From the Editor: A New Edition

By Christine S. Cozzens
Agnes Scott College

No, that's not a typo in the title—it's a pun. As of 1 June 2004, I will be on sabbatical for a year, off to write, read, learn, travel, and find out what other action verbs ought to define my life. *Southern Discourse* will be in capable hands, guest-edited for Volume 8 by Marcy Trianosky of Hollins University. All contributions and queries for the next year should go directly to Marcy; you'll find her contact information in the masthead on this page. Marcy will bring a fresh perspective to *SD*, and I know I'll learn from her issues when I come back in the summer of 2005.

Production will still take place here at Agnes Scott, but we have new assistant editors taking over from Nicolette Lee, who will no doubt soon be editing a law journal. Mollie Barnes and Catlin Copan-Kelly will share the huge job of producing the publication. They have cut their teeth on this issue, learning the software and other mysteries of the process with astonishing speed. All these new additions to the staff will be celebrated with our new year-long color—the fourth in a series of four. You may want to start the guessing now, but you'll have to wait until October for the color to be revealed. We'll rotate back to Nantucket blue after that and go through the series again.

This issue celebrates the 2004 conference so ably hosted by Bob Barrier and the writing center staff at Kennesaw University here in metro Atlanta. I want to close by saying how wonderful it was to have writing class with Peter Elbow at the conference, because that's really what his keynote speech amounted to. As he talked, I recognized so many of the phrases and explanations I use to explain writing and to get students to write, words so familiar and comfortable to me now that I had forgotten that they all came from Elbow's books, read long ago when I was learning the business. He gave us new ideas in the keynote speech, too, and he got us writing, writing, writing. What better way to honor the conference theme, "Getting Back to Writing"—good advice for all of us over the summer.

*Southern Discourse* / Summer 2004 • Volume 7, Issue 3 Page 2
The SWCA Peer Tutor Award is presented annually to a peer consultant in the Southeastern region for his or her excellence in tutoring and outstanding contributions to the writing center community. The 2004 SWCA Peer Tutor Award, juried by the SWCA Awards Committee, was presented to Ms. Tonya Hassell, a former undergraduate tutor at the Winthrop University Writing Center and a current graduate student and writing center tutor at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. She was introduced at the awards brunch by Dr. Jane Smith of Winthrop University and was presented with a commemorative plaque and a $100 cash award.

Conferred for the first time in 2004, the Outstanding Southern Discourse Article for 2002-2003 was presented to Kelly Richardson and Jane Smith of Winthrop University for their article titled, “Tutorial Talk and Personality Types” (Fall 2002). Jane Smith was present to accept their awards, which included a commemorative plaque and a $100 cash award to be shared by the recipients. This award was juried by Beth Boquet and Neal Lerner, editors of the Writing Center Journal. All articles published in Southern Discourse for the 2002-2003 issues were included for consideration. Several other articles were selected for “Honorable Mention,” including “Shakespeare’s Younger Sister” (Summer 2003) by Nancy Karabeyoglu; “What’s the Point? Requiem for the Virgule—Not” (Fall 2002) by Peter Carrier; “The Owl’s Nest: Stretching Our Wings: Learning from a Conference Website” (Spring 2002) by James Inman and Donna Sewell; “A Profile of the Center for Writing and Speaking at Agnes Scott College” (Spring 2003) by Nicolette Lee; and “Tutoring Lashandra at Café South” (Summer 2003) by William Sinks.

For the first time, SWCA offered an award for the best poster session at this year’s conference. The recipient of this year’s Best Poster Session Award is John Evans of Shorter College for his presentation titled, “Andragogy (Adult Education) in the
What’s the Point?
Points of Reference

By Peter Carriere,
Georgia College and State University

The word “comma” seems suspiciously close to the word “coma.” No doubt
generations of students have been so enthralled and mesmerized by discussions
of the comma that they have often slipped off into blissful comatose states, but
there is historical evidence that our beloved, abstruse mark, the comma,
shrouded in mists of mystification,
may be traced to the Greeks.

Indeed, comma definition number 2 in the OED clearly traces this cherished mark to
those imaginative and creative people: “The comparative length of the κόμμα
[comma] and κόλον [colon] have given origin to our terms of punctuation
indicating the close of such shorter or longer clauses respectively, just as our
“period”, [sic] or full-stop, marks the end of a περιόδος [period].”

