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The Muse: Resources for Faculty and TA Newsletters, No. 3, Fall 1991

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The Muse

Celebrating *CRISP* editors

One faculty development editor views her fellow muses

Barbara A. Millis

We all know the value of crisp salads, crisp dollar bills, and especially crisp prose. But who would ever associate such an adjective with newsletter editors?

I recently had the pleasure of "communing" with a dozen or so top-flight college and university newsletter editors. The experience was humbling. I came away with a renewed respect for these strange beasts, first described in the brief *Muse* article (October 1988) "So You Want To Be An Editor?" as "compulsive," "proud," and "courageous."

Just what qualities do successful newsletter editors share? After jotting down some thoughts, an acronym suddenly emerged. Here's what I think it takes to be a delightfully *CRISP* editor.

C = Creativity

Above all else, a good editor, like an inspired artist or poet, sees things differently. Possibilities are everywhere. A routine committee meeting? A kindly professor who looks like Mr. Chips? A new administrative computing system? How could anything newsworthy—or more importantly, *interesting*—come out of these unlikely ingredients? But a good editor will see freshness, an unusual slant, or a new combination that can transform the mundane. Creativity will be evident

in approaches to people as well as to topics. A creative editor will help contributors shape their ideas and communicate their dreams.

R = Responsible risk-taking

A contradiction in terms? Not necessarily. Newsletter editors have to take risks; they must be courageous. Their reputations are on the line with every issue and with every relationship they cultivate with contributors. But successful editors are usually not crusaders; they are responsible members of an extended community. In fact, the upcoming "I" in *CRISP* could as well stand for "integrity" because editors must have the trust and respect of their colleagues.

I = Involvement

The best editors are people who care passionately about their profession. They care about teaching, about writing, about their campuses, and about the world. They set and maintain high standards and strive to bring out the best in their contributors because otherwise communication would languish.

It matters to an involved editor that a sociologist is able to share her unbridled enthusiasm for a teaching technique called "Think, Pair, Share." An editor cares that an accounting professor telephones a composition instructor to discuss journal writing

See CRISP, page 2

Enclosed:

**Supplement: An outstanding *Tutor* for TAs
Subscription Information**

CRISP (from page 1)

options. Involved editors understand their campuses and are sincerely involved with issues and with people. Balanced personal judgments are acceptable expressions of involvement, as Maryellen Weimer points out in "Writing Newsletters with Style" (*The Muse*, October 1988).

S = Sensitivity

Because good editors are sincerely involved, they are aware of the nuances behind the news. They deal sensitively with people as well as with issues. They sympathize with faculty about competing pressures and respect their efforts, however flawed from an editorial standpoint. A sensitive editor practices diplomacy.

P = Patience

Building relationships and establishing a reputation for integrity take time. Editors must be patient when contributors miss deadlines or when their articles ramble for seven pages. They cultivate a gentle sense of humor when the computer is down or when the university printing service becomes backlogged.

A review of this list suggests that the possible contradictions or anomalies go well beyond the alliterative "r" of "responsible risk-taking." We could talk as easily of "passionate patience" or "involvement with integrity." Because editors face such enormously complex tasks, the best of them are necessarily complicated people. Perhaps this complexity is actually the key to their success. As Frank Barron so aptly put it: "[creative people are] more vigorous and have available to them an exceptional fund of psychic and physical energy. Their universe is thus more complex, and in addition they usually lead more complex lives, seeking tension in the interest of the pleasure they obtain upon its discharge." (*Scientific American*, September 1958). Ω

Barbara A. Millis is Assistant Dean for Faculty Development, University of Maryland University College, and edits the *UMUC Faculty Focus*. She acknowledges with appreciation the editors whose suggestions led to this article: Phil Winstead, LeAne Rutherford, Maryellen Weimer, Diane Morrison, Kate Brinko, Laura Border, Linc. Fisch, Mike Nichols, Pam Stocco, Don Forrester, and Ken Zahorski.

College Professing***Comic relief**

The cartoon which appears here is reprinted from page 63 of a delightful and perceptive book by Oliver P. Kolstoe. Fortunately, it's still in print. To obtain a copy of the book (pbk \$5.95, plus \$2.00 postage, \$2.50 UPS, plus 6.25% tax for shipments to Illinois) or for permission to reprint any of the Benjamin cartoons contained therein, please contact Southern Illinois University Press, P.O. Box 3697 Carbondale, IL 62902-3697, tel. (618) 453-2281.



