Writing, computers, and rhetorical situations: A composition odyssey

Kristine Louise Potter

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WRITING, COMPUTERS, AND RHETORICAL SITUATIONS:

A COMPOSITION ODYSSEY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Kristine Louise Potter

December 2000
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Approved by:

Bruce Golden, Chair, English

Date

Carol Haviland
ABSTRACT

This thesis, an autoethnography, explores my own, personal experiences using technology in various writing situations: my writing process, collaborative publishing, my M.A. internship, online tutoring, and my first experience teaching college English composition in a computer classroom. While many compositionists have evaluated the usefulness of technology in settings similar to the ones I discuss in this thesis, most researchers have relied on more quantitative methodologies that, because of their supposed objective and impartial nature, cannot adequately assess the ways writers, teachers, and students are (or can be) personally affected and influenced by the features of computer technology. In addition to offering a qualitative analysis of situations involving technology, this thesis attempts to explain some of the complexities of learning to integrate technology with various facets of composition studies. Although there may be times that we choose to supplement writing situations with certain computer technologies, there may also be occasions for which an integration is more beneficial. However, in order to successfully create such integrations, we need to.
identify and understand the variables involved in our efforts.
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Numerous colleagues have contributed insightful responses to my work over this past year. Among them, Carol Haviland and Rise Axelrod committed their expertise in the field of composition studies, directing and redirecting my efforts to write not for compositionists, but with them. Through countless, lengthy, and thoughtful discussions with Carol, I discovered autoethnographic writing and made it my own. Rise and her wealth of knowledge helped me to refine my thoughts about audience,
purpose, rhetorical writing situations, and social construction. Both Carol and Rise have contributed enormously to my personal and professional development as a scholar of composition studies, providing me with abundant and undeserved opportunities to present my work both in person at conferences and in writing for publications.

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Steve, John, Justin, and Jeremy: you are my life; God bless you for hanging with me.
For my guys:

Steve, John, Justin, and Jeremy
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CHAPTER ONE

What Happens?

What happens when compositionists integrate computer technology with writing in rhetorical situations? Throughout the following chapters, I will explore several of my own experiences using technology in various rhetorical situations in effort to answer that question. Furthermore, my exploration will take the form of autoethnographic research and writing. Compositionists have used various research methodologies in their attempts to answer questions such as the one I pose. However, the majority of inquiries have used experimental and critical analyses to study the events and participants involved in the situations under investigation. More recently, some researchers have begun using qualitative methodologies, following social constructionists' postmodern turn to foregrounded subjectivity, reflection, and introspection for making meaning. Following this turn, my thesis will consider not only the ways technology might shape the meanings we make when we engage in rhetorical situations that include writing, but also the ways individuals (in this case, me) are shaped and have been shaped in those situations.
It did not occur to me to consider what happens when compositionists integrate technology with writing until only a few years ago, several years after I wrote my first essay using a computer. At the time I wrote the essay, I was merely, and a bit dreadfully, completing one of several undergraduate requirements for transfer to Loma Linda University's School of Medicine. I did wish to complete my college English composition requirement with a good grade, but I had no specific thoughts about being a writer or a teacher of writing, or moreover, about computer technology. I did not own a desk-top computer and had never considered that possibly I should, could, or would.

I wrote my draft, a descriptive essay, using a pencil and paper, then carried the draft to a required conference with my instructor. I was anxious. Although it didn't cross my mind to worry about grammar, punctuation, or other such sentence-level concerns (I suppose those elements of my writing had never attracted much attention during my earlier years as a student), the idea that somebody else was going to read my attempts to make meaning was humbling. Interestingly, I was also concerned about revealing my sloppy handwriting because, at some point in my life, I had connected intelligence with neatness. Indeed, my
descriptive essay, meant to demonstrate my ability to make
competent choices in the midst of crisis, elaborated on my
orderliness while I was, at the last minute, searching for
items to pack for my stay in the hospital when my first son
was born.

I collected my thoughts and started
rummaging through the dresser drawers,
contents stacked on neat little piles,
arranged, almost, in alphabetical
order; yet, I couldn’t locate a thing.
Steve told me this was going to happen.
“Pack your clothes in advance,” he
said. “The time will be here before
you know it and you won’t be ready.”
Well, he was right. Steve’s always
right! So I tried to focus on the
things I would need: socks and
undergarments, baggy, over-sized tee-
shirts, my size five jeans (even though
I knew I wouldn’t be able to wear
them), my vinyl tennies, a pair of pink
fuzzy slippers, a toothbrush, a comb,
and finally, a small purple lolli-pop
that Steve made me promise not to eat
after we’d bought it the week before at
the Hallmark shop. I hadn’t called
Steve yet, since I knew he wasn’t due
at work until after eight o’clock, but
there were other things to do that
would keep me busy in the meantime (1).

Prior to my conference with my instructor, I rewrote my
essay, slowly and carefully—and in pencil, so that I could
erase and rewrite even more neatly when necessary. In
addition, I was (and am) a horrible speller, which I’d
known for several years but seemed unable to change. So,
along with a pencil, eraser, and paper, I rewrote with a dictionary on my table and looked up such words as dresser.

After my conference, which turned out to be not quite as unbearable as I'd expected, I gathered my children from the sitters and drove to my mother's house. She owned the XT with 250 MB of hard-disk space and a word-processing program, which she'd told me would be simple enough to learn after a few minutes of typing. Following the directions she left on her desk, I turned on the computer. Several hours later, when she returned home from work, I asked her to open the program. There was a C:\ on the monitor, but every time I typed "cd space write," the computer responded, "invalid directory." She laughed. "You don't type the WORD 'space.' You hit the space KEY on the keyboard."

The word-processing program fascinated me. As I typed, the sentences in my essay appeared on a monitor and looked almost professional in that space. Also, the program seemed involved with my writing. It decided when we were going to start a new line of text. The only time I did a hard return, the activity for which was performed by hitting the enter key, was when I needed to begin a new paragraph. This procedure, also, was fascinating because I
felt that once I'd performed the activity, my words were then stuck inside the monitor, as though enter meant I was "inputing" permanently whatever I had written up to that point. Being a rather inexperienced typist, I made several mistakes; however, my mother suggested I not concern myself with these errors, as I could run a spell-check when I was finished, and the spell-checker would identify and make suggestions for fixing them.

Most intriguing to me was the fact that my essay entered the machine as one thing and emerged from the printer something else. As I mentioned earlier, I make for myself this unusual connection between intelligence and neatness. What this meant for my hand-written essays was that they rarely underwent revisions while I was in the process of drafting them. Often, I used two pieces of paper in my earliest drafting stages. On one, I free-wrote my essay, while on the other, I created annotations when I'd written something and then decided I might want to say whatever I'd already said differently. I didn't like to cross things out, and, often, if I was to erase, I would have to erase several lines of work, which made a mess and also made my original sentences obsolete. With all the time involved in writing and rewriting a clean draft, I
rarely made changes after the second one. However, while I wrote into the word-processing program, I could return to my earlier sentences, and, in parentheses, write my potential revisions in the spaces I was most likely to integrate them. My options were much easier to consider in the context of the draft, since I didn't have to interrupt my thoughts and my reading in order to locate the revised sentences on another piece of paper. As a result, I made more changes to my essay than I'd ever imagined I would make, and what I ended up with, by the time I printed it, was an essay substantially different than the one I'd originally set out to write.

As I mentioned, however, I didn't own a computer, and so, when I left my mother's house, I left with an essay that I hoped would be a final draft. When I found, later, that I wanted to make additional changes to my essay, I was perturbed. I couldn't bring myself to put my sloppy handwriting anywhere on the professional-looking, typed document; therefore, I was back with my pencil and paper, where I made more annotations. Early the next morning, I put my kids back in the car, returned to my mother's house and, that time, opened the word-processor on my own. I typed in the file name that my mother helped me create and
brought my essay, as it looked the night before, back on the monitor. I entered my changes in parentheses. Then, I read the essay aloud, substituting those possible changes, kept what I liked, got rid of what I didn't, and printed another draft. The following morning, I turned it in for a grade.

When I received the next writing assignment for that class, I was eager to be on the computer. Although I hand-wrote the second essay just as I had the first—with two sets of papers, one for drafting, one for annotating—I wrote less scrupulously, knowing I would make many changes when I rewrote the essay with my mother's computer. I found myself growing frustrated with what now seemed like limitations of composing by hand. Before I'd written the conclusion for that essay, I was back at my mother's desk, and, for the first time, composed a considerable portion of my essay without hand writing it first. The remainder of that term found my children and me spending unusual amounts of time in my mother's home. I had become interested not only in the usefulness of the word-processor for composing, but also in the way I composed. As a result, I was tracking as much as I could in the course of writing one essay, and by the end of the term, I was saving drafts of
my essays at, what I considered to be, various stages of my writing process. In the end, I had a final draft as well as several earlier versions of that draft (which I'd saved with sequential file names, like jeremy1, jeremy2, and jeremy3).

One of the most profound effects of my mother's computer was the impact it had on me, personally. As I said, when I enrolled in my English composition class, I was merely attempting to satisfy three of the fifty-six units required for my transfer to a four-year university. Although I had no serious aversions to writing, the activity was not one I'd ever performed with any real interest and was only faintly noticeable on my list of favorite pass-times. When I was in high school, I "dabbled," as they say, in a bit of poetry and fiction, while writing the occasional autobiographies for my psychology and sociology classes. However, I rarely shared my poetry or fiction, as I felt the attempts shameful in the face of Shakespeare and Hawthorne, who, in my high school literature classes, demonstrated interesting and praiseworthy writing. I never imagined myself one of these writers and saw no important reasons to attempt becoming one. My autobiographies were as much fiction as anything
else I wrote, since the intricacies of my "real" life were not any I felt comfortable or maybe worthy of sharing in writing. In short, although I COULD write, I didn’t enjoy writing. However, and much to my surprise, I found myself becoming interested in writing during the term in which I took college English composition. In addition, I believe that integrating the word processor with my writing process is what stirred my interest in composing.

While composing on the computer, I seemed to connect somehow with what I was saying in my essays. The ability to revise easily and without losing what I’d already written freed me from my original concerns about (okay, obsession with) neatness. I could say whatever I wanted when I wrote. In addition, certain features of the word-processor--its ability to change my font-types, font size, and especially to bold or italicize my words--stirred my interest in words and word-meanings. By cutting and pasting, I could rearrange sentences. I reorganized paragraphs, pages, introductions, and conclusions--all for the purpose of making meaning. And I had stopped, for the first time in my own awareness, worrying about the fool I might make of myself when I misspelled. What I discovered was that writing is a craft. What I’d originally
understood to be a limited and faulty means of communication had become a means through which I was very comfortable communicating. No one interrupted my explanations (although, I was curious about the ways I seemed to experience interruptions while I worked--my growing awareness of audience?). No one made faces when something didn’t come out the right way the first time I said it. I was free to make sense of the world using written language, and, as the writer, I could revise my words and sentences until I was satisfied that I was making myself clear.

However, aside from italicizing, underlining, and bold-facing words, there was nothing that computer did to my essays that I and other writers couldn’t have done without it and haven’t done in the history of written language. Compositionists are well aware of the fact that writers revise their work. Indeed, they almost never suggest that writers write final drafts the first time through. In addition, research in computers and writing has never demonstrated that composing on computers leads to more effective writing or better writing processes. In fact, most of the research in computers and writing that looks specifically at the effects of word-processors on
writing processes has concluded exactly the opposite: not only does the word-processor seem to have little impact on writers' revision skills, but, in some cases, it has been argued that writing with a word-processor can inhibit effective writing. However, similar to the assumptions I made about the effects of word-processing on my own writing, early computers and writing researchers assumed that word-processing tools would encourage students to revise and, hence, help them to write.

Early Speculation about Computers and Writing

In March of 1981, at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Dallas, Bruce Cronnell and Ann Humes presented a paper titled, "Using Microcomputers for Composition Instruction." Their abstract reads,

One of the most valuable uses of microcomputers and word-processors in composition instruction is in the teaching of writing revision. A number of activities can be carried out with these tools: for example, (1) after appropriate instruction on revision, students can be given prewritten text and asked to revise it on the word-processors: (2) after a student has composed a text, the microcomputer can suggest that revisions be made: and (3) after a student has composed a text, the microcomputer can look for specific kinds of errors in the writing, mark the place where the errors occur, and require the student to correct them.
Microcomputers and word-processors may also be used to teach students sentence combining and how to generate and arrange content.

Cronnell and Humes, at the time of their presentation, were not, they admit, computer experts, "rather," they stated, "our backgrounds are in instruction" (1). Their work was an analysis of the composing process, which they felt, based on "considerable research," largely incorporated revision in writing (3). In their presentation, they hypothesized that students don’t revise because "it’s a lot of work" (3). Cronnell and Humes sought to use computers in their classrooms because they believed word-processors could assist them as they instructed students in revision, asserting that revision is considerably easier when done on a computer (3), that the computer can teach students to "generate content" (6), and that the computer may actually help students write (7).

Other research, prior to 1981, looked at revision in student writing, computer programs designed to assist instructors in teaching composition, and programs that offer automated revision (Burns & Culp, 1980; Card, Moran, & Newell, 1980). But strictly in the field of computers and writing, this 1981 presentation that considers the
usefulness of word-processing for teaching and learning revision seems to be the earliest publication.

This inquiry, however optimistic, is promising only in that it suggests a solution to a problem. At the time they presented this theory, "Using Microcomputers for Composition Instruction" was, as Steven North describes it, at the "possible solution" stage of inquiry (36). The researchers are not disseminating the results of a theory they have tested. And, unfortunately, there appears to be no published, follow-up study in which Cronnell and Humes revisit their assumption that computers can assist in learning revision strategies. However, other researchers did test the hypothesis, many of them concluding that computers may not be all that useful to students learning revision skills like those Cronnell and Humes mention. Based on the results of later, more complete inquiries, a written dissemination of the results of "Using Microcomputers for Composition Instruction" to improve student revision might have been entitled, "Using Microcomputers for Composition Instruction to Improve Student Revision Ain't Gonna Work!"

Ethnographic Research

The approach to inquiries into the relationship
between computers and revision has ranged from the initial practitioner guess-work in the assumptions of Cronnell and Humes to the most objective experimental studies. In the next several paragraphs, I will consider the conclusions of some of that research, demonstrating, theoretically, what might have been the outcome of Cronnell's and Humes' study, had they published a record of their findings.

To begin, it's necessary to reconsider their assumptions: 1) revision is considerably easier on a computer, 2) the computer can teach students to "generate content," and 3) the computer may actually help students write. If someone were to ask me why I choose to compose on a word-processor, I would respond, enthusiastically, with statements similar to these above. But my enthusiasm does not coincide with that of the two subjects studied in Christina Haas' ethnographic research in "Word-processing as Decision-making: Writers' Choices of Writing Media."

For the purposes of this research, Haas observed and interviewed Tim, a college freshman student, and Johnny, an engineer, at work in their natural environments and over a period of several weeks to determine the factors that influence writers' decisions about word-processing.

