

Re-designing the *Conversazione*: How Can Twenty-First-Century Instructional Technologies Foster Feminist Teaching about Nineteenth- Century Women's Work?

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In the fall of 1997, we team-taught an interdisciplinary course which we hoped would enact a feminist pedagogy introducing students to a topic of continuing interest in Women's Studies—the daily work of women in the United States in the long nineteenth century (1780-1920).

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Field(s):

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Course(s):

Women's Work in the Long
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Context:

--a team-taught, interdisciplinary offering for English or history credit.
--upper-level courses, primarily for juniors and seniors majoring in history or English, but open to students from other disciplines. Kennesaw State is a comprehensive university with a student body that is primarily non-traditional.

Intention:

--to use technology to create a learning environment reminiscent of the tone and goals of the 19th-century *conversazione*, a feminine model for learning emphasizing a collaborative exchange of ideas related to the social position of women and to intellectual uplift.

students to a topic of continuing interest in Women's Studies—the daily work of women in the United States in the long nineteenth century (1780-1920). Ambitiously, we sought to expose students to methodological issues surrounding use of primary texts in both literature and history at the same time as we incorporated a variety of technologies into the course. Because we anticipated that inherent traits in particular instructional technologies would be compatible with our teaching philosophy, and because we imagined that we could use technology to promote our students' understanding of how various technologies shaped women's labor in the earlier era we were studying, we designed our course to incorporate interactive video distance learning, a course list-

WORKS AND DAYS 31/32, Vol. 16, Nos. 1&2, 1998

serv, and multiple presentation technologies (such as web pages and PowerPoint displays).

Like many post-secondary instructors who have responded to calls for “technology-enhanced” instruction, we began this project with great enthusiasm, based in part on our ongoing use of developing technologies, such as the web and email in our own scholarship and daily administrative work.¹ That is, we began designing our class with a rather naïve “add-on” view of technology as a tool we could exploit to teach subject matter more effectively; we failed, as Thomas Russell has suggested neophytes often do, to adapt the content of our course to the technologies we were using, because we assumed those technologies could rather straightforwardly be “infused” into an already-existing (even if streamlined) curriculum (xi).² Said another way, we saw ourselves as teaching *with* technologies rather than *through* them, so that we neglected, in pre-planning and during much of our teaching, to ask ourselves hard questions about how the technologies we would be employing should/would change the ways in which our students viewed the objects of study in the course, as well as their own processes of learning. Thus, what we enthusiastically imagined in planning and what happened in practice—as so often happens in the classroom—turned out to be far from a perfect match. Reviewing our experience, we can see that the mix of setbacks and successes we encountered in the course may best be explained by noting that our implementation of specific technological tools was sometimes at odds with our feminist teaching philosophy, other times consistent with it. Now, as we radically revamp the course for the fall of 1999, we plan to make extensive use of technologies that, within the material conditions of teaching at our institution at this time, have a clear potential for fostering our goals, even as we eliminate or re-form other technology-related aspects of the class. We are struggling to meet what Carl Schulkin has called the “challenge of integration”: using new technologies not only to meet our own goals but to develop “new forms” of learning (11).³

As a record of a teaching experience that was only partly successful and as a springboard toward revising our course, this essay will describe and evaluate our use of several technological strands in the 1997 class, specifically distance learning broadcasts linking our site with a cohort group at Armstrong Atlantic University in Savannah; a computer list-serv connecting students and instructors from both sites; and technology-enhanced presentations of course material which were created by us and by our students. We will show that the relative effectiveness/ineffectiveness of these specific

tools in this class correlated directly with the extent to which our implementation of each technology component was consistent with our feminist teaching goals.

After reading a University System of Georgia Regents' call for proposals on "Teaching with Technology" in the spring of 1996, we collaborated with historian Nancy White from Armstrong Atlantic State University to propose an interdisciplinary class on women's work that would foreground technology both in course content and in teaching methods.⁴ In practical terms, the central objective of the grant proposal and consequently of the course was to "prepare, deliver, and evaluate an interdisciplinary course" that would "make innovative use of instructional technologies to help students understand the various historically situated cultural practices that were a part of women's work in the United States from the early Republic through the Progressive eras." Despite our firm commitment to our subject matter, in many respects that content was actually less important to us than the approaches for productive communal learning which we hoped to nurture in our students. As feminist teachers, we intended (as we declared in our grant proposal) for the class to recreate a nineteenth-century *conversazione* through the use of modern technologies. *Conversazione* is an Americanized version of an Italian word used in the nineteenth century to mean an informal, but challenging, collaborative exchange of ideas. In a letter to Sophia Ripley, Margaret Fuller formulated what became the guiding principles of the *conversazione*. Fuller wrote that she wished "to assemble a circle of 'well-educated and thinking women'" to explore the questions, " 'What are we born to do; and how shall we do it?'" (qtd. in Chevigny 201-11). We hoped in our class to recreate such an interactive, questioning and relevant learning environment for both female and male students. While encouraging the class members' consideration of their own gendered work experiences, inside and outside the university, we wanted to facilitate their *shared exploration* of ways in which nineteenth-century technologies shaped women's work in that era, as well as how women created and appropriated technologies for work.⁵ In setting these goals, we aimed for a pedagogy drawing on feminist standpoint theory (encouraging our students to identify and critique their particular positions in society) and Bakhtinian dialogics (urging them to see themselves as agents in exchanges whereby discourse, in its multiple forms, can promote social understanding and change).⁶ Therefore, as we planned with Professor White, we selected technology emphases that we *thought* would foster our feminist pedagogy. In the discussion below, we

will outline ways in which our expectations were sometimes inaccurate, in large part because they were based in our then-underanalyzed view of the specific technology tools in question, especially within the context of material conditions related to our local teaching situation. To interpret both the consistencies and the mismatches between our feminist teaching goals and our implementation of technologies, we will draw upon Carolyn M. Shrewsbury's essay, "What Is Feminist Pedagogy?"⁷ Shrewsbury's definition of feminist pedagogy as teaching which fosters community, a sense of empowerment, and leadership development among students roughly corresponds to the broad aims we held for the particular technologies we were emphasizing (distance learning link-ups, listserv conversations, and use of presentation technologies). In reviewing our efforts to implement each of the various technology strands we originally had in mind for the course, we will strive for the kind of feminist-postmodern materialist analysis of our experience advocated by Rosemary Hennessy, who has emphasized the need for feminists "to attend more rigorously to the materiality of knowledge":

This means, in part, that we have to inquire into the processes whereby feminism appropriates and reformulates its concepts [in this case, theories and practice of technology use in teaching]. If feminist inquiry is not to be a re-enactment of the dominant pluralist paradigm, it needs to make visible the contesting interests informing new knowledges and disarticulate their salient features from analytics that often subvert the aims of feminism's political agenda. (xiv)

With Hennessy's formulation in mind, then, we will seek to "disarticulate" the major "features" of each of our course's major technology strands, while pointing out the ways in which those traits, as evident in the particular occasion of that class, reinforced and/or undermined the major feminist teaching goals (community, empowerment, and leadership) identified by Shrewsbury.

