

Southern Discourse

Publication of the Southeastern Writing Center Association



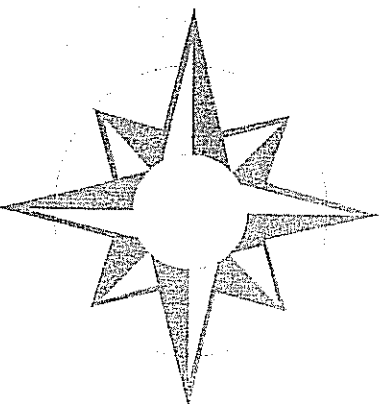
Summer 2008 • Volume 11, Issue 3



**“Back to the Center”
with Presbyterian College (see p. 8)**

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Southern Discourse

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AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE

THE WORLD FOR WOMEN

A Note from

the Editor:

The Intrepid Writer

By Christine Cozzens,
Agnes Scott College



Christine

On a sunny day in Prague earlier this spring, I embarrassed my seventeen-year-old daughter by taking a picture of a total stranger seated at a table in an outdoor café. Even though I had moved across the street from him so that my paparazzi skills would be as little noticed as possible, she thought I was crazy, and said so. "But Emma," I said, "do you see what that guy is doing?" "Oh my god, Mom," she replied. "Is that a typewriter he's using?"

There he was, the unsuspecting victim of my stalking, typing away in the sunshine using a Smith Corona portable even older than the one I had in the sixties at college. When I had walked by him a few minutes earlier, I had noticed the pile of typed pages covered with pen marks strewn about the table, a glass of beer keeping some of them from being blown away. The manuscript looked like a screenplay, but it could have been anything. More important to me than the genre was the writer's dedication and his commitment to the antique instrument of his craft. I could hear the clatter of the keys even from across the street—a cheerful, comforting sound. The photograph I took (see back cover) is intended not to out but to honor this intrepid writer at work.

The scene in Prague made me feel happy that I am in the business of providing a place and an atmosphere that encourages writers to work. While I don't think that our writing center will start serving Pilsner Urquell (the national beer of the Czech Republic) in the near future, the café setting and the typewriter reminded me that writers have different needs, passions, and eccentricities. We make our centers more welcoming and more productive when we remain open to all the possibilities. ✨

You Say Center, I Say Centre

By Kerri Hill, St Thomas University

On January 4th 2007, I received a letter congratulating me on my successful application to the Business Education Initiative, a scholarship introduced in Northern Ireland in light of the period of political and civil unrest known locally as 'the troubles'. The program grants scholarships to students at each of the two Northern Ireland universities to complete a year of study at a university or college in the USA. I was allocated a spot on the prestigious award and subsequently a place at St Thomas University in Miami.

I arrived in Miami in August 2007 and was keen to acquire a job on campus. I was directed towards the University Writing Center due to my academic ability and interest in the subject of English, though it is not my major. When I heard the term 'University Writing Centre,' I was a little confused as I had never heard of anything like it previously, certainly not at my university at home. Despite my lack of knowledge about the centre, I met with the director for an interview. He explained briefly what working there would entail and what the writing centre aimed to achieve. At that point I had not comprehended the scope of what the centre aimed to achieve. I thought it was simply a place where students would go to have their paper proofread.

In the beginning, the centre wasn't overly busy so Dr. Kevin Dvorak, our director, held a number of staff education sessions. Like me, it was his first



Kerri Hill

semester at St Thomas. He spoke a number of times of the writing centres he worked in prior to taking his current position. At first, this didn't register with me but when, in order to enhance our tutoring abilities, Kevin provided a number of handouts that discussed different tutorial styles. I began to realize the breadth of the 'writing centre' concept. The handouts discussed different methods a tutor could use when helping a student. It was as I began

to read this material that I realized that writing centres weren't just present in universities all over the USA, but that an entire field of study was devoted to developing these enhancement centers and improving them.

I was overwhelmed. I did not realize the gravity of the position I had taken on. Despite my tentative thoughts towards my role in the centre, I was, under no circumstances, going to give up. I felt my knowledge would be sufficient to allow for my success as a tutor. I could not have predicted the problems I would encounter.

As I began to work with students, I noticed certain reoccurring issues during the sessions. It started with small things like how I write the date, say 26/10/08 as opposed to 10/26/08, and how I spell certain words: behaviour, colour, centre, and organisational. This wasn't really a problem because most of the time I would be working with students using Microsoft Word, which automatically corrects spelling differences such as these. I also noticed that a number of students sometimes had difficulties understanding what I was saying, not because of my accent, but because of the different terminology I used. Instead of 'a period,' I say 'full stop' and instead of 'parenthesis' I would normally say "brackets."

Coming to America, I was aware that some words were spelt differently, and that some words meant different things—chips, for example, are called crisps in the UK, and French fries are referred to as chips. I find it interesting that in the USA and UK, and in other countries such as Canada and Australia, we all speak English, but there are many different takes on this one language. I might even go so far as to say I speak 'English' but I am learning 'American.'

The problems I encountered in the writing centre were relatively easy to overcome. However, a topic I found more difficult was the different referencing systems used here in America. I am used to using a 'one system fits all approach.' In Northern Ireland, we use the Harvard Referencing System, and this is correct for every paper, regardless of the topic or subject. It is of similar style to those used here in the US; it offers a single approach with elaborate explanations on how to correctly reference any type of source utilized. I discovered that this system is not recognized in America, and also that there is not one but at least three common ways to reference work, MLA, APA and the not so widely used Chicago Style. As I am a student here, I had to deal with learning these new styles, not only when writing my own papers, but during sessions with students. A student would ask me how to cite a book in MLA style and I had no idea what to do. I would often have to ask another tutor to help me, passing it on to them as I was not confident in the

subject. This made me feel uncomfortable, but it was very difficult to learn all the intricate workings of each system. I quickly learned to adapt by having some of our handouts nearby or by having Purdue's OWL up on my computer before sessions began. I still find referencing difficult but have discovered that with the right resources I can help students effectively.