Preparation is not a simple matter of having a great deal of information.

**College Professing, or Through Academia with Gun and Camera* by Oliver P. Kolstoe, illustrated by Don Paul Benjamin. © 1975 by Southern Illinois University Press. Used with permission.

Musings

Our Survey of Readers shows that faculty and TA development newsletter editors responded very favorably to the first two editions of *The Muse*.

Editors gave *The Muse* high ratings for its tips and suggestions, its explanations of unfamiliar processes and printing, its critique on design. Readers stressed that *The Muse* is useful, concrete, gives detailed information, and meets readers' needs head-on.

Editors planned to put the tidbits they had gleaned from *The Muse* to use in writing headlines, reviewing format, choosing fonts, and varying visual aspects. One mulled over the possibility of getting an editorial committee to help, hoping to find a source for additional ideas and dreaming of a reduced workload.

True to their colors, editors suggested improvements for *The Muse*. One with an eye for design said "Don't let it get too 'grey' with dense type." One wondered how we can keep *The Muse* going and if there are enough editors—new developers and/or old hands—to subscribe? Another requested more frequent publication, while an enthusiast exclaimed, "Please keep it up—it's a concrete tool for promoting faculty development."

Editors suggested the following kinds of content for future editions: working with faculty contributors; including good examples of all levels of newsletters, from typed, mimeographed ones to slick, highly designed, typeset, and multicolor printed versions along with the costs and benefits of each; giving concrete explanations of how much time different editors really put into their newsletters; and helping editors set priorities.

Just to keep us in touch with reality one pensive soul reflected that *The Muse's* "strengths are the other side of its weaknesses. It looks good, is focused, and deals with specifics. But it's out of my league in terms of my budget and objectives."

Our hearts were warmed by the final encomium of one fellow muser: "Praise, praise, praise. More, more, more. I'm feeling very privileged to receive this 'gift from the Gods.' Thanks, Muses!"

L.B., L.F., K.Z.

The Muse: Resources for Faculty and TA Newsletters, published by the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, No.3, Fall 1991.

Editors: Laura Border, University of Colorado at Boulder
Linc. Fisch, Lexington, KY
Ken Zahorski, St. Norbert College

Designer: Bill Border, Nederland, Colorado

Typography: Selka C. Lee

For further information about *The Muse*, please contact: David Graf, POD Network, Iowa State University, 15B Exhibit Hall South, Ames, Iowa, 50011, tel. (515) 294-3808, fax (515) 294-6024.

Cutting out white space with old saws

Kenneth Zahorski

To the newsletter editor, something nearly as certain as "death and taxes" is a layout with white space that needs filling. While there is certainly more than one solution to this pesky problem, one of the easiest and most dependable is the use of a memorable saying or quotation. Yes, old saws can still do the trick—provided you have some handy. Just in case you have not yet started your own evergreen file of quotes and proverbs, we offer the following for starters.

The teacher is not a pleader, not a performer, not a huckster, but a confident, exuberant guide on expeditions of shared responsibility into the most exciting and least understood terrain on earth—the mind itself.

Nancy K. Hill

"Scaling the Heights:
The Teacher as Mountaineer."
The Chronicle of Higher Education,
June 16, 1980

I remember the front door. I remember the auditorium. I remember the feeling that you can't make it. But you can.

General Colin Powell,
(visiting his old high school
in the Bronx)

To teach is to learn twice.

Joseph Joubert
Pensées (1842)

... writing leads only to writing.

Colette
"The Blue Lantern," (1949)

Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous.

Confucius
The Confucian Analects

To know is not to be content with things as presented to us, but to seek beyond their appearance for their being.

Ortega Y. Gasset

... how hard it is to make your thoughts look anything but imbecile fools when you paint them with ink on paper.

Olive Shreiner
From Man to Man (1927)

Propaganda has a bad name, but its root meaning is simply to disseminate through a medium, and all writ-

ing therefore is propaganda for something. It's a seeding of the self in the consciousness of others.

Elizabeth Drew

Poetry: A Modern Guide to Its Understanding and Enjoyment,
(1959)

Definition of a grade: "An inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has at-

tained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite material."

P. Dressel,

Ohmer Milton, et al.
Making Sense of College Grades.
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
Publishers, (1986)

The art of becoming wise is the art of knowing what to overlook.

