# TOUCHSTONE

The Journal of the Professor
Magda Vasillov Center for
Teaching and Learning

## Hostos
### Community College

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Cover image: Miguelina Curiel, "Self-Portrait," 2011.

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# PREFACE

*Carmen I. Coballes-Vega, Ph.D.*
*Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs*

As the fifth anniversary issue of *Touchstone* is published, we are inspired by its contribution as a scholarly publication by Eugenio María de Hostos Community College faculty, staff, students, and community partners. In the book, *Leading with Soul,* by L. Bolman and T. Deal, the authors share their thoughts about the connection between "community and the cycle of living." They write,

"We build significance through the use of many expressive and symbolid forms: rituals, ceremonies, icons, music, and stories. Humans have always created and used symbols as a foundation for meaning.  Organizations without a rich symbolic life become empty and sterile. The magic of special occasions is vital in building significance into collective life."  (p.110)

On the occasion of the five-year anniversary, it is fitting that the editors highlight some of the symbols of the purposeful and transformative roles of faculty and their collaborative work with other faculty, students and the college community.

The significance of our collective work at Hostos has been demonstrated in a variety of landmark initiatives and events during this past academic year. First, the Division of Academic Affairs in collaboration with other divisions was heavily engaged in the Middle States Association of Higher Education Self-Study for the reaffirmation of its regional accreditation.  After the submission of the Self-Study, we hosted the Middle States team site visit and received a positive recommendation on all 14 standards. The Commission will be meeting in June 2012 to make its final recommendation. This thorough and deliberate effort was successful because of the invaluable work of all the administrators, faculty, staff and students who dedicated significant time to the preparation of materials and data to support the process.

Second, concurrent with Middle States, the college also developed the new Hostos Strategic Plan during the past year. This extensive and forward-looking document will provide a roadmap based on five goals and 20 initiatives for the next five years.  Departments and units are finalizing outcomes for their areas which are aligned with the Strategic Plan and initiatives and include metrics for their

assessment for the first year (2012-13). Third, the college completed the John Gardner Foundations of ExcellenceÒ in the First College Year self-study. Recommendations from the study will be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. Again, a number of administrators, faculty, staff, and students across all divisions were involved in this extensive effort. Fourth, there are two new CUNY initiatives being implemented and developed. These include CUNY First and Pathways. CUNY First is a systems software solution that will automate a variety of functions such as registration, grade submissions, and employee self-service. Pathways is a plan to establish a Common Core of courses that may be transferable to colleges across CUNY and is scheduled for implementation in fall 2013. A number of faculty are currently liaisons to the various Central Office committees reviewing courses for inclusion in the Common Core and their service is invaluable in moving forward at Hostos. In addition, the Division has appointed a new Faculty Fellow to assist departments toward further development and implementation of the Pathways initiative.  Fifth, in the area of additional resources, as a result of new Compact lines, the college was able to open five new full-time faculty positions and also begin replacing retired faculty and filling existing vacancies. Over 20 new faculty lines were posted in late fall 2011 for January 2012-August 2012 potential hires. In addition, two new full-time academic advisors were hired through Compact lines for the OAA Academic Advisement Center.

Finally, during this year there were a number of faculty-directed initiatives that led the way in reaffirming the college commitment to teaching, effectiveness in student learning, research and service. Several faculty members received Professional Staff Congress (PSC) CUNY awards for research and are now preparing papers and/or publications to share their findings. Faculty and staff also wrote and received several grants totaling nearly $869,000. Several other national and state grants for the 2012-13 year have been submitted with announcements expected in late summer or fall 2012.  During the 2011-12 year, CUNY recognized several faculty/staff for their outstanding contributions to the college with awards and grants.  Those included in this recognition were Professors S. Church, I. Goldemberg, A. Morales, N. Núñez-Rodríguez, N. Angulo, Y. Rodríguez, Ms. R. Cruz-Cordero, Dean C. Mangino, and Provost C. Coballes-Vega. Another notable faculty scholarship contribution was the publication of Dr. Marcella Bencivenni's book, *Italian Immigrant Radical Culture; The Idealism of the Sovversivi in the United States, 1890-1940,* a well-documented and researched chronicle of Italian American radicalism and its connection to world movements during a turbulent period.    The Office of Academic Affairs launched a Global Academic Programs Committee with a directive to establish guidelines and goals for the integration of global content within the curricula and encouraging new internships and other experiential learning opportunities. As a result of the work of the committee, a new study abroad program pilot was established in collaboration with the Center for Studies Martianos in Cuba. Fifteen students and four faculty/staff members will participate in a credit-bearing course offered by Dr. Carlos Sanabria, Humanities Department in early to late June 2012.

The Professor Magda Vasillov Center for Teaching and Learning led by Dr. N. Núñez-Rodríguez and Sarah Brennan organized an effective CTL Road Show series that brought professional development opportunities to the departments and units across the college. The Office of Academic Affairs, Educational Technology, and the CTL hosted the Educational Technology Showcase with Dr. Susan Ko, Academic Faculty Development Director, School of Professional Studies, as the guest speaker. The sessions included presentations by Hostos faculty and the audience included faculty from other colleges in the metropolitan area. The Office of Academic Affairs hosted two speakers, Dr. Ofelia Garcia and Dr. Ricardo Otheguy, CUNY Graduate Center, for a lecture series during the year on the topics of Multilingualism and Pedagogical Best Practices. As a result of the discussions, faculty in the college will engage in research projects during the 2012-13 year on key topics connected with their classes. During this academic year, a number of faculty published articles in peer-reviewed journals. As in the past, Hostos faculty remain actively and professionally engaged and continue their involvement in professional association conferences at the state, national and international levels.

We congratulate Dr. Kim Sanabria and Dr. Carl James Grindley for their dedication and commitment to the journal in their role as co-editors.  Also, I salute the members of the Editorial Review Board for their support in continuing a rich tradition at Hostos.  We are also reminded of the strong mission of the college and the transformative nature of education in the lives of the residents of the Bronx and New York.  Finally, we celebrate the enduring and continuing vitality of The Professor Magda Vasillov Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL).

### *WORKS CITED*

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# INTRODUCTION

*Carl James Grindley*
*Kim Sanabria*

In 2007, when the CTL journal was first envisaged, the hunt for a name led us to the words of our college's namesake, Eugenio María de Hostos. Quite simply, he described engagement as the touchstone of teaching, its test and reason for being, and thus was named the journal, la piedra de toque. A second favorite quote was found at the Hostos museum in the hills high above his birthplace in Mayagüez, where at the end of his life, Hostos is said to have proclaimed: "si volviera a encauzar mi vida, seguiría siendo profesor." With this wistful image of his life cascading tumultuously down a self-carved channel in a relentless quest to share what he had learned, Hostos captured the energy that committed teachers bring to their task and which the journal similarly showcases.

These symbols aside, it is nonetheless another metaphor, that of the chain, as in spark or catalyst, that best represents the spirit of this volume of Touchstone, now at a milestone in its fifth year. The journal is a record of the faculty's ongoing work and daily commitments, of the efforts that secure and tow, mesh and lift. After all, we have much to achieve, since the realities of struggle and hardship are a common currency of discussion along the halls of the "C" building. Yet more importantly, so too are those of community, hope, and potential.

A highlight this year was the series of performances at the Repertory Theater of Chain Reaction, the bilingual play exploring the lives of Antonia Pantoja (the celebrated Puerto Rican community leader who founded ASPIRA), and Yojaira (a student at Hostos Community who is struggling toward her dreams). Written by Professor Teresita Martínez, an expert in drama in education, and skillfully directed by Professor Angel Morales, the play is emblematic of the collaborations that epitomize the faculty's mission, because of its link to other college initiatives. The Book-of-the-Semester project, created by Professor Robert F. Cohen and in existence since 2005, also featured Pantoja's Memoir of a Visionary: its discussion board and calendar of activities brought students online, and former aspirantes to student forums. These events, in turn, complemented a showing of the documentary film on

Pantoja's life: ¡Presente! produced by Lillian Jiménez. What better examples could we find of our connections than these reacciones en cadena?

We now present the latest edition of the Journal of the Professor Magda Vasillov Center for Teaching and Learning. This year the journal includes pieces on leadership and scholarship, learning and technology, tolerance and the changing panoramas of our world. The centerpiece is a dramatic photo essay. The second section is comprised of philosophies of teaching: personal, intimate comments that are evidence of the faculty's deep engagement in their classes. We hope that colleagues will take pride in each other's ideas, and we respectfully thank and congratulate all who have generously linked their efforts together in the shared venture of this faculty journal: contributors, reviewers, readers alike.

*Carl James Grindley*
*The Department of English*

*Kim Sanabria*
*The Department of Language and Cognition*

# VISIONARY LEADERSHIP:
# A PATH TOWARD ORGANIZATIONAL
# EFFECTIVENESS AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT IN ACADEMIA

*Héctor López*

## INTRODUCTION

The 1990s was the 'decade of the leader,' a theme that continues today as the second decade of the twenty-first century moves forward. Nationally, we seem to be looking for the hero who can turn us around, establish a new direction, and pull us through tough and difficult times. Organizations are searching for visionary leaders—people who, by the strength of their personalities, can bring about a major organizational transformation. We hear calls for charismatic, transformational, transitional, and visionary leadership. Innumerable individuals charge that the problems with the U.S. economy, poor organizational productivity, lost ground in worldwide competitive markets, and lost reputation in higher education performance, are largely a function of poor management and the lack of good organizational leadership.

In fall 2011, the Center for Teaching & Learning and the Office of Academic Affairs hosted and moderated a Professional Development Workshop on Leadership through a discussion of *The 360° Leader* (Maxwell, 2005). Of importance is that the workshop and discussion that ensued is, by extension, applicable to current day organizational demands placed on leaders and the linked managerial responsibility, a fundamental element of leadership. This article will address some of the concepts and comments raised during the workshop. It is not an attempt to trivialize the excellent leadership concepts presented and discussed during the workshop, but rather a thoughtful and challenging look at this concept identified as "leadership."

## LEADERSHIP

Leadership is an easy concept to define but a difficult one to study and understand. It is easy to define since, by basic definition, leadership means influencing others to work willingly toward achieving objectives. What makes leadership a challenging concept to master, on the other hand, is the need to understand a variety of leadership theories, and to translate them into leadership skills through application and practice. Such concepts as power, traits or attributes, structure, consideration and participation, among others, have a major impact on how leaders act like leaders. Leadership knowledge is only part of what an individual needs to have in order to be a leader.

A summary review of literature on leadership (Buckingham, 2005; Collins, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 1995, 1993; Lawler, 2003; Pierce & Newstrom, 2008) indicates that leadership is a much more difficult matter these days than it once was. The world is much more complex and confusing. A different kind of work force and the information revolution brought about by technology calls for a different type of leadership as organizations continue to adapt to the internal and external competitive demands of the new millennium. Traditional methods of leadership were designed for supervision of factory workers—they emphasized regularity, measurement, orderly appearance, predictability, and control (Zand,1997). In the 1970s and 1980s, employees were being told what to do and given a lot of guidance. Today, an organization's workforce is more 'internally driven.' Now they are told 'this is where we are going,' and they figure out for themselves how to get there. This sense of freedom about what they can do gives people a greater sense of control over their working life, and impact their sense of success in the work environment. It is also carried over into their personal life and well-being.

In addition, the work environment is changing at an accelerated rate, as witnessed by shorter product life cycles as organizations rush to get their products to market, experience intensified competition, and realize corporate globalization (Friedman, 2005). This scenario makes the present style of leadership—one person at the top of the management hierarchy—increasingly counterproductive.

How do today's new leaders and leadership researchers define leadership? Definitely it is not seen as something that you do to employees in terms of the autocratic (one person) style of leadership, or for employees in a benevolent kind of way in terms of a democratic style of leadership, or even the far end of the spectrum or continuum laissez-faire (free-rein) leadership. A leader is no longer seen as someone carrying the leadership banner at the head of the pack, but more a human relations expert knowledgeable in diversity and adept at bringing diverse people together, sensitive to their needs, and of their capabilities and of a mission. The word "leader" has increasingly been used to mean a person with a vision, someone who initiates changes that anticipate future threats and opportunities and who inspires others to follow.

Experts on management and leadership management believe that leadership is not rank, privileges, titles, or money. They submit that leadership is responsibility. Others assert that the leader is clearly one who has the visionary attributes to envision the future and what the journey is going to be like. If this person creates that visual impression for people and sets performance standards along the way, then people will know that they are doing a good job and that they are achieving the success that's envisioned for them and the organization. This article will address visionary leadership and the practice or process of inspiring a shared vision—envisioning a future and enlisting others in a common cause.

