments, I will continue to mention *Using Writing to Teach Mathematics* (Andrew Sterrett, ed., Mathematical Society of America, 1994) and *Using Writing in the Design Disciplines* (Roger Martin, Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing, University of Minnesota, 1992), with their demonstrations that brief written formulation of ideas can generate dynamic group exercises. I will also keep looking for journal articles and will pull out my file of one-page summary articles from *The Teaching Professor*, many of them based on the books on my shelf. But my colleagues and I remain pretty much on our own when it comes to inventing sustainable assignments that fit our Canadian context: few writing courses or structured writing requirements, but good writing centres as support. Now we also have to face ever-larger classes in all departments and ever-fewer hours for coaching and grading.

Fortunately, we can turn to one Canadian handbook on assignment design and keep finding stimulating ideas. It's a slim 58-page production from Dalhousie University called *Learning Through Writing*, edited by Eileen M. Herteis and W. Alan Wright. The second edition came out in 1993, and it is still available by mail (no carrying!) for $6.00 prepaid from the Office of Instructional Development and Technology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS B3H 3J5. The subtitle *A Compendium of Assignments and Techniques* is an accurate description. This book bypasses theory and concentrates on showing examples of what works in the Canadian university classroom. A few pages at the beginning and end offer point-form summaries of basic ideas about writing and learning, conveniently formatted in just the right font size for overhead transparencies. But the substance of the book is its collection of sample assignments from faculty members, each summarized in a page or half-page with a few words of commentary. I have my favourites, already made into overheads for faculty workshops. Here are a few that have stimulated discussion among groups from Anthropology to Biology to Social Work:

**John Fraser of English assigns a fictional letter: "You are Conrad's publisher. He's recently sent you the manuscript of a long short story called *Heart of Darkness*. Write him a letter in which you make some suggestions for improving it. Bear in mind that he's got a terrible temper."

**Barbara Lounder of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design asks her students to read (yes!) Kenna Manos's article "Notes on the Language of Art Writing" (Arts Atlantic 16, Spring 1983), and then to choose an issue of an art or design periodical and analyse it, for a brief oral presentation and short essay.

**John Thompson of Sociology at the University of Saskatchewan first takes his students though an invention exercise generating various kinds of titles (a way of stating focus). He then in "live" performance writes the draft of an essay on the board from suggestions generated in the title exercise.

**Barry Ruddick of Oceanography asks students to find a good scientific paper and then write the proposal for the research reported there. That requires both a sense of the "big picture" and of the methodological details.

**Judy Guernsey of Medicine asks students to research a community health problem and then write a five-page report recommending the best strategy to deal with it. Some have been published.

**Len Diepeveen of English asks students to design an exam essay question based on course material. Then they say why it is a good question, outline how they would grade answers, and finally write an "A" answer.

**Terry Gordon of French describes a model for bibliographic instruction where students find and read two sets of material. In a course on psychology of women, for instance, they would compare some scholarly literature from the 1950s and then some from the 1990s.

A number of the inclusions are predictable: grading checklists, warnings about plagiarism, abstracts of articles, letters written to absent classmates. Journals crop up in various forms, indicating at least that it is not only artsies who use them. A few samples feel more clever than convincing; others seem specific to a course or a personality. Nobody ever likes all the samples I mention in conversation or quote at faculty workshops. I haven't heard of many being adopted wholesale. But people do start talking about them--objecting, adapting, reinventing, comparing--with the original discipline no barrier. The real subject of discussion becomes what they can do in their classes, and often what they have tried already, except that they haven't told anybody about it before.

My ambition, I like to tell workshop participants and visitors to my office, is to put together a local collection citing assignments people have created and used satisfyingly. It should, in fact, be more than local. I already know some places to look for other Canadian ideas: past issues of *Inkshed* and the *CATTW Bulletin*, and also the Tiplist from McMaster's Instructional Development office:

[http://www.science.mcmaster.ca/idc/tiplist.html].

No doubt there are others sources--please let me know about them, and I will find a way to disseminate their ideas. We all need to protect our shoulders from the strain of carrying more books across the border.

Margaret Procter
University of Toronto