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From the Editors

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From the Editors

Recently, we've been thumbing through back issues of *WCJ* in preparation for another project. As we researched, we noticed that these "From the Editors" sections have gone through several incarnations over the years (or, perhaps we should say, over the various editorships). Early issues offer insight into the editorial process. In 4.2, for example, Brannon and North apologize for their delay in disseminating the issue by explaining the difficulties with production and layout when dealing with the then-new technology of the personal computer. "Computers," they write, "are a lot like their human designers: They don't really like to talk to one another, and they guard the differences in their languages rather jealously" (n.p.). Once *WCJ* worked out these technical kinks, the editors were able to turn their attention to the content of the issue. By 7.2, Kinkead and Harris consider the thematic links between the articles. Their "From the Editors" section begins with a fictionalized job announcement for a writing center tutor, complete with a list of qualifications. This issue, according to the editors, "focuses on the complex person and the complex relationship between tutor and tutee" (n.p.).

Mullin and DeCiccio's "From the Editors" grew increasingly extended and discursive, a tradition we have continued (and probably extended ourselves). As we sit down to draft this issue's section, we can't help but wonder about the extent to which our initial thoughts organize and direct the experiences of our readers. Perhaps Dave Healy had it right: During his editorship (which fell between Grimm, George and Lotto and Mullin and DeCiccio), he did away with the "From the Editors" section altogether. In 15.2 (his second issue as editor and his last "From the Editors" piece), he notes, "I find that taking over a publication has occasioned a fair amount of *announcing* from me in these first two issues, but now that I'm getting that out of my system I intend to fade into the background, where editors, like umpires, belong" (n.p.).

The first article in this issue, Becky Howard's "Deriving *Backwriting* from *Writing Back*," certainly gave us pause in forwarding these comments. Howard's article is adapted from the keynote address delivered in Hershey, PA, at the joint conference of the 2003 International Writing Centers Association and the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing. Howard distinguishes between the post-colonial term *writing back*, a collocation designed to highlight "the experience of a colonized community after the moment of political independence" from *backwriting*, a concept she views

as more applicable to the experiences of those involved in writing centers. Backwriting can be multi-directional, can be individualistic or collaborative, can be engaged in by directors and students, by tutors and faculty, by administrators and the public.

One such illustration of backwriting in the writing center is offered by Margaret Weaver in her article, "Censoring What Tutors' Clothing 'Says': First Amendment Rights/Writes Within Tutorial Space." She describes the controversy brought on by one tutor's repeated insistence on wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with an expletive (so as not to spoil the surprise, we are refraining from reprinting it here), an act that provided an occasion for all members of their writing center to consider the impact of their words on others and their commitment to the rights of others to express themselves.

Melissa Ianetta writes in the liminal space between classical rhetoric and administrative rhetoric in her contribution, "If Aristotle Ran the Writing Center: Classical Rhetoric and Writing Center Administration." She presents her own work as a form of backwriting, claiming this essay as an effort "to show what the history of rhetoric and writing center studies might offer one another."

Two reviews also appear in this issue, one of *The Center Will Hold: Critical Perspectives on Writing Center Scholarship* (the most recent recipient of the WPA Outstanding Book Award) and one of *De-Mythologizing Language Difference in the Academy: Establishing Discipline-Based Writing Programs*.

As we wrap up this latest "From the Editors" section, we have come to consider it a form of backwriting. As editors, we have a great deal of control over the content of each issue. As a result, we have a great deal of control over the scholarship circulated in this field. This section, then, may be our attempt to imagine an audience, to explain our rationale, to invite response. Are we right on? We're not sure. You have to tell us. Write back.

WORK CITED

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