I. Community-Building and/versus Video Distance Learning

Carolyn Shrewsbury's discussion of "community" as one of the goals of feminist pedagogy corresponds well with our initial aims for using video distance learning in our class. Shrewsbury draws on the work of Carol Gilligan to stress that feminist teaching strives "to build connections" and "to maintain connections that have been built," while recognizing that "[r]elationships are more than a

set of interactions among people," that they form a "web of existence" which can promote "both autonomy of self and mutuality with others" (170). Before we began the class, we were imagining that our distance learning video hook-up would foster just such an environment. We expected that the two-way broadcast sessions could be conducted in ways to expand our own and our students' knowledge of themselves and the course content by exposing them to diverse perspectives and inviting them "to build connections" with others in a setting different from their own. We expected the process of participating in an ongoing *conversazione* with students and an instructor from a different site would highlight ways in which any classroom can become a community through the combined efforts of those involved, as they recognize the resources diverse individuals bring to a learning situation, while constructing both individual and shared understandings. In fact, the technicians who worked with all three instructors during pre-course practice sessions seemed to affirm our goals, for they repeatedly emphasized the need (and the possibility) of making the two sites into "one classroom" by way of a range of specific teaching strategies, such as calling on students at the "other" site by name and promoting oral exchanges between students at the two locations.

In practice, however, we found that our use of GSAMS (the Georgia State-wide Academic and Medical System) was more at odds with our pedagogical goals and beliefs than we expected. Perhaps we should not have been surprised. As Chris M. Anson has recently observed, video broadcasts and other forms of distance learning (e.g., online correspondence instruction) have been particularly attractive to administrators, who tend to view this technology as a cost-cutter, since one "lead teacher" can serve a large number of students, potentially at numerous remote sites. Anson also emphasizes that "[s]uch an arrangement is especially attractive to institutions used to delivering instruction via the traditional 'banking' model of lectures and objectively scorable tests" (272). Although he imagines a near-future scenario where a university student could benefit from viewing CD-ROM lectures by an internationally renowned scholar-teacher (266), Anson suggests that caring instructors should be wary of distance learning, since it tends to reinforce the "'factory' model of education" over more dialogic approaches like Paulo Freire's (270). Anson also argues that distance learning generally fails to promote adequate interaction among students, and he notes that teachers working in a distance learning environment "often report feeling detached from the students at the distant sites, unable to carry on 'extracurricular' con-

versations with them" (273).

We hoped to avoid some of the very problems Anson underscores, partly by seeing our group at Kennesaw and the other in Savannah as one community, linked by video technology, and we were partially successful. However, some of the traits inherent in the particular GSAMS classroom environments at Kennesaw and Armstrong (and our rather naïve failure to counteract them) undermined what Hennessy might call our efforts to *appropriate* and *reformulate* video distance learning—very often used to “deliver” instruction to relatively inactive students—into a technology for community-building through a feminist pedagogy. At this point, taking Hennessy’s advice, we can “make visible the contesting interests” at play in that classroom environment, highlighting the specific “salient features” in the material conditions we faced to show how this particular distance learning situation sometimes supported, sometimes “subvert[ed] the aims” of our own feminist teaching “agenda.” As indicated by our bringing three tenured instructors to the enterprise, we did not see video distance learning as a money-saver, but as an opportunity to expand the range of expertise in our learning conversation. Although combining our two groups created a class larger (at about 40 students) than many upper-level humanities sections at either of our institutions, we did not see ourselves as teaching a large lecture section, but rather an expanded discussion-and-mini-lecture course, and we expected that the whole group would benefit from diverse student interests and experiences at each individual site that would not be available at the other.

In some ways, in fact, our hopeful expectations were realized, and the interactive video distance learning link did help foster the kind of feminist community Shrewsbury envisions. KSU students were able to see examples of local historic sites in Savannah (where AASU is located) which otherwise could not have been included in the course. And AASU students could learn about cultural sites in North Georgia as well. One of the KSU students, after seeing a presentation on an historic house in Savannah, subsequently made the five-hour trip to visit the site herself. Her visit generated intriguing conversations between the Kennesaw and Savannah students on the purpose and function of historic preservation. In addition, two of the members of the AASU class were M.A. students who were able to share their own developing research on nineteenth-century history with our KSU undergraduates, enriching our class still further. Overall, whole-group, cross-site discussions between the two classes proved increasingly suc-

cessful as the quarter progressed, especially when we took class time beforehand for small-group discussions at our own campuses. By the end of the term, student presentations based on the major projects, as explained below, provided an extremely effective way to utilize the GSAMS system for community-building: for instance, students from our location took the Savannah contingent on a virtual tour of Cherokee tribal historic sites that Armstrong students could not easily visit in person.

In addition, the three instructors found that the GSAMS hook-up certainly facilitated our own planning. Once a week, we held an extended GSAMS teleconference after class. At that time, we outlined sessions for the next week and discussed what role each of us and various students would play. These sessions also helped us to think seriously about both content and pedagogy for the course, especially our efforts to use new technologies. The immediacy of the face-to-face video hook-up pushed us to examine our teaching critically, as we often had to justify to each other suggestions we made about instructional activities, adjustments to the syllabus, or plans for assignments. At this point, as we revisit the course in light of scholarship on teaching and learning with technology, we cannot help noticing that these conferences provided the instructors with benefits from intense, interactive exchanges that were not typical of the distance learning experience our students had. Ironically, in other words, while GSAMS gave us multiple opportunities for interpersonal learning in an authentic context, so that the three of us were creating a small, fully engaged community of teacher-learners within the larger framework of the course, our use of the same distance learning capability during class-time often cast our students as consumers of knowledge more than active makers of shared understandings, and this passivity undermined community-building.

Part of the problem was that, with all three of us inexperienced in facilitating classes in a GSAMS environment, our students had to suffer through three instructors' efforts to adapt to the very different requirements of teaching on television versus teaching in a traditional classroom. For example, we needed highly organized presentations lasting only about fifteen to twenty minutes to maintain student attention at both sites and allow time for discussion. Simply being a "talking head," we realized, would not be a very successful technique, either, especially for students at the distant site. We consequently integrated a variety of visual resources, but we did so with varying degrees of success, partly because displaying visual images over GSAMS was more complicated than displaying them

in a single classroom. (See below.) We were trying to model both effective presentation skills and group-learning strategies for the GSAMS environment, in order to help our students prepare for their own presentations later in the quarter. But this goal was at odds with our sense that we also had responsibility for coverage of material—a responsibility that discouraged open-ended discussion.

