

English Academic Technology Bulletin 24 (December 27, 2006)

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Welcome to the **English Academic Technology Bulletin**. This monthly publication of the English list communicates basic information regarding the use of technology in the preparation and imparting of instruction. The English list is a closed, moderated list restricted to the staff of the English Department of the College of Humanities of the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus and other authorized users. If you are interested in subscribing to the English list or contributing content to the bulletin, please notify Alicia Pousada (apousada@earthlink.net), the list moderator. To post to the list, just Reply to this message. Remember that what you post will go to every subscriber.

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Announcements

Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants

The NEH's Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants are intended to provide scholars with funds and concrete assistance to follow through on innovative new ways of studying the humanities. NEH staff works with applicants in the pre-application stages to help them prepare their submissions and get them into the right categories. The NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants are available for the

planning of digital humanities initiatives in research, publication, preservation, access, teacher training, and formal or informal educational dissemination. Application guidelines can be downloaded at:

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/digitalhumanitiesstartup.html>

General information about the NEH's Digital Humanities Initiative is available at:

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/digitalhumanities.html>

Newbies Corner

Home remedy for scratched disks

If you have a CD or DVD with scratches, you may be able to salvage it without paying for a special cleaner. If you have a bottle of Brasso (the metal polish) at home, just put a small amount on a paper towel and rub it gently in straight, short strokes from the center of the disk to the outside, going around the entire disk as needed. Finish with a clean towel, following the same radiating motion. Do not rub in circles or attempt to follow the line of the tracks, or you will scratch it further.

Getting tech help without embarrassment

Getting help on online forums can be tricky. If you ask very basic questions, you run the risk of being mocked by more tech savvy users. There are, however, smart ways to phrase questions and more newbie-friendly sites for posing such questions. Tara Calishain's 2005 book *Web Search Garage* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Professional Technical Reference) recommends the following sites for basic computer advice:

Computer Hope - www.computerhope.com . This site contains hardware and software troubleshooting strategies, especially for older machines. It also offers forums and a chat room, as well as a dictionary and some basic Web help.

Tech Tutorials - www.techtutorials.net . Tech Tutorials provides several pointers, on programming, networking, and all kinds of different operating systems.

FindTutorials at <http://www.findtutorials.com> offers both free and for fee tutorials.

If you need to learn about computer security, try the following sites:

SecureMac (<http://www.securemac.com>) for Mac computers

Microsoft Windows Update (<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>) for Windows computers

Open Source Vulnerability Database (<http://www.osvdb.org>) for Linux and other open source operating systems.

What are ActiveX controls?

You may have seen this term and wondered about it. ActiveX refers to a set of technologies developed by Microsoft in 1997 for sharing information among different applications. ActiveX Controls are downloadable software components that extend the operation of Internet Explorer through user-interface elements like pop-up or drop-down menus, text boxes, command buttons, audio players, video players, animations, dynamically changing content (like weather reports, stock tickers, or program updates), and other special effects that make for an entertaining and user-friendly Internet experience. Perhaps the most recognizable ActiveX control for academics is the Adobe Acrobat plug-in that provides .pdf formatted files for download.

ActiveX controls can be used with Internet Explorer natively and with Netscape Navigator, Mozilla, and Firefox through plug-ins. AOL automatically blocks ActiveX controls unless you configure your Internet Safety zones to include specific sites and controls.

ActiveX controls are similar to Java applets. Unlike Java applets, however, ActiveX controls have full access to the Windows operating system. This makes them more powerful and thus more potentially dangerous. While most active web page content is harmless, some web pages may contain active content that can allow unscrupulous individuals to damage or manipulate your computer. Internet Explorer and most other browsers allow you to set safety levels for active content to help prevent such problems.

When a web page attempts to download an ActiveX control, Internet Explorer throws up a Security Warning dialog box on your screen with a signed certificate displaying the control's publisher. If you are on a trusted web site (e.g., Windows Update), and the ActiveX Control is from a trusted publisher (e.g., Microsoft), you can click Yes in the dialog box to accept the certificate and allow the control to be installed. Similarly, if you don't trust the web site or the publisher, you should click No and avoid potential problems.

[Sources: <http://www.netdictionary.com/a.html>,
<http://www.100best-web-hosting.com/glossary8.html>,
<http://www.adobe.com/support/techdocs/315029.html>,
http://v4.windowsupdate.microsoft.com/en/dialog_learnabout.asp?topic=0&noscripting=true]

Using technology in the classroom

Controlling Internet plagiarism

Plagiarism from Internet sources is on the upswing as students increasingly find it easier to copy from websites than to write original papers. Fortunately, there are ways to combat and control such plagiarism. For some excellent tips, go to: "Keeping it real" from *Teacher Magazine*, May 1, 2005, available online at: <http://tm.edweek.org/tm/articles/2005/05/01/06real.h16.html> .