Both subjects, when asked about their preferences for
a writing medium, stated that, although they were quite comfortable and experienced with word-processors, there were specific times they chose to work with hard copies. For example, Johnny felt the view of his document on a computer screen was often limited, and he frequently printed a hard copy of his work. He states, "when the program starts to get too large and I have to jump back and forth from screen to screen or use the scroll bar, I find myself getting confused and mixed up..., and I put the print-out on my desk..." (11). Tim thinks that using paper for drafting leads to more thoughtful writing. He says, "if I get the structure on paper first my ideas come out better" (10). Considering Cronnell's and Humes' assumption that revision is easier using the word-processor, there are times when Johnny would disagree; and if "the computer may actually help students write," Tim's experiences underscore that word, "may." At the conclusion of her study, Haas claims that "sometimes there are limitations in computer technology that paper helps writers to overcome... The choice to use or not use word-processing is made again and again as new writing tasks are undertaken" (13). Though these two writers preferred the computer for certain tasks, when it came to the specific areas of writing with which
they were most concerned, they chose to work with a hard copy.

Critical Research

Tim and Johnny don’t quite fit the student profile Cronnell and Humes laid out in the beginning of their presentation. Cronnell and Humes were focusing on more basic writers for their inquiry, writers who were still developing some of the skills with which Tim and Johnny were already comfortable. However, the results of Haas’ study show that even experienced writers, writers experienced not only with composing but also at composing on computers, find greater value in working with hard copies at certain points in their writing processes. In a rather informal critical study carried out by Richard M. Collier, however, we find less experienced writers attempting to learn revision skills on the computer and then applying those skills to their composing processes. In “The Word-processor and Revision Strategies,” Collier describes his process of teaching four college students to revise on the word-processor. Prior to putting them on computers, however, he studied their traditional revision skills, “from hand written copy to hand written copy,” and recorded their normal processes (151). He summarizes the
experiences of his subjects' typing skills (they all had them) and their writing skills: "two possessed average writing skills, one weak skills, and one superior skills" (150). He videotaped the monitors as they wrote, interviewed them about their personal feelings concerning the process, and tape recorded the writing sessions. Though Collier's results may be somewhat unreliable (considering the relatively small sample size for a critical study) they are, nevertheless, interesting.

Collier came into the study expecting that composing on the computer would improve certain revision skills:

The study attempted to test the hypothesis that the use of computer-based text editors would significantly expand the number and the complexity of the operations used by inexperienced writers when revising and would increase the range of domains upon which these operations were performed, thus improving overall the effectiveness of their revising strategies (150).

He focuses upon two problem revision areas for inexperienced writers: 1) juggling demands placed on memory and 2) recopying or retyping (much like Cronnell's and Humes' argument that students don't revise because "it's a lot of work," Collier believed, "students often make minimal or trivial changes in a text so as to ensure that
recopying is as simple and quick as possible") (150).

But, he claims, his hypothesis was not confirmed by the research. In fact, several of the writing and revision aspects of the word-processor had no significant impact on the subjects' learning. Considering Cronell's and Humes' theoretical, "revision is considerably easier on a computer," Collier found that, though students revised more quickly, "the word-processor encourage[d] concentration on the smaller domains of a text by making minimal alterations easy and larger alterations difficult" (154). That "the computer can teach students to generate content," Collier also found was not the case: "I saw...that the attention shifts needed when a writer is manipulating the keyboard for operations other than simple typing interrupted continuous concentration on the text itself" (153). And finally, opposing the claim that "the computer may actually help students write," Collier concludes, "lockout time (the time between giving a command and being able to proceed with the writing activity...) and strings of command sequences produce interruptions in and distractions from continuous focus on the written text" (154). Again, the claim that word-processors can assist in teaching writing and revision skills is unsupported.
Empirical Research

The results of both Haas' ethnographic and Collier's clinical inquiries are based, respectively, on small sample sizes and insignificant variations. Haas' findings support the claim that certain aspects of revision vary in importance from person to person and are valuable in that these differences should be considered by instructors who choose to teach revision with the aid of a word-processor. Collier claims that students make less thoughtful revisions when they compose on computers instead of using pen and paper; however, (although there was variation in the data) his results are relatively insignificant. A third study, this one conducted by Gail Hawisher in a more controlled environment than the others and over a longer period of time, offers probably the most significant data in the research on writers and word-processors. Her experimental study explores the effects of word-processing on the revision strategies of twenty college freshmen enrolled in a writing course at the time of the study and evaluated over the duration of the term.

Hawisher begins her research by considering related studies in which the results tend to conflict with their hypotheses, then discusses the purpose of her own research:
to shed further light on the influence of word-processing on writers and their writing. It was designed to discover whether college freshmen revised more extensively and more successfully with a computer than with a pen and typewriter. I also explored the kinds of revisions students made with and without word-processing (147).

Hawisher used Faigley and Witte’s taxonomy for counting and coding the changes that occurred in the students’ drafts. A post-doctoral student, experienced in text analysis, coded a set of essays not written by the sample students. To rate the over-all quality of the essays, Hawisher used a group of raters and Diederich’s analytical scale. She relied on a random selection of essays for re-analysis, the random separation of her twenty students into two groups of ten—each group would write and revise using both the word-processor and pen and paper—and random coding of the essays so raters would not know what essays they were reading.

Despite tight control of her research, Hawisher’s results support the results of both Collier and Haas. The frequency of revisions performed by the group who learned and wrote on word-processors did not improve or increase above the level of the group that used pen and paper. The pen and paper group made greater “meaning-preserving”
revisions than did the word-processing group. In addition, when the essays were rated for quality, there was no significant difference between the essays written and revised on word-processors and the essays written and revised with pen and paper. In comparing her results with the assertions made by Cronnell and Humes, the hypothesis that we can teach students to write better essays with the aid of a computer is once more unsupported.

Additional studies concur with the results of the three I chose to discuss in this chapter (Daiute, 1986; Harris, 1985; Lutz, 1987; Case, 1985). With the overwhelming evidence that learning to revise with the aid of a word-processor does not improve revision skills or the level of revision, and considering that there is no apparent study rating the quality of a word-processed essay above that of a pen and paper essay, these and other studies justify the follow-up to Cronnell's and Humes' original presentation: "Using Microcomputers for Composition Instruction to Increase Student Revision Ain't Gonna Work!"

Analysis

Despite the conclusions of these early inquiries, I am claiming that my own writing and revision strategies were
significantly affected by and, moreover, were advantaged by the features of a word-processor. In addition, I became curious about writing only when I began experimenting with the potential of those features. While I obviously cannot generalize only from my personal experiences using a word-processor in order to draw conclusions about other writers' strategies, I do want to submit the possibility that, in the studies I cited, computers are treated more or less as "tools" meant to encourage, replicate, or supplement traditional methods of writing and teaching writing. The difference between the ways I believe technology proved useful in my own early college writing experiences and the ways technology was studied in the writing experiences of Haas', Collier's, and Hawisher's subjects is integral to my purpose for this thesis. When we introduce something new to any existing rhetorical situation (and academic writing is rhetorical), we change the situation. As researchers, we need to evaluate the usefulness of writing strategies, not only in terms of what we believe has worked in the past, but also in terms of the immediate rhetorical situation. However, researchers and composition instructors often critiqued the usefulness of technology in writing situations only by comparing elements of the new
situation to elements of the old (see Klem and Moran’s “Computers and Instructional Strategies in the Teaching of Writing”). Such studies can be useful for historical accounts of the ways writing processes can and have changed; however, these comparisons aren’t enough to help us speculate entirely about the usefulness of technology in new writing situations. “Ironically,” claims Patricia Sullivan, one reason the dominant forces have not confronted the consequences of electronic writing for composition theory (and its teaching) can be traced to the accommodation strategies used by advocates of computers in the English curriculum. Many proponents of computers have introduced them as tools for the writer’s arsenal. By focusing on the “toolness” of writing with computers, discussions of computers and composition have promoted an image of the computer as a “helpmate” or “assistant” to writers and teachers rather than as an agent of change. From the first, most computer-writing discussions have sought to fit electronic writing into currently accepted writing theories. If we look, for example at Wresch’s early collection (1984), we find that three sections discuss programs for “prewriting,” “editing and grammar,” and the “writing process,” and that the section on word-processing research also focuses on the writing process. Miller (1986) pursues a similar strategy when he compares writing processes to software engineering.
processes and critiques how the computer can “assist in text composition” (p. 188). Certainly, discussions continue along these lines, framing the issues in ways that identify computer-assisted instruction or word-processing as aids to writers engaged in composing (45).

The significance of the word-processor in early writing experiences is not merely that its features aid efforts at revision. Word-processing features materialize efforts at revision. “Computers serve as enactive models,” says William Costanzo. “They offer physical analogies to the mental and perceptual activities of writing, giving inexperienced writers access to alternatives that might otherwise remain invisible.” Rhetorically, “the computer visibly reinforces writing as a systematic process” (17).

Such an awareness of rhetorical strategies for making meaning may operate only at the subconscious level during a writer's early writing experiences--and to various degrees--but it is, however, in operation. It's important as composition instructors that we foster this awareness because through practice and feedback, students can learn to extend their processes for making meaning in one situation to making meaning in others. I am suggesting that the rhetorical nature of computer technology
integrations might help students learn to make these kinds of decisions. In The Dialogic Classroom, Jeff Galin and Joan Latchaw explain that in order to successfully integrate technology with writing, computer applications should provide students with "computer related experiences that are transferable to other learning contexts" (15). I want to connect that assertion with postmodern thoughts about the rhetorical relationship between social contexts and useful writing strategies by adding that the cognitive processes employed in computer related experiences also should be transferable to other learning contexts. "One of the most important goals of any writing curriculum," writes James Crosswhite, "is to teach students how to go on teaching themselves to write better, how to adapt their abilities to new situations" (5). Indeed, it is this very important activity that several of us strive to teach our composition students.

As supplements to writing, the uses of computer technology become situation specific: can word-processing features replace, replicate, or improve existing methods for writing and teaching? While questions like this are (and were) good starting places for research, their methodologies deter researchers' abilities to investigate
what happens, and maybe more importantly, what can happen when we introduce technology into these existing rhetorical situations. There is no doubt in my mind, nor the minds of most computers and writing specialists as well as most composition specialists, that when we introduce technology to existing facets of composition studies, we can experience rhetorical changes in those situations. I think that, while it can be useful to look at the products that evolve in these new spaces in terms of products that evolved before them, it is also important to evaluate them in terms of the entire rhetorical situation. This more reflective look at the usefulness of computers to writing requires that we are speculative when we analyze, that we are aware of the connections between writer and audience, writer and classroom, writer and academia, writer and teacher, writer and subject, writer and technology.

Reflective Research and Autoethnography

Possibly, writers like those Hawisher studied in 1988 appear to make fewer substantive revisions to their word-processed texts because their revisions were measured against only a few, very specific components of the rhetorical situation for their writing. However, if Hawisher’s writers were considering, for example, their
audiences while they made their revisions, then the changes to their documents also could be evaluated in terms of how the word-processors' features influenced their thoughts about audience. Foremost, in composition studies, it has been from the audience's perspective that we encourage our students to think. From this perspective, however, we find there are numerous directions from which to approach researching a writing process. As a result, the field of computers and writing has grown substantially to include various perspectives and experiences. More recently, this growth has introduced research that includes new perspectives and experiences, revealing our increasing awareness of the connections between elements in rhetorical situations. The focus of some computer technology and writing research—much of it in computers and literacy—has shifted from trying to discover ways that word-processors might help us teach revision to finding new ways for defining revision in new contexts. This speculative activity suggests that we can learn about computers and writing through more reflective analyses of the rhetorical situations that include computer technologies.

While reflective, speculative, and introspective research is gaining popularity in composition studies,
finding space for this kind of writing is still complicated by academia's long-standing, traditional expectations for scholarly research. Nonetheless, a few researchers have found space for more self-reflective writing in composition studies, and compositionists have benefited from their discoveries. Much of this research has been in the form of ethnographies similar to the one Christina Haas conducted with Tim and Johnny. Several ethnographers, however, have gone a step further with their research and have studied their situations from even less objective positions, taking their own presence, biases, and experiences into account with their generalizations. Other methodologies, offshoots of these less objective ethnographies, bring even more intersubjectivity to research. Cristina Kirklighter, Cloe Vincent, and Joseph Moxley call these ethnographies "postmodern ethnographies or autoethnographies." These are "ethnographies in which the authorial I is used and in which personal experience is emphasized" (vii). In a few instances, a personal experience has been the subject of the ethnographer's research (see Brooke 1997 and Ellis 1995).

My thesis, an autoethnography, will draw from these variations of ethnographic methodologies to explore more
postmodern possibilities for how we can think about integrating computer technologies with facets of composition studies. In the remaining chapters, I discuss several of my past experiences using technology in order to identify the points at which certain technologies became integrated aspects of my work in composition studies. For readers, this methodology is meant to probe questions facing the field of computers and writing (Brooke 14). For me, the methodology is meant to help me piece together some of the patterns that led to changes in the ways I imagine technology can be successfully integrated with facets of composition studies. Writes Clifford Geertz,

What we can construct, if we keep notes and stay alive, are hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced-together patternings, after the fact.

To state this mere observation about what actually takes place when someone tries to "make sense" out of something known about from assorted materials encountered while poking about in the accidental dramas of the common world is to bring on a train of worrying questions. What has become of objectivity? What assures us we have things right? Where has all the science gone? It may just be, however, that all understanding (and indeed, if distributive, bottom-up models of the brain are right, consciousness as such) trails life in just this way.
Floundering through mere happenings and then concocting accounts of how they hang together is what knowledge and illusion alike consist in. The accounts are concocted out of available notions, cultural equipment ready to hand. But like any equipment it is brought to the task; value added, not extracted. If objectivity, rightness, and science are to be had it is not by pretending they run free of the exertions which make or unmake them.

To form my accounts of change, in my towns, my profession, my world, and myself, calls thus not for plotted narrative, measurement, reminiscence, or structural progression, and certainly not for graphs; though these have their uses (as do models and theorizings) in setting frames and defining issues. It calls for showing how particular events and unique occasions, an encounter here, a development there, can be woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go. Myth, it has been said, I think by Northrop Frye, describes not what happened but what happens (After the Fact 2-3).
CHAPTER TWO

Integrating Technology with Composition Studies

Once I became interested in the relationship between writing and computer technology, I found myself participating more and more often in situations that included both. In addition, most of my work in computers and writing entailed working with others who were also interested in that relationship. These collaborative activities introduced me to various and helpful uses for technology in situations that include two or more participants, as well as to the sorts of problems that can arise in the face of new integrations with existing practices and pedagogies. I will address some of those problems in the final chapter of my thesis; however, in this chapter, I will discuss what happened when I used technology in certain facets of composition studies: specifically, faculty-student mentorships, tutoring, and teaching.

Prior to elaborating upon those experiences, however, I believe it is important that I explain what I mean by "integrating" computer technology, as well as describe the process that led me to my explanation. As in my early experiences using technology in my own writing processes, I
did not realize how significant technology's impact was on the outcomes of these experiences, until I considered some of their more intricate aspects. In addition, I learned that becoming successful at integrating technology with existing practices in composition studies is a process in itself. In other words, I have concluded for the time that valuable, new integrations are not accomplished overnight. Rather, these integrations require critical and extensive thought on the part of the individual(s) attempting them. We often become involved in situations in which computer technology is already an integrated aspect of the work we are doing, such as in the example of my experiences using technology in my writing process and in the publishing experiences I will discuss later in this chapter. However, "creating" new integrations is a process of conscious and deliberate thought that, prior to implementing extensively in composition practice, we might consider should be exercises necessary for developmental growth. Through my own experiences, I have learned that once we can identify the points at which supplements become integrations, we become increasingly successful at integrating new technologies with existing practices.

