one of the judges; we find the experimental group using a different set of criteria in judging compositions than the control group; and, in addition, we see the experimental group giving more positive responses to all ten statements on a writing attitude survey. Further qualitative and quantitative research will provide a better understanding of the merits of self- and peer evaluation as a diagnostic and instructional tool in the ESL classroom.

EVALUATION OF A PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL: IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Catherine Schryer, Ontario Veterinary College

Evaluation is a major focus of a research project investigating literacy at Ontario Veterinary College. Using ethnographic research methods, I discovered that a set of reductive evaluation practices were at work in the college—an overdependence on in-class exams using short answers to test for information for its own sake rather than information used to solve problems or to argue for a diagnosis. Bloom's taxonomy, James Britton's work on expressive vs. transactional writing, and research into coherence suggested that such practices were leading to students experiencing difficulty when asked to do extended pieces of writing (especially in class) requiring synthesis and evaluation and a lack of opportunity for students to master the cohesion needed for fully transactional writing.

Further investigation revealed that these evaluation practices have evolved in response to forces outside of the College—both faculty and students believe that they are in the midst of an information explosion and that no time is available for fully transactional writing. Curriculum and pedagogy also reflect and influence the present evaluation system. Despite the college's declared interest in problem-solving and interactive instruction, most of the teaching remains presentational. Thus, the evaluation system and pedagogy work to exclude students from learning how to contribute actively to their discipline.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: ONE PERSON'S PRACTICE

Margaret Procter, Erindale College, University of Toronto

This session focused on a current project at Erindale College that attempts to help students meet the demands of academic writing in various disciplines. Professors are frustrated at the poor quality of students' writing, and students complain that writing assignments impose arbitrary patterns on course material and expect impossible standards of language correctness. Conference participants responded to these comments. To illustrate my attempts to diminish these negative feelings, I exhibited some material used in the project to demonstrate that academic writing can develop and express thinking in specific subjects. Students in cultural anthropology, for instance, find that the standard patterns of exposition match anthropological methods of analysis, and commerce students recognize that accounting practice provides some basic structures for discussing the meanings of numbers. Indeed, data from the project indicate that students learn to revise more competently because they feel greater confidence and recognize an overall goal.

Participants agreed that the improvement and assessment of students' writing skills should be the responsibility of content-area professors, and they offered advice and parallel experiences. Some questioned the desirability of defining explicitly what is expected in a writing task rather than letting students explore possibilities. Suggestions focused on ways to help professors design assignments which would recognize the importance of stages in the writing process.