Despite these limitations, we still expected that students would enjoy getting to know their peers at another college in the Georgia university system and that the students would genuinely interact, learn each others' names, and even become friendly. However, many students found the video distance learning environment bewildering at first; some never overcame their initial discomfort. When cast as listeners, students sometimes had trouble deciding whether to look at the large video screen or to look at the presenter, if s/he was in their own classroom. Students had similar difficulties when invited to speak from their seats at either site. At KSU, students had microphones dropped from the ceiling above them, so that they could talk in a normal voice while they were "on TV." Students at Armstrong manually turned on table microphones. Either way, only one student could be heard at a time, inhibiting the vibrant collaborative talk that often occurs in regular classrooms. Learning how to pay attention to both audio and visual cues to allow peers time to complete a comment was difficult. (For instance, our room's limited space and the need to provide an image for the distant site—an image the moveable "audience" camera could focus on when individual students spoke—precluded placing the group in a circle [a hallmark of feminist teaching], so even at their local site students had to watch peers on screen if they wanted to identify the right moment when they could interject.) A fair number of students seemed to enjoy coming up to the podium to make presentations, and this group was usually willing to speak from their seats during class discussions. Others rarely said anything unless directly called upon. Of course a similar situation can exist in any classroom, but shy students were especially disadvantaged by such distance learning elements as the rather intimidating large screen image of any speaker and the need to direct voices at microphones.

Enrollment imbalance, as well as room size and space arrangement, also affected our efforts to create a sense of one classroom community.⁸ Our class at KSU had about thirty students; the class at Armstrong Atlantic had only about ten. This discrepancy made it difficult for the instructor or the students at AASU to recognize

KSU students or to learn their names, especially since our room at Kennesaw was a long rectangle, with a number of students relegated to sitting in the back, where it was difficult to focus a camera on them. This situation militated against the two groups of students functioning as an integrated unit, so as we re-view the class through the lens of Hennessy's emphasis on disjunctions between material conditions and feminist aims, we can see that the "real" spaces of the two classrooms impeded creation of a "virtual" space in line with Shrewsbury's vision of community.

Overall, in fact, KSU students were generally dissatisfied with the video distance learning aspects of the course. Only about 30% of the students indicated on their course evaluations that they "agreed" that the broadcasting feature of the class was beneficial to their learning. With that in mind, the next time we teach the course we plan to eliminate the GSAMS component. Nonetheless, we still believe that *interactive* video distance learning does have potential for feminist pedagogy.⁹ We were pleased that the horror stories we heard about the broadcasts not being reliable turned out to be inaccurate in our case: we lost transmission only once in a ten-week quarter with almost twenty sessions. Furthermore, the class discussions and presentations that highlighted distinctively local areas of expertise and experience emphasized for us the potential of distance learning for exposing students to new viewpoints not available in their home institutions, so the next time we use this technology, we will follow Russell's advice to adapt our content to take greater advantage of this feature of the technology. (e.g., If partnering again with Savannah, we would emphasize architecture, since that area abounds in preservation sites). We would also advocate for different designs for the video classrooms themselves and for enrollments consistent with the traits of those spaces. Having two rather small classes of about 15-20 students, with each arranged to facilitate the two sites' enrollees being able to see and hear each other, would make for a far more successful class.

II. Feminist Empowerment on the Course List-serv

If our students were sometimes frustrated by specific limitations inherent in the video distance learning environment, they found relief—and enhanced control over their own learning—in the class list-serv. Certainly, in one sense, our list-serv was simply a second component in a complex distance learning space that included both the virtual spaces of our two classrooms merged in broadcast

sounds/images and the multivocal discourse space of online discussions connecting participants who were not in the same physical location.¹⁰ However, we also perceive fundamental differences between the technology of GSAMS (as it was available to us) and the technology of our sustained online discussion site, and we would argue that the different levels of success we attained with these two technologies were consistent with the degree to which our implementation matched our feminist teaching beliefs. In the case of the list-serv, significantly, we began the course with more experience on our side, and thus with a clearer view of what our results would be, since one of us (Sarah) had done teacher research on this technology, and since both of us had fostered student empowerment online before (Randolph, Robbins and Gere 68-74).

Shrewsbury's vision of "empowerment" in feminist pedagogy, in fact, aptly characterizes the aims we had for our list-serv, and the traits she outlines were very much in evidence in the online exchanges for the class:

By focusing on empowerment, feminist pedagogy embodies a concept of power as energy, capacity, and potential rather than as domination. This is an image of power as the glue holding a community together, giving the people the opportunity "to act, to move, to change conditions, for the benefit of the whole population" Power can be used to enhance both autonomy and mutuality. To be empowered is to be able to "claim an education" as Adrienne Rich urges. . . .To be empowered is to be able to connect with others in mutually productive ways. (168)

Consistent with Shrewsbury's formulation, the list-serv discussions, as we had hoped, exhibited a great deal of "energy," with students often debating with each other, asking questions, and responding both to prompts we posted and to each others' entries. The list increased the "capacity" of the course by creating an extended arena for discussion, especially important given the ways in which the GSAMS broadcasts too often devoted excessive time to close-ended presentations with only limited time for student response and questions. Furthermore, online the students could take control, resisting the professors, the syllabus, and the readings by raising their own topics of conversation or redirecting others, so that the list became a site for "potential" rather than "domination." Certainly, on the one hand, as often happens in the unrestrained list-serv environment, some students wrote more often and more extensively than others; but, unlike real-time class discussions

when students are dependent on instructors to contain overly-vocal peers, online the delete button was available. On the other hand, time for reflective students to gather their thoughts before writing, or to revise what they were saying, was also available. We realize that these observations about the content and tenor of our list-serv are not unique; they are quite reminiscent of previous research into the liberatory nature of this technology in teaching.¹¹ Yet the degree to which students used their online language to, as Shrewsbury suggests, “claim” their learning and “to connect with others in mutually productive ways” seemed especially significant in a course where their real-time/space meetings were far more constrained by the broadcast environment than the fluid space of the list-serv.

In some ways, the success of the list-serv was surely related to the nature of our student group. Since Kennesaw students commute, often from well over an hour away, and since they do not tend to spend much social time on campus, list-servs at our institution have often fulfilled some of the generative functions that might otherwise be addressed in late-night dorm discussions. Several of our students had already participated in list-servs for other classes. Therefore, they were able to write informal yet substantive postings as models for their peers. In addition, having the Savannah students on the list made participation more compelling, since those class members were not available for regular face-to-face talks. In other words, in this case the list-serv was more authentic as a site for extending classroom talk than is sometimes the case. (We have both heard about courses where students sit in a computer classroom and e-mail each other, and we wonder how essential such exchanges can really feel.)