When students came to me for help with their grammar and punctuation, I had no problem helping them spot mistakes and trying to teach them the correct way. However when a student came to me asking for more specific help with the structure of their paper, I encountered further problems.

I believe I know how to write a good paper, but this just didn't suffice in my experiences with students. The majority of the students coming to the centre in the first semester were English 100 level students, being taught the fundamental elements of writing, who needed more than just help with grammar and punctuation. When Kevin mentioned a lot of these students would be coming in as it was mandatory in their classes, I did not expect to encounter any problems. One particular student came in with a paragraph written on the topic of doctors and their importance in our society. She had been asked to draft an introductory paragraph and thesis statement. I knew how to extract an introduction but had never heard of the term 'thesis statement.' At this point, I felt uncomfortable. I asked another tutor what a thesis statement was and ended up passing on the student to that tutor; then Kevin explained to me what a thesis statement was and how to use it. I felt inadequate as a tutor as I was supposed to be helping students with their academic problems, and I myself was in need of teaching. I was afraid students would look upon me as insufficient as I wasn't fully educated in what I was helping them with.

Language issues also came up. Living in such a diverse cultural city such as Miami, it is inevitable you will encounter many people whose primary language is not English. In fact the most common language spoken at home in Miami-Dade County is Spanish. As a result, there are many bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) students here at St Thomas University. This has been strange for me as at home in Northern Ireland the majority of people speak English-UK English; in fact, I would rarely encounter someone for whom English was a second language. As almost everything here at St Thomas is conducted in English, it is imperative that a student be fluent in the language. It is also understandable that those who have had to learn English in order to come to college struggle to write a good paper in a language they do not fully understand or know, and that these ESL students are very common in the writing centre. I found working with

these students challenging depending on their level of English language education. One student came to me with an essay her teacher instructed her to re-write. It was clear from her writing, and even her speech, that her English was not that advanced. I asked her to read her paper aloud, hoping she would pick up on mistakes, but to her it all sounded correct. She would say something in her English and I would repeat it in my English to make sure I understood her; she began to write down exactly what I was saying. When I suggested a sentence, hoping to give her an idea of what she could write, again she wrote down word for word what I said. Essentially I was just re-writing her paper for her and she was not learning anything. Having never encountered this situation before, I was unsure what to do and I tried to encourage her to rephrase certain things, but she began to get frustrated, as did I. The session ended pleasantly but I felt she hadn't learned anything, which is the aim of the centre. I discussed the session with Kevin and have since been able to improve my technique in dealing with these kinds of situations. Now, I try to recognize the difference between when someone needs help with their writing skills and when someone needs help with their basic language skills, and adapt my approach accordingly.

Fast forward to today and I feel things have changed, for the better. This is my second, and unfortunately my last, semester working at the writing centre. I feel I have come a long way in my capabilities as a tutor. I spent a great deal of time

"You Say Center" continued on page 7

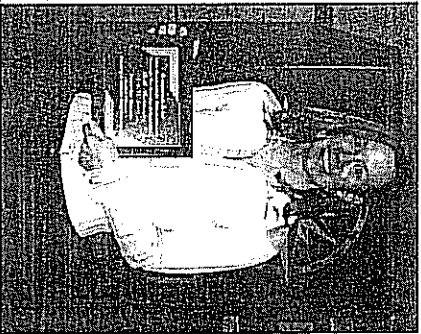


Lucas Irazoqui and Keri Hill

2008 SWCA Award Winners

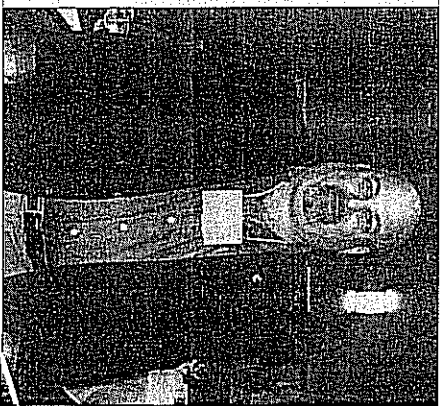
Southern Discourse Award

Congratulations to Beth Burnmaster, Georgia State University, who received the *Southern Discourse* Award for her article "Lessons for Peer Tutors from Hollywood Films," featured in the Spring 2007 issue. The *Southern Discourse* Award is presented annually to the author of an innovative and exceptional article that inspires new directions for writing center dialogue.



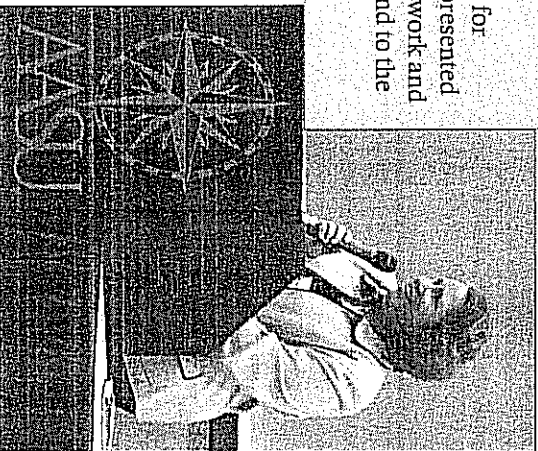
SWCA Tutor Award

Congratulations to Jon L. Schneideman, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, who received the 2008 SWCA Tutor Award. This award recognizes annually a tutor or other writing center affiliate who exhibits leadership, commitment, and overall excellence in her or his contributions to writing centers.



