Today, technology has set the pace in terms of how we correspond with one another. Various technological means—from e-mails, text messages, voice mails, and podcasts—have dominated the waves of communication. But years ago, long before we had cell phones, the internet, and regular phones, people communicated by post. Two such letter writers were Dorothy Osborne writing in the seventeenth century and Virginia Woolf writing in the twentieth century. But today, some present day authors communicate by means of weblogs on the internet, which become windows into these writers’ lives and a reflection of our world. One such contemporary writer who is part of this blogosphere is Jennifer Weiner, a best-selling author of such novels as *Good in Bed*, *In Her Shoes* and *The Guy Not Taken*. Today’s blogs by published authors have replaced letters in that they are more than just a daily reflection of a writer’s life; they are, as well, a means for these writers to express their views on current situations in our world.

In the past, letters were a form of self-preservation, a way for even the non-published writers of the day to express their opinions to others. Even Woolf herself touches upon this when she writes in *The Second Common Reader* that “The art of letter-writing is often the art of essay-writing in disguise” (60). In this excerpt, Woolf is referring to seventeenth century letter-writer Dorothy Osborne and suggests that letters could be a venue for expressing one’s opinions on relevant current issues—something to which Woolf was certainly known for. In reference to Dorothy Osborne, Woolf suggests that her letters “gave a record of life, gravely yet playfully, formally yet with intimacy, to a public of one, but to a fastidious public” (61).

And this is precisely what blog-writers of today strive for—to give a record of life. Today, authors’ blogs are a glimpse at our society. A trend with published writers today is for them to maintain these weblogs as a way to connect to their readers (and as a way to maintain their readership and fan base, thereby increasing sales of books). Readers of Jennifer Weiner’s blogs feel that they are privy to her thoughts and insights, or as Woolf put it in reference to Dorothy Osborne’s letters, “They make us feel that we have a seat in the depths of [her] mind, at the heart of the pageant which unfolds itself page by page as we read” (62).

Certainly beyond the daily reflections of the ordinary as reflected in
Distance Education Task Force Report
Rosi Enriquez

Attention all Faculty Interested in creating a general education course to be offered online: The Distance Education Taskforce will be presenting an orientation to online instruction at RSCCD on October 11th at 1:00pm at the District Office in the Board Room 107.

The taskforce began last March for the purpose of bringing both colleges together to discuss the current status of distance education and to produce a plan for taking distance education to the next level. If this time does not work for you the taskforce has agreed to offer the same workshop on another afternoon at a later time to accommodate those faculty who have afternoon teaching schedules that preclude them from attending.

The charge of the taskforce:

- Establish guidelines for faculty teaching online courses that are solid, consistent and completely in line with Title V regulations
- Offer faculty training through a variety of venues and workshops
- Build an infrastructure that fully supports students, faculty and staff across the district
- Expand the online course offerings in general education
- Create courses that represent the highest quality of content and delivery
- Prepare a budget proposal that delineates all of the needs and respective costs necessary to evolve into a signature program
- Present the Distance Education Taskforce Budget proposal to the District council

The next step for the taskforce is to prioritize the needs as defined by the group through an online tool designed by the RSCCD Research Department. From the results of this survey the taskforce will begin the process of budget preparation in consultation with our fiscal personnel and ultimately presentation to the District Council and District Academic Senate for guidance as to how to proceed in a timely manner. This is a very exciting time for the district as we launch one of the most comprehensive and exemplary programs in the state!

Datatel Update
Sergio Rodriguez

Datatel - What is it?

RSCCD’s Datatel Colleague system implementation is in full swing. After selecting Datatel Colleague as information system of choice for the district in June 2005, the project has picked up steam and made significant strides in its initial configuration.

What is Colleague?

Datatel is the maker of Colleague, the most advanced and comprehensive information technology solution for higher education. Incorporating three key areas - Student, Finance, and Human Resources (HR) - Colleague provides the tools and capabilities colleges and universities need to meet their business objectives. Currently used by half of California community college districts, Datatel Colleague is expected to replace many of the district’s loosely connected systems and streamline student information, HR and fiscal services operations under one unifying information system.
New Library Goes High Tech

Alice Ho

Even though the new library has no sign on the front door, students are finding it! Every morning around 9:00 am, students rush into this new library to look for their favorite spots. By 10:00 am, 80% of the seats are taken. Students sit by the windows, along the stacks, or in a study room reading, working and studying.