William James



Book Review

Looking Good in Print by Roger C. Parker

Looking Good in Print is a book by Roger Parker that I've already heard called a classic in its field. It is indeed an excellent primer in graphic design for the layperson, a category into which many newsletter editors fall.

About a third of the book is devoted to the elements of design per se: building blocks, tools of organization and emphasis, common pitfalls. The remaining six chapters are devoted to applications. Only one deals specifically with newsletters, catalogs, and tabloids. However, there are many other good morsels for an editor to consume—for example, in the chapter on brochures, books, and training materials or in the one on design makeovers in which numerous examples are shown. (Parker deals more extensively with that topic in a 1989 Ventana publication *The Makeover Book*.)

Parker's emphasis throughout the book is on desktop publishing considered generically, although I found almost all topics to be relevant to more traditional publishing as well. He focuses particularly on using desktop

publishing (DTP) programs effectively and—equally as important—avoiding the dangers of over-using programs' capabilities. That's of particular value to newsletter editors, since most of us will become involved with DTP sooner or later in some way.

Looking Good in Print is clearly written. In each topic a basic principle is stated simply, amplified, illustrated with an example, and usually reinforced with a blurb. And, of course, the book itself is a prime example of what the text advocates. It reads almost like a novel, with the reader carried along rapidly. But it is also a book that one can dip back into for renewal of ideas and reminders of good design. Parker is president of The Write Word, Inc., an advertising and marketing consulting firm in Dover, N.H. Ventana Press has also published his *Desktop Publishing with WordPerfect* and *Newsletters from the Desktop*.

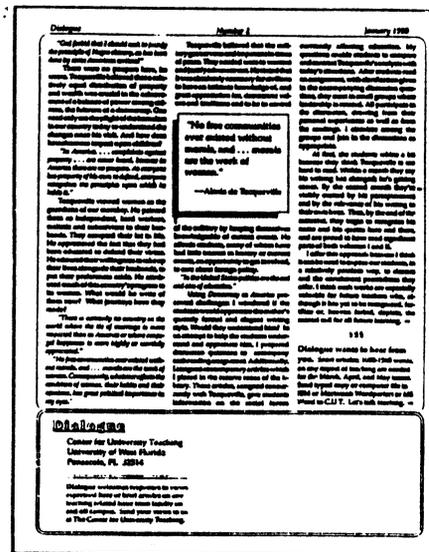
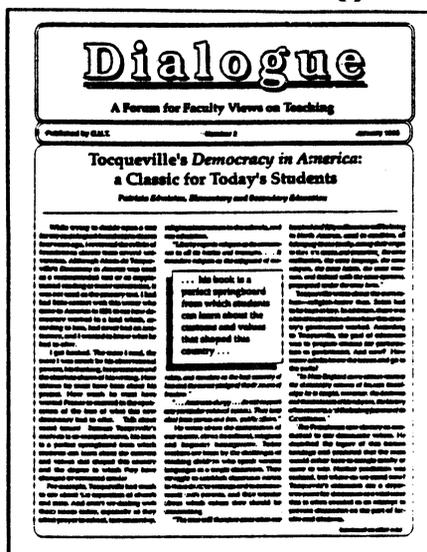
Design attracts attention. We all need to pay attention to it. *Looking Good in Print* is a quick, yet very good introduction to graphic design and its application. I think it can be a solid addition to an editor's armamentarium.

Linc. Fisch

Roger C. Parker, *Looking Good in Print: A Guide to Basic Design for Desktop Publishing*. Chapel Hill, NC: Ventana Press (P.O. Box 2468, telephone (919) 942-0220), 1988, 224 pp. pbk, \$23.95 plus \$3.60 shipping.

Design review

Clean, simple design enhances West Florida's new *Dialogue*



Pages: two, 8 1/2 x 11
Stock: 70# Ivory
 Laurentine
Inks: Forest Green,
 standard black
Type: Palatino for text
Frequency: 10 issues per
 academic year
Circulation: 500 to full-time
 and part-time
 faculty, TAs,
 others off-
 campus
Editors: Frank Rabold,
 Mike Yots

Center for University Teaching
 University of West Florida
 Pensacola, FL 32514
 (904) 474-2042

The University of West Florida's Center for University Teaching launched *Dialogue*, a monthly faculty development publication, in 1989. The name reflects its purpose well: to generate discussions among faculty on teaching issues, either on a casual basis or in more structured departmental workshops. Each issue is a single article on teaching by a UWF faculty member.