SWCA Achievement Award

Congratulations to Jennifer Kunka, Francis Marion University, for receiving the 2008 SWCA Achievement Award. This award is presented each year to a writing center director in recognition of superior work and outstanding service to her or his writing center, to the SWCA, and to the writing center community at large.



Compass Points:

Reflecting on Our Own History

By Pamela B. Childers, The McCallie School

It is April 8th, and I have just returned from the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC or Cs) in New Orleans. This was my first visit since Katrina, but the reality of that natural disaster and its repercussions have been covered by a facade of the old New Orleans as long as I avoided looking up at the World Trade Center column of doors to nowhere, didn't notice the hollow shells of previous landmarks, and refused to visit areas outside the convention center and French Quarter. However, my thoughts took another turn, recalling New Orleans experiences at the 1986 CCCC and the 1994 National Writing Centers Association (NWCA) Conference.

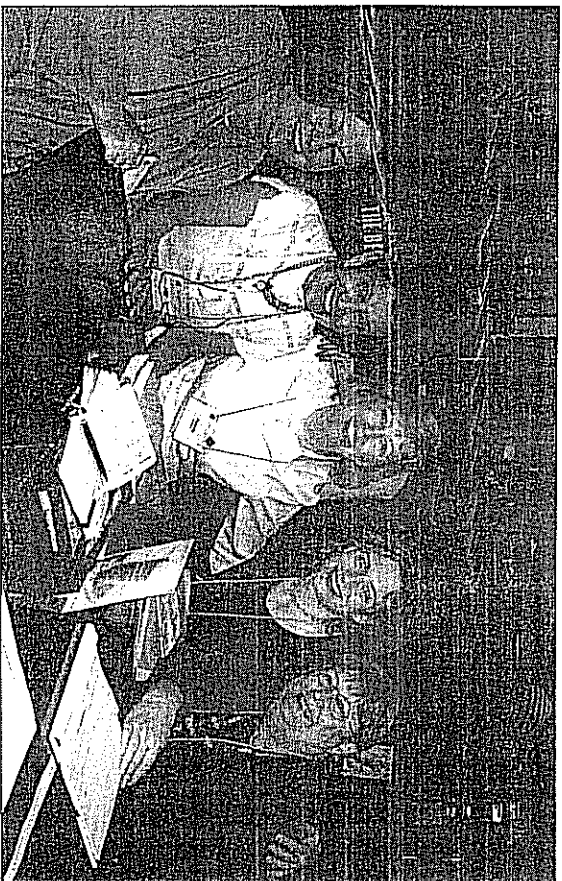
I had not been a regular at the Cs before that 1986 conference, and my roommate had to cancel at the last minute when her daughter became ill. When I arrived, a Texan with a few too many drinks and no connection to the conference, stopped me at the hotel registration and said, "And where's your room, little lady? I wait to come for a visit later." Needless to say, I quickly headed for my room, locked the door, and pushed a chair against the doorknob. I was not happy to be in New Orleans by myself, a solitary secondary person in a sea of university professors as well as this stranger at the registration desk. However, within an hour the phone rang, and I hesitantly answered, thinking Tex may have discovered my name or room number.

To my surprise, it was my grad school linguistics professor and friend who had been told that I would be at the conference. As luck would have it, Earl Brown was staying on the same floor so that I could feel safe, and he also began gathering other "strays" who were alone at the conference. Within a day, I had several new friends to join for sessions, lunch, dinner, and publishers' parties. I also bumped

into my old roommate from a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship at Drew University who moved in to share my hotel expenses.

The point of all this is that we never need to be alone at conferences unless we choose to be because there are always others who would love to learn with or from us. I made it my goal after that conference to seek out those who were alone and invite them to become part of our professional community. This lesson may be one of the most important ones I have learned from the Cs. By connecting with new people and new ideas, we expand our own base of knowledge and experience and question ideas from different perspectives. These encounters may even lead to collaborations on articles, chapters, books, presentations, workshops, and projects with people I have met following this lesson.

My reflections on the 1994 NWCA conference run much deeper because I had already been part of this family for almost eight years, as an officer and member of the executive Board. Ray Wallace came up with the idea of a national conference in New Orleans at the



Trixie Smith, Dilek Tokay, Pam Childers, Mary Dean, Leigh Ryan

developed at that conference, and many of us learned of nearby writing centers or ones with similar concerns that we could keep in touch with after we went home.

"Compass Points" continued on page 15

SWCA Executive Board Actions

By Kerri Jordan, Mississippi College

The board met on February 7 and on February 9, 2008, at the SWCA Conference in Savannah, Georgia. Key actions and discussion topics included the following:

Minutes and Reports

The board approved minutes from the June 2007 meeting and heard reports from the Elections Committee, the Awards Committee, the Scholarship and Initiative Grant Committee, and the treasurer:

Website

The board approved preliminary funding and shaped plans for updating the SWCA Web site. Robert Koch, SWCA's new web coordinator, solicited ideas and offered suggestions regarding how to make the website a user-friendly, substantial resource for anyone seeking information about SWCA.

Scholarship and Initiative Grant Program

The board reviewed and approved policies and procedures for the new SWCA Scholarship and Initiative Grant Program and made plans for advertising the program to current and potential SWCA members. Application information will be made available on the new SWCA Web site.

2009 Conference Location and Planning

No proposals have been submitted by prospective 2009 conference hosts; however, several potential hosts have indicated interest. The board agreed that securing hosts and sites for future conferences is a key priority and made plans to follow up with prospective hosts. Based on a preliminary report from Deborah Reese, the board made plans to discuss at the summer board meeting strategies for better supporting conference coordinators and continuing to improve conference format and content.