Some people are more skilled at executing directives and some people are more skilled at motivating and creating synergy among their employees. Some are

very sincere, very concerned about people and how people react to changes in the work environment. They are demanding but not autocratic and yet get the job done. Yet, organizations have been operating under very difficult conditions that may be characterized as warfare, e.g., dynamic change, crises, urgency, uncertainty, and chaos. In many situations, technology and global competition has created the need for, and in some cases demanded, a restructuring of the organization as exemplified by such paradigms as restructuring, reengineering, downsizing, correct-sizing, and reorganization. The consequence is a flat borderless world and a borderless economy, where leaders are those who embrace major change and capitalize on opportunities and increased competition. Given this environment, what are the challenges for leaders?

**CURRENT LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES**

Today, leaders must face and deal with constantly accelerating change. There is no getting around it. The constant demand for more information and the information revolution brought about by the advent of the personal computer has added to this urgency. Given the information and the tools required, people expect things to get done at a faster rate. Globalization has added to this vicious circle, as organizations establish strategic alliances to compete more effectively in the global economy as a means of strategic positioning or survival in the marketplace.

Technological change, innovation, and the implementation of new technologies in higher education, require leaders to view technology as a tool that can make things possible, and embrace its potential in enhancing course technology applications, i.e., Smart Rooms, Blackboard, Skype, iPad's, etc., under the umbrella of web-facilitated, blended/hybrid, or online environments. Leaders must also be able to deal with the unexpected and unintended consequences of technology that may affect the learning environment. Finally, shifts in faculty composition in terms of diversity requires leaders that are good listeners and respect and understand their people, and where the other person is coming from.

**SOME THOUGHTS ON BECOMING A LEADER**

Presently we accept the fact that the workforce is rapidly becoming increasingly diversified. For many individuals, becoming a leader is a process of transformation that in many cases may be necessitated by changes in the work environment. This transformation requires the leader to be completely responsible for the decisions that need to be made, and the consequences of those decisions. Yet, this transformation is not easy. Whether we want to accept it or not, becoming a leader is hard work, and being a leader may be even more difficult.

Managers need to demonstrate the qualities that define leadership, such as integrity, character, vision, fortitude, passion, sensitivity, commitment, insight, emotional and moral intelligence, ethical standards, charisma, luck, courage, tenacity, and even, from time to time, humility (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; McGaughey, 1992; Lennick & Kiel, 2005; Teal, 1996). In addition, Dean (2006) asserts that being a leader requires a complicated host of attributes. Among them:

1. Self-awareness—the leader requires a clear understanding of his/her own personal, internal core. They need to spend creative time analyzing themselves, reflecting on what's important, staying focused, making choices about who they are and how they behave, understanding where their ego starts and stops, and where it's usefully employed or when it's best to sublimate it to some extent.

2. The ability to embrace and handle change, uncertainty, chaos, and ambiguity by being decisive and self-confident—the essential focus here is flexibility. Failure to adapt to change will create immense problems for an organization. The new challenge for leadership is to help organizations remain flexible, and still maintain a sense of community, of togetherness, where individuals feel like they can come and make a contribution.

3. Having a vision of where the organization is going—leaders must have a vision that can help channel the decisions that are made for the organization. They must also be able to articulate that vision, and able to convince others to share their vision. While the vision itself may not be totally clear, followers who have faith in their leader will help the person in charge clarify the possibilities.

4. A clear set of values—leadership grows out of a set of values held by the leader. Essential among them are integrity, credibility, fairness, and having a good work ethic.

5. A desire to serve those you lead - referred to as 'servant leadership by Greenleaf (2002), this attribute may evolve over time as the leader matures and develops a philosophy of responsibility to be successful and to move the organization forward.

6. Openness—a leader must have the ability to synthesize the thinking and contributions of others. They must be able to proactively invite and encourage people's thinking, be open to change, and initiate appropriate action toward achieving organizational goals—present and future.

7. Trustworthiness—leaders earn trust when it's clear they are not out to dictatorially manage their followers. There is impartiality inherent in the word 'trust.' Also, an unwritten understanding that the leader will make decisions that benefit all members of the organization.

**LEADER CHARACTERISTICS AND THE NEW CONSTITUENTS**

Based on extensive studies conducted and data collected by Kouzes and Posner (1995) during the 1980s and early 1990s, twenty characteristics of admired leaders were identified. From this list, four major characteristics were identified as of primary importance for constituents: honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent. It should be noted that constituents today are more educated, demanding, have more leisure time available to them, and may not be as loyal to their organization as previous constituents. Add to this the change in the composition of the workforce (i.e., 'workforce diversity') and the need for workforce development and we get an excellent perspective of the basic challenges facing leaders today.

Leaders must understand the various constituents with whom they work. This requires the ability to appraise accurately the readiness or resistance of followers willing to move in a given direction; to know when dissension or confusion is undermining the group's will to act; to make the most of the motives that are there; and to truly understand the sensitivities that permeate the work environment.

### LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE—ON BECOMING A VISIONARY LEADER

Certain requirements are popularly identified as requisites for leadership. The most common is that leaders must have vision, which can mean a variety of things: that they can think long-term; that they see where their system fits in a larger context; that they can describe the outlines of a possible future that motivates people; or that they actually are able to establish the elements that determine what is to come. Gardner (1990) asserts that "with respect to some things, the future announces itself from afar…but most people are not listening…leaders who have the wit to perceive and the courage to act will be credited with a gift for prophecy that they do not necessarily have" (p. 131).

The secret to leadership rests in applying the concepts of visionary leadership for survival, growth and excellence, and contribution to the community in terms of social responsibility, outreach programs, and global citizenship. However, this can only be realized when constituents buy into the process.

How does vision work? According to Nanus (1992), the right vision (a) attracts commitment and energizes people, (b) creates meaning in constituents' lives, (c) establishes a standard of excellence and (d) bridges the present and the future. The job of the visionary leader? Be a direction setter, change agent, spokesperson and coach. Heller (1995) describes a process for developing a vision (a 'vision primer' if you may) that consists of four stages:

1. What is my vision of the future?

2. If my vision succeeds, how will I differ
   (a) to my stakeholders?
   (b) to my customers?
   (c) in my internal management processes?
   (d) in my ability to innovate and grow?

3. What are the critical success factors (on each of the four above counts)?

4. What are the critical measurements (again on the four counts)?

The process is an ideal tool for auditing and evaluating your fundamental position on visionary leadership prior to proceeding to a full-fledged modification of your leadership style.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) also offer that a shared goal is a commitment to "*envision* an uplifting and ennobling future, and *enlist* others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams" (p.171). On the other hand, Covey (2004) points out that a shared vision represents a "win-win" performance agreement, where both parties share a common vision based on common principles, liberates both parties to do what they must do—the worker to get the job done and

the leader to be a source of help, a servant. A visionary leader is then seen as one who can develop a unique vision that attracts commitment, inspires people, revitalizes organizations, and mobilizes the resources needed to turn vision into reality.

Other steps that can be implemented to become a visionary leader, and used as a process for self-development, include but are not limited to the following: First, start by learning everything you can about your organization and similar organizations in terms of strengths and weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. Bring your constituents into the envisioning process over a period of time, and keep an open mind. Second, conduct an audit in terms of a clearly stated vision. Third, analyze your constituents and their needs. Who are the most critical constituents and their major interests? Fourth, target your vision—what critical issues must be addressed? Fifth, develop futuristic thinking by setting a timeline or horizon to reduce the likelihood of unpleasant surprises. Sixth, identify important future developments in terms of major changes that can be expected in the organizational environment, internal and external. Finally, assess the significance and probabilities of future developments by building scenarios and drawing conclusions.

By combining these action-steps for envisioning an uplifting and ennobling future, and enlisting others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams, we will be using Dean's seven steps (2006) to become a 'visionary leader'—a path toward organizational and self-development. Taken together, these commitments form the wave that will carry the visionary leader on the journey to making a difference. How the leader personally or operationally adjusts to this new orientation or style is part of the 'leadership challenge.'

We cannot leave visionary leadership without a reference to 'power.' Power and the requisite leadership traits are not sufficient for successful leadership—visionary or any other. They are only a foundation, a precondition. *If* you have the traits and you have the power, then you have the *potential* to be a leader (Zand, 1997). To make this potential a reality, the leader must also have the skills to provide a vision and engage in the behavior required to implement that vision (Dessler, 1998). In other words, the leader must be forward-looking ('intuit' the future) and be adept at developing a shared sense of destiny among the constituents.

### THE ART OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT: MASTERING LEARNING AND EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

For an organization to improve, its leaders must learn from the organization's errors. Poor leaders say they want to improve performance but, curiously enough, suppress the knowledge they need, become defensive when attempting to solve problems or improve performance. Poor leaders are inept at investigating deficiencies in a way that helps people learn and improve. They may make constituents fear that they will be punished if they reveal deficiencies; that is 'they shoot the bearer of bad news,' (Kellerman, 2004). Examples of negative elements in the work environment include, among others, lapses of ethical conduct at the highest levels of the organization without counteractive action being initiated, hostile work environment, unhealthy working conditions, and discriminatory and abusive management practices. Effective visionary leaders open the flow of information by acting as teachers, planting ideas and nurturing them. They learn by finding and capitalizing on knowledge, and their learning becomes the foundation for successful change and improvement, both personal and organizational.

Leadership development is a process that extends over many years. It calls for repeated assessments and repeated opportunities for learning, and for training and tackling challenges. Some leadership characteristics cannot be learned from others. As previously stated, becoming a leader is a process of transformation and accepting responsibility for the decisions that must be made. Decision making is the cornerstone or foundation of leadership. The essential element here is that some individuals may not have or identify with the complicated and demanding host of attributes required in leadership, i.e., the ability to implement change, dealing with uncertainty, chaos and ambiguity, having a clear set of values, accepting responsibility, and being open and trustworthy. Inclusive is the fact that becoming a leader is hard work and carrying out the responsibilities of leadership may be even more difficult for some more than others.

At some time or other, there is a trial by fire and you have to navigate through the fire. Unfortunately, too many so-called 'leaders,' visionary or otherwise, have not confronted this rite of passage. The critical element of visionary leadership lies in monitoring change, making the necessary corrections based on effective feedback, and knowing when to initiate a new vision-forming process. However, all these efforts on the part of the person in charge will not make it happen without credibility.

## CREDIBILITY—A KEY REQUIREMENT

Constituents choose to follow leaders who are honest, competent, forward-looking, and inspiring. Constituents choose to commit to leaders they find credible. Credibility, seen as a human approach to leadership, is characterized by honesty, sensitivity to diversity, and the need for community. It also calls for respect and loyalty. A leader must put into practice six key disciplines to strengthen their capacity for developing and sustaining credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 1993):

1. *self-discovery* by first clarifying their values and standards;

2. *appreciating* the values and desires of their constituents;

3. *affirming* shared values by honoring the diversity of their constituents;

4. *developing* the capacity of their constituents to keep their commitments;

5. *serving* a purpose through servant leadership not self-serving leadership; and

6. *sustaining* hope by projecting energy, enthusiasm, inspiration, and optimism—proactive and compassionate leadership.

Credibility is rooted in the past. It is directly linked with reputation—and credibility, like reputation, is something that is earned over time; it does not come automatically with the job or the title—it begins early in our lives and careers with our personal values and integrity.

## LEADERSHIP TODAY

There is a wealth of resources on leadership. Thousands of studies have been conducted and articles written on a multitude of facets about leadership. Equally as well, hundreds of books on leadership have been printed - from thought-provoking and useful guides to self-development to technical 'how to' guides. Management has moved or progressed from the age of management giants, e.g., John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford, to the age of Microsoft's Bill Gates and Steve Jobs'Apple. Moreover, we have witnessed an era of excellence populated by efficiency experts, e.g., Tom Peters (2010), as well as the era of total quality management (TQM) (Deming, 2000). We have seen command-and-control practitioners ('lead, follow, or get out of the way'); micro-managers; management by fear; management by objectives (MBO); management by walking around (MBWA); transformational leadership; situational leadership; and participatory management. As we navigate the 21st century, 'relationship management' has become the new leadership focus (Pierce & Newstrom, 2008).

## LEADERSHIP—21ST CENTURY STYLE

Today, leaders in organizations are ignoring the fads and are practicing the basics - respect, trust, vision, listening, feeling the pulse of the environment, and managing proactively with a higher degree of self-confidence. Generally, in basic courses of business management or administration, academics teach that the basic principles of management (planning, organizing, directing, and controlling) are universal, that is, they can be applied to any type of organization—private, public, for-profit, and non-profit alike. The same can be said for the basics of leadership—they are enduring. The major thesis of current research on leadership is that what changes are the challenges. What is required of a leader is a fundamental focus on these basics as they confront the challenges that are evolving today and that will continue to evolve in the years ahead.

Being a visionary leader means taking the steps required to boost your effectiveness at filling the leader's role. No specific prescription, however, can guarantee that you will become a visionary leader or a successful leader at that. How can one meet this challenge?