What makes this library so popular? Besides brand new furniture, nice lighting and beautiful views, the advanced technology in the building is one of the attributes that attract students.

On the first floor, you will find a new RFID (radio frequency identification) circulation/security system. In the Media area, a 65 inch Plasma TV hangs on the wall playing educational movies, scheduled campus events and news. Students are surfing the net on new computers or on their own laptops; faculty and staff are getting together in the Faculty Development Center (FDC) and Conference Room. Dedicated to professional development, the FDC is equipped with a multifunctional AV system, Smartboard, and new PCs and Apples.

On the second floor, a self-checkout machine allows students to check-out materials themselves. The Student Innovation Zone (SIZ) provides a space for students to explore new gaming software, video editing programs and other new software on technologically robust computers. The Library Instruction Laboratory has 36 student PCs and an instructor station with a SMART Technologies Sympodium interactive pen display and SynchronEyes classroom management software. The librarian can use the Sympodium to highlight and make notations on the screen. SynchronEyes allows the librarian to create a “collaboratory” directing the student PCs, broadcasting student PCs to the main screen, polling students for instant feedback and having students take online quizzes.

If you haven’t seen the library, you should come to visit.

Lessons Learned From Teaching Online

John Didion

I learned to drive an automatic long before I tried driving a stick-shift. I knew how to drive, but it was certainly different. My “teacher” told me to keep clutching and shifting until the car moved forward--not pretty, but eventually it worked.

That experience wasn’t much different than my experience last spring teaching online. Teaching wasn’t new, but teaching online was. Here are a few lessons I learned:

1. Bonnie Slager is your best friend. She is a great mentor and resource regarding the use of Blackboard.
2. The publisher can help you or kill you. The publishers have tremendous online resources to accompany their texts, but make sure those resources match the edition of your text.
3. In-person orientations don’t work for all students. If some students could come to campus for an orientation, they wouldn't be taking an on-line class.
4. There is no limit to the additional resources you can put on site: articles, video clips, cartoons etc. If it can be downloaded, it can go on your site.
5. Your role is different. Teaching online wasn’t easier or harder. It was just different. You don’t spend your time “teaching” in the traditional sense. You spend it developing the site and then managing and evaluating the students’ learning.

I really enjoyed my on-line experience and will be teaching the class again this fall. Hopefully our Blackboard system survived my initial attempts better than the transmission in that old VW bug.
The Technology Committee promotes the use of technology to increase efficiency of college operations and to support teaching and enhance learning.

Woofspot (continued from Page 1)

letters and blogs, we also read about current issues in the world. Today these are called issue-oriented blogs. Similarly, for Woolf, her issue-oriented letters focused on enduring issues during her day—war, international relations, politics. A typical day in Woolf’s war-torn London is reflected in a letter to Lady Tweeds-muir dated March 21, 1941: “We have been completely bombed out of London, and lead a rather vegetable existence here, surrounded by the melancholy relics of our half destroyed furniture” (483).

In a similar sense, today’s bloggers reflect the concerns of the day. Today we certainly have wars to contend with, issues-a-plenty to contend with, and ongoing strife between conservatives and liberals to think about—all issues Jennifer Weiner posts in her blogs. Following Bush’s reelection, Weiner reflects on the state of the union in her blog on November 4, 2004:

I’m just so damn depressed that I don’t even want to talk about the election. Beyond Bush’s victory; beyond the notion that we’re going to be stuck with decades of his Supreme Court appointees, I think I’m most saddened by the voters’ response to the gay marriage question. Two people want to love each other, and want access to the benefits and privileges that legal marriage brings. Who’s got a problem with love?

Fans of Jennifer Weiner read her almost-daily blogs and read more than about the daily life of a writer. It is appropriate to refer again to what Woolf said about letters and apply it to blogs—that they are a disguised form of essay-writing, a way for these writers to express their opinions on pressing issues of the day. Be it blogs or letters, the writers’ purpose is clear—to have their words be public domain.

Works Cited


Datatel continued from page 2...

- Data conversion planning currently underway
- Core system to be completed September 2006
- Student module training and consulting to begin in November 2006
- Human Resources module in production July 2007
- Financial module in production July 2007
- Student module in production April 2008