

Phase VI: Post Symposium

Invigorated by the shared experience of the Chicago Symposium, the participants of the final phase of the TicToc discussions engaged in a distinctly different type of interaction, setting aside the formality of academic discourse to converse with each other on a lighter, more personal level. The success of the symposium is largely registered in the playful mood of this shift. It is also registered in the positive comments of Joe Amato and Thomas Phillion who offer concrete reflections as to what they consider to be key issues emerging from the conference. Amato (5/23) expressed the importance of situating eworks under an institutional framework, one that will offer a measure of direction without stifling the project's creative impulse. Phillion (5/30) also suggested ways to reconcile the project with the need for university sanction, arguing that eworks should be seen as a "site/space" for teacher/student interactions within the larger UIC English department. Phillion (5/30) went on to address other lingering issues raised throughout the symposium, most notably the need for the TicToc group to be mindful of its sometimes confrontational, sometimes patronizing tone in dealing with faculty members and administrators whose interests are less techno-oriented.

Date: Sunday, 18 May 1997

From: Joe Amato

Subject: Post symposium

just to say that it was great meeting so many of you, and seeing so many of you again... and to thank all of you folks at uic for your incredible generosity and hospitality in hosting the symposium . . .

at this moment, i'm suffering from a bout of fin-de-semester emptyheadedness . . . i'll be sure to post in what i see as key issues coming out of the symposium soon as i have a chance to recharge some . . .

anyway, i had a great time, and i learned a lot . . . and i'm looking forward to future fruitful collaborations . . .

all best, Joe

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Date: Sunday, 18 May 1997

From: Greg Ulmer

Subject: Thanks for your thoughtful contributions to the symposium

I hope the UIC folks got as much out of the meeting as I did. It was a privilege to be included with such a distinguished group of consultants. My travels have been a bit eccentric over the years and I have not had a chance to meet most of you before.

WHAT A LETDOWN! :> au contraire!

I propose that we begin immediately the mythologizing of our meeting (whatever else we do). For starters, may the TOAST be: "Next Year at the TUSCANY"

best

Greg

Date: Sunday, 18 May 1997

From: Randy Bass

Subject: Mythologizing the Symposium

Greg Ulmer wrote:

>I propose that we begin immediately the mythologizing of our
>meeting.

FOLKS: I just did a net search of the scholarly literature for the year 2075, and came across this article in the Journal of the History of Technological Credulity, entitled:

"New Approaches to the 'Face-to-Face' Movement of the 2030's"

The article mostly rehashes the arguments pretty familiar by 2075 of the possible causes for the brief but powerful 'Face-to-Face' Movement of the early 21st Century (neural transmitter backlash, populist reaction to the government funded Bill Gates cryogenic experiments, etc.).

But the most interesting thing about the article was the rather long elaboration of an event, one "TICTOC Symposium" (May 16-17, 1997) as a critical touchpoint for the 'F2F'ers' seeking of a radically reconstructed positioning between "unselfconscious new media hyperbole" and "unapologetic traditional media elegaic." Most of the article was in theoretical language I couldn't understand, but I was pleased (though not surprised) to discern the far reaching impact of our delightful two days. Thanks to all.

Randy

Date: Sunday, 18 May 1997
From: Mick Doherty
Subject: Mythologizing the Symposium

Mythologizing the Conference Mythinformation? Ulmeric Mystory
Becomes Sosnoskic Mythstory? Nursery rhyme as Agent for Academic
Revolution, or Mother Goose's Manifesto in RhetNet-ese (or -ease?)

The original, we all know well . . .
Hickory, dickory, dock,
The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down!
Hickory, dickory, dock.
Dickery, dickery, dare,
The pig flew up in the air.
The man in brown Soon brought him down!
Dickery, dickery, dare.

But perchance we might resonate . . .

Let's all go, Chicago, Tic-Toc
Facetime, from online, ad hoc
Consultants to test
Ken's, Oh, Manifest . . .
Teaching writing upweb, a crock?
Click-n-see Your PC, There!
Why should anyone care?
Re-think, you see Pedagogy
We must (no!) we can (if) we dare

(See the copyright statement on my /tictoc/ site for further details.
It's at the bottom.)