The key strategy in developing and fine-tuning the traits and behaviors you will exhibit as a visionary leader is lifelong learning. Leaders need to formulate and continually revise their vision of the organization's goals and strategies in a changing environment. To really succeed, visionary leaders need to be life-long learners who skillfully and continually encourage their people to learn. In essence, the leader's new role is to help constituents learn by getting the organization into a learning mode. Effective leaders need to learn how to learn, and renew their knowledge if they are to avoid irrelevant or obsolete information that undermines their organization. Part of the leader's task is to "develop what is naturally there but in need of cultivation" (Gardner, 1990, p. 157).

Implemented properly, lifelong learning can provide the visionary leader with a focus on extensive continuing training and self-development, and advanced decision-making techniques throughout the leader's career. Lifelong learning can enable the visionary leader to develop, adapt to, and see an enhanced possibility of fulfilling their potential in an ever-changing work environment. In visionary leadership, the highest priority is on learning how to learn. Nanus (1992) offers that "visionary leaders are virtual learning machines, skilled at accumulating ideas and knowledge from a great variety of sources and putting them together in novel ways to discern

new patterns and directions" (p. 182). Again, the emphasis is on the importance of lifelong learning as a tool for self-development. He presents the following relationships as the formulas for visionary leadership:

1. Vision + Communication = Shared Purpose

2. Shared Purpose + Empowered People + Appropriate Organizational Changes +Strategic Thinking = Successful Visionary Leadership

Success as a visionary leader will be measured by the effectiveness of the vision in moving the organization forward. Within this context, the formulas are not a prescription, but rather a process.

## CONCLUSION

The need for visionary leadership in academia today is critical. Standards in education are constantly shifting and, regardless of our philosophical or educational orientation, there seems to be a social movement in progress toward an elitist agenda for higher education. For example, there have been few periods in the long history of established colleges and universities when the imperative to innovate and to re-define mission statements and visions for the future has not played an important part. Perhaps most important, the nature of knowledge has been profoundly changing to the extent that the rapidly changing character of knowledge - both in and out of the workplace—makes necessary a new approach to research, teaching, and learning.

The challenge for leadership is how to keep getting extraordinary things done in organizations. The most effective leaders use a mosaic of approaches, skillfully switching between vital components of leadership depending on their analysis of the situation. Whatever the nature of the organization, the first step rests in challenging the process, a change in the status quo. The latter requires envisioning the future and sharing that vision with the constituents. The objective is to make a difference as a leader. And visionary leaders *can* make a difference. If you want to have a significant impact on people, on communities, and on organizations, you need to invest in learning to become the very best leader you can. Warren Bennis (Bennis & Nanus, 2003) puts it very succinctly:

Constant change disturbs most leaders and managers. It always has; it always will. But visionary leaders recognize that they—and we—are all children of chaos. Thus they disrupt the status quo, challenge the gospel, and disequilibrate the system in the interest of effecting change that ultimately benefits us all. (p. xiv)

That is what vision is and why it matters. Practicing visionary leadership requires people to demonstrate on an everyday basis the collective skills of Peter the Great,the Great Houdini, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

The greatest challenge to the leader of the future is to make the future a reality. The challenge is all the greater because organizations themselves are on the firing line. Leaders are on the firing line. Visionary leaders build resonance by moving people towards the organization's goals and exhibiting an unwavering resolve. Visionary leadership is a must.

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# HOSTOS FACULTY AND THE CHANGING WORLD OF SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

*Lisa Tappeiner*
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## INTRODUCTION

Hostos Community College likes to think of itself as a college unlike any other. With its revolutionary history, its cosmopolitan student body, and its location in the heart of urban America, it is truly unique. But in other ways, Hostos is typical of academia today. Its faculty span generations—from radicals who came of age in the '60's to newly-minted PhD's born in the Reagan era. Soon, faculty will be welcoming among their ranks digital natives, who grew up communicating with, being entertained by, and learning with digital media. Even before digital natives arrive in large numbers, educators and scholars are beginning to witness profound changes in the way scholarship is being produced, disseminated and used in education. This paper provides an overview of changes in how scholars communicate with each other and to the world, and describes a collaboration between the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Library that shows to what extent Hostos faculty are affected by and engaged in new modes of communication as researchers and as educators.

## SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION: AN OVERVIEW

The phrase scholarly communication has become increasingly widespread in library and information studies. It addresses a range of issues at play in the rapidly changing landscape of producing, publishing, and disseminating knowledge—including copyright, open access, fair use, plagiarism, and emerging social technologies. Until the late 1990's, academic librarians provided access to scarce resources, published scholarship, to faculty and researchers at their institutions. Conversely, today's digital information environment is characterized not by scarcity but by dynamism and abundance. Librarians and others who work with faculty to promote scholarship at their institutions and who have a unique perspective on the transformation of scholarly communication can engage the campus in campus-wide discussions about new modes of digital publishing, standards, and the responsible

use of digital resources in rapidly changing academic research and publishing environments.

Today, scholars are staying current in their fields and conducting research using online sources and interactive tools that were unthinkable just a decade ago. For instance, research on digital scholarship reveals that, for many researchers, reading and contributing to blogs serves as primary means for scholars to disseminate their work within their disciplines and forge relationships with new colleagues. (Manon and Smith, KJellberg). Others consider reader comments on social media websites as a form of peer-review (Manon and Smith). At the same time, traditional vehicles for disseminating current scholarship and research, particularly scholarly journals, are becoming increasingly expensive, despite the fact that much of the research they publish is funded by universities and government agencies, and that academics and government employees serve as unpaid editors and peer-reviewers to ensure quality and maintain reputation.

In many community colleges, where faculty are expected to dedicate most of their time to teaching rather than producing original research, scholarly communication comes into play at a different level. Course preparation, curriculum development, online learning, choosing supporting texts for classes have also been transformed by online scholarship, electronic formats for traditionally print materials, and digital rights management. Seeking alternatives to traditional educational resources is also appealing to faculty who see their students struggle with skyrocketing costs of textbooks. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2005) found that "Increasing at an average of six percent per year, textbook prices nearly tripled from December 1986 to December 2004." (Hilton and Wiley) Similarly, a 2007 federal study by the Department of Education's Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance found that the "annual per student expenditures on textbooks can easily approach $700 to $1000" (Advisory Committee… ) At the same time, more and more free, high quality educational resources are available online: entire courses from MIT, short, informative videos on YouTube from the Khan academy, digitized versions of the classics in world literature. Free open access materials cannot always be the solution to expensive course materials, but in a college that serves economically disadvantaged students, both the library and the Center for Teaching and Learning can identify and promote alternatives to traditional textbooks.

### CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING: A CAMPUS RESOURCE FOR FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP, RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

Traditionally, faculty in community colleges have been evaluated based on the quality of their teaching, but in recent years, Hostos Community College has joined many community colleges in requiring faculty to actively participate in research and scholarly growth as well as professional reputation. Faculty are expected to present at local, national, or international conferences or in community venues, to actively participate in professional organizations, and publish in respected peer-reviewed publications in their respective disciplines. Scholarly output and professional involvement have become key considerations in the reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions.

Hostos Community College's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) encourages and supports faculty scholarship through a variety of activities. Every year they offer a schedule of enrichment activities, bringing scholars from off campus or providing a venue for campus faculty to engage in discussions of the research and pedagogy. In addition, the center provides resources, such as a webpage and email announcements alerting faculty to upcoming opportunities for professional involvement on campus, across CUNY, and beyond. CTL pays particular attention to junior faculty, offering orientation to the process of building professional portfolios and navigating the system for reappointment, tenure, and promotion. Finally, the CTL works to encourage pedagogical excellence and innovation on campus by promoting cross disciplinary dialogues, coordinating and facilitating initiatives such as ePortfolios, service learning, General Education, and mentoring. All of these activities lead to better teaching and a more cohesive, inter-disciplinary faculty.

In the context of rapidly changing modes of scholarship in the digital environment, the CTL can be a venue for conversations among disciplines and across campus about new forms of scholarly communication and how they relate to current standards and guidelines for the reappointment and tenure process. Another important and related role is to initiate dialogues among educators about new digital educational resources that are becoming available in all disciplines.

### HOSTOS LIBRARY PROMOTES FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

Although its primary purpose is to provide materials and services that support the Hostos curriculum, the Library also promotes faculty research at Hostos. Each academic department is assigned a faculty liaison, who selects materials to support programs in the department after becoming fully aware of faculty research interests. In many cases, Hostos librarians serve as research advisors, suggesting to faculty possible venues for publication and approaches to getting their work published. The library maintains subscriptions to journals that embrace the scholarship of teaching and learning and has created a wiki guide that highlights resources for faculty research (http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/librarywiki/index.php/Faculty_Research). It supports faculty scholarship further by offering such services as interlibrary loan and Metro card referrals to local research libraries. Most significantly, as part of a CUNY-wide consortium of nearly 20 libraries, it provides online access to literally tens of thousands of online journals through research databases, as well as scientific and social science data sets, and citation management tools.

As the venue on campus that purchases and licenses scholarly and educational information resources, the library can initiate campus-wide dialogues about the role of new modes in scholarly communication in the research and education.

### CTL/LIBRARY COLLABORATION ON SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

The missions of the Library and the CTL intersect in the crucial areas of support for faculty research and the promotion of resources that foster excellence in teaching. In the summer of 2011, the assistant director of the CTL and the Collection Development librarian teamed up on a Committee on Beautiful Ideas (COBI) project to inform and engage the campus community on issues related to scholarly communication and, more specifically, the open access movement in publishing and education. They published Open Hostos! blog on the Hostos Social

Network (http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/openhostos/), which is dedicated to informing the campus community about issues related to open access publishing and open educational resources. A second component of the COBI project was to survey campus faculty about their research habits and to gauge their knowledge of and interest in open access resources. The survey explored how faculty use information for research and classes, what kinds of information resources they use, and what they would like to learn more about. (see Appendix 1) These results have provided data that will help both the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Library to better meet the research and course preparation needs of faculty at Hostos.

**DISCUSSION OF SURVEY RESULTS**

The survey was conducted using the online tool SurveyMonkey during the fall semester of 2011. It was sent out the List of Teaching Faculty and thirty faculty members responded. Although the number of responses was relatively small, they represented a good sampling of disciplines and departments—including Allied Health, Natural Sciences, English, Mathematics, and Behavioral and Social Sciences. This discussion will focus on questions 2 and 3, which relate to using information to prepare for classes, and question 4, which addresses the use of information resources for research. When preparing a new class, faculty continue to rely on textbooks and other books: 62% are very likely to use textbooks, and 44% are very likely to use other books. Also, not surprisingly, 26 of 30 respondents were either very likely or likely to consult with colleagues within the college. Sources of information most frequently used when preparing for classes include websites of professional organizations and research databases. Although few mentioned books specifically, one respondent painted an amusing picture: "I go to Barnes & Noble bookstore... [with a] folding chair and pull out books for evaluation." Surprisingly, several respondents mentioned Wikipedia as a source of information used for preparing for classes. Although many faculty do not allow students to use Wikipedia for assignments, there are clearly a range of views across campus regarding its usefulness in academic pursuits. No one mentioned traditional reference sources, such as the Encyclopedia Britannica (either print or online), which provide general overviews and help with quick fact-checking. The responses to this question reveal that faculty are sticking to textbooks and consulting with colleagues when preparing for courses, and remaining loyal to discipline-specific online resources, such as websites of professional organizations and discipline-specific databases.

Another question that yielded interesting information was question 4: "When conducting research, what print and online resources do you use most often (journals, websites, blogs, books, primary sources, etc.)? Please provide titles and links, if possible." Faculty provided specific names of key journals and professional websites in their fields when answering this question. These responses confirmed recent studies in information use of faculty, which found that they prefer to stay current by consulting a few core journals in their disciplines (Tenopir 2003 p. v). Moreover, social media, mostly blogs, make an appearance in the context of faculty research. In general, faculty are more open to using a variety of different kinds of information resources, including social media, for their own research than for their teaching.

**CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The survey results will better enable the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Library to provide resources and support for faculty as they prepare for classes and conduct research. It also provides a snapshot of faculty use of information in the dynamic and rapidly evolving worlds of scholarly publishing and educational technology. Finally, the survey also revealed a strong interest among faculty to learn more about open access resources, fair use, and copyrights. By conducting their own research, using information technology in their courses, and grading student work that acknowledges ideas and media that were created by others, Hostos faculty are already professionally engaged in these issues. The Library, the Center for Teaching and Learning, academic departments, and EdTech all have a role in engaging Hostos faculty in discussions about creating and using information in the academic world.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

Open Hostos! blog
http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/openhostos/
Faculty Research (Hostos library guide)
http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/librarywiki/index.php/Faculty_Research
Open Education at CUNY (CUNY academic commons)
http://commons.gc.cuny.edu/groups/open-education-at-cuny/
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**APPENDX I. HOSTOS SURVEY ON FACULTY RESEARCH (FALL 2011)**

Faculty Research -- Tell us about your
research habits and views on publishing
Education

Design Survey   Collect Responses   Analyze Results

View Summary
Browse Responses
Filter Responses
Crosstab Responses
Download Responses
Share Responses

Default Report   + Add Report

Response Summary

Total Started Survey: 30
Total Completed Survey: 30  (100%)

PAGE: 1

1. What department, office or program do you represent?   Download

| | Response Count |
| --- | --- |
| Show Responses | 30 |
| answered question | 30 |
| skipped question | 0 |

2. When preparing to teach a new course, how likely are you to use the following sources of information?   Create Chart   Download

| | Very likely | Likely | Somewhat likely | Not at all likely | Rating Average | Response Count |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Colleagues within the college | 66.7% (20) | 20.0% (6) | 6.7% (2) | 6.7% (2) | 1.53 | 30 |
| Colleagues outside of the college | 26.7% (8) | 30.0% (9) | 30.0% (9) | 13.3% (4) | 2.30 | 30 |
| Academic journals | 26.7% (8) | 33.3% (10) | 30.0% (9) | 10.0% (3) | 2.23 | 30 |
| Textbooks | 62.1% (18) | 13.8% (4) | 10.3% (3) | 13.8% (4) | 1.76 | 29 |
| Other books | 44.0% (11) | 28.0% (7) | 16.0% (4) | 12.0% (3) | 1.96 | 25 |
| Other (please specify) Show Responses | | | | | | 8 |
| answered question | | | | | | 30 |
| skipped question | | | | | | 0 |

7. Are you IRB certified?   Create Chart   Download

| | Response Percent | Response Count |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes | 26.7% | 8 |
| No | 73.3% | 22 |
| answered question | | 30 |
| skipped question | | 0 |

8. Are you familiar with open access publishing and resources?   Create Chart   Download

| | Response Percent | Response Count |
| --- | --- | --- |
| If Yes, tell us what you know in the "Other" box | 30.0% | 9 |
| No | 70.0% | 21 |
| Other Show Responses | | 3 |
| answered question | | 30 |
| skipped question | | 0 |

9. Have you ever obtained a Creative Commons license or included a copyright statement to work you've published online?   Create Chart   Download

| | Response Percent | Response Count |
| --- | --- | --- |
| answered question | | 29 |
| skipped question | | 1 |

3. When preparing to teach a class, what online and print resources are you most likely to use? Please provide titles and links, if possible.                                       Download

| | Response Count |
|---|---|
| Show Responses | 30 |
| answered question | 30 |
| skipped question | 0 |

4. When conducting research, what print and online resources do you use most often (journals, websites, blogs, books, primary sources, etc.)? Please provide titles and links, if possible.                                       Download

| | Response Count |
|---|---|
| Show Responses | 30 |
| answered question | 30 |
| skipped question | 0 |

5. Have you ever modified/negotiated a contract with a publisher?                    Create Chart    Download

| | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 26.7% | 8 |
| No | 73.3% | 22 |
| If you would like to add a comment you may do so here. Show Responses | 6.7% | 2 |
| answered question | | 30 |
| skipped question | | 0 |

6. Please rank these factors in order of importance when choosing a journal to submit your work for publication.                    Create Chart    Download

| | Extremely important | Important | Slightly important | Not a factor at all | Rating Average | Response Count |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

# HOW THE SOCIAL WEB IS SHAPING POPULAR READING

*Jenny Baum*
*Kate Lyons*

## INTRODUCTION

The smell of paper, the feel of brittle pages against one's skin, turning a page and not needing batteries to read a book: this is what people used to associate with books. Music lovers weathered the change to digital long ago, when listeners nostalgic about dropping the needle on a record or rewinding the tape inside a broken cassette, even amongst the most sentimental of holdouts, succumbed to the benefits of storage size and gave preference to the content over the vessel. MP3 players could hold entire music collections in a small, easy to search and organized, little device that wouldn't break as easily as a typical Walkman.

Publishing and popular reading are changing. Although printed books are probably not on the verge of extinction, a new way of reading and sharing the culture of literacy is emerging. Technology, and especially the rise in popularity of eBook formats and eBook readers, is changing the way we absorb, access and share information. What were once static, printed pages are now interactive with hypertext. Access to reading materials and to a world wide-audience for one's own writing has been completely transformed as a result of the Web.

This article will first discuss background on eReaders and particularly the hardware and software options available for reading a digital book. Secondly, this article will discuss how the social web affects the culture of popular reading, including the impact on librarians, booksellers, publishers, and the readers themselves.

## A BACKGROUND ON EREADING

Two ingredients are needed to read eBooks: 1) the device that can display the eBook file (must be compatible with both the eBook's file type and any DRM protection on the file), and (2) the eBook file. ePub, short *for electronic publication,* is the most popular ebook file format available that is becoming an industry standard and hence, can be read on a large variety of dedicated eBook reader devices and tablets.

PDF files can be converted to this format, and software packages, such as Adobe's InDesign or Calibre, can facilitate the file conversion.

Digital Rights Management (DRM) is the software that manages and restricts how a user shares and copies their ePub file. DRM can be proprietary and it can be cracked, resulting in piracy of the work. However, Creative Commons (http://creativecommons.org/) is an organization that can assist authors with making their works freely distributable, and in some cases, modifiable within the author's preset boundaries. Popular content management systems, including blog and wiki software, can also convert pages or posts into the ePub format. Wikimedia (a popular wiki application used by Wikipedia) offers plug-ins that allows users to export their wiki pages into both ePub and PDF documents.

The lack of a platform-independent eBook format and the use of eBook Digital Rights Management (DRM) is a sticking point for some readers as it makes sharing eBooks difficult, even for a single user having many devices. Many eReader devices have built-in options for sharing books, but most have limits that are unacceptably low for users. Although ePub is beginning to emerge as an industry standard, it is still difficult to read a book bought from one vendor on another seller's device or eBook reading software.

The digital reader hardware, regardless of the features of any particular device, incurs a plethora of advantages and disadvantages. The ability to change font size is offered on almost all eReaders and they are often smaller than your average hardcover book. On the other hand, the eReader itself is still a costly purchase, although prices are coming down, and durability can be a concern. For a while, it also looked as though the lack of children's material for eReaders might be a deal breaker for many. Now, however, many eReaders offer full-color displays and occasionally animation and sound effects as value added to the original work. The number of children's titles available, much like the number of adult and young adult titles, is still somewhat limited for eReaders. On the other hand, children can be voracious and picky readers and returning a stack of eBooks to the library is much less labor intensive than returning a stack of 40 or more picture books.

Currently, there are quite a few options for reading eBooks. Initially, dedicated devices like the popular Kindle (from amazon.com), Nook (from Barnes and Noble) and Kobo readers (from Borders) used eInk technology, giving the screen a printed page-like quality. eInk screens can be read in bright sunlight, but some effects, like turning pages, can take a second or two. Generally, users need other input technology, like built-in scroll bars or keypads, in order to navigate the device's menus. Touchscreen eInk technology is just beginning to emerge. Electronic bookmarking, highlighting and annotation tools are available, but may require a small learning curve for users who are uncomfortable with technology to master. Unlike just slipping a piece of paper between print pages, or scribbling on paper, bookmarking, highlighting or annotating on an eReader might require a few steps, or knowing exactly how to click, or, on new capacitive touchscreen tablets, a particular multi-finger gesture, like a finger swipe.

Older Americans tend to be the most likely age bracket to own dedicated eReaders. According to a recent Pew Internet & American Life study, "Seven percent of 'younger boomers,' those now between the ages of 47 and 56, and 6 percent of those ages 66 to 74, own e-readers, the highest percentages among all age

groups for devices like Amazon's Kindle, Barnes & Noble's Nook or Sony's Reader" (Choney, 2011, para 1).

Reading eBooks on tablet PCs with eReading apps (a.k.a applications) built-in, is another popular choice. An article on ReadWriteWeb by Sarah Perez cites Steve Jobs's famous quotation predicting the failure of eBook readers: "Forty percent of the people in the U.S. read one book or less last year. The whole conception is flawed at the top because people don't read anymore," he claimed. (2008, para 1). Perez goes on to cite a number of statistics backing Jobs's argument that people no longer read print materials, but then counters with statistics showing an increase in online reading.

In 2010, just two years after he predicted the demise of eReaders, Apple introduced the iPad, a resounding sales success, along with the heavily marketed iOS iBooks app. Apparently, Jobs had a change of heart. The iPad, however, is not a dedicated eReader. Instead, it is a touchscreen tablet that runs Apple's iOS operating system, the same OS that powers their iPhones and iPods. Thus, Steve Jobs's comment about reading might still hold a grain of truth. For over a decade, research has shown that those who use technology, especially the younger generations, are multi-tasking. According to Lenhardt et al in a Pew Internet & American Life report, "When teens are logged on, they are often multi-tasking, simultaneously emailing, instant messaging, surfing the Web, and if they are fortunate enough to have two phone lines, a cell phone, or a broadband connection, talking on the phone, too" (2001, A General Portrait of Wired Teens, para 6). Since Web 2.0 and social networking became prevalent (around 2004), multi-tasking has an even greater hold on Americans, especially youth.

This desire to constantly multi-task, to be able to flip from email, to Instant Messenger, to a magazine article or web search, to an eBook, explains some of the popularity of tablet PCs, and perhaps explains why the older generation, who is more willing to sit with a single type of online content, is the segment of the population that is adopting dedicated eReaders at the highest rate.

Reading eBooks on devices not intended to be eReaders is another option. Laptops, PDAs and mobile phones are not primarily intended for reading but can be used as readers. The software (apps) for popular smart phones like iPhone, Android phones and Windows mobile phones, etc., exist, so that users can download eBooks to their devices. Similar software exists for desktop and laptop PCs. However, the small screen size is often not suited to reading for long periods of time, and reading on a desktop PC takes away some of the comfort that readers often associate with a good book. Hardly anyone curls up with a desktop PC in a nice warm chair with a cup of tea so that they can read a good eBook. Commuters and travelers, however, who might not want to carry an eReader or tablet in addition to their mobile phones, can often be seen on subways and buses reading on their smart phone, and they may even benefit from the ability to take a break from reading to play a game, for example.

Having Internet access on whatever device a user selects for reading is another consideration. Not only might a reader want to stop reading for a moment to check email or a friends' status on Facebook, but a user might want Internet access to increase their interactivity with the text they're reading. For example, the user might want to post the eBook they're reading to a social networking site, or comment on

an interesting plot development on their blog or Twitter feed. Readers can gain access to the Internet on their devices either through a cellular network, like 3G, or through WiFi. Most eReader and tablet manufacturers offer both options and some are bundled with the least expensive reader while others require a higher-end version of their reader for built-in Internet access options. Users who have WiFi still need to be in a hotspot in order to be connected.

Some eReading software and devices have built-in options such as reading the text aloud and navigating menus via voice control, making the devices very accessible for blind readers. For readers with impaired vision, the option to change the font size, background colors and brightness of the screens can be very helpful. Finally, for users who are house-bound, the ability to download books over the Internet opens up the world of books to them in a way that may have previously required an assistant or a books-by-mail service. For example, North Carolina State Library has acquired a digital talking book player for the blind or visually impaired (http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/lbph/dtbplayers.html), suggesting that libraries are already gearing up to offer these new assistive technologies.

A movement to digital books, regardless of the device used to access the eBook, could mean a world in which digital literacy is a prerequisite for reading. At some point, when publishers and authors begin to offer their content only in eBook format, users who do not have the digital literacy skills to use an eBook reader will not have access to content. In the future, it is entirely possible that, in order to read for leisure, a user will need to be digitally literate. In order to be part of a community that discusses popular books and other written content, users will need to be part of an online social network, because that's where a lot of the connections and discussion will take place.

**THE CHANGING CULTURE OF POPULAR READING**

Fifteen years ago, Philip Roth guessed there were at most 120,000 serious American readers—those who read every night—and that the number was dropping by half every decade. Others vehemently disagree. But who really knows? Focused consumer research is almost nonexistent in publishing. What readers want—and whether it's better to cater to their desires or try harder to shape them—remains a hotly contested issue. You don't have to look further than the pages of The New York Times Book Review to see that the market for fiction is shrinking. (Kachka, 2008)

Starting in daycare and nursery school, a group of youngsters can often be found sitting in a circle listening to their teacher read a picture book. Before color television existed (let alone the Internet), public libraries sponsored book discussion groups, picture book hours and baby lap-sit time. Many readers enjoy talking about books with other people. They like recommending books to their friends and family, and they like reading other peoples' recommendations. Writing alternate endings or new stories (i.e., fan fiction) using a book's characters is also a popular pastime. From pre-verbal years, through the twilight years, people have used reading as an important means of socializing in the United States.

