

VIRTUAL WRITING FORUM WITH DON MURRAY AND THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT IN AN ASYNCHRONOUS ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the level of participation and perceptions of effectiveness and value among participants in a virtual forum interacting with one another and with Donald Murray, a noted mentor in writing instruction. National Writing Project teacher consultants were invited to participate in a two-week interactive session using Caucus®, a non-threaded, World Wide Web-based, asynchronous computer conferencing system. Eighty-one teacher-consultants responded and participated in the event. Using a multiple perspective framework, data gathered through surveys, interviews, transcript analysis and online discussions suggest that participants, project coordinators and directors, as well as the author himself, found the event a valuable learning experience with interesting possibilities.

KEYWORDS ALN, writing, teaching, consulting, value

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Writing Project (NWP) is an established network of approximately 160 sites of school/university partnerships that has been experimenting online with its professional development model that includes teachers as writers, as researchers and as colleagues who share and reflect their teaching practices and theories. (See Appendix A.) NWP is experimenting with a Virtual Institute to extend the practice of continuity programs that support teacher leadership in providing professional development practice and research throughout the school year.

The project of this article sought to use technology to provide a dynamic learning experience for teacher-writers that emerged both from the source and from the destination, a technique described as semiosis [1]. This rejects the definition of education as a process of delivering information and instead conceives it as a process of dialogue and negotiation of meaning from shared social experiences [2]. By using and analyzing this technique in an online environment with practicing teachers, the hope is that it can then be better understood in terms of its application potential in classrooms as the use of virtual environments reshapes some of our practices and definitions of literacy and writing instruction. The National Writing Project with its teacher as researcher-practitioner model, combining educational theory and practice, seemed a likely subject for this project (see Appendix B for a history of the project under study).

This online conference was not designed to replace current existing author discussions in face-to-face settings, but as an additional option for such activities and a way of experimenting with

virtual environments. The asynchronous format of the electric conference allowed those in various time zones to correspond without having to coordinate schedules around other activities, an issue that impacts busy same-location educators as well.

While it may be an excellent model for those teacher-writer-researchers for whom these kinds of exchanges might not be possible otherwise due to distance and/or time constraints, there is no implied suggestion that this format is superior to the rich synchronous dialogue that occurs in face-to-face author and issues discussions. Indeed, there is research support that computer-based activities are neither always superior nor inferior, but that they overall compare favorably with more conventional instruction [3]. It is a different format and as with any differences there are some gains and some losses. However, what may be most important are the participants' perceptions of the conference's work in terms of its value as a learning experience. If they see it as worthwhile, they may be more likely to adopt it and experiment with other like forums of discourse.

While this is a study using technology as a means of examining literacy collaboration and interaction, it is first and foremost about literacy. This study's perspective is that web-based technology is a tool for exploring literary activities and a means of forming a coherent learning community when distance is a factor. The findings are examined in the context of ways this project or others like it might be replicated in other communities and the implications of like experiences in transforming future literacy instruction.

II. METHOD

A. Background

The segment of the NWP Institute model that provides reading and discussion of current theories and practices on writing instruction was one that appeared possible to facilitate in an online environment. Questionnaires were sent out to NWP site directors during the 1998 Summer Institutes surveying them on authors and book titles being read in their Invitational Summer Institutes with the intent of using their responses to invite an author to engage in on-line conversations with NWP teacher-consultants.

Sixteen directors responded. Author choices were: Donald Murray first, followed by Donald Graves, Ralph Fletcher, and Regie Routman. There was a surprisingly great variety of readings and authors and the newest publications did not tend to dominate the list as expected. Another surprise was the large number of the directors' requests for a listing of what other sites were reading. This was subsequently posted at <http://www.teleport.com/~obee/nwp/authors.htm>.

There were some options in technology tools for bringing the author online event into a web-based environment: an asynchronous conference environment at Northern Arizona University (NAU) Site's Caucus® space, or a synchronous threaded discussion (MOO environment) with Teachers.net. As a means of determining the best choices, the pros and cons of each were posted for discussion with the NWP Design Team in their asynchronous conference space:

1. Northern Arizona University (NAU) site

(in a conference environment organized by numbered discussion items)

- We'd have the advantage of the more sophisticated environment.
- We'd limit numbers of participants to NWP thereby safeguarding the author from too much reading/responding.
- Exclusivity could promote NWP memberships.
- Archives would be ours from which to collect data, publish, etc.

2. Teachers.net

(<http://www.teachers.net/>)

- A large potential audience where we could get NWP name and work better recognized.
- Workload for NWP could be less since Teachers.net may facilitate, or at least assist with facilitation.
- Collaboration and networking with other groups would enrich our own work.
- Becoming familiar with Teachers.net can provide participants with additional resources and assistance beyond the Virtual Institute.
- Gary Obermeyer, Design Team leader, and network facilitator, has worked with Teachers.net and says they are a fine group with which to work.

Other considerations included a discussion that the asynchronous format of Caucus® space might be more appealing for NWP's teachers of writing, since it seemed more closely connected with familiar writing formats. On the other hand, the synchronous or real-time environment of Teachers.net seemed a more conversational structure and style to its writing, which might model NWP research and practice discussions. Then, in April 1999, Donald Murray accepted NWP's invitation to join the project and indicated that he preferred the asynchronous space due to its time for reflective response, and expressed the need for assistance in learning to navigate it. The decision was made; we would use the asynchronous format, graciously hosted by NAU.

The issue of the author(s) and participants needing technical assistance was one the NWP Design Team, who coordinated this effort, was aware might be a problem. We realized this issue of technological confidence, in addition to the required time commitment, might also discourage teachers from registering for the conference. In terms of time for this project, author, Donald Murray, was also clear about his limitations and availability. The conference itself was designed to assist busy teachers with time issues by providing flexibility for response within the two week schedule of postings. However, we realized that while there might be flexibility in their log-on times, some with less online and conference experience would very possibly need to expend any time savings on learning to navigate the technology.

B. Design

The conference was scheduled for two weeks of author-participant interaction, with an additional two weeks prior to the author's postings for participants to log-on, register, introduce themselves and describe previous connections to Donald Murray's writing and work. In deciding how to prompt discussions Murray suggested "I MIGHT be able to distribute Daybook Notes for two weeks, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays or Tuesdays and Thursdays." He said the notes would have two parts:

1. The notes I make to myself about my writing: problems I've encountered and solutions, reading about writing that has stimulated me, general comments on the writing life and its practice. I will be writing my weekly Boston Globe column and working on a book about aging this summer. [I've attached an example of Daybook Notes.]
2. Responses to writing/teaching questions that NWP leaders have sent me the day or weekend before. I am happier with questions about writing since I write everyday, less happy with questions about teaching since I have been out of the classroom for twelve years now and find that each year I am away from that reality I have simpler, clearer answers. My answers would not be individual responses to each question but specific responses to clusters of similar questions.

Since I am writing and publishing—the column and four book contracts at the moment - I would want to retain the rights to what I would distribute over the Internet in this program. I keep recycling, saying what I have already said and thinking it new. I

comfort myself by saying that Bach and Mozart did the same thing (emailed correspondence from DMurray, Mon. 26 Apr 1999 12:13:54 EDT).

Directors were again polled for a month preference for the event: August or September, and 43 of the 47 directors who responded indicated that September was preferable. Murray suggested, “August or September is equally good—or bad—for me, but I think it would be of far greater benefit to the teachers in September when it would carry their summer enthusiasm into the classroom and allow them to share their students’ concerns and to share my daybook notes” (E-mail from Dmurray060, Thu, 6 May 1999 09:57:05 EDT).

One question was: would teachers be too immersed in school routines and students (actually a pretty nice place in which to be immersed) to not find the time to join us? However, this concern seemed to be dismissed by the fact that it is also one of the richest times for gathering first impressions and establishing writing goals and patterns for the rest of the year.

Initial invitations were sent out via the NWP Directors’ listserv on September 6, 1999, and several subsequent reminders and invitations were sent out to other NWP listservs over the next two weeks. By the time the conference was scheduled to begin, there were 151 registrants signed up to participate. Of that number, 115 logged onto the conference space during the event and 80 posted writing. The initial item provided for respondents prompted them to introduce themselves and briefly discuss previous writings or connections they may already have made with Murray’s work.

This article defines the successes and failures of this project from the perspective of multiple realities: those of the author-teacher, those of the teacher-authors and those of the network facilitators. Each defines success from their unique perspective of the event and in terms of their previous experiences and biases based on similar events. The author-teacher in this instance is Donald Murray, noted writer and teacher of writers, who considers himself first and foremost a writer. His life as a writer is well documented in his work [4], [5], [6], [7] and [8]. Besides being a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist, he is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of New Hampshire. He has been a writing coach for several national newspapers, written poetry for many journals, including *Poetry*, and has authored several books on the craft of writing and teaching writing. (See Appendix C.) The teacher-authors are those participants whose primary focus is on teaching and who write as a part of their professional lives to better assist their students in learning. The network facilitators are both former public school classroom teachers who work with the National Writing Project, one as a consultant and the other as a university instructor and member of the NWP Task Force.

III. RESULTS

The conference had discussion threads or items, the first of which began with navigation tips for using the conference space, followed by one that asked for introductions by participants that included some reflections about previous encounters with author, Don Murray’s work. Of the seventy-two participants who logged on and introduced themselves in the conference, most were very familiar with Murray’s work and writing and all appeared to be very motivated at the prospect of sharing some of his renowned wisdom about the craft of writing and teaching writing. During the conference, Murray published a series of nine Daybook Notes postings, each dealing with different subject matters. The conference also had discussion items that included, questions, articles and quotes to share. See Appendix D for a listing of content items.

