Inkshed

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This issue was edited by Jane Milton, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
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http://www.stu.ca/inkshed

About Inkshed . . .

This newsletter of the *Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning* (CASLL) provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use, particularly in the Canadian context. CASLL membership runs from January 1 to December 31 and includes a subscription to *Inkshed*. To subscribe, send a cheque, made out to "Inkshed at NSCAD," for $20 ($10 for students and the un (der)employed to the following address:

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Subscribers are invited to submit items of interest related to the theory and practice of reading and writing. CASLL also has a website (www.stu.ca/~hunt/casll.htm) maintained by Russ Hunt.

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Inkshed editors and editorial consultants, past and present, include the following:

From the Editor's Notepad

This edition of Inkshed brings you more in the conversation about classroom teaching of workplace writing that has now spanned several issues. Both Roger Graves and Natasha Artemeva describe their practice and the results experienced by their students.

Two new features in this issue are an annotated bibliography by Natasha Artemeva and a column featuring brief descriptions of current work engaged in by CASLL members. I hope you will add to these collections in future issues. The annotated bibliography will be a useful resource for all (and you will also find links there to other website bibliographies), and the column on who is doing what will help keep us in touch and perhaps spur some more conversations and ideas among those engaged in similar pursuits. You will also find the registration form for Inkshed 20 (The Reunion). Look for more information about the program on the list soon. This promises to be another in the long list of our conferences described as the "best Inkshed ever." For those who can attend, remember that we need a volunteer to review the conference for the next newsletter for those unfortunates who can't be there.

– Jane Milton

Roger Graves

Worlds Apart or a Global Village:
Rethinking the Workplace/Classroom Distinction

Discourse, Agency, and Writing Outside the University

> Email from a student after completing the winter 2000 undergraduate Technical Writing course:
>
> [the] Second reason I am writing this e-mail is to THANK YOU for teaching this class. Everything we had in this class from document design, memos, and all those in class assignments helped me to do my job successfully now. I was hired as IT and promoted to People Soft developer where presentations, document design, creating set of instructions for end users are required. My boss and some other managers, including end users love it because is organized, readable, my points are on the place, plus I use pictures. They love it. I just want to thank you for it. Thank you
>
> Muharema

One school of thought -- articulated in *Worlds Apart* by Patrick Dias, Aviva Freedman, Peter Medway and Anthony Paré -- has it that workplace writing is so distinct in its context, its attenuation of learning tasks, its collaboration, its ownership of text, and its goals from academic writing assignments that only a general rhetorical awareness and general rhetorical strategies can be usefully taught in the academic classroom (pp. 185-200). However one might want to quibble with this conclusion, it seems a reasonable enough one if you accept certain premises: that most academic assignments in a professional writing course -- and the "report writing" genre springs to mind here along with any set of memo or letter writing exercises -- are sorely lacking a meaningful context for student writing. That is, if the reader for the writing is, for all intents and purposes, the instructor, then this kind of writing activity has little potential for transferring learning from the academic context to the workplace one. I think that, if you assume this as the paradigm for instruction in professional writing (and there is some reason to believe that is a reasonable assumption), this view accounts for the middling (or worse) success of traditional, textbook-based undergraduate instruction in professional writing. This does not mean, however, that there is no point in teaching professional writing courses at a university or that we should accept the learning conditions we are handed. In fact, we can change these learning conditions if we pay attention to useful criteria that Dias et al have identified: collaboration models, attenuation of learning tasks, goals for learning, and models of student participation.

My recent experiences suggest two circumstances where professional writing can be gainfully taught. I want to re-examine, first, a "faculty internship" experience I had recently in light of the issue of "context." What did I know about the context of my writing at this company before I went to work there? What context for this writing did I build in the five weeks I spent on site? How could I create or re-create a similarly meaningful context for my graduate students who were learning to write these kinds of documents? I will argue that both this course and student internships provide models of how academic study can be mingled with workplace contexts to provide meaningful learning experiences, especially for students of professional writing.

A second curricular innovation I have been working with for the past three years also challenges the conclusion that professional writing cannot be taught in a meaningful way in an academic setting. I teach a "service learning" course that directs students to write grants for a social service agency. To complete this assignment, students must "learn the agency:" travel to the agency several times, meet with the agency director several times, interact with the clients the agency serves, research possible foundations the agency could apply to for money, write about the agency and the project they need funding to initiate. All of these activities -- reading, writing, interviewing, researching -- build the context traditionally associated with workplace writing. All of these activities take place in the shared context of our weekly class meetings at the university and our trips around the city. These learning experiences introduce students to environments where collaboration counts, tasks are not attenuated, the goals for learning are to produce usable documents, and student participation moves quickly from attenuated authentic participation to legitimate peripheral participation.