Even before Web 2.0 and social sites like MySpace and Facebook launched, libraries and other organizations started to realize the potential for the web to serve as an online community for people to gather and share their interest in books. For example, as early as 1998, The New York Public Library sponsored a chat application

that allowed authors to connect with users. They would then publish the chat transcripts on their website (http://www.nypl.org/voices/connect-nypl/chats-nypl). In addition, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress (http://www.read.gov/cfb/), which encourages readers to connect with books and each other, has a vast online presence with many resources about books and reading. And, of course, there is the popularity of Oprah's Book Club, which likely peaked with the twin controversies around James Frey's "A Million Little Pieces" (and questions as to its biographical authenticity); and Jonathan Franzen's "The Corrections" (and the author's statement that he did not want it included in the Book Club). It is worth noting that, years later, Oprah handed out Kindles to a gleeful audience.

Thus, readers were already moving to the online world to connect with other readers when much more interactive and community-driven websites started to appear in what was later dubbed the emergence of Web 2.0. Book management/recommendation sites (for example: good reads, library thing and Facebook apps) now shape what some people choose to read. Suddenly, the wisdom of crowds began offering a service long offered by librarians: Readers' Advisory. Whereas Readers' Advisory is not very scalable, traditionally involving a one-on-one transaction, book recommendation software features adapt with the user's preferences and with the preferences of the community. A long-tail title can explode in popularity, years after its initial release, simply via viral marketing on social networking sites, as detailed in Chris Anderson's "The Long Tail". Wikipedia defines long tail marketing as referring to "describing the retailing strategy of selling a large number of unique items with relatively small quantities sold of each – usually in addition to selling fewer popular items in large quantities" ("Long Tail," 2012, para. 2). One oft-cited example of this is Jon Krakauer's "Into Thin Air", which exploded in popularity years after its initial release thanks to online reviews and interest. Readers, in their ability to harness the collective book reading experience by using their social network connections, are gaining the Readers' Advisory expertise of their local librarian.

Many people use social media for book sharing and the Good Reads site allows users to recommend books they are currently reading. Google Bookstore offers links to reviews from sites like Good Reads and suggests related books. Good Reads expands on the idea of book clubs by enlisting the author to create a type of game or contest around the work (http://www.goodreads.com/challenges/4-the-goodreads-book-club-challenge). Bookperk does something similar. For example, they recently ran a contest to choose who would be the voice of the next Neil Gaiman audiobook as selected from the most user votes (http://neilgaiman.bookperk.com). The number of social networking sites that have developed for readers is growing, and these collective groups, provide the tool for readers to gain expertise about popular titles and authors and have book discussions. Publishers, librarians and booksellers are now adapting their services to fill other gaps. The New York Public Library has attempted some out-of-the-box experiments in social networking, such publicly written staff blogs. Blogs on NYPL.org serve as a Readers' Advisory to anyone with an internet connection, in lieu of the traditional, in-person Readers' Advisory which was constrained by geographic location.

A few key elements emerge as being central to user expertise: reputation and trust; popularity; the quality and enthusiasm of a review; and like-mindedness or shared interests between the reviewer and the person reading the review. Social

software sites that promote these elements seem to be the most successful at emulating a Readers' Advisory interaction.

For authors, the advent of social media and eBooks has translated into a plethora of free options and opportunities. From The National Novel Writing Month website (www.nanowrimo.org), to gather.com, users create content. Plug-ins for popular blogging software allows authors to export their blog posts into ePub, a popular eBook format. Sites like Gather encourage writing by creating communities around shared interests. Users are encouraged to write fan fiction rather than simply be consumers of the types of media they are passionate about. These groups also serve as a vetting process as the community can work as a sort of focus group for early drafts, meaning that the author no longer is forced to work in solitude. The social networking that these groups accomplish can extend even to the cover art and marketing stages of a work, long before that work is ever glimpsed by a publisher. Cory Doctorow, for example, was able to make use of these networks from an early stage in his career, partly from his involvement with the ever-popular BoingBoing.net and partly from what he refers to in his novels as "Whuffie", a kind of reputation-based currency that is gained (or lost) with favorable (or unfavorable) actions in his book "Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom".

Authors are now better able to build their own buzz with social networking tools, as was the case with Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight" series. Meyer was able to build a fan base through her blog and build enough buzz to secure a movie deal. Although the "Twilight" series was not self-published, the marketing style conformed to the self-publishing ethos. Self-published books are increasing in popularity. The creator of a work can control the means of production and distribution of the works, as with Cory Doctorow's oeuvre. Doctorow was distributing his short stories as ebooks before any major publishers had developed ebook distribution streams. Now, self-publishing is no longer simply the domain of vanity works but a distribution stream unto itself.

Self-epublishing has exploded in popularity and a few start ups have risen to meet the demand. For example, Bookbaby.com converts and distributes your ebook for roughly $40 and gives the user 100% of the royalties through their network of digital retailers like Apple's iBookstore, the Nook store at Barnes & Nobles and the Kindle store at Amazon.com. Tapjoy has announced a self-publishing program for mobile developers to publish their games. As many core audiences have slowly moved from spending leisure time reading to watching movies to playing videogames (or perhaps, went straight to playing video games), the opportunities for digital natives to present their own stories have moved right along with them.

There is a stigma attached to self-published works that has not been eliminated by the shift to digital books, but the reviews and ranking systems of ebooks can make or break their popularity, rather than the traditional vetting systems. A New York Times Book Review article describes how Justin Halpern, a 28-year old semi-employed comedy writer living with his parents in Los Angeles, went from a virtually unknown young man with a Twitter account, to a best-selling author in just nine months. He decided to start posting his 73-year-old father's irascible, foul-mouthed wisdom on a Twitter feed that he called 'Stuff My Dad Says.' "Nine months later, he has more than a million followers, a deal for a sitcom starring William Shatner (tentatively titled ''Bleep My Dad Says'') and a book at No. 8 on the hardcover nonfiction list" (Schuessler, 2010, para 1). Although the number of books sold translates into best-seller status and still symbolizes success, statistics like the number of followers for a Twitter feed, or the number of friends on a Facebook page, are starting to gain equal hold in terms of measuring success and the popularity of an author's work.

While many people who grew up with libraries see them as "temples to books", digital natives intuitively find the content they crave from eBook web sites and "readalikes" (book recommendations based on what they're currently reading) from social networking web sites rather than from things such as traditional library displays, librarian recommendations, etc. Eli Neiburger, Associate Director for IT & Production at the Ann Arbor District Library, spoke on this at the LJ/SLJ eBooks conference, saying (as reported in an article on digital book world) "libraries are screwed". "In an internetworked world, the idea of a local copy only makes sense to a hoarder," He says. Ultimately, he says libraries still have a future as community spaces that are places of production. How are libraries working to ensure their users are producers of ebooks and not simply consumers of them? He ended his talk by saying, "The cat is out of the bag. Everyone is a publisher. The 20th-century [library] brought the world to its community. The 21st-century library brings its community to the world" (Williams, 2010, The Library as Platform, para 2).

A recent NPR article comments, "In the current climate, libraries worry they'll become obsolete. Publishers are afraid they won't be able to make any money" (Neary, 2011, para 6). The demise of print is predicted and decried almost as often as the prediction that libraries will disappear. The common argument is that "everything" will be available online. However, not everything will be available for free online. Libraries have traditionally made materials that are expensive available for free to their users, which encourages reading and literacy, even in the poorest populations. Libraries are known for digital divide initiatives and reading programs. Although the Amazon Kindle and Barnes & Noble Nook are in the process of adding "LendMe" features which promise to have the appeal of library services, if not the full functionality, these functionalities still rely on a reader knowing someone who has the book.

Some libraries are responding by building a strong social media presence so that they can be in the virtual place where their users congregate. The New York Public Library, for example, tackled this by hosting a Social Media Week and bringing together the minds at Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, and Google to help them develop their social media strategy.

Booksellers are no exception to those in the book industry whose demise is regularly predicted, even globally. For example, Yin (June 15, 2011) reported in Galleycat, "Australian small business minister Nick Sherry angered booksellers by predicting that bookstores "will cease to exist" in five years" (para 1). The business minister was referring to brick and mortar stores, not the monolith online retailers like Amazon.com, who has branched out and now sells everything from diapers to toasters. Australia is an interesting case because the retail price on their books is substantially high, yet they have a flourishing book culture, despite a push to get the Internet into Australian households. (Reuters, 2011). Meanwhile, in the United States, Barnes & Noble recently reported a net loss, despite a 20 percent increase in sales for the fiscal year and addressed a recent buyout bid (Boog, 2011). Some

bookstores are now charging for in-store author events, a move that was previously considered "desperate" (Yin, June 22, 2011) Booksellers are already looking to the Apple store's customer service model so that they can be as nimble as the oft-cited giant in user-friendliness. However, no bookstore, no matter how well stocked, has everything.

## CONCLUSION

As user demand turns towards ebook readers over traditional print media, communities still need to continue to disseminate information and promote literacy in a reliable and effective way. Ironically, the same touting of user expertise that will lead to the obsolescence of major stakeholders in "the book business" (librarians, publishers & booksellers), might ultimately lead to less literate users, or at least, a much wider literacy divide. Libraries currently provide paid content for free. Without libraries, users who cannot pay for content, will be limited to only free content, which is undoubtedly far more abundant and accessible but not necessarily equal in authority or quality to paid content. Libraries and schools seem the best poised to tackle the task of a potential literacy divide by continuing to provide content for free to their users, but with a dwindling infrastructure, users may need to advocate for themselves.

The ever-changing nature of technology means that digital readers will likely come down in price, but that new and improved models will continually be on the landscape as well. Without a doubt, many of these improvements will serve to make readers more connected and reading as a pastime may look very different from the solitary experience it currently is.

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# TRANSLATION AND EXCERPT FROM JOSE MARTÍ'S *LAS CLASES ORALES*[1]

*Nelson Núñez-Rodríguez*
*Kim Sanabria*

## INTRODUCTION

Recent pedagogical research emphasizes student engagement in the learning process. With this in mind, instructors, as experts in the field, need to deconstruct their teaching methodology to influence the intensity, persistence and quality of student learning behavior.[2] Jose Martí (1853-1895) provided valuable insight into the way oral lessons enhance this process.

## TRANSLATION

Reading does not focus your attention: it distracts it. Human nature, particularly in the Americas, needs reason to be addressed with imagination: it feeds on lively, nuanced discussion: it calls for a vibrant format to envelop topics that are essentially dry and serious. It is not that American intelligences reject depth: it is that they need a bright pathway to draw them to it.

One could say that reading aspires to give respectability to oral classes. Classes do not need this. Knowledge becomes better established if it is imparted in a more enjoyable way.

Those responsible for college lessons certainly have nothing to fear as regards the success their words may have. They are all distinguished experts, appreciated for their merit, and mostly loved by the young people attending their classes. (…)

Classes thrive on animation and skirmish. Sometimes, attention becomes weary, and it needs a chance incident to shake it up and reanimate it. Concepts expressed in a daily, natural way are recorded by one's intelligence better than those that are presented in a diluted way, that of written communication, which is intrinsically stark and detailed. People who write something for others to read know that what they write is to be submitted to scrutiny, because it is not improvised. They therefore seek to write nothing objectionable.

## ORIGINAL TEXT

*Una lectura no sujeta, antes distrae la atención: la naturaleza humana y sobre todo, las naturalezas americanas, necesitan de que lo que se presente a su razón tenga algún carácter imaginativo; gustan de una locución vivaz y accidentada; han menester que cierta forma brillante envuelva lo que es en su esencia árido y grave. No es que las inteligencias americanas rechacen la profundidad; es que necesitan ir por un camino brillante hacia ella.*

*Pudiera decirse que se pretende dar con las lecturas cierto carácter respetable a las clases orales. Las clases no lo necesitan. -Los conocimientos se fijan más, en tanto se les da una forma más amena.*

*No tienen ciertamente las personas encargadas de las lecciones del Colegio, nada que temer en cuanto al éxito que allí pudiera tener su palabra. Son todos ellos jurisconsultos distinguidos, apreciados en su valer, y en su mayor parte amados por la juventud que ha de asistir a las clases. (…)*

*Viven las clases de la animación y el incidente. Necesita a veces la atención cansada un recurso accidental que la sacuda y la reanime. Grábanse mejor en la inteligencia los conceptos que se expresan en la forma diaria y natural, que los que se presentan envueltos en la forma diluida, siempre severa y naturalmente detallada, de las peroraciones escritas. El que escribe lo que ha de leer, sabe que escribe lo que, por el hecho de no ser improvisación, ha de someterse a juicio: quiere, por tanto, que el juicio no halle nada censurable en él.*

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[1] *Revista Universal, México, Vol.6.* (18 June 1875): 234 – 236.

[2] Ambrose, S.A., Bridges M.W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M.C., Norman M.K. *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching.* Jossey-Bass. (2010).

## STREET LIFE: CONNECTING CULTURES OF SANTO DOMINGO AND NEW YORK CITY

*William Casari*

These photographs were taken as part of my PSC-CUNY grant *Street Life: Connecting the Cultures of Santo Domingo and New York City*. My photographic essay examines life on two streets: The Grand Concourse in the Bronx, New York and Avenida Mella in the Colonial Zone of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. I hope to illustrate the intersection of the lived experience for Dominicans and others along both streets and show the connections between the two places.