A. Daybook Notes

A Gift of Loneliness is the first of the Daybook Notes and in it he thanked his wife, Minnie Mae, for allowing him to live the writer’s secret life by providing him with the space, time and understanding silence so necessary to the craft. His reflective piece following this *Boston Globe* column, discussed his habits as a writer. He explained that his first rule is “nulla dies sine linea”

– never a day without a line – attributed to Horace [65-8 BC]. He then established another rule: “know tomorrow’s task today.” Murray explained that the most important writing is often done away from the writing desk, the rehearsing where words and fragments of languages as well as images – pass through his mind. He described his daybook log as a sort of lab book or writer’s log, and a way he can talk to himself, a way to teach himself what he is learning when he might not realize he is learning. And while he does not reread the daybook as often as he expects, he indicated that it doesn’t matter because it is the writing that is important. Once written down, things come to mind when they are needed. His daybooks, along with all his papers, are collected at The Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Seventeen teachers, in turn, read, responded to this item and discussed their own writing as well as questioned Murray further on his writing practice. One concern expressed was keeping a balanced life with writing commitments woven into work and personal lives and a discussion ensued on the fine art of procrastination and the prewriting or rehearsal time writers need to effectively compose. One participant, Don Rotham noted, “I enjoy the space between the impulse/responsibility to write and the act of writing. I enjoy the loneliness embedded in the fragile connection with others that writing honors.” Another participant, Theresa Manchey, said, “I can force something on demand, but the really good, heartfelt stuff is practiced and practiced in my head as I go about living, teaching high school, training the dog, caring for my family.” Tamsie West described how she embeds this concept into her classroom instruction,

One way that I harness this ‘rehearsal time’ for my students is that I try to announce writing assignments at the beginning of the unit with which the assignments are associated, rather than when it is ‘time’ to write. For instance, I have just begun a unit on ‘What Is An American?’ based on de Crevecoeur’s ‘Letters from an American Farmer.’ I have already told the accelerated juniors who are involved in this unit that we will be writing an essay associated with the ideas and discoveries they find in our study. I hope that announcing writing early gives them time to think about their writing before we actually sit down to draft. In journal time every day, they can explore those ideas in freewriting, (or write about something else, of course).

Peter Riegelman posed the notion that this ability to recognize the importance of preplanning and rehearsal might be a function of age.

Murray responded to the group, “I am impressed but not surprised by the quality of this discussion. We ARE a community although we do not jostle against each other in the school corridor. I’m delighted to be involved.”

This item of the discussion closed with participants conferring about Murray’s suggestion to close a writing session with a sentence about the next writing task, “talking about the writing away from the desk, making them sit quietly for five minutes – perhaps ten – thinking about writing what they may write.” Joan Anderson responded that her research on Hemingway’s writing habits indicated that he also followed this practice and she had had some success with her college freshmen students using it.

Stuff Keeps Piling Up, the second of the Daybook notes, was a humorous piece about how people accumulate “stuff.” Murray’s wife, Minnie Mae, had suggested that someone must be breaking into their home and instead of robbing them, the intruders must be leaving stuff to add to their collection of clutter. Murray again shared and reflected on his process in creating the piece, by not going for humorous lines, but for specifics. While this is what he termed, “a pretty ordinary piece that readers may enjoy because the experience is universal ... It may be worth noting that the humor – if you find it funny – comes from the specifics, not from yack-yack lines... the more effective way is write with specifics, not telling the reader when to laugh, but creating a situation that may make them laugh.” In further sharing his craft on this piece he said, “My late friend and colleague, novelist Tom Williams once told me that the writer should have a technical trick in

each piece of writing to keep the writer interested. Sometime I write a column for a technical reason – can this be told backwards, or only in dialogue? Today, as I got to the end I wondered if I could take the lede [lead], copy it and turn it into dialogue. I did it – and it was fun. Will the reader get it? Not important. Did you?”

In responding to participant questions in the next portion of this discussion thread, he requested that readers please not see him as an “authority” but as an apprentice practitioner. “I have no loyalty to my answers. They are today’s answers while I am at the workbench. I may do just the opposite tomorrow. Please do not take me too seriously. I am serious about my craft. I play no games. I do not put you on. But I am learning. We are learning together. Other, better writers, may not do what I do. This, as the brain surgeon said, is my practice.”

He then responded to conference participants’ specific questions about how he writes and what inspires him. He suggested, “Write about what makes you different. All the things that made me strange to my family, my classmates, my neighbors, my church, my teachers, myself were the things I have eaten on as a writer for 60 years.” He introduced “recent re-learnings – that will appear again in the conference discussions:

- The importance of the writing in the subconscious before the writing at the writing desk.
- The importance of writing with velocity to escape the censor, write what you do not expect, cause the instructive failures that are essential to effective writing.
- “Description is the place to begin when you do not know how to begin.”

One participant, Harry Noden, who has much experience with exploring the relationships between art and writing, asked Murray to comment on his perceptions of this. Murray responded that if he had not been a writer, he would surely have become an artist, that writers and artists have a great deal to teach one another. He explained the need to stay focused on current writing projects and the danger of “running off like a beagle following each new scent.”

Another participant, Michelle Rogge Gannon, inspired by Murray’s piece, submitted a poem about “stuff” she trips over, mostly in the middle of the night. She received reader response from teacher participants and thanked them with the explanation that Murray’s piece had inspired her.

Twice-Lived Life, the title of Murray’s current in-progress book, due to be published in December 2000, was also the title of the third Daybook notes. In this item he modeled and discussed his method of layering, comparing it to oil painting, where subsequent drafts of the same piece of writing are added to develop texture and meaning to the underwritten first draft. He then demonstrated this technique by modeling it with part of a chapter on fitness and exercise from *Twice-Lived Life*. He closed with, “At the end of the writing, I make a few quick notes that tell me where I MAY go the next morning – and that stimulate my subconscious to write during the next 24 hours.”

Deana Lew, in response to a Murray quote, asked, “But how do you teach somebody to write? Can you teach writing or can you only set up a place for it to happen, coach it, respond to it, encourage it?”

And Murray responded, “Well, that’s teaching, isn’t it? Teaching doesn’t need to mean command posture, male lecture, telling instead of showing, allowing, cultivating. You have described the process best, ‘set up a place for it to happen, coach it, respond to it, encourage it.’ Each year I ‘taught’ less and gave my students more room to learn. They taught themselves. And since I was often teaching students who went on to become professional writers, I KNOW they taught themselves. I was the cheerleader jumping up and down on the sidelines.”

In discussing with participant Claudine Keenan the process of demystifying the writing process, he suggested, “If you write with your students, they will begin to see the shared craft. They will also see it in your understanding of where they are in the process, the problems they face, the

feelings they have about their writing. The more I taught, the more I had to listen in conference to what my students were saying – in words and manner – about what they had written. Their attitude was often more important than the draft itself.”

In discussing his journey into writing as a career, he explained that he came from a family of storytellers. After surviving a destructive childhood that included much time convalescing from illnesses, where he would read and write and dream, he coped by inventing a second family, a fantasy family who lived in the wall. He cannot remember when he could not read and write. He said, “Bonnie Sunstein of the University of Iowa, in examining my papers at Poynter, found a paper I had written and illustrated when I was 9-years-old. It had the simple, direct, active verb voice I thought I learned from journalism years later. It got a ‘B’ with no other comment. In fourth grade Miss Chapman said I was class editor and that was it.”

He talked about the response he receives to his writing from family and friends, but disclosed that writing, for him, is a solitary pursuit, “a lonely trade” and he values his aloneness, which is different from loneliness.

Respondents countered with a discussion on the processes and rituals used in their own writing including “layering.” Joan Anderson described how her students layer their pieces in an electronic environment class, having discussions about them on a listserv and webboard before they draft a paper about their online writing and researching. They then utilize those discussions as a springboard to their more formal writings.

In *Writing When Not Writing* Murray discussed the pressures that build in a writer’s need to get ideas to paper and the difficulties for a writer to *not* write when this occurs. He wondered how we could instill that urgency in our students. He then gave examples of some of the writing he has done when not writing: a layered piece about his grandmother, a second paragraph to the lifting piece, a hurtful incident with a tactless eye doctor, a conversation between a man with a unique speaking style and his 99 year-old mother, and notes on items to pursue at some future writing time. In responding to an inquiry about predecessors to the daybooks habit or ritual and circumstance he establishes in order to encourage the writing, he detailed,

I didn’t really have predecessors to the daybooks. I did collect quotes but didn’t talk to myself in any orderly way. I am obsessed with tools – pens, paper, computer hardware and software. I need to sit down with toys – oops, tools – and have my things nearby. The back scratcher my paralyzed grandmother used to extend her reach. My Levenson pocket briefcase and my Levenson vertically lined 3X5 cards. My pens, two black on red. My L. L. Bean briefcase. Perhaps most of my cd player and my cds – Bach, Mozart, Handel help when things are going bad. All sorts of stuff. Writing is so intangible we need habit and tools. I envied the daughter we lost when she had to make her oboe reeds; I envy artists with canvas to stretch and brushes to clean, the busy work that stimulates the artistic mind.

Gordon Coonfield, a teacher consultant and university instructor, queried Murray on his views concerning recent practices of motivating students to write through politico-social pedagogy that “...immerses students in some critical social problem, which is expected to irritate them into writing - like grains of sand in an oyster’s soft flesh, which rarely ends in pearls.”

Murray responded,

I was always a proud teacher of craft. I was constantly insulted by many of my closest colleagues in public and private because I taught craft. Some of the people who voted me Department Chairperson went to our vice-president and asked to have me kept from appearing at MLA since I would be an embarrassment. Some of my friends who are my friends wouldn’t eat with me at conventions. I know others who wrote and requested I be removed from the faculty because I lacked credentials. I know because they sent me copies of the letters. Two years after retirement they gave me an honorary degree and ten

years later named a journalism lab for me. Did it piss me off? Sure, but I tried not to let it keep me from teaching what I felt I was qualified to teach and what the students needed to learn. I explored my craft. I did my work in my way and the work itself in the classroom, during the conference, and the writing desk was my greatest satisfaction. Honors and insults both seemed remote, both surprising, both irrelevant. The joy was in the unexpected line, the student who found a voice.

And then, after reflection, he added,

I re-read that and am a bit embarrassed. I do think all our theologies should be challenged. I keep ready and thinking about my craft. I am not yet an old man sniping at those roaring down the track and passing him. I understood why people didn't respect my work. I didn't respect it myself at times. I want to say my piece and to have everyone else given the same opportunity. I am a believer, not in theology, mine or anyone else's, but in doubt, uncertainty, contradiction, questions more than answers. But you answer questions. Sure do. Just don't take me more seriously than I take myself.

This item closed with three teachers sharing some of their own writing. One shared a Daybook entry and two other participants shared poems. They received response from one another and responded in turn.

Context, the next of the Daybook notes, included Murray's personal confrontation with glaucoma where he compared those who are battling the effects of aging to the heroes of military wars; both accepting the conditions of combat and carrying on. The piece was formatted so that he interspersed a running commentary within the draft for readers to see his thought processes as he reflected and layered, making writer decisions and revisions on the piece. He dealt most specifically with the audience and context of the piece, showing how he works at identifying and connecting with his anticipated readers.