Personally, I've been trying to work "pedagogy" into a song ripoff
for years. Some of you may know that I've sort of fallen into the role of
writing the annual Computers & Writing conference theme song, usu-
ally a ripoff — er, a re-imagination — of a Billy Joel song (though last
year's "HTML" was based on the The Village People's "YMCA") . . . I am
thinking about possibilities for a TicToc song . . .

suggestions?
Mick

Date: Tuesday, 20 May 1997
From: Greg Ulmer
Subject: Mythologizing the Symposium

Here is a riddle:

Who wrote the following note?

\$11110000010110000111111100001111101100000001011110
 0101000100.01US ?

[answer: Deep Blue, reminding itself not to shout CHECK in the
 Tuscany]

Greg

Date: Friday, 23 May 1997
From: Joe Amato
Subject: Mythologizing the Symposium

have had a chance to gather my thoughts a bit . . . herewith some
 postimpressions of our f2f get-together:

1. for me a primary issue remains the degree to which our desire to
 implement "comfortable" technologies (laudable in so many ways)
 bleeds over into our ruminations on "comfortable" pedagogies (not so
 laudable) . . . this can quickly devolved into "customer is always right"
 approaches to classrooms, here or afar . . . much critical intervention
 needed, as i see it, precisely at this point . . . we want to create, say, nur-
 turing environments *within which* anxieties may be raised . . . also
 related is this idea of making technology as such visible, something i try
 always to do even as i rely on my capacity for forgetfulness while i work
 (as at this moment *now*, or then) . . .
2. (i think it was) bill covino situated the advent of online utopias as
 part of the general mix of 60s psychedelic culture (to paraphrase
 b/madly, and note that ted nelson first uses the words "hypertext" and
 hypermedia," by his own account, in a 1965 paper, and traces his own
 ideas back to vannevar bush's 1945 article about *memex*, "as we may
 think") . . . i would argue that the more definitive treatments of ai and
 the like (yet to be writ) will have to address, in particular, the general
 development of mainframe environments (esp. in the 50s) as well as the
 cybernetics stuff coming out of wwii (and later, the work done down at
 uiuc, where, in the communications library, you can still find an *orig-
 inal* copy of heinz von foerster's *the cybernetics of cybernetics*!) . . . in
 any case, the hallucinatory-online connection was, for me, best drawn
 out some years ago, when bobby rabyd (a pseudonym) put up his
 hypertext, *albert hofmann's strange mistake* (also known as *lsd50*, cele-
 brating the 50th anniversary of the discover of acid), for free ftp down-
 load at a brown site (as i recall) . . . but the reason i pick up on this point

is this: if in fact there is a “liberal,” not to say liberatory, element in our current tictoc discourse, one whose lineage in some ways is to be located in the 60s, perhaps we would do well to revisit our rhetoric in terms of the 60s to see what, if anything, is recuperable in such terms . . . and again—this is precisely the strategy bill readings takes in *the university in ruins* (a book i’ve mentioned here before, which i find provocative and useful, whatever its problems) . . . which is to say, we needn’t entirely turn our backs on what happened during the 60s simply b/c a republican (techno!) agenda has managed to paint it all as hype . . . oh and btw, yes, paulo freire died a coupla weeks back, at 75 . . .

3. how to orchestrate w/o leadership from the top-down? . . . organizations always desire accountability (again, see readings on this), so i think uic needs a director for its online initiatives . . . but a director who can “manage” w/o the customary hierarchical impulse to centralize . . . that is, a director who knows how to distribute both responsibility *and* control (jim does this well!) . . . i’m not knowledgeable enough about the inner workings of the uic english dept., or for that matter the admin. structure of uic, to propose whether the online stuff jim is doing should be “part” of same . . . naturally this is a key question . . .