As I take photographs in both venues, I think of comparisons between the two streets and the two countries. I look for people doing similar things, apartment buildings, businesses and retail activity along both streets. However, when I begin editing the photographs later I just notice how different the two streets really are. While the lived experience and people might have similarities, through the photographs the built environment and way residents interact with their surroundings is very different on Avenida Mella than the Grand Concourse. Structures, automobiles, shopping and passersby interact differently in each public space. Many Dominicans and others populate each environment.

I find it easier to take photographs and try not to think about the result. Just take photographs and see what happens. I hope they speak for themselves. Alternatively, I found myself walking along other nearby avenues and neighboring streets: Broadway in Washington Heights, Manhattan and the Little Haiti street market just off Avenida Mella in Santo Domingo. The stories on nearby streets inform the entire neighborhood. This photographic essay is a work in progress and will be completed Summer 2012. Until then I will continue taking photographs and looking at the results. I hope those who view my photographs can stay in a place of wonderment and exploration before moving to analytic thoughts when looking at the images. At least for a moment.

### PHOTOS

1. Bronx County Building with Thomas Garden Apartments in foreground. Grand Concourse, Bronx New York. August 2011.
2. Dominican Day Parade. Grand Concourse, Bronx, New York. 24 July 2011.
3. Avenida Mella in the Colonial Zone, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. January 2012.
4. Bike vendor along Avenida Mella, Colonial Zone, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. January 2012.
5. Passersby walking along Avenida Mella, Colonial Zone, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. January 2012.
6. Dominican Day Parade. Grand Concourse, Bronx, New York. 24 July 2011.
7. Dominican Day Parade. Grand Concourse, Bronx, New York. 24 July 2011.
8. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. January 2012.

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Bronx County Building with Thomas Garden Apartments in foreground.  Grand Concourse, Bronx New York. August 2011.

Dominican Day Parade.  Grand Concourse, Bronx, New York. 24 July 2011.



Avenida Mella in the Colonial Zone, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. January 2012.

Bike vendor along Avenida Mella, Colonial Zone, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. January 2012.



Passersby walking along Avenida Mella, Colonial Zone, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. January 2012.

Dominican Day Parade.  Grand Concourse, Bronx, New York. 24 July 2011.



Dominican Day Parade.  Grand Concourse, Bronx, New York. 24 July 2011.

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. January 2012.

## MORE THAN TOLERANCE:
## DISRUPTING HETERONORMATIVE
## ASSUMPTIONS IN A BIOLOGY CLASSROOM

*Julie Trachman*

In **"Teaching Queer: Bringing Lesbian and Gay Studies into the Community College Classroom,"** Glasgow and Klevitt caution that tolerance and even acceptance is not necessarily adequate for creating a more inclusive classroom setting. They write that "[i]t can do more harm than good because the concept of tolerance itself implies that what is tolerated is something that one does not really consider to be equal in value"(233). This article was one of several sources focusing on curriculum transformation that were suggested as reading material in preparation for the Oct. 28th 2011 workshop sponsored by the Hostos Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) and the Women and Gender Studies (WGS) committee.

This particular statement regarding tolerance caught the attention of many of us in attendance at that workshop. The guest speaker, Prof. Susan Farrell of Kingsborough Community College, led a discussion that considered the above and other articles in order to help us develop ideas on how to both integrate WGS topics into a wide variety of courses and build cross-disciplinary bridges where possible. As a starting point to our day-long conversation, we agreed that as educators we all need to strive to move beyond mere tolerance when it comes to issues of inclusiveness in and out of the classroom.

The emphasis of this workshop was consistent with the ongoing conversation promoting diversity in academia at large. The literature on curriculum transformation in the Women and Gender Studies discipline promulgates many of the same points that have been discussed in the publications of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) throughout this past decade. In AACU's fall 2011 newsletter, *Making Excellence Inclusive* (*MEI*) (fall 2011), Albertine and McNair (4) discuss MEI core principles and ask us to pay "attention to the cultural differences learners bring to educational experiences, and how that diversity can enhance the enterprise." MEI also advocate for us to ensure that every student regardless of race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc., is afforded "the best possible course of study for the context in which the education is offered."

CUNY has participated in this endeavor for a number of years, as showcased in a 2009 AACU MEI newsletter (Clayton-Pedersen 4). Faculty on all of the CUNY campuses were asked to participate in a flurry of activities last spring directed at assessing the diversity of the CUNY campuses such as the CUNY Strategy Sessions on Diversity and Inclusion. Some of us were asked also to participate in the session entitled "Inclusive Excellence" held on April 29, 2011, CUNY Central. These sessions focused primarily on diversity of faculty members but to some extent had us consider the diversity of the CUNY student population as well. In talking with faculty while these activities were in progress, it seemed that up until spring 2011 the Inclusive Excellence initiative had been relatively unknown amongst faculty on the Hostos campus. However, Hostos' mission statement clearly manifests the MEI core principles, and all one needs to do is to take a look at the individuals populating the campus to recognize that Hostos is constantly striving towards the ideal of "inclusive excellence" with respect to student education and faculty and student diversity.

Efforts such as the Inclusive Excellence initiative on college campuses like CUNY and K-12 schools across the country exemplify the efforts made in the United States—as well as throughout the world in recognizing and promoting human rights—including LGBT rights. These types of initiatives push us to examine as members of communities and as individuals our own attitudes and practices on human rights issues and concerns, to try to ensure that each person is neither endangered nor made to feel marginalized. As Secretary of State Hilary Clinton acknowledged in her Dec. 6, 2011 speech before the U.N. Human Rights Council, which focused on LGBT issues and was reported upon by Volshoy and Ford, the U.S. is not perfect when it comes to LGBT issues and other human rights concerns and has a ways to go. Nonetheless, the country is making progress and working to enact laws that protect everyone. Secretary of State Clinton mentions that "laws are 'teaching' and they help to lead the way for the entire society." She goes on to say that "[l]aws that require equal protections reinforce the moral imperative of equality." With respect to progress in the U.S. on LGBT issues as of 2003, gay behavior is no longer criminalized in any state in the U.S. Recently, "Don't ask, Don't tell" for military personnel has been repealed and more and more states are allowing gay individuals to enter into marriage contracts. New York State legalized gay marriage in the summer of 2011 and the eighth state, Washington, in February 2012 signed a bill to enact gay marriage soon.

Even though it is against U.S. law today and considered to be a hate crime, there are still many LGBT Americans who experience bullying, harassment and / or violence in their daily lives. We know there are occurrences such as what happened to Matthew Shepard who, in 1998, was tortured and murdered for being gay. Even today, we unfortunately hear of similar enough episodes even in New York City and elsewhere: individuals being assaulted or even murdered because of their sexual orientation. And everyone is likely to be aware of the situation regarding Tyler Clementi who was cyber-bullied and committed suicide when "outed" by his roommate. In March 2012, Clementi's roommate, Dharun Ravi, was convicted of invasion of privacy, hindering apprehension, witness tampering, and all four of the bias intimidation charges. Worldwide, the situation is considerably bleaker. There are 76 countries which still criminalize gay behavior and in five countries, gay individuals may be put to death (Nebehay). Some countries seem to be regressing. For example, Uganda is currently trying to enact the death penalty for homosexuality in certain contexts (Mugashi).

As Secretary of State Clinton says in her speech to the U.N., "[W]hen any part of humanity is sidelined, the rest of us cannot sit on the sidelines…. Progress starts with honest discussion... reaching understanding in a constellation of conversations in places big and small…." (Voshoy and Ford).

All college campuses including Hostos (representing small places) need to participate in these honest conversations in order to move everyone as much as possible into the 21st century attitude-wise regarding to LBGT issues. According to Blumenfeld (21), 31% of LBGTQ students, faculty and staff who were recently surveyed at higher education campuses reported they experienced "a difficult or hostile campus climate and 21% experienced some form of harassment related to their sexual identity or gender expression." The hostile climate at these campuses had negative impacts on the students' educational experiences, with many considering leaving school, and others experiencing "lower educational outcomes." Many felt the hostile campus climate affected their mental and physical well-being.

Hostos, like many college campuses across the country, is not as safe a haven as we would like it to be for all of our students, staff and faculty. Occasionally, homophobic comments are overheard in the classrooms, hallways and Hostos' environs, and we all worry about the potential occurrence of more violent forms of gay bashing. The Sexual Harassment Awareness and Intake Committee helps educate students and faculty on campus regarding these matters, but it is not enough. Many faculty, staff and students have come together in new initiatives to expand on educational outreach. The Hostos Civility Committee came into being in fall 2010, the Safe Zone initiative was launched officially in fall 2011, and The Open Alliance kickoff occurred in April 2012. These efforts, all sanctioned by the OAA, are directed at promoting safe and supportive environments for all of us to work towards educating our students and maximizing the positive learning experiences of our students. Besides supporting the WGS workshop held October 28, 2011, the OAA also co-sponsored in fall 2011 the WGS film series, which was used as a platform to promote a better understanding of WGS issues.

Promotion of curriculum transformation in regard to LBGT issues and other diversity concerns such as race, ethnicity and gender issues is a topic being considered in many of our recent pedagogic journals as evidenced by Armstrong's article in National Education Association's journal, *Thought and Action*. Armstrong (51) asks us to contemplate that "students learn best when they are truly visible, respected, and safe, and that you want them to be prepared to thrive in a world that is complexly diverse." Armstrong (53) posits that we should consider fostering this type of inclusivity across all disciplines.

In AACU's publication *Diversity and Democracy,* devoted to LBGTQ issues, Blumenfeld (21) advocates similarly that LBGT issues should be considered in all classes regardless of the discipline.

In accordance with the above, Hackman in her article in the AACU *Diversity and Democracy* publication focuses on the social justice aspect, whereby each student will be ideally fully engaged because he or she is being treated fairly irrespective of his or her background and is afforded equal opportunities to be successful in his or her studies. Hackman suggests that we take this even further by asking us to explore

in the classroom the incorrect rigid notion of the binary constructs of male and female in order to understand the origins of heterosexism and homophobia. Like Hackman, Zacko-Smith and Pritchy Smith (8) ask educators in the classroom to "strive towards an understanding that both gender and sexuality lie on a continuum, with no point on that continuum being better or worse than any other." With this understanding that gender and sexuality are on a continuum (an idea given credence by the scientific work of Kinnsey et al. and Fausto-Sterling), it becomes possible for us as educators and as a society as a whole to ask everyone to appreciate and respect these inherent differences amongst human beings; moreover, these values can be utilized to enrich our students' educational experiences. Zacko-Smith and Pritchy Smith (2) ask educators to serve as mentors and to help define the reality for those we are educating, and configure this reality to coincide with the demands for social justice and equity. This endeavor to expose students to more diverse ideas has long-term benefits for our society. Several studies have shown that student exposure to diverse ideas, especially in the first couple of years of college, increase the likelihood that these individuals will be able to continue entertaining more diverse thoughts after college (Milem et al. 689; Schott-Cecacci et al. 37).

Human beings like to think in binary terms when it comes to an individual's sex (that is, his or her maleness or femaleness, according to an "evaluation of chromosomal sex, gonadal sex and morphological sex and secondary sex traits") (Loue 54) and when it comes to an individual's gender (that is , his or her masculinity or femininity, which in reality are socially constructed roles, behaviors, thoughts, characteristics, etc. that a given society deems suitable for males and females respectively) (Loue 59 -60). Echoing what was said earlier, Kinnsey (897), in discussing male homosexuality states "[t]he world is not divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects." Fausto-Sterling in her work on human sexuality has been talking for years of the idea of not just being two sexes, but rather five (acknowledging that there is in reality a continuum with male and female at either ends of the spectrum, which Fausto-Sterling refers to as "intersex") (Fausto-Sterling 1993, 21; Fausto-Sterling 2003, 19). Many of us in society still tend to think in heteronormative terms. These heteronormative assumptions are not correct and unfortunately, if maintained, can lead many individuals who do not fit in the pigeon-hole to feel marginalized or to experience homophobia. Those of us in education, regardless of our discipline, have been asked to work towards disrupting this heteronormative thinking (Sumara and Davis 191, 202; Broadway 296).  As a biology teacher, one would think this would be easy, but many of our textbooks still maintain many heteronormative viewpoints (Broadway 294), so we have to look elsewhere for alternative resources and think somewhat outside of the box.

