

## **Phase IV: Recommendations-- The Administrators**

### **Remarks at the Keynote panel of the TicToc Symposium**

*Thomas H. Bestul*

These comments are in response to questions posed by Paula Mathieu before the keynote session, and particularly reflect my point of view as Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of English. First of all, I think there is no question that technology should and can play an essential role in achieving the goals of graduate education in English, which I take to be to help students become more sensitive and intelligent critics and readers of literature (and the culture which produces it), and to become committed, professional teachers with a humane understanding of the diverse backgrounds and levels of skills of the students they are likely to teach.

In any discussion of technology, I think it is essential to keep in mind the particular institutional setting, even when talking about graduate studies. For UIC this means constantly being conscious of our mission as a public, urban university, with a special role as the gateway for immigrants, minorities, the poor, and the working class, even though other constituencies are of course served as well.

With that in mind, a key issue for me is one of access. I don't think we can make our plans on the assumption that our students will have easy access to a networked computer, preferably from their dwelling place. Our student body is diverse, not homogeneous. We must recognize that for many of our students, burdened with outside employment, heavy family responsibilities, and severely limited finances, even

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managing to get to a public on-campus computer lab is a difficult task. There is no easy solution to the problem of access, which is finally socio-economic. I certainly don't think we should abandon the latest technology on the grounds that to use it gives an unfair advantage to those of our students who have the financial resources and the time available to access it. But we can, in designing our courses, be sensitive to the problem of unequal access. Certainly no student should be made to feel like a second class citizen because he or she doesn't own a multi-media computer and subscribe to an internet service provider. We can also push for an expansion of public labs with extremely generous opening hours, and do our part to promote internet access in off campus sites, such as the neighborhood branches of public libraries.

The positive side of this is that new technologies can be empowering and a democratizing force in society. This is what happened with the advent of printing and wide access to computing (especially the internet) has the potential to work in the same way. The inclusive membership of many academic listserv discussion groups has already gone some way to democratizing scholarly discourse, or at least making it readily accessible to a wider public than at any time in the past.

Now for some specifics relating to graduate education. Certainly faculty should be encouraged to incorporate technology into their graduate-level courses, whether it is the use of listservs, the web, or other forms of interactive learning. Workshops and informal presentations at the departmental level should be held for the sharing and exchange of ideas. I think it is reasonable to involve students in electronic work (design and maintenance of web pages, etc.), as long as it is integrated with the academic content of the course, and the main focus is on intellectual matters having to do with language and literature. As the technology becomes more familiar, I suspect less and less class time will be required for nuts and bolts basics. The situation with the web right now has a parallel in the early days of word-processing, when composition teachers were sometimes explaining the mysteries of cutting, pasting, and spell-checking to a neophyte audience. The question is always one of balance; yet at the same time, I think it is important to recognize that clear distinctions between the theoretical and the applied that formerly seemed clear-cut are not always possible, or even desirable, in the new technological environment.

In practical terms, the department should be ready to accept transfer credit for courses completed electronically, provided it has good information about the quality of the course. We should be open to the possibility of students taking their exams and defending their dissertations in cyber space. I think there would be many advantages in these procedures.

If we train our students, or work with them, to become adept at the new technology, I expect that we will have enhanced their employabil-

ity in significant ways. Such familiarity has the potential to make them better at both teaching and research. Realistically speaking, though, I think in the present state of the job market, it would be somewhat risky to engage in an technologically-centered dissertation rather than one in traditional lit crit or cultural analysis.

As a department, I think it is important that we not exploit teaching assistants by using them for routine tasks of web site maintenance, and the like. Scholarship and pedagogy should always remain the principal focus. The test is always whether there is genuine intellectual content relating to our discipline (broadly defined) in whatever we ask our graduate students to do.

The key to successful use of technology in graduate education, I believe, is to seek out ways it can be integrated into courses, independent study projects, and dissertations, rather than merely being regarded merely as a tool or an adjunct to study. We must be sensitive to the issues of quality control, but we have the mechanisms for that already in place in the form of peer review and departmental and university committee structures. The new technology, if it is welcomed and not seen as a threat, surely has the potential to revolutionize the ways we conduct, and conceive of, our essential tasks of research and teaching. Indeed, as shown by this conference, the revolution is already well under way.

