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There is Magic in the Web ...

When one teaches at a fully networked college, as I do, there ought to be the temptation to explore new technology to ascertain if and how it may be employed in enhancing or transforming one's teaching and research, the accepted Siamese twins of our discipline. I am here this afternoon to propose and support with some testimony from my own experience the view that the advent of the personal computer has already made much more of a difference than I initially expected , and now, that the machine has sprouted networking cables, I think , might well radically alter the prospects of how we conduct our professional business. I am convinced that we are in the midst of making the transition to a new paradigm both in our studies and in our classrooms. Some of us are further along in exploiting the new technology and what it can net us than others, but nobody, as far as I am able to gauge, has yet managed to abandon the traditional ways and proclaim complete satisfaction with the new model. My presentation will document why that is necessarily so in our teaching at the moment.

Some of my older friends will be amazed to learn that I am championing the new computer-based technology, for, though there has always been some pressure from the powers that can make the difference in one's professional life to embrace the gifts available through various audio-visual media, I usually declined such offerings, having found the rewards not worth the efforts. That view is probably as much the result of my own preconceptions as of shortcomings inherent in the technology itself. While I have always played audio recordings of sonnets or scenes from a few plays in my Shakespeare classes, there haven't been any film strips, etc. Video cassettes are a different matter altogether: I still arrange for the viewing of a large number of videos of the plays I teach—mostly from the *BBC Series*, though Kurasawa's **Throne of Blood** , for example, has occasionally filled in when discussing **Macbeth**, long before people began to develop any multi-cultural sensibilities. My video-jaded students don't particularly like to attend the scheduled evening sessions, but they

come, knowing they are required to write a number of reviews of "performances" of their choice. If we find a Shakespeare play at the Guthrie or our own college theater, they invariably choose to review live performances. And when I have volunteered to stage a play with student volunteers who do not receive academic credit for their labors, I have always had plenty of talent to choose from. In other words , my use of non-traditional means of enhancing the reading experience of Shakespeare has been exclusively based on my perception that the additions might aid students in gaining a better understanding of Shakespeare's works.

I. The Computer & Writing for Publication

Yet as early as the heydays of the Apple IIe, I had the hunch that this technology might allow me to do something that could not reasonably be achieved in any other way: because of the ease of manipulating, i.e., revising, written material offered by the personal computer, I decided to change the usual expectations in a Senior Seminar on *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*. Instead of demanding the traditional term paper, I told my students that they were being asked to do something quite different —or more, as they ended up putting it: there certainly would be the customary oral presentation to the seminar at the draft stage, before they could proceed to revising and polishing the paper. However, their responsibilities would not end with the final version for me to grade: subsequently, each member would also have to team up with a peer (of their choosing) for the purpose of co-editing their papers for publication. We would, indeed, use the departmental Apple IIe and attached dot-matrix printer to produce a volume containing their (and my) essays, so they might receive a printed copy recording the collected achievements in their capstone course as English majors. Though the result does not look so impressive now that we use Macintosh computers and LaserWriters for everything, to generate volumes that come close to rivaling the work of a print shop at a fraction of the costs, all my subsequent experiments of that kind are grounded in the idea that we can challenge our students to write for an audience other than the faculty member reading another paper to determine a grade. My students still like the idea of ending up with something to take home and show to others,

and, hence, are willing to do the work required for the project to succeed at the tail end of the term. And I am amazed every time at how seriously they take their jobs as team editors, determined even to make sure that the adopted style sheet is adhered to by all, for example, and ruthless in cajoling their peers into delivering the best they are capable of.

Having the advantage of a Macintosh with its graphical user interface, we are now able to produce volumes that do no longer look like something that could have been generated by a good typewriter: matching proportional typefaces for titling matters and body text, a layout that borrows from the standards of the print shop—genuine italics and boldface, drop caps, em or en dashes, adjustments in leading and kerning, full justification, genuine foot- or endnotes—, and graphics all help shape the appearance of our publications, which, by the way, migrate from word processor files to page-layout documents before being turned into multiple copies by the College's off-set press.