Computerized essay grading software

One of the most exhausting parts of teaching English is grading essays. There are now some very effective computer programs that, if used in conjunction with teacher grading, can remarkably alleviate teacher grading burdens. For more information on this, see "Scantronning Shakespeare" in *Teacher Magazine*, Sept. 1, 2006 at: <http://tm.edweek.org/tm/articles/2006/09/01/01classtech.h18.html> .

World View radio program on language

Worldview on Chicago Public Radio aired a series examining global language change:

<http://www.chicagopublicradio.org/programs/worldview/worldview.asp>

The following segments are available for download, and can be played in the classroom to supplement your lectures or readings.

Language Empires

Dr. Nick Ostler—Chairman, Foundation for Endangered Languages

Global English

Dr. David Crystal—Honorary Professor of Linguistics, University of Wales, Bangor; Author, *English as a Global Language*, *Language Death* and others.

South African English: Oppressor or Liberator?

Dr. Vivian de Klerk—Professor of Languages and Linguistics, Rhodes University; Author, *Corpus Linguistics and World Englishes: An Analysis of Xhosa English*

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Spanish corpus

If you or your students need to check on the frequency with which a particular word is used in the Spanish of a specific historical period, ranging from the 1200's to the present time, go to the Spanish Corpus at: <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org>. This 100 million word corpus of Spanish texts was created by Prof. Mark Davies of Brigham Young University and funded by the NEH. The rapid search engine allows a wider range of searches than almost any other large corpus in existence. You can search for words separately or in collocations.

On-line encyclopedia

If you need to check on some facts but don't want to run to the library, you can consult 52,000 articles from the *Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition* at: <http://www.questia.com/library/encyclopedia>.

The Cortland Review

The Cortland Review began in 1997. It publishes poetry, short fiction, essays, interviews, and book reviews. The poets and writers included in the *Review* constitute a mixture of both established and new writers from the print and online worlds. The journal is available absolutely free on the website, and you are able to read and also hear the featured poets and writers via Real audio clips. Go to: www.cortlandreview.com

Ebooknet.com

This is a portal to everything involved with eBooks. From this site, you can find out how to create and publish an eBook, where to download eBook Software, where to download eBooks.

www.ebooknet.com

Criterion

Educational Testing Services covers Criterion, its new online writing evaluation service, in its latest issue of *Innovations*. Criterion uses automated scoring technologies to evaluate students' essays online. Students submit their essays to Criterion via an Internet connection, and the Criterion e-rater scoring engine

provides students with a holistic score and annotated feedback regarding the grammar, usage, mechanics, style and organization and development as well as 36 more specific structural categories. Students can also use any of six online writer's handbooks, including a bilingual Spanish/English guide, to obtain writing advice and examples of good writing.

Criterion does not evaluate content (that is still up to the professor), but it can considerably reduce the mechanical sorts of corrections that occupy so much of a professor's time.

For more information, go to:

http://www.ets.org/Media/News_and_Media/pdf/innovations_fall2006.pdf and scroll to the article titled "Learning to Write, Writing to Learn" on pp. 6-7.

Windows tips

Document scraps

If you're working on a committee report in Word, and you get a sudden brainstorm, don't bother opening a new document to save the thought. Instead, create a document scrap in the following way:

1. Type the idea right into the document you're already working on, and select the text you want to save in a scrap document.
2. Drag and drop the selected text onto the desktop. This automatically creates a scrap document which is marked by an icon on your desktop.
3. You should then delete the text in your report.
4. When you get a chance later on, you can open up the scrap file on your desktop and develop it further if merited. Then save it in Word for the future.

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Getting all drive statistics simultaneously

Checking the properties for each of several drives one by one is a drag. A better solution is to:

1. Simply select all the drives in your My Computer folder.
2. Right click on the selection and then select properties. Now you can see the properties for all the selected drives in tabbed format. Checking each one is a snap.

Opening URLs without opening your browser

1. Select Start → Run
 2. Type your URL (e.g., <http://www.amazon.com>) and press ENTER. Your browser will automatically open and go to the URL you typed in.
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Mac Nuggets

Taking screenshots

Sometimes you want to be able to show your students or colleagues exactly what appears on your computer screen. Mac OS X gives you a few options for taking screenshots. If you press the Command-Shift-3 keys, you can take a picture of whatever is currently on your screen. If you press Command-Shift-4 instead , you get a small cross-hair pointer that you can drag over the part of the screen you want to capture. In both cases, these commands save the screenshot to your hard drive.