4. i found myself at times, during the symposium, not knowing whether i should respond in my adminese voice—to help find a suitable language for discussing online work that might be compatible with existing uic institutional constraints (w/o which latter voice i am, as many of you are no doubt aware now, highly uncomfortable) . . . that is, i was uncertain whether in fact we were all to be actively grappling primarily with *representational* issues—or whether in fact we were to sift through, as well, more substantive (from my pov) issues having to do with the how’s, what’s and why’s of teaching, scholarship, tenure and such like . . . of course the “answer” to my conundrum is, as my rhetoric suggests, that we were to do *both* . . . but in this regard, i think it worth noting here that, while it may certainly be propitious to find ways to locate and refine arguments within *existing* organizational categories to do what we do, i would like to think—i would *very much* like to think—that the categories themselves are somewhat at stake . . . that what ‘we’ are about (i’m not speaking in adminese now), at least in part, is in fact *altering* our institutions, while meeting the exigencies of the status quo . . . so for example (and i didn’t want to bring this up at the meeting, but—) when and if i go up for tenure here at iit in the fall, i will be sure to compose a statement that fleshes out my commitment, online *and* in print, to *changing* my profession (and my department) for the better . . . which includes in fact altering the scope, if not the effect, of what we do . . . in fact i’d probably have eric post a draft of my personal statement up on *rhetnet*, for feedback, if i could justify this latter as anything but a replay of mick’s more pioneering spirit (eric, DON’T ASK, pleez!) . . .

anyway, just fer starters, as per . . . i hope you're all easing your way into some r & r . . .
best,
Joe

Date: Thursday, 29 May 1997
From: Cynthia Haynes
Subject: Defusing the bomb

Hi ticktockers,

Jan and I want to say we thoroughly enjoyed meeting all of you. A special thanks to Jim Sosnoski, Keith Dorwick, and Ken McAllister and all the others who worked so hard to make this one of the most productive working symposia we have attended. We are headed for Hawaii in the morning to attend the Computers and Writing Conference...but before leaving we wanted to congratulate Mick Doherty for being selected to be the Linguarian of the Summer! All of you who are now envious must send us a character request and you too can become a member of our thriving academic community! Seriously, we would love to hold a post-symposium MOO meeting if anyone is interested . . . maybe we could call it "Defusing the MOO"? We will continue to reflect on the TicToc issues and get back to you before we head to Norway in June.

Cheers,
Cindy and Jan

Date: Friday, 30 May 1997
From: Greg Ulmer
Subject: Dialogue and revisions

It does make sense, as Jim suggested, for the consultants to offer here some summary of any observations they might have made in the free flow of discussion during the meetings (or even, observations they wished they had made, as is mostly my experience). *L'esprit de l'escalier*. (?)

At the same time, I am wondering if the UIC folks have a different perception, or evolved perception, of the project after or because of the meeting in Chicago, and if so, what new questions might now be on the table or on the screen rather?

best
Greg

Date: Friday, 30 May 1997

From: David Downing

Subject: Future spottings

Hi, TicToc-ers,

After returning from a 10-day trip to New England, I am just getting back to work, and reflecting on our symposium. I enjoyed seeing and meeting everyone, and I look forward to working now towards the publication phase of the project. The first thing I did was to begin surfing the web, checking out some future sites that I thought might give us some idea of what we might look forward to with respect to the future consequences of TicToc. Amazingly enough, I found an e-zine site called "UnWired" from the year 2111. It was remarkable because the site contained a brief article by R. U. Sirius, VIII. Sirius recounts a very suspicious story of his recovering various cultural artifacts following some catastrophic event that supposedly will happen in the next century—his task seems to be an attempt to reconstruct a history that will have been nearly lost. Sirius's main link is to another, earlier web site e-zine called "Re-Wired." This site was dated 2076, and the focus here is on a story by one Ultra Luddite (of indeterminable gender) all about our symposium. What I found is quite stunning, to say the least. I'm sure you will be as pleased as I was to learn about the incredible recognition being granted by our descendants to our humble symposium. But at the same time, I'm equally sure some of you will be disturbed, even outraged, at the flagrant omissions, the rampant distortions of the truth, the misrepresentations of simple events, and the mythologizing of the real. I am all for following Greg's lead by beginning to mythologize our meeting, but what I have uncovered here will undoubtedly cast a somber warning over these activities. Indeed, that those who would call themselves historians and seek to reconstruct the past should resort to such mendacity, inevitably leads us to only one conclusion: if nothing else comes of this symposium, we should make sure we compose only the most strictly linear, realistic narrative accounts. Objectivity at every turn. Surely, nothing else will save us from the fictional imaginations of our cyborgian descendants. You can check this out for yourself, and the easiest way to do this is to point your browser to "<http://gradend.en.iup.edu/~downing/tictoc/sirius.htm>" where I have simply copied Sirius's site onto my own. Since the news is so stunning, I have had to omit all graphics in the name of expediency, but you can perhaps imagine how striking they are from the narratives themselves. I have left in tact the rather garish color schemes which I think we can read as a sign of a less-disciplined, future epoch. Some portions of these future sites deploy such sophisticated interactive video animations that it's not even possible for us to access them on our late-20th century equipment. Nevertheless, with some patience, it will be possible to