II. The Computer & Local Electronic File Transfers

A more significant change occurred when my college gave us Macintosh computers in 1988 and agreed to network all faculty machines and those in the computer classrooms and walk-in labs shortly afterwards: when Apple brought out *MacOS 7*, which includes the ability to turn every Macintosh computer's hard drive into a potential file-sharing server, it was time for the next step. I set up a couple of folders (i.e., directories) on my office Mac's hard drive as "In" and "Out" boxes and made them accessible to my students. Rest assured, I set the privileges so that everything else on that hard drive is completely off-limits to others: they can't even "see" anything but those two special folders. Using an *alias*, a hot link that connects directly to those two folders, and their group password, my students are able to see what's inside the "Out" folder, copy any item to the computer they are connected from, but not modify anything inside my "Out" folder. When it comes to the "In" box, they are denied all access privileges, except for the power to drop off their documents by dragging their file icons onto the "In" folder. As long as my Mac is powered up, my students are able to retrieve copies of material I want them to have at any time from any computer on campus,

including their personal machines in their dorm rooms. They have gotten used to checking in the "Out" folder for assignments, updates, deadline modifications, or whatever. They are also quite satisfied with their ability to drop of electronic copies of their written work at any time of day or night in the same manner. Of course, I had to be taught the hard way once again, that computers are not like human beings: they have neither imagination nor charity. If two students put files both named "Hamlet Paper" into the drop folder (or "In" box) before I have a chance to remove the first file, the second document will replace the first one. So, given the fact that the Mac has always been able to handle long filenames, I have resorted to imposing strict naming conventions to forestall such mishaps. I now receive more papers by the stipulated deadline, though their sleep-deprived authors may not show up in person that very day!

Sometimes I require a paper printout of students' essays as well. However, much of the time I settle for an electronic file, which I either print out myself or grade "on screen." Unfortunately, there does not seem to exist a word processor specifically designed to aid us in that task: it requires too much effort to create editable margins (columns) for comments, etc. Hence, I have resorted to using Microsoft **Word**'s ability to attach to text an electronic version of post-it notes : only these annotations' markers will show on screen at all times: when you print out the document, the markers do not get included; the contents of a note is revealed only when you double-click on its marker. The solution isn't ideal, as even a complaint about a missing comma requires me to hit the key combination macro to create the note, etc. However, as my students may not remove the annotations when they revise a paper, I can check out their responses to my advice, demands, suggestions, etc. directly on screen again when the paper comes back. Sometimes they inform me with a counter-annotation why they do not wish to take my advice. Anyway, I am not exactly sure why , but my students tend to consider my electronic comments with greater care than when they were allowed to disassociate themselves from them by submitting another discrete copy that does not include my observations. (In case you wonder, I'll get around to addressing the issue of the transfer of data from remote sites later, in the context of talking about the WWW.)

III. The Computer & E-Mail, or The Option of E-Forum

In the wake of networking cables came the availability of universal e-mail access at Gustavus: when only faculty machines and those placed in public labs were connected, e-mailing individual students or colleagues became possible. Now that we have the dorms connected as well, e-mail can be used as an effective extension of the classroom. Not only does Gustavus currently grants free e-mail accounts to all faculty, administrators, and students, but the College also generates group e-mail addresses for every class each semester. If it's fall, the address pattern is: "f-english-82," or "f-art-12," for example. Ordinarily, these class lists do not include the faculty member; if you want to be added, you have to make a special request to the network administrator. I routinely do so, in order to be able to create the preconditions for what I call E-Forum, a novel venue for carrying on the "conversation" that never seems to be adequately prepared for, let alone fully concluded in class. My students suspect that I have additional (, more devious,) motives for this electronic forum: I require each student to post his or her reactions to the day's readings and/or their classmates' or my own posts to the class e-mail list by two hour's before meeting time. It will be obvious from what somebody says, if he has read the assignment, or if she has only gotten through Act I. I also discover how they reacted to the assignment: what they wish to discuss because they are fascinated by something or because they need help with a specific character, passage, or whatever. From their submissions I get a fairly accurate notion of what to expect from a student long before the first paper or test are written and handed in. In E-Forum the silent types do not remain silent; the incessant talkers are invariably challenged by their peers before long. While students tend to be reluctant to openly criticize each other's claims in class, they do not appear to hold back when they post to the class list. As a result, my plans for the day often require revision at the last minute: upon digesting their posts, I suddenly realize that something that I had thought we did resolve last time still does not make sense to some of the students. The carrot for participating in this collaborative extension to in-class discussions consists of 10 % of the semester grade. In other words, you can't earn an "A" unless you do well in E-Forum. Actually, my students do not seem to mind the stick, believing,