Workplace/Academic Writing: My experience

I spent a little over one month working at the Chicago Interface Group, a software firm located at 368 West Huron Street in the River North area of Chicago (www.cig.net). In that time I was able to write or co-author three manuals, contribute to planning meetings, and even help with product development in a minor way. In many ways this work reinforced the ideas I already had about teaching technical writing: the kinds of things I already teach are the right things to be teaching. That is, there is a rough match between what goes on in my technical writing classes and the kinds of documents and methods of work that I encountered at this work site.

Entering a Community of Practice (COP): Details of my Internship

While working as a technical writer, I employed ethnographic research techniques to gather data: notes, interviews, and drafts of documents. I focused my research on these issues:

1. What kinds of writing projects do working professional writers work on?
2. What technology do they use to create their documents?
3. How do they use the technology to create documents?
4. How much testing do they do of their documents?
5. How do they build cognitive models or conceptions of their audiences and the purposes for which they read?
6. How do they develop the content of their documents?

Each of these questions is directly related to issues that come up in technical writing courses: teaching students about the genres or forms of technical documents, encouraging them to build models of their audiences, introducing them to computerized technologies for writing and communication. Ultimately, I wanted to know what kinds of discourse took place outside the classroom so that I could connect my classroom practices with those other discourses and practices.

What kinds of writing projects do working professional writers work on?

I found that the people at this small company work on a broad variety of documents:

- installation manuals
- user manuals
- FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) sheets
- white papers (8 page documents discussing how a client has used CIG software)
- promotional flyers/mailers
- functional overviews of products (descriptions of how they work)
- newsletter

This particular company develops software applications and sells licenses to use software products for mainframe computing systems. The interfaces (screens that you see on mainframe computer terminals, for example) are two colors--one for text and one for the background. To the uninitiated, these screens seem forbidding and confusing; often they give little clue as to what might be a reasonable response from the user. The interfaces that CIG produces transform these screens into the kinds of screens that show up in web browsers like Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer. Most users can figure out where to click or what to type or how to interact with web pages, and consequently the computer systems become easier to use.

The manuals that enable purchasers to install the product are extremely important, as are the manuals used to teach the employees of these companies how to use the products. Without these documents, CIG's products do not get used and the licenses to use them are not renewed. Sales of new product licenses depend to a great degree on past product performance; that is, if companies liked the last product CIG produced, they are very likely to buy the next one. To sell new products, CIG relies on mailers and direct marketing to people who use mainframe computer systems. They also rely on white papers (case studies) and functional overviews to support sales people when they present the products to customers. I think two things are important here: first, the written documents are part of the product (without them, there is no viable or usable product); and second, written documents support marketing efforts in critical ways (without marketing documents, sales slow).

What technology do they use to create their documents?

CIG uses the Microsoft Office suite of products on most workstations, but they also bought a special word processing product called Doc-to-Help. This program adds sub menus to the regular MS Word menus, so that when you click on "Edit" from the top menu bar you would see an elongated drop-down list of choices. Many of these choices make it easier to create manuals by automating the formatting of the document. Headers appear in a set size, typeface, and place on the page, and all text and sub-heads are automatically indented.

Doc-to-Help produces print, online, and web-based documents from the same original files. The technical writer at CIG told me that they chose Doc-to-Help specifically because it produced print output. The users of CIG products were, for the most part, still print-based; they did not use the internet extensively, although that was changing. These users demanded print documents for the manuals; the sales people also needed print documents to leave behind after sales calls and to mail to prospective customers. The support people at CIG, however, did post FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) to the web site, and they were in the process of moving more of the troubleshooting advice/documentation to the web site. They would also make PDF formats of the manuals available for clients to download. They used a variety of software packages (it differed from person to person) including Microsoft FrontPage to create these documents.

How do they use the technology to create documents?

Because the company creates and sells computer software, everyone in the firm works with a computer on their desk and internet access. I did not see a hand-written document or draft of a document the entire time I was there. During planning meeting we used white-boards to visualize processes and outlines of activities. These whiteboards often remained up for weeks; some of them appeared to have been up for months. They were handwritten, but that was about it.

The word-processed word, then, dominated. Once a document file had been created during the drafting process, it was available to anyone on the network. I could open a document on the technical writer's computer, for example, and then save it to mine or change it and save it back to that other computer. Sometimes documents were sent as email attachments to others to review.

Handwritten whiteboards provided the means for sharing ideas in group meetings. Word-processed agendas for meetings and draft documents of all kinds were shared through the computer network. Draft documents were also printed out for review and testing. In short, a person who could not use computer technology would not be able to contribute to the success of CIG. Furthermore, everyone was expected to use both their own and company time to add to their computer skills. The environment demanded continued learning and quick learning in a computer environment.

How much testing do they do of their documents?