Composition theorists have suggested that most early,
deliberate, conceptualized uses of computer technology in composition related practice do function as supplements, and that only through reflection on such practice can one learn to identify the points at which technologies actually become true and successful integrations (i.e., Galin and Latchaw 1998). For that reason, I suggest we not attempt complex integrations with complicated technologies in situations that involve others, until we can both identify our specific purposes for the integration and speculate deliberately upon the potential effects of that integration. I'm not suggesting we don't attempt integrations of any sort until someone says, "okay, now you've got it; go create fabulous new integrations with technology." On the contrary, because we learn, in part, to integrate by integrating, we should attempt it. I am only suggesting that we be mindful of the situations in which will attempt these integrations, so that we don't place unreasonable expectations on ourselves or others. Furthermore, I am not asserting that the only way to use technology is through integration. Many people use technologies as supplements to their teaching or writing, and these experiences can be valuable for several reasons. However, in situations where we feel integrations are most
appropriate (and those situations may vary according to the individuals using technology), we need to be critical and reflective about the process and purpose for the integration.

What's important to integration itself, I believe, is that both the process and end result be unifying acts: acts that successfully combine two or more existing elements in order to create a new element; a process and product that feel and appear seamless and that, in addition, are useful. To a degree, integration is a mentality as well as an act. One cannot imagine integration as a process of supplementing. Supplementing what already exists creates a product that remains, in effect, the same but includes features of the supplemented technology. In such a combination, the product is most easily evaluated in terms of how it compares to similar products that did not include the new technology in their constructions, like, for example, the comparisons made in the studies conducted by Haas, Collier, and Hawisher (Chapter 1). True integrations, however, result in new products. And they should be evaluated, not in terms of how they compare to what already exists, but in terms of the effects they have on their users and audiences. In composition studies, this
position obliges us to reimagine what it means to write, revise, publish, and teach those writing, revising, and publishing processes once we integrate computer technologies with them.

As I mentioned, shifting from supplementing to integrating is, in part, a mentality, which is often the result of serious reflection on scenarios that included technology. Much of that reflection involves contextualizing our experiences with the work of theorists who have researched various uses for technology in composition studies. In my own experiences using technology, it was through such reflection that I became aware of the points at which technology became an integrated aspect of my work. Early on, although I was using technology to make meaning, I failed to see connections between that technology and the significance of my experiences. However, through repeated experiences with technology, coupled with my reflections on those experiences, I began to make connections between the meanings made in those situations and the computer's influence on those meanings.

The scenarios that follow in this chapter should serve a number of purposes. Primarily, they are meant to
demonstrate that there is a distinction between supplementing with technology and integrating technology with areas of composition studies. Furthermore, narrating my own experiences with technology will exemplify some of the mental processes or stages of learning to think critically about what it means to integrate technology. In addition, the analyses of my experiences gives me an opportunity to discuss them from various perspectives, in light of both historical and contemporary research in composition studies, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy, in order to connect them with other questions and areas of investigation in both the sciences and the humanities. Finally, this discussion of my own experiences is meant to stimulate more interest in the usefulness of reflective thinking and research in the field of computers and writing.

Publishing, the first scenario in this chapter, is a narrative of my earliest experiences using technology in collaborative writing situations. These publishing experiences, which spanned the first seven years of my college education, were instrumental in my learning that how technology is used, perceived, and presented in collaborative contexts can influence the meanings made in
those situations. While both my "Campus News" and Pacific Review classes concluded with literary publications, the ways technology was used in each case impacted the amount of collaboration that went into writing, designing, and publishing the manuscripts.

The second scenario in this chapter, Mentoring, is both a narration and analysis of Bruce's and my mentor-intern relationship, the significance of which developed after several years and, in large part, as a direct result of computer technology. Although I still wasn't making clear connections between computers and composition studies at the time we began integrating technology with the relationship, I was interested in the effects that technology might have on our relationship and the usefulness of technology in mentor-intern relationships. Over the past two years, as I've had time to reflect on the points at which computers impacted our relationship, I have learned that integrations of this sort can actually assist us in reinventing useful aspects of mentoring that became less customary, probably, once technology made it possible for students like me to attend university campuses.

In Tutoring, the third scenario, I will discuss one of my more deliberate attempts to integrate computer
technology with composition studies. During my second year as a graduate student, I saw a unique opportunity to combine my interest in computers with tutoring in order to create a new space online for our writing center. Moreover, at this point in my education, I was thinking seriously about contextualizing my work with the works of other scholars and researchers in the field, so I took on the project as one that would complete the research requirements for two of my classes. Through reflection on that research, I learned that, although I'd begun the project determined to integrate technology with a particular facet of composition studies, I was, in actuality, using technology as a supplement. However, through my repeated reflections on the effects of using technology to tutor students online, I finally began to see where technology worked as an integrated aspect of my attempts to help students think more critically about their writing.

During my second term as a teaching assistant in CSUSB's English department, I attempted a complicated and complete integration with computer technology in my own composition classroom. By winter, 2000, I had nearly completed my M.A., and I was eager to combine my
experiences and research in order to design a composition course that satisfied my department's English 101 objectives in addition to providing my students with valuable uses for technology in their reading, writing, and thinking processes. The final scenario in this chapter reflects on that most recent experience, and I hope that my re-examination of the course will ultimately demonstrate that, while considering various uses for technology is an exciting enterprise in composition studies, integrating technology with composition means radically revising our processes for teaching and writing.

Publishing

I first deliberately combined my interest in computers with writing when I found myself in the position of Editor-in-Chief for "Campus News," a newsletter several students created and published at Mount San Jacinto College's Menifee Valley campus. The position permitted my continued writing, which, after the conclusion of my college composition course, I was most eager to do. In addition, it allowed me to further explore computer technology, which, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, had become a new fascination. I say I "found myself" in the position of Editor-in-Chief of this newsletter because that is exactly
what happened. With no prior experience organizing a publication, I was supposed to be only the Managing Editor. However, shortly before our first publishing deadline, we experienced conflict amongst some members of the staff, and the then-Editor-in-Chief resigned. The bit of experience I'd had placing articles in PageMaker, our desktop publishing program, exceeded the experiences of other staff members by about 100 percent. That fact, in combination with the information I had concerning the Editor-in-Chief's agenda, left me responsible for assembling the newsletter, enforcing deadlines, and making arrangements with the printer—criteria that, at the time, had defined the role of our Editor-in-Chief.

It was from this position that I became most aware of larger audiences and the effect computer technology can have on influencing a large audience's perceptions of a publication. Considering the length and content of a particular text, I had to make decisions about what graphics to use, where to place them, the most logical points at which to break text on a page, how many columns to set up, whether to divide those columns using solid lines, broken lines, no lines. I played with font types, font sizes, headers, and the location of page numbers. In
addition, I had to consider readers’ tastes: what types of information would readers appreciate? what might upset them? My audience included the parents of students at the college as well as the community that surrounded the college (the consideration of which, incidentally, led to the conflict inspiring our Editor-in-Chief’s resignation). While some articles might be appropriate for a college newsletter, not all were, and even considering those that we would publish, I had to make decisions about which articles should run on the front page and which should not.

I made some of these decisions aided by input from other staff members; however, because many of them were uncomfortable with the technology, I received little response to my queries. For some reason, students seemed to associate their computer experiences with their ability to critique computer generated designs, leaving me with much of the responsibility for making editorial decisions. In addition, the faculty advisor for "Campus News," while she was also a freelance journalist who was helpful in making decisions concerning editing, knew little about computer technology and was unhelpful in my attempts to stimulate the staff's interest in making decisions about integrating text with design. Ultimately, we published
three newsletters in the course of one semester. However, when I resigned at the conclusion of the term because I couldn’t continue with the work-load, nobody was enthusiastic about taking over my responsibilities. Unfortunately, “Campus News” dissolved upon my resignation as Editor-in-Chief.

While I enjoyed learning about and working with desktop publishing software, I was disappointed in other individuals’ unwillingness to participate. For that reason, when I learned several years later about the well established Pacific Review at CSUSB, I was excited about reinvolving myself in publishing. The literary journal was supervised by department faculty member Juan Delgado, who also knew how to use the publication software, and the students involved in the production had no qualms about critiquing the journal’s layout and design. My first year as a Pacific Review staff member was spent reading and editing the materials submitted for publication. I did not participate in the computerized construction of the magazine, except to offer feedback on the design, and I was not responsible for making decisions about graphics. However, my second year on staff differed markedly from the first. Juan teamed up with another faculty member, Jeff
Galin (department computer guru), to offer the Pacific Review as a credit-bearing course, English 605, in which students would assume greater responsibility for the literary production. Approximately twenty students began working in teams to accomplish the steps necessary for publication. Moreover, in addition to the annual hard-copy magazine, we also would produce a web-based version, the process for which entailed creating and uploading a website.

Because I had experience working with PageMaker, I chose to participate in the magazine's hard-copy layout. But the class was organized in such a way that production teams were dependent upon regular interaction with each other in order to complete both publications. Whereas my previous experiences in publication activities--Editor-in-Chief of "Campus News" and one year editing for the Pacific Review--seemed largely independent of the activities others performed, the work I did in English 605 was linked directly and very tangibly to the interests of everybody in the class. The web design team interacted regularly with the hard-copy layout team in order to make decisions concerning the carry-over of certain design features, like font-types and graphics. The editing team assisted the
layout team in decisions about where to place certain texts in the book. Several students worked with graphics in Adobe Photoshop to design text covers, then displayed their creations for the entire class to critique. Because we were attempting the equivalent of a full-time job in two class sessions per week for only ten weeks, Juan and Jeff signed the class onto a listserv, where we exchanged and responded to email postings concerning issues of the publication. Sometimes we worked out these issues over the listserv, while other times we decided to bring the issues to the next class meeting, often setting a clear agenda and agreed-upon focus for class discussions.

In addition to achieving the production of our annual magazine and a new website, Juan and Jeff had designed a course that introduced students to the "real life" intricacies of corporate publishing. At the same time, they wanted students to think critically about the work they were doing in such a collaborative setting. Our assignments included evaluating e-magazines and hard-copy journals, then writing critiques that we shared with other class members. We were responsible for keeping a weekly "log" that demonstrated our efforts in and contributions to our individual teams as well as to the entire class. We
wrote a ten- to fifteen-page research paper in which we discussed the usefulness of technology in at least one aspect of collaborative publications. And we concluded the course with a complete hard-copy literary magazine, a web-based version of the Pacific Review, and a personal reflective essay.

It was during English 605 that, for the first time, I began thinking consciously about connections between computers and writing. Although I'd been interested in the usefulness of technology in writing, I had not yet considered the significant impact technology has in certain writing situations. By the end of the term, I realized that without specific technologies, our project would have failed. Most crucial to the success of Pacific Review, in both its hard-copy and web-based forms, I believed, was the class listserv. Although the publishing software--PageMaker, Adobe Photoshop, and Claris HomePage--were necessary tools for designing the publication, it was the listserv that materialized and logged connections among members of the class. The listserv, in fact, allowed us to accomplish a task that would have otherwise been impossible, given the amount of time we had in which to complete the project. It eliminated the need to arrange
face-to-face "committee" meetings—overcoming scheduling and distance barriers—and made it possible for students to share concerns in advance of classroom meetings.

In addition, it was the ability to exchange ideas in writing and the meanings that evolved from those exchanges that most influenced my current interest in computer and writing integrations. For example, when the class was constructing a mission statement for the website, students posted their sentences to the listserv and others "wrote into" those sentences, revising and editing, then reposting them for other students to revise, edit, and repost. We ended up with a collaboratively assembled mission statement, the meaning for which had been directly influenced by features of computer technology. I did not believe students would have offered so many suggestions had they revised face-to-face. I noticed that when we met face-to-face, many students were uncomfortable suggesting changes in someone else's writing; however, on our listserv, students were actually crossing out the words others had written and replacing them with their own. The ability for communication technology to have such a rapid and profound effect on written meaning led me to an investigation of interactive e-journals for my course.
research paper, and I spent many hours analyzing the methods e-journals employ to stimulate effective collaboration among writers; then, I designed a hypothetical, online discussion forum for our Pacific Review website.

By the time I completed English 605, I was beginning to make clear connections between computers and writing. While I reflected on the “Campus News” publishing experience during my term in 605, I could see distinctions between the ways technology was used in each of those situations and its impact on both. Clearly, students in 605 made use of computer technologies in ways much different than did the students who worked on “Campus News.” For “Campus News” staff, the technology was a tool necessary in the final step of the publication. For the Pacific Review, computer technology was an integrated aspect of the course. My Pacific Review discussion forum never came into actual existence; however, as the following parts of this chapter will illustrate, my research into the effects of integrating technology with facets of composition studies did.

Mentoring

It’s difficult to answer the questions how, when, or
why Bruce’s and my relationship became what it became—I’ll call it a mentor-intern relationship. Mentor, however, has been labeled with a variety of terms, including guide, supporter, advisor, teacher specialist, teacher coach, consultant, helping teacher, peer teacher, support teacher, encourager, and befriender (Odell 7). In any case, each of these terms defines characteristics specific to most people’s understanding of the term “mentor” itself. Intern, like mentor, has also been labeled a number of ways, including mentee, protégé, and student. But “intern” works as a term that describes part of Bruce’s and my relationship because it explains how we worked together during at least one specific point in time, so it’s the term I’ve adopted.

I met Bruce shortly after I transferred from MSJC to CSUSB. But when I say, “I met Bruce,” I mean exactly that. I was a student in, coincidentally, two of Bruce’s classes during my first term as a junior. And I got to know him much better than he got to know me, as is often the case when one instructor teaches a class of 20 students (so I intend no degradation of his character—or mind). However, I didn’t come to know Bruce as well as I knew other instructors by the end of that same term. In fact, while
carpooling home after our last final, a peer student asked, 
"so what do you think about him?" I responded, "I still 
don't know." But he gave me "A's."

Bruce's most confusing characteristic was his age. 
While the bit of hair on his head was completely white, 
indicating that he was probably over sixty, the smooth skin 
on his face and hands suggested he was relatively younger. 
In class, he didn't stand often. Rather, he kind of 
sprawled himself all over the table at the front of the 
room. He did sit in a chair, but he was so tall, his chair 
had to be positioned a few feet back from the table, just 
so he could fit his legs comfortably beneath. This 
position forced him to bend forward in effort to make hand 
or eye contact with his book. When he talked, he looked at 
either his pen or the table, which he often rubbed, tapped, 
or drew invisible pictures upon with his finger. He rarely 
rose to write on the board, because his arms were so long; 
all he had to do was reach behind himself and begin 
scrawling.

His pedagogy, like his place in the room, was somewhat 
traditional. In both classes, one a course in literary 
criticism and the other, composition, students read 
selected material, then came to class and discussed the
reading. We did a bit of peer editing in the writing course, but aside from that, there was little interaction amongst students: no group writing assignments, presentations, or workshops. This Socratic sort of environment was new to me. At the community college, my instructors practiced more progressive teaching strategies and encouraged more dialogue among students in their classrooms. "But," I thought, "welcome to the university, Kristine."

