

the SVSU Literacy LINK

Welcome to our Commemorative Issue of *Literacy Link*

This is our thirteen year anniversary of *Literacy Link*, made possible through the continual support of the Academic Vice-President, Dr. Robert Yien, who has



supported this journal since its inception in the early 1990s. To celebrate these thirteen years of writing, thinking, and talking about the various definitions of literacy here on campus, we have created two commemorative issues for this academic year.

In this, our first 2006 issue, we take a retrospective glance back in time to highlight some of the common issues and ideas that have been featured in the pages of this journal. After all, to help appreciate where we are, it is important to see where we've been.

In this issue we have collected short excerpts from various writers over the past years. It seems that our conversations tend to fall into two central categories: First, we've attempted to define the particular types of literacy. We have had lots of conversations about writing and reading literacy, but we've also featured articles on technology literacy, cultural literacy, and informational literacy. Second, we've published many articles on best practices in the discipline; that is, faculty sharing with us what they do in their Art, History, Ethics, Biology, and Criminal Justice

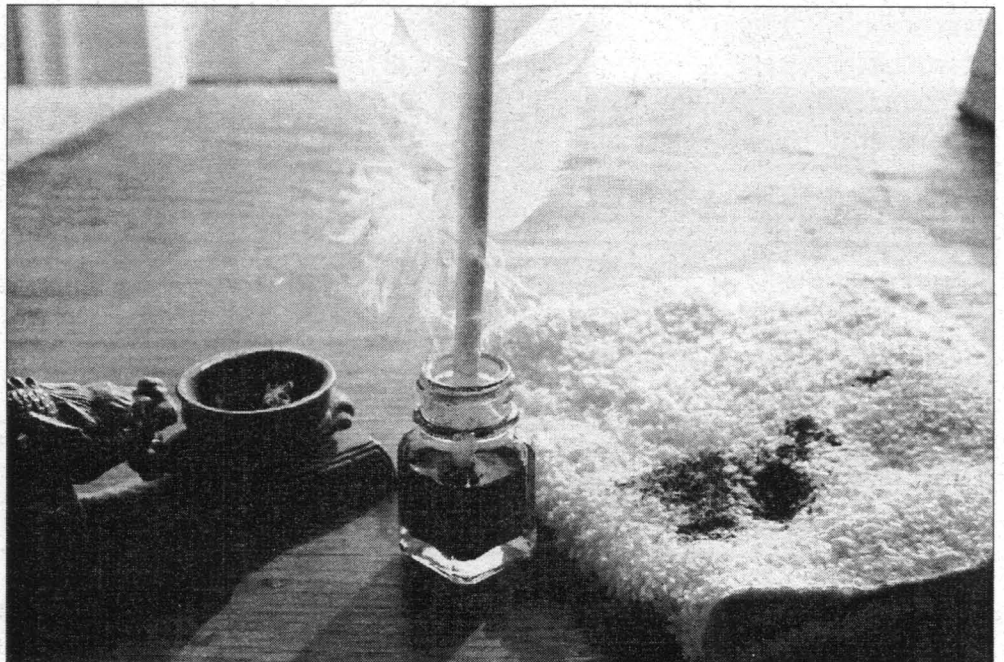
classes to enhance students' literacy skills.

The upcoming 2006 issue will highlight some of the literacy initiatives here on campus, profiling the many committees and organizations that work to increase our students' skills and recognizing faculty for innovative approaches to teaching these skills in their classrooms.

And that is just as it should be. *Literacy Link* has been supported by Dr. Yien to enhance our understanding of literacy and to provide all of us with models to explore new ways to help our students.

We hope that you enjoy our collection of conversations, with the understanding that more good insights will follow.

Lynne Graft & Helen Raica-Klotz
Literacy Link Co-Editors



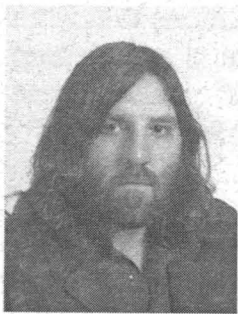
"Artifex Five," Howard Miller

From the Editors' Desk(tops):



Lynne Graft Helen Raica-Klotz

In addition to our collection of past writing, we are also pleased to feature in this issue the black and white photography of Howard Miller, a SVSU English major with a background in art. Miller was asked to create a series of photographs for the Writing Center that showed the connection between composition and creativity: what he produced is "Artifex," an intriguing set of images that speak to his understanding of the writing process as an organic and creative act.



"This is also the way in which I approach writing," he explains. "I begin with a subjective concept, and as the work progresses, the poem or story takes on a life of its own, leading me where it wants to go. In this way I become an interpreter of something that is beyond me."

Again, we hope you enjoy these words and images that explore literacy in a myriad of ways.

Helen and Lynne

Miller writes, "In these photographs, the original subjective concept was to create a series of photographs that had to do with my studying habits and the tools I use that symbolize academe to me. Once I had assembled my objects in order to give life to the concept, I had to rely on the fact that the subject matter itself only lends itself to certain compositions. This fact is the manifestation of the art work itself; therefore, in this situation the objects are completely relative to my ability as a subjective interpreter of the objective art (art separates from myself into an object unto itself)."

