TEACHERS & WRITERS

Dear Jenny

by Beverly Paeth

[The articles in this issue are excerpted from T&W's new book, The Nearness of You: Students & Teachers Writing On-line. *See plug on p. 16.—Editor]*

IT WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY OPPORTUNITY FOR my junior high students. A published author whose books they could hold in their hands was willing to participate with them in an on-line writing workshop. My eighth grade Chapter 1 students at Holmes Junior High in Covington, Kentucky, were using telecommunications to create an on-line community of writers with four other schools in Kentucky. After two years of working and writing together on-line, we (the Kentucky Tele-communications Writing Program) decided to expand our program with a five-month writing workshop that would involve eight Kentucky authors. Each author would be paired up with a KTWP classroom.

The author I selected for my students was Jenny Davis, a writer and teacher from Lexington, Kentucky, about eighty miles south of Covington. I had met Ms. Davis several years earlier on a perfect fall day at an authors' fair celebrating Kentucky writers. I slowly strolled among the authors' displays, perusing their books in hopes of discovering young adult books for my classroom library. I purchased several books that day, including one by Ms. Davis, *Good-bye and*

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Keep Cold. I spent a few minutes talking to her while she autographed the inside cover. I remembered her as being friendly, a free spirit, warm, and approachable. Sometime during that school year I sat down to read *Good-bye and Keep Cold,* a beautifully written story about a young family in an eastern Kentucky coal mining town who face tragedy and learn how to get on with their lives.

When we were planning the Kentucky Authors Project for our on-line community, each of the teachers and adminis-trators in our project was asked to select an author he or she wanted to work with. I immediately thought of Jenny Davis. I knew Jenny's books would touch my students because they were about the issues that interest teenagers: love, caring for

others, family, tragedy, and friendships. The administrator of our project contacted Jenny and she agreed to work with my students.

Jenny's busy schedule allowed her to work with only eight students. I selected eight girls for the project because Jenny's main characters are girls about the same age as my students. I was hoping that my at-risk students would make an instant "connection" with her books. When selecting students for the project, I asked for two things from them: a commitment to participate until the project was over, and a willingness to read Jenny's books beforehand. The students varied greatly in writing ability: two I considered to be the best writers in my class; four were average; and two were novice. Because I taught five classes, I also tried to select at least one student from each class so that all my students were involved—indirectly or directly—in the project.

The selection process completed, the project began with the eight girls reading Jenny's books. At the time the project started, Ms. Davis had three published books: *Checking on the Moon, Good-bye and Keep Cold*, and *Sex Education*. (As you might have guessed, *Sex Education* was the one book everyone wanted to read.) Some girls read all three books, some only one. Then each girl first wrote a short introductory note to Jenny. In their notes, the students introduced themselves with short narratives, sometimes commenting on Jenny's books.

> Hi, my name is Titus Warrington and I go to Holmes Jr. High. . . . I'm 14 years old, in the eighth grade, like to read, like to use the computer and have my friends by my side.
>
> I'm reading your book *Good-bye and Keep Cold*. I really like your book. I was thinking of writing my own book but I don't have any ideas but one. That idea is about Howell Street Boys. They are a bunch of boys who live on Howell Street and hang out together.
>
> I am glad that we chose you. I'm pretty sure this year will be progress if we keep in touch. I am really easy to get along with I think. . . .
>
> If you think L.A. is bad you should see Covington. We have people begging for money, living on the river, afraid of work, and we have a lot of criminals.
>
> I have 2 brothers (Brian 18—alive and Phillip 17—died) and I have 2 sisters (Betty Jo 20—alive and Angel—died).

> Hello, my name is Rachael England. I'm an eighth grader at Holmes Jr. High. . . .
>
> Covington is not all that bad. People say it is worse than it really is. There is not a lot of crime here. It is actually kind of nice.
>
> . . . I like mystery and love stories. I am reading one of your books as we speak. I am reading *Sex Education*. I think it is pretty good. . . .
>
> I like to write stories and poems. When I write my stories I base them on dreams that I have. I can't really write poems unless I am sad or angry. I usually write my feelings. Half the time, I end up crying because I guess I kind of think what I write is the truth.

> Hello Jenny. My name is Melissa Swafford. I am fifteen years old. I think it is pretty fun to be able to write a real author. I am starting the book named *Checking on the Moon*. So far I think it's very good. What are some of the other books that you have written?
>
> . . . I like the kind of books that when you pick them up you don't want to put them down. A lot of suspense. I like to play pool with my friends. My brother gets mad when all of his friends pay attention to me. He doesn't want me to have a boyfriend and that gets me mad. I hope to hear from you soon.
>
> Your friend,
> Melissa

> Hello, my name is Heather Price. I read two of your books, I think they are really good. I think you have good ideas writing the books. The one that really got to me was *Sex Education*. Mainly the part where David died. They went through all that trouble and then something happens.
>
> My favorite hobbies are reading, writing, learning new things, making friends, playing basketball. I also like to hang out at school with my friends. My favorite classes are reading, math, science, and English.
>
> In reading class I get thirty minutes to read then I get to do some writing. My reading teacher showed me the two books that you wrote, if she wouldn't of showed me them I would never understand about love.
>
> The two books I read were about how to care for someone and how to go on with life besides sticking with something that really bothers you. It seems like you know how I feel sometimes. Your books are great, I could re-read them over again and again.

In her response, Jenny answered the students by giving some background about who she is, and her life as a mother, wife, teacher, and writer, and noting her inexperience with telecommunications: "This will be the first time I've ever used Internet or e-mail or whatever this is, so I'm going to be learning some stuff along with you." She introduced herself on-line to my students as:

> 41 years old, married, very recently, the mother of two children, and two step-children, a teacher, and, and. . . . How easy it is to sum up and how empty it all really is when you read it. I guess I forgot to mention the obvious—that I am a writer. This is probably because lately I've been so busy and my life has been so full that I've had very little time to sit down and write. . . .

The first problem the student writers encountered was coming up with ideas and subjects for their stories. Together, the teachers in the project (I was one of six) decided that students would work on either a personal narrative or piece of fiction, since both were required of all fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders for the state writing portfolios. I had a conference with each of my eight students and tried to help them with story ideas. A few wrote to Jenny asking for help. Stephanie, a quiet student and the best writer in the class even though she was repeating eighth grade, wrote to Jenny describing her struggles in hopes that Jenny would have an instant solution:

Hi!! It's Stephanie again. I tried to think of something to write about, but I couldn't come up with anything. I'm not good at coming up with things to write about. My stories are not that good or anything. But I don't think you're expecting a masterpiece.

I was wondering how you come up with the ideas for your books. I can't come up with ideas for almost anything that involves writing and using my brain. I was sorta hoping you could help me come up with some ideas for a fiction story. I would write a personal narrative but I've had a boring life so far. . . .

But before I go I would like to say that it's great that you've taken the time to help us kids out.
Sincerely,
Stephanie Edmundson

Jenny didn't tell Stephanie what to write about, but she did emphasize the importance of writing about what you care about:

Thanks for writing me. I hope this gets to you. I'm still not sure I trust the computer. I understand you want me to help you come up with ideas to write about. I'm probably not going to be able to help you with that. The truth is, we each have to write our own stories. My best advice to you would be to imagine yourself sitting down to read a really good book or story, one you don't want to put down. Now, what is it about? Who are the characters and what are their problems? Write the story you would want to read. If you like scary stuff, start there. If you like family stories or romance, give it a shot. You are the writer. The truth is, if you don't like what you're working on, you probably won't want to keep going, so it's important to satisfy yourself.

The only other "trick" I know is to get really quiet and see what comes into your head. Sometimes, for me, if I do that, I get bits of dialogue that eventually develop into something.