In spring 2011, the Women and Gender Studies committee conceived the idea of showing a series of films in the fall to somewhat complement the Women's History Months events held in March of every year. Because of my long-standing interest in gender and biology issues (and the nature vs. nurture aspect of psychological issues), as well as an awareness of the Safe Zone Initiative to be launched in fall 2011, I considered a number of movies that bore a relationship to LGBT issues and decided upon the award-winning movie, "TransAmerica," which pertains to transsexualism. Because this topic was not directly germane to the biology classes that I was teaching during the fall 2011 semester, I offered to show the movie outside of class time, but was willing to offer my Anatomy and Physiology 1 (A&P1) students extra credit if they attended and did a write-up on the movie topic. I also knew that there was a possibility that my colleagues on the WGS committee would send their students but they also were showing movies of their own that tied in with their particular course content. Mentioning the movie to my students, many showed interest but could not attend at the scheduled time. Some were willing to watch on their own.  However, because expanding student awareness about LGBT issues was very important to me, I decided to broaden the extra-credit assignment and scaffold it in a way that it would also help all students who decided to do the assignment, including those who had attended the movie. As a springboard with which to link the film with concepts and factual content of the A&P course textbook by Martini et al., I had the students read a New York Times article entitled "Pas de Deux of Sexuality," which I believed was a good complement to the movie topic because of its dealings with the biological complexities of gender identification /sexual orientation. I felt that under the circumstances I could carefully use it for A&P1, which does not cover human reproduction, genetics, nervous system or the endocrine system or topics that are directly relevant to the assignment (in science courses, we are under tight constraints as to topic coverage). I had been including gender and biology topics "gently" prior to the introduction of this assignment. For example, my discussion in my classes about the South African female athlete Caster Semenya (Dreger) made quite an impression on my students. Because of her male physique, Semenya was accused for a time of being male and not allowed to compete for a given period. The creation of this assignment based on the Pas de Deux article was, indeed, a huge leap forward in transforming the curriculum regarding WGS issues. Given the launch of the Safe Zone initiative, the legalization of gay marriages last summer in New York State, and the specter of individuals like Tyler Clementi, I felt the extra-credit assignment was worth doing as long as I carefully crafted the assignment in such a way as to not take students too far beyond the scope of the A&P1 course and make it somewhat relevant to course content that they would need at a future time in A&P2 (overall, a win-win situation).

Using the A&P text and the NY Times article as the basis of the writing assignment, I constructed a series of questions that would get the students to appreciate just how complex sex and gender identification really is. I wanted the students to see all of the steps involved in determining a person's sex. I started with the basic genetics: What happens if someone has XX vs. XY among their 46 chromosomes as compared to those an individual with certain genetic anomalies like XO vs. XXY? What is the role of the SRY region on the Y chromosome? I had students considering the influences of the sex hormones at different stages of human development. Students became more aware of the sex hormones' physical and psychological impacts on brain development and function. I had students recognizing that both males and females produce both of the stereotypic male and female hormones but typically produce them in differing proportions; however, there are individuals where the hormone production does not always fall within "normal" ranges. Additionally, there are some individuals who could produce these hormones

in adequate amounts but could experience atypical developmental patterns if the individual is lacking the necessary hormone receptors.  I wanted students to realize, even if subliminally, that within all of this complexity due to underlying biology, there is a continuum, and sex/ gender identification is not simply "binary" – male or female. Understanding this, they would better understand the 'Brees of the world (Bree being the fictional subject of TransAmerica) or more importantly, the Chaz Bonos and Tyler Clementis of the real world. These individuals are part and parcel of the full spectrum of the human condition.

Twenty-four students attended the movie with fifteen in attendance from my A&P1 classes. Eleven students from my A&P classes submitted the extra-credit writing assignment (with three A&P students also attending the movie). Between the quality of the contents of the assignments submitted, and the discussion in class after the viewing of the movie, it was apparent that the students genuinely appreci-ated the fact that sex and gender are a lot more complicated than first meets the eye (even the discussion in class when the assignment was disseminated to my three sections of A&P students was of some value in getting the point across about the complexities regarding gender and sex). Students who submitted the write up and / or came to the movie clearly demonstrated that they understood that it is much more than having XX chromosomes equated to being female and XY chromosomes equated to being male. The students came to understand as well that as a society we need to appreciate that there are many "in-between" areas that exist and that we can be much more "sensitive" in regard to how we approach our conversations about human sexuality and gender.

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# NEURO MATHEMATICS EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

*Alexander Vaninsky*

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## ABSTRACT

Teaching and learning mathematics may be viewed as an interactive process of creation of specific domains in the human brain. The domains later act as mathematics knowledge centers. Learning mathematics may be regarded as a development of connections among them and other centers. Topology and the dynamical system of mathematics—related brain structuring are promising areas of research. We refer to this approach as Neuro Mathematics Education (NME) and focus on the role of technology. The NME approach allows for a new insight into mathematical abilities and paves the way for development of original teaching tools, strategies and techniques. In particular, it stresses the principal importance of eliminating mathematics anxiety—the main barrier to success in mathematics. Among the new tools for teaching mathematics are the active development of mathematical intuition, which is a skill of finding solutions to problems without following formal rules, using hypnopedia and hypnosis, and instruction delivery in the multifaceted interactive environment, to name a few. The goal of the NME is the creation of a positive mental environment for the perception and storage of mathematical information: concepts, notions, rules, techniques, etc. We present evidence that using technology contributes to the implementation of the NME in practice and has a positive impact on perception of mathematics and its applications.

## PERCEPTION OF MATH

Mathematicians tend to underestimate the mental challenges related to learning mathematics.

Evidence:

"…In spite of trying a myriad of popular methods (modified Socratic, self-paced instruction, mastery learning, etc.), what I produced …was *in*effective teaching. I was a good lecturer, enthusiastic about teaching, serious in my attempt to do it well, and I cared about my students. They liked me and my courses, but from everything I could see, they were not learning much more than students of other teachers, and that was woefully inadequate" (Dubinsky & Moses, 2011).

## EXAMPLES

An opinion of a person who has grasped a concept:

"What is so hard about equivalence classes of ordered pairs of integers?" (Wu, 2011, re: teaching fractions).

An opinion of a person who has not:

"…As a young student of functional analysis, I had considerable difficulty with the idea of the duality of a locally convex space. I was fine with the notion of a linear functional that acted on elements …to produce numbers… But the idea of applying actions to these transformations, …equipping <them> with arithmetic and …topologies, was really tough for me" (Dubinsky & Moses, 2011).

Pedagogically, there is no big difference between the two situations. The problem is in the difference in the individual perception by different people.

## WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Generally speaking, we, the Instructors, should clearly understand the mental activities taking place in students' brains and manage them appropriately to make our students successful mathematics learners. One of the ways to achieve this goal is to use a neuroscience approach to teaching mathematics. It was proposed, among other publications, in Laughbaum (2011) that we follow in this presentation. Our objective is to suggest some new ways of instruction delivery stemming from the neuroscience approach and to stress the role of technology. We refer to this approach as Neuro Mathematics Education (NME).

## NEUROSCIENCE APPROACH TO TEACHING MATHEMATICS

The neuroscience approach to teaching considers the transfer of knowledge as having a direct impact on the human brain and the forming domains that act as knowledge centers. Using technology in a mathematics classroom helps the implementation of the teaching tools suggested by neuroscience. Technology contributes to the optimization of the process of accumulation of information in working memory and sets up the appropriate pace of its transfer from working to long-term memory. Technology helps to increase the intensity of knowledge transfer from instructor to student, and to avoid a congestion of the student's working memory, leading to mathematics anxiety on one side, and the instructor feeling overloaded, on the other side.

## GENERAL COMMENTS

As mentioned in Laughbaum (2011), the brain always tries to associate an additional portion of information to that already stored and related to the same or associated area of knowledge. The success of a learning process depends on:

- The state of development of the long-term memory;
- The capacity of working memory;
- The conductivity of the channels connecting working and long-term memory;
- The conductivity of the channels through which new information is delivered;
- Noise in the channels.

The multi-channel delivery of new information using verbal, visual, and spatial means simultaneously is preferable because total conductivity of a set of channels is greater than that of any particular one. This phenomenon is well-known in conventional pedagogy; neuroscience approach allows for its further elaboration.

**REASONS OF UNSUCCESSFUL LEARNING**

Neuroscience approach reveals some cases when any method of conventional teaching has been practically ineffectual. First is a case of a restricted capacity of working memory. Such students cannot comprehend concepts or notions presented in a classroom, and experience mathematics anxiety, according to Klinberg (2009). Insufficiency of the working memory may be compensated by shorter lessons or limitations imposed on the amount of new material per lesson.

The second reason is a weak long-term memory. Students may be successful during a classroom period but unable to memorize procedures or strategies for a long period of time.

Teachers assigned teaching mathematics classes comprising students suffering this hidden incapacity will face poor performance and low achievement rates.

The third reason is general memory-related problems. Such situations should be recognized in a timely manner. Only specially designed measures including special education and using medications aimed at memory improvement can help.

The fourth reason is the high level of noise in the information channels. In such cases information cannot reach the brain in full because it is mixed in the channels with a lot of subject-unrelated noise. Most of its content is lost along the way.

**PRACTICES TO AVOID**

The main way to successful teaching mathematics is to avoid mathematics anxiety that blocks further perception. For example, any quiz suggested in the beginning of the class should aim not to upset students. Any assessment should demonstrate students' progress, though possibly, very small. In our experiment, all quizzes were intentionally made very easy and were counted towards extra credit.

It is also important to avoid comparing publicly successful students with those who are still not on track.

It is essential to stress any progress in the mathematical study and give some small extra credit for any improvements.

**HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP?**

What follows is an example of implementation of some elements of the neuroscience approach for teaching mathematics in a community college. It is based on using technology to arrange the educational process in a recursive way referred to as MARTA: the Multilevel Alternating Recursive Teaching – Assessment, Vaninsky (2010).

It comprises:
- *Classroom or interactive video contact* as a basic and most crucial element of teaching and learning mathematics.
- *Online exercises* for enrichment and self-paced practice.
- *Alternating teaching and assignment* at all levels of proficiency.

## MARTA functional scheme
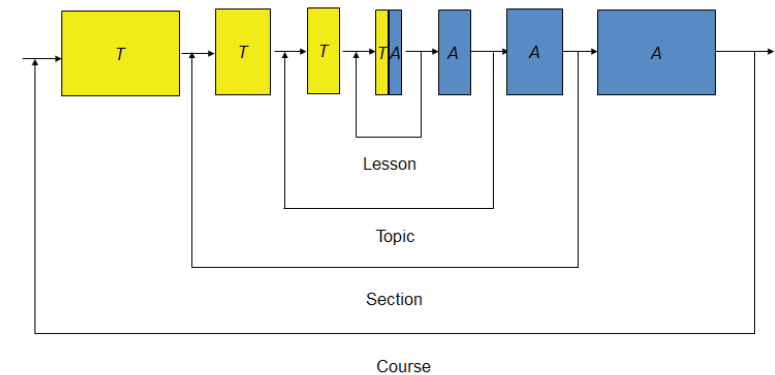


**NEW TEACHING TOOLS**

In the technology-based environment, the following new teaching tools have become available for all instructors:

- Video lecturing with personal contact with students (using Acrobat Connect or equivalent);
- Prerecorded video classes on CDs or streamlined;
- Supervised video—practice;
- Online independent practice.

Technology also provides access to mathematical poems, songs, games, and plays, and makes fully innovative teaching tools available: i.e., meditation, hypnopedia (sleep-learning ), hypnosis, etc. Some examples of application of these tools are described in the literature but it should be stressed that such techniques require much more additional study before being recommended for practical use. The neuroscience approach emphasizes their practical importance.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study presents a neuroscience approach to teaching and learning mathematics (NME) with a stress on using technology. Learning mathematics is regarded as having a direct impact on students' brains, their development of mathematical knowledge domains, and establishing connections among them and other domains. New teaching tools are available in the framework of the NME, such as mathematics meditation, hypnopedia, hypnosis, etc. Technology allows for the optimization of the pace of information delivery to working memory and its transfer to long-term memory using a nested multilevel process oriented to learners of different types and styles. Using technology decreases the probability of mathematics anxiety and enables the instructor to avoid overload.