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Lynne Graft Helen Raica-Klotz	Tammi Waugh	Tim Inman	Saginaw Valley State University Graphics Center
co-editors	graphics & layout	photography	printing
<p>The SVSU <i>Literacy Link</i> is published two times per academic year. Those interested in submitting articles may contact either Lynne Graft at x4030 or lrgraft@svsu.edu, or Helen Raica-Klotz at x6062 or klotz@svsu.edu. Articles may also be mailed to SVSU Dept. of English, 7400 Bay Road, Brown 326, University Center, MI 48710.</p> <p>Special thanks to the Office of the Vice-President for funding and support of the <i>Literacy Link</i>.</p>			

Types of Literacies

We not only expect our students to have basic literacy in reading and writing; we expect our students to possess multiple other literacies: technological, informational, and cultural. What follows is a review of some of our conversations about these issues over the past years, focusing not only on why literacy in these areas is important, but what we can do to help our students achieve success.

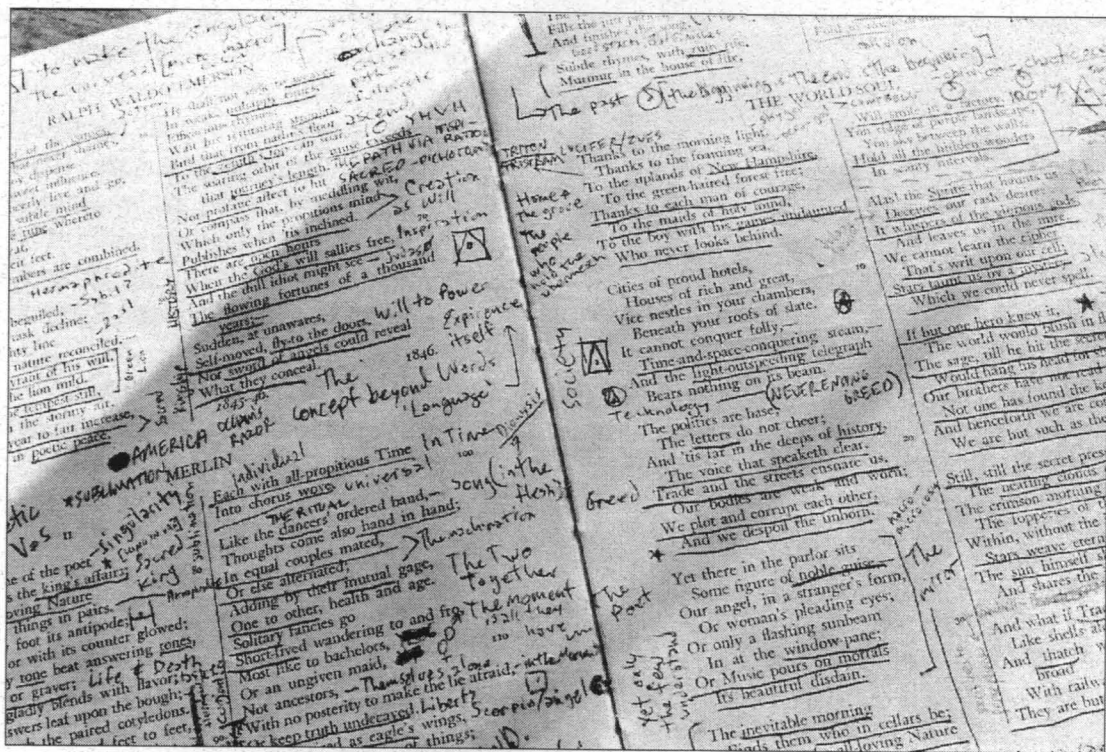
Technological Literacy:

The latest issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* tells us that more university professors are downloading their course lectures to podcasts, which students can listen to on their ipods as they do laundry or go work out. And if you walk into any college dorm room, you are bound to see a student with a Chemistry text or Literature Anthology on her lap sitting in front of a computer screen, surfing Facebook or IMing her friends while "studying."

It is clear that technology has changed the ways that students and faculty learn and teach at the university. But it wasn't that long ago

that much of the technology we currently take for granted was unfamiliar, and frankly, scary to attempt in the classroom.

Sally Cannon, former Professor of English and part of the original Epiphany Project Group, wrote about this very experience in "Risk Taking in Cyberspace," coauthored with Dr. Robert Lane, Dr. Carole Wolfe, Diane Boehm, and Lynne Graft in the November 1996 issue of *Literacy Link*. She told the story of the first time she attempted to use email in her writing class in the computer lab. The instructions to the students were simple: "After responding to their peers' rough drafts of a summary assignment, I asked them to email me, summarizing the feedback they had given each group member. I also asked them to cc their group members, so that each member