Good luck and let me see what you're doing.
Jenny

I relayed Jenny's advice to each of my other struggling student writers, and it helped them all come up with topics for their stories. After reading Jenny's note to Stephanie, the girls realized that common everyday experiences can be the basis for good stories. Rachael, another good writer, decided to write about her recent breakup with her boyfriend. Titus wrote about a group of kids who hung out together in her neighborhood on Howell Street. Nicole's best friend had had a tragic accident a few months earlier when she fell from a bridge. Genia wrote a fiction piece based on her sister's pregnancy. The rest of the girls—Stephanie, Heather, Marian, and Melissa—wrote scary fiction pieces because they were all big mystery fans.

I gave the students—who became known in our classroom as the Jenny Davis writers—time to work on their pieces. Of course, we had some days when this was impossible because of state testing, assemblies, and the other interruptions that occur in every school. The eight students worked independently on their own writing, asking for very little help from me. I wanted the students to feel that Jenny was their "teacher" for this project, not me. Jenny and I decided that I would handle editing for punctuation and spelling since it would be too hard and time-consuming for her to do it on-line. She would work with questions of content and revision.

We wanted to involve Jenny early on in the process and to encourage the kids to e-mail her frequently. They began to send first drafts to Jenny and to ask questions: they wanted to know if they needed more details, if they used too much dialogue, if their beginnings captured the reader's attention.
Titus wrote:

Dear Jenny,
Hi, it's Titus! This is the first chapter of the Howell Street Boys book. I just wanted to ask you a question so I can work on this book to get it done. Do you think I should have a prologue in the beginning and then start Chapter One with "One hot summer day?" Sorry it took so long to get this thing started. Please let me know where you think I can add more details or improve my writing.

Jenny responded:

Dear Titus,
Well, you've made a good start on the Howell Street Boys book, although since it's also about the girls on Howell Street, you might want to rethink the title. I do think a prologue would work here. In fact, your first paragraph is like a prologue and you might consider expanding it. You say the Howell Street kids fight every day. Do you know why? What do they fight about? Have you ever read a book called *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton? If not, I recommend it. It's also about gangs and I think you might really like it.

One thing you might try to do is develop Cliff's character a little more. What does he like? What does he look like? What do he and Stephanie talk about? Mostly, I'd say, keep going. You've got a good idea. I'll be looking forward to reading more.

Jenny's prompt responses always started off with positive comments. "I really like the way you started your story, Heather. I like the way you use dialogue to pull your reader into the story." "Nicole, your story about Angie's fall and recovery literally took my breath away."

Jenny answered the students' questions and then gave specific advice. When Genia asked her whether she used too much dialogue, Jenny answered, "I like your dialogue and on the whole it works just fine." Jenny followed this with a question she had about one character's actions. She never overwhelmed the writers with more than they could handle. She carefully developed a good rapport with each student even though these conferences took place in cyberspace.

Dear Genia,
I really like the way you started your story. I could imagine how Missy felt, scared, alone, and pretty confused when she found out she was pregnant. I also think the conversations between Missy and Todd were pretty realistic. He at first felt trapped, but then he wanted to take responsibility. Her parents are really upset and don't know how to give her any help. Genia, since Missy is telling the story, she would refer to Mrs.

Swafford as Mom, not Mrs. Swafford. I liked your dialogue and on the whole I think it works just fine. One thing I didn't understand was when Missy says she has proof that the baby is Todd's, and she says her proof is her cousin Cheri and Many Barge, the Wolf Lady. You probably need to explain that. I'll be waiting to see how this ends up. Thanks for sharing.

As the students and Jenny corresponded, a mutual trust was established. Because Jenny writes honestly about teens and their emotions, my students felt they could write with the same kind of candor. (For example, in her book *Sex Education* a teenage couple struggles with the question about whether to have sex.) My students wrote honestly about issues like teen pregnancy, their relationships with boys, and gangs, often revealing bits and pieces about themselves. Jenny was never judgmental or shocked. Unlike Jenny, I was with the students day-to-day, and was sometimes stunned by what my students revealed in their writing. I wasn't always sure that they kept in mind that sending writing across a network (even though these were rough drafts, not polished pieces) was a type of publishing. Their stories were being read by everyone on our network, not just Jenny.

I soon began to see that the students took this project very seriously. They put a tremendous amount of effort and time into their writing. They took their stories home, asking their parents and family members to read them. In class, they asked other students to read their pieces because they wanted the reaction and advice of peers. When Jenny gave suggestions or asked questions, the students immediately set to revising. Revision has always been very difficult for my Chapter 1 students—once a draft was done, they felt they had completed their "assignment." But these writers kept going and their pieces became longer and longer and better and better over the course of five months. Marian, who used a two-page story that she wrote in October as her Jenny Davis piece, wound up with an eleven-page story complete with a title page, table of contents, and chapter titles. The girls all told me that they wanted their pieces to be good because they were working with a "real" author and they didn't want to disappoint her.

About two months into the project, three of my students (Marian Marshall, Genia Petty, and Heather Price) and I got to meet with Jenny at a state technology conference in Lexington, where we were showcasing our telecommunications project, the Authors Project. We invited Jenny to join us in our booth, and she agreed to meet with us after she was done teaching for the day. The Student Showcase was held in a huge hall that was bustling with activity. Students from across the state staffed booths displaying school projects involving technology. Teachers walked down aisles asking questions about the projects and gathering handouts. Heather, Genia, and Marian, anxiously awaiting Jenny's arrival, kept busy distributing handouts and explaining our project. They chatted among themselves, speculating about how they thought she would look, what she would be wearing, and if they would be able to pick her out from the hundreds of teachers walking by. Suddenly, a woman rushed up to our booth wearing what my students described as a

Mary Poppins hat and granny glasses. They knew. It was Jenny. The girls shyly introduced themselves, and Jenny immediately knew who they were. The girls asked Jenny questions about her books, especially *Sex Education*. They all wanted to know where the idea for that story came from and were enthralled by Jenny's story. Genia had been sitting at a computer in our booth working on her story about a pregnant teen, so Jenny sat down and worked with her for about thirty minutes. She didn't disappoint. My students were impressed.

Even though meeting face-to-face with someone that you have been corresponding with on-line isn't always feasible, it was an added bonus. However, this project was successful because of the relationship that was established on-line through writing.

Marian had written some poems that she showed me but no one else. After meeting Jenny, Marian gave me permission to send her poetry to Jenny by "personal mail" so no one but Jenny could read it. She trusted Jenny.

Jenny read the poems and thanked Marian for them:

> Dear Marian,
> Thank you for sharing your poems with me. I think it's hard to let someone else read the inside of your soul, which is what poetry is. I like your poems very much. . . . One thing I like best about your work is that you put your feelings right out there. It makes it very personal and I feel connected to you. I understand that line about wondering if you start over if you'd get everything right. It's a great thought, one a lot of people have. I imagine we'd make, if not the same mistakes, different ones if we did have a chance to start over because making mistakes and learning from them seems to be a big part of what life is about. Your poem "The Light" is a real celebration of life and love. I hope you keep writing. Thanks again for sharing.

Marian was encouraged by Jenny's response and continued to work on her poetry as well as her story "A Trip to the Graveyard." After school was out for the summer, she wrote about her participation in the project:

> When I was first told about this project I was very excited. The thought of me writing an author really excited me, although I did not know anything about the author, Jenny Davis. To tell the truth, I had never heard of her before. When my teacher gave me one of her books, *Checking on the Moon*, I took it home and read it. After reading that book and Jenny's other two books, I had a better impression of what she was like, the books gave me an idea of how Jenny wrote and thought.
> I had started a scary story earlier in the year for an assignment at school, but it was a *short* story. I took that story "A Trip to the Graveyard," and used it for this project. The reason I did that was because I felt that since I was writing to someone who had already written three books, she could help me make this story into a good story. I sent Jenny what I thought was my completed two-page story but I still needed a good ending. I asked Jenny for some ideas. In her response she told me a lot of good things about my story that encouraged me to want to write more.