## JEOPARDY

*William A. Covino*

As Associate Head of the UIC Department of English, I am a sort of “curricular negotiator,” charged with producing a schedule of classes that meets the needs of Department programs and students, and also acknowledges the strengths, interests, and predispositions of the professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants who teach the 450 sections of composition, literature, and creative writing we offer each year. In this position, I have come to know a faculty prone to raise complex, searching, intelligent, and difficult questions on just about any alteration in Departmental life that comes along; many of them were trained in New Criticism, and have learned well to do a close reading of everything. Further, many of them do not exhibit the technological enthusiasm and expertise common to participants in the the Tic-Toc Conversation. Thus, the prospect of a virtual Department with an on-line curriculum might represent a kind of jeopardy, a sort of threat to modes of teaching and research that seem well worth preserving. Keeping in mind the “Tic-Toc Manifesto” and the “Tic-Toc Conversation,” I would like to survey an assortment of questions that might be raised by those outside the Conversation about its tenets. I raise these questions under a set of categories of the sort that you might see on the TV game show “Jeopardy.” Using jeopardy as a title term, I do not mean to raise my own objections to the virtual Department, nor to presume that these questions necessarily represent an actual defensiveness on the part of the larger faculty. Rather, I want to indicate some ways in which the Conversation might resonate with a constituency it affects.

Here, then, are the “Jeopardy” categories:

Who’s the Enemy  
 What’s the Rush?  
 Scope and Circumference  
 Hermeticism  
 The Rhetoric/Literature Split  
 Free Agency

**WHO’S THE ENEMY?** A Manifesto implies seizing power, and its rhetoric is in many instances agonistic. Who are the enemies here? The Luddite faculty? An upper administration that threatens to overwhelm the “virtual Department” with the “virtual university?” An institutional

reward system that does not sufficiently recognize electronic scholarship? Bill Gates?

There has been some suggestion in the Conversation that electronic pedagogy allows for teaching as a subversive activity, providing for a classroom politics that is less authoritarian. If subversive activity is warranted, why is computer technology, a child of military intelligence and the new essence of corporate culture, its most effective medium? Does the possibility remain for "place-bound" subversion: radical, liberatory intellection in an unwired classroom where ideas and emotions collide face to face?

**WHAT'S THE RUSH?** To what extent might we presume that the development of an online Department will eventually take place in any case, as a sort of generational phenomenon? Given that computer technology, unlike New Criticism, is not going to pass away, should we expect that new faculty raised on Microsoft will quite naturally increase the energy devoted to a virtual Department, without efforts to enlist them?

"The Rush" here might refer not only to the speed of generational transition to facility with virtual environments, but the intellectual speed that such environments seem to encourage. An electronic context encourages us to think and write quickly; that is a large part of its appeal. The development of the Tic-Toc Conversation on line has prompted rapid acts of participatory deliberation; here, as on other listservs, there is some urgency to write a contribution to one thread before it gives way to another. Often this means responding impulsively, without craft. In such a context, knowledge-making is, in a very real way, speeded up. Given this fact, what do we do about faculty who are convinced that rigorous thinking and writing are and should be a slow processes?

Many of such folks would question the conception of published writing as a dialogic work-in-progress; they hold to the idea that "finished" paragraphs are better, and that much quiet deliberation must precede intelligent ideas.

**SCOPE AND CIRCUMFERENCE.** One question attendant to the issue of faculty development is what sort of "scope" and "circumference" (Kenneth Burke's terms) technology should be accorded as an intellectual area. Within the English Department, is technology a subject? a field? a specialization? The Haynes/Holmevik proposal that "the faculty needs [one always wants to pause at the word "needs"] not only to be able to see the possibilities for teaching with technology, they also need to shift their work methods, research process, and pedagogical practices to successfully integrate an online component to courses," suggests that with reference to teaching and scholarship, technology is larger than a subject, a field, a specialization; that it is actually the best available resource for making knowledge.

However, it would appear to a number of my colleagues, that technology is a specialty. The description of the UIC English graduate program published in the Peterson's Guide to graduate study lists Jim Sosnoski's specialization as "technology and pedagogy," and Joe Tabbi's as "technology and literature," both on the same order as specializations in, for instance renaissance literature, romanticism, and film theory. If technology is a specialization among specializations, is the advocacy of department-wide technological facility analogous to, for instance, the advocacy of department-wide romanticism?