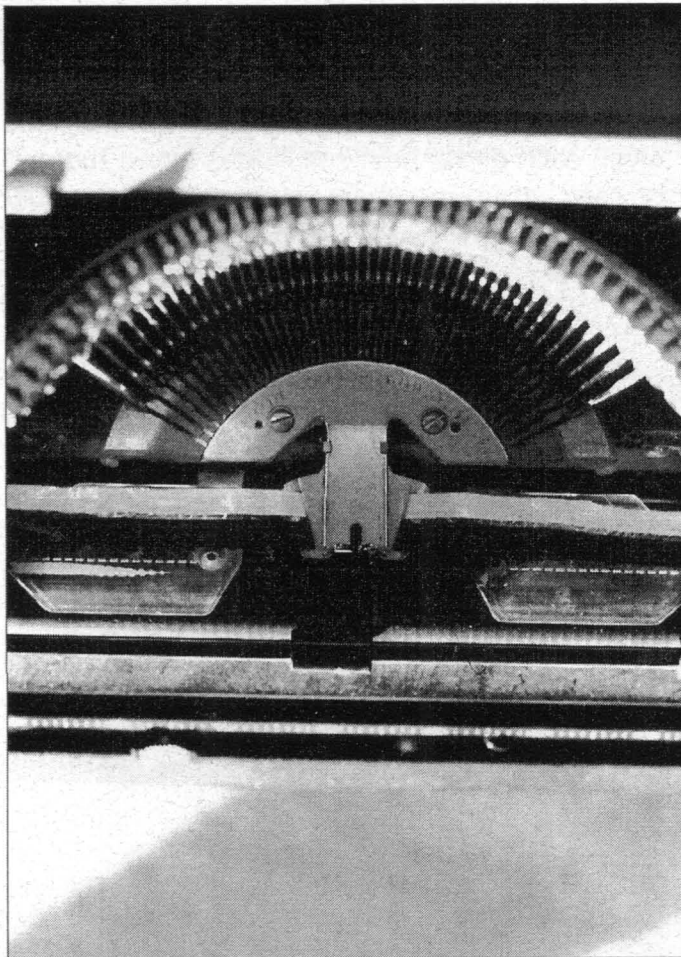


"Artifex Two." Howard Miller

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would get another 'take' on the advice given."

"The only problem," Cannon explained, "was that the students didn't know how to cc multiple people. And neither did I. And so, as they started calling to me from their computers, looking (up) to me for some help, I found myself in the awkward and somewhat embarrassing position of having to tell them that I (ahem) didn't (ahem) know. Intensifying this embarrassment was the realization that it was no doubt an easy thing to do, and I began cursing myself for not trying it out before class . . . instead of fudging through and trying to save face, I decided I had no choice but to admit my ignorance. Thankfully, the students did not gasp or guffaw, but continued on at their computer stations trying to solve the problem.



"Artifex One." Howard Miller

One student quickly figured it out, and began sharing her discovery with those around her, and in very short order, the whole class (including me) knew how to cc several people."

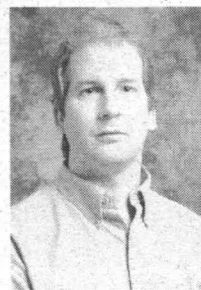
Cannon saw this moment as an important turning point in her preconceptions about technology: "Openly admitting that I didn't know everything about the software and technology we were using forced the students to take responsibility for their own learning. In a small way, I suppose, it helped to further decenter the class, that is, diffuse my authority and encourage students to take ownership themselves."

While it may bring a smile to our face to reminisce about the time we were all learning to navigate the intricacies of email, Cannon's observation is still applicable today. Technological literacy develops best in those moments of collaboration: where teacher and student work together to understand how to manage an Excel spreadsheet, turn on the smart podium, create PowerPoint slides, use Microsoft Publisher, and yes, even how to email more than one person at a time.

It is also clear that SVSU faculty have worked to integrate technology into their classroom, perhaps becoming as technologically savvy as our students. Well, almost. It would seem we had little choice, since most university students expect technological literacy from their professors.



Dan Tyger, Online Teaching and Learning Coordinator, in his essay, "More than a BOT:



Thinking on your Feet and in your Seat: Extending Course Interactions to the Online World," wrote in the November 2000 edition of *Literacy Link*:

"Students increasingly mediate a large percentage of their

literacy and language learning through electronic media. A computer is a valuable resource and is, in many cases, students' lifeline to learning."

In this article, he invited faculty to envision a course in which ". . . students can practice communicating, reading, acquiring vocabulary, and critical thinking and writing skills. Students repeatedly can view the online demonstration or lecture you post with streaming audio and/or video. A debate may go on for hours after class. You will be amazed at the quantity of writing and communicating that will occur in an online course. There won't be any more questions about where the student stands when the grades are available to him or her 24 hours a day. Posting assignments and announcements is made possible by simple, web-based forms. Students can exchange files collaboratively, email one another, and chat live to discuss their projects. You can receive homework, papers and projects through the digital dropbox. Instructors can access students' discussion forums where students interact with each other, exchanging thoughts and commentaries regarding course content and assignments. Uploading documents is a snap. Hyperlink your lecture notes to related, external web resources you have found in your cyber travels to expound on the topics. Online office hours could be in your future. A study group won't require physical presence to be in attendance. Migrating materials to a virtual classroom can be a fairly painless experience."

Tyger closes by telling us "SVSU recently purchased the license for Blackboard, an online educational software package designed for instructors . . . more than 75 faculty members are currently experimenting with this new technology."

Five years later, 230 instructors, about half of the university faculty, use Blackboard in their courses.



Informational Literacy:

Got a question? The Internet has the answer. At least, that's what our students would tell you.

Most of our students were raised on the internet, where you can Google anything, or anyone, anywhere, anytime. But as we know only too well, knowing how to surf the net doesn't make you able to access and understand credible and scholarly work in your field. That takes a little more effort (and know-how). The trick is to teach students that they don't know as much as they might think about informational literacy.

Helen Raica-Klotz, Lecturer of English, and Gloria Lawler, former Reference Librarian, addressed some of the common concerns that students have about informational literacy in their collaborative essay, "Rethinking Research" in the November 1999 issue of *LiteracyLink*. After completing a library instructional with Lawler and submitting the final research based paper in Raica-Klotz's English 112 Advanced Composition Class, students were asked what they wished someone had told them before they began the research process.