When I revised my piece I went over it once by myself, other times with my friends, and sometimes with teachers. I had to go over it a lot of times before I could send it off to Jenny again. No matter how many times I went over it, I still had fun.

When I was finished I was surprised that my two-page story turned into an eleven-page story. I sent my final copy to Jenny and she wrote me back and said how proud she was of me. She said, "I can't believe how much work you've done on your story. It's amazing when I look back and see what you had just a few months ago. This story is great." When I read that, I felt I did great. It was the best thing that anyone has ever said to me.

I did get to meet Jenny in person at a technology conference with my teacher and some of my classmates. When I met Jenny, she was what I expected, very pretty and very kind. After meeting her I felt she was very trustworthy, so I decided to send her some of my poems that I did not show anyone except my teacher. Jenny's response gave me the courage to share them with others.

The project was more than writing and getting help with it. It was also about friendship and finding someone you can trust, someone like Jenny. She now has a fan for life.

I was amazed by the time and commitment of my "Jenny Davis writers." I learned that because my students were keenly aware of their audience—a published author—they put more effort into their pieces than when the audience was their peers or a classroom teacher. These girls worked on one piece of writing for a five-month period, something none of my other reading and writing students had done. We had other classroom projects going on at the same time and students sometimes took time off from their Jenny Davis pieces, but they always returned to them. Some pieces turned out to be quite long, over ten typed pages. Some students wrote their stories in chapters. Heather, who plans to write a sequel to her story "The Missing Grave," wrote at the end, "Want to find out what Amy means—read the next story, called 'Is It Okay to Walk Back to the Cemetery?'" Heather also documented her involvement in this project with a short narrative:

When I was in the eighth grade I did a lot of writing during the year. In fact, all the eighth graders in Kentucky had to complete a writing portfolio. The most fun and the hardest writing I did all year was a telecommunications writing project with Jenny Davis, an author and a teacher. I had never written so much or put as much effort into anything as I did this project.

The story I decided to write for my project with Jenny was called "The Missing Grave." I like to read mystery stories that have something to do with friends. I am a big R. L. Stine reader. His *Fear Street* books are mysteries that always involve teenage friends. I wanted to see if I could write a story like that. I wrote a few pages and sent them to Jenny. Then she wrote back and told me that she liked my "use of dialogue that pulled the reader into the story." But she said she was confused by one part, and that it would be a good idea to add more

details and that I should try to develop the characters a little. I went back to my story and put more details in and I worked on describing my characters. I felt good that she inspired me to work harder and keep going with my story.

Each time I added something in one part, I had to go back and revise other parts of it for it to all make sense. With all the classwork on top of that, I thought that my story would never get done. I even took my story home to work on it. I wanted to put all of my best effort into it so it could be the best piece I wrote. I wanted it to be my best piece so that I would have something to look back on and to remember that I do have a talent for writing.

I was the last student to finish my story and the last to send it to Jenny. But when she gave me the response, "Wow! Your story is really good. It was impossible for me to quit reading because you built up so much suspense, I just couldn't stop . . . ," I felt good about myself because I wrote a story that somebody would like to read. When Jenny added, "R. L. Stine better watch out!," I knew I could write.

My one regret was that we did not start the Authors Project earlier in the year. Time simply ran out. My eight students worked until the very last week of school trying to finish their stories. Some of them needed more time to revise again but could not. And unfortunately, because we did this project the second half of the school year, most pieces were not finished in time to use in the eighth grade writing portfolios that are used in the state-wide assessment (these are scored in March).

I know my "Jenny Davis writers" received incredible benefits from their five months on-line with her. As the project started to wind down and my students began to think about summer vacation, a few of the girls sent Jenny some final comments:

Dear Jenny,
. . . I was reading some of the stories that some of the girls in the project did and they have a very good story. I and the others appreciate you helping us in writing and good luck. I hope you write another book because you write some good books.
Sincerely,
Titus

Dear Jenny,
Hello! How are things going? Just fine here, I just finished my story. It's pretty long but I hope you like it and enjoy reading it. I am going to work on Part Two this summer. I want to thank you for all your help and meeting me in Lexington. I had fun this year, you helped me improve the writer that I am. Have a nice summer and thank you for all the help.
Your friend,
Heather

In her final note to her eight writers, Jenny made it clear that learning and friendship had occurred in Lexington as well as Covington.

Dear All,

It's hard to believe that the school year is over, but it is. I have really learned a lot working with you all this year and I've enjoyed it. I printed copies of everyone's stories and I will hold on to them. As a class, you are a powerful group of young women with tremendous energy and honesty. Thank you one and all for sharing your writing with me.

Please take care of yourselves this summer. You know as well as I do how many opportunities there are during the summer for getting in trouble, or doing things you might regret later. Think twice, and remember you are each important to me. I want you all safe, sound, and not pregnant come September! Whatever happens, I'll be thinking of you and would love to hear from you.

My home address is _____. If you want to get in touch, feel free. Thanks again for a great experience this year. Keep writing.

Best wishes,
Jenny

Being "Dear Jenny"

by Jenny Davis

WHEN I WAS FIRST ASKED TO PARTICIPATE in a technology project I thought it was a joke. I've barely mastered the telephone, still can't use a bank machine, and get cranky at the sound of velcro. I'm a person who loves the smell of a freshly sharpened pencil, who has been known to hug a notebook, and who can happily spend hours debating which color ink to put into my fountain pen. I was hardly a logical choice to teach writing via computer to kids in another city.

However, I am not only a writer, I am a teacher as well, and one of my professional development goals for that year (mandated by my school) was to make it at least into the twentieth century, if not leap ahead to the twenty-first. My students know much more than I about mouses (mice?), modems, and memory. It was time, apparently, to take the step. I was also intrigued by the notion of being able to work at home. I had recently married and acquired a full-time stepson who is confined to a wheelchair. Our range of motion is much more limited than it used to be, and it was important to find ways to make our home both a comfortable and productive place.

The most important reason I decided to give it a try was a mixture of guilt and defiance. I had recently turned down an opportunity to be a writing mentor to a high school senior in my own community. Although the chance to nurture a young writer is exhilarating, it's also extremely time-consuming, and I was panicking, with the start of school and my new life as the full-time mother of three and wife of one, that I wouldn't have time for extras. However, once I'd finally and firmly said no to the mentoring job, I felt bad about not giving back to a world which has given me so much. Hence the guilt. The defiance came in the form of the fatal fantasy besetting so many women today: I can do it all!

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In fact our project *was* beset with technical difficulties from the first. The computer I had was an Apple IIC, one which I had used to write my books, and which I was comfortable with to the extent I will ever be comfortable with a machine. Nonetheless it was apparently hopelessly outdated when it came to the world of the Internet. The project provided me with a modem and with a lovely, incredibly patient, helpful woman named Kathy Rey-Barreau who was to be my technical advisor. We strung cords from the phone in the kitchen to the library, an awkward setup that snarled household traffic, but had the benefit of forewarning everyone that I was trying to use the *!#* modem and set to work . . . or tried to.

After several attempts to connect me to the Internet, even Kathy was getting frustrated. Apparently, my computer was having trouble obeying orders. (Secretly, I was proud of it for being so out of date and dim about the world of technology. We were truly a team!) Finally, and this took several weeks, during which time I began to despair of ever actually teaching writing to anyone, I was able to make contact with the girls at Holmes.