Despite our high expectations, we did encounter several problems with our list-serv. For one thing, as in other classes where we’ve used this tool to supplement face-to-face meetings, managing the list was time-consuming. Getting e-mail addresses established for our Armstrong contingent, for instance, took longer than we had anticipated, so we were hesitant about putting too much emphasis on “list-talk” until everyone (or nearly everyone) was online. Once the list was rolling along, we needed to monitor students’ work there, in quantity and quality, because we had made regular participation a requirement that would be addressed in course grades. The two of us also spent a good deal of time talking about prompts that would make the list productive. Among other things, we considered the kind, length, and frequency of postings by us as issues we needed to address continually. While

on one level this kind of reflective analysis should be a part of all informed classroom practice, adding the list-serv as a strand to the other components of the course we were actively interrogating meant our ongoing self-assessment was more complex. In other words, while the nature of the list provided multiple opportunities consistent with our belief in feminist teaching as nurturing, these same traits increased the demands on our time and energy.

Another problem—the question of equity—was more at odds with feminist teaching’s democratic principles. Those students who had home computers tended to find the requirement to participate in the list-serv quite appealing: they could kick back in pajamas in the wee hours, if they chose, augmenting class discussion with the added benefit of time to reflect upon what had already been said or to reread in light of our in-person work together. For these students, the time spent crafting postings for the list and reading others’ entries there was constructive and liberating; they could choose when and for how long to be online, and they could take advantage of that flexibility to enhance the quality of their participation in our ongoing conversation, with the online component truly complementing and extending “real” class time. In these cases, the list-serv really did seem to be contributing to a *conversazione*, with the “parlor” both a virtual and a domestic one. However, students who did not have home computers or who were not already comfortable with email tended to find the list-serv requirement burdensome. While we could fault a few for scheduling too little time on campus to use our open labs, we also recognize that many of those enrolled at KSU have multiple personal and professional responsibilities beyond attending college. (One of our students, for instance, was juggling multiple part-time jobs, a new baby, and two courses.) For these students, learning the steps for accessing their email accounts, finding time to use a campus-based computer, and becoming adept with the rhetorical strategies for online talk became major challenges. We tried to mitigate such difficulties by providing some class time for tutorials and inviting students to come to our offices for one-on-one lessons, but the gap between accomplished, well-provided computer users and novices was never fully closed. In the end, we were left with a modified U-curve in list-serv participation, with a large number of students classifiable as very active, energetic chatters, a much smaller number as resistant and/or frustrated, and not many in between.

For those who did participate regularly, the list-serv was remarkably productive. Online discussion gave us a means to cover more

content, and to “make visible” students’ understandings and their questions. For example, we utilized “content-focused” discussions of *Celia, A Slave* and Susie King Taylor’s autobiography, in which we designed questions to prompt a comparative discussion of the texts both as historical sources and as works of literature. (For questions and students’ replies, see our website at <http://www.kennesaw.edu/hss/work/content/htm>.) Students responded thoughtfully to each others’ and to our prompts. They quickly established a pattern of rhetorically authorizing their own comments by situating them within the context of something said by another class member, thus suggesting that the list language could be dialogic as well as performative. (See examples of “dialogic community-building” on the website, based on exchanges about Harriet Beecher Stowe’s essays on housekeeping.) They made similar moves by relating their comments about one topic to other material we had studied in the course; in addition, they often used the list as a space to expand on or clarify class discussion. (See examples on our web-site.) These rhetorical traits of the students’ online activity exemplified two objectives Shrewsbury lists for feminist teaching promoting empowerment: “develop the students’ independence (from formal instructors) as learners,” and “expand the students’ understanding of the subject matter of the course and of the joy and difficulty of intense intellectual activity” (169).

Also consistent with feminist teaching, one of the empowering aspects of the list-serv discourse was more affective than content-centered. A number of our students began to use the list-serv virtual conversation space to erase the physical separation of the KSU and Armstrong groups. For example, they made no distinctions between students based on location: they were just as likely to cite a peer from another site as from their own, and just as likely to ask a follow-up question to a “distant” student as to a “close” one. (See examples of cross-site exchanges on our website.) Over time, then, some “voices” on the list-serv became distinct for each other, even though students were having difficulty getting to know each other well through the GSAMS technology.

Other empowering benefits of the list-serv were less specific to this course, but notable nonetheless. For example, students used the list site as a place/means of negotiating with us professors for clarification of and adjustments to assignments. (See link.)¹² These online moves helped democratize the classroom in a situation that might have been quite stilted, given such constraints on the instructors during class time as rushing to end a discussion before the broadcast screen went black. In addition, reading students’ list

entries helped us instructors see what students were understanding and enjoying, versus what they were confused about or unable to appreciate, so we were able to make adjustments in our teaching along the way. On a number of occasions, in fact, we would write a response to an individual student's posting based on the assumption that one person's confusion could be representative of a larger problem, or that one person's insightful question might reflect just-forming concepts in more class members' minds. See, for example, this exchange between Sarah and Jennifer Johnson:

1) Jennifer's posting—

In reading the Addams article *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (about her experiences at Rockford seminary) I found it interesting that she mentions the influence of her father on her education and religious beliefs. I think he was mention[ed] at least four times. Then again in the Gordon article "From Seminary to University: An Overview of Women's Higher Education, 1870-1920"—she is talking about a survey of Vassar alumnae that revealed these women attended college because their parents wanted them to. "Fathers were mentioned five times more frequently than mothers as sources of inspiration for college attendance." This is in the era of women being the major influence of the children in the home? Any comments? >Jennifer Johnson

2) Sarah's response—
Jennifer—

How brilliant of you to pick up on this seeming contradiction! Actually, there's been some research in literature and cultural studies on this seeming contradiction in much of the biographical discourse of the 19th cent., esp. the second half, but Beth Kowalski has even documented a similar set of comments in late 18th cent. English writing by women about their learning. K's thesis is that the MAJOR WOMEN THINKERS of late 18th cent. England, even as they advocated improved ed[ucation] for women, were generally . . . training under MALE teachers, esp. key fathers and father figures. Certainly, in Addams' case, if you read her whole book, you'll see her father as a main character/influence thru much of the text, tho less so after she opens Hull House. One explanation some women's studies

scholars have suggested for the seeming discrepancy is that women were “in charge of” home education in the early years, but until they gained access to higher ed late in the century, they couldn’t mentor the advanced ed of other women. Once more of them went to seminary and college, however, we begin to see a few female mentors emerge, esp. in the single-sex colleges. However, as recently as the late 70’s, when I was first in grad school at UNC, Chapel Hill, there were literally NO WOMEN PROFESSORS in the English department there!!!! So if we wanted mentors, we had to have males (and some, of course, were great mentors.)