One student wrote, "I wish someone had told me research takes so much TIME! I thought computers were supposed to make research easier, not harder."

Raica-Klotz responded, "Ah, the magic of modern technology. Most of our first year students have little experience with the joys of finding articles on microfilm, working a fiche reader, or searching through the small text of a paper index, processes that were standard only ten years ago.

The Literacies, from page 5

The computer gives students different ways to access information, yet not all of these ways are quicker. I now emphasize to my students that research – good careful research – takes time, regardless of the search mechanisms.”

Lawler added, “Where it’s true that computers allow access to a tremendous amount of information, sometimes this can overwhelm students new to researching. Differentiating between on-line databases, Cardcat, and the Internet can be confusing. During library instructional sessions we discuss the differences between each and what type of information each locates. We also stress the importance of not procrastinating.”

“I wish someone had told me that you really do have to go into the library sometimes to do research,” another student commented. “You can’t always do it all from your computer.”

Lawler responded, “Most of the services available on our Library Main Menu are accessible from remote locations. We realize that many students prefer to do research from home. However, doing research in Zahnaw Library provides the students with various resources not available to them from remote locations.

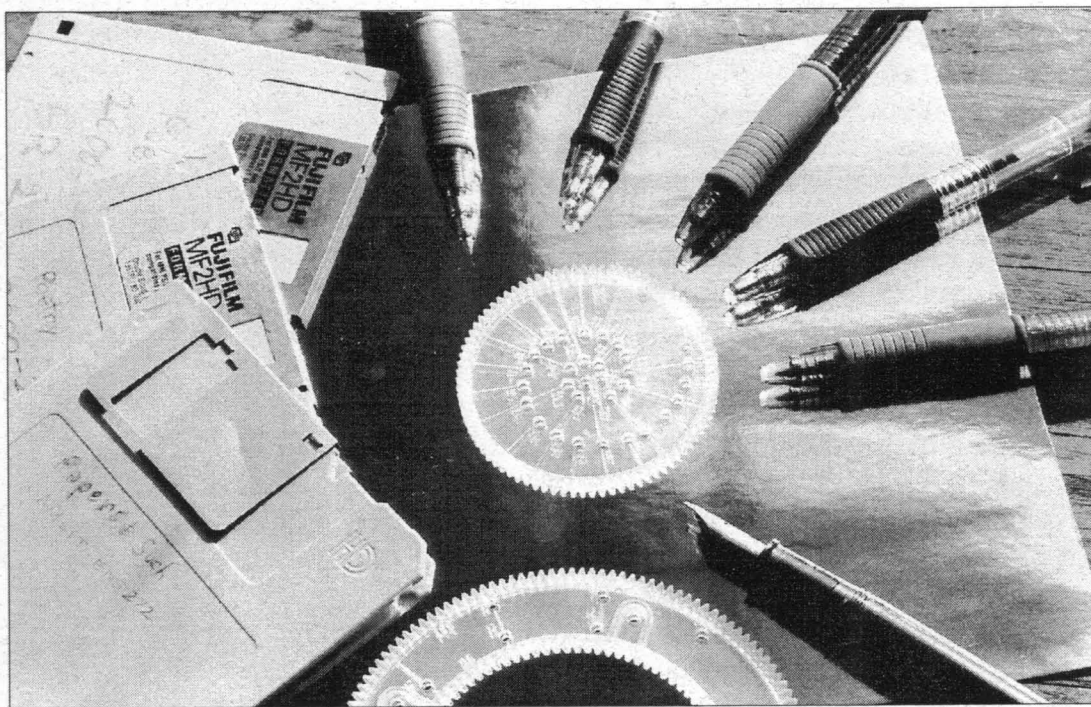
And nothing can replace the valuable help of a Reference Librarian!”

“Most instructors, myself included, like to

emphasize how technology has made this process easier,” noted Raica-Klotz. “And yet the computer cannot do everything. It cannot grab a book off the shelf, find a journal on the rack, and browse through the reference section. I ask all my students to conduct their basic research in the library. It is here, not simply on a computer screen, that information exists as well.”

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But accessing scholarly research is not the same as understanding it. Elizabeth Rich, Professor of English, articulately sums up this concern in her essay, “Writerly Research: Helping Students Take Charge of Their Knowledge,” published in the November 2003 *Literacy Link*. She writes, “Roland Barthes



“Artifex Three.” Howard Miller

makes a distinction between the ‘readerly text,’ that which can be consumed with little or no thought, and the ‘writerly text,’ that which demands the reader to participate, think, react,