Dialogue complements the standard semi-annual newsletter, *Sharing Teaching Ideas*, which is more traditional in its presentation of news about the Center and its programs.

Dialogue is a particularly good illustration of using type to lend visual variety, accomplished by employing one font in

various sizes and a nice combination of italics, bold, and roman. A pull-out quote, boxed and with shadow, adds interest to each page. The entire text is outlined with a hairline box with rounded corners; the banner and address panel are double-outlined. There's just enough restrained graphic treatment to make the publication attractive without risk of clutter. It represents very intelligent use of desktop publishing software, (Aldus PageMaker 3.01 in this case). Use of two colors in this short newsletter is not necessary, but it adds an extra touch of class at an additional cost of only \$25.

The editors deserve compliments on developing the concept of *Dialogue*, as well as the good design.

L.B., L.F., K.Z.

Filings...

Reprints from other newsletters

Faculty development newsletter editors occasionally reprint articles that have appeared in other newsletters. Alternately, they may announce the availability of the articles and make copies for any who request them. We've contacted the authors and each is willing to have the article reprinted. If you wish to consider a particular article, write to the address given below in order to get an accurate copy and attribution information.

"Macho Grading and Other Reasons Students Fail" by John Hatten. *Instructional Development*, Vol. VI, No. 3, Winter 1989. About 2600 words.
Contact: LeAne Rutherford, Instructional Development Services, 143 Library, University of Minnesota-Duluth, Duluth, MN 55812-2496; (218) 726-6256.

"Pacing Lectures" by Marilla Svinicki. *CTE*

Newsletter, Vol. 10, No. 1, October 1988. About 500 words.

Contact: Marilla Svinicki, Center for Teaching Effectiveness, Main Bldg. 2200, University of Texas-Austin, Austin, TX 78712; (512) 471-1488.

"The Case for Leaving Things Out" by Linc. Fisch. *Connexions*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Spring 1988. About 600 words.

Contact: Linc. Fisch, 3309 Bellefonte Dr., Lexington, KY 40502; (606) 278-1457.

"Of Student Bondage: A Poke at Professional Distance" by Rebekah Womack. *LCC=Teaching*, Number 2, April 1988. About 700 words.

Contact: Rebekah Womack, English Department, Lexington Community College, Lexington, KY 40506-0235; (606) 257-5706.



An outstanding *Tutor* for teaching assistants

Laura L.B. Border

Martin Cobin, Professor Emeritus of Theatre and Dance at the University of Colorado, pointed out several parallels between the theatre and the university in a Graduate Teacher Program workshop "The Teacher as Actor." Both require an audience. Both are nurtured by and reflect the needs of society. Each is inherently conservative, focused on maintenance rather than on change.

This tendency toward conservatism is reflected in the university's symbols and traditions: for example, the colorful caps and gowns that grace our graduation ceremonies. Rhetoric and dollars are devoted to research and development, while many course syllabi, reading lists, and general values focus uniquely on the greatness of the past.

Nonetheless, the university of today is faced with meeting the challenges of tomorrow. How will the university be transformed? Who will fill the ranks of the professoriate? How will these faculty teach? How will students be prepared? What will they need to know? What will they tolerate? These questions are being addressed at many levels across the nation.

Our challenge as TA developers is to help to mold the faculty of the future. To do this we need clear vision: hindsight that draws on the best of the ivory tower tradition and foresight that prepares young faculty to leap into the twenty-first century with lambskins in hand.

Now in its sixth year, the Graduate Teacher Program newsletter, *The Tutor*, is deliberately designed in form and content to reflect this juncture of the past and future. Graphics meld tradition and

innovation. The title plays on the archaic meaning of tutor as teacher and the current meaning of tutor as adjunct, while at the same time creating a visual and verbal pun.

Our logo figure, Tooter, dressed in his medieval garb, heralds the inevitable change. The additional logo figures seen throughout various editions reflect changing demographics in the student population.

The two-column design is functional and easy to shape. The positioning of photos, graphics, and announcements vary from one issue to the next depending on the amount of copy per page. Layout is simple. Paste-up costs are low.

Photos from the University's photo bank add interest and variety. It takes a little research, but at \$6.00 per photo it is definitely affordable.

