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Bibliography of Recent Writing Center Scholarship (Nov. 1993-Oct. 1994)

Michael Condon

The “Bibliography of Writing Center Scholarship” has become a tradition of sorts, at least since *WCJ*’s tenth anniversary edition, and in the spirit of continuing a tradition I took this project on without giving much consideration to the purposes and possibilities of bibliographic scholarship. But as I began working on the bibliography, questions surfaced: “Who uses this bibliography, and for what purposes? What should be included, and who should decide that?” I realized early on that almost any bibliography is selective. But how selective should *WCJ*’s bibliography be? How far afield should I range? Of course I would include *The Writing Center Journal* and *Writing Lab Newsletter* and *Focuses*. But what about *CCC*, *College English*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Journal of Advanced Composition*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Pre/Text*, *Written Communication*—well, you get the idea.

The advent of computer-assisted database searching (either through the Internet or CD-ROM) multiples the bibliographer’s questions. For example, ERIC now has an archive of some papers presented at last year’s Conference on College Composition and Communication. Should I search that archive? What about papers presented at other conferences, e.g., NWCA or various regional writing center conferences? I have chosen not to include papers presented at conferences, even though some of them may be more useful for a particular researcher’s project (i.e., more helpful, or more expansive, or more focused on a particular problem) than some of the articles included here. I made this decision because: 1) I’m hoping that having mentioned them, readers will be aware of their existence (mostly through ERIC), and ERIC data-base searches are a relatively easy task (unless my sense

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of technological capacities and access issues for university libraries is way off-base, in which case I'd like to hear from readers about this); and 2) in most cases, these papers have not undergone the kind of peer-review process that journal publication typically entails. I chose not to include journals beyond *WCJ*, *WLN*, and *Focuses* because any inclusions would seem to be based more on my individual discretion than on any (as yet) articulated principles of a collective organization.

Within the context of a scholarly environment shaping and being shaped by electronic media, I've also pondered a version of the "plagiarism" problem. I can download megabytes of "information" into a word-processing program, and from that "information" (which has been selected, compiled, and entered into its electronic form by the hands of someone, if not several persons) I can easily delete the extraneous "noise" of different formats, yielding a "clean" MLA version of "my work." Now, how do I cite or document my reliance on the work of these (often nameless) others?

I suspect at least part of my uneasiness has to do with an uncertainty about the ways in which the work I've prepared will be used. For example, is this bibliography the first place scholars, teachers, or tutors turn in the sometimes difficult processes of research? Or does this bibliography represent a kind of curious and self-conscious acknowledgment of the important but possibly parochial work that is carried on by relatively few scholars nation- and world-wide? And am I contributing to that parochialism by limiting myself to those publications squarely "within the field" or within the center?

Well, these are a few of what I found to be the more compelling questions that the bibliography process foregrounds. But I'm also interested in discovering whether others find these questions useful, relevant, or answerable, or whether other questions need to be explored. The easiest way for me to do this would be through e-mail, at MC5365@csc.albany.edu, but I want in no way to exclude other forms of written communication (although sky-writing might be somewhat cost prohibitive), so I can also be found at The Writing Center, HU 140, State University of New York, Albany, NY, 12222.

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