We began with introductions, a logical step. All of the girls had read one or more of my books and they were full of questions and comments. I told them some about myself, my family, my writing process, and my background. I teach fifth and sixth graders on a daily basis, and it was a change for me to be communicating with older kids. These girls soon revealed themselves to be street smart and almost world-weary, except they also exuded an excitement about this project that was both endearing and a bit daunting. I had no idea if I would really be able to live up to their expectations. Somehow, the idea that I was a real, live author was extremely exciting and important to them. Having always been plagued by the notion that I'm not really an author, just a person who has managed to write a few books, this struck at my insecurities.

Still, the important thing was the work, and when we finally got down to it I found myself quite comfortable giving feedback. The main challenge was to limit my

responses so that they would be useful. How well I know how an editor can overwhelm a writer with insight. I used the same technique I use with my students in class. I found something I was honestly excited or moved by and commented first on that, and then asked some questions, no more than two or three, usually about characters, sometimes about plot or setting, but real questions that I wanted to know the answers to. This strategy is as effective as it is simple. It's a genuine response to work, tempered only by the knowledge that no matter how ragged a piece may look to me, it may in fact represent the very best a person has to offer . . . at least so far.

I imagine that my own experiences with writing and being edited have made me sensitive to the pain a thoughtless comment can cause. Writing is so hard, not just finding the words, but finding the strength to say them, to commit them to paper, and share them with someone else. I try to be gentle in all my dealings with other people's writing. Also, I'm really not much of a critic. The truth is I find it very easy to discover something fresh, funny, beautiful, or engaging. One of my good points as a teacher is that I'm easily entertained!

I was astounded by the energy and excitement the girls exuded. Their writing was all over the place in terms of style, subject, and proficiency, but the central fact was they cared about their work and it showed. It also motivated me to be careful and caring in my responses.

Perhaps what strikes me most about this whole experience was that I *had* to focus on the writing, there were no distractions. In the classroom, I am well aware of which student looks tired, who is hyper today, whose parents are going through a divorce or are away on a trip. I know when my sixth grade can't take in anything I'm saying because they're worried about the big science text next period, and like all teachers, I'm acutely aware of the behavioral consequences of a drop or rise in the barometer. These are concerns classroom teachers deal with daily. On-line, we had none of that. Only the words in front of us, and because of that, those words became more important than ever. They had to count, because their meaning couldn't be expanded with a grin or a grimace, there was no eye contact to help me determine whether my meaning was clear or confusing. In some ways it seems astonishing for a writer to admit what a challenge dealing only in writing can be, but there it is. Of course when I submit a manuscript of a book or a story, I realize the words must stand on their own, but these weren't finished pieces, these were conversations with real children, and I was often afraid of being misunderstood.

In fact, that happened very little. I was really impressed with the diligence with which these girls worked and reworked their stories. They also seemed comfortable asking me questions to clarify comments they didn't understand. I credit their teacher, Bev Paeth, with providing them time, encouragement, and confidence. She is truly a gifted teacher and I felt honored to be sharing the project with her. It was a treat to be able to meet some of the girls at the technology conference here in Lexington. I was able to put faces to some of the names, and they were able to do the same with me. In fact though, the real work was done in our hearts and minds and on the screen, word for word.

I suppose it is just as well that it never occurred to me that my conversations with the girls were being read by anyone other than them and their teacher. In preparing this article I've become acutely and embarrassingly aware that *of course* other people were following it. I've wondered if I would have been as spontaneous and free with my comments had I been aware of a larger audience. At any rate, none of my words or theirs can be taken back, so we'll let them stand. I loved getting to know those girls, having a chance to be with them in their ever-evolving process of writing and growing up. I'm a little less afraid of the computer now, and would welcome another chance to interface on the Internet.

The Kentucky Authors Project
Authors and Students in On-line Partnerships

by Robin Lambert

THE KENTUCKY AUTHORS PROJECT WAS A ONE-year experiment designed to explore ways to bring students and published authors together in on-line writing partnerships. It involved fourth through eleventh graders and seven teachers at five Kentucky schools, and eight published authors.* The project had two main goals: first, for students to go through a process of writing and revising their own work, with an author's help, to produce a polished final piece for their portfolios; and second, for students to engage authors about the authors' writing processes, their lifestyles, and works the authors had published or were drafting.

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* The eight authors were John Cech, Artie Ann Bates, Jenny Davis, Gurney Norman, Jenny Galloway Collins, Jim Wayne Miller, Kate Larken, and George Ella Lyon. The five schools were McNabb Elementary in Paducah, Holmes Jr. High in Covington, The Brown School in Louisville, Saints Peter and Paul School in Lexington, and South Floyd High School in Hi Hat.

About the Project

The five schools involved in the project were located in demographically diverse communities scattered across the state. The schools had participated the previous two years in the Kentucky Telecommunications Writing Project (KTWP). Through KTWP, students were experienced in sending and responding to "notes" posted on electronic bulletin boards in several dozen topical conferences. They had also exchanged personal notes, read and discussed books in "lit groups," and participated in several shared curriculum projects designed by the teachers.

I joined KTWP as coordinator in August of its third and final year. Early in the fall, KTWP's supervisor asked participating teachers to develop a project involving authors and students in on-line partnerships. The request was accompanied by a $10,000 grant from the State Writing Program for authors' fees and on-line expenses. The KTWP teachers were excited but apprehensive, as they would be charting unknown waters.

The teachers decided to develop a general structure for the project before asking authors to participate. It started with a conference call involving me, the teachers, and our project researcher. Our basic plan paired each author with a group of students for the duration of the project. We decided to create an on-line "conference" for each group. Students would post drafts; authors would respond with comments, suggestions, and examples of their own work; and students could post their revisions. The conferences would be open so anyone in KTWP could browse and read the exchanges. (We agreed that interactions unsuitable for public perusal could be posted in the private on-line mailboxes of teachers and authors.) The teachers also decided that each student should try to complete at least one polished piece of writing in collaboration with his or her author. We left genre and topic open to negotiation between author and student. Once the project began, the individual teachers would work out the daily details directly with the authors with whom they were working.

We also wanted students to read their author's work and to post direct queries to him or her about his or her writing process, life, and work. We created no specific structure for this. Rather, we chose to see how these interactions might develop naturally in conjunction with the writing conferences.

The teachers suggested authors and asked me to make the contacts and arrange the pairings. Our pool of authors included writers whose work teachers admired, those who were known to work with school groups, and authors who were listed with the State Arts Council. Most lived in Kentucky.

We contacted nine authors, and all but one agreed to participate. As only one of the eight had experience with telecommunications, KTWP agreed to provide technical training and support. Most of the authors already had some computer equipment. KTWP borrowed or purchased the additional components each author needed for a functional telecommunications system.

We agreed to have the project begin with students and authors posting a personal introduction. We asked the eight authors to tell something of their lives and their approach to writing. We asked the students, after introducing themselves, to suggest areas of writing with which they wanted help. After these introductory exchanges, students posted pieces of writing. Some were continuations of their personal introductions; others were stories, poems, or essays, in greater or lesser states of completion. The authors responded to these posts, and the students came back with enthusiastic revisions, new pieces, or questions. This interaction continued through the school year.

What We Learned

Through the seven months of the Kentucky Authors Project, we learned a great deal that might be helpful to others interested in on-line partnerships between students and authors.

1. Teachers and authors should plan the project together. The plan should address specific needs and goals. Here are some important questions to ask: Are you looking for polished final drafts? Do you want students to concentrate on one piece or produce a number of pieces? Are there specific genres you want the students to work in? Are there aspects of writing you wish to emphasize—voice, for example? How will responsibilities be split between teacher and author? Will the teacher read every piece before it is posted? Will students post first drafts? Do the author and the teacher agree on the writing process and how it is taught? Will there be a final product, such as a class collection of stories and poems? How will the on-line partnership fit with the ongoing curriculum? While both teachers and authors should be somewhat flexible, they should decide how they will approach each of these issues before the project begins. At the project's end, everyone agreed that planning and training should take place in the summer, so that the partnership can be integrated with the ongoing curriculum from the beginning of the school year.