At first confusing, this statement relies on our knowing that the writer is using
the words “comma,” “colon,” and “period” to mean lengths of word groups
(with an implication of duration or time and thus importance). Here’s an
example from the OED citing Fuller from 1840: “Though a truce may give a
comma or colon to the war, nothing under a peace can put a perfect period
thereunto.” The period in this nomenclature is the longest word group and the
comma the shortest. In fact, we still use the word “period” to indicate a length
of time, as in “I learned the rules of punctuation in a short period of time.”
According to the OED, then, a comma in Greek rhetoric was “a phrase or group
of words less than a colon […] hence a short member of a sentence or period.”
I, for one, am glad that the comma was allowed to be a member of the period
club. After all, the OED declared that the comma was the punctuation mark
“used to separate the smallest members of a sentence,” a remark that almost
calls into question the mark’s status and importance. I wouldn’t want just any old
punctuation mark, (e.g., the virgule or the crotchett) to have access. Would you?

Grammatically speaking, then, a period is a sentence whose end is marked by the
point, or period, while a comma is only a member of a period and the colon,
another member of the period, is longer than the comma but shorter than the
period. And we indicate these syntactical members with appropriate marks: the
comma (,), the colon (:), and the period (.). Just in case we get confused. Period.

So what about those fifty-some rules governing the use of the comma in American
usage as defined in the Chicago Manual of Style? Here is OED definition number 2
(quoting J. E. Sandys on Cicero’s Orator): “the function of the comma is to make
clear the grammatical structure, and hence the sense, of the passage; one of the
means by which this is effected in actual speech is a short pause; hence the comma
is often inaccurately said to be merely the mark of such a pause. . . .” Evidently
Sandys never studied the origin of pointing, or the art of indicating pauses in
writing that reflect pauses in speech, or that the comma was defined somewhat
oddly by the great Ben Jonson as “a mean breathing.” So what does he know?

The rule I have been quoting here refers us to section b of 1, in which some
clarifying examples are given. Section b says that a comma is “a clause or short
member of a treatise or argument” and that this definition is obsolete (something
we might consider for our fifty-some rules). Here are the examples:

Example #1, Jeremy Taylor from 1649: “This being the hardest comma in the
whole discipline of Jesus is fortified with a double blessedness.” Now here’s an
example I can relate to: more students than I can count have struggled with the
hardest comma in the rule book and have, more than once, invoked Jesus with a
“double blessedness” in their attempt to apply the rule.

Example #2, from L.S. People’s Liberty ii, 1652: “The main argument […] is
bottomed upon part of the 7th comma of 4. Chapter of Genesis.” I don’t know
about you, but many of my students have “bottomed” during comma discussions,
too.

Example #3, L. Addison from 1671: “In the Moresco catalogue of crimes,
adultery and fornication are found in the first comma.” Here’s where I definitely
drew the line. Even though it might resurrect those students who have bottomed
out into a comatose state during discussions of the comma, I don’t want my
More Than a Paycheck
By Katie Kastner, College of Charleston

Trotting alongside Sir Gawain, thoroughly engaged in the thrill of the hunt, I am suddenly roused by the unmistakable creak of a heavy door forcefully jerked open. The Green Knight! As I peer apprehensively over my paperback, an impenetrable wall of stocky tree trunks reverts to one of laid brick. My horse, I realize, is naught but a tawny swivel chair. My glance shifts to the door, through which steps a figure clad in a green—polo shirt. Rather than subside, my heart palpitations escalate. It’s a client!

My first day as a peer consultant in the College of Charleston’s Writing Lab was steeped in nervous anticipation. “What happens if a neuron misfires, and I fail to recognize significant problems in a subordinate clause?” Today, as a so-called “experienced” consultant on the verge of graduating, I feel obliged to share some writing lab advice, which I hope will prove helpful to subsequent aspiring grammarians.

For one thing, working in the Writing Lab for almost three years has taught me that every consultant is, at one point or another, entitled to a temporary loss of cognizance. Contrary to popular belief, a consultant is not the grammatical equivalent to a new-fangled electronic abacus, complete with liquid crystal display screen. Do not be ashamed to crack open the nearest dictionary or thesaurus if you can’t think of a synonym for praetorian off the top of your head.

Though superficial grammatical errors can be painfully distracting, resist the temptation to simply “fix-up” a client’s paper. Encourage students that writing is a process and a messy one at that. A writing center is more than a magical dentist’s office, where clients emerge after half an hour’s visit with cleaner, whiter papers. Whether your client is an aspiring Bill Gates or the next Paul McCartney, remind him that the written word encompasses every facet of life, from hastily-scribbled memos to revolutionary lyrics. Since the relatively feeble short-term memory can hold little more than a seven-item list, generating a complex philosophical theory or even a clever limerick would prove impossible without this necessary step of recording ideas on paper. Above all, clients should grasp the importance of writing, a process that creates a tangible product with a reputation for surviving even after the writer contracts a case of permanent laryngitis.