add the key images later if anyone wishes to help out on this score since I am at a very basic level of web page design. Voice your appreciation and outrage, but above all we must mount a campaign to alter the future as we see it in these web sites.

David

Date: Friday, 30 May 1997

From: Thomas Phillion

Subject: #1: Reflections and issues

Before I begin to reflect and issue-pose, I just want to say with everyone else that I enjoyed meeting so many of you face-to-face. I'm afraid that I don't have the energy to reflect further on the relationship between f2f and electronic exchange, but it does seem to me that there is a value to meeting f2f; something about actually seeing faces and bodies and, perhaps even more important, the context in which various pedagogical/researcherly activities are taking place, or being discussed-debated, helps to make the talk humane and down-to-earth and pragmatic, so to speak (not that down-to-earth and pragmatic are necessarily better modes of discourse, just useful ones at times, I think).

Anyway, reflections:

I attended briefly the panel discussion on Friday, and I came away impressed and pleased with what my fellow UIC faculty members had to say. I guess I was impressed because the speakers all seemed to make clear an important paradox; that is, that computers are going to play an important and perhaps transformative role in english studies in the future (as they are currently), but that several factors necessarily will limit or constrain our department's commitment to computers and technology in general (student population, money, other commitments, etc.). I also was pleased that almost all the speakers I heard made a real effort to indicate their sensitivity to the more provocative suggestions of the consultants in the audience; at the same time, they also seemed to say that decisions about how to use technology and computers in the UIC English department, obviously, will come from within the department. The speakers all emphasized that the UIC English department is a multifaceted place (perhaps like a shopping mall?) that will proceed with the tough issues raised by technology in a way similar to the way it handles other complex questions: through dialogue and negotiation, through speculative reflection and consultation (as in the Tic-Toc conference), but also through careful attention to tradition and to the local needs of diverse—but unequal—participants in the UIC English department.

This is perhaps a long-about way of saying that I thought that the mood of the panel presentation was defensive, but spiritedly so. I was

glad to see the panel presenters make strong arguments for not doing anything too radical with computers (or English studies), but without closing off the notion of doing important and useful things with these objects (some of which might turn out actually to be “radical”).

Tom

Date: Friday, 30 May 1997

From: Thomas Phillion

Subject: #2: Mythologizing the symposium

Given my reading of the “defensive” tone of Friday’s presentation, I came to Saturday’s session determined to try to shift the mood in a more positive direction such that the consultants’ considerable knowledge and experience might be put to good use. To that end, I raised the question of how to conceive of the place of e-works within the UIC English department, and I offered the three different possibilities that I have considered: to view it as a “program” committed to technology and English studies in the same way that we have a “composition” program or a “secondary English” teacher education program; to view it as a “service” or “office” within the English department committed to helping students and teachers to go “on-line”; or, to view it as a “site” or “space” within the English department that students and teachers can make use of for diverse purposes, much like the UIC Writing Center. My sense was that the consultants and others responded positively to this last suggestion, and after a few weeks away from this idea, I still like it. The strength of this proposal, as I see it, is the way that it gives institutional definition to this former “project” while at the same time making room for a maximum amount of freedom and experimentation.