In addition, the author should discuss what kind of feedback he or she is most comfortable providing, and the teacher should indicate what he or she feels students need. Deadlines should be established for how often students post and how quickly authors respond. Teachers and authors should plan a regular process for "checking in" with each other to reflect on the work and make necessary changes. It doesn't matter whether the planning takes place in person, over the phone, or on-line.

Participants in the Kentucky Authors Project learned some of this the hard way. In the structure we developed, we failed to build in a process for teachers and authors to plan together once they were paired. Rather, we said it *should* happen and left it up to teachers to initiate. The conferences in which teachers and authors followed up with a specific plan were more successful and satisfying to all involved.

2. Conferences work best when authors combine personal "talk" about themselves with direct, specific responses to

individual student writing. As mentioned above, each conference began with personal introductions. Students talked mostly about their families, hobbies, and favorite books. Authors talked about their childhoods, their personal lives, and their writing. (Interestingly, most apologized to the students for their lack of technical skill with telecommunications.) The exchange of introductions drew students into the project and opened up topics for discussion. The following is an excerpt of author Artie Ann Bates introducing herself to a group of fourth graders:

> Dear Students:
> I'm looking forward to working with you on this writing project. This is the first time I have done anything like this, and it has been slow getting the kinks out of the modem. I think we will all have fun sharing our writing, and I shall put a map of Kentucky by the computer so I can see Paducah when I read your notes.
> You have been so nice to tell me about yourselves, and now I would like to return the favor. My name is Artie Ann Bates and I am 41 years old. My husband's name is John Cleveland, and our twelve-year-old son is Davy Cleveland. I have been a medical doctor in eastern Kentucky for seven years.
> My family and I live in the mountains of Kentucky, in a holler. In case you have never heard of a holler, it is a narrow valley between two mountains which a small creek has hollowed over thousands of years. We live in a century-old log house that was once my great-grandparents'. Their youngest daughter, Artie, was my grandmother and she was married in this house. There is much family history here, and a place with history is a gold mine to a writer.
> John, Davy, and I have quite a few animals; twenty-one, to be exact. We love animals and during the five years we have lived here, they have accumulated. There are four dogs, three cats, eight chickens, two ducks, one bunny rabbit, a horse, a pot-bellied pig, and an iguana. Everyone lives outside except the iguana, who is cold-blooded and must have the heat of the house to keep him warm. In time, I will tell you a little about each one of these pets, for each has a distinct personality. They are so different that if I described one of them, without saying the name, to either Davy or John, they could surely figure out the one of which I spoke. Perhaps there is one of these creatures that you would like to get to know first; if so please let me know.
> I am glad we are getting to know each other. Perhaps someday we can meet in person, but for now we will correspond via computer. Thank you. . . .

The authors' introductions prompted many questions from students, many of them personal, some of them about writing:

> Hello Ms. Larkin,
> . . . I really don't like writing because it takes a long time sometimes. I sometimes get writer's block. . . . If you have any positive suggestions to help me in some way please feel free. Thank you!

> . . . I like to write but I have trouble getting endings. How do you make your stories end?

> Dear Jenny,
> What were your dreams when you were my age? Did you have any at all? Sometimes I think I have too many views on issues. Write me back.

> Dear John Cech:
> What kind of books have you written? I would like to be just like you. I think I will like your books when I get them. I like fiction books myself! I like very funny stories that are fiction books such as *Fudge-a-Mania*! I don't really have any experience with writing to famous people so if I make a mistake I am sorry if it is not proficient or distinguished! And I am a little nervous about writing. I hope I can get over it. Were you nervous when you started? Well I have to go sorry I have to but I do!

For some, a group response just wouldn't do. One ninth grader boldly expressed what was on her mind:

> Dear Jenny,
> Although you did send information on your background and history as a writer it did not come out very clear. Some of it was cut off. I can't send my pieces to someone I know so little about. If you would please, send me some more personal information. Answer for me these questions: How did you first decide to become a writer? Does it pay good? What are the advantages and disadvantages? Is it time-consuming? Do you work from your home? Was this always your dream? Are you rich? For now that is all I would like to know unless you just want to add some more information about yourself, your family. I would appreciate all of these to be answered, and in the meantime I'll be thinking of more!

Most students have a hard time imagining authors as real people and an even harder time imagining themselves as authors. The personal side of the author-student interaction often engaged students more deeply with their writing or encouraged them to reveal something important about themselves. After one author mentioned caring for a stepson with severe cerebral palsy, an eighth grader wrote back and revealed her own battle with the disease, which she had never before mentioned at school. In response the author said,

> I understand why you try to keep your history with CP to yourself. People don't always understand and it's hard to feel different. I think though that probably your experiences, even though they are hard to endure, will make you a better writer in the long run because you have had to feel more than most people. Hang in there, and don't be afraid to be yourself.

3. On-line writing projects work best when they are an integral part of the curriculum. Most students participated well in the personal introductions and questions. Most also sent a draft for their author to respond to. In all cases, the authors responded to both the personal questions and writing samples. Fewer students revised and re-posted. Some wrote back more personal questions; some posted a second, unrelated, piece of writing; some dropped off the network altogether.

In schools where the Authors Project was an "add-on" component to the regular classroom curriculum, the conferences tended to lose focus and energy. They were more likely to fall through the cracks of the school day, and both students and authors expressed confusion and frustration. Without direct classroom support, most students lacked the motivation, time, or confidence to do the revisions required for a polished piece of writing, and the authors on the other end of the modem couldn't do much about it beyond offering encouragement. One author described her conference as "parallel writing," meaning that she would post something and students would write, but their writing would seem unrelated to her post.

4. Telecommunications makes possible long-term interactions and lends itself best to the earlier stages of the writing process. All the participants noted that the medium of telecommunications is particularly good at supporting the conceptual work of writing. Author John Cech described it as "great for seeding ideas." This was especially true when the conferences were well-coordinated between teacher and author, or when individual students took an exceptional interest. Jim Wayne Miller, an author who had a particularly productive relationship with one prolific young writer, described the process this way: "It's turning up things much like you would turn up an arrowhead while ploughing a field."

The opportunity to work over an extended period of time was cited by authors and teachers alike as a great advantage over traditional short-term writing workshops. Every author remarked that it was personally gratifying to see a work mature, to learn an individual student's voice. One said it felt like a "mentorship." The medium of telecommunications encourages frequent and ongoing exchanges and makes students more comfortable with writing; for instance, it makes it easy for students to post works-in-progress. A teacher of rather reluctant writers said this ease reassured and motivated her students, who would have been intimidated by having to produce a lengthy piece before receiving feedback. Authors commented that being able to post frequent, short responses helped them give specific suggestions without the worry of overwhelming students. It also allowed them to catch problems early and redirect students before a piece went way off track.

While telecommunications works very well for drafting and revising, everyone in our project agreed that a bulletin board service does not work for the final editing stage of the writing process. Technically, it is difficult to mark on a piece of writing directly. Our network had nothing approximating a red pen. Participants agreed that editing is best accomplished when teacher and student sit side-by-side and work out correct grammar and punctuation.

5. General exercises and advice were less effective than personal responses to student work. In order to encourage students to put up new pieces or to revise, several authors posted "mini-lessons" in their conferences. Generally these were short instructional posts having to do with elements of good writing. Several authors suggested exercises for students to complete. By and large, these met with stony on-line silence. One teacher told me privately that the mini-lessons "went right over my students' heads." The younger students particularly found it difficult to abstract from general posts to their own writing. In some cases, the sophisticated tone of the students' personal introductions may have misled authors:

> I enjoy writing poetry more than anything else and right now I am trying to concentrate on rhyme, structure, and rhythm. My poetry has always been very abstract. . . .