To the extent that the virtual Department constitutes a curriculum, it must entail the scope conventionally associated with curriculum planning and implementation. That is, building the virtual Department, like building a conventional curriculum, will require ongoing negotiation with special interest groups, some as small as an individual faculty member who doesn't do e-mail; others as variegated as our Department's area groups, each representing a broad teaching area (literature, theory, linguistics, creative writing, composition/rhetoric) and consisting of members who each approach teaching in that area in distinctive ways; others as large and significant as the student population, whose intellectual and practical needs must be somehow kept in view; and the global university complex of offices and officers that deal with the timetable, room assignments, teaching loads, contracts, enrollments, budgets, graduation requirements, and so forth.

**HERMETICISM.** To what extent should the virtual Department respect hermeticism as a legitimate scholarly behavior? Medieval philosophers generated radical meditative visions when they were left alone: might the un-wired individual scholar-teacher be the most progressive among us, or perhaps the most deliberate (see "What's the Rush?" above).

Perhaps the virtual Department provides for a kind of "new hermeticism," in which one can be at once physically alone, working in pajamas, and networked. Was "new hermeticism" operating when—as a colleague observed—many of those ostensibly listening to a speaker during a Tic-Toc symposium meeting at the UIC computer center were watching their screens, playing with their screens, absorbed with their screens, rather than with the speaker? Was "new hermeticism" operating when one Tic-Toc participant left the physical society of the symposium group during the lunch break, during which many engaged in face-to-face conversation, to retreat to a library cell and send e-mail comments on the morning's events to those who, at that very moment, were *talking* to each other?

**THE RHETORIC/LITERATURE SPLIT.** Hermeticism is less the model, perhaps, in rhetoric and composition, because of our public sphere orientation. In this field, the importance of electronic environments has developed quickly, so that more and more graduate pro-

grams in the field are giving it attention, and new PhDs are increasingly interested and well-trained. This raises the question, of course, whether electronic pedagogy is or will become ghettoized as a “comp thing.”

**FREE AGENCY.** There has been, in the TicToc Conversation, some caution voiced about electronic pedagogy becoming the province of free agents, rather than Departmental faculty; there is a sense, however, in which Departmental faculty involved in electronic pedagogy are already free agents, by virtue of their facility with processes that colleagues and staff find arcane. This may be a particular concern with relation to the Departmental clerical staff, a concern which I might illustrate with a recent episode in the part of my job that involves curriculum planning and policing. One of our Department instructors will be teaching an online composition course this fall. We'd decided that, because the course will presuppose a certain level of electronic literacy, enrollment should be restricted to those students with the requisite skills. How do we “screen” these students? The instructor first suggested that students be required to register at the Department office, rather than through the regular automated phone process, and that Department staff—which consists of both part-time student assistants and full-time, long-time secretaries—be supplied with a questionnaire to review with interested students. The questionnaire would ask, for instance, whether and how often the student uses e-mail, can send attachments, and use a browser; finally, it would supply a little quiz by giving the student a URL and sending her to find the associated web page. The staff, justifiably, found the prospect of administering this questionnaire horrifying, first of all because it would add another layer of questions and concerns to the overwhelming array that they address each day, but more specifically, because no one was prepared to take responsibility for interpreting and evaluating the students' responses. What we settled on was putting the instructor's e-mail address into the course schedule, and directing students to contact him for clearance to register. This is, on the one hand, the equivalent of the traditional “consent of instructor” procedure, but on the other hand, an instance of the course prerequisites bypassing the Department, so that the instructor becomes more of a free agent than he might be if the prerequisites were more conventional and widely understood.

The larger question attendant to this anecdote is one that perhaps motivates all of the concerns I've raised here, the question of who the virtual Department bypasses and who it includes. This is, of course, the question that must occupy the practical politics of community-building, the question whose answers affect the faculty's sense of any jeopardy to their professional lives. While my statement here has acknowledged at several points the kinds of jeopardy that might be raised in the minds of the “un-wired” Department members, I should stress that the

techno-enthusiasts are not without their own sense of jeopardy, expressed to some considerable extent in the Tic-Toc Conversation and the Tic-Toc Symposium with reference to the still uncertain institutional status of electronic scholarship, the perception of inequitable compensation for time-consuming pedagogical innovation, and the overall sense that print publishing and physical classrooms continue to be the sites for recognized professional achievement.