Board Members Present:

Beth Burmester (incoming president), Glenda Conway (outgoing president), Christine Cozzens (*Southern Discourse* editor), Kevin Dvorak (incoming at-large representative), Jill Frey (at-large representative), Kathi Griffin (at-large representative), Kerri Jordan (incoming vice president), Robert Koch (Web coordinator), Noreen Lape (incoming at-large representative), Sandee McGlaun (treasurer), Deborah Reese (2008 conference coordinator).

"You Say Center" continued from page 4

during the fall semester learning the different methodologies I encountered. Now I feel a lot more confident when I am working with a student. I have embraced the "You differences, rather than allowing them to cause me to feel inadequate. I am happy to explain to students that I am from Northern Ireland and some of the concepts are newer to me than them! But, I also then tell them that just because the concept is new to me, it doesn't mean that I cannot help them, especially since I have been keen to learn how to use the resources around me. Like Purdue's OWL and our own handouts. I find this helps students learn how to use them, too. Again, this is the aim of the centre.

I often wonder if there is a place for a writing centre at home in Northern Ireland. To my knowledge, we have no such facilities available to students at university. I believe it has a lot to do with the attitude of universities at home: there is a belief that when a student comes to university they should already be able to write a good essay. We don't have general education classes past high school, so when you got to university you take classes solely focusing on your degree. Therefore, as there is no further English education at university, a student should have sufficient English skills upon entry. I think, however, that the idea of a writing centre should not be wholly dismissed. Not all students can write well when they finish high school, and they should not be denied entry to university because of this, or they should not struggle and receive a lower grade without some form of help being offered. Also, writing centres can benefit good writers, too. After all, some students who use our centre are already good writers who realize how much better we can make them. I would suggest the idea of a writing centre to my university if the opportunity arose. However with only one voice in around 70,000 students, I am sure it will be very difficult to make an impact!

SWCA Mission Statement

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) was founded in 1981 to advance literacy; to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals; and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both academic and nonacademic communities in the Southeastern region of the United States. A member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), an NCTE Assembly, the SWCA includes in its designated region North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands. Membership in the SWCA is open to directors and staff of writing centers and others interested in writing centers from public and private secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, and to individuals and institutions from beyond the Southeastern region. Adopted by the SWCA Executive Board 31 May 2003.

Back to the Center: Digging into the History of an Evolving Writing Center

By Jill Frey, Presbyterian College

On a sunny day, a visitor to Presbyterian College (PC) might see a class seated beside the Ionic columns on the front steps of Neville Hall. Walk inside and take the stairs to the second floor to enter the writing Center, a sunlit room with tall windows overlooking a fountain. Our location has worked well from the beginning: Historic domed Neville Hall, a longtime symbol of PC, is home to the English, history, and religion departments and equidistant between the science and social science buildings with a women's dorm on the right and a men's dorm on the left. We are in the center of campus.

The bottom right drawer of my desk holds our history in five volumes. It's been more than ten years since the English Department gave me the opportunity to realize their dream of opening a writing center, and the paper trail left by our center rests in these loose-leaf notebooks. A careful dig may bring our center to light, revealing the underlying structures and the added layers of our evolution.

Volume 1: The Foundation

Excavating to the bottom of the stack, I uncover the first artifact: Tutor Training Workshop Schedule, Saturday, August 20, 1997. There is it—the bedrock of any writing center—the tutors and their education. Their smiling faces in the photos, copies of those we put on our bulletin board, remind me of those first exciting weeks. We continued the beginning-of-the-semester training for several years, progressing to spring workshops for fall tutors and a component on Blackboard. Then in 2004 two courses for tutors were approved: Writing Tutor Practicum for beginning tutors and Practicum in the Writing Center for experienced tutors. Now novice tutors have more time for reading, writing, observing, and reflecting.



Jill Frey

Practicum in the Writing Center, a one-credit course that may be repeated each semester, involves experienced tutors in mentoring new tutors and leading projects.

Next I find a simple version of our Writing Center Conference Report Form, ready for those first conferences: "Main concern was . . . We worked on . . . Suggestions for next step. . . ." Those paper reports continue in each volume, changing colors to mark the years at a glance. A Writing Center Activity Report ends the first semester's documents, and the first item under the heading Recommendations is "Open to any class," rather than just the English students we saw that semester.

Faculty Connections

The spring 1998 flyers advertise that we are now open to students from any class, a sign of things to come: our continual efforts to reach faculty from all disciplines and their students. Entries include pictures of faculty speaking at staff meetings, the Faculty Guide to the Writing Center, and the outline of a presentation at new faculty orientation, which became an important part of the introduction to the college's academic work for new faculty and administrators: "We have a good time as they act out humorous skits that show myths about the writing center and what we actually do. This relaxed meeting is a good beginning for the personal relationships and ongoing conversations about writing possible at our institution. Faculty send their assignment sheets, which we file and keep in notebooks; tutors take to the table, and we add their guidelines to our Web site. We have maintained our close connections with the English Department, conferring with the majority of students in composition classes but also have partnerships with other disciplines, such as biology, whose juniors and seniors write a review paper. A Writing Ideas Across the Curriculum Workshop for faculty, a newsletter, and a Web site are ambitious goals for spring listed in the fall 1998 report. The spring pages include the program we assembled for a workshop with my presentation entitled "How the Writing Center Works with Writers." The workshop provided the content for the first issue of the newsletter *Writing Centered* with articles for faculty and administrators including "Writing in the Biological Sciences" and "The Philosopher on the Writing Conference." The tutors wrote about how working in the writing center benefited them.

Following the paper copy of the newsletter in this notebook, a printout of the home page of our new Web site shows that while the format has changed and

content expanded, the organization is the same: information on the writing center, faculty and student writing resources, the newsletter, and Guides to Writing at Presbyterian College, our faculty members' writing advice.