The following term, I found myself in a class I didn't care for, and after searching the schedule for an alternative, I ended up back in one of Bruce's courses. I was surprised, however, that when I approached Bruce about adding his class--already three weeks into the term--he remembered me. This third course, on Shakespeare's tragedies and romances, seemed a bit more student-centered than either of the two I'd taken with him the previous term. While students still read and then discussed their readings, Bruce more-or-less permitted students to decide the course of those discussions. However, it was during that term that, for a moment, I felt I finally knew what I thought about Bruce. He gave me an "A-" on my first writing assignment, and I didn't like him--progressive
pedagogy or none. But, as I said, that determination lasted only a moment; for, when I began scanning his comments, I learned he'd been quite fair about the grade, and I quickly returned to my previous state of ambivalence, choosing neither like nor dislike, and staked myself in that position for the remainder of the term.

Maybe I desperately needed an answer to the question my carpool buddy kept asking, because spring term of that same year, I enrolled in Bruce’s 17th Century Literature. Although I wasn't impressed with the grade I received in the Shakespeare course that winter, I did feel I was learning something about both writing and literature. Bruce’s comments on my essays cut right to the heart of my most challenging issues as a writer. It seemed that, no matter what I did to hide the troubled areas in my writing, he spotted them. I had never been so motivated, yet, at the same time, so damn frustrated. In addition to learning about myself as a writer, I was also beginning to appreciate Bruce’s teaching. Like his insight to my writing, he understood the muse for our texts. Few of my instructors had connected with literature at such a level, a connection I not only comprehended but, in addition, had come to fear.
Once, I took a course in women writers, where, after reading Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!*, I made a comment indicating that I could, on a certain level, sympathize with the character, Carl Linstrum. "Sympathize with him how?" the instructor replied, somewhat shocked. I tried explaining, at a very sophomoric stage in my education, that we all have certain tendencies, whether we act upon them in socially acceptable ways or not, and that these human tendencies are what allow us not only to create such vulgar characters but also to identify with them. Unfortunately, the instructor didn't agree. In fact, she so adamantly disagreed with my perspective, I began wondering whether something was wrong with me. But I believed it was, in fact, this capacity to identify with characters, that made me a writer.

So, when Bruce, in 17th Century Literature, asked the class how it was possible that Milton could have, so splendidly, created Satan, I kept my mouth shut. But other students didn't. They responded, "He combined the characteristics of all the evil people in the world!" "Yeah," said Bruce, "but how did he know the characteristics so well?" "He studied them," they replied; "he read about them, maybe even knew some..." "Really?"
Bruce parried, "but the character is so real." "Yeah," the class answered, feeling they had nailed the question. And everybody just sat quietly, including Bruce, who had returned to sprawling. After a few moments of silence, I raised my hand. Bruce signaled that it was okay if I spoke, so I explained, maybe a little more carefully, what I'd attempted to explain about Carl Linstrum. "No," Bruce replied. "So, what you're saying is that... No. Writers don't do that. How could Milton know that...?" It took a while before I realized he was being ironic, but I realized it. "Is that what writers do when they write?" he asked. "I do," I responded. "Hmmm," he replied. I finally felt that I'd connected with a writer. And I decided I liked Bruce alright.

From that point forward, I developed more confidence in my writing, and my essays improved dramatically during the following year. In addition, I allowed myself to explore the possibilities of Bruce's and my relationship. He, apparently, was comfortable with the idea as well, because it was not unusual for him to take time out of his schedule to comment on an essay I'd written for another class. When I began graduate school, I gladly accepted opportunities to take his courses, which led us into
further discussions about writing, now that I was obviously serious about my plans to teach composition. As a requirement for the program, I would have to complete a one-term internship in a composition classroom, so when Bruce asked if I would intern in 306, his upper-division writing course, I accepted.

From our conversations, Bruce had learned about my interest in and familiarity with computer technology. He, too, was interested, but he hadn't put much thought into methods for integrating computer technology with his teaching. He suggested I might want to combine my ideas about technology with the work we would be doing in 306. However, it was near the end of spring term when we began exploring such possibilities, and, with summer just around the corner, we didn't have much time for preparations before leaving campus for the year. The 306 class was offered in fall, which meant we would have to meet off-campus during the summer months. Unfortunately, because I lived one hour from campus in one direction, and Bruce lived 35 minutes the other, scheduling meetings became complicated. When I suggested we use a chat program in order to communicate online, Bruce seemed interested. I guided him through the process of downloading and
installing the program (which he probably laughs about today), and he set up an ICQ account. With the chat program in place, we were prepared to plan our course.

I began using other bits of technology in effort to communicate more precisely online with Bruce. For example, when Bruce attached the first draft of the syllabus to an email and sent it to me for review, I made my comments using the commenting feature in Microsoft Word. I had to explain what I’d done so that he could find my comments, but once he did, he was curious about the feature and began practicing with it himself. As we became more proficient with the technology, we began to wonder if we could integrate the Microsoft Word commenting feature with the course, and we asked several students in the 306 class to turn in their essays on floppy diskettes rather than hard-copy. Bruce and I continued relying on technology to communicate throughout the term. Students turned in two copies of their essays—one for me, and one for Bruce. Once we both made our comments on the essays, we emailed the comments to each other for comparison. Because we had ICQ, we then discussed our comments while we were reading them.

Introducing technology to the relationship took our internship to a new level. Our ability to communicate at
various times throughout the day (and often, night), led us into conversations that were most often related to academia but sometimes not. It was difficult, when we logged on to ICQ for a chat, not to ask questions like, "how are you?" or "what have you been doing today?" We were touching on more personal aspects of each other's lives and, hence, learning who each other was. This new dimension to the relationship permitted our greater insight to reasons behind some of the questions or concerns we had about the course. For example, if Bruce suggested that I lead a class discussion, and I said, "no, I don't want to lead that discussion," he might respond with, "well, that's because you..." As a result, I was learning, also, about myself. While our conversations almost always served an academic purpose, sometimes the academic issues we dealt with had nothing to do with the 306 class. I was learning about departmental issues, administration policies, teaching literature courses, and Ph.D. programs.

In addition to serving our collaborative needs in the internship, we were using technology to communicate about my writing. Often, when I wrote an essay for a graduate class, I attached that essay to an email and sent it to Bruce for comments. Soon, we had developed a commenting
system that rarely left one or the other of us confused. Bruce became my editor as well as my intern advisor. His ability to write into my text, as opposed to along the margins or at the end, encouraged him to make his comments specific to that area of my writing and helped me to clearly see the connection between his suggestions and my text. In the following example from my thesis proposal, the comments might appear invasive (a controversial concept in composition studies); however, because the comments are embedded in the text, they are almost seamless with my own writing. In addition, by embedding the comments in the existing text, Bruce was forced to write with me, only making me sound more like myself, as he tried to keep the voice, tone, and rhythm consistent with my own:

I can find evidence of this reciprocal effect when I look at what's happened in my own writing process. [to me as a writer] I will investigate and evaluate that correlation more completely when I talk about myself and technology in my thesis. [I don't think you need this sentence] What's important is that the context for my meta-analysis is a number of incidences, large and small, in which technology contributed to the [different] rhetorical situation[s] [in which I found myself the writer]. My exploration of these incidences will include the personal analysis of my essays when I used technology as
both the medium and the subject of my focus in my [own] writing. I will explore my professional work in the online tutoring project I began with Carol Haviland and Richard Colby last Fall, describing some of the conflicts in our Writing Center that led to as many successes as they did frustrations. Examining (revisiting?) my work in the internship I did with Bruce Golden will contribute largely to my [a] discussion on mentor relationships in Composition and how they are reshaped with the integration of technology. From a more student-centered perspective, I will reflect on issues of literacy and technology by drawing primarily from Jeff Galin's] Computers and Writing course I took with Jeff Galin, but also from courses in which discussions on technology were included as at least a portion of the course outline.

Bruce became a part of my writing process. Rather than merely critiquing my work, or "fixing" my work, or making suggestions for my work, he became part of my work. Over the past two years, Bruce has continued this practice with students in his classes. After visiting two of those classes, I learned that his students' responses are similar to my own: "no, this does not feel invasive, and yes, I feel as if this clearly indicates the instructor's involvement in my writing process; it makes me more aware of what I do when I write." Possibly, this technology
affects how students perceive an instructor’s comments. Comments hand-written between lines, in margins, and at the ends of students’ texts look different than the text itself. Symbolically, these differences might model the traditional, hierarchical student-teacher relationships that trouble many of today’s composition theorists. Embedded comments, on the other hand, situate both the student’s and instructor’s writing in the same text, making the activity appear more collaborative than instructive, the difference between writing over a student’s essay and writing with it.

My curiosity about what happened once Bruce and I integrated technology with our relationship is what led to my current research in mentoring relationships. When I looked about the department, I didn’t see relationships between other instructors and students that were similar to the one Bruce and I had established. Students, of course, had their favorite instructors, usually those under whom they’d completed their internships. But the relationships, while they seemed to benefit students, didn’t have the breadth of Bruce’s and mine.

Mentoring had its origin in Homer’s Odyssey when Mentor was “immortalized [in the Goddess, Minerva] as the
guide and counselor who groomed [Odysseus' son, Telemachus] for leadership" (Luna and Cullen 4). Today, however, mentoring is more often simply the advice a respected, experienced person provides to someone less experienced—especially in a specific location—who can learn from and profit from the mentor's own experience (Heller and Sindelar 7). The difference between the characteristics of today's mentoring relationships and the relationship described in Homer's Odyssey can be seen in the language of the above quotation and paraphrase. While guiding, counseling, and grooming would necessitate advice, advice does not require guiding, counseling, and grooming. Historically, we've seen these guides, counselors, and groomers in the non-fiction examples of Socrates and Plato as well as Freud and Jung. But in modern scenarios, we see them most often in fabrications: Batman and Robin in the super-hero comics and Zazu and Simba in Disney's The Lion King. Kram, in "Mentoring in the Workplace," explains that there are two primary functions in such mentoring relationships: career functions (including sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure, and challenging work) and psychosocial functions (including role modeling, counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and
friendship) (162) -- each of which is evidenced in the relationships listed above. C. B. Derr describes these more abstract, interpersonal relationships as "significant mentoring" (144-165). "Typically," according to Gehrke, "such a relationship is viewed as forming slowly over time, being complex and emotionally intense, and being of incalculable value" (qtd. in Odell 8).

There may be several reasons for the lack of "significant mentorships" in modern American societies. However, the academic culture has not lost sight of the benefits to such relationships. In order to establish mentoring relationships between new teachers and experienced teachers, schools, community colleges, colleges, and universities have begun implementing programs in which new or aspiring teachers are paired up with experienced faculty members, usually for a year or, sometimes, as in the requirement at CSUSB, for a single-term internship. But according to Odell, "while individuals do deliberately search for someone to guide them, mentors and protégés more often happen upon one another in unplanned ways" (8). In addition, if we reconsider the relationship between Minerva and Telemachus, we remember that Minerva's responsibility required a
substantial amount of time and energy. She was not only advising Telemachus on the logistics of fighting for his father's freedom; she was also counseling him about interpersonal relationships, teaching him the customs of the various lands and seas that he traveled, and encouraging him by accepting and confirming the decisions he made while on his journey.

This "direct transposition of significant mentoring characteristics to the new teacher - mentor teacher relationship," states Odell, "is difficult to achieve in the school setting" (10). He suggests that it can best be accomplished through informal one-on-one meetings outside of the teaching day and, perhaps, somewhere off the school grounds where "a supportive level of comfort can be more readily achieved by both mentor and new teacher" (15-16). Unfortunately, with the increase in student body, limited numbers of full-time faculty, heavy teaching loads, and the substantial number of non-traditional students who are either raising families or working full-time jobs in addition to attending classes, scheduling time for meetings off campus is not a small challenge, as was the circumstance when Bruce and I began planning our 306 course. Certainly, we could have established at least a
"sort" of mentoring relationship, despite our scheduling problems. Kram and Isabella call these mentoring alternatives "peer relationships": information peers, collegial peers, and special peers (119). While these relationships are beneficial to both mentors and protégés, "In the literature, mentors are found to be significant when they impact the protégé comprehensively and multidimensionally, that is across personal and professional life dimensions (e.g., Hardcastle 1988)" (Odell 17). In addition, research in psychology has concluded that more extensive mentoring is valuable to both the mentor and protégé (e.g., Erikson 1963, Levinson et al. 1978, and Kram 1986). However, this extensive sort of mentoring is difficult to accomplish using one of the above peer structures.

Advances in internet and computer technology can lead to new mentoring constructs that more accurately simulate those found in historical and, more recently, fabricated mentoring relationships, like Zazu’s and Simba’s. And, in fact, several academies and organizations have already begun experimenting with the usefulness of the internet in creating these relationships between experts and novices. The Electronic Emissary Project, which sets up "curriculum-
based electronic exchanges among experts, students, and teachers," has been in operation since 1993 and has effectively united technology with collaborative learning (Sanchez and Harris). In one of their more unusual matches, the Emissary paired Jannah Piasetsky, a ten-year-old student working on an Arthurian extracurricular project and living in Connecticut, with Dr. Sigmund Eisner, an emeritus English professor at the University of Arizona. The two corresponded by email on a particular topic that was of interest to both; but in addition to learning about the topic, both participants expressed their satisfaction in the relationship they had established. Jannah was particularly pleased with the speed at which she was able to receive comments on her work:

I liked how quickly Dr. Eisner responded to my questions and gave me so much information about the characters in the story I was reading. Email was often quicker for me than getting back my teacher's comments on my reports in the classroom (6).

In addition, Jannah's confidence in her thinking and writing skills was encouraged through the exchange:

I liked it when Dr. Eisner complimented me on my vocabulary or on the questions I was asking. I believe that he really meant it and I felt that he was listening to me and taking his work
Dr. Eisner was pleased with the opportunity to re-explore his interest in Arthurian Studies, but he was most impressed with the friendship that resulted in the exchange:

There were two [benefits] I can think of right now. The first, and by far the most important was a friendly relationship with a lively, interesting, and interested ten-year-old (6).

Jannah’s parents, however, provide the greatest insight to the comprehensiveness and multidementionality of the relationship in their reflection:

We learned how valuable it is to a developing mind to have a mentor who: can gauge the student’s level of understanding and address and stimulate thinking commensurate with intellectual readiness; while, separately, assessing the student’s emotional needs and providing (age) appropriate forms and frequency of support and encouragement (7).

Due to lack of proximity, Jannah and Dr. Eisner would never have established such depth in this important relationship without computer technology. While Jannah’s questions and essays could have been post marked and slow-mailed to the professor, as Jannah stated, it was the immediacy in emailing that she so appreciated.
have in face-to-face conversation. As a result, I explored the topics of our conversations in more depth and with greater sincerity. When Bruce and I arrived at a problem we felt we could better resolve together in person, we scheduled face-to-face meetings, which, inevitably, set a clear and focused agenda necessary in the lives of two very busy individuals.

Jannah's and Dr. Eisner's correspondence began in 1995. One year later, when Sanchez and Harris conducted their research on the Electronic Emissary Project, their mentoring relationship was still in operation. Such findings are complimentary to an integration of technology with composition studies when we consider that, not only can aspiring--and busy--students greatly benefit from long-term relationships with teacher-mentors in the field, but also that the medium itself is conducive to numerous objectives in composition studies. Much of composition research, for example, has capitalized on the collaborative learning that takes place between experienced instructors and inexperienced students, claiming that instructors learn about their own pedagogies, philosophies, and writing practices when they engage in their students' work. As Bruce was attempting, regularly, to communicate with me in
a writing medium, there were several occasions during which I had to ask him to clarify himself, pressing him to look more critically at his own writing strategies. In addition, as I mentioned earlier, Bruce was interested in the usefulness of computer technology in composition studies but had not thought seriously about ways for integrating that technology with his practice. Recently, however, his proposal for a presentation at Computers and Writing 2000 was accepted, and this May he will discuss his most current experiences teaching with technology in his composition courses.