Floating sections marked with memorable graphics allow for variety from one issue to another. The "Honors" section fetes graduate student teaching award winners once each year.

"Words from the Wise" is inclusive and up-to-date as quotes by women and racial or ethnic minority writers or educators are featured along with the familiar quotes of traditional white male writers and educators. This section can be used as filler if copy is running low.

The boxed section "Tooter's Teaching Tips," which appears in most issues, highlights three teaching behaviors that can be grasped quickly and applied concretely. The "Graduate Teacher Forum" showcases graduate teachers' comments and encourages attendance at Graduate Teacher Program activities. *The Tutor's* potential as a teaching resource is emphasized by the three-hole punch that encourages readers to

See Tutor, Supplement, page 2

The Tutor, a newsletter for teaching assistants and graduate part-time instructors at the University of Colorado at Boulder, is an outstanding example of a publication to stimulate interest in teaching as well as interest in academic support services. We've invited Laura Border, its editor, to comment on its purpose, design, and production. Laura is the Director of the Graduate Teacher Program at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, Colorado 80309-0360; telephone (303) 492-4902.

Tutor (from Supplement, page 1)

tuck it into a personal collection.

The Tutor is printed on 70 lb. Scott offset. As *The Tutor* is a quarterly newsletter, we have color-coded the issues. We sequence the color of paper and ink using the pattern purple for spring, green for summer, brown for fall, and blue for the winter issue.

For the last six years *The Tutor* has been type-set by the University Publications Department. At present our staff is learning to use PageMaker in hopes of reducing expenses. The fall issue tends to run to six pages, but we have managed to keep most issues to four pages.

Readers and content weigh heavily on the minds of most editors. Our reader surveys show that graduate students are concerned with improving their teaching and learn useful tidbits by perusing *The Tutor*. To capitalize on this fact, various types of readers are considered in planning layout and length of presentations. The speed queen can pick up juicy tidbits in the "Tooter's Teaching Tips" section. The peruser can enjoy a long article over a cup of *café au lait*. The quoter can expand his or her repertoire in "Words from the Wise." The newsletter features up-to-date information on teaching, provides a sense of professionalism, informs, educates, and amuses.

Since our program and our publications are based on the premise that teaching involves ongoing personal development and continuous adjust-

ment to an ever changing world, the content of *The Tutor* is chosen with practicality and direct applicability in mind.

Content varies. Some issues feature topics or methods being discussed nationally. Others focus deliberately on the University of Colorado at Boulder faculty and staff community as a source of excellent ideas on teaching. The enclosed newsletter features the special needs that learning disabled students have in the classroom, discusses academic support services available to them on the Boulder campus, and provides tips for their instructors.

If your faculty development center is interested in starting a TA newsletter, you may be wondering how to justify the expense and the time spent on such a publication. Our graduate dean feels that *The Tutor* has a dual purpose. First, it serves as an information arm for the Graduate School, allowing direct communication with all graduate teachers twice each semester. *The Tutor* is a tangible reminder that the Graduate School is aware of and supportive of TAs' contributions to teaching and graduate research. The yearly Associate Dean's column reinforces this confluence of theory and praxis. It gives the Graduate School an attractive vehicle for showcasing award-winning teaching assistants.

Second, the newsletter functions as a resource, a tutorial on teaching and related issues. It builds on and comple-

ments pre-semester Graduate Teacher Program and departmental TA training efforts. For example, the Learning Disabilities staff presented four workshops for the Graduate Teacher Program before we decided that an article on the topic might appeal to the general University teaching community.

All teaching assistants, graduate part-time instructors, full-time teaching faculty, and interested administrators receive the newsletter. Sending the appropriate number of copies to each department so that secretaries can distribute them saves time and reduces mailing costs. The mailing list is thus reduced to the names of graduate secretaries, administrators, and off-campus recipients. The CU Foundation distributes copies to potential donors and has succeeded in securing outside funding for the Graduate Teacher Program.

The excitement inherent in working to improve graduate students' teaching skills is that we can indeed mold the future. Our hope is that the dramas played out in the classrooms on our campus will encourage standing-room only attendance, respond effectively to the pressing needs of our changing population, and strengthen the foundations of our ivy-covered towers sufficiently to provide a solid base for the University of Colorado at Boulder in the twenty-first century. Ω