Our newsletter for faculty and administrators finds its form as well. The issues open with a feature article written by a group of tutors based on faculty interviews; an additional opportunity for dialogue. Some topics have been writing assignment sheets, group papers, writing in freshman seminars, and the evolving state of commenting on papers. "From Red Ink to Macros." The switch to color made it possible to show a professor at the computer adding those macros, juxtaposed to another sleeping on the couch, exhausted after grading a pile of essays, red pen in hand and papers scattered. Our feature article in 2004 on how professors integrated *The New York Times* into their writing assignments was posted on *The New York Times Knowledge Network* site. Tutors also write articles on interesting assignments writers bring to the center or on some aspect of writing from a student's viewpoint, such as "Writing Processes Differ" and "One Tutor's Opinion of Digital Responding."

Volume 3: Midcourse Adjustments

I stop at Volume 3. The first page is new, not the usual semester fall schedule but a numbered list of objectives. This list, introducing all subsequent years, represents the altered institutional position of the writing center. I begin reporting, not to the English Department, but to the Academic Dean, evidence of strong support for our work across the college.

Volume 3 first mentions the addition of writing center tours to library tours as part of freshman orientation. Thirty Hose groups (named after our Blue Hose sports teams) stop by on a hot August afternoon for skits and encouragement to come to the writing center, crowding into our center at fifteen-minute intervals, some sitting on the floor, to hear the tutors explain what we can do for them. One of last year's objectives was to work with 75 percent of freshmen on their writing, and 81 percent of freshmen actually participated in conferences in 2006-2007. Our hope is that these freshmen will return as sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

Volume 5: Ten Years and Counting

At the top of the pile, a slim volume only just begun reveals our current activities. The newsletter continues to have a wide influence. Provost Rob Holyer sent copies of the spring 2007 *Writing Centered*, its leading article on capstone courses, to the board of trustees: "Not only does it give a good view of the work of the writing center, it is also the only document that gives a good sense of what is

happening in the academic program at PC. I guess that this shouldn't be surprising since writing is such a central part of the academic enterprise."

Work with faculty has developed further with the formation of the Writing Center Advisory Committee, whose members, two from each division, give me ideas about improving the center, suggest potential tutors, discuss with faculty colleagues on a informal basis how we might collectively improve student writing, and recommend workshops for faculty. A first-time Freshman Writing Award the committee developed focuses faculty attention on good writing as they submit entries from students in their classes.

Additional funds paid for our new online scheduling system (WCOline) that students and tutors love. This innovation has eliminated distractions we faced with our previous system of reservations by phone or in the writing center: mob scenes at the front desk with students coming between classes and the frequent ringing of the phone. Students can now sign up in their rooms, and tutors can see which writers are coming, what their main concerns are, and what they have worked on in past conferences.

Yet some aspects of our center remain as they were when I began Volume 1. A new year brings familiar joys: the enthusiasm of a nervous new tutor who grasps the idea of questioning and active listening; the energy of a good brainstorming conference with an apprehensive freshman who took us up on our promise to work on getting started; the excitement of a student figuring out how to revise a troublesome paper. Our work is much more than a paper trail.

By the Numbers

Presbyterian College: an undergraduate liberal arts college in Clinton, SC with approximately 1,200 students
Writing Center Coordinator: Jill Frey
Number of Tutors: 16
Number of Visits: (2006-07) 1,982 conferences with 524 students
Hours: 8-4 Mon-Fri and 7-9 pm Sun-Th
Website: <http://web.presby.edu/writingcenter>

What's the Point?

No Verb, No Subject: What Is It?

By Peter M. Carriere
Georgia College and State University



Peter Carriere

The word "phrase" and its many derivatives ("phrasemonger," "phraslet," "phrasologist," etc.) occurs alphabetically in the *Oxford English Dictionary* slightly above the word "phreak" an appropriate place for a group of words devoid of either subject or verb. My students would love it, of course, and would wax extraordinarily eloquent about "phreakin' phrases" that might need some form of punctuation.

Most of us believe a phrase to be a group of words without a subject or verb that modifies a word or group of words in a sentence: a prepositional phrase, for example. As usual, however, "phrase" has a long and somewhat sordid history, going back as far as ancient Greece. According to the OED, Scholia on Aristophanes' *Clouds* declared that the word "phrase" came from a Greek word meaning "to point out, indicate, declare, tell!"—a usage pretty far removed from the way we interpret it today.

The first definition in the OED has nothing to do with grammar. Instead, "phrase" is defined as a "manner or style of expression [as in] turn of phrase." The first illustration of this definition is from 1530 by one J. Palsgrave, who, commenting on the difference between English and French, wrote, "the phrasys of our tong and theyres differeth chefeley in thre thynges." But I think a better illustration might be about the difference between student writing and our writing that "differeth" in at least three-hundred things, including how to use and punctuate phrases.

Definition 2b tells us that "phrase" has also been used to mean only one word, which seems to contradict the whole idea of a phrase to me. In 1791 an astute observer named J. Long wrote, "this idea of destiny, or if I may be allowed the phrase, 'totemism' [sic] is not confined to the Savages." In this case, the word "totemism" is labeled a phrase rather than a word. Of course, I agree with Long's observation, because I have myself observed students creating a totem of sorts out

of stacked beer cans, so totemism as destiny is alive and well and has nothing to do with savages . . . sort of.

We have to go to definition 2c before we get the definition most of us know. But even this definition unravels at one point. In 1904 a grammarian named C. T. Onions in *Advanced English Syntax* listed "13 adverb-equivalents," which is OK until we get to number 4: "A Clause—*When you come, I will tell you.*" Is nothing sacred! How dare someone named Onions confuse phrases and clauses! It borders on grammatical malfeasance! And we'd better never let our students see Onions' work because they are already clueless about the difference between the phrase and the clause!