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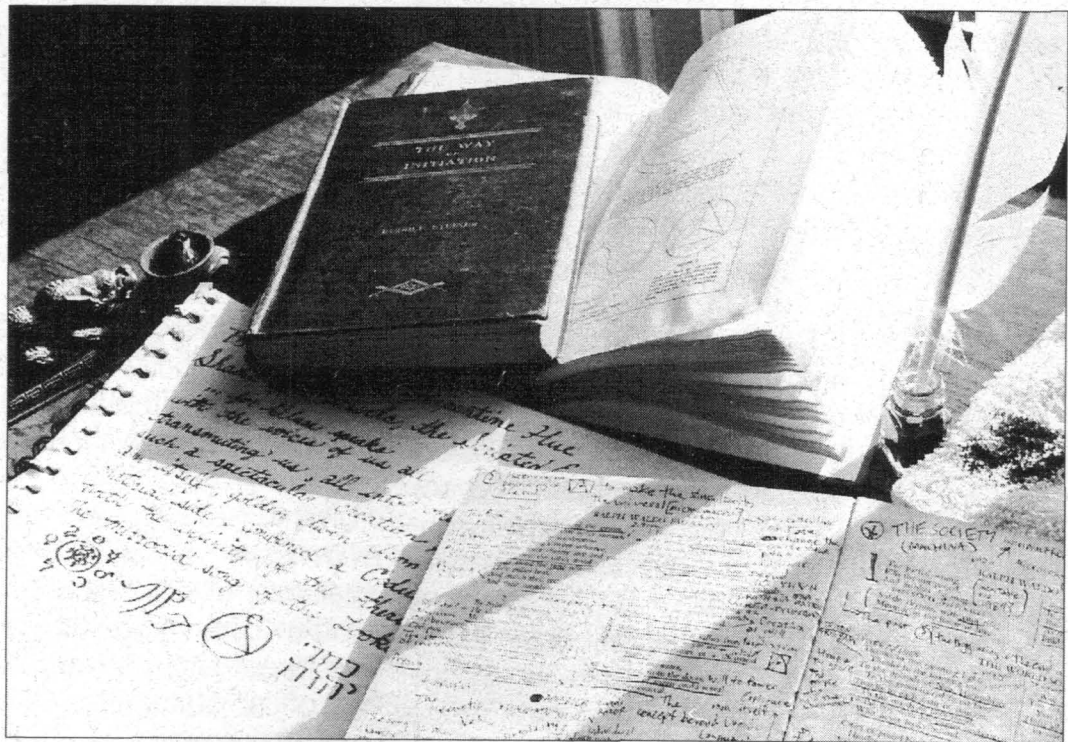
and engage in it. As students can produce tens of thousands of web sites and articles on a given topic instantaneously with the use of new research technologies, they enter what can be either a stimulating or frustrating experience. Sometimes, the search yields so much information that students move into what appears to be a 'passive activity,' an oxymoronic state in which they do and produce, but they remain dissatisfied with being unable to gain meaningful knowledge from the research project."

"Some examples of how they can find sources and produce meaningless writing may include skimming only online articles that appear in the first page of a Google or database search and/or stringing together short summaries of their sources in each body paragraph of their paper, so that the research paper looks like a research paper but fails to have taken a critical look at the sources and synthesized the information. What is at stake is teaching quality thinking and writing when technology has made the process easy to fake. What results is dissatisfaction on both sides: Teachers, frustrated with reading weak papers and students, feeling as if their time were spent on busy work."

Rich points out that only by crafting research-based assignments thoughtfully and working closely with the library staff has she been able to address this issue. The latter

point she stresses heavily, noting that all of the SVSU library instructional sessions are based on the standards set out by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

"These standards also follow the process in a chronological sequence that begins with defining the way that the student will approach the topic, not knowing in advance what the paper will say or even (the exceptionally vague phrase) 'what the paper will be about' but rather determining what questions must be satisfactorily answered in the paper. What is most striking about the standards is that the writing of the paper is not addressed until the fourth standard, which is quite late in the process. What this means is not that writing is not important. It means that the writing process begins earlier than students consciously recognize. Writing happens every day that the students perform research strategies, think about their topics, and collect and read their sources. In this sense, writing is much more of a collective and interactive event



"Artifex Four." Howard Miller

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than the popular image of a person staring at a blank sheet of paper or a computer screen, thinking about what he or she will say."

"By engaging with a mass of texts in a 'writerly' way, to borrow Roland's concept of the active and stimulating 'writerly text,' students change from being passive consumers of information to active owners of their own knowledge."

This is a worthy goal for all of us, faculty and students alike.



Cultural Literacy:

Cultural literacy is not just a catch phrase by E.D. Hirsch: for our international students, this term means a great deal more. Why do Americans talk so quickly and loudly? What is peanut butter? How does one "chill," "dis," or "catch some Z's?" Since SVSU is a temporary home to some 300 students who come from Taiwan, Bosnia, Germany, France, Saudi Arabia, and other locations around the globe, cultural literacy involves more than teaching English speaking, writing, and reading skills. Or rather, cultural literacy is interwoven into all of these tasks.

Carlos Ramet, Executive Assistant to the President, in his May 1993



Literacy Link essay, "Writing in the ESL Classroom," notes, "There are all types of ESL students (as many as there are nations in the world and age groups and different school systems) and as many reasons for studying English as there are

types of students At SVSU, the majority of students presently taking ESL (English as a Second Language) can be described either as international exchange students or college students from other countries who now reside permanently in the United States. Many of these international exchange students have studied

English as a foreign language in their own countries and some of them aspire to become English teachers in their native countries on their return."



But this is a difficult task for many ESL students. "These students are often painfully aware of the gaps between the sophistication of their ideas and the limitations of their linguistic skill in the target language. This gap is articulated with comments such as 'I have complicated ideas, but only simple language,' or 'I feel like a child



when I try to speak or write in English,' says Judy Younquist, ESL Specialist, in "Common Hurdles in Second Language Writing: Mistake or Message?" in the November 2000 issue of *Literacy Link*. "International students know that even though they are literate and well-educated in their home

culture, native speakers may view them as being less literate, and perhaps less intelligent, than they really are."