If you want to save a screenshot to your clipboard, so you can paste it directly into a document or e-mail message, press Command-Control-Shift-3 to save the full-screen view, or Command-Control-Shift-4 to capture your desired section to the computer's clipboard.

Snap Backup

Snap Backup allows you to backup and archive your Mac data frequently. You decide where to put your data files and where to create the backup files. You can also specify an archive location, such as a USB flash drive, for storing backup files. Snap Backup automatically puts the current date in the backup file name, a handy feature. Backup files are compressed into a single file that can be read by zip programs such as StuffIt®, gzip, and WinZip®. To get this free Mac program, go to:

http://freeware.filehungry.com/english/product/macintosh_software/utilities/snap_backup

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Useful sites and downloads

Columbia Educational Resources Online

Columbia Educational Resources Online (CERO) is a collection of e-seminars in a variety of subjects ranging from the arts, to teaching, business, science, and finance. They are intended for high-school students, undergraduates, and their teachers. Teachers and students can sign up for a 60-day free trial of CERO.

E-seminars are 3-5 hour long online classes that include video instruction by an expert in the field, along with primary texts, interactive maps and timelines, simulations, and animations. Students benefit by being able to hear and see subject matter represented audiovisually.

Two e-seminars of particular interest to English majors and professors are:

1) The Shakespearean Sonnet and the Modern Voice given by Kristin Linklater

This e-seminar draws on Professor Linklater's experience as a student, teacher, actor and director and details her innovative approach to "speaking" Shakespeare.

2) The Future of English given by David Crystal

Leading language expert David Crystal explores the global spread of English and the key issues determining its future. Prof. Crystal links the global dominance of English to the expansion of British and American economic and political power, and probes in-depth issues such as the threat of globalized English and the recent emergence of "new Englishes."

To sign up and/or learn more, go to: <http://cero.columbia.edu>

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CD-ROM editions of rare books

Octavo Digital Imaging is a company in Oakland, California that specializes in digitalizing rare books. The company website allows you to browse through their collection by author, subject, and source. There are many titles that would be of interest to an English professor, such as the works of Shakespeare, Johnson's Dictionary, the Wyclif Bible, the works of Chaucer and Blake, etc. The advantage of having a CD-ROM edition is that it is searchable, the pages can be magnified, and there are supplementary essays and commentaries included. Prices are quite reasonable, and many of the products are also available for sale at

Amazon.com at bargain rates (e.g. Johnson's Dictionary is \$50 at Octavo and \$35 at Amazon).

To view the available products, go to: <http://www.octavo.com>

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Portals to the "invisible Web"

The "invisible Web" consists of sources that do not show up in Google or other searches because they are dynamically created via user queries. These are Medical databases (e.g. Medline), discussion lists, phone numbers, e-mails, government data bases (e.g. UK Parliament Pages), scientific databases (e.g. ResearchIndex), Auction databases (e.g. eBay), dictionaries, thesauri, magazine articles, etc.

To penetrate the "invisible Web," try some of the following portals:

<http://www.beaucoup.com>

This site provides an annotated listing of over 2,500 search sites—including directories, indices and search engines. These sites can be browsed by subject, and users can also utilize Beaucoup Super Search which is a meta-search tool powered by Mamma.com.

<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbacc.html>

The International Database (IDB) is a computerized data bank of statistical tables of demographic and socio-economic data for 227 countries and areas of the world.

<http://www.magportal.com>

Magportal is a tool for finding magazine (not journal) articles on the web.

[Source: Pedley, Paul. (2001). *The Invisible Web: Searching the Hidden Parts of the Internet*. London: ASLIB-IMI.]

The greatest films

Milestones in Classic Hollywood/American Films can be found at mirror URLs: www.filmsite.org and www.greatestfilms.org . The site was created in 1996. It consists of thousands of pages and has won awards for its interpretive and

detailed plot synopses, review commentary, film reference material, and historical background for hundreds of classic Hollywood/American and other English-language films.

Converting sound files

If you work with sound files from interviews, oral histories, or performances, you may want to check out a shareware program that directly converts audio from MP3 format to .wav format, and also from .wav back to MP3. The conversions are made digitally, not through the sound card, so copies are identical to their originals. Files can be sent directly to your CD burner or audio-editing program. The program is shareware; if you like it, you are encouraged to donate \$18.

For download, go to:

http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file/fid,22729-order,1-page,1/description.html?tk=nl_hsxdown

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Password Hash

Password Hash is a browser add-on for Firefox 1.5 and 2.0 and for Internet Explorer 6 (it doesn't yet work for Internet Explorer 7). It lets you use the same password for every site, but converts it into a strong and unique password before submitting it to the site. To use it, you hit F2 or type @@ in a password field on a webpage. Then you input your usual password, and when you hit Enter, Password Hash combines the password with the domain name (such as google.com or pcworld.com) of the site you're logging onto, and runs them through a formula (called a hash) to create a unique, strong password. If you install Password Hash onto a different browser on a different computer, it still creates the same password at any given site.