The third definition of "phrase" in the OED suggests that the word has been used to indicate groups of words used "in an effective manner, a striking or pithy expression," but also sometimes used in a "meaningless, trite, or high-sounding" way. For instance there is this line from Purchas's 1613 *Pilgrimage*: "The liquid pitch floated on the water, like clouded creame, to vse his owne phrase." This one reminds me of an apropos email I received from my daughter-in-law a couple of years ago that contained, according to the subject line, "analogies and metaphors only an English teacher would love." Here are a few that outdo Purchas ten to one:

"She grew on him like she was a colony of E. Coli, and he was room-temperature Canadian beef."

"She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up."

"The halibutones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease."

"The ballerina rose gracefully en Pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a fire hydrant."

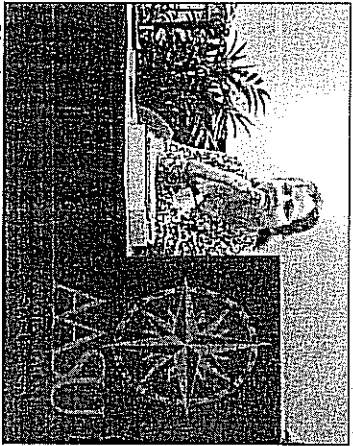
"It was an American tradition, like fathers chasing kids around with power tools."

Well . . . maybe a hundred to one.

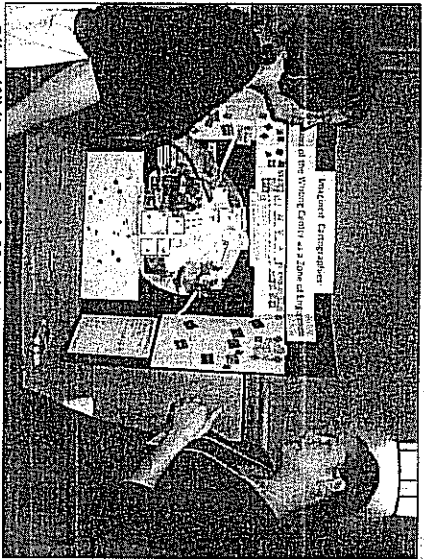
One of the compound words formed with "phrase" and some other word is "phrasemonger." The phrasemonger is a person "given to excessive use or coining

"What's the Point?" continue on page 15

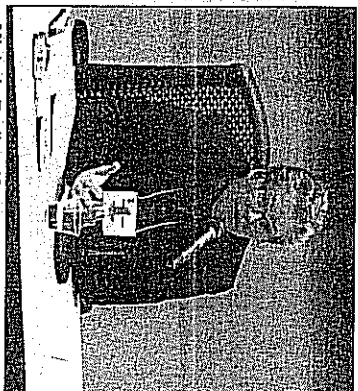
SWCA Conference 2008



Glenda Conway



Olivia White and Carrie Matthews



Michele Eodice, Keynote Speaker



Louisa Hill presents at SWCA



Vicki Behrens



Christine Cozzens and Christopher Ervin, Keynote Speakers



Kevin Dvorak, Keynote Speaker



Jamerson Magwood and Beth Burmester



The Armstrong Center, AASU

Popcorn and Newsreels: Just Words (Part I)

By Karl Fornes, University of South Carolina Aiken



Karl Fornes

From 1996 to 2006, in my role as director of the writing center, I was reasonably active in our university's Summer New Student Orientation Program. One of the many sessions scheduled over a three-day period included a session called "Expectations of a Pacer," an unfortunately titled session that used the image of the school mascot to indicate that USCA students might somehow be mistaken for horses and adopt the "expectations" we might have of said horses. Despite the name, the session was the standard introduction to the academic and nonacademic codes of conduct one might expect during new student orientation. To open the session, our vice chancellor for student life and services would introduce prospective students to our university's four values: citizenship, collegiality, character, and quality learning. I would then cringe a bit at the unparallel structure of our values list and embark on my discussion of academic integrity, particularly plagiarism. From 1996 to 2002, the discussion would use case studies to emphasize the complexity of plagiarism. In 2002, I was asked to revise the presentation to focus more explicitly on the punitive aspects of our academic code of conduct.

For the new presentation, I began my little PowerPoint with some discussion of classroom behavior and the academic code of conduct, referring to all of the nasty things that students suffer when they are caught cheating. I would then proceed to the plagiarism portion of the presentation and a snappy little photo of Joe Biden, the senior democratic senator from Delaware, would appear on the screen, fluttering delicately from the upper left hand corner to the center of the screen as only a PowerPoint preset transition can flutter. Then, with an unnecessarily loud and psychically intrusive *Law and Order* "Da DONG," I would stamp "PLAGIARIST" across Senator Biden's gaping maw in a tastefully chosen "Wanted: Dead or Alive" font. The students would jerk back in their chairs, and I would explain that Joe Biden had plagiarized on several occasions. Joe Biden was the leading democratic candidate early in the 1988 presidential campaign before

being charged with reproducing in a speech language formerly used by a member of the British Parliament (Dowd A1). Once that charge struck, it was all downhill for Biden as people dug up speech after speech and found bits and pieces of John and Robert Kennedy strewn throughout (Dowd A1). Then, by mid-September 1987, reporters discovered that Biden had plagiarized a paper during his early days at Syracuse University College of Law (Dionne A1). Joe Biden was a plagiarist, all right! With Biden out of the race, Michael Dukakis became the democratic nominee and bobble-headed his way through tank rides before being crushed by George Bush in the 1988 election.