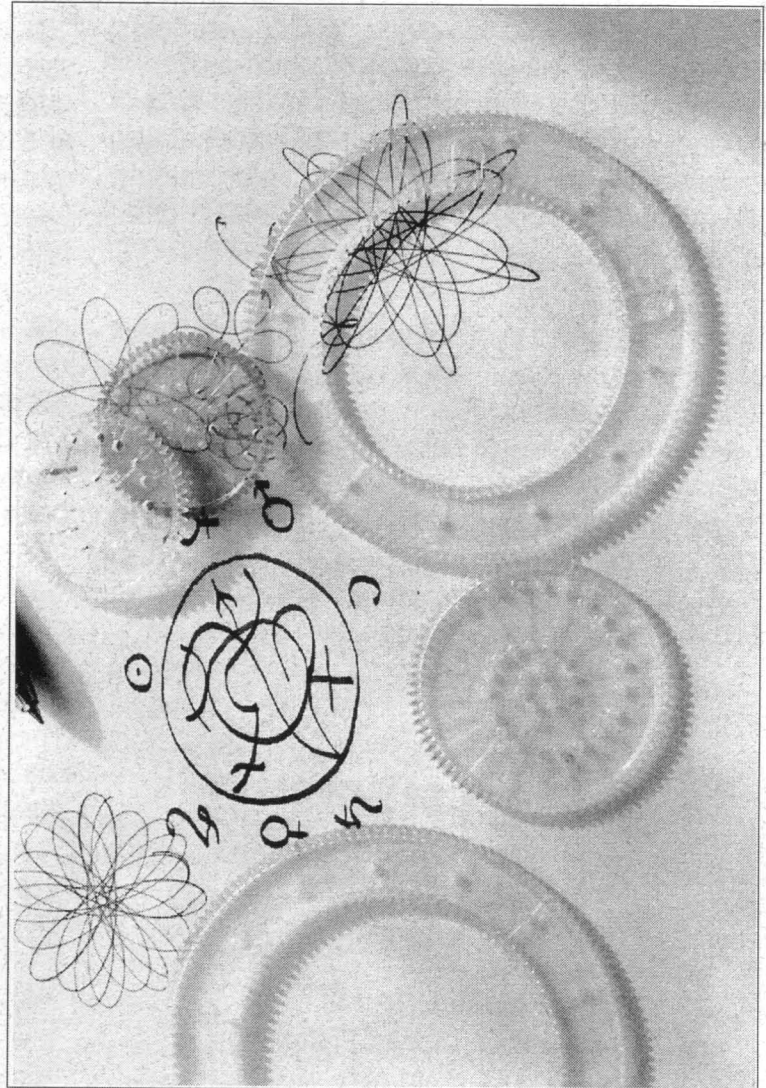
"Compounding the linguistic limitation is the lack of cultural knowledge," Younquist continues. "Even those who have studied a foreign language for many years may find that there are contextual discourse restraints that impede them from achieving their communicative purpose. This struggle is readily apparent in second language writing, where the use of unfamiliar lexical and cohesive elements can disrupt a clear message."

"Diverse ethnic and linguistic groups bring with them all kinds of different assumptions that may lead to communication breakdown in written communication. As they are acquiring the target language and learning Western style rhetorical strategies, ESL students have to deal with presuppositions, cultural assumptions they assume the audience shares with them."

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"Increased ethnic and linguistic diversity is becoming the norm in classrooms across the country Becoming more aware of what ESL students want to communicate in writing requires increased sensitivity and openness to a variation in language. A mistake in an ESL student's composition may very well be a message, one that signals information about a different language background and cultural perception. Increased awareness and understanding are vital if students and teachers are to reach communicative objectives."

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"Artifex Six," Howard Miller

Best Practices the Disciplines



Dr. Erik Trump, Professor of Political Science, wrote an article entitled "Guiding Student Writing in the Disciplines" in a November 1999 edition of *Literacy Link*. In this essay he points out, "Until we clearly articulate the how and why of writing

for our disciplines, we will continue to get student writing that just 'happens.'"

"For the student who does not recognize the disciplinary organization of knowledge and learning, these experiences with contradictory advice about writing can lead to the discouraging conclusion that writing standards are inconsistent and arbitrary, established only by the whim of individual professors," Trump goes on to explain. "The student copes by learning to ask what a professor 'wants,' never seeing that those 'wants' have patterns, which, if mapped, can help the student negotiate writing across the disciplines."

Best Practices, from page 9

"An effective writing guide places students' writing tasks for a given class within the context of writing in the relevant discipline. This kind of guide not only demonstrates *how* to write but also explains *why* to write that way. Unfortunately, the guides we produce for our classes often neglect the *why* part."

Below, we've selected some of the "best practices" in writing from seven disciplines at our university that have been profiled in issues of *Literacy Link* over the past thirteen years. What you will read here are your colleagues' attempts to do as Trump suggests: integrate writing into our curriculum in a clear and thoughtful way, to develop not only better writers, but better thinkers in our respective fields.



