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NCTE News: Writing centers

Originally designed to give extra help to underprepared college students, writing centers are now recognized as an effective means of helping all high school and college students improve their writing. What is the status of writing centers today and what issues must planners consider when introducing these centers into their existing English programs? *Writing Centers*, a Starter Sheet issued by SLATE, the action wing of the National Council of Teachers of English, answers these questions and addresses issues and concerns writing center administrators must face. The brochure, which includes a bibliography, is part of SLATE's continuing program: Support for the Learning and Teaching of English.

Author Muriel Harris, associate professor of English at Purdue University, describes writing centers as informal, experimental places where writers of all abilities are encouraged to try out new approaches in their writing and to engage in the necessary practices of writing and revising. She

discusses the tutor's role in assessing and concentrating on specific needs of each individual writer. Tutors help writers find their own answers to writing problems through collaboration and discussion of writing topics and ways to develop ideas. They also help students learn to polish their prose. Tutors give nonevaluative, oral feedback on the student's writing, striving to develop the student's general writing skills.

Harris emphasizes that in institutions with a writing-across-the-curriculum focus, the center provides the primary source of writing assistance for a variety of assignments, such as business and biology reports, history term papers, and resumes. The Starter Sheet includes background information and the text of a 1987 NCTE resolution calling for increased support and improved status for writing centers in schools and colleges. (For a free copy of *Writing Centers*, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request to SLATE, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.)

NIDS – National Inventory of Documentary Sources in the United Kingdom and Ireland

NIDS is a long term project in which all types of finding aids to archives and collections in repositories throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland are published on microfiche and are indexed by names and subjects. NIDS enables researchers, in their own library, to pinpoint collections which contain documents of interest to them, perhaps revealing previously unsuspected resources in lesser known collections. Research trips can then be planned so as to benefit from such prior explorations.

Those interested in receiving the NIDS Newsletter free, three times a year, should contact: Chadwyck-Healey, Cambridge Place, CAMBRIDGE CB2 1NR, England

Excerpts from Issue No. 3, Feb 89:

Waste not, want not

Dr Howard B Gotlieb, founder of the Twentieth Century Archive at Boston University's Mugar Memorial Library, may have found a solution to the problem of where to dispose of your waste paper . . . but only if you are famous. He has just

celebrated the archive's silver jubilee – twenty-five years of collecting other people's rubbish. 1,400 personalities from Alistair Cooke to former prime minister Lord Wilson of Rievaulx have contributed to the vast archive; US House Speaker John McCormack alone presented four million items. Dr Gotlieb has twenty cataloguers at work on the material, and now has to refuse offers of waste paper from far and wide. Such is the appeal of having your very own archivist.

The archive already receives visits from 5,000 scholars a year, but its true value may not become apparent until well into the next century and beyond. Gotlieb has shrewdly anticipated the age of electronic communication in which rubbish, even famous rubbish, will not be available. In Boston at least, future researchers will have plenty to work on.

OUCS

In March 1988, the Oxford University Computing Service (OUCS) launched Micro-OCP, a version of the Oxford Concordance Programme for IBM PC compatibles and the fruit of a ten-year project to

provide a unique linguistic facility for arts students. Originally a concordance was merely an alphabetical list of the most significant words in a text with a reference to their location. OCP can be used to put every word of a text in context, and make word lists, indexes and concordances from works in a variety of languages and alphabets. It can work on any natural language and can be used to analyse style and vocabulary in a particular text, and to compile a detailed study of a less familiar language, such as the pidgin English of Papua New Guinea.

OUCS have used a Kurzweil optical character

reader to convert texts to computer readable form. It is an 'intelligent' scanner in that it learns the shape of letters in the text, and can recognise up to ten different type faces per text. Using the Kurzweil, OUCS have built up the Oxford Text Archive, one of the world's largest libraries of computer readable texts, now measuring 1000 megabytes of data in twenty-five languages. As an example, the complete corpus of works in Anglo-Saxon (around three million words) comprises 40 megabytes. The British Library has funded a one-year post to investigate the Archive's applications.

From the Sydney Morning Herald:

A truly great task: translating modern languages into Latin

THE VATICAN

GEORGE ARMSTRONG

ROME, Friday: In February, the Vatican will publish the first of two volumes of a Latin lexicon of "new" words that have entered modern languages, or, more specifically, entered the Italian language, and for which there have not been "official" Latin translations.

The choice of new words deemed worthy of translation has been taken by the Latinitas Foundation, a Vatican office which was set up by Pope Paul VI in 1976 to preserve and promote the use of the purest Latin.

It is headed by Abbot Carlo Egger, a native of Vipiteno, also known as Sterzing, in the German-speaking Italian region of Alto Adige. Work on the new lexicon began in 1982.

The newest of the new words in the first volume is AIDS — syndrome comparati defectus immuninitatis.

Probably the oldest of the new ones is the 1920s dance known as the Charleston — saltatio carloniensis nigritudinis chorea est. American negroes may have been

the best Charleston dancers but it is doubtful if the dance steps originated with them.

Now that it seems smoking is going the way of the Charleston, the word for cigarette lighter enters the Latin language — ignitabulum nicotianum.

If Nero's mother had ever needed a baby-sitter, and rejected the tempting idea of infanticide, she would have called in an "infantaria", perhaps an entire infantry of them.

Baby doll is also among the "B" entries in this Italian-Latin dictionary, and the translation, "tunicula dormitoria" or night-gown, leaves something to be desired, and leaves the actress Carroll Baker out of the picture.

The English word "weekend" seems rooted and flourishing in the Italian language, and it may even appear in Volume II. In the first volume, "fine settimana" comes out as "extrema hebdomada feriata". Who said Latin was more concise than our mongrel tongue?

Some straightforward English words are, however, considered to be also Italian words by the lexicon's board of advisors, such

as derby, finish, and check-up.

The first two are sports entries. The "finish" of a race is *extremum certamen*, and "derby" is *derbianum certamen* — though "derby" in Italian sports has none of the equestrian about it, being a football match between two clubs whose homes are in the same city. Check-up is "*totius corporis inspectio*".

Hollywood's Uncle Walt has made it into Latin. The translation of animated cartoon is "*imaguncula diisneyana*", though Roger Rabbit should not be told.

Restaurants on Italy's motorways were given the catchy name of "autogrill" in the 1960s, even though they are not noted for their grill. In Latin, they are to be known as "*caupona autocinetistarum*" — or an eatery for those who are self-propelled.

Other translations for eventual use include: make-up artist (*cervisiae conquendai*); lightweight person (*homo leviter eruditus*); filibustering (*diei mora extrahendi ratio*); flamenco (*vandalicolloquium speculatorium*); secret agent (*speculator tectus*).

The Guardian

31 December 1988