I would then rifle through similar slides of Doris Kearns Goodwin, Stephen Ambrose and Jayson Blair, each with a similarly loud "Da DONG" and a detailed explanation of their crimes. By the time finished, the young and formerly blissfully unaware prospective students would be suitably horrified by the many routes that might lead to their expulsion. The whole thing was really quite fun, for me anyway.

Last fall Joe Biden reappeared on my television with his "from-the-hip" style and, strangely, more hair than he had in the late 1980's. Of course, Biden has been running around Congress for the twenty years since dropping out of the 1998 campaign, but seeing him in the debate rattled me. I wasn't surprised in February of this year to hear that Barack Obama, an inspiring speaker in his own right, was accused of plagiarism. As it turns out, Obama was accused of using the same language as his friend, Deval Patrick, the governor of Massachusetts (Zeleny A21).

Obama: "Don't tell me words don't matter. 'I have a dream.' Just words? 'We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal.' Just words? 'We have nothing to fear but fear itself.' Just words?"

Patrick: "'We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal.' Just words? Just words? 'We have nothing to fear but fear itself.' Just words?" ("Ralph Nader").

Obama later claimed that he and Patrick "trade ideas all the time" and, in fact, Patrick was on the Obama campaign staff. Nonetheless, Obama said, he should have attributed the words to Patrick (Zeleny A21). In a debate later that week, Senator Hillary Clinton took Obama to task for the similarities. On *Meet the Press* the following Sunday, Tim Russert discussed the charges and introduced two clips from Hillary Clinton and Bill Clinton.

Senator Clinton: "You know, the hits I've taken in life are nothing compared to what goes on every single day in the lives of people across our country."

Former President Clinton: "The hits that I took in this election are nothing compared to the hits that the people of this state and this country are taking every day of their lives" ("Ralph Nader").

Rightfully, each of the above transgressions is clearly less serious than Biden's plagiarism twenty years ago. We tend to look the other way when folks reuse the work of paid staff members or spouses; we tend to demonize people when we suspect that they have "stolen" the language of others. Not coincidentally, the Biden stories appeared on the front page of *The New York Times*; the Obama accusation appeared on page 21. Can we rightfully categorize the use and reuse of political rhetoric as plagiarism, especially if the text came from a staff member, such as Deval Patrick, or a spouse, such as former President Bill Clinton? Is it more accurate to consider such work as "institutional texts" in the same way that a corporation might consider its Annual Financial Analysis corporate property?

Lest I be accused of not giving equal time, I should note that John McCain's campaign is not beyond such accusations. In mid-April 2008, bloggers noted that Cindy McCain's Ahi tuna recipe, along with several other "McCain Family Recipes" listed on the campaign Web site, were lifted directly from the Food Network Web site. Oops. According to a spokesperson for the McCain campaign, the purloined recipes were the fault of a Web intern who "was swiftly dealt with" ("Bloggers find"). Yikes! The McCain folks don't mess around when it comes to dealing with their interns, eh?

Now, I'm more confused. Of course, the idea that the "McCain Family Recipes" might actually be lifted from another source is a little distasteful, but I'm confused about the whole concept of recipe plagiarism as a concept. Is it possible? Can I really be plagiarizing when I serve "Karl's Most Famous Crispy Baked Pork Chops"—just replace the bread crumbs with crushed melba toast, yummy!—because I found the recipe in *Cook's Illustrated*?

I don't pretend to have pat answers for these questions. I suspect, however, that a failure to embrace the complex nature of plagiarism serves to reduce a complicated matter of negotiation and education to a simple matter of crime and punishment. I hope to have some fun with these ideas a bit in the next column. ✨

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Resources

- "Barack Obama: Plagiarism." <http://youtube.com/watch?v=2wLjig7IN1A>. A side-by-side comparison of Barack Obama's speech with Deval Patrick's 2006 speech.
- "Hillary's Own 'Xeroxed' Words During Texas Debate" <<http://youtube.com/watch?v=w0sjnKcEH7c>> A brief excerpt from the *Meet The Press* discussion mentioned above that compares Senator Clinton's words to her husband's words several years ago.

The President's Letter

By Beth Burmester, Georgia State University

In my inaugural letter to SWCA members, I find it fitting to turn to the topics of myth, history, and narrative, which were raised by Director Kathi Griffin and tutors James Rice and Amy Marcellus of Millsaps College during a presentation on the final day of our SWCA conference, in Savannah. The subtitle for their session was "History-in-Progress," and it struck me how that phrase, that point of view, relates to our organization as a whole, and to us as individual members, individual storytellers and listeners.



Beth Burmester

Framing the panel, Kathi asked: "Who are we trying to persuade? What argument can I make as the writer of our history?" These are incredibly important questions for directors to pick up as we (continue to) face difficult budgets, threats of funding and resource cuts, and other barriers to growth—largely coming from a lack of understanding about who we are and exactly what, and to what degree, we contribute to the intellectual life on campus, and the academic missions of our colleges and universities. As Kathi concluded her remarks, she reminded us that we also need to consider what comes *after persuasion*: "Instruction is crucial, so that we begin to instruct others to dislodge past myths." "Who are these others we must instruct? Who is our audience?"

During the ensuing discussion, Marcy Trianosky, from the audience, asked all the tutors in the room whether they felt that their participation in SWCA and other professional development opportunities helped them beyond their immediate roles. One brave student replied that she appreciated the professionalization for its own sake and how it helped her daily in tutoring, but she didn't really see how it would benefit her in her anticipated graduate career as a physical therapist. Her comment made me undergo an epiphany. Perhaps, just perhaps, our most significant audience of all—the students who make up our staffs and whom we strive to mentor generously—may be missing the epic ways that tutoring is preparing them to find success in any career path they take. Maybe we haven't woven this tale into our narrative, yet.