At our break on Saturday, Paula Mathieu approached me and said that she too liked the above proposal but that she was concerned that e-works not become a space like the UIC Writing Center in which almost all students work or volunteer without pay. One of the pitfalls of being as peripheral as the UIC Writing Center, Paula reminded me, is that there are not enough resources in support of it. Consequently, a lot of good people give time and effort without the sort of remuneration that faculty sometimes take for granted. As I told Paula, I share her concerns, but it also seems to me that there is no way to avoid this pitfall, at least absolutely, here at UIC. The director of e-works will need to make strong arguments to others in support of the work that will take place therein; but almost as a matter of course, there will be limitations. The Director and others in e-works will have to work toward the goals articulated in the Manifesto with regard to pay and other work conditions, but they also will have to find creative ways of configuring e-works such that benefits (useful benefits) beyond the economic are

wrought, and such that creative (but temporary) re-configurations of normal economic relations are somehow obtained.

Tom

Date: Friday, 30 May 1997

From: Thomas Phillion

Subject: #3: Part 3 of the myth

As the discussion on Saturday moved beyond the topic of the place of e-works in the UIC English Department, I found myself responding to a couple of different comments that people made, without ever having the opportunity to voice my thoughts. Here, then, are just a couple of ideas that I found especially provocative:

One comment I responded strongly to was Cindy Selfe's comment that she thought the Manifesto should be revised to be less "agonistic" (I believe this is what she said). I strongly agree with this comment, if by it she means let's cut out the argumentative, us-vs.-them rhetoric (or, as Ken so bluntly put it, "who are the enemies?"). From the get-go, I was uncomfortable with this dimension of the manifesto, and the way in which it infused some of our electronic conversations and especially the Friday panel presentation (the label of "administrators" to identify the panel speakers seemed to me to create an unnecessary and inaccurate "us vs. them" situation). In general, it seems to me that the label "manifesto" is a poor one; it presumes a certain amount of power and privilege, or at least a desire for power and privilege in opposition to some contemporary force. More useful, I think, is a collaborative or oppositional approach, one that recognizes the peripheral position of e-works, and one that names the commitments of the e-works collective without diminishing the views of non- or anti-technological colleagues and administrators, or colleagues and administrators who appear to possess a simplistic or reductionist view of technology.

At another point in the discussion, I think when we were talking about the "colonialist" mindset of the U of I-Online document, I had a reaction that builds upon what I am saying above. I began to think, in other words, that we in e-works ought at all times to be as self-reflective as we can about our complicity in this whole *affair* with technology. Throughout the morning, I heard several remarks that indicated a deep skepticism about the self-serving goals of administrators with regard to technology, and the like. I think it is important to realize that we in e-works and tic-toc (with the exception of Greg Ulmer, of course :), are much like our "conservative," "traditional," or "colonialist" brethren. Don't we in e-works and other Internet projects share a desire to acquire a large viewing audience? Don't we want e-works to be an example to others, to be replicable in other post-secondary contexts,

because we have a desire to enhance the reputation of UIC (or maybe just our own reputations?)? Haven't some of us embraced technology because we *fear* the notion that others might beat us to the punch? (or because we know that no one is hiring those Shakespeare scholars anymore?) My point in all of this is that we should be careful about positioning others (even the u of I on-line people) as somehow entirely different from ourselves, at least in the sense that they are colonialist, materialist, or capitalist, and we are not. It seems to me that we ought to indicate through e-works, and through the tic-toc manifesto, our recognition of our complicity with the current fascination with technology, but our aspirations to create a different sort of culture.

Just two quick, and final, comments. As Bill Covino spoke convincingly in response to Greg Ulmer about how Greg's "romantic" notion of literacy is being co-opted by the Disney corporation and other businesses, I began to think about the direction I assume he was headed in. I think Bill was making the point that we need an approach to literacy, to technology, that is self-aware with regard to issues of power, class, race, and gender (I heard some whispers about this last idea on Saturday—did anybody else hear that?). In composition terms, we need a social-epistemic approach to literacy and technology. The point I want to make here is that I think there is a place for both Greg's perspective and Bill's perspective (and Joe's and Patty's, and Eric's, etc.). That is, I think we need a social-epistemic approach that is as inspiring, as hopeful, as Greg's perspective. E-works, I think, ought to be inspiring and critical; experimental and pragmatic; comfortable and uncomfortable (as Joe Amato so passionately put it).