Key documents were tested extensively. The installation manual I helped write and edit was originally drafted by one of the co-owners of the business, a mainframe computer programmer. This document was given to the three people working on documentation/support for this new product: the technical writer, the web support person, and me. The technical writer and I each reviewed the draft separately and then met to compare changes. These changes were what I think of as editorial: steps were left out or not numbered, formatting for the same kind of information would vary, that kind of thing. After comparing our responses and compiling them into one document, the technical writer met with the programmer who drafted the installation guide. We then revised the document based on our suggestions and comments from the programmer.

We then tested this draft (draft 2) by asking another computer programmer to use it to install the software product onto a mainframe computer. I conducted this user test on April 18. It lasted from 9:30 am until 4:00 pm; the subject was not able to install the program, even after all this time had passed. It took almost 2 hours to complete Step 1, a process that in the final test took 20 minutes. Ultimately, we were able to revise the manual so that in the final test the total elapsed time was 2 hours.

Within one work week we created 8 different versions of this manual. The final version shipped with the "beta" version of the software product. This amount of revision, and the collapsed time frame we did it in, is exceptional and not documented in the research literature of professional writing.

How do they build cognitive models or conceptions of their audiences and the purposes for which they read?

This is hard to uncover. Some of this conception of audience is clearly internal: the programmer who wrote the installation guide imagined an audience much like herself. For her, there was a logical way that she would go about installing a product. She had also worked with a great many other programmers, so this internal conception included that experience of listening, watching, and working with teams of programmers installing new products. She told us (April 11/2000 meeting) that these installers were "not web guys" but they did know Endevor (a mainframe software program). So some of her conception of audience was derived from social experience. She also tried to imagine how this audience would try to read -- what kinds of words and sentences and images would make sense to them. She tried to imagine metaphors that would communicate the concept of the new software program; at one point she kept mentioning that the actions of this program were like putting something into "cold storage" and then taking it out again.

One part of the new program offered an option for the user to add their picture to the computer so that other people could see that photograph when checking to see if a particular file had been checked out. The authors of the new program clearly thought this was a benefit, and they were conceptualizing a work place in which the users did not know each other personally but might be able to recognize each other's pictures. So they changed the new software with this kind of audience in mind. They applied this conceptualization of the audience to the manual as well. When planning the user manual, we began with typical user tasks and then structured the manual around these tasks. The second chapter, for example, was structured around a product's "life cycle," a metaphor that users were familiar with from Endevor and from mainframe computing.

How do they develop the content of their documents?

In the case of the installation manual, one of the two main software developers wrote the first draft of the manual. This draft itself was based on an installation manual written for a previous software product. That is, the structure of the installation manual, including the kinds of things written about and the way in which they were written, were guided in large measure by the previous document. What we have here is an evolving genre of document. The particular adaptations made in this genre at CIG were not limited to format, although format was important. As the document underwent usability testing by other programmers/installers, more information was added. Crucial steps were re-written to explain more clearly exactly how to follow the steps. Some steps were deleted because they were unnecessary, and other steps included information that simply was incorrect. The testing team added icons to identify where upper and lower case typed input became significant (in Unix environments) because we saw test subjects continually make errors at these places in the procedure. The content, then, became an amalgam of text and visuals created in the first draft and overwritten with text and visuals from the computer programmer who helped me test the manual.

The user guide was a different story. The technical support people (the technical writer, the web support person, and me) met with the other owner of the company, the person who worked on the source code for the product we were writing about. Together, we sketched out what should be in the manual and who should write which sections. Each of the support people was given a section to write. I was put in charge of assembling all the pieces and working them into a coherent whole. To write each section, we all opened up a copy of the product and "played" with it. We tried to break it: ask it to do things it couldn't do. For each function of the program we described the purpose of the function, how to activate this function, what each computer screen would look like, and what information users would need to fill in the boxes or fields of the screen. We included pictures of what users would see if they filled in the boxes correctly and what to do if things didn't work out. The content of this manual came largely from personal experience using the product ourselves. However, this was the first version of this document and unlike the installation manual, it would be used over and over (the installation manual is used once and set aside). It is likely that this document will be revised extensively after the company gathered feedback from actual users in the workplace and through training courses.

Transitions or Transmogrifications?

I'd like to consider four elements that Dias et al identify in *Worlds Apart* -- attenuation, collaboration, goals for writing, and kind of participation -- in the context of the internship situation described above. How did these variables affect the nature of my experience as an internship student?

Attenuation

Because of my status as a "professor" and former instructor for the technical writer in the company, I was not given "appropriate authentic attenuated tasks" (190). Instead, I was asked to collaborate on an installation guide and user guide without any sense that the tasks were attenuated. In some ways there was a real curiosity about what kind of a document I would produce since in some ways I was regarded as the "expert" who was slumming (a GenX term).