In the participant questions that follow this day's Daybook Notes, the query concerning the ability of teaching others to write resurfaced. It is one that plagues teachers of writing. Murray responded with,

In fact, a writing course is a course in self-teaching. They have to teach themselves as I am still teaching myself. We never learn to write any more than we learn to live, or love, or cook, or teach. We are always in the process of learning... no-one will write with care, with craft, with concern for language until they write something of importance to themselves that they believe will be of importance to others.

He went on to suggest:

We cheat our students by making English too easy. We give our students assignments so they do not have to explore their worlds and find something to say; we give them little formulas – the critical analysis paper – so they do not have to think because we tell them consciously and unconsciously what to think, what we want to hear. It is easy and boring for those who want good grades, just boring for those like myself, who didn't care about grades because we felt we were stupid, outside the system, and would make it in some other way than getting good grades.

One participant, Joan Anderson, asked Murray if journalism writing techniques seem more appropriately shared with students learning to write online. Murray responded, "Individualization is the name of the game and writing online is individual. Also we teach best when someone wants/needs to learn. That is more likely to happen online."

When a recap of the issues to date was posted, Murray said, "I hope the joy comes through, the importance of writing to me, my happiness at my writing desk, the reality of my remembered and imagined worlds, the satisfaction of reflection, the surprise of what I find myself saying."

Today's Column—and Tomorrow's? contained Murray's Globe column entitled "On the Gift of Giving, Way Before the Season." It was a layered version of his initial Daybook Note entry, *A Gift of Loneliness*. He explained that this piece is a reflection of a theme of these two week's musings with our online community, the writing that is done away from the desk. He also shared two new column ideas he is planning to work on and an invitation to join in the pleasure of writing a weekly column.

Gary Obermeyer, co-facilitator of the project, posted a summary of Murray's writing advice to date in that item:

Habits of Mind for Writing

1. Don't wait for an idea.
2. Listen to your own difference.
3. Avoid long writing sessions.
4. Break long writing projects into brief daily tasks.
5. Write in the morning.
6. Know tomorrow's task today.
7. Seek instructive failure.
8. Focus on what works.
9. Keep score.
10. Let it go.

Murray countered by suggesting it be 12 items, renumbered and beginning with the following:

1. Pay Attention [Be aware]
2. Respect Your Individual Response [Reaction] to the world.

In *New Essay and Old Problems*, Murray posted a response to an assignment that asked writers to stand at the edge of the millennium and reflect. His response was published in the Fall 1999 edition of University of New Hampshire Magazine. In it, he connected his life memories with those of his Scottish ancestors in a lively, poignant fashion. He contemplated on the craft of the piece, showing where he made choices of what and how to say things. He suggested we help students look for tensions or the unexpected surprises in their own writing that give off sparks as their pieces are read.

Next, he addressed the NWP audience-participants as fellow teachers, and advised and discussed with them his thoughts on the teaching of writing. He included, "Things I wish I had done more often when I was teaching – They always worked." Below is the list from which he elaborated:

- Started the first class by having students write.
- Writing with my students for ten minutes [five?] at the beginning of class.
- Writing a single essay or article during a semester or term.

He then shared an idea for a new column on the cost of prescription drugs and how difficult it is for the elderly to cope with increasing medical expenses at a time when most are on fixed incomes. He moved on to what he termed a self-indulgent piece on "Time to Write" where he explained the importance of writing in his life.

Murray further refined the previous summary posting on "Habits of Mind While Writing," and revised it to include:

- Not seeking, receiving. Quiet, waiting, receptive.
- Giving up control to the writing.
- Welcoming surprise, contradiction. Disloyal.

- Sense of play.

In combining the craft of writing with the art of teaching how to write, he suggested that these habits may have implications for each of us as we write and have significant implications for the environments at home and in class when our students write.

Writing Lifting, the next Daybook, was a chapter in *Twice-Lived Life* where he discussed the change in his once-scornful viewpoint on exercising and how he and Minnie-Mae have now developed an exercise routine. He followed this with a comparative discussion on a writer's routine, how 90 minutes at a time seems about right to flex the writer's muscles. In this item, he masterfully connected the writer's life to the process of living itself.

Last Daybook was a layering and extension of the Daybook *Writing When Not Writing*, a chapter in *Twice-lived Life*, entitled "Watching," in which he went beyond his childhood memory of the daily morning ritual of checking to make sure his ill grandmother has survived the night. He noted that he now awakens every morning and checks on his wife, as she in turn regularly checks on him. He commented after, "At this point I stop and stand back. I have been hurtling forward, now I see myself going where I did not expect to go. Of course this is what I want, but it is scary."

He provided an annotated list of some of the books and authors he recently read on the art and craft of writing (see Appendix E) and posted a chart tabulating the number of words he has written each day of the year. He followed that with another chart, this time giving monthly word counts and averages as well as a running total of words per year and yearly averages. He explained that Ernest Hemingway counted words, as did William Faulkner and Graham Greene and he gave us reasons for counting words:

1. To make the intangible tangible.
2. To delay [avoid] the question of quality. "How'd the writing go this morning?" "512 words."
3. To reassure myself that I have been working.
4. To create an inner demand that will stand against the outer demands of the world.
5. To keep myself honest.
6. To document progress.

When questioned, "Do you consciously attempt to layer with specific details or participles, etc.? In other words, do you work from a framework as you review your work or do you just layer spontaneously as you sense something is needed?" Murray responded that it is an issue he had not previously thought about. He said:

This is an important question that no one has ever asked and that I have never asked myself. I will learn from what I say. I enter into the draft. I take instruction from the draft. I try to forget all rules, traditions, models, expectations, promises, standards, traditions and simply work within the draft line-by line. Of course, the writer has to keep the evolving vision of the whole in mind as the writer works with the detail. Each specific changes the whole and the changing whole affects each specific. Some of the questions I must be asking myself:

What does this mean?

What more could I/should I say?

Is this clear to me?

Will it be clear to a reader?

Do I need to slow the pace so the reader will understand?

Do I need to speed up the pace so the reader will continue to read?

Does the voice [the music] of the writing support the meaning?

Are the proportions of the parts appropriate?
 As I move in close and zoom back is the distance at each point helpful to the reader?
 Does everything move the draft forward?
 Does the draft need to be polished?
 Is the draft too polished and need to be roughed up?
 Do I give the reader too much information? Too little?
 Does it work?

And on and on but I don't formally ask these questions. I work in a very practical way, line-by-line, word-by-word, space-by-space. And it is just as important to leave the draft alone where it works. Change – revision, editing – is not virtuous.

B. Articles and Handout

In addition to the Daybook Notes, the conference contained reprints from three articles from other publications:

1. “Unlearning Writing” in Learning Matters (Murray, 1998)

Murray described his lifelong work at unlearning the ten lessons or principles he was taught in school. “Much of what I have to unlearn is logical but wrong, well intentioned but ineffective, traditional but guaranteed to produce writing that says nothing, is dull, graceless, unread. And so I sit at my desk putting in and taking out, working hard at the task of unlearning ten lessons or principles I was taught.”

The teacher participants responded by sharing some of their experiences with writing instruction in their schools and classrooms. Two teachers responded by describing how their schools' approaches to teaching writing include weekly assigned expository writing prompts, or fill-in-the-blank organizational forms on worksheets, or insistence on using an outline before writing. Two other teachers discussed the difficulties of teaching writing and being teacher-writers. Another teacher, Sally LeVan, described an experiment she conducted with her in-service teachers and her college students, where the students described to the teachers what might best help them to become proficient writers. Her students echoed Murray's thoughts in his “Unlearning Writing” lessons. Then, three of her students logged on also and thanked Murray for sharing his work. The final teacher respondent to this thread, Rosie Roppel, described an assignment she had given to her students that dealt with a different genre of writing. She was surprised when these successful short story writers met with confusion on a book analysis assignment and marveled at how timely this online conference was to her work.

2. “One Writer’s Curriculum” in The Learning Network (Murray, 1999)

Murray depicted writing as a life-long learning process and way of life and outlined his own personal curricula at the university of his writing desk:

Here are the courses for which I have registered in the first semester of the next academic year at the university of my writing desk:

- Semester I, Course 1: Workshop in Daily Writing
- Semester I, Course 2: Patience
- Semester I, Course 3: Advanced Layering
- Semester I, Course 4: Writing and the Subconscious
- Semester II, Course 1: Workshop in Daily Writing
- Semester II, Course 2: Finding the Line
- Semester II, Course 3: Elephant Eating

Semester II, Course 4: Practicum in Advanced Failure

I expect to return to school in the first fall of the new millennium. The catalogue is full of courses I need to take:

Writing With Velocity - Most writers write fast to outrun their internal censor and to commit the accidents that instruct.

Fluency: How it Can Be Easy To Write - The flow of writing carries writers toward meanings they had not foreseen. Writers have to encourage the flow and then give themselves over to it.

How Leaving Out Becomes Putting In - What isn't said, is. The silences in writing – the space in the text – allow the reader to enter the text and make it their own.

Tuning Writing's Music - We often talk of the writer's voice but that voice has to be tuned to the content, the genre, the audience of the text. It is the music of a draft that informs the writer and the reader. The meaning is heard before it is seen.

The Importance of Developing What Works - Effective revision is discovering what works and developing it far more than correcting error.

Answering the Reader's Questions: When They Are Asked - A good piece of writing is a conversation with the reader. The writer anticipates and answers the reader's question when and where they are asked.

Allowing the Draft To Control - The writer has to give up control to the draft and its own evolving meaning. The draft will tell the writer what to say and how to say it – if the writer listens.

Cultivating Surprise - The writer should be comfortable with the unexpected, prepared to build on what hasn't been foreseen.

Reading What Isn't Written – Yet - All writing courses are reading courses with a difference – the writer has to learn to read what isn't yet written. And, of course,

Workshop in Daily Writing. - The best writing instructor is the draft. Write. Read. Ask what works. Ask what needs work. The draft will tell you. Revise. As Bernard Malamud said, "I love the flowers of afterthought."

3. "What-and-how-to-write When You Have No Time to Write" in Readings for Writers (Murray, 1998)

Murray listed and expanded on ten habits of the mind and craft that have helped him become a productive writer without the assistance of long writing days free of interruption.

- Don't wait for an idea.
- Listen to your own difference.
- Avoid long writing sessions.
- Break long writing projects into brief daily tasks.
- Write in the morning.
- Know tomorrow's task today.
- Seek instructive failure.
- Focus on what works.
- Keep score.

- Let it go.

Participants discussed these habits and then one participant, Karen McComas, published a piece of writing, prompted by a quote, and participants discussed the process of the piece with her. In another item, Murray shared a handout (see Appendix F) he has used in workshops and he compared himself to his father who, to his embarrassment, used to copy, frame, print, and distribute Bible verses. “I do the same thing with writers’ quotes,” he quipped.