E-works also ought to be a sight for useful conversation, a point that I will end with. In response to my opening comment on Saturday that e-works ought to support research, teaching, conversation, and information, Don Marshall raised a question about this term "conversation." I nodded my head in agreement, mostly because I had thought about using the term "communication," but had cut it in favor of the more trendy term. The more I think about it though, I like this term conversation. In a way, I shouldn't even have to mention it; research and teaching, it seems to me, all involve conversation, and perhaps this is why Don reacted negatively to this term, for fear that it conveys something soft or uninvolved in work. But it seems to me that with research and teaching currently configured as they are, usually, as not about conversation, or about limited conversation, there is a need to highlight the usefulness of exploratory or speculative conversation. Just the other day, Don helped me to make an argument to the Dean of our College of Arts and Sciences in support of putting a sink in our new Writing Center; the rationale, of course, was that a writing center needs coffee, and more importantly, it needs a place where people can gather to talk, discuss, vent, acquire insight, friendship, and sometimes even inspira-

tion. These informal or unofficial or underground venues for talk are important to the ongoing official or sanctioned talk that takes place in writing centers. Correspondingly, I'd make the argument that an English department needs unsanctioned or exploratory conversation—lots of it. And it doesn't just need conversation directed toward "work," or, alternatively, "normative work." It also needs hard to define communications such as those that have taken place within Tic-Toc that involve work, but that involve work of a type that most of us find strange and/or hard to define. E-works, I think, ought make arguments in favor of this sort of unsanctioned or undefined talk, it ought to research and reflect upon the form and function of such talk, and it ought to provide a working site for it.

Anyway, these are my reflections, my last ones for the rest of the summer, I think. Issues? The main issues are hard for me to see at this point; I suppose that they will come up in context, as we negotiate the administrative structure of e-works, and make decisions about its future direction. The issues now, I think, are pragmatic ones—what should that administrative structure of e-works look like? Where should this space or site be located (in the English department, or in a more interdisciplinary venue, as Jim seemed to be suggesting?)? It will be interesting to see how e-works changes and grows, and I look forward to hearing more about it, to participating in it, and especially to learning more about technology and literacy from those of you who continue to participate in this conversation.

Tom

Date: Monday, 2 June 1997

From: Eric Crump

Subject: Interesting article from the *Chronicle*

Thanks for forwarding the *Chronicle* article! Interesting, yes, and disappointing. Lisa attended the C-Fest MOO session lead by Cynthia and Mick, did a nice (but very short) piece about it for the *Chronicle* online. But this version relegates their work to two unattributed paragraphs and neglects to share any of their provocative comments. Sheesh.

The message here seems to be that the academy is in a muddle, unsure how to proceed with incorporating online work into the fabric of its value system. C-Fest is more proactive and productive, attempting to articulate ways the academy might proceed. Seems to me *that* effort ought to get a bit more attention than it did.

But I'm very biased in that regard :)

Eric

Date: Monday, 2 June 1997

From: Joe Amato

Subject: Interesting article from the *Chronicle*

EEK . . . thanx for forwarding that article, burks, don't know how i missed it! . . .

i'd hate to use IT as an example of how my dept. should be thinking about online work, though! . . . it leaves one with the feeling that it's not only "risky," but downright foolhardy (!) for scholars to be spending their time forging virtual networks and the like when they'll ultimately be evaluated in accordance with "traditional" standards for promotion & tenure... i mean, the article doesn't provide much in the way of WHY anybody would want to do online work . . . and w/o really delving into the reasons why, the entire online effort appears somewhat of a dodge, a fad, a way for younger scholars to colonize new territories for their own potential benefit . . . look at the following, again:

>And Internet-savvy scholars admit that not every on-line project is
>worth counting toward tenure. Moderating a mailing list, for
>example, may dominate a scholar's time, but in some cases
>such work would barely qualify as scholarly service, let alone as
>publishing. And while building a World-Wide Web site can be
>difficult and time-consuming, most observers agree that technical
>work should not be afforded the same credit that rigorous
>research in one's field deserves.

who are these "internet-savvy scholars," anyway? . . . the effect of these three sentences is damaging as hell . . . "moderating a mailing list" surely constitutes scholarly service—service to one's profession (and i've never run into anybody claiming same as publishing) . . . building a web site, depending on what it is, can be more or less "rigorous" than research "deserv[ing]" of credit . . . and it's not not not simply "technical work" . . .

i'm happy to hear, btw, that john unsworth got tenure, having known john for years now online (and having met him only once fff) . . . but hey—he got tenure at uva!—no mean accomplishment . . . at the same time, *postmodern culture* (which john started with eyal amiran) is surely an established journal in the field . . . having begun such a thing, and having gotten it sanctioned (most recently) by johns hopkins up, is also no mean accomplishment . . .

anyway . . . disappointing piece, in all, and i just thought i'd register my disappointment here . . .

best, Joe

Date: Tuesday, 10 June 1997
From: Bob Goldstein
Subject: Conference and onward

Dear 'Tockers:

I've been ruminating about the conference for a while, but I doubt I'll have time to refine anything further. Much as I like technology, the human contact was essential. So here are my recommendations, as considered as I can make them.

Where to start? The hi-tech/UI-Online frenzy is driven by economic threats and opportunities, real and imagined. UIC's actions must address this at a minimum, and therefore the experiments should tell us something about increasing revenues or decreasing costs. I'm not a corporate mogul, but we should at least understand the economic analysis, even when our ultimate actions do not maximize financial gain. Bottom line of economics: start with accessible technology that is most beneficial educationally.

Select a course or small group of related courses.

1. What aspects could be better done by self-study, aided by a well-crafted cdrom or web site?
2. What aspects could be better done by asynchronous or synchronous interactions between students and perhaps TAs?
3. What aspects must be dealt with by the professor?
4. What aspects require f2f?
5. Should courses remain separate?
6. Is technology really useful? We need answers, at least tentative answers, for the specific courses under consideration, not necessarily in general (yet).

Now — what kind of collaborative effort would it take to produce the cdrom and web site, organize and train the TAs, set up the infrastructure (MOO, lists, etc), and give the professor(s) the tools to keep everything coordinated? And in the long run, can the materials and techniques developed for one class be used, with modifications, in another class? Can we construct object oriented teaching? (Hmm, could this be Learning with Object Oriented Teaching - LOOT ? Sorry, couldn't resist :-)

I'm advocating the teaching equivalent of Quality Time. When a student interacts with a professor, make it worthwhile. But don't use up the professor's time if a TA or cdrom will do as well. If you're not sure how to divide the labor, experiment. But keep track, so later you can better predict how to make the divide.

Some specifics:

1. Many people see MOOcho benefit. Since a MOO needs a crit-

ical mass, it might help if one MOO is used for several different courses.

2. Deal with a small set of related courses at one time. Can a sense of community be encouraged by lists or MOO in which students from different courses mix? Will students in one class benefit by being able to comment in another class discussion?

3. I did not get a sense of great support for eworks as a virtual department. But I think there would be lots of support for a genuinely useful informational web site. Keep the web site fresh, with the goal of having most English faculty and students want to view it at least once or twice per week. That means new info on seminars and other events, new pointers to pertinent info on the net, a convenient place to find policy and regulations, meeting minutes if appropriate, contests (maybe a web scavenger hunt, writing contest, whatever), and so on. A tall order, frankly. But start with this goal, and see what it evolves into.

4. Access, particularly student access, is a problem. But this will be solved by market forces, not by the English department. Fortunately, I believe there is enough access now that we can experiment in earnest, even if not all students can participate. Specifically aim the experiments at students who already have reasonable access and expertise. It's ok to have some experiments with beginners, but the real questions that need answering now are "How do we teach English to technology-experienced students?" rather than "How do we teach technology to beginners?" Keith's new course in the fall is a good example of what to do. Keep the emphasis on "teaching English" rather than "using technology because it's there".