Finally, of the countless life lessons I’ve learned as a consultant in the Writing Lab, the most significant is that of respecting others’ autonomy. The “clients” you help are more than fellow students; they are fellow human beings. Though the stylish name badge may elicit a sense of authority, be conscious of the attitude you convey as a consultant and avoid patronizing peers seeking help. In addition to providing a fulfilling job, the Writing Lab is also a place conducive to friendship. Say “hi” to clients (both past and present) between classes. Eddie Spencer makes a great companion on a rainy day, but try exchanging smiles with the late great poet-laureate. Acquaint yourself with fellow consultants—a quiet lab sans clients is one of the few places you can freely express your love affair with the fundamentals of English grammar, fearing neither persecution nor ridicule.

So I leave you with just a few tidbits of wisdom I’ve gained in the line of duty. Remember that, ultimately, your job as a writing lab consultant is not that of a stereotypical “proofreader,” but that of a listener, a motivator, an advisor, and a friend.

What’s the point: Continued from page 4

students locating any kind of aberrant behavior in their commas!

Besides, commas must continually fight for their autonomy and dignity. The fourth definition of the comma in the OED says that it is a mark “placed above the line as a quotation-mark: that at the beginning of the quotation or line is inverted, that at the end erect (thus ‘.’); and both are commonly doubled (thus “…”). Now called inverted commas.

Is nothing sacred? Must the comma’s status deteriorate, become a secondary mark used for quotations? Is it too late to protect the exclamation point? And what about the ampersand? Are these marks destined to go the way of the hand, the crotchet or the dagger? Far be it from me to sound the general alarm, to arouse public opinion, to appeal to radio talk show hosts, for even if these worthies rush to our aid, I’m afraid it might be too late, that we all may have already arrived at the point (or period) when we simply throw up our hands and ask, “What’s the point?”

Page 5  Summer 2004 • Volume 7, Issue 3/ Southern Discourse
Compass Points: What Happens When Things Change?

By Sonja Bagby, State University of West Georgia and Pamela Childers, The McCallie School

During the last year, we have become aware of changes at many writing centers throughout the country. These occurrences seem to fall into a few specific categories that all threaten the status quo: budgetary or administrative changes at the institution, changes in the writing center personnel caused by job changes or illness of directors, and political maneuvers that change the role of the writing center within an institution. We are not suggesting that changing the way a writing center functions is a bad thing at all. In fact, we are firm believers in the organic nature of writing centers, but let us be prepared for some of the problems that might threaten our own writing centers.

Our friends at writing centers in California, for instance, are dealing with budgetary issues that threaten the existence of their centers. New administrators arrive and have no idea how a writing center functions within the framework of the institution. In both of these instances, the pressure falls on the writing center director to educate others about the value of the writing center and offer suggestions of ways to consolidate or cut costs without eliminating services. Although it might not seem so at the time, sometimes these revisions in the structure or new ideas from uninformed administrators even strengthen the writing center in the future. One strategy for dealing with such changes is to call upon the resources of other writing center directors who have had similar experiences through IWCA and WCENTER. Whether it is a secondary, college, or university writing center, the suggestions of others may offer ideas we hadn’t even considered.

Another common problem is the writing center director leaving for another position, becoming ill, or retiring. In many cases, the director has an able assistant who can offer continuity in the writing center; however, along with budgetary constraints mentioned above, this may not be the case. For instance, several of our well-respected writing center colleagues are changing jobs this year and going to new institutions where they may or may not be involved in writing centers. That means that there are now several institutions with search committees who may or may not know much about writing centers, yet they will be the ones recommending the finalists for these new openings. We can hope that new, experienced writing center directors will be hired to continue the outstanding jobs of their predecessors, but we also know of places that may take years to recover from changes in directors. One of the ideal models is the program at Colorado State where faculty members rotate among the directorships of the writing program, writing across the curriculum program and writing center. If someone leaves or is ill, there are always at least two other people who know how the writing center functions. Such arrangements also mean that the institution values the writing center as an integral part of their school-wide writing program.

Finally, what happens when the writing center is moved to a specific department after having been a free-standing or independent entity? Sometimes this happens because the institution wants to eliminate a writing center budget and subsume it into the English department budget line. Other times people see the writing center getting praise, funds, and attention, so they want to run it themselves without knowing the work, research, and experience necessary to make a writing center function well. Also, the term learning center has become popular, so some institutions think the writing center should be subsumed into that all-encompassing tutorial kind of place. Sometimes our colleagues in other states have been successful in directing the whole program and teaching others the value of writing center theory and pedagogy to apply in mathematics, reading, and other facilities to make them more than remedial.