**Rethinking Composition:  
Diverse Students in Dialogue with  
Multiple Communities,  
Or, Did Esperanza enroll at UIC?**

*Ann M. Feldman*

As the director of a campus-wide first-year writing program, the central question I ask is as follows: How can our classes invite students to cross the borders of their home neighborhoods into academic communities in ways which allow students to author themselves into new and challenging intellectual environments? Now, my own horizon is expanding and I must ask how the vast terrain offered by the world wide web will change the way we see the composition program and the students who take classes in the program.

First, I'd like to take up Cindy Selfe's suggestion (April 25) that I articulate my goals for the program to prepare for a discussion about the role of electronic pedagogy or even the role of the composition program in UI- Online. In my brief remarks, here, I'd like to focus on our second required writing course, English 161, which has evolved from the impoverished, generic research paper course to a course on academic inquiry. English 161 focuses on how meaning-making occurs in the academic community. Four features drive the intellectual activity in this class and they are as follows:

1. In English 161, students engage in the process of inquiry about a **subject matter** of some significance. [e.g., gender issues, cultural critique, immigration, the Vietnam Era]
2. Students become aware that in the university academic disciplines are defined as much by their **method** as they are by their subject matter. [e.g., the methods of the social sciences and the humanities, the arguments typically posed in different disciplines, the acceptable warrants in specific disciplines]
3. Successful academic inquiry involves **positioning oneself** in relation to the subject matter of the inquiry and the methods. [How does the way one sees oneself change as participation in a variety of communities changes?]
4. Successful academic inquiry involves authentic participation in appropriate **academic practices**. [For example, close, careful readings of academic texts and use of intellectual tools such as summary, synthesis, and analysis.]

Let's focus on the third feature: Successful academic inquiry involves **positioning oneself** in relation to the subject matter of the inquiry and the methods. Considering this issue will lead us directly into a consideration of electronic pedagogy.

Most of our undergraduates come from the Chicago area; most of them work. They represent fully the diversity of the city and the surrounding suburbs; on a composition survey they tell us that two-thirds of our students were raised by a person who spoke a language other than English. Our students come from many different communities. How, then, to build a sense of community in the classroom?

For bell hooks, an essential, but often-missing aspect of academic practice is the notion of community. In *Teaching to Transgress* (Routledge, 1994), she tells us that the challenge to embrace multiculturalism also makes us "examine critically the way we as teacher conceptualize what the space for learning should be like." For hooks a transformative pedagogy assumes that we must build a sense of community in the classroom. Only when we have developed this sense of community can we create both openness among participants and intellectual rigor.

In a piece called "Keeping Close to Home: Class and Education" in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989 South End Press., 127), hooks remembers an experience reading Carol Stack's ethnography for a class.

Carol Stack's anthropological study, *All Our Kin*, was one of the first books I read which confirmed my experiential understanding that within black culture (especially among the working class and poor, particularly in southern states), a value system emerged that was counter-hegemonic, that challenged notions of individualism and private property so important to the maintenance of white-supremacist, capitalist patriarchy. Black folk created in marginal spaces a world of community and collectivity where resources were shared.

This new awareness propelled her forward to tell others to

speaking openly and honestly about our lives and the nature of our personal struggles, the means by which we resolve and reconcile contradictions.... combining personal with critical analysis. . . can engage listeners who might otherwise feel estranged, alienated.

When Bruce Williams, a student in an English 161 I taught a while back, read an excerpt from the same Carol Stack piece he began to realize that something was missing. As a young African-American father, he brought substantial personal experience to the subject but he could not find himself in this reading. He knew something about the role of fatherhood from his own experience as a new father. He began to see himself differently and the academic materials on the topic as

well. He was able to rewrite his experiences and find a place in the academic conversation as well.