5. Experiment with faculty collaboration. Instead of 2 professors each teaching a single course, have both teachers collaborate on both courses. You'll get more thorough coverage of on-line office hours, and it will be psychologically harder to enter "class" unprepared. It will also make development of web site material (and possibly cdrom editions) more likely, particularly if the material, once developed, can be easily customized for both classes. Give TAs more room for initiative in developing and using materials.

I can't get much more specific because I really don't know anything about teaching English. Or taking English; the humanities requirements for geeks like me were quite minimal. But I really think that if you design a program to address the above questions, you'll do the Right Thing.

Bob

Date: Tuesday, 10 June 1997

From: Leslie Hammersmith

Subject: Conference and onward

Response to Bob Goldstein from Leslie Hammersmith:

I would like to second Bob Goldstein's recommendations! I agree with all four of his specific points. I am using the web to teach English as a Second Language and there is always a debate whether we are teaching "English" or if we are teaching "computers". I think we should be teaching computers as a tool for learning English. Or, to quote Bob, "Keep the emphasis on "teaching English" rather than "using technology because it's there".

At this moment I think distance learning is a far step from anything my department (Tutorium in Intensive English) can do right now at least. We have to start small. Access is a problem for our students, but even greater is the need for teachers who can use the technology and develop courses. Right now I am the only who has done it.

Bob, I would like to congratulate you, and thank you, for hitting the nail on the head (for me at least). I think these recommendations can give eworks a viable path for growth, as a virtual department and as a leader in technology assisted learning.

That's it for my first contribution to the TICTOC list. I enjoyed participating in the Symposium and wish I could have been involved more. It was extremely useful to meet everyone f2f. I look forward to a productive relationship with eworks.

Thanks, everyone!

Leslie

Date: Friday, 13 June 1997

From: Burks Oakley

Subject: Report on electronic publishing

Greetings! I rec'd this message from Sharon Hogan (UIC Librarian) - thought it might be of interest to the 'tockers.

Best regards,

Burks

>Dear cni-announce subscribers: The message below from Peter
>Graham of Rutgers announces the availability of a report on elec
>tronic publishing and tenure, which is a topic of discussion on
>many campuses. —Joan Lippincott

>You may wish to see and inform others of the recent report from
>a Rutgers committee on electronic publishing and tenure. In the
>course of developing this report we asked for information from
>the cni-announce list and got a number of helpful comments.
>Many respondents expressed interest in the outcome of our work.

>The report is now under discussion within the Rutgers communi
>ty. It was developed by a committee of faculty in the University
>and makes recommendations for the consideration of electronic
>publication in the appointment, promotion and review process.
>One paragraph in the Summary portion of the document reads,
>"The Committee regards electronic dissemination as having all
>the capabilities to be as legitimate a form of publication as print.
>We urge a focus on content and quality review processes rather
>than on medium or format, and we suggest flexibility and com
>mon sense in interpreting the value of new publication modes."
>This reflects what the committee found and recommended, i.e.
>that the quality of the work as reflected by peer review is the
>important issue, not the format of the publication. The report also
>takes note of the need for assurance of the authenticity, or integri
>ty, of electronic publications. The report is available both in
>HTML format (with links to many of the e-publications men
>tioned) and in PDF format (reflected the publication format here
>at Rutgers). The HTML version, which will link to the PDF ver
>sion, is available at URL:<http://aultnis.rutgers.edu/texts/ept.html>.
>—pg Peter Graham
>psgraham@rci.rutgers.edu Rutgers University Libraries 169
>College Ave., New Brunswick, NJ 08903 (908)445-5908; fax
>(908)445-5888 URL:<http://aultnis.rutgers.edu/pghome.html>

Date: Saturday, 14 June 1997

From: Mick Doherty

Subject: Report on electronic publishing

This report is also linked to the tenure page I developed in conjunction with my TicToc presentation: <http://www.rpi.edu/~doherm/recognition>. The site (mine not Rutgers) was featured in *CHE* last month. :-)

Mick