Most interesting about using computer technology in composition study's mentor-intern relationships, I believe, is the value in the space. Many students enter the field of composition because they want to learn about their own writing as well as learn about others' writing processes. Situating mentor-intern relationships in a medium that encourages communication in writing in addition to offering the features of technology that are most employed in today's writing processes, will, quite likely, create more thoughtful, comprehensive writers. While distance is one matter for which technology bridges a gap, the medium also becomes a space where the opportunity to make new meaning,
in ways face-to-face exchanges and hardcopy drafts don't permit, exists.

Tutoring

During the Fall quarter of my second year in the Master's program at CSUSB, I began my work as a tutor in our campus writing center. At the same time, I was taking a course called "Issues in Tutoring," in which I was studying writing center theories and learning about the relationships between tutors and students, students and institutions, and institutions and writing centers. Simultaneously, I was enrolled in a class called "Computers and Writing," in which I was studying the impact of technology on literacy and writing, as well as its impact on teaching literacy and writing in the modern academy. For both courses, I needed to develop and complete a project with respect to the focus of each class. After meeting with my instructors, I worked out a plan to satisfy the requirements of both classes in a single project. I would study theories of both technology and writing centers in order to determine where those theories intersected. From that point of intersection, I would develop a proposal for an online writing center at CSUSB, based on the possibility that the intersection of theories could provide
some foundation for a theoretically grounded cyber-tutorial-space.

I never wrote the proposal, only because it turned out we didn't need one in order to offer online tutoring in our writing center. However, I did write an essay in which I examined the theories and made suggestions for ways we could successfully integrate technology with writing center work. This was my first attempt at a conscious integration, and, as you will see in the following excerpt from my essay, I was still confusing supplementation with integration.

It's no longer enough to know how to read, write, and do arithmetic. Computer technology is modifying our language, the way we think about what we read, and the mediums in which we write. Since part of our responsibility in working with writers is to help them learn a cultural literacy, computer-based tutoring can help facilitate the teaching of that literacy for students whose ways of writing, reading, and thinking are undergoing a transformation (Costanzo 11). But whether technology can effectively substitute for the advantages of face to face tutoring sessions at CSUSB depends entirely on how those benefits are visualized with respect to writing center theories. The culmination of writing center and computers and writing theories will have to create a CSUSB online writing center that functions for the
collaborative efforts of both the tutor and the writer.

Although my effort to identify the intersecting points of each theory was a worthy one, what I suggested we accomplish was not a true integration. Instead of considering ways we might create a new space for new kinds of tutoring, I was attempting to design a site that would substitute for the face-to-face sessions that already existed. Now, one-and-a-half years later, I can see this, which is precisely why I suggested in Part 1 of this chapter that we consider our early attempts to integrate technology with facets of composition studies "necessary exercises for developmental growth." Again, I'm not suggesting that we don't attempt some integrations; after all, it's through this kind of practice that, I think, we learn--hence, the phrase "necessary exercises." However, I do suggest that we not attempt more serious integrations (like the one I will discuss in Part 4 of this chapter) until we have experienced such activities as the online tutoring project I'm going to write about now.

I began the online project hoping to create a space where the writing center might offer tutoring for CSUSB students who couldn't make writing center hours. Carol
Haviland, our writing center coordinator, cheerfully supported the idea and offered to let me use the project in order to meet the research requirement in the "Issues in Tutoring" class that I was taking—and she was teaching—that term. Because I wanted the project to succeed as an integration, I didn’t offer online services right away. Rather, I sought Jeff Galin, who was teaching the "Computers and Writing" course, which I was also taking that term, and asked him if I could use the project to fulfill the research requirement in his class as well. Although I’d been interested in the relationship between computers and writing for several years, I didn’t have any experience creating integrations. I knew what they felt like, and I knew they could work, but I also knew they could be problematic. So, I decided to spend the remainder of that Fall term reading theory and studying the integrations other university writing centers had accomplished.

A few weeks following my discussions with Carol and Jeff, Carol approached me with an email from Jim Radomski, an instructor at CSUSB’s Coachella Valley campus. Jim was inquiring about tutoring services for students who were struggling with their essay assignments in his upper-
division class. Unfortunately, CSUSB has been unable to fund a writing tutor on its satellite campus, some eighty-plus miles south-east of the main campus, so students who desire help on their essays have had to either make the drive into San Bernardino or seek assistance elsewhere. Carol asked if I thought it was possible to offer tutoring online for the students in Jim's class, and I immediately kicked the project into high gear.

I had intended, originally, to use ICQ for my online tutoring sessions because I wanted to simulate the synchronous experience of a face-to-face session; however, with only a few weeks left in the term and not enough time to teach the application, I abandoned the chatware in favor of email exchanges and resolved to conduct the tutoring sessions asynchronously. The week following Jim's plea for help, I visited his class and explained the process for attaching an essay to email. But during the time between Jim's plea and the trip I made to Coachella Valley, Carol and I gave considerable thought to the situation and decided that CVC might be the place to begin seriously developing an online link for the writing center. So, after visiting Jim's students, I met with administrators who were most likely to assist me with the project. By the
end of the day, I was conversing with the Coordinator of Technology, Shohreh Esfandiari, and the Coordinator of Information Resources, Bonnie Butterfield. While Bonnie was busy downloading and installing ICQ, Shohreh was demonstrating their video conferencing program. Jim Daniels, Director of Student Affairs, was pricing a video camera and software for the computer that CVC had decided to put in our writing center at the end of that month. Although we would have to continue the email exchanges for the remainder of fall term, come winter we would offer online tutoring via NetMeeting and a video camera that permitted face-to-face sessions with students at CVC.

Due to a number of technological problems, in the year-and-a-half since I made that trip to the desert, I’ve tutored one student using NetMeeting. However, I’ve continued the email exchanges in addition to considering the usefulness of online tutoring. I can’t say the project has been a huge success; although, several of the students who’ve received help online might disagree with me, and I am pleased to have been of service to those students. But what has been particularly interesting about this experience is not the hoop-jumping I’ve had to do in effort to make the project work (or not); rather, it’s the
progression of changes in how and why I choose to communicate with writers online. Moreover, my work as an online tutor is what ultimately clarified the distinctions between using technology to supplement an already existing practice and integrating technology in order to create valuable, new spaces for writing.

Our writing center policy is that tutors "write with students, never for them." Tutors most quickly come to understand what the policy means by "never for them." In their efforts to avoid such a role in the writing process, tutors often have students hold the writing utensil during a session. If a tutor recommends a particular change in the student's draft, the tutor will encourage the student to make the changes in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper, rather than making them him or herself. Furthermore, tutors encourage students to read their texts aloud, rather than reading the texts silently themselves. One objective for these practices and the policy that helps enforce them is that students will retain ownership of their essays, for both the most obvious academic reasons--concerns about plagiarism and laziness--and the theoretical--concerns about agency and intellectual property.
The portion of the policy stating that we write "with" students is not as simple for either the students or the tutors to understand. Actually, this part of the policy can be interpreted as support for tutors holding a writing utensil during the tutoring conference, in addition to doing some of the writing in students' margins or on a separate sheet of paper. The idea that we write with students is espoused with notions of collaboration and interactive writing, which promptly evolved during the early research conducted by social constructionists. Writing, most postmodern theorists will assert, is a collaborative, dialogical, social act. We never write alone or as individuals. Rather, we are constantly informed by our cultural histories, personal pasts, and our perceptions of audience. In essence, the theory that we write in these dialogical situations lends support to collaborative acts of writing as more natural ways for making meaning. Therefore, we write "with" students in our writing center.

Still, tutors must constantly speculate about the points at which writing with students becomes writing for them. Often, these questions are answered on an individual basis, depending on the tutor's assessment of a particular
student. Moreover, because everybody has diverse experiences in writing situations, each tutor may interpret differently the point at which writing with a student becomes writing for the student. But interpreting the policy is further complicated. Along with the obvious and theoretical reasons for the policy are the pedagogical ones. Our job as writing center tutors is not to "teach" students how to write essays. The university has paid certain instructors—and students have paid the university—with the assumption that they will teach college students how to write college essays. Tutors work from an interesting and complicated space located somewhere between instructors, students, and the institution. Our responses to students' essays differ from the responses instructors give. We do not assess a student's work in the same ways an instructor might. We do not tell students "how" to write their essays. We often make suggestions for revision in the context of an instructor's comments; however, we can never be certain that our suggestions are in tune with the instructor's objectives for the assignment, and so we are extraordinarily careful about the techniques we employ while we are writing with our students. While an instructor may strike through a student's words or phrases
in an essay, a tutor will most likely ask the question, “why did you choose this word?” Consequently, we become a different sort of audience for students, spring-boards of a kind, as we engage them in dialogue about their work.

I took this policy seriously for a number of reasons. First, and as I mentioned in chapter, I am partial to social-construction theory. I do believe that we write in dialogical situations, so engaging with students in their writing processes was an activity that I not only felt I should practice because of policy, but also one that I was quite comfortable practicing. Furthermore, I believed that students learned differently in the writing center than they did in their classrooms. The relationship between tutors and students differs from the relationship between instructors and students. I liked that I wasn’t perceived as the one with the power—the grade-giver, the assessor, the storehouse with all the right answers. Students were comfortable discussing their work in these settings because they weren’t so out of sorts in the hierarchy. I loved, especially, working with the students who, after sitting at my table, proceeded to slide their documents toward me and hand me their pencils. It was during beloved moments like these that I worked eagerly to convince students of the
power they had as writers and that they should take pride
in the new meanings they made in those essays.

For the above reasons, my greatest concern about
creating an online space for tutoring was how I might
transfer these facets of the tutoring session to a location
that didn’t permit them. When a student’s document was
positioned in my word processor, I would hold the writing
utensil, I would read the text to myself, and it would be
impossible for me to ask questions because the writer
wasn’t present to answer. I could literally “recreate” a
student’s text, its organization, its purpose, its meaning,
positioning myself with way more power than I was
comfortable with in the relationship. Moreover, I would
have to write comments about the student’s essay, much like
an instructor, so I worried about leaving that space
between instructor, student, and institution.

Once I realized that tutoring online introduced these
new complications in the tutoring process, I was forced to
look outside writing center theory in order to support the
decisions I made about how to conduct an online session—
specifically, I was reading computers and writing theory.
But in considering the works of theorists such as Ellen
Barton, Patricia Sullivan, and Janis Forman, I discovered
that research in both writing center and computers and writing theory clearly intersected at the point of collaborative writing. In order to avoid taking a position of authority in the online relationship, I had to respond to the writer’s work “using” the technology as a collaborating tool. What ultimately became most important to me during online tutoring sessions was not whether I actually altered the writer’s text, but rather, how I altered it. As a social constructionist, I knew that writing was a collaborative activity and that texts were socially constructed. As a tutor, I can’t help but acknowledge the collaborative aspects of writing, as, no matter how the tutoring session is handled, the writer most often walks away with a collaboratively altered text. But research on collaboration in various facets of the field has also demonstrated that, depending on the site for text production, the purpose of the collaboration, and the medium for writing, the collaborative act changes. What seems to be a useful form of collaboration in one context may not be useful in another.

When I introduced computer technology to my tutoring sessions, I changed the context for the tutoring and, as a result, the collaborative act of tutoring writers had to
change as well. Janis Foreman, in "Computing and Collaborative Writing," asks, "does the introduction of technology into the collaborative writing process make reading and writing more important than talking and listening currently are in collaborative composing?" (74). She doesn't answer the question; however, in order for online tutoring to work, the answer must be "yes." I realized that, when I introduced online tutoring, I had continued viewing talking and listening as more important than reading and writing and, hence, continued trying to replicate the face-to-face tutoring session in the online session. There was no possibility of my making the project work.

Such a discovery led me to rethink other concepts of the tutoring session. If this introduction of technology made reading and writing more important than talking and listening, it was possible that having the writer hold the writing utensil, asking questions with the intention of begging an on-the-spot answer, and encouraging the writer to read the text "to" me, also were less important than other aspects of the technology-based session. My concern about tutoring online shifted from worrying about how I could replicate the face-to-face work I did as a tutor, to
how I could best use features of technology specific to online tutoring. In addition, if having the writer hold the writing utensil, asking questions of the writer, and encouraging the writer to read his or her draft to me are what contribute to shaping the power structures in face-to-face tutoring relationships, then power in the online relationship must be shaped by something else.

As I said, what seemed most important in my communication with writers was that I be aware of "how" I said whatever I said in response to their writing. In my earliest online sessions, I made my comments in the body of an email, numbering paragraphs and sentences so that I could talk about the writing without invading the student's text (unlike the commenting Bruce was doing on my own essays). However, I found this process tedious and difficult to make precise. In addition, when I went back to review my comments on essays, I was overwhelmed with the time involved in connecting my comments with the sections of the essay they were addressing. In the following example, you will see that, while lengthy conversation and explanations might be useful in a face-to-face tutorial, emulating the strategy in online space, no matter how clear one makes the writing, is impossible.
Maricela: Here are my thoughts concerning your essay:

I'm pretty sure I understand what you are saying most of the time, but you are forcing me, as a reader, to work too hard to understand in some places. Your "thinking" is wonderful, but what you actually write is sometimes too general. I urge you to be more confident in your writing. Say it how it is. For example, consider the difference between your first sentence and this one:

"Someone told me one time that the mind is a world filled with excitements, wonders, wishes, and fears."

I would also like to suggest that you read your paper very carefully. In several places, you make some really big leaps. For example: when talking about feelings in your first three sentences, you say that an owner blocks excitements, wonders, wishes, and fears (which I might argue are not all feelings), and that when the owner decides not to block them any more, something takes away the owner's identity. I think you may be leaving out some information that would support your making such a leap in ideas.

It's not clear to me, when I finish reading your first paragraph, what issues your essay is going to address. I see as I read on that you discuss Anne Frank's need for a friend. You support your assertion with a quote from her diary, which is good; however, in the last sentence of paragraph 2, you introduce the idea that she had an imaginary friend, but you don't explain that fact or make any real connections
between it and the rest of the paragraph. You could tighten up that paragraph by making your sentences more specific and determined, then providing a clear transition for the introduction of her imaginary friend. Another thing you might consider is introducing the imaginary friend earlier in the paragraph, so that the quote supports your argument that she only had an imaginary friend because she desperately needed someone.

In your third paragraph, you discuss the "tone" in Anne Frank's writing, asserting that she was angry. Then you go on to justify her anger. But the writing throughout this paragraph makes your ideas a little vague. For example: near the end of the paragraph, you write, "it is...this is...it is...it is..." I'm not sure exactly what "it" is. See if you can be a little more specific. "It" is a pronoun, which is meant to replace a noun. But we need to know what noun you are replacing.

You introduce paragraph 4 with the idea that the reader of Anne Frank's diary can perceive the author's thoughts. However, the paragraph doesn't go on to discuss either the reader or the author's thoughts. Think, maybe, about how you say what you are saying in that paragraph and whether it is important to your analysis. You seem to want to talk about the family and the family's values. I think this is a great idea. But you need to have some purpose for discussing it. You compare the family's values to the values of modern-day families, stating that they are different. How are they different, and how might that difference help your
analysis of the diary?