Sarah Robbins

Overall, then, for most students, the list-serv was an empowering component in the course. Teaching the class again in 1999, we will certainly use online discussion again, whether a free-standing list-serv, a chat space attached to our website, MOOS, or some combination of the above. However we implement this technology in our next instructional program, we will include more guided computer classroom time for novices early in the quarter to help them get comfortable with the logistics of conversing online. We will also provide some models for appropriate tone and content. (This effort might prevent the kind of “reading error” one of our female students made in this case by interpreting a male classmate’s satirical comments on Irish domestics as straightforward ethnic bigotry.)¹³ And perhaps most important, we will devote some online and in-person discussion space/time to addressing questions about the implications of the list-serv content and methods, in light of the course’s broad inquiry questions. In 1997, although we could see much evidence of learning in our students’ postings, we’re less sure that they were able to critique the list-serv itself as a *conversazione* space and, more broadly, as a site for collaborative cultural work. With these changes, we hope our use of online discussion will better fulfill another of Shrewsbury’s objectives: helping students “develop their thinking about the goals and objectives they wish and need to accomplish individually and collectively” (168-69).

III. Creating Technology-Enhanced Presentations for Leadership-Building

Shrewsbury’s description of “the development of leadership” as a

major goal of feminist pedagogy is clearly consistent with our own ideas about key responsibilities for our teaching (171). With Shrewsbury, we believe that students should be enabled “to act” out of their own beliefs and understandings, to “take part in developing goals and objectives” for their own learning, to take on various leadership roles and tasks, as well as to evaluate their own work and develop alternatives when they encounter problems in learning (171-72). While we tried to address this overarching leadership-building aim in a variety of ways, we imagined it being most fully embodied in the students’ own technology-enhanced major projects, to be created individually or (preferably) in teams and presented to the whole class near the end of the term. Because creating these projects would invite the students to bring together and act upon their understanding of the course’s interdisciplinary content—nineteenth-century women’s work—through various technologies available for interpreting and representing that work, we hoped this key class experience would foster a sense of control over their own learning, as well as specific habits of mind and leadership skills that would carry over into other classes. As leadership-building activities, we conceived of the student projects as end steps in a sequenced process, beginning with our own modeling of ways to use presentation technologies, moving to assignments asking students to critique others’ use of such technologies, and culminating in the projects themselves.

Central to our teaching about presentation technologies was a view of “technology” that we tried hard to convey to our students, in part through the course theme itself. We wanted students to move beyond the understanding of technology that seemed then to be prevalent on our campus—a view connoting only “high-tech tools” and specifically conjuring up images of computers and other hardware elements—toward a more historically informed understanding, recognizing technologies already so imbedded in our daily life that we no longer think of them in those terms. This aim meant highlighting specific examples of technology shaping and being shaped by women’s work in the nineteenth century, such as kitchen utensils which changed over time, or print technologies being appropriated by women like the Lowell factory workers, who created their own publications to represent their own identities and social practices.¹⁴ It also meant, in an abstract sense, encouraging our students to see “technologies” in more social, historical, and ideological terms, rather than simply viewing them as neutrally instrumental objects or processes. We hoped that having our students critique and create projects *representing* technology in nine-

teenth-century women's culture, while self-consciously using presentation technologies themselves, would make them more aware of complex ways of thinking about technology historically and in their own lives. Thus, we selected an array of specific "new" presentation technologies (e.g., PowerPoint slide shows, web pages) that we thought our students might want to try out. We modeled the use of those technologies in class to provide examples for critique. Then we asked our students to create their own products, always reminding them that more traditional approaches using "old" technologies would be welcome as well.

In practice, our goals were well met in terms of the high quality generated in our students' projects, unevenly met in their critique assignments, and not very well met in the work we asked them to do on self-assessment. At this point, we can see that the shortcomings in our students' work were partly caused by our failure to make explicit the links between our leadership-building goals (focused mainly on metacognitive learning objectives within a feminist philosophy promoting learners' authority and self-analysis), on the one hand, and the role that *using* presentation technologies could play in that effort, on the other. In other words, if our failure to make fully effective use of video distance learning can be explained primarily by noting a *mismatch* between traits of the technology as it was available to us and our feminist pedagogical goals; and the success of our list-serv can be attributed to a *positive match* between technology traits and a feminist teaching agenda; the mixed success rate we had with presentation technologies can be explained by noting our *failure to make our students fully aware of co-relations* between the potential inherent in various presentation tools and the leadership skills we wanted class members to develop.

One cause behind this pedagogical failure—our then-underdeveloped thinking about differences between constructing "new" knowledge and constructing generative (re)presentations of knowledge—was made clear to us recently in a provocative panel paper at the 1998 Modern Language Association conference. Joseph Tabbi's discussion of interdisciplinary work on technology in the humanities included the salient observation that professional reward structures continue to favor a rather unsophisticated version of the best scholarship as always creating original knowledge, while devaluing activities focused on "*circulating* scholarship." Noting that new technologies have actually moved beyond the text storage functions associated with more traditional ones like print books, Tabbi pointed out that "the archive" of the humanities "has

become," via such technologies as computer hypertext, "a place where knowledge is received and *worked over*," rather than a domain of "settled ideas," so that activities such as editing, synthesizing for display presentations (e.g., on the web), and curating (all of which might in instrumental terms be conceived of as types of "information-processing") should attain greater value, both as "essential to *activating* the knowledge produced by the profession" and because of their ability "to bring knowledge to the specific places where it is likely to produce an effect." Using Tabbi's framework as a guideline, we can now see that, besides providing models and structuring critique exercises for our students as preparation for doing their own presentation projects, we also needed to make them more fully aware of how the culminating task exemplified not just a reformulated version of the traditional research report assignment, but rather an authentic exercise in the kind of "distribution and dissemination" of knowledge increasingly possible with new technologies. Making this distinction clear would have reduced any pressure they felt to "cover" a particular topic fully, create an "original" statement about it, or draw from a wide array of traditional library sources, and instead focused the assignment clearly on creating a technology-enhanced representation of an argument about women's work that could be *useful* to members of our classroom community. Tabbi's framework also helps us see that, in carrying out the three-part instructional sequence culminating in the student projects, we should have been more explicit about our own thinking processes for preparing our presentations, and we should have pressed our students to see connections between their critique of others' presentations and their own creative processes—especially how those processes would vary depending on the technologies used.