Still one more example. Fernando Escobar had been reading an excerpt from Ruth Horowitz's *Honor and the American Dream*, an ethnography about a local Hispanic community. He wrote this in his journal:

For me, 32nd Street is a reality. I was born in Mexico. Half of my family is here and half is there. I'm part of a society in transition and there can be many levels of transition even within the same family. My mother-in-law is very traditional; the man should be strong and free and the woman should take care of the family. My wife, on the other hand, is more educated and no longer accepts those traditions. I also can identify with Stack when she describes how members of a very poor community depend on each other economically as a network. In my block there is a mechanic who does electrical work and we often trade off. My father-in-law lets me have an apartment very cheap and in exchange I work on his car. So, to use the same word, we have a reciprocal relationship. (Fernando Escobar)

Sandra Cisneros, too, writes about leaving home in order to return. She ends *The House on Mango Street* (a street not too far from where we sit today at UIC) with the following resolution:

One day I will pack my bags of books and paper. One day I will say goodbye to Mango. I am too strong for her to keep me here forever. One day I will go away.

Friends and neighbors will say, What happened to that Esperanza? Where did she go with all those books? Why did she march so far away?

They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the one who cannot out. (110)

By reading their experience and their community in an academic context, my aim is that students will be able to relate the personal to the critical as they come to new understandings. Two important ingredients help this to happen: first we need to strengthen connections with the surrounding community and second, we need to incorporate a stronger sense of apprenticeship in our view of teaching and learning. Initially I moved toward these pedagogical goals by working with teaching assistants on a couple of variations on the theme of "Exploring Chicago." In one version students read ethnographies about the family and make sense of their readings by exploring their own neighborhoods through ethnographic interviews, archival research, and examining survey data. In another version students explore the arts in Chicago working collaboratively in teams to learn about local architecture, drama, or performing arts. Beyond developing classrooms, I have established a relation-

ship through the university's Great Cities Initiative with a community agency in nearby Pilsen, Muggers Latinas en Accion. One of our teaching assistants, Tobi Jacobi, spends a portion of her time consulting with the agency on their writing and communication needs. Part of that project has involved establishing e-mail for the agency, getting them on the internet, and piloting some of the newly developed synchronous writing software (which we haven't done yet.) The electronic connection opens up vast opportunities for the agency and our connections with the agency, in turn offers an important resource for students doing research who can in a month or so, visit the web site that Keith Dorwick is developing for them. All in all if I had to name this direction for the composition program, I'd call it "Realizing Community."

Now, what does all of this mean for the advent of electronic pedagogy and how might the composition program fit this picture? Reviewing the consultants' comments and advisories helped me to begin to think through some of these very difficult issues.

Eric Crump reminded me that I had asked how we, in the composition program, might "translate a studio course that depends so strongly on personal interaction and continuous drafting to an electronic mode." He then went on to suggest that I focus not on the activities of the class but on the purpose for those activities, illustrating how a MOO might become a site which could offer the conditions in which argument occurs encouraging students to 'negotiate the terrain.'

David Downing's suggestion that we "conceive of our work as building a culture rather than just disseminating more knowledge quicker via modems and computers" (April 25, 1997) seems consonant with the goals of our program. Randy Bass (April 26, 1997) reminds us that "it is impossible to map a f2f course into cyberspace so that it is the same course." Reasonable enough. Currently many of our teaching assistants teach using transitional technology: listservs, home pages for individual classes, trips to Scailab to use Dadaelus, etc. Keith Dorwick is teaching our first virtual on-line class this fall. The question I must pursue is how to translate my goals regarding the realization of community into a cyberspace application.

I particularly appreciate Greg Ulmer's suggestion that e-works offer us the opportunity to "remember how we got where we are now, both collectively as a discipline and personally. His story, like Sandra Cisneros's reminds us too that each of our students has her own story that becomes part of the visored scene of both the composition program and the eworks project.

How might the composition program's goal of "realizing community" fit with the institutional imperative of UI-Online. Who would be our audience? First, current UIC students might wish to take an on-line course. An unfortunate reality at our institution is that students often choose courses according to when they are offered. A virtual course

would fit many students' schedules quite nicely. From my perspective, though, the challenge of designing an on-line course that explores the notion of "realizing community" could look quite different on the Web. If our course extended beyond UIC's student population and participants began exploring their own communities, enhanced by materials already on the web, quite a different dynamic and exciting dynamic would emerge.

Beyond this, our program is run by teaching assistants who do not currently have access in the department to a single computer with internet access. (I'm working on this problem, but this is the current situation.) Teaching assistants especially must have support to develop on-line courses. I pose this as a topic that might be more fruitfully discussed Saturday morning in my session with Cindy Selfe. What does the TicToc conversation mean for graduate students and especially teaching assistants in English Studies? What challenges will we pass on to the next generation of the professoriate?