Each writing center encounters unique problems, and we don’t have the answers because each is playing out as we write. We are hoping that our colleagues encountering problems will keep a log of what has happened, how they have dealt with the problems, and what visions they have down the road. It would be great to be able to share some of the stories next year. ☺

Sonja Bagby and Pam Childers
A Writing–Centered Reading

By Sylvia Whitman, Rollins College

In her closing remarks at February’s SWCA conference, Christine Cozzens urged us to keep writing at the center of writing centers—for staff as well as for clients. It made sense to me. When I polled peer consultants about possible topics for spring 2004 staff meetings, they overwhelmingly expressed interest in their own development as writers.

We made a “Writing-Centered Reading” the centerpiece of this semester. Organized by a consultant leader, this event celebrated us as a community of writers serving a larger community of writers at Rollins College. We advertised it via flyers, posters, and campus-wide emails featuring a consultant’s original art and held it at the bookstore with a podium, fifty folding chairs, and a spread of homemade goodies. Eighteen of us read, briefly—poetry, a journal entry, psalms, a dramatic monologue, and excerpts from a literature review, a short story, a thesis, sports journalism, and email. Over an hour and a half, we had a full audience.

We’re keeping the focus on writing with a staff meeting on personal statements (writing them and consulting on them) and with another on word lovers at work (a panel which likely will feature a public relations flak, a grants writer, and an editor). When we can, we work in a writing prompt. Since we’ve done haiku before, this semester we tried the triolet, an eight-line poem with repetition and limited rhyme.

Getting Started

Getting started is the worst.
Never know where it will go.
Finally, the thought comes as a burst.
Getting started is the worst.
Good ideas may not pop up first.
All thought are valid, this I know.
Getting started is the worst.
Never know where it will go.

Lindsey Steding

[Senior Spring 2]

If not for deadlines, I’d get nothing done.
Why do I have to be so lazy?
It seems I’m constantly on the run
If not for deadlines, I’d get nothing done
Never any time for fun
All these deadlines make me crazy
If not for deadlines, I’d get nothing done
Why do I have to be so lazy?

Stacey Perry

[Writing Center Psychosis]

The voices just won’t stop
Despite my haggard pleas.
“This professor sucks; I’m just gonna drop”
The voices just won’t stop.
Sometimes the light comes on, but the filament always pops,
And our notes to them may as well be written in Japanese:
The voices just won’t stop
Despite my haggard pleas.

Sam Leiningger

[On the 100-Acre Campus]

If Pooh taught writing
It’d be sweeter than honey
Much more inviting
If Pooh taught writing
Than learning from profs who are fighting
Bout...[turf, tenure, and money]
If Pooh taught writing
It’d be sweeter than honey.

Rosie Jenkins

The Clueless Client

Rosie’s client doesn’t have a clue.
Annie Dillard he, by God, is not.
A neo-dullard, actually, it’s true.
Rosie’s client doesn’t have a clue.
A symbol in an essay, maybe two
Enhance its meaning, “plus sign?” What?
Rosie’s client doesn’t have a clue
Annie Dillard he, by God, is not.

Anonymous Consultant

[Free-Writing Saves the Day]

I am suffering from writer’s block.
I am completely stuck.
As the minutes tick on the clock,
I’m suffering from writer’s block.
Tick tock, tick tock.
My brain is mired with muck.
I’m suffering from writer’s block.
I am completely stuck.

Stacey Coffman

Page 7 Summer 2004 • Volume 7, Issue 3 / Southern Discourse
Back to the Center: Press Rewind and Then Fast Forward: A Historical Look at The Writing Studio at Georgia State University

By Beth Godbee, Georgia State University

Rewind
Like many centers founded in the 1970s, Georgia State’s writing center began as a writing clinic and then shifted into a writing lab, focusing on skills and grammar correction. While the center was established to serve students from all disciplines and levels of study, its primary purpose was to offer remediation for students who failed the Regents’ Test, a timed writing exam required for graduation within the state university system of Georgia. In 1979, the university required students to enroll in remedial courses if after seventy-five quarter hours they had not passed the Regents’ Test. The writing clinic responded by offering “Regents’ Readiness Review,” a combination of workshops, one-on-one tutoring, and self-directed learning with grammar films, audio tapes, spelling work sheets, and handbooks.