Along those lines, our increasing understanding of how information-processing technologies like the ones we used strive for specific *effects* has helped us realize that, in teaching the class again, we should explicitly invite students to see and interrogate those effects. We had devoted many months before the course to gathering pictorial images related to our topic of nineteenth-century women's work. The images we selected were chosen not simply for their attractiveness, but for their potential ability to help students understand major aspects of course content and to help them learn to critique and utilize such images as an interdisciplinary methodology for studying women's work. But we were never explicit about why we chose a particular image or what effect we were trying to achieve. We should have signaled to our 1997 stu-

dents that our display of visual elements in presentations during class fell into these categories, with use of any specific technology *adapted* to these purposes:

1) Providing an *organizational guide* to content, as in a PowerPoint series of slides outlining a lecture on a particular subtopic, such as women's involvement in the temperance movement [<http://www.kennesaw.edu/ahss/wwork/presentations.htm>];

2) Offering an *illustration* of a key concept, as in showing a photograph of women demonstrating outside a bar, in the context of the temperance movement, or a woman teaching her child to read, as an example of domestic literacy management;

3) *blending the two goals*. For instance, one of us might be giving a brief lecture on women's factory work, with the video screen showing an outline of major ideas. Then, our video shot might shift from the PowerPoint outline to a photograph or artifact on our document camera tray, so that students could view a particular example of a factory scene like that being discussed [<http://www.kennesaw.edu/hss/wwork/lowell/index.htm>].

Other uses of textual information with pictorial images sometimes aimed at more metacognitive objectives, as in PowerPoint presentations inviting the students to interpret archival materials themselves, and, in particular, to situate their interpretation within the original site of publication or use. For example, we might show an advertising card of middle-class and working class women together in a kitchen, then show a prompt asking students to write about specific clothing and body placement details reinforcing differences in the two women's work responsibilities in that kitchen, then return to the image itself while the students were carrying out the writing task. As we discussed the students' interpretations of such an artifact, we would try to encourage them to ask themselves: *What reasons might the original producer/circulator of this image have had for representing women's work in the ways seen here? How would such goals have been related to an historicizable audience? In other words, what does the image suggest to us about the beliefs and values of its maker(s) and consumers?* In our next class, noting Tabbi's emphasis on the user productivity promoted by new technologies, we would move beyond interpretation of such specific images themselves in the light of course content to shared critique of the *processes* we used to prepare the presentation, along with consideration of how particular technologies shaped audience response. As we tried to prepare students to assume their own classroom leadership roles through preparing and presenting their projects, we should, at the very least, have

told them how much time we were spending preparing our visual presentations. "You made it look way too easy," one student complained, "so I was shocked when I started trying to do my own and found out how hard it was and how much time it took."

Certainly, even in our 1997 offering, a number of our students' formal course evaluations rated our own technology-enhanced presentations very highly, and some even saw a clear relationship between this kind of presentation-for-interpretation work and the written course assignments asking them to "visit" and "critique" both a web site and a historic preservation site. However, although some particularly thoughtful students indicated that, after awhile, they had begun to identify particular characteristics of "good" image-centered class presentations (e.g., qualities such as strong use of color, clear spatial design, links between argument and image), fewer seemed self-consciously to carry over these kinds of observations into their written critique assignments.

Our key assignments in the course were designed sequentially to assist students in preparing their own technology-enhanced research projects. Students first prepared a web-site critique and then an historic site critique before they prepared their own group projects. Students used the same questions in evaluating both the "virtual" web-site and the "real" historic site, because we wanted to emphasize that both kinds of sites were actually shaped in some similar ways by different technologies and purposes. For example, we wanted students to understand that web-sites are constructed to present a specific point of view, just as historic sites are preserved and presented to the public in order to convey a particular interpretation. With such parallels in mind, in their evaluations of each type of site, students were asked to analyze what happened to their understanding of nineteenth-century women's work during their "visit," whether to the virtual or the physical site. In addition, they were asked to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the two sites, by commenting on these questions: "Specifically, if you were to become a 'manager' of this site (e.g., as a web page master or as a docent), what changes might you make in the site to make it work better as a source of knowledge about women's work? Why?" Finally, they were asked how they might build upon what they had learned at the site with additional research and analysis. (See <http://www.kennesaw.edu/hss/wwork/sitevisit.htm>.)

In preparation for the web-site visit, we held one class in a computer lab, exploring a range of sites, including *Codey's Ladies' Book* and Duke University's Scriptorium, to do group critique as practice.¹⁵ We noted during that session that some students were

having trouble realizing that web-sites, like traditional print texts, vary in reliability depending upon who authored them and for what purpose. There was also a tendency to be dazzled by graphics, color, and links more than the substance of a site. We tried to promote a more critical perspective on these and other issues through comments in class and on the list-serv as students were preparing their critiques. However, in the end, partly because we failed to provide adequate guided practice in analyzing links between web-specific rhetorical elements and the relative effectiveness of particular sites, and also because students had trouble gauging accuracy, their positive and negative comments about the sites they reviewed were sometimes superficial.

A similar tendency existed to accept uncritically the presentation of historic preservation sites visited. For instance, it was very difficult for some students to see that every site's brochures and other interpretive material are fashioned in a very particular way to convey a specific interpretation. We discussed the fact that historic sites (e.g., authors' homes, Native American sites, architecturally significant sites) generally have not only educational purposes but also economic and ideological ones. Still, some students found it much easier to describe the basic physical arrangement of the sites or the clarity of interpretive material than they did to *evaluate* the interpretations, and very few identified the roles that multiple technologies played in creating the site's message. (For an example of one of the more successful historic site critiques, see Vicki Jenkins' on our website at <http://www.kennesaw.edu/hss/work/assignments.htm>).

One reason for these shortcomings in the critique assignments from our first offering of the course was our unsophisticated thinking about the complex yet potentially generative relationships linking print text, oral text, images and objects in the various kinds of technology-enhanced presentations we explored in the class. As we are gradually learning more about theories of discourse, we should be able to examine our own and others' creative processes more critically and make those examinations more accessible to our students. For instance, we are looking to theorists of digital rhetoric like Richard A. Lanham to guide our own model-making and to consider ways of inviting our students to think more critically about how different technologies foster different kinds of rhetorical practices.¹⁶ In this way, we can make more productive, comparative links between assignments like the site critiques and students' own presentation projects. At the same time, we are also using work in the scholarship of teaching to assist our analysis of

ways we used (misused and underused) various display technologies in our first class. Along those lines, we are considering adapting the “virtual exhibits” element developed by Sally Gregory Kohlstedt and her colleagues for a web-based history course, as well as a version of their “incremental scaling” approach for gradually introducing various technologies to students throughout the term.¹⁷ We expect that, by providing more guided practice for critique within more thoughtful analytical frameworks, we will see an improvement in the quality of our students’ work on the web-site and historical preservation site critique assignments, both of which we plan to retain in the 1999 class.