Some students simply viewed their writing as personal and didn't want to be told what to do. "I guess that you could say that I enjoy writing but only when I can come up with my own ideas. I absolutely hate it when a teacher says, 'Here, write a story about such and such,'" one said.

At the project's end, teachers said that for *them* the authors' instructional posts had been great. They learned from the mini-lessons and gained many ideas for future activities. But everyone agreed that mini-lessons are of little use to students unless they are coordinated with the teacher's activities, and are accompanied by opportunities to write and get a response. As author Jim Wayne Miller put it,

> Authors doing this kind of work shouldn't be concerned with uploading materials students haven't asked for. They should be more centered on student work. If an "essay-ette" is done, it should be drawn out of student work and posted as an epilogue or comment on student work.

Some Considerations for Working with Authors On-line

1. Select and pair authors carefully. When I first contacted the authors, I explained the program, and asked if they would like to participate in some way. I asked a number of questions to aid me in pairing them with specific groups of students: What age students do you prefer to work with? About how much time could you devote to the project each week? About how many students do you anticipate being able to work with in that time? What kind of computer equipment do you have access to? What kind of experiences have you had with on-line communication? This information enabled me to make pairings that were satisfying to both authors and students. It also enabled me to determine the number of authors we would need.

2. Authors should be paid. Several authors confessed a frustration with the frequency with which they are approached by schools to work for free. The Kentucky Authors Project was designed to pay authors. We based the pay scale for the project on roughly two-thirds the fee normally paid for writers-in-residence programs in Kentucky schools. The stipends were calculated on the number of hours each author estimated he or she would devote to the project. It was paid in two lump sums: one-half at the beginning of the project and one-half at its completion. The authors expressed satisfaction with this arrangement and felt it was fair since they were able to work at home, on their own time, without having to travel to the schools.

3. Allow plenty of time and support for technical training.
While all of the authors had worked in schools, mostly in
one-day workshops or short-term residencies, only one was
familiar with telecommunications. Several needed training in
word processing and in using a modem. While the authors
were all willing to participate in pioneering something new,
some expressed apprehension and sometimes deep skepti-
cism. If they ran into technical difficulties early in the
project, this skepticism was intensified.

And they did run into problems, many of which are
common to most telecommunications projects. Every author
used a different word processing and communications
package. One had noise problems on her home phone line.
Another had to learn to disable most of the features of her
modem to connect with our bulletin board.

Because the authors were scattered across the state (and
two lived out of state), training was difficult. We assigned
each author a "buddy" who lived nearby and could offer
technical support and training. Every author stressed this
need for technical support. Several said they would have quit
the program in the beginning had it not been for the immedi-
ate and personal support they received.

It took two full months to train the authors. Because the
authors were not interested in the technology for its own
sake and were anxious to get on with writing, this training
period required support and encouragement. However, by the
project's end all of the authors were enthusiastic about the
new possibilities the technology offered.

The Advantages of Telecommunications
The authors also identified several advantages of telecom-
munications over traditional classroom writing workshops
and residencies. These included:

• *The opportunity to reflect before responding.* Several
authors said that because they did not have to provide an
immediate response to student work, but could read and
reflect at their leisure, they were able to provide more
serious and considered suggestions. (They also noted that
when a student note seemed urgent, they could respond
immediately.) They repeatedly cited the opportunity to
provide frequent short responses to student work as a distinct
advantage.

• *Attention to language.* The authors noted that the fact
that they don't see students and can't rely on the visual and
aural clues of conversation forces them to pay extra careful
attention to written language—both students' and their own.

• *Opportunities to work with students in faraway
places.* Telecommunications helps overcome the constraints
of time and distance. The authors felt that the opportunity to
work simultaneously with students in different locales
sharpened their own cultural perspectives and brought new
and varied meaning to their work and reflections on it.

• *More opportunity to get feedback from young people.*
Several authors in the project write for children and young
adults. They posted pieces of their own work and invited
students to respond. The flattered students responded eagerly
and seriously, as in:

Dear Gurney [Norman],
After watching the Appalshop production of "Fat
Monroe" and reading the story [in *Kinfolks*] I still have a
few questions to ask. First off, were you involved at all
in the production of the film? After reading the story I
was really taken aback by how close the movie was to
the story, there's almost no difference, which is some-
thing very rare. The story does have a few sentences
which make a change that makes you feel much more at
home in the story. I think that in the film you really feel
out of touch, like you're walking into the middle of
something, it's really sort of awkward.

I know you spent a lot of time on this story, and did
you ever consider adding more to the end? The story
leaves you in a very high emotional state, but still with a
lot of questions. Did you ever try tacking on a few
sentences at the end as sort of an explanation of
Wilgus's feelings? Not enough to take down the
emotion, but to take away a couple of questions.

I'd also like to know a little about how you write.
Revising and working on a piece for ten years is just
unthinkable to me. Do you think that you could still
work on it more, or did you finally get it right?

. . . Thank you for taking the time to correspond with
us. I enjoyed your short story immensely. I thought that
it made a very good point about how we learn lessons in
our life, or at least how we should.
Sincerely,
Shaun Alvey

The authors appreciated such seriousness, and found the feedback
valuable.

• *The opportunity to work at home on one's own schedule.*
All the authors appreciated how telecommunications allowed them
to set their own schedules. All were conscientious about making
prompt responses, but were glad for the freedom from specific
obligations as to time and place.

• *Opportunities to talk with other authors and teachers
about the work.* The Kentucky Authors Project provided two
vehicles for project-wide communication between the
authors and teachers. The first was a conference open to
adults only, called "Author Talk." Designed to address issues
of philosophy, approach, and process, the conference was for
the teachers and authors to communicate with each other as
formally or informally as they wished. While "Author Talk"
did not receive heavy traffic, the authors felt it offered them
an unusual opportunity to share their teaching ideas with
others. A number expressed regret that they did not make
better use of the conference. The second vehicle was a
newsletter for public distribution describing activities in
KTWP, among them the Kentucky Authors Project. All
participants liked the newsletter and the sense of connection
it provided with others in the project, and to KTWP as a
whole.

New Questions the Kentucky Authors Project Raised
Telecommunications creates new problems as well as new
opportunities. It is not as private as personal mail. It's not
exactly one-to-one communication. It's more like one-to-
many communication; but, unlike broadcast communications,

it is interactive. It is not as formal as print publishing, but is a kind of publishing. It can be both chatty and serious. As Jim Wayne Miller observed, "For a long time communication in much of the world has been oral. Then there was print, and oral and print communications went along together. This is a hybrid . . . It may be that the medium may alter the message sometimes." The forms and meanings of telecommunications are being created as those of us involved go along.

Several issues related to the newness of this form of communication emerged in the project. One had to do with manners. Some students seemed to feel less accountable than in a face-to-face situation. On one occasion a student made a particularly rude remark to an author. The comment prompted a discussion of the content and style of appropriate and useful criticism. Sometimes students seemed rather inattentive to what they posted. One author who worked with elementary students noted that the medium could foster a potentially counterproductive "casualness" in student writing.

Finally, telecommunications can blur the distinction between process and product. Its natural potential for supporting the early stages of the writing process may need to be balanced by emphasis on completing individual pieces. Participants should decide if they want to culminate their work on-line by publishing a collection of finished pieces. This issue of when to emphasize process or product needs to be negotiated by teachers and authors before the project begins, and then re-assessed during the project.