C. Quotations

Murray began one discussion item by posting a quotation that inspires him. It is from Elizabeth Berg’s *Escaping Into the Open: The Art of Writing True* (1999) [9].

I believe that fiction feeds on itself, grows like a pregnancy. The more you write, the more there is to draw from; the more you say, the more there is to say. The deeper you go into your imagination, the richer that reservoir becomes. You do not run out of material by using all that’s in you; rather, when you take everything that is available one day, it only makes room for new things to appear the next... You don’t need to know a whole book in order to write the first page. You don’t even need to know the end of the first page. You need only the desire to create something that will say what you feel needs to be said, however vague its form at the beginning. You need a willingness to discover the wealth and wisdom of your own subconscious, and to trust that it will tell you what to do and how to do it – not all at once, but as needed, step-by-step. You have to take a deep breath, let go of your usual control, and then begin walking in the dark.

Murray told participants that he has a copy of this posted just to the right of his computer screen. He then opened a new item with a number of favorite quotes and participants shared some of their own as well. See Appendix G.

IV. PARTICIPATION AND EVALUATION RESULTS

Forty-three responded to the evaluation form (see Appendix H) and of those, eleven sent back responses indicating they had not logged into the conference due to time constraints or technology problems. Three additional respondents wrote only comments and did not respond to the yes/no questions indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Authors & Issues On-line Evaluation Responses

	Yes	No
During the online event with Don Murray, did you engage in any writing that you might not have otherwise?	21	8
Did the conversations with Don Murray encourage you to reflect on classroom practices in literacy?	22	7
Did your attitude toward using computer technology for collaboration change in any way? If so, in what way(s)?	12	17

As seen in Table 1, respondents increased both their own personal writing and their reflection on their classroom practice. In response to the evaluation question, “How did you view this online event in terms of its value as a learning experience? How might this type of learning experience be used at NWP site level?” the responses were very favorable, see Appendix I. In terms of viewing it as a learning experience, six mentioned how they had personally applied the

information to their own writing and six explained how they had adapted information and used it in their own classrooms.

Interestingly, their attitudes about using technology did not seem to change as noted in their responses in Table 1; some commented in their responses that they had already had a favorable impression of working online and this only reaffirmed that belief.

Within the conference space, respondents shared some learning insights as well. Harry Noden described the experience, “like I’m participating in a graduate seminar for writers.” Pat Stall shared, “... the more I learn about writing the more connection I see to teaching and vice versa. Your layered writing practice has great power for reflective writing about teaching.” Other insights included Theresa Manchey, “The wealth of information coming across cyberspace this week has been overwhelming at times, but only because it is so relevant to my life as a writer and teacher. Now, I know how my students must sometimes feel when they’re given an opportunity to ask questions and they can’t think of any,” and Diane Howard, who thanked Don Murray for his sharing “... which helped to boost our level of confidence that we can make a difference as we ‘teach’ writing.”

Two evaluators expressed the need to use these types of projects to build community and collegial support. E Carolyn Tucker said, “... I have no access to a group of like-thinkers other than through a conference like this. I am caught between being overwhelmed by appreciation for the experience and angry for the void that will exist when this is over.” Peter Riegelman said, “I feel very honored and fortunate to be amongst this NWP crowd, where it is a given that we all want to improve and grow as writers, thinkers, and teachers.”

The remaining twenty-two responses gave the conference evaluation ratings and suggested site-applicable variations. Seven respondents voiced their frustrations with technology issues and sixteen discussed time factors involved in this type of conference. Some expressed appreciation for its asynchronous format, some discussed the optimum time of year to host such an event, others noted the difficulty of finding time to participate at the level they would have liked, and still others shared how they planned to use activities at a later time.

Gary Obermeyer, one of the conference facilitators had considerable experience with other conference groups, most with a focus on educational reform. When asked for an evaluation on this conference he said, “... on a scale of one to ten, it came pretty close to the top. I’ve never worked with another event that was any more productive than this one.” He felt it was productive not only in the percentage of people who actively participated, but in the fact that Don Murray’s postings all stimulated some kind of response” and it kept bringing people back... especially the author himself.” [10]

Murray’s postings indicated that he, too, found it valuable, “This has been an important learning experience for me.” One of Donald Murray’s goals for this conference was to eliminate the mystery of how writers work. He did this by writing, discussing when and how he writes, what motivates him to write and explaining that writing is a craft that is never mastered but forever learned. Indeed, he closes with additional questions posed to invite additional reflection and learning:

I would, however, like to know:

What, if anything surprised you?

What did you see me doing – or not doing – that I may not have been aware of?

What did you observe that has specific implications for your own practice and for your teaching?

What should I have done that I didn’t?

What is the value of this kind of striptease?

Has what I have done encouraged you to share with your students?

What has NWP learned from this that may be applied to the future?

And thank you for all the support you have given me. There is no such thing as a secure writer.

In terms of the fixed two weeks time frame, as opposed to an open conference that extends until discussion wanes, we found it an effective strategy because it let people commit to a fixed amount of time and energy. The author, Don Murray, also felt the time was about right for this format. He observed that a week might be too short and if it extended beyond the two weeks time, it would become something else, perhaps an online writing seminar with interactive coaching and multi-drafted responses, a drain on the already over-committed author and community.

One of the interesting discussions that seemed to provide new learning for the group was about how much writing goes on prior to actually putting words to page. Even the author, Don Murray, who keeps daily word counts remarked at how he had not realized how much of his actual writing takes place throughout his day, not just in the mornings when he sits at his desk. He considered the importance of knowing the next day's writing task, though not necessarily the content, prior to completing the first day's writing schedule. When he finishes writing each day, he marks the word count for that day and sets the task for himself for the next writing session. Then, the next day's prewritten begins as he walks into the remainder of his day. If this is the case for all writers, what implications does this have for timed writing prompts that are to be completed in one sitting? Can they accurately measure a writer's potential and ability?

One dilemma for Murray that is inherent in this format was his inability to "read" his audience. In comparing this with a face-to-face format, Murray said, "I saw every student I taught in a conference—face-to-face—every week. I read their face, their tone, inflection, body language, dress, hesitations, silences. Here I had no real feeling for the audience. I took off my clothes and they remained dressed." (E-mail from DMurray 060 Tue, 07 Dec 1999 18:00:23 -0500 EST)

The difficulty in online communication, in not receiving the voice tone and inflection, the facial and body language responses, even if it's only a head nod is an issue with all online communication. With only words, it takes some study of language and of characters in a stereotypical fashion to fill in the blanks, with the accuracy being haphazard at best. Teachers need to develop new "instincts" for learning online "voices" somewhat like a blind person reads Braille or a deaf person does signing. The ability to "read" participants would take more time than two weeks of posting, especially when many posted only once. So, how do we come to know people? From repeated interactions? From the words they are able to produce as text on a computer screen? Moran [11] suggests a variety of interventions and aids to computer-mediated conferencing: context-building, setting norms and agendas, facilitating discussions by recognizing and prompting participants, dealing with information overload by summarizing and unifying discussion threads, and perhaps coordinating a face-to-face meeting as an introduction and/or conclusion to online community work.

In his final evaluation of this event, Murray indicated, that while the experience was beneficial and interesting, he is not fully convinced that it was valuable for the participants. While he was impressed by the questions he received, he expected far more questions, more challenge, more response, more interchange. One of the participants, Shirley Brown, noted in her evaluation of the event, "I thought it was interesting to read about the questions about writing that participants raised with Don Murray, although I thought at times that his stature prevented people from asking questions about teaching writing." However, without someone of his stature, would participants even consider registering for this type of event?

Murray shared his experience with this project with other authors; Ralph Fletcher, Don Graves, Chip Scanlan, who expressed to him some of their concerns with the possible demands of this approach, and he assured them that it was not painful, that he learned from what he did and found

that it was manageable. He indicated that he would consider doing it again but would want to control his time as he did and isn't sure if it was helpful without more interchange than he was able to participate in. However, he notes, it made it possible for him to contribute without travel and while caring for his wife. It was manageable because of his control and perhaps his unwillingness to respond more to their individual work. He was uncomfortable with the lack of interchange, but cognizant of the importance of focusing on his own work at this stage of his life.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Before conclusions can be drawn, several limitations of this study deserve attention. Besides the respondents who were unable to participate due to technology access problems and those who had difficulty with time commitments, most of the remaining participants also had problems with finding time to participate as completely as they would have liked. Several commented that they planned on returning at a later time when they were not so involved with the opening of the school year to reread and reflect on the discussion. Also, this was the first time that most of the participants had attempted the conferencing format, Caucus®, which requires some instruction and practice time. Additionally, the group under study was a temporary subgroup of a larger learning community that has some established notions about the area under study, writing instruction. This disallowed for much debate or change in attitudes or behaviors. However, there are some conclusions that can be drawn and some implications for further investigations and studies.

Conference participants, NWP facilitators and the author himself didn't know quite what to expect with this conferencing event. Prior to the conference author, Don Murray, stated, "I'm nervous and eager, terrified and confident—a good combination." (E-mail from DMurray 060, Thu, 15 Jul 1999 08:06:55 EDT). He also was worried that he wouldn't have anything of interest to say.

One of the facilitators, Gary Obermeyer, stated in the evaluations that he realized that one of the reasons he didn't go into it with a clear picture of what it was going to look like was because he didn't know who Don Murray was. "So I was helping to set up this environment for people to learn from and about this author and I didn't even know what the content was going to be, other than this notion of Daybook Notes. I knew it was an author sharing journals. That's about all I knew. So when I saw what the journals looked like, then we began to invent the ways to make it." [10]

Having a context and a culture within which to build an online conference, especially one of short duration such as this one, seems essential for interactive exchanges. If the author and facilitators had no expectations, surely the participants were similarly unprepared for the kinds of possible learning situations that might occur and how best to respond to opportunities. Murray's concern over having nothing of interest to share proved to be entirely unfounded; respondents indicated that they were very interested and motivated by Murray's Daybook Notes and his responses to questions. However, participants in this event were cautious about posting, replying to posts and asking questions, having no clearer sense of what outcomes might be expected.