Collaboration

Dias et al overstate the differences when between the ways university classes and workplaces treat collaboration when they claim that "In the end, all university students are graded individually, even when they collaborate on specific assignments" (198). In my classes this simply isn't true. When students work collaboratively on assignments they all get the same grade and the same comments. In my work during the internship the installation guide drew efforts from at least five different individuals at different times and in different roles. This common activity parallels what Dias et al lead us to expect. In my classes, I use policies like the following one to encourage a similar collaboration environment:

Students are encouraged to work in groups of not more than three. Groups will be treated in the same manner as individuals: projects that are group written do not have to be longer than projects written by individuals. Each member of a group will be assigned the same mark for group assignments.

Goals

The goals for writing at the worksite were similar to what Dias et al call action and policy oriented (189). That is, the writing had a material product as its end result rather than operating as an evaluation of whether or not I had learned how to produce such a document.

Participation

In many ways my participation can best be described as "autonomous professional practice" (Dias et al 188) because I operated and was treated more like a consultant than a neophyte. Consequently, I did not experience the kind of guided and attenuated assignments that Dias et al describe in their research.

Case 2: Student as Autonomous Professional

In addition to my own experience of working as a full member of a Community of Practice (COP) [Dias et al's term for social groups in a workplace setting who share a discourse], I have witnessed a similar experience in several students in my service learning course on grant writing (http://condor.depaul.edu/~rgraves/377home.htm). I want to detail the experience of one student, Alissa Hull. Her experiences in the course seem to violate the easy separation of academy and workplace that Dias et al rely on in their conclusions about the nature of the writing done by students who participate in multiple COPs or what might also be called discourses (see Chaden et al). Ultimately, I want to argue not that Dias et al are wrong or incorrect in their characterization of what they found during the course of their research. Rather, I want to point to other data and suggest that there are other ways of constructing the student writing relationship that lead to an understanding of students working as full members of multiple discourse communities simultaneously. These other models may not be widespread, and certainly not in Canada (service learning does not seem to have made inroads in writing pedagogy at Canadian universities as of 2003), but that should not preclude our consideration of these other practices as possibly superior and worth pursuing as we seek to close the gaps Dias et al identify in their work.

COP and Autonomous Professional Practice Take Over The Course

Researchers tend to assume that students are young and inexperienced, and that is the paradigm normally assumed. However, increasingly I have encountered students who are not traditional college age (they were over 25) and whose participation in a COP predates their enrollment in a course. As a consequence, these students interact with a course in a much different fashion, one not detailed in research literature. In the following two paragraphs I summarize the goals of the grant writing course as described to the students. Alissa took this course with me in the fall of 2001:

> This is a service learning course that fulfills the experiential learning requirement for the liberal studies

program. Because it is a service learning course, we will engage in two kinds of work:

* learning how to analyze language in the specific professional context of non-profit agencies
* writing grant proposals for agencies

To learn to analyze the discourse of non-profit agencies and of funding sources we will read and study grant proposals that have been written for non-profits. I will lecture on the characteristics of this kind of discourse. This will involve a lot of traditional classroom work: going over the theories, applying them, writing analyses to see how well the concepts are understood. One analysis will focus on a document written by the agency you will be working with when you write the grant proposal; your analysis will be used to help the agency understand how they are representing themselves and to help you write a good proposal for them. So this aspect of the course, while theoretical and analytical, will provide the groundwork for writing the proposal.

The second aspect of the course is the service work (a total of about 25 hours, although some class time will be used to fulfill this requirement). The "service" that we will do in this course is writing grant proposals for agencies. To do this well, you should plan on spending at least 6 hours on the site of the service agency learning about their programs, talking to people who work there, and helping run the agency. You need this background so that you can write about what they do with conviction and specific detail. You should also budget 5 hours to spend at the Donor's Forum researching possible sources of grants (the foundations that give out money). Finally, expect to spend between 10 and 15 hours writing, revising, and presenting your work. You will present a draft of the proposal to the agency contact in the second last week of the course; the final proposal must be ready on the last day of class.

Alissa came to the course after having been part of the Young Women's Empowerment Project (YWEP) for 18 months. At the time of this writing (April 2002, eight months later), she continues to work with this group as she prepares to graduate. In her grant proposal, she says:

> [The Young Women's Empowerment Group is] a collaborative effort by survivors of prostitution and their allies to seek social justice for girls and young women who trade sex or being sexual for money, gifts, drugs, or survival. Each participant in the project is recognized as being able to make decisions about one's own life while seeking opportunities for harm reduction. The Project focuses on the systemic conditions which create a population of women and girls to be used in prostitution and seeks ways to effectively influence youth in order to create changes in the sex industries.