The truth is that experience tutoring establishes multiple ways for social interaction and dialogue that will be valuable for any career that relies on one-on-one communication. That beyond the tutorial sessions, being a part of a collaborative staff provides ongoing training and shaping in creating a professional identity, public speaking, group speaking (the etiquette of facilitating discussion and of participating as a group member), focused problem-solving and strategic planning, event planning (orientations, workshops, social and academic field trips, organizing a conference), attention to time management and deadlines, writing, and reflective practice—the ability and capacity to critically evaluate one's own performance and grow from both mistakes and successes as part of a continuing process toward confidence and successfully meeting challenges, and posing new ones to learn from. Believe me when I say these attributes will make tutors' applications for graduate programs and jobs float to the top of the competition.

Not only teachers, but many professionals who meet with clients and conduct interviews—lawyers, therapists of all kinds, psychologists and psychiatrists, doctors, business consultants, journalists, ministers—all seek individuals who are excellent speakers and listeners, who know how to begin and facilitate conversation and engage problem-solving in the moment.

Having our tutors become familiar with writing center studies, or the professional conversations in our field surrounding teaching, writing, and talking about what we do, also benefits student tutors because it gives them the scholarly genres and familiarity that will lead them to understand and navigate the scholarly journals and genres of other disciplines. It gives them research skills and expertise that translate across fields, so that they are prepared to study issues in any course, discipline, or program.

The same holds true for attending and participating in the SWCA conference. Once they have participated they know what to expect and how to get involved in other professions that also host regular conventions, publications, and professional associations. They gain the advantage of knowing these exist and how to jump right in as contributors. They are poised to make that transition between student and professional, smoothly and with intellectual verve.

As a community, we are the oldest association of writing center professionals. Founded in 1981, SWCA is celebrating its 27th year of providing annual conferences and professional resources and networks for members. Our flagship publication is celebrating its ten-year anniversary, as Volume I, number 1

premiered in March 1998. In that issue, a cover announcement invites members to the conference held in Macon, with the theme, "We are the Stories We Tell." Thus we come full circle, as we engage this call to invent ourselves, and from Macon to Millsaps College, we follow the exhortation to combine chronology with causation, and to collect and frame artifacts of our work and lives teaching writing and teaching teaching. We are also the histories we write. Our conferences continue to prove this, and to provide us with muses—from conference chairs Peggy Ellington of Wesleyan College in Macon, in 1998, to Debi Reese of Armstrong Atlantic State University, Savannah, in 2008, and all the presenters and participants who shared ideas and stories from podiums and hallways—to inspire our journeys. Let's remember our legacy—our characters, heroes, settings, plots and plot twists—as we move on, every day, a work-in-progress. ✱

"What's the Point?" continued from page 10

of grandiose or striking phrases." I would say that the five items just above this paragraph are an excellent illustration of exceptionally talented phrase-mongering, wouldn't you?

One of the more satisfying compound words, though, is "phrasebook," which the OED defines as "a small book containing useful or idiomatic expressions in a foreign language, local dialect, etc. . . ." Thomas Nashé, in his *Unfortunate Traveler*, observed that "in emptying their phrase books, the ayre emptied his inthrales." So just what is Nashé saying here, that people who use phrase books strain so hard they, well, pass gas? Now that is a crude image!

But the line that seems to me to apply to student use of phrasebooks (or in our lexicon grammar books) is this item from 1660 by a grammarian named Fox: "If I should set down all these unsavoury, unwholesome, unchristian, undivine Expressions, contained in this thy phrase-book, I might have taken it all." Ah, well. Wistful thinking. And even if our students did set down all those grammar rules, it doesn't mean that they would know them or know how to apply them. And so, in the end we are left with one perennial and ubiquitous question: what's the point? ✱

"Compass Points" continued from page 6

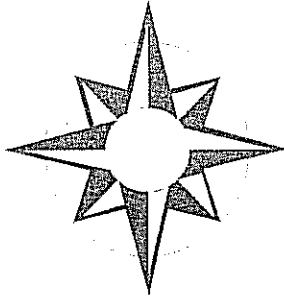
Through advancements in technology, we have been able to continue and build upon those connections in ways that we hadn't before the national conference. In a field where face-to-face conferences are so important, being able to put faces to names made a big difference. Sessions at NCTE, the Cs and other conferences reflect many of those connections because of chance meetings in the French Quarter or lunches bringing people together with common interests. I would compare this first national conference of NWCA, which later became IWCA after the conference in St. Louis, to a first family reunion. Now, the family has enlarged with more generations and cousins from across the oceans joining the gathering. And what would be more appropriate for the next gathering than having it on Halloween 2008!

This April over lunch at that same Doubletree Hotel with Byron Stay and Joan Mullin, we reminisced about that 1994 conference and shared those experiences with Hannah Ashley, a relative newcomer to IWCA. A few nights later, I returned for dinner with a writing center person teaching in Turkey, two from Maryland, one from Michigan, and another from Texas. We were old writing center colleagues; some experienced newer ones, and a brand new person. I guess I was practicing what I had learned at the Cs in 1986. So, here we were fourteen years later making new connections but also challenging and building upon old ones. We were also practicing those lessons I had learned back at the 1986 Cs in New Orleans, bringing new people into the fold.

As I look back on those distant conferences as well as the one I just attended, I am reminded that we are global, we are collaborative, and we are lifelong learners. Like New Orleans, we have a past that we should not forget and should use as a learning experience. New Orleans has much of the old city still there, but there are also changes that have resulted as part of its plan for the future. The same is true for us and our profession. We should continue to welcome loners and newcomers, listen to their ideas and excitement, and continue to learn from one another far beyond the next conference in New Orleans. ✱

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"The Intrepid Writer" (see page 2).