If a learning experience is defined as the ability "to acquire knowledge or skill or a behavioral tendency" (Webster, <http://www.webster.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>), then the Murray conference did indeed seem to provide a learning experience for online participants. In capturing Murray's online models and discussions about the craft of writing, some examples were made available on the thinking and decision-making that can allow better understanding of the interactive process between the writer and the teacher of writers. Changes in behaviors and/or beliefs built upon and expanded on already grounded knowledge were evidenced by Bob Sizoo, "Your rereading of the piece with commentary serves as a fine example of how one can edit/reflect on this kind of writing with audience in mind. Several teachers are planning to have their students do this exercise, and we'll use it with our summer institute participants next year. Thanks." (21:5) Brian

Writing also responded with, “I introduced your practice of layering to a mixed class of 9-12 (grade) students. One ninth grade girl felt she had written her finest piece yet. When I ask students to ‘write another draft,’ they usually balk. Last week I introduced layering and they went right to it.” (21:6)

The separation of teacher and learner by distance and/or time has presented learning communities with new challenges in terms of motivation and in developing student-teacher rapport in virtual environments. NWP participants were accustomed to working and learning together with distance as a factor. Their individual sites around the country/world work independently from one another and a few members, usually directors, come together at an annual fall meeting that coincides with the annual National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Convention. The fact that they were all teachers of writing and, as Eldred and Fortune point out [12] asynchronous conferencing is more closely aligned with writing than speech, suggested that this environment would be conducive to active collaboration and participation in that they routinely write and respond to other writers. However, with all these factors predicting much interaction and exchange, there was not as much as might have been expected. And, although this project included teachers and an author who shared a common culture of student/teacher collaboration and viewed learning as shared social experiences, the author noted the teacher-as-disseminator-of-knowledge model seemed to prevail in this conference. This was perhaps more difficult for him that it was for the participants. Teachers, who are student-centered, rely on the interchange and non-verbal as well as verbal communication that is a part of classroom practice. It is more than the mere answering of questions that guide a teacher in directing and redirecting student thoughts and interests. Teachers watch for overt and covert clues to respond to subject matter, much as a speaker or entertainer “plays” an audience; and it’s extremely difficult to interact with an invisible, silent audience. When asked to compare the online teaching environment with a face-to-face one he commented on difficulties in “reading” the audience response. “I saw every student I taught in a conference—face-to-face—every week. I read their face, their tone, inflection, body language, dress, hesitations, silences. Here I had no real feeling for the audience. I took off my clothes and they remained dressed.” (e-mail correspondence from Donald Murray, Tue, 07 Dec 1999 18:00:23 -0500 EST)

He regretted that there was not more interchange between him and the participants. “I was impressed by the questions I received but expected far more questions, more challenge, more response, more interchange.” (email correspondence from Donald Murray, Tue, 07 Dec 1999 18:00:23 -0500 EST)

His parting questions remained unanswered; it appeared that most participants were there to hear him in a less than social constructivist model. The cause for this could be, as previously suggested, Murray’s prestige and familiarity as an author and mentor to many of the participants. Besides perhaps being in awe of his presence, they may have felt they knew him after absorbing so much of his work; and their relationship of reader to writer was already implemented, thus excusing them from the effort required in establishing a reader-writer connection.

Zito [13] reports that online communities “...can, in some cases, form better one-on-one relationships” (p. 408) than real time ones. This community did seem connected, but whether that had to do with the established culture in which they were already members, or whether the online experience established or solidified that remains unanswered. The brief length of this conference did not allow for sufficient time to form a community nor to study it.

A longer virtual conference might provide the venue for studying the computer’s use of networking tools for collaboration and the creation of knowledge through discussions as suggested by Hawisher [14]. It is evident that this medium is a means of reaching community members who might not have access to notable teachers and learning communities because of distance or time. However, this shortened online format might best be utilized in extension

activities rather than as the primary means of instruction. Further studies need to examine how this asynchronous conferencing system assists communities of learners with either objective.

VI. APPENDIX A

Overview of the National Writing Project

The National Writing Project (NWP)

[Http://www-gse.berkeley.edu/Research/NWP/nwp.html](http://www-gse.berkeley.edu/Research/NWP/nwp.html) is a national network of 162 local university-based, teacher-centered school partnership programs in 49 states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. The NWP is the nation's largest higher education/school partnership program providing leadership and professional development in the teaching of writing and in forming and maintaining communities of teachers in sustained professional development. Site directors are typically university professors of English or Education, and co-directors, typically, are classroom teachers. Most sites are assisted by teacher advisory committees, steering committees, or councils, which maintain the partnership and direct outreach activities. Local sites are usually funded by multiple sources that include host campus and surrounding school district support and, at some sites, additional state and foundation support. Local sites join the network through an application process and submit annual budgets and reports for extensive peer review in order to maintain their affiliation and funding.

Since 1973 the National Writing Project has served over 1.8 million teachers and administrators to develop better teaching skills in all areas of literacy, and most specifically in writing. Each summer individual sites, working in partnerships with local universities sponsor Invitational Institutes where outstanding teachers, grades K-16, study and demonstrate their classroom practices and prepare to share their knowledge about writing instruction with educators and interested communities during the school year through continuity programs.

The Invitational Institute, based on the premise that the best teachers of writing are peers, brings together exemplary teacher practitioners for an intensive institute of 4-5 weeks, usually in the summer. Participants are drawn from all grade levels, K-University, across the curriculum, and both public and private schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Whenever possible, they receive modest stipends to cover expenses: tuition, fees, books, and incidentals. Additionally, they receive graduate credit. The Institute provides a rare opportunity for teachers to come together for an extended period of time as a community of writers, as critical friends presenting and refining best practices, and as colleagues in the study of their craft. This experience is central to the development of a teacher of writing and to the training of an NWP teacher consultant.

Continuing Education Services—After the Institute, NWP teacher consultants are recognized as adjunct faculty by the partnering college/university. They deliver workshops conducted at school sites, lead study groups, conduct teacher research, and plan outreach programs throughout the school year. Through academic year programs NWP sites provide regular teacher education other programs cannot typically provide: a carefully planned and coherent continuing education program for practicing classroom teachers within their own local professional community.

The Continuity Program—The network of National Writing Project sites offers teacher consultants and their colleagues a range of programs for continued training and support. Typically, they include: monthly Saturday meetings; advanced Summer Institutes; teacher research programs; editing/response groups; publishing opportunities; councils; target programs for teacher consultants with common interests; opportunities to plan and participate in local, regional, and state conferences; university seminar series, etc. Many of these programs draw upon the national network, creating national/local teams of educators capable of working for common purposes. The goals of these activities are to continue building capacity in local writing projects, strengthening the community of teacher consultants, and enhancing the quality and rigor of outreach for quality writing instruction.

VII. APPENDIX B

History of the Authors & Issues Project

The Network Development Initiative began in the fall of 1995. The NWP contracted with webmaster Christina Cantrill to provide leadership in the development of an NWP website. Shortly thereafter, Christina recruited the first NWP NetHeads, a self-selected special interest group (SIG) of network aficionados, to serve as advisors and a sounding board for development of the NWP Website.

In the early fall of 1996, NWP engaged the services of Network Developer Gary Obermeyer (Learning Options, Inc.) to assist in the network development. Gary was selected for his extensive experience with reform-oriented networks and the use of interactive technologies to develop online communities. The first order of business for Christina and Gary was to develop an initial plan of work and network vision. Through a series of conference calls and one face-to-face meeting, Executive Director Richard Sterling and Co-Director, Elyse Eidmann Aadahl, the initial network development plan began to emerge.

In consultation with NWP Executive Staff, Christina and Gary set about recruiting a Network Design Team to provide a sounding board and reality check on the network development efforts. The team was drawn primarily from the NetHeads special interest group, with additional members selected/recruited to assure a geographic spread and diversity of Writing Project roles. The Design Team began to meet in an online space on the MetaNet™ network, an asynchronous conference space that is password protected and allows for threaded itemized discussions by topic.

In October 1996, the National Writing Project proposed a network development initiative as follows:

Our Aim: To increase the effectiveness and influence of the National Writing Project.

Our Goal: To develop a networking plan that

- builds on existing NWP networking capacity.
- pools the networking resources of the NWP Partner Sites.
- creates an open system that can be scaled up ad infinitum.

In November 1996, Gary Obermeyer sent out a recruitment letter to directors and teacher consultants to elicit interest in the new NWP Design Team that was scheduled to meet online from then through May 1997.

The original fourteen members, plus two facilitators two NWP directors and two NWP staff members met online in a conference space environment. For various reasons, not all of the Network Design Team members were active in the conference. For some it was a problem of access. For others it was time. For still others, there was not enough direct, meaningful connection to their day-to-day work. We found that the idea of networking was too abstract to compete with the urgencies of classroom practice and/or Writing Project business. Still, the Design Team made important contributions to the development of NWP's growing online community, and helped transform the original network vision into a realistic network development model.

In February 1997, Christina Cantrill started a new item on the Design Team Conference space <http://www.tmn.com:24:1> so they could explore some ways that electronic networking could extend the work being done during the summer institutes. Some ideas had already been mentioned, including cross-site work and online journals.

She encouraged Design Team members to brainstorm some of the things done in the summer for which electronic networking could provide an interesting forum. She posed the question, “What are some of the activities, some of the people, some of the groups, and some of the goals that come together to develop the NWP network itself every summer?”

Later that year they hosted a mailing list to site directors to answer three questions:

- Can the summer institute experience be enhanced and enriched through the use of electronic networking?
- Is the strategy of using small, ad-hoc design teams an effective strategy for supporting cross-site projects and documenting NWP work?
- What are the implications for NWP (technical, financial, training, and personnel)?

In a Spring, 1997 issue of *The Voice*, Gary wrote,

The NWP Network Model is a framework for strategic network development, recognizing the potential of desktop-to-desktop communication and anticipating a future with professional development integral to the work of teaching. We know that most schools are not yet on the Internet and that teachers presently have precious little time for reflection and dialogue about their practice. The network plan is based on a belief that strategic investments made now will accelerate the trend to online and in-the-job professional development and establish NWP as a long-term player in school reform and improvement. Our strategy is to support NWP Site Directors and Teacher Consultants as change agents. Our aim is to create the premier online resource for the teaching and learning of writing.

That summer, we tried an experiment called the E-Journal—using email and the worldwide web to connect Summer Institutes in a writing exchange and a forum about the Institute experience. This was the first real test of the network development strategy that evolved over the 1996-97 school year.

The E-Journal was the brainchild of Shirley Brown, a Teacher Consultant with the Philadelphia Writing Project and a member of the initial NWP Electronic Network Design Team. Her work with the Philadelphia WP Institute, in particular the practice of sharing of journal entries, inspired her to see the electronic network as a way to connect with other Institutes. A complete report of the E-Journal was published in *THE VOICE* (Winter, 1998).

