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From the Editors

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From The Editors

Like Prufrock, writing center people have a convenient measurement of time: we measure out our lives, not in coffee spoons, but in conferences. No sooner is NCTE over in the fall than we begin to look forward to 4C's in the spring. And those who are seriously addicted sandwich in MLA at Christmas or sneak in a few regional conferences at odd times.

Why do we expend the money and energy that conventions require? Do we learn that much that we did not know? Or receive that much gratification from being "on program" yet one more time? Obviously, there must be other, more compelling, reasons than these.

Although the reasons vary from person to person and time to time, one underlying, pervasive reason for attending conferences is our need for communion with each other. Few if any schools have more than one writing center, and a single writing center requires only a single director. Thus writing center directors usually exist in a department or program with no colleagues who share their primary interest. There may be others with related concerns—writing program directors, composition instructors, learning and study skills specialists, and, most important, the tutors with whom we work each day. But none of these people know the rewards and frustrations of directing a writing center.

Thus we are frequently on the road, traveling to Minneapolis or New Orleans or New York or San Francisco—wherever the current conference is being held. Once there, we present papers and lead workshops, attend sessions and hear lectures, renew old friendships and start new ones. But above all, we talk. Between sessions, in halls and elevators, over lunch and dinner, at bars and restaurants, we talk. And as we talk, our spirits revive, our problems diminish, and our sense of community is renewed.

To some extent, *The Writing Center Journal* serves the same purpose, creating invisible but durable bonds between those of us who direct writing centers, allowing us to share information and to voice common concerns. This issue of the journal, for example, explores a variety of writing center issues—our relationship to writing-across-the-curriculum programs, the special problems of basic writers and the general anxieties of all writers, the different forms that a writing conference can assume, and the role of play in a tutorial. Also included are the second annual checklist of writing center scholarship and a review of a new book on tutoring. So until the next conference comes along, enjoy this issue of the journal.