According to an early handbook, the writing lab was created “to provide free help for Georgia State University students with any kind of writing problem, from essays in lower level English courses to graduate theses.” Although walk-ins were welcome, the center encouraged students to make regular weekly appointments. Tutors could then “diagnose” students’ writing problems and keep records on what “treatments” were made in tutorials. All faculty (full-time professors, part-time instructors, and graduate assistants) teaching first or second year courses were required to “volunteer” thirty minutes in the writing center for each course they taught. Additionally, two graduate assistants staffed the center, and even the chair of the English department was known to tutor in the writing center. The center’s hours and staff varied from semester to semester. Like the hours, the physical setting changed in the early years from a single office, to three disjoined rooms, and finally to its own space and current location within the English department.

During its first twenty-five years, the center had three directors: Marguerite Murphy, Dabney Hart, and Pat Graves, all of whom were professors of British literature. In 2002, Marti Singer became interim director until the English Department could hire a full-time, tenure-track faculty member. The department conducted a national search and in 2004 hired Beth Burmester to direct the center, conduct research, and teach classes on writing centers and composition pedagogy. In the past two years, under the leadership of Marti Singer and Beth Burmester, the center has undergone a number of changes. Notably, the English department has established paid graduate assistantships for tutors, provided the writing center with its own budget, and funded a renovation of the center’s space. Singer explains that perhaps more than any other factor, “The changes in physical space facilitated the changes in operation.”

Play
The physical environment of the center has been transformed from a dark room divided by carrels for private tutoring and composing on computers to an open space where tutoring is conducted at tables, often among groups of tutors and students. Changes in lighting, flooring, and furniture have affected the personality of the center. Windows have been uncovered to add light and a view of the city skyline; paintings and plants now create a friendly, homelike atmosphere; and a coffee area encourages writers to congregate in the space. We hope to make additional changes to the environment by adding sofas, showcasing student work, and rearranging the sign-up desk so that it becomes a more functional work area. As we make changes to the layout of the center, we are also updating our center resources by creating a sample papers collection, adding books about composition and tutoring, and cataloging journals not in the university library, including Writing Lab Newsletter and Writing Center Journal.

Interestingly, at a time when many directors are introducing technology into their centers, the opposite has occurred at Georgia State. Computers were removed from the center in 2002 for budgetary reasons and because the university opened two new computer labs. Despite the removal of computers for student use, technology has not entirely left the center. Efforts are underway to improve the center’s website and to encourage email correspondence. Rather than answering questions through the “grammar hotline,” a telephone service in use since the
By the Numbers

Georgia State University: a public research university located in downtown Atlanta with more than 25,000 students at undergraduate and graduate levels in seven colleges

Director: Beth Burmester
Associate director: Brennan Collins
Consultants: number varies by semester but ranges from fifteen to twenty-five tutors, who are graduate students with stipends from the English, psychology, or the WAC program; we currently have two undergraduate tutors, one from English and one from WAC.

Student visits: during 2002-2003 academic year, 5,530 tutorials, thirty or sixty minutes each
Hours open per week: Monday through Thursday 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; staff meetings Tuesday noon-1 p.m.

This emphasis on research led to a name change in 2002 to the Center for Writing and Research. Now, in 2004, Georgia State’s writing center has again changed its name to The Writing Studio. The new name, researched by Beth Burmester, first appeared in the late 1990s at University of South Carolina and is now being used by a variety of institutions from Duke to Grinnell College. The new name indicates both a place and a method for teaching writing. For Georgia State University, The Writing Studio reflects a philosophy that embraces work-in-progress and collaboration and will allow for an expansion of programs to include creative writing and research projects with graduate students. We will begin a publicity campaign this summer to continue the center’s transformation and introduce it to the university community.

As part of a large, urban university, Georgia State’s Writing Studio faces distinct challenges, but also has unique opportunities for outreach. Like the early writing clinic, today’s studio still helps students prepare for the Regents’ Test and even keeps exam scores for students to pick up. Although we encourage appointments and believe that tutors and students alike benefit from regular collaborations, we do experience periods of quiet followed by waves of walk-ins. We have yet to find a way to balance the greater demand that arises during midterms and finals. Despite these challenges, The Writing Studio supports multidisciplinary scholarship by working closely with the college’s writing across the curriculum (WAC) program. Additionally, the studio is staffed by tutors from a variety of disciplines and provides volunteer opportunities for students interested in tutoring or teaching. The studio provides a referral network for the Atlanta community, where companies and individuals can find tutors or editors to help with their writing projects. The Writing Studio is increasingly involved in outreach to Atlanta’s academic community and hopes to organize a coalition of area writing centers in the near future.

Fast Forward
Our future direction will include further professionalization and community building. In addition to improving studio resources and enhancing the environment, we are working to make ourselves better known on campus through increased publicity and publications, such as handouts and a quarterly newsletter. Our current projects include developing a tutor handbook, holding weekly staff meetings, and coordinating conferences and outreach programs. The Writing Studio plans to sponsor a series of workshops to increase collaboration with teaching assistants and faculty. Furthermore, we are in the process of reconstructing tutor hiring and training to include a formal and competitive application process and required tutoring portfolios like the ones teaching assistants keep. These changes are aimed at improving the overall quality of our tutoring, while legitimizing the work we do in The Writing Studio.