ETHICS

"Imposing a Tight Structure in Applied Ethics"

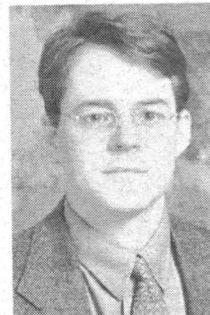
Literacy Link, October 1992

Judith Hill
Professor of Philosophy

[In my Ethics course,] "students are required to write three 5-6 page essays during the course of the semester. Typically, the essay will take the form of a response to a specific moral question. For example: 'Baby Doe was born with certain severe birth defects to unmarried, unemployed teen-aged parents. The baby suffers from a condition that will cause her death within a few days unless she has immediate surgery. With the surgery, she could live for several years (especially if additional surgical procedures are provided), but she will still be severely impaired, both mentally and physically. Should the life-saving surgery be performed?'"

"The first step in dealing with the question is to state as clearly as possible a general principle of euthanasia, e.g., 'Euthanasia is justifiable when and only when a patient has a permanent mental or physical disability that would prevent anything like a normal life.' The second step is to defend this principle of euthanasia to the case in question: 'If we accept this principle, should we or should we not perform the surgery in the Baby Doe case?'"

"There are two reasons for insisting on this structure. First, I want to discourage students from dealing with moral questions on an ad hoc basis. Seat-of-the-pants moralizing is usually not well thought out, and is often inconsistent with other positions one holds. Second, the point of Ethics courses is not – cannot be – to provide specific answers to every moral question students will ever have to deal with. The point is to teach moral reasoning skills, so that students can work out the answers to moral questions for themselves as they arise."



HISTORY

"Names, Dates, and History Professors"

Literacy Link, April 2000

Paul E. Teed
Professor of History

"In my own teaching, I have developed several strategies to smooth my students' transition from list-based instruction to college-level historical analysis. Students in my survey classes are required to read at least two historical monographs or primary sources that force them to explore problems outside the textbook. Robert Gross's book, *The Minutemen and Their World*, for example, analyzes the meaning of the American Revolution for the people of the single town of Concord, Massachusetts. While

Best Practices, from page 10

textbooks usually focus on traditional political and military narratives, a book like this forces students to examine the social and cultural fabric of early America in closer view. In class, the students are asked to assess this kind of writing in ways that go well beyond its factual narrative."

"First, I require short, low-risk exploratory writing assignments that encourage students to sketch out the larger argument being made in the book. Second, we spend time developing the meaning and implications of the book's argument and comparing it to other possible interpretations of the same event or problem. Finally, students are encouraged to compare the argument or interpretation to the necessarily more superficial account in their textbook. The result is the realization, at least for some students, that historical truth is always subject to revision and, at times, even indeterminate."

"In my upper division courses, students are required to prepare more extended historiographical essays in which they analyze several short essays that represent conflicting interpretations of the same event. Reading three very different analyses of Abraham Lincoln's racial views, for instance, my Civil War students are confronted with recognized scholars who draw opposite conclusions from almost identical sources. Here it becomes impossible to use a simple, factual narrative to solve the problem. Students must examine sources and critique the argumentation and methodology of conflicting scholarly analyses. I have found that this sort of assignment is very exciting for students."

MATHEMATICS

"Mathematics: The Writing Connection"
Literacy Link, October 1992

Judith Moehs
Professor of Mathematics

"When writing is an integral part of the mathematics curriculum, student understanding of mathematics increases and math grades improve" (Linn, 1987; Mett, 1987; Havens, 1989).

"Five assignments demonstrating the mathematics and writing connection follow. Teachers may use them in any way they deem profitable; however, it is important that all assignments be modeled and responded to in some way."

"Writing Prompts for Mathematics:

1. If the answer is _____, what might the question have been?
2. Summarize what you just read, heard, discussed, taken down in your notes.
3. Rewrite _____ so that it would make sense to a third-grader, your mother, a pre-calculus student, an alien, a student who's been absent.
4. How are _____ and _____ alike? How are they different?
5. Write a story problem based on this picture, graph, equation, information."

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE

"Writing and Research Methods in Criminal Justice"

Literacy Link, October 1992

Ken Gewerth
Professor of Criminal Justice

"I am trying to make it [learning research methods in my Criminal Justice courses] a bit more palatable by taking something of a nontraditional approach to the class."

"First, I try to emphasize to the students that Criminal Justice research (even the qualitative stuff) is nothing magical, but rather just another way of communicating. At its heart, research in our field is a process of (1) making some observations about the problem of crime, (2) trying to figure out what those observations mean, and (3) telling someone else (like a legislator or another researcher) about those observations, usually in writing. Putting the research process in this context brings it into the realm of the student's everyday experience, and allows me to stress that without good writing skills, the most elegantly designed and flawlessly conducted research is worthless."

"Second, I de-emphasize the quantitative aspects of the course, and instead work to strengthen students' ability to locate existing information about the criminal justice system and present it clearly and concisely in written form. Upon reflection, I realized that most of my 'real world' research experience did not involve the design and execution of original quantitative research, but rather summarizing, integrating, and critiquing existing information and presenting it in written form. Consequently, I have devised a series of short research and writing projects. Some for example, require the students to summarize rather lengthy U.S. Supreme Court decisions (40-50 pages) in a 2-

5 page memo; others require the students to go on a kind of 'scavenger hunt' through the library to locate facts about the criminal justice system; still others require the students to edit and correct examples of terrible writing which I have saved from previous semesters."



