

EDITOR'S COLUMN

To be appointed editor of the *Journal of Basic Writing* is to become custodian of a symbol as well as a publication. When *JBW* was founded by Mina Shaughnessy and her colleagues at The City University of New York in 1975, it helped signal the emergence of basic writing as an uniquely important field within English studies. Each issue published since then has reminded us of the continued evolution of that field. I am delighted, and very honored, to assume the editorship of *JBW* and thus help sustain the extraordinary tradition started a decade ago.

With this issue, *JBW* inaugurates a number of changes. Our new cover symbolizes the start of our second decade of publication. Designed to give our readers easy reference to an issue's contents, it reflects our new policy of moving away from issues with a single theme to issues on various topics, thus giving us the flexibility of being able to publish new material quickly.

JBW is now a refereed journal. After passing through an initial screening process for general suitability, all articles (except invited essays) are reviewed by at least two members of our Editorial Board or, when needed, by external reviewers. Authors and reviewers remain anonymous, and authors receive copies of all reviews when a final decision is reached. Thus, although we cannot publish all the manuscripts sent to us, we can surely promise expert guidance for newer and experienced authors alike.

JBW has an enlarged Editorial Board. The names are listed on our masthead. This outstanding group of teachers, scholars, and researchers in basic writing and other areas of composition and rhetoric, honors *JBW* with their willingness to serve. As you read this, each person will have served one year of a three-year term, working actively as a reviewer and advisor.

Starting with our 1986 issues, a \$500 prize, the "Mina Shaughnessy Writing Award," will be given to the best essay in *JBW*

every two years (four issues), thanks to an anonymous donor. The judges will be independent of the Editorial Board. I hope that this prize will stimulate many fine contributions to our pages.

No reorganization such as *JBW* has undergone in the last year would have been possible without the energies and personalities of key figures at The City University of New York. Marie Jean Lederman, then University Dean for Academic Affairs, invited me to serve and has facilitated my work ever since with patience and vision. Marilyn Maiz, our Associate Editor, is not only our resident *JBW* historian but also our executive producer, somehow finding time in her already crowded schedule to work out myriad details while remaining always unflappable and warmly supportive. Ruth Davis, our Associate and Managing Editor, combines her extensive experience with academic journals and academics with a rare and lively ability to attend to exquisite detail that daily amazes the rest of us.

With this as background, I invite your attention to this issue. To assure that *JBW* would get off to a strong start in 1986, I invited seven outstanding people to write about their current concentration as it relates to basic writing. The result, I think, is fascinating. The authors teach at diverse colleges and did not collaborate on their plans, yet what emerges is a surprisingly cohesive collection that suggests fresh views for scholarship and research in basic writing, ideas that clearly launch basic writing into its second decade of life.

Essays by David Bartholomae and Myra Kogen open the issue with careful analyses of complete passages of student writing to challenge us to notice with fresh eyes how basic writers handle the conventions of academic written discourse. Bartholomae's intriguing insights come from his study of 500 essays on a single topic; Kogen's cogent argument leads us away from a "deficit model" of the basic writer toward reading between the lines of student writing to find strengths of discourse upon which to build.

The conventions of academic writing are next discussed from an international perspective by Alan C. Purves who draws on his landmark five-years' research in national writing styles in 15 countries. Knowing that ESL students are often part of basic writing classes, Purves offers student samples to counsel us wisely, and with sensitivity, to crucial international differences in interpretive and rhetorical communities. Diversity is also the concern of George H. Jensen who shows us compelling evidence for the learning strengths of basic writers. Using carefully gathered data based on the personality theory of Carl Jung, operationalized in the personality inventory of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator,

Jensen makes clear why no longer can we accept research on basic writers that ignores their assets and their heterogeneity.

Michael C. T. Brookes switches our focus from students to teachers, offering us a touching portrait of himself as a head academic dean at a CUNY college who volunteered to teach a class in basic writing. By narrating his experience and sharing excerpts from his journal, Brookes is refreshingly candid about himself, his perceptions of his students, and his revised perspectives as an administrator.

Essays by Marilyn Sternglass and Andrea Lunsford on assignments for basic writers complete this issue. Sternglass uses student samples to argue convincingly that when basic writers make a personal "commitment" to a writing task, they engage in more complex thinking and demonstrate less dependence on source texts. Lunsford traces the history of writing assignments, draws skillfully on a wealth of sources to review the literature on current controversies over what constitutes an effective assignment, and then offers concrete and challenging guidance by giving us a list of six characteristics that typify good assignments for basic writers.

I commend this collection to you. Much here will likely strike our readers as controversial or worthy of comment, for new territory is being explored. We invite for possible publication your responses (500–750 word limit) or letters to the editors, but most of all we invite your essays to our pages.

Lynn Quitman Troyka

Correction: Frank Parker, whose article on dyslexia appeared in our Fall 1985 issue, was incorrectly identified. He is currently Professor in the Interdepartmental Linguistics Program of Louisiana State University.