

October 23, 2002

David Boocker, Chair  
Department of English and Journalism  
Western Illinois University  
Macomb, IL 61455

Dear Dr. Boocker,

I wish to apply for the position of Assistant Professor in English with specialty in writing advertised recently in the *MLA Job Information List*. In May 2003, I will receive my Ph.D. in English from the University of Florida. My credentials in composition and rhetoric, especially strengths in computers and writing, theories and practices of composition, and networked and webbed writing, should make me an excellent candidate.

My dissertation, "Ease in Composition Studies," draws upon cultural studies and the history of composition to investigate ease, as defined by simplicity, transparency, and related qualities. I outline the history of ease, demonstrating its proliferation of meanings and growth into a powerful ideology which shapes understanding of technology and culture. Ease enforces common assertions about complexity and pragmatism and less often acknowledged, but still powerful, gendered meanings. In fact, as I demonstrate, current-traditional rhetoric, reform-minded pedagogies introduced after 1950, and computer-assisted instruction are all influenced by the ideology of ease. However, ease is not a monolithic concept: its definition includes startling ambiguities. Literary theorists, artists, and other writers have spoken out against manifestations of ease. Additionally, strong connections between ease and print literacy, established by the role of ease in writing pedagogy, raise questions about ease in computer-assisted learning. My dissertation concludes by leveraging these important critiques of ease to better understand the way composition pedagogy reproduces ideological structures of ease, often creating new problems in attempts to solve old ones. Two of six chapters of "Ease in Composition Studies" are complete, and a third well underway.

I consider my dissertation the latest part of a large project investigating ease in composition studies and culture at large. I envision at least two book-length projects building on this work: a broad historical and critical analysis of the concept of ease, and extension of my research into ease in composition, especially the area of computers and writing.

Though I am currently focusing most intellectual energy on my dissertation, other projects demonstrate the breadth of my scholarship. My CCCC 2003 panel *Theme and Technology: Seeing "A Theme for English B"* has been selected for the pilot webcast "CCCC 2003 Live." Presently, I am reviewing courseware in preparation for development of open alternatives to proprietary systems like BlackBoard and WebCT. I will soon revisit work which uses alternative software development methods to suggest improvements to common collaboration frameworks, for use in computer-assisted and "traditional" classrooms.

At the University of Florida, I have developed and taught many sections of first-year composition and media studies courses. Also, I have assisted faculty teaching the graduate seminar in theories and practices of writing, contributing to syllabus design and taking an active role in the course. Most often, I taught in the Networked Writing Environment (NWE), Florida's computer-assisted classrooms, and designed syllabi which took advantage of its unique atmosphere and web-based writing tools. I always use relevant literary theory and composition studies research to encourage students to consider their methodologies for

learning and invention, developing frameworks to render this sometimes difficult material accessible to first-year students. In April 2002, the Department of English recognized my enthusiasm and excellence in teaching with a departmental teaching award.

Besides teaching in the Department of English, I served as Information Technology Specialist for the NWE for two years. In this special graduate assistantship, funded by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (CLAS), my primary responsibility was assisting instructors teaching in the NWE. Through one-to-one tutoring, email, informal and formal workshops, and other means, I helped many graduate students and faculty with classroom applications of NWE technology. I also supported research, helping graduate students develop hypertexts or MOO installations, discussing projects, and suggesting relevant readings or resources.

During my two year assistantship, I transformed the NWE's minimal documentation into a comprehensive, searchable hypertext database which provides reference- or tutorial-style help for all applications in the NWE desktop environment, and explains related concepts in detail (<http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/writing/help>). I evaluated and adapted software for pedagogical purposes. Finally, as liaison between CLAS support staff and the Department of English, I gained leadership experience by working with administration, drafting policies for the CLAS director of technology, and participating in college-level administrative meetings.

My professional activities are extensive. I chaired Computers & Writing Online 2001, an online companion conference for the 17th Computers & Writing (C&W) Conference held at Ball State University (see <http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/cwonline2001/>). The online proposal review system I developed for C&W 2000 was used for C&W 2001 and will be used in 2003. For these and other projects, the C&W community recently presented me the 2002 *Kairos*/LORE award for excellence in service.

At Florida, before beginning NWE duties, I helped other graduate students develop syllabi through peer teaching and informal advice. With Department of English advisory committees, I drafted a template syllabus and goals statement for first-year composition and media studies courses. Since 1998, I have assisted writing program administrator Sid Dobrin with graduate assistant orientations and the seminar in graduate theories and practices of writing.

I have enclosed my vita and transcripts. Other useful information about my scholarship, teaching, and service is collated on my web site (<http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/~dilger/>). Letters of reference have been sent under separate cover. I will be attending the MLA convention in New York City and would be happy to meet with you there. If you'd like to arrange an interview or request more information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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