YWEP branched off from the original group, called the Advocates for Prostituted Women and Girls. Among other actions, this group protested the award of an honorary street named for Hugh Hefner (Playboy began in Chicago) by the Chicago City Council. YWEP began as a series of peer-based counseling, art expression, and information groups designed to provide skills such as how to survive on the street but also discussions about how issues such as racism, foster care, and economic inequality structured the lives of these women.

Outcomes

The grant that Alissa worked on focused specifically on obtaining money to run these workshops. In March of 2002, the YWEP was awarded $4,000 from the Crossroads Foundation as partial funding towards these workshops. In April of 2002, other potential funders were performing site visits, a second stage of investigating an organization and a good sign that further funding would be forthcoming.

In addition to writing a successful grant, Alissa took the textbook for the course, Grassroots Grants, and used it in the YWEP strategic planning mission session in October. Chapter Four begins by impressing upon the readers the need for establishing a "case statement;" Alissa took this planning process back to the YWEP and had them use it as part of their development process. The key thing here is that reading from the course was taken into the workplace COP and in fact created a practice within that group. So in a manner completely opposite to what Dias et al report, where the initiate must conform to the established practices of the workplace or community, here the student functioned as a full member of the group and not as peripheral or in an attenuated capacity -- as an autonomous professional.

Rethinking Workplace/Academy Metaphors

In the case of MA in Writing students, they are already established in COPs. In many cases these students come from or "originate" not in the school context but in a workplace context. When they come back to a school context, they are already experienced members of a COP and know its ways. They take night or weekend courses and then bring that knowledge back to the COP where they then use it to change the writing practices of that community. This model envisions a completely different kind of agency on the part of students. Rather than being neophytes, they are already established members of their communities. Rather than having to "learn new ways to learn new genres" they are already well versed in the model of life-long learning, as evidenced by their enrollment in a MA program. Rather than viewing school as a place to demonstrate their learning prowess, they bring an expectation that it should instead "relate" or extend somehow to professional practice in writing.

These MA students are not alone, however, in their approach to writing at work. As my students become less and less stereotypical college students and more and more part-time and returning students, the easy distinctions between workplace and academic writing practices blur. In Illinois, undergraduate students work an average of 30 hours per week; at my institution this number may in fact be somewhat low. Beyond the obvious problems this situation imposes on courseloads and reading, it is significant from a research point of view precisely because it implies that at least some of these students are already located in a COP and write within that context. When they write as students, they adapt or perhaps revert to school discourse as they read the classroom situation and teacher expectations. That is, they provide yet another example of individuals for whom the "transitions" metaphor simply doesn't fit. Instead, they are more appropriately seen as members of multiple discourse communities.

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Natasha Artemeva

Traveling in Space and Time: A Study of Learning Trajectories in Student Acquisition of Engineering Communication Strategies

In my CCCC 2003 presentation I reported on one part of a six-year longitudinal study into student acquisition of engineering genres. The main objective of the longitudinal study is to discover whether a pedagogy based on Rhetorical Genre Studies and Theories of Situated Learning and Distributed Cognition provides a foundation necessary for building continuity between the university engineering communication classroom and engineering workplace practices.

In my six-year study, I have followed a group of my former students who in the past took an Engineering Communication course that I designed and have been teaching at Carleton University. The course design is based on the principles of Rhetorical Genre Studies and theories of situated learning. A detailed description of the course was published in Artemeva, Logie & St. Martin (1999). The main questions that remain to be answered are whether

- the students can and do acquire engineering communication strategies in the communication classroom;
- the students continue to apply and develop these strategies beyond the communication class;
- these strategies, in fact, assist then in communications that occur beyond the communication class.

My preliminary studies (Artemeva, 2000; Artemeva & Logie, 2002; Artemeva, Logie &St. Martin, 1998) have shown that students do indeed acquire basic communication strategies appropriate for their chosen field that help them to become acculturated in workplace contexts. In other words, they begin to genre their "way through social interactions, choosing the correct form in response to each communicative situation [they] encounter," which they do "with varying degree of mastery" (Shryer, 1995, CATTW).The subject of my CCCC 2003 presentation is a series of events that occurred in the life of one of my longitudinal study participants. In the presentation, I related these events to the audience and then analyzed them using Rhetorical Genre Studies as a theoretical tool.

The events:

Sami was a second year engineering student when he took my engineering communication class. At the end of the course he gave informed consent to participate in the longitudinal study. About a year after his graduation he sent me an e-mail saying that he had been hired by an engineering company where he had worked for 4 months by that time. In his e-mail he communicated deep frustration with the communication practices in this company that were contrary to what he had learned at school both as a student and an undergraduate Teaching Assistant:

> As it turns out, most engineers at this company don't believe in wasting their design time with documentation, and therefore all writing seems to be done last minute and in a very poor manner. . . This as you can imagine does not only create internal problems, but also wasted time and money when these documents go to subcontractors and half their work has to be redone due to mistakes in the documentation.
>
> Most of the engineers here are only about 10 years older than I am, and their outlook on documentation is incredibly different than mine . . .