## Address to the TicToc Symposium

*Tom Hall*

In preparing for this session, Paula Mathieu asked me to give some thought to the Department's instructional goals and to the question of whether emerging technologies should occupy a place in the undergraduate English classroom. Among the questions that arise here is just how extensively the undergraduate curriculum should strive to incorporate new media and methods of instruction, and whether technological proficiency (however one measures that) should be one of the things we want all of our graduates to achieve. Should existing courses be supplemented with or supplanted by online instruction, and how do we go about training both faculty and students to move in that direction? To what extent should the requirements for an English major be tailored to reflect new technologies, and would the UIC English Department accept transfer credit for coursework taken elsewhere electronically? These are timely questions because just this year the Undergraduate Studies Committee initiated a review of the undergraduate curriculum and has begun examining the very difficult question of what a B.A. in English in the next millennium should accomplish and how it should accomplish it. We are nowhere near an answer yet, but I think it's safe to say that electronic pedagogy will certainly play a prominent role and is destined to alter our conception of the English classroom. Even in the benighted field of Anglo-Saxon studies, where scholars hold dear to the cherished methods of philology and historical scholarship, electronic instruction is rapidly taking a central place in the discipline. Last week I was at a medieval studies conference where a session was devoted to three new electronic editions of Anglo-Saxon texts including the *Electronic Beowulf* project spearheaded by Kevin Kiernan of the University of Kentucky, which is soon to be released by the British Library in CD-Rom format (for £95). The edition is so stunningly impressive that I will be very surprised if a majority of *Beowulf* classes in North America and Britain are not making use of Kiernan's *Electronic Beowulf* within five years. At the same session Melissa Bernstein of the University of Rochester demonstrated a smaller-scale edition of Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* which she has placed on the Internet and which will be available for use in Old English classrooms this fall. Both of these projects employ radically innovative technologies in their presentation of texts and images that are now a thousand

years old, and one could hear the jaws dropping in the room where this session took place. If the Anglo-Saxonists have already been won over, then the rest of English studies is in for a wild ride.

With regard to the undergraduate curriculum in our own department, let me first say that the present degree requirements are uniformly content-oriented rather than method-oriented. To get a degree in English at UIC, a student must take a course in Shakespeare and a course in twentieth-century literature and a variety of other courses that cover certain kinds of material such as a particular genre or period of literature, even if the exact nature of that material is often loosely defined. The *manner* in which the content of a course is presented or covered is in most cases entirely up to the instructor, and in fact I would bet that many members of our department would argue that it's essential to the notion of intellectual freedom that instructors be allowed to determine the way in which their courses are conducted. Even a course as central to the degree as our English 300, Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism, is taught in multiple ways with varying goals and with varying degrees of attention to new pedagogical formats, though everyone who teaches it still teaches a recognizable version of a course on literary theory and criticism. The point here is that there is already room within the present curriculum for instructional innovation, and it's possible right now for us to talk about incorporating new technologies into the classroom without any curricular reform, but the site of that instructional innovation is currently at the level of the individual instructor, not at the level of an over-arching departmental agenda. So far as I'm aware, all the various schemes available within the university to encourage and reward instructional development are similarly targeted at the level of the individual instructor. All of this may change if the Undergraduate Studies Committee decides that it wants to reconceive the English major in a fundamental way so that the requirements for the major become less content-oriented and more method-oriented, but at present it's difficult for me to see that this will happen in the near future.

Articulating the goals of the English major is precisely what the Undergraduate Studies Committee set out to do this spring, and while the committee is still chewing it over I think I can accurately anticipate the spirit of their decision if I say that we think of ourselves in a fairly traditional way as being in the business of producing English majors who have a reasonable command of the history of literature written in English, who understand the development of literary theory and criticism, and who are accomplished writers and students of the English language. The short answer to the question of whether the Department's educational goals include teaching our students to become adept at the new electronic media is no, at least not at present, but this is clearly a question I'll need to refer back to the Undergraduate Studies Committee this fall when we renew our discussions. For the