To download Password Hash, go to: <https://www.pwdhash.com>

[Source: Erik Larkin, PC World, Wednesday, December 13, 2006]

Cyberhumor

12 Step Recovery Program For Web Addicts

1. I will have a cup of coffee in the morning and read my PAPER newspaper like I used to, before the Web.
2. I will eat breakfast with a knife and fork and not with one hand typing.

3. I will get dressed before noon.
4. I will make an attempt to clean the house, wash clothes, and plan dinner before even thinking of the Web.
5. I will sit down and write a letter to those unfortunate few friends and family that are Web-deprived.
6. I will call someone on the phone who I cannot contact via the Web.
7. I will read a book... if I still remember how.
8. I will listen to those around me about their needs and stop telling them to turn the TV down so I can hear the music on the Web.
9. I will not be tempted during TV commercials to check for email.
10. I will try and get out of the house at least once a week, if it is necessary or not.
11. I will remember that my bank is not forgiving if I forget to balance my checkbook because I was too busy on the Web.
12. Last, but not least, I will remember that I must go to bed sometime... and the Web will always be there tomorrow!

[Source: <http://www.computerjokes.net/160.htm>]

More Murphy's Laws of Computing

1. When computing, whatever happens, behave as though you meant it to happen.
2. When you get to the point where you really understand your computer, it's probably obsolete.
3. The first place to look for information is in the section of the manual where you least expect to find it.
4. When the going gets tough, upgrade.
5. For every action, there is an equal and opposite malfunction (Created by Nate Askins)
6. To err is human . . . to blame your computer for your mistakes is even more human, it is downright natural.
7. He who laughs last probably made a back-up.
8. If at first you do not succeed, blame your computer.
9. A complex system that does not work is invariably found to have evolved from a simpler system that worked perfectly.

10. The number one cause of computer problems is computer solutions.

11. A computer program will always do what you tell it to do, but rarely what you want to do.

[Source: <http://www.computerjokes.net/139.htm>]

Computer history of the world

In the beginning, God created the Bit and the Byte. And from those he created the Word.

And there were two Bytes in the Word; and nothing else existed. And God separated the One from the Zero; and he saw it was good.

And God said - Let the Data be; And so it happened. And God said - Let the Data go to their proper places. And he created floppy disks and hard disks and compact disks.

And God said - Let the computers be, so there would be a place to put floppy disks and hard disks and compact disks. Thus God created computers and called them hardware.

And there was no Software yet. But God created programs; small and big... And told them - Go and multiply yourselves and fill all the Memory.

And God said - I will create the Programmer; And the Programmer will make new programs and govern over the computers and programs and Data.

And God created the Programmer; and put him at Data Center; And God showed the Programmer the Catalog Tree and said You can use all the volumes and subvolumes but do not use Windows.

And God said - It is not good for the programmer to be alone. He took a bone from the Programmer's body and created a creature that would look up at the Programmer; and admire the Programmer; and love the things the Programmer does; And God called the creature: the User.

And the Programmer and the User were left under the naked DOS and it was Good.

But Bill was smarter than all the other creatures of God. And Bill said to the User - Did God really tell you not to run any programs?

And the User answered - God told us that we can use every program and every piece of Data but told us not to run Windows or we will die.

And Bill said to the User - How can you talk about something you did not even try. The moment you run Windows you will become equal to God. You will be able to create anything you like by a simple click of your mouse.

And the User saw that the fruits of the Windows were nicer and easier to use. And the User saw that any knowledge was useless--since Windows could replace it.

So the User installed the Windows on his computer; and said to the Programmer that it was good.

And the Programmer immediately started to look for new drivers. And God asked him--What are you looking for? And the Programmer answered--I am looking for new drivers because I can not find them in the DOS. And God said - Who told you need drivers? Did you run Windows? And the Programmer said - It was Bill who told us to!

And God said to Bill - Because of what you did, you will be hated by all the creatures. And the User will always be unhappy with you. And you will always sell Windows.

And God said to the User - Because of what you did, the Windows will disappoint you and eat up all your Resources; and you will have to use lousy programs; and you will always rely on the Programmers help.

And God said to the Programmer - Because you listened to the User, you will never be happy. All your programs will have errors and you will have to fix them and fix them to the end of time.

And God threw them out of the Data Center and locked the door and secured it with a password.

[Source: www.ahajokes.com]

If you enjoyed this issue and would like to become a subscriber, please write to Alicia Pousada at apousada@earthlink.net.

Happy holidays to all, and to all, a joyous and healthy New Year!