Then, in three months, Sami sent me another e-mail containing the following information:

> *Recently there was a project where the senior engineer had an implementation plan (this particular*

> *person has been in industry for 25 years, and he has told me before: "documentation and writing is a waste of my time and experience". . .). I had a different implementation in mind, but was having trouble getting my ideas heard by that person. And when he did, he told me: "no." There was going to be a design meeting at which he was going to present the method we were to proceed with. After being advised by my boss, I prepared a well thought out and organized presentation outlining my method and the alternative methods. The presentation was geared to the upper management (some engineers and some business people) as well as the director of R&D and director engineering (who would want to see a little more technical info).*
>
> *The other person [the senior engineer] gave a five-minute presentation, which was so technical that I had a difficult time following all the information (I'm one of the original designers on the project). He had nothing prepared in the form of pros and cons of the method etc. Then I was given the floor to give my presentation. I had all the information on all methods from implementation time, to manpower and cost projections. My presentation lasted five minutes as well, but I gave them all the information necessary to make an intelligent decision as to why we should go with my method. They agreed.*
>
> *The director of R&D let me give 3 more presentations to upper management after that. I also authored a document which had to outline different technologies and which ones we should use in our new product. This document was intended for both management and engineers (I found that document difficult to organize).* ***Then, I was promoted to director of R&D about 2 weeks later*** (emphasis added).

In an e-mail discussion and a series of interviews that followed this message, I asked Sami why he decided to write his own proposal. He responded:

> *The only reason why I wrote my own proposal was to show the senior engineers and the director of R&D that I was capable of independent thought. That I was not just another lab rat.*

I asked Sami if he had consulted any proposals written in that company before writing his own and whether he had attended any presentations before delivering his own. He responded:

> *I did not see proposals written within the company, but just other sample documentation. I would have liked to see a proposal, but I could not locate one. I am finding that there are a number of people who like to do things orally, so that they are not held as accountable.*
>
> *Yes I had attended 2 or 3 presentations. Only one of which I thought was good (it was given by our chief engineer, whom I have much respect for) and the rest were poor at best. The presenters did everything that we are taught to be wrong.*

I asked him (in many different ways) what had helped him prepare the proposal and deliver the presentation. His response was:

> *I relied more on what I learned at school and my other experiences* [his summer work terms and work with the first company where he was for three months] *than I did about what* [the current company] *was doing. In all fairness, anything would be better than the general practice here.*

I analyzed the events that occurred in Sami's life through the lens provided by the theoretical concepts of Rhetorical Genre Studies. I believe that the analysis presented below allows us to uncover connections between classroom and workplace and provides us with an opportunity to redefine our understanding of what it means to learn genres of one's profession.

Catherine Schryer's (2000) definition of genres as "constellations of regulated, improvisational strategies triggered by the interaction between individual socialization . . . and an organization . . .." (p. 450) serves as the basis for the analysis. Schryer explains that in this definition, the key word "constellation" allows her "to conceptualize genres as flexible sets of reoccurring practices (textual and nontextual)" (p. 450) and that the term "strategies" allows her "to reconceptualize rules and conventions (terms that seem to preclude choice) as strategies (a term that connotes choice) and thus explore questions related to agency" (p. 451). Schryer's redefinition of genre is largely based on Bakhtin's (1981) notion of chronotope. Bakhtin (1981), discussing the development of literary forms, defines chronotope (literally, "time space") as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships. . ." (p. 84). Bakhtin (1981) insists that

> the chronotope . . .has an intrinsic **generic** significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for . . . the primary category in the chronotope is time (emphasis in original). (p. 85)

With this focus on time and its role in the acquisition and use of genres within various chronotopes, the notions of chronos and kairos become particularly useful. Paul Tillich (1886 -1965), German-born American philosopher and theologian defined the notion of kairos as a " crisis' or fullness of time,' the right time for creative thought and action" (Sessions, 1995, p. 803). Jo-Anne Yates and Wanda Orlikowsky (2002) suggest that "we focus . . . on the temporal dimension and draw on the Greek concepts of chronos and especially kairos as used in ancient and modern rhetoric to help us think about issues of time and timing in genre systems" by concentrating "our attention on active shaping of kairotic moments rather than passive acceptance of the chronological ones" (p. 118). Yates and Orlikowski (2002) take the view that reflects a dual perspective on kairos: they see it as both "emerging from the communicative activities of human actors (i.e., rhetors and audiences) in specific situations (e.g., institutional context, task, place, and chronological time)" and as "enacted, arising when socially situated rhetors choose and/or craft an opportune time to interact with a particular audience in a particular way within particular circumstances"(p.108).