Students were free to choose their own topic for the final group project, as long as they conducted research and used technology to present an interdisciplinary and interpretive view of some aspect of women’s work in the nineteenth century. It was especially through this assignment that we hoped that our students would demonstrate leadership skills as they assumed the role of “experts” teaching the class. Further, we hoped that the experience of making a visual presentation over GSAMS would enhance their confidence as leaders, even more than had their ongoing, informal appearances during inter-campus discussions. To hone critical skills, students evaluated each others’ presentations, based on a list of specific criteria. (See website.) Finally, students wrote essays in which they reflected on what they had learned about interdisciplinary inquiry, about the use of new technologies, and about the history and literature of nineteenth-century women’s work. The quality of many projects was high, and we believe that, to a large degree, our goal of encouraging the development of leadership skills was met, as students became producers (rather than merely passive consumers) of knowledge. We found, however, that students’ ability to assess their own and others’ work needed considerable strengthening. In our 1999 class, we will make clearer the potential connections between a critique of others’ technology-enhanced presentations and a critical interpretation of one’s own work, in order to promote improved assessment both as projects are being prepared and after they are shared with an audience.¹⁸

IV. Summary, Implications and Projections from Our Ongoing *Conversazione*

When we began drafting the syllabus for our 1997 class, we did so with three goals in mind, with the first focused on course content, the second on use of technologies and related processes of

study, and the third on our feminist philosophy of teaching:

1) We wanted our students to learn a significant amount of interdisciplinary content about women's work in the United States in the long nineteenth century (1780-1920). 2) We wanted them to explore and critique various technology-enhanced interdisciplinary methodologies for studying the course topic. In other words, we wanted them to see that historians and literary scholars have different and similar ways for learning about this kind of subject, to see that research methodologies for both disciplines are changing in response to new technologies, and to see that their own knowledge about a subject is shaped by methods of inquiry they should critique as well as use. 3) Finally, we wanted our students to develop as *productive* learners, able to collaborate in a community and to generate knowledge (pro)actively rather than simply to absorb information passively.

Looking back now, we would say that our course effectively introduced students to a wide array of information about our topic of women's work. Interestingly, however, by continuing to place a great deal of emphasis on the *amount* of content included in the course (goal #1), we made our efforts to integrate our use and critique of technology into a feminist teaching philosophy more difficult.¹⁹ Thus, although as Women's Studies specialists we are proud of *what* our students learned, as feminist teachers committed to using instructional technologies, we have determined to place more stress on process and less on content in future versions of our course. Certainly, we are not the first technology-oriented humanities instructors to worry over achieving a balance between teaching subject matter and teaching processes for learning. For instance, Kohlstedt and her colleagues, in planning for their web-based class on "History of Science and Technology," addressed the difficulty of this challenge: "We agreed that we wanted to do more than digitize a standard lecture course; at the same time, we also did not want to force the goals and methods of a traditional history class into a standardized virtual environment. Consequently, we designed lecture topics and web activities simultaneously, working through content and technique in an interactive way" (1, 7).

Seeking a more interactive blending of content and process will surely be a priority for our 1999 class, where we hope to develop more informed approaches for adapting subject matter to particular technologies, and to place greater emphasis on metacognitive activities, partly by providing more guided practice in the use of multiple technologies. For example, early in the term we will give an assignment asking students to work in small groups on gather-

ing and organizing a discrete body of information that others in the class are *not* reading about, then preparing a concise, cogent, and visually appealing presentation of key points from that study for the whole group—a presentation whose own rhetoric will also be analyzed, with emphasis on links between technologies employed and the argument constructed for the classroom audience. This assignment will serve multiple purposes, of course. It will allow students to try out display technologies early in the course. It will provide a time-efficient way to “cover” material that might otherwise be eliminated entirely from the syllabus. And it will give students a chance to critique their own work as knowledge-synthesizers and presenters collaboratively well before they begin work on their own major project for the term.

While seeing content and process as interactively reinforcing each other is increasingly one of our aims, we realize that it will be equally crucial to draw more self-consciously upon feminist pedagogical theory as a guide to our decision-making. Although much work remains to be done in scholarship and classroom practice committed to teaching through both technologies and feminist theory, we are supported by such efforts to lead the way as Suzanne K. Damarin’s formulation of the “cyber-witch teacher.” Stressing her own need to construct “a feminist place to stand and . . . a sense of how to act” as a teacher “schooled in mathematics and information technologies,” but also dedicated to “feminist values and guidelines,” Damarin theorizes a new teaching space by imagining a figure drawing upon both the traditions of nurturing affirmed by such feminist pedagogical theorists as Noddings, Kinsley, Greene and Manke, and upon Haraway’s Cyborgian model, rather than feeling she must choose between them (208).²⁰ As Damarin points out, however, “constructing [such] a standpoint requires sustained attention and hard work,” since integrating these two fields always involves “struggle.” Keeping Damarin’s encouragement and cautions in mind, we approach the 1999 redesign of our course with as much enthusiasm as we had in 1997, but also with more realistic expectations and a more fully developed strategy for three-way integration. Thus, while we are aware of the kinds of dangers Neil Postman describes in “a world in which the idea of human progress. . . has been replaced by the idea of technological progress” (70), we think we are better equipped than in 1997 to draw upon concepts from both the feminist and the emerging teaching-with-technology traditions, and thereby to find, for ourselves and for our students, a more productive balance of content, process, and guiding philosophy in our classroom.

Notes

¹ For a discussion of the limits in many academics' thinking about technology and teaching, see Anson. Note especially his view that instructors often "refine classroom methods and tinker with our teaching styles. . . within the framework of certain fairly stable educational conditions" rather than fundamentally changing our teaching practices (262). See also Anson's reference to the Pew Higher Education *Policy Perspectives*, which have highlighted a distinction between the professoriate's tendency to "appreciate the leverage that technology has provided in the library" but not to realize "fully how the same technology might apply to the process of teaching and learning" (262).

² We thank Joe Bocchi for alerting us to Russell's work. Professor Bocchi also allowed us to read a draft of his research team's report on technology use in teaching within the University of Georgia system, from which we drew several concepts and questions that have shaped our essay.

³ The website that provides a record of much of our experience teaching the women's work course for the first time is at <http://www.kennesaw.edu/hss/wwork>. We are grateful to Andrew Doss, technology support specialist for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Marty Luko, then a graphic artist in KSU's University Relations office, for their assistance in preparing the site.