Reaching back to our past, we acknowledge the original mission of the center to help all university students with all types of writing, and we work to continue this tradition.

Acknowledgements
Special thanks to Beth Burmester, Brennan Collins, Marti Singer, Pat Graves, Dabney Hart, and Marguerite Murphy, who have all provided valuable information through interviews for this article. All photographs are provided by Cindy Michaels, who tutors, edits, and serves as our local photography expert.
Peter Elbow addresses the audience at his keynote speech.

Agnes Scott tutors take a break in the lobby.

Marcy Trianosky smiles from her table at the SWCA awards luncheon.

Tonya Hassell sits with her Winthrop University colleagues.

Elbow signs books for an adoring fan.
Jessica Graves, Winthrop University, presents her paper on gender roles in the writing center.

Tutors from Francis Marion University rap an introduction for their director, Philip Gardner.

James Inman, Donna Sewell, Leah Cassorla, and Pam Childers enjoy the awards ceremony.

Philip Gardner accepts the 2004 SWCA Achievement Award.
2004 Conference Centers Writing Centers in Atlanta

By Bob Barrier, Kennesaw State University

Live music, an open mike, a fascinating talk by Peter Elbow, a broad spectrum of papers, and good food all combined to make the 2004 SWCA Conference memorable. More than 230 participants met at the Atlanta Marriott Northwest for the three-day gathering, February 19-21, which began with an unusual digital late-night session with Jay Bolter, Kathleen Yancey, and James Inman and featured sixty-six sessions on the theme “Getting Back to Writing.” The local host, the Kennesaw State University Writing Center, planned and organizing this conference as a capstone for its twentieth anniversary celebration.

Thursday’s session opened with a unique mixture of informal entertainment, first by SWCA’s own Jerry Mwaghe and his band Trinity, which combined rollicking reggae music and old-favorite lyrics. Early arrivers munched on an array of hors d’oeuvres, visited, and heard parodies (“Ode on a Coffee Urn”), jokes, and tall tales from the open mike. Later in the evening, the group moved to another side of the room to participate in an informal digital discussion, “Late Night with Jay, Kathie, and James”: position statements by three major figures in computer technology, writing, and tutoring. Georgia Tech’s Jay Bolter spoke of the changes and promises kept and those unkept of the past ten years in hypertext and hypermedia. 

Current 4C’s president and expert on evaluation Kathleen Yancey outlined the changes in tutoring and emphasis made by her writing studio at Clemson University. And IWCA vice president and outgoing SWCA President James Inman challenged writing center staffs and composition courses to emphasize digital rhetoric and confront the possibilities of techniques that so many of our students are now using.

The informal discussion that followed explored the advantages and potential weaknesses of less structured writing center staffs; whether or not there is indeed a “digital revolution,” and if so, how it can be taken seriously; and some of the political and theoretical implications of this reemphasis. All in all, it was a different way to begin a conference, an experiment that needs to be continued.

Friday’s very full schedule of activities began with a breakfast meeting in the hexagon-shaped Cobb Ballroom. Throughout the day nominations and elections took place, and next year’s slate of officers was chosen. At 10:30 a.m., almost 300 writing center staff and other listeners packed the ballroom to hear Elbow’s much-too-short sixty-minute talk on the oral aspects of writing and revising. In a wide-ranging and extremely accessible manner, he touched on many of his theories of voice and expression in writing, the felt-sense and freedom in creating and recalling. He then gave some very useful examples of using voice, clarity, and rhythm in revising. (Handouts from his talk are archived on the conference website, www.swca.us 2004 Conference link.)

Times between sessions were filled with visits to poster sessions and book exhibits. Shorter College’s exhibit—“Andragogy (Adult Education) in the Writing Center”—was chosen as the best poster session overall, receiving a $100 prize. Of the books by featured speakers, Elbow’s attracted the most attention (and sales), and the writer was available throughout the afternoon for book signing and meeting conference attendees. His visit was especially exciting for the many tutors and area teachers who had never met him in person and who found him true to reputation—accessible, unassuming, and very easy to talk to. Thanks to Pam Childers, who arranged for his visit and gave a graceful and informative introduction to his speech.

Friday and Saturday were taken up by the main business of the conference, presentations by tutors and directors. The sessions explored many aspects of the conference theme—Focus on Tutors, Tutor/Faculty Relationships, Theory/Practice Intersections, Administration and Training Issues, and Special Populations—and listeners carried away from each of them ideas and enthusiasms for their own centers and their own tutoring.