as they do, that such collaborative work will be expected from them once they leave college. Unfortunately, the advent of universal e-mail also means that there now is the possibility of students seeking help from outside "experts" when they should not. One of my colleagues reported that he happened to see e-mailed answers to examination questions come out of the a printer. the idea of take-home examinations may require a review in the light of the almost instant availability of "answers" over the electronic network.

IV. The Computer & Remote Data Access

Speaking of the possibility of gaining access to databases located at remote sites, the Internet has allowed me to browse and retrieve data for years. I thought *Anonymous FTP*, *Telnet*, or *Gopher* quite marvelous, until I discovered the World Wide Web, which is completely platform- independent. No matter what kind of computer you use, you can establish access to the Web through a direct connection or a modem linking you to a net service provider. For the record, I have been able to curtail my use of those three older protocols drastically, relying on the Web whenever possible. True, I employ **Fetch** to ftp text and graphics files to my "www-docs" account from my Macintosh at home, but access from the office happens via the Mac's Chooser. Also true, access to our College Library's catalog and the PALS system are accomplished using *Telnet*, and so does going to the electronic versions of the **MLA bibliography** or **Books in Print**. I concede, I also had to use *Telnet* to go to the UNIX shell of the College's Web Server in order to create a Web directory and make it "world readable." However, since I established my presence on the Web, I have not really relied on **Turbogopher** or **Fetch** for retrieving data. Almost everything that exists in electronic form(at) you might look for can be found on the Web, which is exceedingly easy to navigate. A Web browser can handle just about all transfer protocols, including e-mail—though I still prefer using a dedicated package for that purpose, **Eudora Pro**. It simply is more powerful, allowing for the easy transfer of styled documents as "attachments to text messages.

Let me begin with a caveat, though. While a Web browser like Netscape's **Navigator** is easy to use, what it nets you is not always

first-rate or acceptable. We need to distinguish between what is currently technically possible and happens to be available on the Web, on the one hand, and what the new way of providing and integrating/ linking information promises for the future.

Presentation/Simulation of Using the Web: *I'll bring the computer and projection unit; will need screen and three pronged extension cord. Time requirement can be adjusted on the spot, depending also on what the audience wants and needs to be shown.*

To put out your syllabi and related information for your students and all the connected world to see is very convenient—it even saves trees—and, at the same time, I am afraid, rather pompous, unless you are actively engaged in having people sign up for your courses from distant locations. My college would like me to do that, but has not yet figured out how to charge distance learners for our services. Having no such rationale, you might end up having to "pay" for the moment of gratification when discovering that your courses are listed on the World Lecture Hall page by having to discourage people who appear to have lost sight of the distinction between mine and thine: I have received requests from around the world for copies of student papers, as a result of having published assignments as part of my course material , from persons offering as a rationale nothing more than that they "needed it," since they, too, had been assigned a paper on **The Shrew**. Believe me, I always respond very thoroughly to such requests, advancing at least three major reason for having to turn them down. In a couple of cases I have been rewarded with apologies from the would-be plagiarists afterwards. In defense of such inappropriate request, I need to point out that many people lose sight of copyright issues on the Web: everybody is capable of grabbing anything he or she wishes to have, if somebody has published it on the Web. All you have to do is tell your browser to save a copy of that item you desire.