Within the workplace chronotope that didn't favour communication strategies that Sami had acquired while at school, Sami used both textual (a written document and a presentation) and a non-textual (studying background of all people who were to attend his presentation) response to the situation. He was able to create a kairotic moment and use it to his advantage. (Note: The moment did not exist in the chronological time, that is, nobody had asked for submission of proposals, for example, which would create a kairotic moment that could be seized by anyone.).

The importance of the non-verbal/non-textual response to a recurrent situation (Miller, 1984) was reasserted by Anne Freadman, first in her article "Anyone for Tennis?" (1994b) and then in "Uptake" (2002). In her discussion of the trial that led to the last capital punishment in Australia, she asks, "How does a sentence' become an execution?'. . . how does saying make it so?" (p. 42) and then answers her own question by saying, "it makes some sense to say that the sentence is an uptake of the verdict..." (p. 44). That is, genres (and, therefore, uptakes on genres) do not have to be texts they may be actions, cartoons, etc. Anne Freadman (2002) defines the conditions of the existence of genre as dependent on what she calls " memory' and the adaptation of remembered contents to changed contexts" (p. 41). Understanding of these theoretical notions allows us to unpack Sami's story:

Sami consistently claimed that in the new workplace, he used communication strategies that he had learned at school and practiced during his workterms. That is, Sami is referring to the "memory" (Freadman, 2002) he brought to the new workplace from previous chronotopes. This "memory" allowed him to analyze a new situation and find an appropriate textual (writing a proposal) and non-textual (analyzing the audience of his future oral presentation) uptake on the situation. He clearly had a repertoire of appropriate "regularized" (because they were recognized by the management and clients) but at the same time "improvisational" (because they were distinctly different from the practice of that particular workplace) engineering communication strategies, both textual and non-textual. He was able to find an appropriate uptake on a situation in a particular and somewhat constraining (if we remember the attitude toward communication) -- chronotope of his new workplace and created a kairotic moment to his benefit (while the senior engineer saw only a routine moment in chronos the real time).

Miller (1994a) p. 38 states: ". . . what we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have . . .. We learn to understand better the situations in which we find ourselves. . . for a student, genres can serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community." From Sami's story, we can see how he first was in conflict with the organization because its communication practices were contrary to what he had learned at school and on his workterms. However, he was able to use his understanding of engineering genres as allowing for flexibility, i.e., he wasn't taking the situation for granted. In other words, to echo Schryer's (2003) comparison of genres to jazz, he was able to successfully improvise within the limits of the genre. Miller (1994a) reiterates that ". . . our stock of knowledge is useful only in so far as it can be brought to bear upon new experience . . ." (p. 29). Sami was able to use his stock of knowledge to recognize the situation and to choose an appropriate uptake.

In this case study, I have applied the theoretical notions of Rhetorical Genre Studies to unpack a complex situation of professional communication in the workplace. I presented a series of events that occurred to one of my longitudinal study participants and used the notions of

- genre as regularized and improvisational strategies,
- chronotope,
- kairos, and
- textual and nontextual uptake

to explore the continuity in one student's acquisition and development of engineering-specific communication strategies.

This analysis allowed me to uncover the importance of the "improvisational" part of Schryer's definition of genre and of the "non-textual" part of the genre or uptake. Sami has understood the rules of genres of engineering. Even though only recently out of school, he is already in possession of a repertoire of flexible rhetorical strategies that allowed him to create a kairotic moment, select a suitable constellation of communication strategies, and turn the rhetorical situation to his advantage. The non-textual uptake on Sami's complex utterance was his promotion to Director of R&D.

I can now conclude that Sami did successfully acquire the necessary engineering communication strategies that would allow him to adapt to ever changing professional rhetorical situation and would not let him be co-opted by the constraining features of workplace communication practices. To echo Anne Freadman (1994):

> To understand the rules of the genre is to know when and where it is appropriate to do and say certain things, and to know that to do and say them at inappropriate places and times is to run the risk of having them ruled out. To use these rules with skill is to apply questions of strategy to decisions of timing and the tactical plan of the rhetoric (p. 59).

This analysis has allowed me to redefine my understanding of what it means to teach and learn genres of one's profession because it illuminates the importance of a young professional's ability to improvise on the basis of regularised communication strategies acquired at school and elsewhere. This case study supports the previous findings of my longitudinal research and indicates that Rhetorical Genre Studies

- not only provides researchers with powerful tools for the analysis of rhetorical situations in workplace contexts,
- but also allows instructors to develop classroom contexts that allow for the successful acquisition of "regularized improvisational strategies" and, therefore, provides continuity between school and workplace.

