

Editors' Column

With this issue, we complete our first three-year term as Editors of *JBW*. We want to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have supported the *Journal* during our brief tenure. Above all, we want to express our appreciation both to our growing number of institutional and individual subscribers and to all those who have submitted manuscripts to the *Journal*. Without you, *JBW* could not exist as a meaningful enterprise. Second, we want to thank the thirty-seven members of the Editorial Board and our dedicated professional staff: Ruth Davis, Associate and Managing Editor; Marilyn Maiz, Associate Editor; and Richard A. Mandelbaum, Copy-reader. Finally, we must acknowledge our advertisers, many of whom also publish books written or edited by *JBW* contributors and by members of our Editorial Board. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you during our second term.

One of our priorities during the 1991–93 term is computerization of the *Journal's* managing and editing of manuscripts. We recognize that we have an obligation to those who submit to *JBW* to speed up the editorial process, especially with respect to those manuscripts either rejected or returned for revision and resubmission. Ultimately, we need a system which will permit submission of manuscripts and reviewers' reports by electronic mail, as well as one that allows us to transmit the material for each issue to our printer directly. Budget permitting, we hope to have taken the first steps in this evolution by the time the current issue reaches you.

A second priority, continuing from our first term, is to make *JBW* a truly international and multicultural journal. Frankly, this has proven to be a far more difficult task than we at first envisioned. In spite of efforts by ourselves and members of the Editorial Board to encourage overseas submissions, *JBW* only receives a trickle of manuscripts from outside the United States, of which only one or two a year are of potential interest to our readers. Articles concerned with the theory and practice of basic writing in American

classrooms peopled by minorities are almost as rarely submitted. However, we shall continue our efforts to broaden the *Journal's* base during the next three years.

We would like to turn now to a brief summary of the articles in the current issue. If there is any emerging theme, it is the growing complexity of defining basic writers, delineating their attributes and capacities, and analyzing how awareness of this complexity influences our attitudes and practices as teachers.

In the first article Robert de Beaugrande and Mar Jean Olson present a view of basic writing that challenges prevailing linguistic, psychological, and educational theory and practice. The authors go on to report on a pilot project that interposes speech between successive written drafts, leading to writing of improved length, fluency, organization, and detail.

Alan Purves broadens and internationalizes the concept of writing communities as profound cultural phenomena each with its own rhetoric and conventions of transcription, language, structure, content, and style. Writing is to be studied almost anthropologically in relation to the models and conventions established within these communities.

Patricia Bizzell tries to bridge the theoretical impasse between a deep and abiding suspicion of any exercise of power in one's teaching with the desire to promote liberatory goals. In contrast to traditional notions of teacher-centered "power," Bizzell offers several, more complex forms of classroom "authority," and suggests how these new forms might enter into the design of composition curricula.

By employing computer analysis, George Otte attempts to define the seriousness of error in a class of upper-level developmental students who had failed the CUNY Writing Assessment Exam. The study shows that student recognition of their own errors is lower than one would suspect; that the most remedial error patterns tend to be those that are most clearly written conventions: capitalization, spelling, punctuation; and, most importantly, that few classwide error patterns exist, leading to the indispensable need for teachers to work with students individually.

Donald Lazere returns to the debate occasioned by Thomas J. Farrell's 1983 article, "I.Q. and Standard English," and suggests the importance of social class, among other factors, in assessing the broad range of basic writers who come to college from predominantly oral cultures.

Sally Barr Reagan presents the case study of Javier as an example of how to look more closely at the multitude of cultural and idiosyncratic factors that influence the feelings and behaviors of

basic writers at risk. The author goes on to suggest the need for teachers to change their attitudes and roles, instead of maintaining deficit-oriented definitions of their basic writing students.

Finally, Walter Minot and Kenneth Gamble challenge the assumption that basic writers are a homogeneous group, by studying the affective characteristics of basic writers with low writing apprehension and high self-esteem, suggesting important implications for composition theory and practice.

Bill Bernhardt and Peter Miller