As I see it, currently the Web is capable of producing much more and much more impressive contents than is available today. The number and kinds of html tags under *HTML 3.2* appear sufficient to publish most kinds of data we might wish to disseminate. However,

not all browsers are equally capable of reproducing what the author of a Web page wanted you to see. As I personally prefer Netscape's **Navigator 2.02 or 3.0x,** there are a few tagging options I eschew out of consideration towards people dependent on a less capable browser. Clients of commercial services

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F.Y.I..: a Web browser does not receive the complex pages you see on screen in that format; it receive the text and so-called "tags" (usually in pairs, indicating where to begin and where to end an attribute/feature) telling it how to interpret the text data. All graphic elements are downloaded as separate documents, which explains why they frequently display after the text has appeared, if at all!

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often are stuck with browsers that can't do "tables" or "forms," let alone "frames," though it is those features that make the Web attractive to commercial outfits, including college admissions offices.

My primary worry concerns the contents of Web pages. And I am not concerned with the dissemination of obscene or otherwise offensive material. Though I am not sure how you can effectively practice censorship when it comes to the dissemination of illegal material, given the non-hierarchical nature of the Web, I wish the Germans could succeed in shutting down neo-Nazi propaganda sites located in North America and elsewhere. My primary concern involves the standards adhered to, or, rather, disregarded so often by Web authors in the humanities. Shakespeare sites provide among the most notorious illustrations of what I think we should not support. First, revisiting the issue of mine and thine, there is the textual variation of ignoring or avoiding the copyright laws. Actually I am more provoked by the widespread practice of digitizing versions that do no longer have copyright protection—for a very good reason: these are texts that have been superseded by modern editions which were edited by scholars who understood the challenges and responsibilities of the task. My mentor Charlton Hinman must be rotating in his grave, when he contemplates the standard of all too many Web editions. I have a hunch David Gants will a word or two to say on this subject. Yet when you start looking for Shakespeare texts on the Web, even MIT's imprint does not vouchsafe a reliable text. The members of

the Milton transcription group, who are committed to producing a first-rate electronic edition, are alarmed enough by this state of affairs that they have been toying with proposing a kind of quality seal to be attached to scholarly texts. Being people who work predominantly on command-line platforms,. they are not sure a graphic icon would work. Because "the Bard" has attracted a lot of "buffs," there is even greater need to separate the wheat from the chaff of Internet edition of Shakespeare's works. Of course, I am not the first one to perceive the vacuum. Yet only time will tell, for example, what projected projects in hypertext publishing like the **Internet Shakespeare Edition** <http://castle.uvic.ca/shakespeare/>, sponsored by the University of Victoria, BC, will amount to. Judging by its prospectus, it could become a genuine boon to scholarship, offering a modern edition along with the F_1 text and those of quarto editions, whenever available The offerings from the Folger site, on the other hand, are not yet significant. And until they have an on-line catalog, or decide to publish more than the table of contents of the **Shakespeare Quarterly** on the Web, that site offers more fluff than substance.

Next, there is the issue of attribution. Not only are many primary texts transcribed from outdated or unidentified editions, but there are also a large number of pieces of secondary material disseminated by that most prolific of all Web authors, Anonymous. His or her competency varies widely: you will come across pieces that would not compare favorably with **Cliffs Notes** (, which are also available in a Web editions, alas: <http://www.cliffs.com>), but you may also come across a genuinely impressive piece at the very same URL, or Web address. You never know. Beyond that, there is the question of how to cite material discovered on the Web. When you go to the Muse Project Web site at the Johns Hopkins Press <http://muse.jhu.edu>, you can finesse the problem of how to cite electronically disseminated data: **ELH**, for example, is available to subscribers and curious non-subscribers alike: you can download and store any of the articles you may want, or make a printout for your paper files. However, you don't have to cite them as material found on the Web. There still is the parallel paper edition of the journal, and I suspect nobody will fault you for giving bibliographic information directing readers to that version.