In your last paragraph, you mention that the reader can sense some censuring on Anne’s part as the writer. You might need to offer some support here. Can you find a quote from the diary that demonstrates her sort of censuring? You mention in your introduction that writing to an imaginary friend is good because we aren’t criticized or judged or laughed at. You might tie that idea into your last paragraph as well, restating why Anne Frank chose to write to this friend.

Good luck as you work on your revision. Remember to read your paper carefully to yourself, sentence by sentence, before you are done. It’s important that you think about whether or not your readers are going to understand exactly the point you are trying to make.

-Kristine

Because of the time involved in pointing to each aspect of the essay I wanted to address, it wasn’t long before I shifted my comments into the students’ essays, where I felt there was a much clearer context for my writing. My decision to integrate my comments with students’ texts was, I will admit, partly influenced by my responses to the comments Bruce made in my own essays. Therefore, I did generalize about my own experiences during
my efforts to find effective modes for communication in the online space. Still, I was particularly careful about the language I used in a session. Much like the might’s, maybe’s, and could’s, that you see in the above example, the following example, an explanation of the process I used to make my comments in one student’s essay, demonstrates my continued concern with tone in what I was encouraging the student to perceive as a conversation in the essay.

Hi, Doris. Okay. Let me explain how I've done this, because it might seem very invasive, and I don't want you to be offended by my "bold" attempts to help. I've made a number of comments in your essay. My comments are all bold-faced, so you will know when I am talking to you [notice that I did not say "addressing you"]. Keep in mind that everything I have suggested is merely that—a suggestion. I think you have a very good essay here.

If I thought that a word wasn't doing quite what you wanted it to do, I crossed it out; and if I could, I made a suggestion following that crossed out word. I realize that you may have some better ideas, though, and that sometimes, I may be misunderstanding you. Don't mistake the crossed-out words as an attempt to change your document. You still have the original document on your hard drive, and you can use whatever I've offered that you think will help and then toss whatever you think won't. Where you see bold question marks in this copy of your draft, I am confused about your use of
the terms that precede those question marks. Read those sentences carefully, and ask yourself what, exactly, you want your reader to understand by what you've written. Get back with me if you have any questions; or, if you would like for me to take another look at your draft before you turn it in, send it to me again by email. I hope this was helpful.

-Kristine

Gradually, I learned new strategies for communicating with writers in their documents, and eventually I eliminated lengthy explanations like the one above. Still, my objective continued to be maintaining the collaborative feel of a tutoring activity instead of sounding to the student like simply another instructor telling him or her what works and what doesn't. One of the most effective means for establishing this role in the face-to-face session is by asking students questions and encouraging them to solve problems in their writing by thinking through the answers to those questions. However, when the writer isn't present, that sort of dialogue isn't possible. In order to continue a collaborative and conversational tone in the session, then, I wrote the questions I wanted to ask. But in addition to asking my questions, I offered suggestions for why the student might have made a
particular choice:

We are all important people and we believe is right, because if you never speak you are just letting ever one either control you or walk all over you. [I'm not seeing the connection between the two ideas you present in this sentence. You say that "we are important people...because if we never speak...?" How does never speaking make us important? Do you mean that we are important, so we should communicate our ideas to other people, and that, if we don't, we are just allowing others to control us and take advantage of us? Maybe you are suggesting that because we are important our ideas, also, are important and that if we take our own ideas seriously, other people will as well. What else might be going on in this sentence?]

While the medium doesn't allow the student to answer my question, as in a real-time dialogue, my intention as the student's tutor was to leave her feeling as though we had made meaning in the exchange. In addition, I took advantage of an opportunity to connect with the student in ways her instructor might not have time for during a grading session. It's possible that one problem this student has as a writer is that she doesn't feel confident expressing her own ideas. Hopefully, my thoughtful response to her sentence will encourage her to believe in her own ideas, as, coincidentally, her sentence seems to be
suggesting is so important.

Through this process of learning to comment on students’ work in ways not similar to the discussions we have in face-to-face sessions, but mindful of a common objective (to write with students, never for them), I also began a process of reimagining what it means to integrate technology with an existing practice. In addition, conscious reflection on my previous experiences with integration became a core element of that process, even if I had to generalize about those experiences. I needed to learn, and learning, says John Dewey, is “a continuous process of reflecting on action” (qtd. in Zeni 79). While my reflections helped me identify several ways technology might create spaces for collaboration, they also encouraged me to shift my thinking from finding ways to use existing technologies to finding technologies that complement existing situations.

As I considered Bruce’s and my unintentional integration, as well as the usefulness of specific technologies in my Pacific Review class, I realized those successful integrations were largely the result of implementing technologies that seemed most useful under current circumstances. In both of these instances, we
determined the specific uses for technology in light of larger objectives: not to create a space identical to one that already exists, but to create a space in which we could communicate effectively and with purpose.

Moreover, the goal of these integrations meant reimagining theory. For example: I mentioned in Part 2 that Bruce's embedded comments might appear invasive in my text, and that much of composition theory argues against such invasive acts. However, when we integrate a new feature with existing practices, we also need to revisit principles in composition theory. What does it mean to "invade" somebody's text? While we can attempt to invade any situation, the ultimate assessment of our act is determined by someone else's interpretations of the action. So, while words may have denotative meanings, language is defined by context. And when we change the context, we need to re-examine the language in the theory. Ultimately, successful integrations of technology with existing rhetorical situations are as much a mentality as they are an act. Therefore, writing with students, never for them, is a policy that, similar to the ways it is re-imagined by every tutor in every collaborative activity, should also be re-imagined in situations including computer technology.
Chapter 2, Part 4 of this thesis has been the most difficult piece of writing I've attempted since the introduction. What you are reading now is a version of the seventh draft, which is somewhat different from the sixth, which is substantially different from the fifth, which in turn differs greatly from the first, the second, the third, and the fourth. The difficulty has confused me, since the organization of my autoethnography has been rather simple up to this point: the first part of each section is a narrative, and the last part of each section is an analysis of that narrative. However, while I have plenty of material with which to analyze the reasons I was forced to revise my pedagogy when I attempted integrating technology with my teaching, narrating the experience through which those changes took place has presented me with a new challenge. As writing instructors, we (hopefully) revise our pedagogies repeatedly, whether those revisions are a result of our reading new composition theory, teaching a higher- or lower-level composition course, discussions with other faculty, or simply identifying characteristics specific to a particular classroom composition. So, writing about changes in my own pedagogy as though they are
somehow profound and ground-breaking moves in composition studies would not only be a primary example of scholarly self-absorption, but it also feels anticlimactic.

In addition to struggling with the usefulness of Chapter 2, Part 4, I'm learning how difficult it is to identify the specific points at which my pedagogy changed when I integrated technology with my teaching. For example, when I moved my teaching into a computer-facilitated classroom, I gained more physical space in which to organize class activities; however, explaining what happened to me as a teacher once I acquired that space is complicated. I can discuss the activities I re-designed in order to make use of the space, but I don't know how to describe the cognitive, emotional, and physiological realizations that inspired the deliberate changes I made in my teaching pedagogy. Possibly, my quandary results from the fact that I experienced these changes only recently and am too soon pushing myself into a reflection and analysis of the event. Unfortunately, as I'm considering this possibility, I'm also remembering how often I've assigned my students a reflective essay on a recently completed course activity. However, I have set myself up to write this piece, and, even though I may learn only about myself
and/or my students, I'm going to complete the assignment.

During my lengthy career as a composition instructor (four terms, so far), I have taught from the philosophy that we write into existing rhetorical situations and that, through our practice making meaning in these situations, we learn to make meaning in new rhetorical situations. In order to make significant meaning, however, we must be able to identify the situations we write into and become members of—or at least familiar with the participants in—the communities to which we will contribute our ideas. Ultimately, we should learn to extend our meaning-making processes from one rhetorical situation to another. I suppose that latter statement is why I ask my students to write reflective essays. In addition, it is the reason for my autoethnography. As I was attempting to make meaning out of composition theory, I had to reflect on the meanings I had made in my own writing experiences. As I was learning to make meaning in the computers and writing community, I had to reflect on what I'd learned about composition. And as I was attempting to integrate computer technology with my teaching, I had to reflect on the meanings I'd made while studying computers and writing theory. Now, as I wish to make meaning out of my teaching
experiences with technology, I have to reflect upon my teaching. It's quite likely that is what provokes my difficulties writing this particular piece of the thesis.

In light of my research into computers and writing, I felt compelled to teach in a rhetorical situation that included computer technology. In fact, after teaching three composition courses, I had determined that NOT teaching in a situation that included computer technology was a disservice to my students. While, for the most part, I'd taught successfully without integrating technology with my teaching objectives, I felt that I was not preparing my students for writing in, what Duin and Hansen call, "a real-world situation" (89), contexts in which students would find themselves making meaning for reasons they deemed sincere. For communicative purposes, people are depending more and more on features of computer technology; and not asking my students to integrate those features with their research and writing processes left them inexperienced and unprepared writers. While, theoretically, I believed this was true, I also believed that if I was not wary about the integration, such a radical change in pedagogy could also be harmful. However, having spent several years as a writer, a student, and a
tutor, considering seriously the complications involved in technology integrations, I wanted to trust my ability to make this radical change. I scheduled my upcoming, Winter 2000 composition course in the department's computer classroom.

It was at this point in my short career as a composition instructor that I made my first meaningful and practical change in pedagogy. Whereas previously I had relied upon the organization of my course textbook and the examples set by my own instructors to guide me through the process of teaching writing, I now had to create my own course. I wanted to teach a class in which the course projects would determine the materials to be integrated, rather than the other way around. In addition, if my students were going to write in "real" rhetorical situations, I needed to build a set for interaction and collaboration. However, facilitator of interactive learning was not a role I had experienced. Granted, I had participated in interactive learning when I took the Pacific Review class, but that was only one experience, and it was darkly overshadowed by my experiences in the seventy-or-so other conventional courses I'd taken. Only in that single class had two instructors modeled the sort
of pedagogy necessary for interactive learning. And, yes, I'd read a substantial amount of social-construction theory that explained the usefulness and methods of initiating collaborative work in composition classrooms, but there is a tremendous gap between reading theory and implementing theory. Of course, I had practiced with technology in several of my own writing situations: my writing process, my internship, and online tutoring; but I also knew that, as valuable as my experiences were, the significance of their outcomes was filtered through my own personal interpretations and biases. However, and despite these concerns, I wanted to provide my students with a real writing context in which to learn strategies for making meaning, and I was responsible for determining how--and the order in which--those strategies would be presented.

As I was prepping the course in this way, I found that several other facets of my pedagogy were changing as well. The textbook I'd used in my previous courses wouldn't work in the technology-based course, nor would the previous writing assignments prepare my students for their collaborative work with each other. In the past, I required only one internet resource in students' formal research papers; however, one objective for this new class
was to give students more freedom to experiment with research strategies, so I had to assume that with regular access to the internet, my students would rely most heavily upon the information they could locate in that medium. For that reason, I added a substantial amount of information to my unit on evaluating the credibility and usefulness of website materials. In addition, although I had always encouraged collaborative work in my composition courses, it was now fundamental to my students' success. What this new condition meant was that I would have to teach the strategies for collaboration, as well as model the act myself.

Fortunately, I would not struggle with finding opportunities to model collaboration. I was teaching my class with two other teaching assistants who, like me, had previously taught in traditional classrooms because they were uncertain about how to successfully integrate computer technology with their teaching. In a proposal we sent to Computers and Writing 2000, we explained:

> Our concern was that we lacked experience utilizing the computer classroom in ways that would not externalize computer technology but would, instead, contextualize computers and their influence on writing. We wanted to make technology central to
writing as well as to the teaching of writing.

Then, after discussing our frustrations with teaching in traditional classrooms, we continued:

We chose, for the Winter term, to teach our classes in a computer facilitated classroom and combined our ideas and theories about technology and writing processes in order to construct, for our students, a collaborative project that supported writing in "real" contexts.

Having studied computers and writing theory together as graduate students in the English Composition program, Carmen Fye, Richard Colby, and I had developed a relationship that was inspired and supported by several commonalities like the one above. Therefore, as we were discussing our concerns about teaching in the computer classroom, it felt natural when we combined our ideas about computers and writing in order to create a shared context for the integration. Ultimately, we developed the research component that was eventually entitled Collab-project, requiring students in my class, Carmen's class, and Richard's class to work collaboratively in order to develop a topic, then research, write, and publish their materials, together, on the internet.

Essentially, I believed, Carmen, Richard, and I would
set the tone for collaboration in addition to convince our students of both the usefulness and efficiency of collaborative work. But this act of collaboration with other instructors, like my decision to facilitate rather than instruct a course, was not a familiar experience, and I learned shortly into the planning stages of the project that much of what I believed were important elements in teaching my course were not equally important to my colleagues. Consequently, I was having to abandon several facets of my pedagogy in the spirit of collaboration. For example, even when Carmen, Richard, and I agreed upon certain reading assignments, we were sometimes at odds about when to schedule them or which elements of the readings we should address in class. On numerous occasions, we set the criteria for a particular project, then later learned that one or all of us had interpreted the conversation differently and so had scheduled our students to perform an activity for which neither of the other classes would have a context. In all fairness to Carmen and Richard, I was not the only one who had to revise; each of us was forced to make several pedagogical changes--over and over again.

Through experiencing such frustrations during the
planning stages of Collab-project, we grew increasingly aware of the potential for problems once we introduced our students to the situation. In anticipation, we spent countless hours hypothesizing the possibilities and talking through resolutions. But in many instances, although we were able to predict a problem, we were unable to negotiate a solution. These moments served as bold reminders that we didn’t hold all of the answers and that, more often than in any of our previous classes, our students would become acutely aware of that fact. In effort to console ourselves of this sometimes overwhelming fear and grief, we merely complimented our ability to create what seemed, indeed, to be a “real-life” rhetorical situation.

Our students began the term in their own classes, and they remained, physically, in their own classes for the duration of that term. We wanted to make the integration as seamless as possible; so, even though we discussed Collab-project on the first day of class, we didn’t ask our students to begin their work with each other right away. Rather, it was during the end of the second week in our ten week quarter that students performed their first collaborative activity: a common reading of Sherry Turkle’s “Seeing Through Computers” and students’ written
introductions of themselves, which they emailed to the project listserv that now had 75 members. Gradually, students increased the number of posts they made to the project listserv, making connections between their responses to the common readings and the responses of students in the other classes. By the third week of class, students were using the listserv to narrow the topic for the collaborative research project, and by the fifth week of class, students were ready to begin phase one, in which they researched and wrote a response to the question, "at what point does a social act become an act of violence?" Specifically, they had chosen to research three social acts: child discipline, sex, and music.

During these formative weeks in the project, I was making a number of decisions concerning the usefulness of certain technologies, as well as evaluating my students' responses to the course activities. As I mentioned earlier, my textbook had determined the work students did in my previous classes, and I was comfortable with that text's pedagogy, so I had few concerns about whether I was presenting my students with adequate learning material. But for my technology-based course, I was selecting readings and designing assignments in the context of a
theme, not a text, and I worried, constantly, about my ability to articulate clearly for my students the connections between what they read, what they wrote, the department objectives for English 101, and Collab-project. Consequently, I was putting a considerable amount of time into assessing the coursework and the schedule--much, much more time than I'd dedicated to any previous course.

Additionally, my process for evaluation changed in this new context. Whereas my assessments of students' work in previous courses was determined by the criteria discussed in the text--since I felt that criteria was undergirded by composition theory and was, therefore, valid--my evaluations of the work students did in the technology-based course was determined in light of my department's objectives for an English 101 course, in addition to the specific audience for which my students were writing.