⁴ Having the class develop in connection with a special grant might, in fact, be viewed as both beneficial and challenging: it meant we had atypical resources (e.g., funds to visit archives to collect images for our presentations) but it also encouraged us to set a very ambitious agenda for the class.

⁵ In saying that we expected students to learn about how women were "shaped by" technology, we do not mean that our course constructed nineteenth-century women as passively molded by (male-made) inventions over which they exercised no control. Indeed, with Stanley, we would argue that "the effects perspective" receives excessive attention (459-72), and our course emphasized creative interventions through technology as practiced by women like Catharine Beecher in her housekeeping manuals.

⁶ For links between feminist theory and Bakhtinian sociolinguistics, see Bauer and McKinstry (1-6).

⁷ The opening lines of Shrewsbury's piece are significant for our analysis: "Feminist pedagogy is a theory about the teaching/learn-

ing process that guides our choice of classroom practices by providing criteria to evaluate specific educational strategies and techniques in terms of the desired course goals or outcomes. These evaluative criteria include the extent to which a community of learners is empowered to act responsibly toward one another and the subject matter and to apply that learning to social action" (166).

⁸ A related problem was purely logistical rather than caused by the particular technology of distance learning video. Both KSU and AASU have institutionally mandated starting and ending times for classes, and unfortunately the times were not precisely the same. Because the KSU students came to class 20 minutes before the link began with AASU, we hoped to use that time to answer student questions and to discuss logistical matters. We discovered that students often did not remember to ask questions that were unresolved from a previous class, and we sometimes felt that this time was not being used very productively. On the other hand, since the AASU class extended about fifteen minutes after ours concluded, students there had time to continue classroom discussion and were able to make more effective use of the time. One of our obvious recommendations for future University of Georgia system GSAMS classes similar to ours is that start/end times be standardized and that the video connection end early enough on both campuses for students to be able to confer with instructors at their local site.

⁹ For an insightful discussion of two Women's Studies distance learning courses, see Rose. Rose's two attempts to use both video and online linkups differed from ours in several ways, but she encountered similar constraints to ours in material conditions such as room arrangement. Her assessment of distance learning's potential for feminist pedagogy is more dismal than ours: "In short, nothing I learned from my two experiences teaching women's studies via distance education persuades me that—however appealing it may be to cost-cutting administrators intent on achieving economies of scale—distance education can accommodate, much less facilitate, the goals of feminist educators" (115).

¹⁰ While the term "distance learning" for academics in Georgia would generally be associated with GSAMS video, we are aware that, for many others, online discussion sites—virtual "talk spaces"—might be more likely to represent their view of "where" and "how" distance learning would occur. If Anson is right that "distance learning" will soon most often occur with students working in computer classrooms linked to other sites, and that video

elements in computer programs may play a key role in small-group or individual exchanges as well as expert lecture performance (271-72), it seems especially important for future scholarship on teaching with technology to distinguish more clearly than we ourselves can at this point between the strengths and weaknesses of the two primary distance learning approaches of online text-based discussion and video-oral presentation (exchanges), and to begin teasing out how effective they are when enacted together (as in our class) versus when carried out alone.

¹¹ For a useful survey of research on the value of online discussion that reaffirms many of our claims, see Duin and Hansen, especially pp. 99-106, where "Studies on Classroom Computer Networks" are outlined.

¹² In terms of Shrewsbury's description of empowering pedagogy, we could say the list-serv became a space where students could "play a role in course development," sometimes even becoming "change agents" (169).

¹³ See Ashton-Jones, especially her section on "Conversational Dynamics and the Ideology of Gender" (11-17). Even though we worked hard in person and in private emails to negotiate a comfortable truce in this case, we found some discomfort remained, and we've come to understand that we need to be more attentive to differences in gendered response tendencies, and to offer explicit training in email conventions.

¹⁴ See also Gere and Robbins for a discussion of similar uses of technology by club women at the turn into the twentieth century (643-78).

¹⁵ While students who were computer-adept quickly grasped what we were asking them to do, inexperienced students spent much of the time just figuring out how to find a site on the web. Despite a slow start by some students in the practice session, everyone completed the web-site critique assignment, although with varying degrees of success. Although we will be providing much more extensive computer lab time in our next offering, and will therefore be able to offer more hands-on assistance to novices, for this particular assignment, it was not so much operating the technology which caused students problems, but the need to bring a critical perspective to bear on what they were seeing. For useful comments on the issue of the "target audience" and "learning environment" for online instruction, see Cain (25-26).

¹⁶ See especially Lanham's contrasting of printed books and computer screens as meaning-making sites for writers and readers, as well as his comments about "the transformations practiced on

words and images by a digital display," in light of the "unfixed and interactive" nature of digital display, a situation such that the "reader can change it, [and] become a writer" (222).

¹⁷ Kohlstedt, Boyles, and Largent point out that their "virtual exhibits," which presented integrated "text and images followed by short essay questions" had qualities notably different from in-class lectures using slide shows. For instance, "students are able to move through the exhibit at their own speed, spending more or less time on each image and its accompanying text" (7).

¹⁸ Our emphasis on improving both the students' presentation projects and their self-assessment abilities should not obscure the excellent work produced by members of our first class. See <http://www.kennesaw.edu/hss/wwork/h490gdI.htm>. Particularly successful projects included a nineteenth-century-style cookbook, a short magazine modeled on *Codey's*, and a range of web pages. Furthermore, students clearly *enjoyed* creating the projects, and several told us how excited they were to be able to show "their" web pages, artifacts, 3-D artwork, or other products to family members.

¹⁹ Certainly, however, we could also view technologies themselves as part of the content of the course, instead of dichotomizing Women's Studies content versus technology processes. In that sense, we could be faulted just as much for trying to "cover" (or introduce our students to) too many particular technologies as for having too ambitious a syllabus on women's work. In fact, by eliminating the distance learning component from our course in 1999, we are affirming that the content aspect of our technology goals was over-ambitious the first time, cutting the strand that was the least compatible with our philosophical stance, and opening up new spaces for improved integration of all three of our goals.

²⁰ For Damarin, this model teacher is a hybrid: "The post-modern witch-teacher, a mythical creature who adapts the methods of the witch/crone/hag both to the classrooms and to the technologies of today, is neither goddess nor cyborg, but always already part goddess and part cyborg. Like the witch-women of Greenham Common, she seeks the elemental aspects of technologies that make them vulnerable and invokes elemental powers against them. In her computerized classroom, this cyber-witch pays no heed to the patriarchal 'don't worry your pretty little head about it, dear' discourse that positions teachers and students as 'not needing to know' about the elemental stuff of which technologies are made . . . Demystification is her motto" (218).

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