University; “Getting Back to Mock Sessions,” Middle Tennessee State University; “Recess for Writing Centers,” Valdosta State University; “An Eye for the ‘I,’” Rollins College; “Helping Students Make the Transformation,” Appalachian State University; and “Negotiating Interference: The Politics of Tutoring Regional Dialect Patterns,” Francis Marion University.

The Special Interest Sessions received enthusiastic response: the opportunities-in-publication session featuring Susan Hunter, editor of Dialogue; Christine Cozzens, editor of Southern Discourse; and James Inman, editor of Kairos; and the “Writing Centers in Small Institutions” session led by Marcy Trianosky. Pam Children’s Saturday morning workshop, “Establishing Writing Centers in Public and Private Schools,” presented local teachers with a good start toward beginning their own local writing centers.

After Saturday morning’s sessions the conference closed with a buffet in the Georgia Ballroom, featuring an inspiring and memorable speech by Christine Cozzens, recipient of the 2003 SWCA Achievement Award, and special awards for other achievements and service. Cochair of the Awards Committee, Jennifer Liethen Kunka of Francis Marion University and Jerry Mwangi, gave spirited and amusing introductions for these special people. In her closing address, Cozzens talked of her wish for a renewed emphasis on the importance and integrity of writing centers. She called for returning to an emphasis on writing and on the enthusiasm that such a re-emphasis can bring to everyone involved. She especially stressed tutors’ and directors’ own writing in the centers, with examples from her own center’s in-house groups and publications. It was an inspiring affirmation of writing’s own first principles.

The conference coordinators and the host school had put a good deal of emphasis on variety of sessions and activities and on the facilities and food. Overall evaluations were high—4.6 out of 5 for the conference overall and at least 4.2 for all other categories (publicity, registration, speeches, sessions, hotel, and site). Among memorable evaluation comments: “Best conference food in ages!” “Peter Elbow is a writing theory god. Very grateful to have heard him in person.” “I LOVE SWCA.” “It was simply fabulous.” And “I’ve left the SWCA Conferences many times with ideas about how to be a better Writing Center Director. After listening to Peter Elbow and Christine Cozzens this year, I am leaving the conference with ideas about how to become a better WRITING Center Director.”

The 2004 conference was attended by a larger than usual percentage and number of student tutors and first timers, more than fifty percent of the more than 230 participants. Members came from the association’s eight states and also from Louisiana, Kentucky, Rhode Island, New York, and Turkey (Nancy Karabeyoglu from Sabanci University). The conference attracted a wide range of participants, extending the concept of writing centers in age and locale.

SWCA HOLIDAYS: Continued from page 3

Writing Center.” He was presented with a check for $100 at this year’s awards brunch. All poster sessions accepted for the conference were automatically entered into the competition. Presenters were evaluated by a subcommittee of the SWCA Awards Committee on the originality, content, and presentation of their poster sessions.

The awards presentation was preceded by a talk titled, “Getting Back to Writing in the Writing Center,” by Christine Cozzens, director of the Center for Writing and Speaking at Agnes Scott College and recipient of the 2003 SWCA Achievement Award.

In addition to co-chairs Jennifer Liethen Kunka and Jerry Mwangi, members of the 2004 SWCA Awards Committee included Michael Pemberton of Georgia Southern University, Marcella Sherman of Hillsborough Community College, E. Stone Shiflet of University of South Florida, and Marcy Trianosky of Hollins College.

The guidelines for the 2005 Achievement Award and Peer Tutor Award competitions will be announced in the next issue of Southern Discourse and will be available at the SWCA website (www.swca.us).
SWCA Executive Board Actions

By Christina Bourgeois, Georgia Institute of Technology, and Jane B. Smith, Winthrop University

At the two SWCA executive board meetings prior to and after the 2004 conference, the following issues were discussed.

2004 SWCA Conference in Atlanta, GA and 2005 Conference Planning

Bob Barrier, 2004 conference chair, reported on conference statistics and suggested that an official thank you letter be sent to featured speakers Peter Elbow, Jay Bolter, James Inman, and Kathleen Yancey. The board congratulated Bob for receiving the 2004 Distinguished Graduate Faculty Service Award from his colleagues at Kennesaw State. Three schools in South Carolina have expressed interest in hosting the 2005 conference; colleges have also expressed interest in hosting in 2006. A motion was made and passed to follow up quickly on these proposals.

Treasurer's Report

Karl Fornes, treasurer, presented a spreadsheet showing SWCA’s receipts and expenditures; this led to discussion of whether or not the expense of the summer board meeting was worth its value to the organization.