That first summer, seventeen institutes joined with the intent of posting journal entries. However, much of the writing was in an essay or story format. The second summer of the Virtual Institute, 1998, the number of sites increased, as did the number of posted writings and in 1999, over 300 teacher consultant entries were posted on the E-Anthology site.

About that time, I began wondering about technology as a means of keeping teacher consultants sustained in their work throughout the school year, rather than adding more pieces to an already overcrowded summer institute. On August 14, 1997, I posed a question to directors via the NWP Director Listserv:

One of our concerns with ISI is helping teachers stay connected after the Invitational is over. Our ISI runs from the first part of June to the first part of July. This year we decided to run it for four weeks and tie our fifth week and credit to three Saturday meetings in the fall. This was done in part to draw in rural teachers who have difficulty coming into Reno for extended periods of time in the summer. We also hoped, by continuing to meet, to extend teacher exchanges into their classrooms and to encourage individual teacher research in the ensuing school year. Each fall meeting date is scheduled to last approximately five hours. We sent a survey out last week to fellows asking for evaluation of different parts of the institute and what they are hoping/looking forward to in the fall meetings. Happily, they threw us many bouquets (cheers.)

Disappointingly, they gave us no feedback on what they would like to see in the fall (boos.) They mostly just said they want to hear how everyone's year is going. Hmmm ... five hours worth?

I'm now having second and third thoughts on what seemed to be a good idea and where to go with it. I would very much appreciate any input other directors have with this, particularly if you have tried something similar.

Thank you.

In exploring the Extended Invitational the following questions emerged that November:

- Does an extended time frame make for a better invitational experience?
- What activities, experiences, and outcomes are possible in the extended sessions that are not possible in the conventional 5-week setting?
- Is it a reasonable trade-off for the time cut from the summer session?

The main components of the Invitational Summer Institute are teachers writing and providing response to one another, teachers reading and discussing current research, and teacher demonstrations on which to share, reflect upon and discuss. The most obvious extension seemed to be the teacher writing which could be posted for response. With the E-Journal underway and providing that element, the next component seemed to be the reading and reflecting aspect. One thing that might not be possible for an individual site would be to dialogue with authors of research.

- The initial proposal outline looked like this:
- Time with author actually on-line: Approximately one week
- Time of ensuing discussion: Approximately one month

Benefits to NWP: Author's book could promote discussion on issues on teaching writing among participants and also allow lurkers to experience a virtual meeting where author posts ideas and responses to an issue for further teacher online participation. The resulting discussion can be archived on conference space for future review and reflection.

Benefits to NWP participants: promote teacher discussions on relevant issues on the teaching of writing, attend virtual conference-type experience without the travel time and expense, support reflective practices by presenting models of teacher-research and collaboration, provide support for teachers attempting change, connect teachers with like-minded colleagues and cutting edge information.

Benefits to author and publisher: Opportunity for further study on issues addressed in book, publicity for book without added time and expense of travel, market targeted for discussion is prime market for Heinemann's teacher education division.

Costs: NWP design team to provide costs of conference page set up, discussion moderator and publicity. Publisher to provide cost of author time.

VIII. APPENDIX C

Publications by Donald Murray

A Writer Teaches Writing : A Complete Revision. 2nd edition. (January 1985) Houghton Mifflin College; ISBN: 0395354412

Writing for Many Roles. Mimi Schwartz, Mary Ann Waters (Contributor), Donald M. Murray (Contributor) (December 1985) Boynton/Cook Pub; ISBN: 0867090979

Expecting the Unexpected: Teaching Myself and Others to Read and Write. (December 1989)

Boynton/Cook Pub; ISBN: 0867092432

The Literature of Tomorrow: An Anthology of Student Fiction, Poetry, and Drama. (January 1990) HBJ School; ISBN: 0030329035

Shoptalk: Learning to Write With Writers. (June 1991) Boynton/Cook Pub; ISBN: 0867092580

Read to Write: A Writing Process Reader. 3rd edition. (January 1993) Dryden Pr; ISBN: 0155001906

Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, Poem: In Essay, Story, Poem. (April 1996) Boynton/Cook Pub; ISBN: 0867094036

The Craft of Revision. 3rd edition. (August 1997) Harcourt Brace; ISBN: 0155054465

Write to Learn. 6th edition. (June 1998) HBJ College & School Div; ISBN: 0155054481

Writing for Your Readers: Notes on the Writer's Craft from the Boston Globe. (1992) ASIN: 1564400514

Learning by Teaching: Selected Articles on Writing and Teaching. (November 1990) Boynton/Cook Publishers; ISBN: 0867090251

Writing to Deadline: The Journalist at Work. (2000) Heinemann; ISBN: 0-325-00225-8

IX. APPENDIX D

NWP Authors & Issues Online Item titles plus number of responses

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X. APPENDIX E

Murray's Annotated Bibliography of Recent Readings on Writing As Listed in the Conference

Bayles, D. & Orland, T. (1993). *Art & fear - Observations on the perils (and rewards of artmaking)*. Santa Barbara, CA: Capra Press.

I have just discovered this small paperback, read and re-read it, given more than a dozen copies away, would require it for any writing workshop or course I would teach. It is a wise, inspiring, practical book about art that applies to writing.

Lamott, A. (1994). *Bird by bird - Some instructions of writing and life*. New York: Pantheon Books.

A new classic I read with delight. It should be on every writing instructor's bookshelf.

Berg, E. (1999). *Escaping into the open - The art of writing true*. New York: Harper Collins.

A fine new book by a fine writer who tells the story of her professional development in an unsentimental, practical way. I read and learned.

Plimpton, G. (ed.) (1999). *The writer's chapbook*. New York: Modern Library.

Edited from *The Paris Review* interviews and with an introduction by George Plimpton

I think all *The Paris Review* Interviews should be the starting point for the professional library of every writer and writing instructor. This collection is a fine introduction to the enormous resource *The Paris Review* interviews have given the world of letters.

Perry, S.J. (1999). *Writing in flow - Keys to enhanced creativity*. New York: Writer's Digest Books.

A fascinating book based on the important ideas about the creative process developed over the years by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who, I think, is the most important scholar of creativity working today. Perry's book is packed with an abundance of specific information about writing by the many publishing writers she interviewed while doing her dissertation.

Bolker, J. (1998). *Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day: A guide to starting, revising, and finishing your doctoral thesis*. New York: Owl Books.

Joan Bolker is a friend of mine so I am prejudiced in favor of her very wise book but both are filled with helpful, practical advice for those who enter the Swamp of Dissertation.

Zerubavel, E. (1999). *The clockwork muse – A practical guide to writing theses, dissertations and books*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

XI. APPENDIX F

Don Murray Handout from NWP Authors & Issues On-line 1999

ONE WRITER'S CRAFT

Donald M. Murray

nulla dies sine linea

Writing produces writing.

Horace said, "nulla dies sine linea" - never a day without a line. I try to exercise the writing muscles everyday. I do not delay writing until I have cleared a writing morning without

interruptions. There are no writing mornings without interruptions internally and externally. Flannery O'Connor said: "Every morning between 9 and 12 I go to my room and sit before a piece of paper. Many times I just sit for three hours with no ideas coming to me. But I know one thing: If an idea does come between 9 and 12, I am there ready for it."

Seek the Line

If I don't know what to write about, I list in my mind, on paper, and on the computer screen, what I'm thinking about when I'm not thinking, what I see out of the corner of my eye, what feelings, ideas, phrases and images I keep turning over in the compost of my mind. I read the list to see what surprises me, what contradicts, what flows against intent, what confuses me, what I don't understand and need to understand. I lie in wait for a line - a fragment of language that contains a tension that demands exploration.

Write to Think

I remind myself that writing is thinking. I don't need or want to know what I am going to say before I say it. Writing will tell me what to say and how to say it. I have to get out of the way of the writing as it seeks to discover its own meaning.

Lower My Standards

One of my most important writing lessons came from the poet Bill Stafford: "I believe that the so-called 'writing block' is a product of some kind of disproportion between your standards and your performance.... one should lower his standards until there is no felt threshold to go over in writing. It's easy to write. You just shouldn't have standards that inhibit you from writing...I can imagine a person beginning to feel he's not able to write up to that standard he imagines the world has set for him. But to me that's surrealistic. The only standard I can rationally have is the standard I'm meeting right now...You should be more willing to forgive yourself. It doesn't make any difference if you are good or bad today. The assessment of the product is something that happens after you've done it."

Break down writing projects into achievable daily writing tasks.

A page a day is a book a year. Twenty minutes a morning is more productive than three hours Sunday night. Janwillem van der Wetering said: "To write you have to set up a routine, to promise yourself that you will write. Just state in a loud voice that you will write so many pages a day, or write for so many hours a day. Keep the number of pages or hours within reason, and don't be upset if a day slips by. Start again; pick up the routine. Don't look for results. Just write, easily, quietly."

I cannot write a book but I can write a page. My writing is done in fragments of time, with short bursts of energy. Richard Rhodes said: "If writing a book is impossible, write a chapter. If writing a chapter is impossible, write a page. If writing a page is impossible, write a paragraph. If writing a paragraph is impossible, write a sentence. If writing a sentence is impossible, write a word and teach yourself everything there is to know about that word and then write another, connected word and see where the connection leads."

Know tomorrow's task today.

When I leave my writing desk before noon, I know the next morning's writing task. I don't know what I will say or how I will say it. I try to write without expectation or, at least, against expectation. I write to surprise myself, but I know the chapter I am going to begin, the section, the scene, what may be the opening line, the problem but not the solution, the starting point but not the direction, the voice if not the melody. Most writing is done away from the desk, in the writer's unconscious or subconscious, while the writer is doing errands, eating, sleeping unaware of the crew at work in the engine room.

Write with information not language.

I write with specific information, knowing that the more particular, the more universal I will become. We write with details, seeing our subject, then finding the words to make the reader see and feel. It is revealing details that make the writing lively and vigorous. Readers respond to concrete details that remind them of specific details from their own

world and allows them to turn the writer's draft into the reader's. To write brief, tight copy, select what must be developed and then pack it with specific, accurate, revealing details.

Write Out Loud.

Voice is the most important element in catching the reader's attention, keeping the reader interested, and earning the reader's trust. Try an experiment: turn the monitor off and write out loud, hearing what you are saying before you see it.

The music of the writing will tell you what you think and how you feel about the evolving subject. Tune the draft to the music of the evolving meaning and to the writer's ear.

Write Fast.

Write as fast you can to outrun the censor and to force the instructive failures from which effective writing grows. I hope to write ahead of what I know. I start empty and allow the writing to fill the blank page. It is writing - at high velocity - that brings the writer insight, connects what has not been connected before, produces the unexpected word or phrase that clarifies.