moment I should say that my own feeling is that at some point the Department will have to incorporate technology into just about every course we teach in one way or another, but I don't think we're yet at the stage where we can require it either of students or teachers. Our resources are far too limited, and the faculty need to be much better trained. I would like to see us get to the point, perhaps within the next decade, where we can say our majors have had an opportunity to enroll in an online course, but that should be an option, not a requirement. One of the glories of the English major is that it embraces many fields of study that can be approached in a variety of ways, and I think a technology requirement in the major is a bad idea. So am I suggesting that technology is outside the purview of English? No, certainly not those aspects of technology that are already or will soon be integral to the study of English. I can assure you I'll be using Kiernan's *Electronic Beowulf* in my *Beowulf* class two years from now, and I've already begun directing students to research tools on the Internet that are relevant to their projects, but I have not and do not intend to require my students to acquire particular technological skills as part of their English coursework. As the Director of Undergraduate Studies would I accept transfer credit for a course taken elsewhere electronically? Of course I would, just so long as the student could demonstrate that the electronic version of the course involved a comparable amount of reading and writing and examination to its UIC counterpart.

If I might turn for a moment to one of the articles of the TicToc Manifesto that I think needs to be addressed from the perspective of undergraduate studies, I'd like to say a few words about Article 5. This is the one that reads "We conceive of our purpose as being community and culture development within an educational context; our scope is greater than the dissemination of information." There are two points I'd like to make in response to this very important article, and the first is that if there is anything the undergraduate English population at UIC desperately needs, it's a greater sense of community as members of and contributors to the English Department. I realize this is not quite what the e-works impresarios had in mind when they added this article to the Manifesto, but this strikes me as an issue of absolutely profound significance for the life of the English Department. I've been here for seven years now and have seen the equivalent of two generations of English majors come and go (more or less), and I have yet to gain the sense that our majors feel as though they belong to anything other than their families, their jobs, and the city of Chicago. Obviously much of this has to do with the complicated lifestyles of our students—their ties to the commute, their commitment to a 30- or 40-hour-a-week job—and to the physical nature of the UIC campus. But there is, for example, no UIC chapter of Sigma Tau Delta to unite our best English majors socially or professionally, and on those rare occasions when the English



Department does try to organize an event for the benefit of our majors, no one shows up. In the fall of 1996 when Gerry Sorensen, then Director of Undergraduate Studies, scheduled a meeting for all English majors interested in forming a group to produce an undergraduate English newsletter, only two students attended, and I regret to say I think this is about the best we can hope for under the present technology. With the advent of e-works, however, the potential for nurturing a thriving community of undergraduate English majors becomes much more realistic. And this brings me to my second point in response to Article 5, which is that I see nothing at all wrong with a virtual English Department that does a good job of enforcing a sense of community by disseminating information. Now I know the e-workers envision themselves as engaging in something much grander and more sublime, something that will revolutionize higher education from top to bottom and rid us of all crime and disease, but at the risk of proposing something more modest I would suggest that what our English majors really need at the moment is not a new theory of electronic culture but some well disseminated information. A fair portion of my job entails interacting with English majors on a daily basis, advising them about their progress toward the degree or about enrollment problems or transfer credits and such, or attempting to contact English majors via snailmail or phone in order to advertise scholarship competitions and programs I think will be of interest to them. Much of this could be done more efficiently (and cheaply) via e-works, and e-works would also be the ideal site for an undergraduate English newsletter. E-works could also assist the Department by helping us conduct surveys of various kinds and by helping us construct a profile of the UIC English major. The possibilities extend far beyond this, of course, but I simply want to underscore the point that I see no shame in using e-works as a vehicle for disseminating information to our students and for collecting information from them for the routine administrative purposes of the English Department.

By the way, I see serious difficulties with Greg Ulmer's proposal that the B.A. in English be reconceived in terms of a production-oriented scenario in which students would be asked to write a book in four years. Experience has taught us at UIC that we have minimal control over the sequencing of a student's courses, and even though there are definite requirements for the degree, it is hard to predict what courses a student will or will not have had by year two or three. Add to this the fact that the average UIC English major is a transfer student who may not have declared an English major until his or her junior year, and it becomes impossible for us to impose any requirement that is intended to stretch out over the course of four years. I am sympathetic to the idea that the requirements for an English major should ideally be cumulative and directed toward a well conceived set of interconnected goals, but the reality at UIC is that the English Department must cater to a spectrum

of students who enter the university at different times and with different intentions and certainly with different degrees of experience with electronic environments.