Moreover, I was making bold decisions about the technologies that were integrated with my course. Although I chose numerous technologies, I didn't choose them thoughtlessly. Rather, I allowed the goals for the course and the objectives for the course projects to determine which writing elements would be useful. In other words, while in the past, my textbook led students through a
process for writing essays, this time, I allowed the perceived end result of specific projects to inform students' processes. Moreover, I did not select certain technologies and then decide how to use them. Instead, I selected the projects for the course and then asked students which technologies might be useful in their attempts to complete those projects. Thus, I felt, our early discussions about writing processes and each technology we integrated with those processes had both a context and a purpose.

Nonetheless, my students were often overwhelmed, as they had to juggle several new integrations in only a few weeks. I, too, was overwhelmed at times, wondering how in God's name I was going to accomplish everything I'd set out to do and keep my students' heads on their shoulders during the process. I reasoned with myself in interesting ways: it was okay if I was in turmoil on the inside, I could maintain composure on the outside; as long as my students felt they could trust me, they would be all right; I could even tell my students that "I don't know how we're going to get from point A to point B, we just are." However, I'd had ten years experience as a college student; I was thirty-four-years-old, not nineteen; I'd raised three
children under more complicated circumstances; I was familiar with the theory supporting our insane project; and I was the instructor for the course, not a student in the class. All of this put me in a much different place than that of my students. NONE of my students had ever experienced this sort of interactive learning and collaboration, which left them entirely frustrated when things didn't work out as planned. Accordingly, I found myself sympathizing with students in ways I'd never imagined. I became “touchy-feely,” many times placing my arm around their shoulders when they whined about their frustrations with the technology or with the students who, they felt, weren't contributing fairly to the work-load. And, daily, I complimented them on their successes. While I'd always been willing to accept partial responsibility when an activity failed in a previous class, it seemed that in my Winter 2000 course, I was regularly apologizing for things like lost files, undependable students, and barely manageable time constraints.

Most deserving of my apologies were the injuries I inflicted on my students when I told them I was leaving California for an indefinite period of time. We had just completed phase one of Collab-project. My students were
tired, and they were anxious about the next phase, during which they would build the project website and also combine the research and writing they had done in their class with the research and writing produced in both Carmen's and Richard's classes. Unfortunately, my absence was unavoidable and spanned what seemed to be, at that very moment, the most inconvenient time for me to leave.

We had a total of nine essays from all three classes. One-third of each class wrote about child discipline, one-third wrote about sex, and one-third wrote about music, each attempting to explain the point at which those social acts became acts of violence. In phase two, students formed three new groups: research and evaluation, writing and editing, and web design. The writing and editing team combined the essays from each class in order to create three collaboratively written pieces. Then, they edited those final pieces for cohesiveness, grammar, and mechanical clarity. The research and evaluation team was responsible for evaluating the credibility of research that groups were integrating with their essays. Additionally, they created smooth transitions introducing the research into the body of the text. The web design team created the website and uploaded the material once it was complete.
In order to facilitate this phase of the project in a somewhat orderly fashion, Carmen, Richard, and I decided that we would each work with one team. But, since we had one of each team in each class, this decision meant that for the last two-and-a-half weeks of the project, we would be present in each other’s classes. My sudden need to leave the state only two days prior to commencing phase two introduced a new and rather complicated problem. I couldn’t ask another instructor to both take over my class and also attend Carmen’s and Richard’s classes. Besides, even if somebody had been willing to give up so much time, there was no possibility of informing that person sufficiently enough that he or she could be useful to Carmen, Richard, or the students in our classes. However, I had to leave. So, after completely annihilating my students’ minute moment of happiness in the fact that they had finally accomplished the first phase of the project, I met with Carmen and Richard to sort out the new details. We decided that, using chats and email, I would do my absolute best to continue working with my groups throughout their process of writing and editing the drafts. And from almost three-thousand miles away, during the ten days of my physical absence, I taught three classes, three times per
day, three days each week, over the internet. Amazingly, we finished the project on schedule.

I want, now, to state that without Carmen and Richard, I could not have accomplished such an objective. The trip out of California was a family emergency, and under any other circumstances, I would not have left my class. On the other hand, my absence couldn't have come at a more convenient time either. Because we had worked so closely for so many weeks, and because we knew exactly what was happening in each other's classes--the context, the schedule, the objectives, why--and because all of our students were familiar with each of us, Carmen, Richard, or I could have taken over any one of the classes, and the act would be as smooth a transition as the most brilliant writer could write. Furthermore, without the students' experiences using computer technology, I could not have continued teaching while I was away. I suppose I might have emailed information to Carmen and Richard, and they could have presented that information to my groups in each class; however, the burden on both of them, considering the responsibilities they had during that phase of the project, would have been exceptionally overwhelming.

I had never taught from such a perspective, and the
experience was as frustrating as it was exhilarating. The two hour time difference between California and Wisconsin complicated the schedule only because there were specific events that I had to attend at certain times, and afternoons in Wisconsin (the time during which these events most often took place) were mornings in California (the time during which our classes met). For that reason, we were never able to organize a chat. However, my experiences tutoring online and working with Bruce during my internship simplified what could have been rather complicated email exchanges. I spent my nights in Wisconsin reading over the drafts and making my suggestions for combining and revising in brackets and in bold. I designed handouts that students could read from their email inboxes, so neither Carmen nor Richard had to bother with photocopies or taking time during class to pass out those copies. Once students in Richard's 8:00 a.m. class completed their work on the drafts, they reattached them to an email and sent them back to the listserv so students in my 10:40 a.m. class could retrieve them, continue the writing and editing, then pass them along to Carmen's 2:40 p.m. class. Since I was also on the listserv, I was able to review drafts between classes and move things in new
directions or back on track before the next class was off on further tangents.

Students in all three classes were amazingly sympathetic and remained calm throughout my ordeal. I believe that their experiences collaborating successfully with each other over email during the first phase of the project are what allowed them to relax and move forward with such confidence while I was away. I had learned by the time I left California that students in my groups were sincere about and dedicated to their work. In addition, I believe it was the context in which students were working that inspired such dedication: they were writing for a real purpose; they were using real communication technologies; and they strategically combined the two in effort to create something useful and praiseworthy. I learned while I was in Wisconsin that, although students benefit from the input of experienced instructors, given the strategies and the space in which to practice and develop those strategies, they are perfectly capable of and, in fact, will complete amazing tasks. Consequently, I could never revert to the pedagogy I once had. Unlike the concerns I had about my students' preparedness after completing one of my more conventional composition courses, I finished the Winter
2000 term with great confidence in my students' abilities to make meaning in various, "real" rhetorical situations.

Obviously, my overall assessment of collab-project is that it was a successful integration. This does not mean, however, that the integration is one I consider to be flawless. On the contrary, not only did Carmen, Richard, and I experience a number of problems while we were designing and implementing the integration, but my students' evaluations of both the course and my instruction indicate that there is substantial space for improvement. I will address these concerns more completely in Chapter III, where I discuss some of the problems that I've learned are inherent with computer technology integrations.

SUMMARY

At the time I became fascinated with both computers and writing, they were distinctly separate interests, even when I enacted them simultaneously. But the particular events in which I employed both technologies steadily enhanced my awareness of their relationship. I commenced writing an essay when I opened Microsoft Word, a newspaper or literary journal when I opened PageMaker, a website when I opened Claris HomePage. To send a chapter of this thesis to Bruce, I attached it to an email. To read his comments
on that chapter, I used a word-processor. When students
could not come to our writing center, I tutored them
online. I taught my class in California from a Macintosh
in Wisconsin. Each of these events immersed me in
situations that clearly exemplified connections between
computers and composition studies.

With these experiences came unique occasions for me to
observe technology’s impact on writing situations. I
learned that using computer technology to write can affect
the meaning writers make when they compose. Combining
technology with a collaborative activity might overwhelm
students when instructors don’t have experience with
computers; but with some experience, the combination can
also create new and useful spaces for text production.
When mentors and interns, tutors and writers, and
instructors and students conduct activities online,
technology reconstructs certain hierarchies. Teaching
assistants, for example, become collaborating teachers. It
is during unique occasions like these that I discovered new
technologies and took my studies in composition new
directions.

Specific encounters with computer technology have
determined the points at which I could and could not create
successful integrations. It was not enough to understand the difference between supplementing and integrating. I had to practice with technologies before I learned that introducing them to an activity doesn't automatically create an integration. When I perceived online technology as a new space for tutoring, I failed at the integration because I tried to make the technology replicate an existing space. But when I allowed the space to redefine tutoring, I could work with writers in new and exciting ways. Integration, I learned, is as much a mentality as it is an act. As frustrating as my encounters with technology have been, they have also had a significant and positive impact on the ways I think about using computers in any rhetorical situation.

This ability to think critically about the usefulness of technology finally gave me the confidence I needed to design a computer-based writing course. As a result, I developed a teaching pedagogy that, I believe, will prepare my composition students for writing in various rhetorical situations, for a multitude of audiences, and with considerable thought about the processes they use for writing and the technologies that they implement in their future writing experiences. The more I develop as a
teacher, it seems, my students develop more as writers.

All of these events, certain occasions, encounters, and developments, along with my interpretations and other's theorizations produced the stories in this chapter. What is more, when we weave such stories with facts about students' resistance to technology, the existence of technology, the glitches in technology, and the fact that we live, think, read, and write in the age of technology, we learn that we have to think reflectively in order to identify helpful and valuable ways to make meaning with technology in composition studies. Furthermore, because computers "offer physical analogies to the mental and perceptual activities of writing, giving inexperienced writers access to alternatives that might otherwise remain invisible," it is imperative that we teach our composition students and our aspiring composition instructors to think reflectively if they will derive the benefits of computer technology integrations.
CHAPTER THREE

Integrating Problems

We're often reminded that we see only the bad in things, that in our fast-paced, competitive society, we tend to overlook the pleasantries and delicacies in effort to hike the shortest and most narrow, path to success. I remember that when I began the graduate program at CSUSB I was frequently and rather easily lured into the gossip scenes, where disgruntled faculty and contending M.A. graduate students fostered the negative fall-out of departmental quarrels and suspicions. I rode home from school each evening with my carpool buddy and fascinating new tidbits of information that drove our conversations for the otherwise lonely hour southbound down I-215. I don't really know when I decided to lay off criticizing the department for placing so much emphasis on theory instead of practice, criticizing the instructors for not always making the choices they "could have" made, criticizing my fellow graduate students for not thinking more critically before they contributed in class. But I know it happened somewhere near the time I began investigating Ph.D. programs and learned that I was sufficiently prepared and qualified to apply to the most eminent universities in the
country.

I think it's interesting that, while we so quickly identify all the unlikable features of a current situation, we are most apt to recall the good in a previous one. Even my mother and father, who have been divorced for several years, speak more often about the merriments of their life together than they do about the problems (neither would admit to this, however). My brother and I spent two hours in my living room this evening laughing about particulars from our childhood, which was, without doubt, the most difficult and frustrating experience of our lives.

Nonetheless, we cannot completely deny the folk-wisdom that with the good comes also the bad. However, while I've been reflecting on my experiences throughout this thesis, analyzing several possible uses for computer technology in writing and teaching situations, I've been neglecting the obvious reality that these marvelous integrations do have their unpleasant counterparts. In fact, much of the research in the field of computers and writing has been conducted in effort to address and eliminate such problems as online gender bias, accessibility, funding, computer glitches, and lack of teacher training. So, I don't want to conclude without at least acknowledging the truth that
these problems surfaced in my own work with computers. However, I do want to approach analyzing the problems inherent with computer integrations from a perspective that might differ slightly from the ones we most often see. Over the past ten years, I’ve witnessed and participated in several circumstances where discord arose both in response to and as the result of introducing new technologies to existing rhetorical situations. What I’ve learned, consequently, is that where computer technology is present so are problems. And while it may be an instinctive reaction that humans try to “fix” whatever problems arise, I wonder: if our problems were treated as a useful and integral component of computer integrations, could we create rhetorical situations that more effectively prepare us for successful writing, teaching, and thinking possibilities? In other words, I’m suggesting that we might speculate about the problems that inevitably accompany a computer integration and that, accordingly, we should consider integrating those problems as well.

Before I elaborate, I want to share the following experience. At the opening reception for Computers and Writing 2000, Pat Nolan and Kim Glover (Texas Women’s University) presented “Movement in Text Minor.” I arrived
late, so the "movement" was already moving, and because I missed the introduction, I didn’t have much context for the presentation. Three dancers were performing on the "live" floor to music downloaded off the internet with RealPlayer, which the audience could see on a large-screen, background monitor. During the performance, for which early on I was struggling to identify some purpose, the music stopped. On the monitor we could see that RealPlayer was executing one of its frequent "buffering" processes, most often due to thin bandwidths. The moment RealPlayer began buffering, the dancers stopped their "movement." "Well," I thought cynically, "another problem with technology." When the music began again, so did the dancers, as if nothing had interrupted their step; yet, we (the audience) knew it was interrupted.

We continued watching this unusual demonstration with computer technology, and, again, both the music and dancing stopped while RealPlayer buffered. I was still searching for some purpose in the presentation when I leaned over to Jeff Galin and said, "this is scary."

"What?" he replied.

"I said, 'this is scary.'"

"What's scary?"
“This,” I answered. “The ‘buffering’ is part of the experience.”

Jeff laughed, and we returned to watching the performance—and the buffering. When the dance was complete, computer assistants loaded a chat program, and Victor Vitanza provided his cyber response to the experience: “...the buffering,” he said (or wrote); “Yes, YES, Y E S !” Although he also said much more about the experience, in equally postmodern ways, he had made a connection similar to my own: the buffering became part of the experience; so much so, that we began anticipating the pause in movement, and, instead of concerning ourselves with how the problem might be remedied, we became interested in how it functioned as an integrated aspect of the cyberdance.

I realize this example of one way a particular problem might be integrated with experiences in computers and writing has several flaws. First of all, the presentation was a live activity, and we’ve become accustomed to expecting “glitches” in any live performance; therefore, our expectations are not as high in such a setting as they might be in the more controlled academic environment. Secondly, but maybe most importantly, I seem to be
suggesting that, since both Victor and I made the same sort of meaning in the experience, it was the correct one and, therefore, everybody should agree--problem solved. Third, could it be that integrating a problem is only one additional way to "fix" a problem? And finally, since much of academia is grounded in identifying and solving problems, it seems I am suggesting we loosen the underpinnings of academic success. I don't know that I can adequately un-do or justify these flaws, and to avoid attacks that I neither desire nor deserve at this stage in my career, I'm not going to try; however, at least readers know that I've thought about them.

What I do want to consider are some possibilities for the ways computers and writing specialists might make--and have made--use of problems, since they seem inevitable in any situation that includes technology. While we should and will continue researching and practicing methods for eliminating problems altogether, until we have succeeded in that venture, we need to anticipate what sorts of problems are currently irresolvable and speculate about how to integrate them with the rest of what we do. The problems that arose in and as a result of the technology integrations I discussed in Chapters I and II of this
thesis ranged from personal attacks on listservs to failures with computer applications, and while I won't discuss all of them (because I really want to finish writing this thing), I will share a few examples that should explain how I came to view problems in this new light.

