

1-1-1988

From the Editors

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Recommended Citation

Harris, Jeanette and Kinkead, Joyce (1988) "From the Editors," *Writing Center Journal*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 2, Article 2.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2832-9414.1123>

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Because integrating computers in the English curriculum means more than just buying hardware and software, the National Writing Centers Association sponsored its first summer workshop focusing on successfully developing and maintaining a computer-assisted writing program. Held at Logan, Utah, in June 1987, at Logan High School's Writing Room, the participants learned first-hand how to use word processing to facilitate writing, to improve student attitudes about writing, and to stimulate collaboration among writers.

Surrounded by mountains still crowned with snow, the teachers—from secondary schools, community colleges, and universities—spent Day One writing *without* computers to discover why students should write *with* computers. They came to the workshop for similar reasons: their schools had decided to add computers to the English repertoire, so they needed to know how, why, and when to use them. Gordon put it this way: “We run a remedial writing course with a two hour weekly lab session attached wherein students must write on the computer; I need to know more about the business.” Judy echoed that: “The English Department has made a commitment to incorporate computers into the curriculum, and I'd like to be able at least to show kids how to start them up.”

Although many of the teachers had some experience with word processing—such as laborious self-teaching to write a dissertation—most of them did not have a clear idea of what it meant to set up a computer writing center.

Mary was an exception: “I am eagerly looking forward to the installation of a writing lab at my high school. When I visited LHS's Writing Room last year, I felt something exciting was going on. No one was sitting around, grinding their teeth into their pens, waiting desperately for a muse to visit them. Instead, everyone was typing away, checking an occasional word or phrase with a neighbor. It was a fairly ordinary scene except for the fact that I had never witnessed it before—students were getting words onto the page as naturally as breathing itself.”

By the end of a week, the participants—to various degrees—felt computers were a natural part of their writing. Marilyn had learned what a cursor was. Lois knew the importance of room organization. Bonnie found that a teacher must use style checkers judiciously—and always as a teaching tool. Tina discovered the usefulness of learning logs to reflect on writing as well as teacher modeling. Calling her evaluation at testimony, Mary found magic in freewriting, the “demanding cursor.”

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Tina voiced a common fear: “This workshop will qualify me for additional duties in the school district—the reality of working in public education.” Computers do add stress for writing teachers—at least at first. It is no easy task to learn yet another skill; however, computers ease some problems. Most importantly, teachers must remember *why* computers. As Carol Mendenhall put it so eloquently in the November *English Journal*, we don’t need writing centers if it means “a place in a building where there are a few computers with grammar programs stacked next to them” (70).

For one week in June, teachers learned the why. For them, their computer places will be vital centers of writing.