In any good project, all the participants must feel ownership for it to be successful. But we learned that *a sense* of ownership is not sufficient. Because telecommunications writing projects are new and few participants will have experience in charting a project's course, careful ongoing planning is necessary to keep them from drifting. Despite—and maybe because of—some of our difficulties, we count the Kentucky Authors Project a success. We all learned—about writing, about technology, and about the ever-changing process of communicating. Now, every one of us is looking for opportunities to undertake a similar effort in the future.

List of On-line Resources

by T&W Staff

THE FOLLOWING WORLD WIDE WEB RESOURCES were compiled by Bram Moreines and John Ruttner of the Institute for Learning Technologies, Columbia University, and Jordan Davis of Teachers & Writers Collaborative. A word of warning: because of the changing nature of the Web, the addresses of these sites may not be current. For a continually updated version of these resources, we suggest that you link to them through the following homepages:

http://www.twc.org/tmhot.html

or

http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/K12/livetext/index.html
http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/K12/livetext/resources.html
http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/K12/livetext/english.html
http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/K12/livetext/poetry.html

(Note: names in parentheses below indicate the Web site author or host. For those new to computers and the Web, a gopher *is a mainframe computer accessible through the Internet—the user can access the computer's directories from a personal computer. Hypertext is a term used to describe text, often augmented by pictures or other media, which the reader moves through by pointing and clicking with a mouse.)*

Language Arts Curricula & Pedagogy

Humanities in Cyberspace
http://www.teleport.com/~cdeemer/humanities.html

(Deemer) A hypertext discourse on the Internet's role in the changing of teaching and scholarship, by a playwright and hypertext author.

Teachers & Writers Collaborative
http://www.twc.org/tmmain.htm
(Teachers & Writers Collaborative) Keep your eye on this site for resources on teaching writing and ways to connect to T&W projects.

Writers In Electronic Residence
http://www.wier.yorku.ca/WIERhome
(York) Homebase for Canada's Writers In Electronic Residence Program, a pioneer in the field.

On-line Writing Lab
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/
(Purdue) Lots of information that'll help you with your writing: how to avoid sexist language, fix run-on sentences, or follow MLA (or APA) format for citing your sources. The site also offers listings of writing materials and Writing Labs on the Internet.

The Global Campfire Home Page
http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/fl/pcto/campfire.html
(Indiana) "Since the dawn of time, humans have entertained themselves and each other telling and retelling stories. You are invited to take part in this ritual that is as old as humanity itself. Read one of the stories that interests you, add the next part, and check back later."

it is interactive. It is not as formal as print publishing, but is a kind of publishing. It can be both chatty and serious. As Jim Wayne Miller observed, "For a long time communication in much of the world has been oral. Then there was print, and oral and print communications went along together. This is a hybrid . . . It may be that the medium may alter the message sometimes." The forms and meanings of telecommunications are being created as those of us involved go along.

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http://www.twc.org/tmhot.html

or

http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/K12/livetext/index.html
http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/K12/livetext/resources.html
http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/K12/livetext/english.html
http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/K12/livetext/poetry.html

(*Note: names in parentheses below indicate the Web site author or host. For those new to computers and the Web, a* gopher *is a mainframe computer accessible through the Internet—the user can access the computer's directories from a personal computer.* Hypertext *is a term used to describe text, often augmented by pictures or other media, which the reader moves through by pointing and clicking with a mouse.*

Language Arts Curricula & Pedagogy

Humanities in Cyberspace
http://www.teleport.com/~cdeemer/humanities.html

(Deemer) A hypertext discourse on the Internet's role in the changing of teaching and scholarship, by a playwright and hypertext author.

Teachers & Writers Collaborative
http://www.twc.org/tmmain.htm
(Teachers & Writers Collaborative) Keep your eye on this site for resources on teaching writing and ways to connect to T&W projects.

Writers In Electronic Residence
http://www.wier.yorku.ca/WIERhome
(York) Homebase for Canada's Writers In Electronic Residence Program, a pioneer in the field.

On-line Writing Lab
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/
(Purdue) Lots of information that'll help you with your writing: how to avoid sexist language, fix run-on sentences, or follow MLA (or APA) format for citing your sources. The site also offers listings of writing materials and Writing Labs on the Internet.

The Global Campfire Home Page
http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/fl/pcto/campfire.html
(Indiana) "Since the dawn of time, humans have entertained themselves and each other telling and retelling stories. You are invited to take part in this ritual that is as old as humanity itself. Read one of the stories that interests you, add the next part, and check back later."

Kairos: A Journal for Teachers of Writing in Web Environments
http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/1.1/index.html
(Education Dept., Texas Tech) Lots of interesting articles and features.

Writing Tools

The Virtual Reference Desk
http://thorplus.lib.purdue.edu/reference/index.html
(Purdue University Libraries) The most thorough indexed listing we've seen of on-line reference sites, from dictionaries and maps to periodic tables.

Hypertext Webster's Dictionary
http://c.gp.cs.cmu.edu:5103/prog/webster
(CMU) Submit a word you want defined, and all the words in the returned definition are hyperlinked to their respective definitions.

The Elements of Style
http://www.cc.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/strunk/
(Strunk, William, Columbia) The 1918 version from Project Bartleby.

Inkspot: Resources for Young Writers
http://www.inkspot.com/~ohi/inkspot/young.html
(Debbie Ridpath Ohi, inkspot.com) Extensive primer, contest guide, and index "for writers, especially those who write for children."

Fun Writing Tools

Addventure!
http://www.addventure.com/addventure/
(addventure.com) Write your own adventure, or add to collaboratively written adventures in progress.

Anagram Insanity
http://infobahn.com:80/pages/anagram.html
(infobahn.com) Actually creates anagrams from entered phrases. Amazing!

Casey's Snow Day Reverse Dictionary (and Guru)
http://www.c3.lanl.gov:8075/cgi/casey/revdict
(Los Alamos National Labs) "Finally, the remedy for that tip-of-the-tongue feeling! You type in a definition, and Casey's dictionary will tell you which word you are trying to think of!" (Well, sometimes . . . but it's fun trying.)

CRAYON: Create Your Own Newspaper
http://sun.bucknell.edu/~boulter/crayon/
(Bucknell) This site gives the user an opportunity to design his or her own on-line newspaper, and add "syndicated columns."

Shakespearean Insult Page
http://alpha.acast.nova.edu/cgi-bin/bard.pl
(Nova Southeastern) A delightful pastime: reloading this page gives the user a fresh new incomprehensible Shakespearean insult.

HAL
http://ciips.ee.uwa.edu.au/~hutch/Hal.html
(Jason Hutch, CIIPS) While the conversations won't be nearly as coherent as in *2001*, a dialogue with an AI program is something everyone should try at least once.

World Writing Center
http://wwwbir.bham.wednet.edu/wws\wws.htm
(Wednet) Birchwood school's interactive story-building Web page, by and for students.

On-line Libraries

Alex (Gopher)
gopher://rsl.ox.ac.uk:70/11/lib-corn/hunter
(Oxford) Alex allows users to find and retrieve the full text of documents on the Internet. It currently indexes over 700 books and shorter texts by author and title, incorporating texts from Project Gutenberg, Wiretap, the On-line Book Initiative, the Eris system at Virginia Tech, the English Server at Carnegie-Mellon University, etc.

Anamnesis
http://www.jhu.edu/~english/anamnesis/
(Johns Hopkins) This interface provides access to over 300 authors and over 3,000 of their novels, essays, poems, and treatises, located in various archives all over the Internet.

Bartleby (Project)
http://www.cc.columbia.edu/~svl2/
(Columbia) Academically scrutinized editions of classic works for readers and scholars.

Children's Literature Web Guide
http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/index.html
(Calgary) An astoundingly complete reference, with links to all kinds of resources.

Bibliomania
http://www.bibliomania.com
(Datatext) On-line library of out-of-copyright classic fiction.