I mentioned in the Publishing section of Chapter II that a particular conflict left me in the unexpected position of Editor-in-Chief of "Campus News." During the time we began soliciting articles for our newspaper, the Menifee campus was only beginning its third term of classes, and few student organizations were formed. One of those organizations, however, was established early on and had been in operation for almost a year; although, meeting times and places were not disclosed to the general student body. The Gay-Lesbian Student Union (GLSU) was particularly careful about posting this information because several flyers had been defaced with ugly threats to its members, should they ever "come out of the closet." In response to our first call for articles, "Campus News" received an essay written by a student who was perturbed over the defacements and wanted the administration to thwart further reckless behavior. The essay then inspired
our Editor-in-Chief to explain for “Campus News” staff the politics surrounding what apparently had become a serious concern for the campus. MSJC, Menifee Valley was largely supported by its community, a town primarily inhabited by fundamentalist Christians who might cease their financial support, should word of the GLSU’s existence spread. As a member of the Board of Trustees, our Editor-in-Chief was privileged with this valuable and supposedly accurate information; therefore, we “other” students in the college were now expected to understand the concern and, as thoughtful newspaper editors, refuse to publish the essay.

Needless to say (I hope), several staff members were disturbed by the idea that our newspaper should be controlled by community politics, and they hesitated to impinge upon the student’s right to free speech. The problem escalated further when our Editor-in-Chief began a campaign to disband the GLSU altogether. Collectively, “Campus News” staff members argued against the Editor-in-Chief’s agenda, and shortly before our first newspaper went to print, the Editor-in-Chief resigned. At that point, the seriousness of the problem was revealed. While staff members were philosophically and politically at odds with the previous Editor-in-Chief, when faced with having to
make a decision about whether to publish the essay, several folded. It seemed it was one thing to verbally express an opinion and another to print it.

As the newly appointed Editor-in-Chief, I became responsible for organizing and enforcing deadlines for editorial decisions. However, I was also under the supervision and instruction of a faculty advisor who was supposed to assist me with these tasks. While this advisor was helpful by making suggestions for how I might approach the disagreement among staff members, during class discussions she remained surprisingly silent. I brought examples from other college newspapers that printed controversial articles and letters to the editor, which in many cases refuted articles previously published. In addition, I explained that "Campus News" could write a by-line, in which we might express a philosophical point of view, stating that we claim no position in the argument. However, students could not arrive at an agreement and suggested that, as Editor-in-Chief, I simply make an editorial decision. When I spoke privately with my advisor, she said she thought things went fairly well and that she believed I should make whatever decision I felt comfortable making. Later that day, with PageMaker before
me, I imported the article and placed it on the front page.

No serious aftermath followed. We received a few letters of gratitude from students who were pleased with the newspaper content, but nobody, not even the flyer defacers, hassled us. Perhaps as a result of the lack of negative response, the staff complimented my decision, never suggesting that I might have done the job differently or that, in retrospect, they might have been more involved. It became easier after that initial publication to make decisions concerning content, and staff members rarely expressed concern about publishing controversial articles. Our ex-Editor-in-Chief’s campaign quickly dissolved; yet, the weekly GLSU flyers were still defaced, and the club had to continue meeting secretly.

Despite the “Thank You” plaque “Campus News” gave me at the end of that year, I was concerned for a very long time. My desire to never be involved in problems of this sort led me to avoid taking active rolls in academic controversies. I learned not to trust students in powerful positions. I learned that faculty can be wish-washy, that students can be downright nasty, and that administration first accepts my tuition payments, then looks out for itself. In addition, I learned that collaborative
experiences, as enticing as they may seem to students who like working with people, become prime sites for problems.

So what happened that, eight years later, I found myself teaching a composition course in which my students had to collaborate not only with each other, but also with students they would never meet in two other classes, and that, in addition, they would have to unify their decisions about publishing controversial essays? Several things. But one of them is not that I, as one myth has it, wished to take out my aggressions on my students--no baggage of that sort was involved. However, over the past nine years and despite my desires to avoid problems in academia, I’ve continued investing myself in situations with computers. Dumb, I know. But as a result, and as I was thinking about ways to use technology in writing and teaching situations, each time a problem surfaced, my memory returned to “Campus News.” Sometimes, I was back in an argument with the first Editor-in-Chief. Other times, I was revisiting my discussions with the faculty advisor. Many times, I was contemplating, once more, whether to run the GLSU article. The more I became involved in computers and writing, the more I wrestled with the problems inherent with technology integrations. What brought me through these situations,
however, was theory. As I read more, I returned to the
"Campus News" experience with more knowledge, so that by
the time I was ready to teach my collaborative course, I
felt I understood the problems and, moreover, had grown
comfortable with their existence.

In 1988, Gail Hawisher noted that "computers had
physically arrived in writing classrooms, but teachers and
students had yet to adjust their accustomed strategies for
teaching and learning to these now-new spaces" (199). She
is right. When computers arrived at Menifee, the
overwhelming response from faculty and students was "let's
publish!" But nobody had thought much about what should be
involved in teaching and learning publication. The "Campus
News" faculty advisor advocated collaborative and
interactive learning but had little knowledge about how to
teach it. I'm not faulting her; in fact, I commend her for
recognizing and considering the usefulness of technology
and collaboration in the classroom. However, as Elizabeth
Klem and Charles Moran noted in 1992, compositionists
generally felt new pedagogies were inherent in computer
integrations and that teachers, once they began using
computers in their classrooms, would automatically adjust
their instruction to suit new theories of social,
interactive learning (133). However, compositionists soon learned that radical changes in pedagogy were not inherent in computer integrations and that problems were.

Because problems with technology continue to recur, many computers and writing specialists have shifted their primary concerns away from finding ways to eliminate problems and toward helping new instructors learn to identify the potential for problems early on (see Gail Hawisher's and Cynthia Selfe's Evolving Perspectives 276, for example). While, sometimes, we see potential problems and prevent them from arising, other times we cannot (as in, for example, the RealPlayer buffering that we can't control). In addition, I believe there should be some problems that function purposefully in rhetorical situations (i.e., students' assumptions about publication materials). In these situations we have opportunities to teach critical thinking. In cases like these, preventing problems is not helpful to students or instructors, but neither is ignoring them and hoping they will work themselves out or go away. They won't. On the other hand, simply speculating about problems and then eagerly awaiting their arrival, when they will torment students and lead to irresolvable or unhealthy conflicts, is irrational. However, if we take time to
consider unavoidable problems and then work them into our pedagogies as useful, practical tools for teaching, we might create learning environments that prepare students for meaningful, productive life experiences.

If computer integrations create spaces for social, dialogical exchanges, as several compositionists before me have suggested is the case, then they inherently create spaces for problems because where there is social interaction, there are problems. In addition, since the integration of different technologies will create different spaces, it is possible to speculate about the inherent problems by considering the particular integration. This is exactly what Carmen, Richard, and I tried to do while we were preparing Collab-project. For example, we knew our classes would need a listserv for communication because the classes met at different times during the day. If, hypothetically, we were teaching at the same time, each of us in computer-facilitated classrooms, we might have used real-time communication chatware. Already, you can imagine the difference between these two spaces. As we considered the listserv, we speculated the potential problems. First, with three classes, the technology would serve approximately 75 members, presenting students with, at
times, an overwhelming amount of email when they logged on to their computers. Some computers and writing specialists would argue that such an integration is too taxing on students. However, we chose to integrate the problem with our classes by teaching useful filtering strategies early in the term. In addition, knowing our students would have little listserv experience coming into the class and could at first be overwhelmed by 75 messages per day, we created individual class listservs and gave students time to practice filtering before integrating the collaborative listserv.

We speculated that what might be even more complicated than filtering messages, however, were the problems inherent in collaborating over a listserv. Because students would not communicate face-to-face, they were less likely to see eye-to-eye. Throughout our studies in computers and writing, we'd read about several instances when students used profanity or were "flaming" (expressing anger in hyperbolic form) in electronic communication mediums. In addition, each of us had either experienced or witnessed the kinds of written assaults that angry students will heave at each other when they don't have an immediate audience. We wanted a space in which students might
challenge each other; however, we didn't want students behaving in uncivilized ways. Yet, this was going to be a social space, so the sorts of disagreements that arise in social spaces were likely to materialize on the listserv as well. We brainstormed ways to integrate the problem with the rest of the project.

Finally, students would choose the topics for research, but in the context of a larger question, which the instructors would write: at what point does a social act become an act of violence? Through their reading and writing assignments, we tried to challenge students at the level of their integrity. They researched historical examples of social violence (which most of them discovered to be appalling), and they compared those historical examples with contemporary ones. Thus, they learned that religion, politics, and culture have played tremendous roles in shaping our definitions of violence. While students did disagree on several issues, those disagreements became contextualized with their discovery that, individually, each of them has been influenced by nasty, powerful figures and organizations—and also good. Consequently, we hoped, when problems with not seeing eye-to-eye surfaced on the listserv, students were self-
reflective and critical in their responses.

The biggest problem we theorized while planning Collabproject was also one I didn't integrate successfully. When they registered for our courses, students had no idea they were taking English 101 in a computer-facilitated classroom. Because we have only one computer classroom, instructors have to apply for the space, submitting proposals for how they plan to use it. However, the committee responsible for reviewing those proposals can't assign instructors to the classroom until they know what times and days those instructors are teaching. Often, instructors are not assigned a course section until after the schedule is released to students and they begin registering for their classes. This means that students may register for a course that is, according to the schedule, being taught in UH-263, only to learn on the first day of the term that the class has been moved to UH-047. Furthermore, my students could not know they would be collaborating with two other classes. While students often don't know what they can expect in the way of course activities (hence, they enroll in classes, only to drop them after the first class session), my situation was more complex than most. I was attempting a fairly radical
challenge to students' common expectations about traditional college English composition courses. For most of my students, I assumed, Collabproject would be their first experience in interactive-learning. They would enter my class with numerous, time-honored assumptions about English 101 and be surprised to find themselves in a room with twenty-five desktop computers.

In speculating about ways to integrate this problem with my course, I concluded that there were some problems beyond my speculating abilities. Students were, no doubt, going to question the utility and validity of the course, but how, I could not foresee. Therefore, I began my course discussing modern technologies and "real world" situations, thinking my students might simply accept the usefulness of technology, collaboration, and hard work in the classroom once they made a connection with their goals for the future. What I learned, however, is that students have difficulty imagining their futures. Mentally, I compared the situation to students' attitudes about taking lower-division undergraduate courses. Most of them just don't see the relevance of English 101 to their careers as accountants and nurses. So, I accepted (based on philosophies about the ways we make meaning) that students
would not make connections between what they were doing in my class and other facets of their lives until they were faced with a problem that required they draw on some experience from the class, and I simply continued contextualizing their work in rhetorical situations larger than the academy.

While, theoretically, this particular integration made sense to me, my Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) scores indicated that my students were not making clear connections between my instruction and the objectives for the course, which were the same objectives our department requires of all 101 courses. However, in previous classes, my scores in this area of teaching had placed me above average. Those students never indicated they were confused about the purpose for their work. Students in my computer-based course did. On the other hand, when students in my Winter 2000 course wrote their reflective essays, most of them indicated that they had made connections between the collaborative project and other areas of their lives. Michelle stated,

My overall impression of this project was that it was a very creative, useful and rewarding way to learn about writing. The information that we have posted on the Internet could help
people who wonder about or have problems dealing with violence in sex, music, and child discipline. My plans after I finish college are to teach elementary school and I think that what I learned during this class will help me be a better teacher (Reller).

Had I explained the usefulness of class activities in light of the course objectives, I might have better integrated the problem with students' assumptions about not only the collaborative project, but also English 101 in general. For example, when the class discussed various technologies that might be useful in the project they would soon begin, they seemed confused about why they were doing this project when it required so many technologies. Why not just write an essay? I responded that they would have to draw on resources in various situations throughout their lives and that in this class they would learn strategies for thoughtfully analyzing those situations in terms of useful resources. Had I, in retrospect, told them that the department requires they "learn to make elective choices as to invention strategies, potential resources, content, style, and form, depending on purpose, attendance, and genre" (CSUSB), I might have given them an explanation they could accept at that particular moment in their lives. They may not have agreed with the premise, but they might
have accepted the activity as one important in the class. However, we’re fortunate that problems such as these exist when we integrate technology with writing and teaching situations. Not only do they provide us with opportunities to help our students, our writers, our mentors, our interns, and our peers to think critically about the application of computer experiences in their “realer” lives (as Carmen, Richard, and I labeled non-academic experiences), they also encourage us to be thoughtful about the ways we choose to integrate technology with existing rhetorical situations. We do have to think critically when we are attempting to eliminate a potential problem from the integration equation; however, what’s important in either case is that we learn to speculate about the problems that will arise and then determine, when we simply cannot fix them, how we might successfully integrate them with the experience so that we don’t invite unnecessary conflict that could result in irreversible damage.

Conclusion

It is difficult for me to imagine that an integration as complex as integrating problems with composition studies could be thoroughly discussed in twenty pages of writing.
Moreover, I can’t imagine that in one-hundred-and-thirty pages, I have thoroughly described even one-tenth of what happens when compositionists integrate computer technology with facets of composition studies. Therefore, I submit my thesis as an inquiry that, in the nature of autoethnography, is meant to probe further interrogations in the field of computers and writing, not merely answer a few questions.

Several times during this past year I’ve been asked, “what, exactly, is autoethnography?” Mary Louise Pratt probably provides the most theoretical answer: “if ethnographic texts are those in which European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their others (usually their conquered others), autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct in response to or in dialogue with those texts” (445). Therefore, I might explain my thesis as a form of autoethnography in the following way: if composition research is that which represents me to the field of composition studies, my autoethnography is a representation of myself in dialogue with that research. I don’t see myself as “conquered” by the composition community. Influenced, informed, controlled (maybe at times), but not
conquered (although, Pratt does modify the expression with "usually").

Most important, however, to distinguishing between my thesis and Pratt's explanation is my conscious awareness of the fact that I am employing autoethnography as a methodology, whereas, the autoethnographers Pratt refers to produce texts of various forms that we call autoethnographies because they are attempts to communicate using a discourse (which would include language, genre, mode, and punctuation) that will satisfy readers in the community for which they are writing.

Pratt also explains that "such texts often constitute a marginalized group's point of entry into the dominant circuits of print culture" (446). My thesis certainly constitutes one point of my entry into a dominant circuit of print culture. And, alas, as a "student" of composition studies, I am marginalized several times over--but still not conquered! While I may be writing the autoethnography Pratt defines, I've taken her conception of autoethnography a step further. As a research methodology, autoethnography must serve an investigative purpose. Therefore, to write autoethnographic research, one might investigate his or her own experiences in a community or rhetorical situation and
then write about them in order to communicate new information about and back to the community.

In sociology, autoethnography is considered qualitative, introspective research in which the writer brings his or her own voice and experiences into the process of making meaning. In Final Negotiations: A Story of Love, Loss, and Chronic Illness, Carolyn Ellis invites readers into the “day-to-day reality of coping with a progressive disease and negotiating a shifting relationship” (abstract). She claims that “writing evocatively, emotionally, and candidly...provides for authors a method of inquiry, understanding, and restorying ourselves.” The book is not an autobiography; rather, Ellis draws on her personal experiences and considers them in light of research on coping with death in a relationship. In this way, autoethnography is, in part, writing autobiographically. However, it is writing autobiographically as a researcher who immerses him or herself in personal experience, or, as Geertz explains in Chapter 1 of my thesis, a researcher who shows how particular events and unique occasions, an encounter here, a development there, can be woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a
sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go.
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