The issue comes into focus, though, when you use a database that exists only in virtual reality. For example, last year I assigned a longer critical paper on Jane Austen's **Pride & Prejudice**. To discover what would happen, I steered my students to Henry Churchyard's Austen site, which is quite impressive: Chapman texts, secondary and collateral material clearly attributed, and a large number of linked bibliographical, biographical, and background information that goes considerably beyond what my college's library can provide on its shelves. All of this is superbly integrated by pervasive linking of material that might ever be connected. However, there are also included a lot of bits and pieces whose provenance remains unacknowledged. I am not at all sure I know how to cite such material, and the MLA certainly has not yet pronounced on the subject in any definite way. They seem to still be struggling with the powers that elevate a computer over a typewriter, if the published **Guide** may be invoked in this context. In the interim, we have have to consult two stopgap offerings: **Beyond the MLA Handbook,** at <http:falcon.eku.edu/honors/beyond-mla>, or Janice Walker's MLA-Style Citations of Electronic Sources, at <http://www.cas.usf.edu/english/walker/mla.html>.When I contacted Henry Churchyard, he did not offer a solution, to citing material at his own site.. So I told my students to be pioneers and make up a set of conventions. I won't entertain you with the results, other than to observe that their ways of citing such material will not pass muster with a scholarly community. On the other hand, my students' papers demonstrate quite well that the isolation of time and place of a rural college in Minnesota do no longer have to inhibit scholarly endeavors. And I do not mean to suggest that we should make due without our own institutions' libraries, since much can already be had more conveniently on the Web these days, and because Johns Hopkins' example of publishing all journals on the Web is likely to find many imitators: overall production costs for Web publishing are so much lower for a university press, though receiving subscriptions from users might turn out to be an inhibiting challenge. the folks at Johns Hopkins clearly have not figured out a way yet to restrict access to the electronic editions of their journals to paying customers and entice potential subscribers with the gift of free sampling at the same time.

V The Computer & the Riches of CD-ROMs

Finally, I'd like to offer a couple of observations concerning the use of so-called multi-media wares available on the computer. I believe just about all Macintosh models sold in the US these days come with pre-installed CD-ROM drives. Consequently, it is easy to access the various Shakespeare offerings. Again, you had better examine the offered goods for quality before you part with your money, having answered the question of how to use the product in a classroom situation first. After all, unless you can make the material available to all of your students at the same time by projecting both text/ images and sound, CD-ROMs are poorly suited for group settings. And yet, the A. R. Braunmuller and David Rodes' **Macbeth** published by Voyager I found intriguing and even convincing. For your $ 35.— you get the text edited and copiously annotated by Braunmuller; a sensible introduction to the play and its history on the stage by Rodes, accompanied by plenty of still photographs and QuickTime film clips taken from the versions by Orson Welles, Kurasawa, and Polanski; a complete audio version of the Scottish play starring the Royal Shakespeare Company; and, finally, a Karaoke version, allowing you to try your talents in a role of your choosing against the RSC. Everything is cross-linked very thoroughly, so you may shift from one focus to any other at the click of a mouse button. You are even able to take notes and store them at any point in the text. In other words, you get all the things you could acquire separately on a single CD-ROM. Only the Karaoke option appears to offer something we might not have been able to generate the old-fashioned way, though. Thus, while I find this CD-ROM quite good, I keep wondering what the new medium would have allowed them to do that they haven't imagined. The networked personal computer is encouraging us to shift from the familiar paradigm, to do other than doing on a computer what we have done without it: the Braunmuller **Macbeth**, I submit, does not really do that. I am confident, though, that others will explore its potential more imaginatively in the future. And it is that potential that keeps me committed to the new technology and its promises. "There is magic in the web of it," as Othello did put it, and we are all challenged to net it.