Voting and Membership

Donna Sewell, vice president, opened discussion on the present inability to cross-reference membership files with conference registration, and the extent to which this makes it difficult to determine which conference registrants should be able to vote. The board approved a motion to conduct voting “on the honor system” following a careful explanation of procedures to the membership attending the conference. Mary Alm, member-at-large, moved that a subcommittee be set up to propose a solution to the membership difficulties at the summer meeting; this passed.

Southern Discourse and the SWCA Web Site

Christine Cozzens, editor, announced that she will be on sabbatical next year; Marcy Trianosky will step in as guest editor, with production continuing at Agnes Scott. The board approved Christine’s reappointment as editor (2004-09). After discussion, the board passed Karl’s motion that the new position of “Webmaster” be created.

Members Present at both meetings were Mary Alm, Robert Barrier, Christina Bourgeois, Pam Childers, Christine Cozzens, Karl Fornes, James Inman, Jennifer Kunka, Jerry Mwagbe, and Donna Sewell. Members present at the second meeting only were Leah Cassorla, Jane Smith, Trixie Smith, and Marcy Trianosky.

Meet the New Assistant Editors!

Cailin Copan-Kelly is a rising junior English-Literature/Creative Writing major at Agnes Scott College. She loves reading Margaret Atwood. Cailin will be studying abroad in Cork, Ireland in the fall semester and plans to obtain Bono’s signature for Mollie.

Mollie Barnes is a rising junior English Literature major at Agnes Scott College, where she is also completing the pre-med program. She loves F. Scott Fitzgerald. Mollie will not be studying abroad in Ireland, but she will be listening to U2 all semester, waiting for Cailin to return with that autograph.
Dear Members and Friends of SWCA,

Many of you were present at our 2004 conference in Atlanta, hosted with grace and imagination by Bob Barrier and the Writing Center at Kennesaw State University. We were particularly pleased at the large number of tutors who took an active role in the conference by leading sessions, providing technological assistance to presenters, and acting as session chairs. Proposals for the 2005 conference are currently being reviewed by the board, so stay tuned for next year’s plans.

The Atlanta conference was also the site for our yearly SWCA board elections. Many thanks to our outgoing board members, who served with dedication for the last two years: Donna Sewell, vice president; Christina Bourgeois, secretary; and Jerry Mwagbe, at-large member. Outgoing president James Inman will continue to serve on the board for one year as immediate past president, providing the new board with an important link to the activities he initiated during his term. I am pleased to have been elected as your new president for the next two years. Other newly elected members include Jennifer Liethen Kunka as vice president (Jennifer returns to the board after completing a two-year term as an at-large member), Jane Smith as secretary, and two new at-large members, Leah Cassorla and Trixie Smith.

The new board has already been hard at work reviewing proposals for the 2005 conference, soliciting proposals for 2006 and beyond, and evaluating membership recordkeeping and services. We are now preparing for a summer board retreat that will focus on long-term strategic planning to ensure the continued viability of SWCA. Among the goals we are already considering are expansion of the SWCA web site (check it out at www.swca.us), and improved communication with current and prospective members in our region. We look forward to hearing your ideas about how SWCA can improve its support of writing centers in the Southeastern region.

Marcy Trianosky

SWCA Membership Application 2004-2005

Name: ____________________________
Center or Department: ____________________________
Institution: ____________________________
Mailing Address for copies of Southern Discourse: ____________________________
Telephone: ____________________________ Fax: ____________________________
Email Address: ____________________________
Writing Center Web URL: ____________________________

☐ Student $12 ☐ Individual $30 ☐ Institutional I $50 ☐ Institutional II $100

2004-2005 Membership

See www.swca.us, for details

Mail application with check to:
Jane B. Smith, SWCA Secretary,
Winthrop University, Department of English,
Rock Hill, SC 29733
Tel. 803-323-4587
Southern Discourse
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Cozzens, Christine
1347 Fairview Rd NE
Atlanta, Ga 30306

SWCA will hold its next conference in charming Charleston from Feb. 10-12, 2006 at the Francis Marion Hotel.

Photo courtesy of www.frenchamericancharleston.com

SWCA Mission Statement

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) was founded in 1981 to advance literacy; to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals; and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both academic and nonacademic communities in the Southeastern region of the United States. A member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), an NCTE Assembly, the SWCA includes in its designated region North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands. Membership in the SWCA is open to directors and staff of writing centers and others interested in writing centers from public and private secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, and to individuals and institutions from beyond the Southeastern region.

Adopted by the SWCA Executive Board 31 May 2003.