Gutenberg (Project)
http://jg.cso.uiuc.edu/pg_home.html
(Boston University) An effort to create a hypertext catalogue of all books stored as electronic text on the Internet.

The Modern English Collection
http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/modeng.browse.html
(Virginia) A long list of locally digitized electronic texts, annotated and with illustrations.

On-line Books

http://www.cs.cmu.edu:8001/Web/books.html
(Carnegie-Mellon) A state-of-the-art electronic text finder and language resource meta-list.

Other On-line Collections by Subject/Type

WWW-VL: Writers' Resources On The Web
http://www.interlog.com/~ohi/www/writesource.html

(W3 Virtual Library, interlog.com) Subject categories include Children's, Horror, SF/Fantasy, Mystery, Poetry, Romance, Screen/Playwriting, Journalism, Tech/Scientific, Business Writing, Travel Writing.

Banned Books On-line
http://www.cs.cmu.edu/Web/People/spok/banned-books.html
(Carnegie-Mellon) A special exhibit of books that have been censored or the objects of censorship attempts. The books featured here, ranging from *Ulysses* to *Little Red Riding Hood*, have been selected from the indexes on the On-line Books Page.

Canadian Writing
gopher://access.mbnet.mb.ca:70/11/member-services/cdn-writing
(MBNET) A place to read literature originating from all parts of Canada, and in all genres.

Language Arts Index Sites

The English Server
http://english-server.hss.cmu.edu/
(Carnegie Mellon) Carnegie-Mellon's student-administered server to English literature and language arts. A top-flight resource.

English-Language Arts
gopher://unix5.nysed.gov/11/K-12%20Resources/English-Language%20Arts
(New York State Dept. of Education) An extensive K–12 resource list from the New York State Department of Education.

Language Arts
gopher://psupena.psu.edu/1$k%20LANGUAGE-ARTS
(Penn State) A gopher list of language arts projects and articles.

The Written Word
http://www-hpcc.astro.washington.edu/scied/word.html
(Washington) An on-line English server.

LiveText Poetry Page
http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/
(ILT/Columbia) A simple list, for quick perusal of classic and current poetry on the Web.

Teachers & Writers Collaborative's On-line Residency
http://pindar.ilt.columbia.edu/twc/
(ILT/Columbia) In collaboration with a T&W poet, poetry students from New York's School for the Physical City are creating multimedia exhibitions of their work.

Poets
http://www.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Genres/Poetry/Poets/
(Yahoo Index) Poetry listed by author.

Electronic Poetry Center Author Home Page Library
http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/

(SUNY Buffalo) Poetry listed by author.

Poetry
http://www.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Genres/Poetry/
(Yahoo Index) Poetry listed by poem title.

Poetry
http://english-server.hss.cmu.edu/poetry.html
(Carnegie-Mellon) Listing of poems and authors.

The T. S. Eliot Page
http://www.next.com/~bong/eliot/index.html
(telospub.com) One of the greats.

The Joseph Ceravolo Page
http://www.csam.montclair.edu/~ceravolo
(Montclair State) Another one of the greats.

Saint Mark's Poetry Project
http://www.poetryproject.org
Homepage for New York's Poetry Project. Includes calendar of readings, symposia, etc., and excerpts from *The World*, the Project's literary magazine.

Technology Planning Guides

Creating Learning Communities
http://www.cosn.org/EPIE.html
(P. Kenneth Komoski, EPIE, and Curtiss Priest, CITS) "A useful tool for those school and community decisionmakers who may agree with the goal of networking, but who are concerned about the practicality of achieving it for their schools and communities."

School Network Development: Publications
http://info.ckp.edu/publications/publications.html
(Common Knowledge: Pittsburgh) Articles, proposals, and reports from a Pittsburgh Public Schools project "seeking to develop new environments for teaching and learning using the technology of wide-area computer networks."

Technical Guidelines for Schools
http://www.svi.org/guidelines.html
(SVI.org) As clear and technologically savvy a primer and guide as you're likely to find. Highly recommended.

Quality Education Data
http://www.infomall.org:80/Showcase/QED/
(infomall.org) QED has tracked technology deployment in public schools since 1981. Here are results of annual surveys ofmore than 80 percent of the public schools in the U.S.

U.S. Department of Education
http://www.ed.gov/index.html
An extensive site, including Hypertext Publications (http://www.ed.gov/pubs/index.html), a gopher server of on-line documents (gopher://gopher.ed.gov/), and WAIS searching of Eric Digests (gopher://inet.ed.gov:12002/7waissrc%3a/EricDigests).

Nationally Recognized Technology Plan Examples

Technology Challenge Grants
http://www.ed.gov/Technology/Challenge/ProjectDesc/index.html (U.S. Dept. of Education). The U.S. Department of Education is awarding $9.5 million in Challenge Grants for technology in education to nineteen school districts to fund community initiatives using information technologies and the Internet to "transform their factory-era schools into information-age learning centers." Includes initial abstracts from the nineteen local school districts.

Acceptable Use, Censorship, and Copyright

The Internet Advocate
http://silver.ucs.indiana.edu/~lchampel/netadv.htm (Indiana) Helps users to to: 1) respond to inaccurate perceptions of pornography on the Net; 2) promote positive examples of youth Internet use; 3) develop an "Acceptable Use Policy" (AUP) and provide examples of AUPs from schools and libraries; 4) consider software to block Internet sites; and 5) network with organizations committed to electronic freedom of information.

Censorship on the Internet
http://www2.magmacom.com/~djakob/censor/ (David Jakob, magmacom.com) A comprehensive exegesis on the issue, with extensive links torelated sites.

The Copyright Website
http://www.benedict.com/ (benedict.com) An excellent, thorough, yet readable primer of copyright issues. "Real world, practical and relevant copyright information of interest to infonauts, netsurfers, webspinners, content providers, musicians, appropriationists, activists, infringers, outlaws, and law-abiding citizens."

Internet Education Issues
gopher://gopher.oise.on.ca:70/11/resources/IRes4Ed/issues (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) A gopher of graduate level materials on important global, local, and technical issues, from censorship to ethical use.

Technology Funding and Purchasing

Apple, Inc. Web
http://www.apple.com (Apple.com) See also: Apple Gopher for products, pricing, and downloads.

Yahoo–Education: Grants
http://www.yahoo.com/Education/Grants/

K–12 Grant and Funding
http://unicron.unomaha.edu/dept/econ/funding.htm (Omaha) On-line funding guides and information, including Grant-getter's Guide, Internet Resources for Non-Profit Organizations, US DOE Discretionary Grants, Fellowships in Educational Research.

Educational Technology
http://tecfa.unige.ch/info-edu-comp.html (CERN, Geneva) An immense World Wide Web Virtual Library index site.

Reform and Technology (Gopher)
gopher://nysernet.org:3000/11/School%20Reform%20and%20Technology%20Planning%20Center (Nysernet) K–12 gophers from the School Reform and Technology Planning Center. If you haven't found it yet, you'll probably find it here.

PLUGS

Readers of *Teachers & Writers* may want to take note of two books published by Ablex Publishing Corporation. The first is *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education 1979–1994* by Gail E. Hawisher, Paul LeBlanc, Charles Moran, and Cynthia L. Selfe ($22.95 paperback), a documentary history. Primarily of interest to teachers at the college level, the book contains a valuable bibliography and intriguing insights into this new and rapidly changing field.

Fans of Gianni Rodari and his *Grammar of Fantasy* (see September–October issue) who wish to learn more about the Reggio Emilia movement (which inspired Rodari to write his book) will find the ultimate source in *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education*. This rich and rewarding collection of interviews, articles, and photographs edited by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini, and George Forman is available for $24.95 in paperback.

Send your prepaid order to Ablex Publishing Corporation, 355 Chestnut St., Norwood, NJ 07648.

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