CHEMISTRY

"An Integrated Approach to Learning"

Literacy Link, November 2001

Deborah Huntley
Professor of Chemistry

"Physical Chemistry is often perceived as the most difficult part of the undergraduate curriculum. It is certainly the most theoretical, requiring an integration of chemical, physical and mathematical concepts. The Physical Chemistry Laboratory, a two-semester sequence which complements the Physical Chemistry Lecture, is intended to make the seemingly abstract concepts of physical chemistry more concrete Since students taking Physical Chemistry are junior and senior chemistry majors, they are ready for additional challenge in the laboratory setting. "

"Last year, I added the independent laboratory project and have since made it a permanent part of the program. Working in pairs, students develop and implement a short experiment on their own, with much less direction than they have typically encountered in the past. . . . They are free to choose any project, as long as it relates to physical chemistry and the equipment and supplies are readily available (and not prohibitively expensive). They are responsible for determining what supplies they need, establishing a method, executing the experiment, analyzing the data and presenting the work to their peers and the faculty of SE&T. The

Best Practices, from page 12

presentations take the form of a scientific poster session, similar in format to a poster session at any major scientific meeting. The project occurs in the latter half of the semester, but planning begins early, as shown in the time line below."

Time Line	
Week	Task
one	Students are introduced to the special project
four	Students choose partners and topic and discuss their topics with me
five	Student turn in "proposal" consisting of: Title Goal Primary Reference List of needed chemicals, supplies, and equipment laboratory procedure
eight	Begin Laboratory Work
twelve	Poster Session

"I chose the poster format instead of formal written papers or oral presentations for several reasons. I wanted the students to learn from each others' work, which is difficult with written papers. I didn't want the students to report their results to me, but to each other. I didn't want them to be able to gloss over muddy points which is easy to do in a written report but much harder in a discussion format where questions are being asked. This forces them to think carefully and thoroughly about their topics. Formal oral presentations accomplish these objectives, but are stressful, time consuming and the audience frequently becomes passive. In poster sessions, both audience and presenters are active participants and learn from the experience. Since the poster presentation is less formal than an oral presentation, it is easier for the presenter to accept input and suggestions open-

ly. Finally, posters are a very common format at national scientific meetings where the vast number of contributed papers precludes including all presenters in oral sessions. This format has been used effectively by other departments at SVSU for similar assignments."

"The real value in this project was that students were asked to integrate seemingly disparate knowledge into one project. They needed to apply their knowledge of fundamental chemical principles, their acquired laboratory skills, their ability to read critically, their knowledge of mathematical and graphical data analysis and their written and oral communication skills to their chosen topic in physical chemistry. I report, with a great deal of satisfaction, that the students were challenged by this assignment, but met that challenge and significantly exceeded my expectations."



BUSINESS

"Developing Writing Skills:
Management 328 Revisited"

Literacy Link, March 1993

Gail Sype
Professor of Business

"In a recent *Literacy Link*, I described a writing/group presentation project that I was trying for the first time in two sections of Management 328 (Organizational Behavior). The project required students to choose one topic related to the course and conduct an in-depth analysis through both an in-class oral presentation and the submission of a group paper. Groups chose their own topics; each group was encouraged to clear its topic with me before developing its presentation or paper [However,] I found that students did not always distinguish between

Best Practices, from page 13

the type of material, such as case histories, that lent itself to in-class presentation versus that which was best presented in a written format. I also found that students tended (though not always) to simply stand up and read their papers rather than using the two [suggested] formats as opportunities to maximize information. Many of them seemed very uncomfortable presenting in front of a group and did not do justice to interesting and relevant material."

"I might use this project again, but given lots of time, resources, and energy, I would do several things differently:

- I would require students to clear with me not only a topic but a detailed outline and description, and to do so at least two weeks before the presentation.
- I would require students to choose topics with a narrower focus.
- I would suggest that students video-tape a 'dry run' of their presentation in order to be able to critique it and perhaps avail themselves of the opportunity to enliven it a bit.
- I would offer to read rough drafts of papers in order to catch spelling, grammatical, and other errors before having to deduct points for them.
- I would ask talented colleagues (like the readers of *Literacy Link*) to make suggestions about how to improve the assignment.
- I would encourage students to use speakers, graphics, posters, handouts, etc., to give their in-class presentations, for lack of a more elegant term, 'pizzazz.'"



ART

"Drawing on Writing in Studio Art"

Literacy Link, November 1998

Matt Zivich
Professor of Art

"For the past several years I have been assigning short written papers in some of my studio art classes. The papers were to be personal reactions, for the most part, to videos shown in class that dealt with various artists apropos to each class. Assigning written papers in a studio art class was moving into new territory virtually never attempted before."

"Though I never thought papers written after viewing videos would be the cutting edge of artistic expression, it did occur to me that encouraging the students to be creative in their writing might make for more interesting papers to read."

"Therefore the first new written assignment in a combined beginning and advanced painting class was to be a one-act play based on three differently influential artists of the 20th century: Tomas Hart Benton, Jackson Pollock, and Andy Warhol. The play was to be based entirely in a New York bar at a time when all of the characters' lives overlapped. The play was to be based entirely on information observed and heard in the store videos, though I did not discourage students from seeking more information. Predictably, some of the papers were factual and parroted the video's narrative. Only now, the main characters were doing the parroting."

"Some of the papers were truly creative, as if a veil had been lifted from the eyes of these students. What I read was not just quotations by the artists in the videos, but the students' personal reactions to the artistic styles interwoven into the paraphrased narrative."