Write Within the Draft.

Once started, work within the draft. The phrase lies within the word, the sentence within the phrase, the paragraph within the sentence. Each small unit of writing predicts the next fragment of writing. It contains a question that must be answered, a statement that must be documented, language that must be defined, confusion that demands clarification, situations that must be placed in context. The writing grows from within itself - the spider weaving its web.

Welcome Surprise.

Graham Greene asked, "Isn't disloyalty as much the writer's virtue as loyalty is the soldier's?" The writer should welcome surprise, contradiction, challenge, reversal, irony, doubt, saying what is the opposite of what the writer has said before. E. L. Doctorow, "Writers are not just people who sit down and write. Every time you compose a book your composition of yourself is at risk. You put yourself further away from whatever is comfortable to you or you feel at home with. Writing is a lifetime act of self displacement." And Don DeLillo adds, "I think after a while a writer can begin to know himself through his language. He sees someone or something reflected back at him from these constructions. Over the years it's possible for a writer to shape himself as a human being through the language he uses. I think written language, fiction, goes that deep. He not only sees himself but begins to make himself or remake himself. I think after a while a writer can begin to know himself through his language." Sandra Cisneros sums it up, "Write about what makes you different."

Say One Thing.

I try to say one dominant thing in a piece of writing. Everything should contribute to the development of the draft. Kurt Vonnegut Jr. Said of writing fiction, "Don't put anything in a story that does not reveal character or advance the action." The same thing is true of non-fiction. To find the one thing - or to combine diversity into a tension that holds - I may write 100 or 150 titles; draft 25, 50, 100 ledes - the first few lines - in my head and on the page until I hear the voice of the text, discover the focus and the distance, the genre and the form, what must be left out, what must be left in.

Revise What Works.

The most effective revision does not come from correcting error but just the opposite, by discovering what works, what is the strength of the draft, and developing it. A good piece of writing grows from its successes. Once the best and strongest elements in a draft are developed most of the weaknesses will disappear.

Write in Layers.

I often write over what I have written, morning after morning, the way an artist develops an oil painting. Each day I think it is finished and then, as I read it once more, I begin to find new things in the writing, bringing a new complexity - and interest - to what was once simple, obvious, and dull. Donald Barthelme said, "Art is not difficult because it wishes to be difficult, rather because it wishes to be art. However much the writer might long to be in his work, simple, honest, straightforward, these virtues are no longer available to him. He discovers that in being simple, honest, straightforward, nothing much happens: he speaks the unspeakable, whereas we are looking for the as-yet-unspeakable, the as-yet-unspoken." And once the writer has found it he has - again - to make it as simple as the complexity will allow.

Answer the Reader's Questions.

An effective piece of writing is a dialogue with a reader. The experienced writer will hear the reader's questions. These include the questions that the writer hopes will not be asked. They must be answered at the moment they are asked. An effective way of organizing research, outlining a draft, or re-ordering a draft, is to anticipate the five - four or six -questions readers will ask and the order in which they will ask them.

XII. APPENDIX G

Quotes From Our Office Walls

From Donald Murray

The secret of life is to have a task, something you devote your whole life to, something you bring everything to, every minute of the day for your whole life. And the most important thing is - it must be something you cannot possibly do!

- Henry Moore

FAIL.

FAIL AGAIN.

FAIL BETTER.

- Samuel Beckett

I have missed over 5000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot—and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life... And that is why I succeed.

- Michael Jordan

Nulla dies sine linea

Never a Day Without a Line

- Horace 65-8 BC

Every morning between 9 and 12 I go to my room and sit before a piece of paper. Many times I just sit for three hours with no ideas coming to me. But I know one thing: If an idea does come between 9 and 12, I am there ready for it.

- Flannery O'Connor

If I don't sit down practically immediately after breakfast, I won't sit down all day.

- Graham Greene

To be a writer into sit down at ones desk in the chill portion of every day, and to write.

- John Hersey

Two simple rules: A) You don't have to write. B) You can't do anything else.

- Raymond Chandler

The writing generates the writing.

- E.L Doctorow

There is no one right way. Each of us finds a way that works for him. But there is a wrong way. The wrong way is to finish your writing day with no more words on paper than when you began. Writers write.

- Robert B. Parker

A day in which I do not write leaves a taste of ashes.

- Simone de Beauvoir

If you keep working, inspiration comes.

- Alexander Calder

To write you have to setup a routine, to promise yourself that you will write. Just state in a loud voice that you will write so many pages a day, or write for so many hours a day. Keep the number of pages or hours within reason, and don't be upset if a day slips by. Start again. Pick up the routine. Don't look for results. Just write, easily, quietly.

- Janwillem van de Wetering

Perfect is the enemy of good-

- John Jerorne

If you want to take a year off to write a book. you have to take that year, or the year will take you by the hair and pull you toward the grave ... you can take your choice. You can keep a tidy house,

and when St. Peter asks you what you did with your life, you can say, I kept a tidy house, I made my own cheese balls.

- Annie Dillard

The art of the novel is getting the whole thing written.

- Leonard Gardner

I believe that the so-called “writing block” is a product of some kind of disproportion between your standards and your performance ... one should lower his standards until there is no felt threshold to go over in writing. It’s easy to write. You just shouldn’t have standards that inhibit you from writing ... I can imagine a person beginning to feel he’s not able to write up to that standard he imagines the world has set for him. But to me that’s surrealistic. The only standard I can rationally have is the standard I’m meeting right now ... You should be more willing to forgive yourself. It doesn’t make any difference if you are good or bad today. The assessment of the product is something that happens after you’ve done it.

- William Stafford

Living’s hard. It’s writing that’s easy.

- E. Annie Proulx

If one wants to write, one simply has to organize one’s life in a mass of little habits ... at the beginning of a book, I’d set myself 500 words a day.

- Graham Greene

From Joan Taylor

The world is divided into the minority who produce and majority who call meetings.

- Donald Murray

From Karen McComas

When you come to the edge of all you know, you must believe one of two things: There will be earth to stand on or you will be given wings to fly.

- Looking for source

From Lorie Schaefer

“It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both.”

- E.B. White

“Some days you must learn a great deal. But you should also have days when you allow what is already in you to swell up and touch everything. If you never let that happen, then you just accumulate facts, and they begin to rattle around inside of you.”

- L. Konigsburg

“The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler,” 1967.

“Each of us is gifted.

Some of us just open our packages earlier.”

- “The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler,” 1967

From Peter Riegelman

“There are moments in our lives, there are moments in a day, when we seem to see beyond the usual. Such are the moments of our greatest happiness. Such are the moments of our greatest wisdom. If one could but recall his vision by some sort of sign. It was in this hope that the arts were invented. Signposts on the way to what may be. Sign posts toward greater knowledge.”

- Robert Henri, American painter & teacher, from “The Art Spirit”, c. 1923

“We are not here to do what has already been done.”

- Robert Henri

From Shirley Brown

Power is the ability to take one’s place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one’s part matter.

- Carolyn G. Heilbrun

Not everything that can be counted, counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.

- Albert Einstein (?)

Remember: the past won’t fit into memory without something left over; it must have a future.

- Joseph Brodsky

From David LeNoir

Oh, it’s limping crude hard work for many, with language in their way. But I have heard farmers tell about their very first wheat crop on their first farm after moving from another state, and if it wasn’t Robert Frost talking, it was his cousin, five times removed. I have heard locomotive engineers talk about America in the tones of Tom Wolfe who rode our country with his style as they ride it in their steel. I have heard mothers tell of the long night with their firstborn when they were afraid that they and the baby might die. And I have heard my grandmother speak of her first ball when she was seventeen. And they were all, when their souls grew warm, poets.

- Ray Bradbury

From Brian Wright

“Challenge the influential master.”

- Cezanne

“I develop my method of working without claiming that there are no others, but mine developed naturally, progressively.”

- Matisse

XIII. APPENDIX H

A. Evaluation of NWP Authors & Issues Online 1999

What impact did participating in the online event with Don Murray have on your desire to write? Did you engage in any writing that you might not have otherwise?

How did you view this online event in terms of its value as a learning experience? How might this type of learning experience be used at NWP site level?

What prior learning experiences have you participated in using online technology?

Did the conversations with Donald Murray encourage you to reflect on classroom practices in literacy? If so, what changes did you make or are you considering making?

Did your attitude toward using computer technology for collaboration change in any way? If so, in what way(s)?

What changes would you like to see in future Authors & Issues Conferences?

B. Access information

What time(s) were the most convenient for you to access the conference?

What previous experience did you have in using computer technology for accessing information or for providing a learning environment?

How long have you been using a computer?

1 year or less

2-5 years

5-10 years

more than 10 years

What online technologies do you use: (i.e. e-mail, Netscape, chat rooms, etc.)

What online technologies would you like to learn more about?

In terms of familiarity with online technologies, how would you rank yourself:

(5 to 1)

5 = very familiar and can usually play around a while and figure things out

1 = nervously worry about breaking something while randomly beating on wrong keys

C. Demographics data

Years and areas of teaching experience

Initial NWP Invitational Institute year

NWP activities you have participated in at local site and state/regional/national level

XIV. APPENDIX I

How did you view this online event in terms of its value as a learning experience? How might this type of learning experience be used at NWP site level?

I see conferences like this one pulling together members of local writing projects with the national membership. Sites will be less isolated, and be able to participate in identical learning situations. More common experiences, and joint ventures, will most definitely lead to a more heightened identity for all sites. (Audrey Friedman, Rhode Island WP)

Very valuable. (Betty Pittman, NW Arkansas WP)

Murray is so good at sharing his writing process that it doesn't really matter whether this is new learning. Some of it was, but much was just remembering to think about some things I already knew. I have lots of pieces I can use at the various summer institutes, but wish we could find a way for people to go through the process during the summer. Maybe not all of it, but some of the most significant pieces. (Faye Gage, Connecticut WP)

I thought it was interesting to read about the questions about writing that participants raised with Don Murray, although I thought at times that his stature prevented people from asking questions about teaching writing.