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Current trends and issues in the qualitative research literature: A Bibliography

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And here are two online bibliographies brought to our attention by Marcy Bauman (via Carl Whithaus) and Jo-Anne Andre:

Carl says, "A pretty amazing comp/rhet bibliography on the web just went up, put together by Rich Haswell and Glenn Blalock. It's called CompPile, and it's at

`http://comppile.tamucc.edu/`

Although neither *Kairos* nor *Academic Writing* are among the journals covered. It does cover 1939-1999.

Jo-Anne adds, "Do you subscribe to the WPA list? Every so often, some fantastic resources get mentioned there that should probably make their way onto the CASLL list."

`http://www.ibiblio.org/cccc/`

(This one's the CCC online database.)

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Current Projects

This column features brief descriptions of Inkshedders' ongoing work.

My current project involves investigation of transfer in academic writing across disciplines. For this study, I have interviewed two academics who have changed majors (one from history to biology; the other one from art history to public policy). I am interested in whether their academic literacy in their first disciplines transferred to their second disciplines, and if so to what extent and how.

My presentation at Inkshed is based on this study, and I should have most (if not all) of the analysis finished by then.

Another project which may interest others is a survey of the writing center at Carleton University. I started from Aviva Freedman's article in 1984 and looked at some changes since 1984. I'm giving a talk in a third year linguistics course (a survey course on writing), but I won't have any written reports any time soon for I have other pressing priorities. The slides and my speaking notes are available upon request.

Tosh Tachino
Carleton University
[on his way to Iowa State University in the fall]

What I'm up to at University College of the Fraser Valley:

I spent my Fall semester on a research leave to develop a few upper level courses in English. We are interested in offering a Writing and Language concentration within our English major. We now have a Drama and a North American Literature concentration. The Rhetoric (Writing and Language) stream we see as helpful to many of our students who want to become educators and see English as a "teachable" subject.

The courses we now have are a Survey of the Rhetorical Tradition, a survey of Composition Theory, a course in the Teaching of English and an Advanced Composition and an Advanced Composition: Theory and Practice course. We also offer a History of English, Structure of English and Canadian Dialect course at the upper level. We have an Introduction to Linguistics and a Language acquisition is in the works.

Rhonda Schuller
UCFV
Abbotsford, BC

Technostyle Announcement

The editors of *Technostyle*, the refereed journal of the Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing, would like to let CASLL members know about a recently released special issue of the journal.

Co-edited by Celine Beaudet of l'universite de Sherbrooke and Graham Smart of University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the special issue explores the topic, "The Expertise of Professional Writers and Its Development."

We've copied the table of contents below.

Papers/Articles

- Claire Harrison - Masters of Rhetorical Knowledgeability.
- Isabelle Clerc & Celine Beaudet - Pour un enseignement de la redaction professionnelle ou de la redaction technique?
- Eric Kavanagh - Entre identite et lisibilite : le cas embarrassant du Canada.
- Marjorie Rush-Hovde - Negotiating Organizational Constraints: Tactics for Technical Communicators.
- Bertrand Labasse - Entre deficit epistimologique et defi procedural : une discipline en souffrance d'expertise.
- Graham Smart & Nicole Brown - Learning Transfer or Transforming Learning?: Student Interns Reinventing Expert Writing Practices in the Workplace.

Review/Compte Rendu

- Russ Hunt - *Worlds Apart Acting & Writing in Academic & Workplace Contexts* by Patrick Dias, Aviva Freedman, Peter Medway, Anthony Paré.

Announcements / Annonces Call for Papers/ Appel de communications

Fay Hyndman, Nadeane Trowse, and Gloria Borrows
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TEACHING IN CONTEXTS:
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http://www.stu.ca/inkshed/inkshed20/shedreg.htm

and here to look at the call for proposals:

http://www.stu.ca/inkshed/inkshed20/shedcfp.htm

Hockley Highlands is a relaxing spot, with all kinds of amenities (like an indoor pool and exercise facilities); however, for most of us, the prime recreational activity will undoubtedly be walking (or sitting on the huge outdoor deck looking out at) our famous Bruce Trail.

Cost: a very reasonable $130 a night for a single room with bath shared between two rooms or $140 for a single room with private bath; all meals included. The conference fee itself will probably be similar to last year's conference: $75 ($35 student and un[der]employed)

Inkshed conferences are always good, but we want this to be a REUNION conference so we encourage all current and former Inkshedders to return to the fold. We also encourage first-timers to come and experience what has kept us going for 20 years!

Your trusty conference organizers are: Margaret Procter, Barbara Rose, Brock Macdonald, Patricia Golubev (the U. of Ters) and Leslie Sanders and Mary-Louise Craven (from York, where else?)