As a learning experience, it was a good event. I intend to use the archive in next year's summer institute for its content and to demonstrate the possibilities of on-line learning. One particular aspect that I think really well was its asynchronous nature. I never could have participated if I had to be at my computer at a designated time. I also think that you and Gary were important as support people. (Shirley Brown, Philadelphia WP)

Wonderful experience. The content was, of course, of great interest, but I also enjoyed exploring the format. For site level use, perhaps the NWP could arrange a once-a-week posting to run throughout the summer. Perhaps one person per site could pose a short list of questions/responses from the site, while all participants have access to read postings. (David LeNoir, W. Kentucky WP)

Well, there was concentrated attention on writing theory to practice, and that always is going to help a site. I've been trying to think about applying this experience at our site. Once I got over my disappointment that everyone couldn't be involved [this was not for lack of your efforts, team!] I started thinking about:

- inviting some local hero to be the focus person
- somehow getting permission to look together at Don's ideas, and continuing a conversation about
- writing every day
- counting words
- looking through personal writing toward issues and global ideas that emerge
- difficulty of spreading the good news

(Patricia McGonegal, WP at Vermont)

I always get good ideas from Donald Murray and from general conversations regarding writing. This conference re-engaged some memory paths on writing, and I always need inspiration to re-engage memory paths since all of my memory paths are less than adequate.

How might this type of learning experience be used at NWP site level? Not sure. Not many of my fellows have regular Internet access. (They live out in the woods, you see.) Maybe in the future.... (Pat Stall, Four Corners WP in New Mexico)

Could be used at the site level, but it might be difficult to administer without our Joan and Gary. If the design could be passed on as a turnkey operation, it may be able to work. (Bob Sizoo, Redwood WP CA)

It was great for me. I don't have much time and the few times I was able to access the conversation were wonderful. I could get caught up easily. (Donna Camp, Central Florida WP)

I thought it was a great experience. (Tasha Russell, Philadelphia WP)

I like the idea of having ongoing professional discussions of the virtual kind available but whether or not I will actually engage in it, I cannot say. Perhaps it takes some practice and getting used to. (Marcia Venegas-Garcia, San Diego WP)

I really enjoyed the views of people around the country. The technology made it possible for all members of the writing project to communicate and have the experience and wisdom of a respected professional guide the event. (Idris Trotman, Connecticut WP)

I thought it was very informative. I enjoyed the sessions and I did view it as a learning experience. NWP works very well. I don't know how responding to a computer presentation as opposed to a personal response would work. (Sheryl Alford, W Tennessee WP)

It's a wonderful idea. Gosh, we could have our own little conference with a writer just with our site participants. I might have managed to find time somehow if the participants were my summer fellows. I miss them. (Ann Mershon, U of Minnesota WP)

This was a terrific learning experience! I saw not only what Murray thinks about writing (his own, his students', ours) but what others thought as well. I could see this working as a site-specific activity if each site held "pre-online event" meetings or booktalk groups about Murray's work, and then were more prepared for posting questions in advance. If an author were interested in a synchronous event, I could see a site becoming very involved in meeting in one place to connect and interact with the author. More than a few people at each site would get hectic, so something like this may work better as a single-site event. (Claudine Keenan, Lehigh Valley WP, PA)

Extremely valuable, the only drawback for me was that it is very difficult to find the time during a semester to engage with an experience as rich as this one was at the level I'd really like to. I don't really know a solution, but less each week for a few more weeks?

Because I believe in the notion that writing is another form of thinking and that to do either well we have to begin with the act of composing and then we have to move into reflection and revision, the conversations were valuable to me as a teacher even though I do not teach language arts, composition or creative writing. As a matter of fact, I used the concept of layering in one of my classes. Some students expressed concern that they may have been given inaccurate information in a previous class. While I know this may be entirely possible, given the whole situation, I certainly can't stand up in class and talk about that. Instead, I chose to address the idea that when we learn something, we learn it generally from one perspective at first and with a specific purpose in mind. When we revisit the same concept later, we are generally approaching it from a different perspective and often with different purposes for the learning so our understanding expands. Each time we revisit the concept, we layer new levels of understanding on our previous learning. This of course was a direct result of Don's talk about the "layering" he does in the process of revising his writing. (Karen McComas, Marshall U WP, WV)

The event was outstanding. It gave me new things to think about as a writer and a teacher of writing. I have already shared some of his comments about layering with my students and several of the articles with fellow teachers. I think such a conference would make a great basis for a sitewide forum on issues raised. Such a forum could be a Saturday gathering or an electronic conference.

The use of the term layering to describe certain types of revision is something I've already used successfully with my students. I am also considering some ways to use word counts as a means of encouraging students to write daily. And the piece on "context" will be extremely helpful in lessons on audience.

I now see for myself how such experiences can broaden one's understanding and extend the professional community of writers. (Theresa Marchey, N Virginia WP)

I considered this online event a very valuable learning experience; reading the comments was inspiring. I hope the NWP site can be utilized as a site for posting ideas and issues. The AP literature and composition group has a terrific email exchange where teachers post questions to the list and interested participants respond.

Murray's conversations provided a focal point for my discussions with students about writing. I told my classes about the project and read excerpts of Donald Murray's conversations. (Meg Geffken, NE Pennsylvania WP)

It is great to be in touch with other teachers around writing. To see ourselves as writers. (Susan St. Michael, Portland WP)

Teachers want authentic engagement from their students but often come up short when getting into real pedagogical issues. We'd rather pat each other on the back than really dig in, question, reconsider, try to understand. I don't think you learn much by ritualized peer congratulation, exercises in mutual self-esteem. I would be (more) interested at this point in setting up a project using online conferencing. Is there any clearinghouse? Could you help me discover—actually you have; if I'm smart enough I can probably set up something from the registration list. Thanks. (Alan Thomas, Pennsylvania WP)

I'm always hesitant to try to evaluate a learning experience. I have trouble separating the nuts from the bolts. My desire to write increased during the online event. I feel that the event reinforced and gave me pause to review the writing process. I now count words. Mr. Murray's list of reasons to do so made sense to me. His discussion of think time for the process perked my interest. I'm reading two of the books he recommended: *Art and Fear* and Elizabeth Berg's book on writing fiction. I definitely want to make better use of layering. I plan to review the materials provided by Mr. Murray. The online event allowed me to feel more comfortable with computer technology for collaboration. I am always nervous doing something for the first time. When I know others might be watching, I tend to be less spontaneous. I loosened up a little using the computer. Does that make any sense? (Brian Wright, Green Valley Writing Project, CA)

This was the first time I had engaged in this type of online activity, and I found it very valuable. At the site level, I can definitely see small groups meeting during or after the event to talk about what struck them as important, or what might change in their teaching/writing lives as a result of the conference experience. (Mary Ellen Vigeant, Connecticut WP)

I learned a great deal! I printed everything I could print, and I will be reviewing it as I want to share pieces of it with my students. As a learning experience for myself, it helped me to see the writing process in a new light—building each day on pieces from yesterday. At NWP sites, this type conference could be used as writing starters, discussion starters, and just good research into writing. (Nancy Kampfe, Dakota WP)

I would have teachers and student teachers go online to read and respond to professional writers so that they could see that they struggle and accomplish in the same way as non-experts do. I learned that we probably could be more sensitive to the human side of our student writers. (Sally LeVan, NW Pennsylvania WP)

I like the idea of it a lot, the opportunity it offers. (Margrethe Ahlschwede, W Tennessee WP)

Reading the postings as often as I could, I felt more connected to the WP community and incredibly validated in my experiences as a writer/writing teacher. Every experience is a learning experience. This was just one delightfully unique one. I think we would have had difficulty finding a better subject to lead this discussion. (Robert Redmon, Oklahoma State WP)

Intriguing way to learn. Not as satisfying as face-to-face but more interactive (of course) than just reading one of his books. I think it might be a good way to keep in touch after ISI's or in rural sites. (Lorie Schaefer, N Nevada WP)

I mostly benefited from Donald Murray's information, which I was already familiar with, and tended not to read the responses due to time factors. I do think using this type of experience could be helpful depending on the issues presented. Again, I suspect time is the major block to taking full advantage of this. (Renee Callies, Third Coast WP in W Michigan)

I participated online in the conference and took most of the information back to my sophomore classroom for them to read and for them to use while reflecting on how they write. I had the students write (while I wrote along with them) in the same fashion as his examples. We also took our writing and expanded certain areas of the writing that seemed flat and then shared those particular passages with others in the classroom. I downloaded all the pieces that Donald put up to ponder at a later time. His examples are great for students to see too. They were great examples for the new teachers in our building to view. I think TCs could use this material as models for writing. I think his writings were inspiring and I think the new teachers might love to have them in hand. We could put a list of books that he has written, or even put these models/discussions together in a pamphlet form for participants to purchase, of course, giving Donald a BIG cut, and then base some personal writings on these. (Rosie Roppel, Alaska WP)

Any activity or event that encourages or promotes writing is valuable. Any event that creates a desire is even better. This online event was quite stimulating in that it promoted and instilled. On a NWP site level, the event would help promote more writing about the process of writing among local teachers/participants. (Diane Howard, S. Georgia WP)

More of them would be great. Although I did not reply or post many times, I looked forward to reading what others posted. (Diane Howard, S Georgia WP)

I thought it was fascinating "listening" to him describe his own writing process, etc. He's so "normal" yet so brilliant! (Sharon Moerman, Third Coast WP in W Michigan)

It was wonderful!!! Seeing an author open up and let me inside of his personal space really helped me as a writer. Just as I model for my students at school, Don modeled for me as writer.

I was interested in seeing how Don wrote and re-wrote his drafts. I began to notice my writing more. I found that I do many of the same things that he does when I write. It validated me to see him work and think aloud.

Watching the question and answers helped me to see how important it is that we allow conversation in the writing class. It is important that we model, discuss, and reflect with the students. (Alisha Daniel, Coastal Georgia WP)

My attitude did change because of the collaboration. I never thought that it would be possible. I often printed off things to ponder that others had said. I did not respond as much as I might have had I not been at work all the time, but I really did not realize what technology could do. I thought it would be impersonal, but it was not really! (Pam Hughes, SW Arizona WP)

XV. APPENDIX J: MODERATOR'S ROLE AND TASKS

Contact and negotiate with author
 Collaborate with author to plan conference agenda
 Tutor and coach author about on-line environment
 Post invitations to listservs
 Draft publicity for newsletter
 Send reminder publicity to listservs
 Respond to subscribers; create user names and password
 Log on as subscriber so they will be able to go directly to conference
 Help subscribers navigate the conference space and introduce themselves
 Add subscribers to conference list
 Regularly update which participants have joined the forum
 Schedule and set up conference space. Work with host university
 Draft and post introductory conference item messages
 Motivate and guide discussions
 Provide technical support. Answer questions on how to use conference space
 Removing irrelevant or offensive material if necessary
 Design evaluation tools for conference
 Administer evaluation component and analyze data
 Archive data gathered
 File report

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XVII. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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