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# THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHIES

## *Carl James Grindley*

Today, teaching statements, or teaching philosophies are the stuff that dossiers and portfolios are made on. Lamentably, however, a great many such statements appear to be nothing more substantial than hastily constructed busy-work that through a surfeit of online guides have become more and more formulaic, gradually removing the true personality of the person behind the desk, and replacing it with a blueprint of the desk itself. Without resorting too strenuously to scholarship on the matter, it is reasonable to suggest that the subject is at once vexing, vague and of tremendous importance to people's potential and present careers. As Gabriela Montell noted back in 2003:

> The problem, some professors say, is there's an absence of criteria about what constitutes a good teaching statement, not to mention good teaching. In fact, few professors were able to give concrete examples of what they considered a bad statement, but most said they knew one when they saw it. (n.page)

Similarly, Nancy Van Note Chism mused:

> When asked to write a statement on their philosophy of teaching, many college teachers react in the same way as professionals, athletes, or artists might if asked to articulate their goals and how to achieve them: "Why should I spend time writing this down? Why can't I just do it?" For action oriented individuals, the request to write down one's philosophy is not only mildly irritating, but causes some anxiety about where to begin. Just what is meant by a philosophy of teaching anyway? (1)

Along the same line of reasoning, Daniel Pratt, writing for the AAUP lamented:

As I watch the mounting pressure on faculty members to produce philosophy of teaching statements, I see strategies ranging from genuine reflection on commitments that clarify and justify specific educational aims and means, to simple borrowing of ideas and texts from available samples and sites. For those involved in the review of teaching, it may be difficult to discern the genuine from the contrived, the sophisticated from the naive, or the profound from the prosaic unless we move philosophy of teaching statements from the periphery to the center of the review process. If such documents continue to be peripheral, faculty will have little incentive to opt for the genuine rather than the borrowed as they craft their own statements. (n.page)

Currently, there are some 960 PDFs of individual teaching statements or guides to writing teaching statements posted on sites with the .edu extension. Most are wracked with banality or link to one another (Indiana, for example, sends people to Duquesne, The University of Minnesota, The University of Michigan, and The University of Georgia, (http://www.indiana.edu/~harweb/teaching/Article%202.pdf); whereas The University of Washington directs its graduate student traffic to Ohio State, The University of Texas at El Paso, and The University of California at Berkeley (http://careers.washington.edu/sites/default/files/all/editors/docs/grad-students/Academic_Jobs_Teaching_Statements.pdf... although two of those links are indeed broken). Even Columbia uses examples from Tulane, Wake Forest, The University of Minnesota and Ohio State (http://www.columbia.edu/cu/tat/pdfs/teaching%20statement.pdf).

On the surface, any so-called practical advice appears to be too broad actually to be practical. The University of Florida, for example, advises its product to craft statements that "help employers 'see' you in the classroom and work to clarify your views of teaching and learning while documenting evidence of your successes and potential" (http://www.crc.ufl.edu/assets/files/guides/GRADteachingstatement.pdf). Even more meaningless is Adam Chapnick's advice that:

> There is no style that suits everyone, but there is almost certainly one that will make you more comfortable. And while there is no measurable way to know when you have got it 'right,' in my experience, you will know it when you see it! (5)

Despite the problems with the philosophy of creating a philosophy of teaching, I remain convinced that such documents have a sound place in a portfolio, if, that is, they move away from the formulaic and more towards the personal reflection. Philosophies of teaching, at least in the context of reappointment and promotion, are typically read by broad faculty committees, whose members come from divergent fields. Mathematicians read the portfolios of Allied Health faculty, English professors review the inner workings of the Biologist's mind. With the growth of our college, it is becoming more and more likely that reappointment, tenure and promotion votes will be cast by faculty members who have met the candidate but infrequently, whose dealings with a prospective lifetime colleague might amount to no more than a few hours here and there in a large committee meeting. With this in mind, the teaching statement, at least as it has been envisioned in our portfolios,

takes on a very important task: that of introducing and personalizing one voice out of many. I do not think that this concept has gone unnoticed.

Conversely, something about the portfolio process—introduced at Hostos nearly a decade ago by then Provost Daisy Cocco de Filippis—caught on with those senior faculty whose duty it was to review the work of the untenured. Hostos has always had a culture of sharing experiences, but with the advent of the portfolio system, I think that senior faculty began to reflect on their careers, on their vocations, in ways that have complimented the types of reflections made by their junior colleagues.

I still recall, the thoughts that went on in my mind when I crafted my own statement. In retrospect—and it is posted online in my ePortfolio—it is dismal, as if written by a machine whose only function was to design other machines. If I were to rewrite it today—and that is something I will be doing after reading the statements printed in this edition of *Touchstone*—I would make it far more personal.

Many of our writers this year talk about place. Professors Lundberg, Morales, Phillips and Rodriguez tie their most formative pedagogical moments to specific locations—Sweden, Cuba, the hills of upstate New York... To me, this sense of place was particularly strong in the statements crafted by Professor Phillips who dropped me off "under the shadow of the Adirondack Mountains." In that I agree. My approach to teaching is fixed inviolate to the rhythms and cadences of Canada's pacific coast, where the relentless tides and the ceaseless rains gave one a sense of consistency, so when I was finally ready to attend a university, I fell into my classes as if they were as natural a part of the landscape as the giant cedars and firs. I doubt I could have made the transition from non-student to student in any other environment.

I think that if I were forced to chose just one emotion that I could take from the statements of professors Morales and Rodriguez—who place their most defining moments in Puerto Rico and Cuba respecitvely—it would be joy. It is a little acknowledged truism that there is tremendous joy in both teaching and in witnessing others learn. Both of these experiences come out so clearly in the words of these two remarkable professors, that I am ashamed to admit that my first experience in front of a class was that of terror, that some mistake had been made when I was flung in front of my first composition class as a twenty-something year old teaching assistant. I wish that I could have had the incredible pleasure that both professor Morales and Rodriguez describe—even to this day, I am wracked with anxiety before class, terrified that someone will march in and say that I do not belong.

Professor Laskin does an admirable duty in framing her approach in terms of a transition from one way of life to another. This is, of course, something we have all experienced, if just in the gradual transition from one side of the classroom to the other. Professor Laskin frankly discusses her life as an English PhD, working as an adjunct. As a college, we are all the richer for her choice in leaving the English classroom for the library. She has probably interacted with more students in a term that I will in a decade. If there is anything that reading these statements does, it is to make one reflect with humility on the vast contributions of our senior colleagues.

Professors Cohen and Lundberg head towards the philosophical, with Professor Cohen recognizing the 'sacred' role that we play in leading our students towards both a lifelong passion for learning and engagement in the vast enterprise that is this nation and this planet. Professor Lundberg is at once more reliant on

specific philosophies but also cognizant of the time and place wherein her experiences were consolidated.

The following statements are models of their kind. Far more useful to junior faculty than anything one will find interlinked on the web and useful as well to senior faculty in that these statements are true reflections of the very real humans who crafted them.

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# "EVERY SINGLE SOUL IS A POEM:" POETRY, PEDAGOGY, AND THE PERSONAL

*Leigh Phillips*

This is the poetry of the past.

Fourteen years after leaving Hartford, NY, I still consider myself a country girl. I remember Mr. Robbins driving his tractor down rural route 40, waving hello on the way to his barn. I would wave back, watching the sun set around the shoulders of a man who worked in the field, under the shadow of the Adirondack Mountains.

I grew up in the same fields, with the same mountains. When Mr. Robbins would ring our doorbell with a bag full of corn he had grown, I would look in his eyes and thank him. Several times a year, my parents would bag up the fruits and vegetables harvested from our garden and have me bring them over to Mr. Robbins. Together, our families worked to provide a complete harvest. From an early age, I learned that community is essential; it must be preconceived, planted, nurtured in order for each individual to feast and thrive.

After leaving Hartford, I began to pursue higher education at Sage Junior College of Albany. There, I received a different harvest: the bounty of a liberal arts education. Once I said to my advisor, "All of my classes seem to be connecting to each other in mysterious ways." There was poetry in biology lab and even mathematics; there was mathematics in music and history in art. My advisor looked at me confidently and said, "That's how you know it is working."

Through guidance of supportive faculty members, I stepped into myself as a poet and citizen of an academic community. In addition to perceiving the connections between disciplines, I started seeing connections between myself and those disciplines. Poet Audre Lorde wrote in *The Cancer Journals:* "In becoming forcibly and essentially aware of my mortality, and of what I wished and wanted for my life, however short it might be, priorities and omissions became strongly etched in a merciless light, and what I regretted were my silences. Of what had I ever been afraid?"

As an undergraduate, I read these sentences repeatedly and began to examine my own silences. On the first day of class, I entered the classroom with my eyes downcast. I wrote, but I did not speak. I was afraid that if I gave my opinions in class, my instructors or colleagues would tell me that I was wrong. I was ashamed of where I came from, and did not want anyone to know that I grew up forty-five minutes from a grocery store in a town that was most known for its Grist Mill. I did not want anyone in my women's studies classes to know I was in a 4-H club called "The Laboring Lassies" and that I had won a blue ribbon on my presentation "How To Set a Table Properly." I thought that if I remained silent, I would not have to become who I was, and who I was felt poor, rural, and...*wrong.*

The year I read Audre Lorde's words, "Death, on the other hand, is the final silence" was the year Mr. Robbins was pinned underneath his tractor and died. This year, my English professor asked me to host a campus wide poetry reading, despite the fact that I had never once spoken in class. "Me?" I asked incredulously. And so I opened the reading with a recitation of Pablo Neruda's poetry, my homesick voice cracking in half at the following lines: "There I was without a face / and it touched me. / I did not know what to say, my mouth / had no way / with names, / my eyes were blind, / and something started in my soul, fever or forgotten wings..."

Professor Bertagnolli's eyes were shining after the poetry reading. She thanked me, and I replied, "Thank you for letting me know that Pablo Neruda exists."

"You exist," she reminded me. "And I knew you could do it."

The liberal arts showed me the possibilities of the world. It taught me both about its beauty, through art, and its injustice, through history. I learned of institutionalized racism and sexism, and how power imposes silences and language can either reinforce or disrupt those silences. The root of my empowerment was learning how to write and speak to the silence. This was achieved in part due to faculty members who displayed a willingness to mentor. Each provided their students with provocative readings and challenging assignments. We were treated as students of the world and respected as individuals. In turn, I began to return what I had learned as a child growing up in the Adirondack Mountains: generosity creates partnership, solidarity, and community.

Within this nurturing atmosphere, I learned to recognize myself as part of an interrelated network of faculty and students. In my second year at Sage Junior College of Albany, I began to mentor younger writers and students who needed self-confidence to recognize their dreams. I also became the literary editor of our school literary magazine, *The Vernacular.* I flyered campus walls with signs that read, "Attention poets!" and waited for our journal's mailbox to flood with submissions. None came. Finally, I began talking to writers individually:

"Tracee? I hear you're a really good poet."

She blushed. "No, no, I'm not."

"Is there any way you'd let me see your work?"

She removed a pile of handwritten loose-leaf from her desk, and looked down at the floor while she awaited my reaction.

"Tracee. Do you have any idea how amazing you are?"

She met my eyes and said, "My roommate, she writes, too."

Within three months, Tracee won first prize in our school's poetry competition, and her roommate, Alicia, let someone read her work for the first time.

Later that year, the front cover of the 20th anniversary edition of *The Vernacular* featured a quote from one of Alicia's poems: "Returning what I received and learned with twice the intensity". It has now been twelve years since the publication of *the Vernacular*, and I remember these words. Although I am not in contact with Tracee or Alicia, their words remain in print, and their silences, broken. I hope that they still write, and I thank them. I am fourteen years away from the countryside and Mr. Robbins, both of whom taught me how to give. I am twelve years away from Albany, Tracee, and Alicia, who taught me how to teach. Today, I teach at Hostos Community College, where I am "Returning what I received and learned with twice the intensity."

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*This is the poetry of the present.*

As a poet, teacher, and colleague, I most value community. In the classroom, I strive to create an environment that privileges every voice, and recognizes the contributions of each member of our diverse student body. I aim to facilitate genuine dialogue between myself and the students, and the students and their peers. I present our semester as a journey that we collectively embark upon.

Within the first few days of class, the work that I assign may be met with a barrage of questions. *Will there be a test on this reading? Am I interpreting it the right way?* My response to these inquiries is simply that we are climbing a mountain together. *What happens when we reach the top?* The answer is best described in a Stephen Dunn poem, where he says, "Now here's what poetry can do. / Imagine yourself a caterpillar. / There's an awful shrug and, suddenly, / You're beautiful for as long as you live."

Learning, I tell my students, is collaborative and collaboration allows us to be infinite. Through critical thinking and participating in productive dialogue, we are widening the lens. Human perception is, after all, only partial. Together, we create an understanding of the world that is inclusive and representative of the vast communities which comprise the whole.

I followed my formative years in the Adirondacks with a decade as itinerant scholar, traveling from Albany; to Roanoke, Virginia; to Binghamton, NY. Literature was the anchor in my unmoored universe. As a poet in constant search of identity, I have always strived to build a homeland out of language. Today, I can proudly say that I have built a homeland out of Hostos, and Hostos continues to build a home in me. From The Adirondacks to the South Bronx and each place in between, I have learned that roots are established and most effectively nurtured by the presence of community.

Communities that have become a part of my daily life include that of the South Bronx, and also that of our student body. Here at Hostos, communities are created by common language, a shared borough or homeland, or merely an appreciation of our common experiences. As a full-time faculty member, I seek to cross the bridge between cultural and classroom communities, and the campus community at large. Through service to the English Department, I affirm my commitment to collegiality, and dedication to a network of educators who are passionate about

their pedagogy. Together as a department, we can best address the mission of Hostos Community College, and work to ensure the successful future of our students, and The City University of New York.

As a full-time faculty member, I aim to integrate classroom and departmental communities through scholarly initiatives. Engagement with my scholarly community allows me to live the working life of the poet-scholar by performing and publishing my work, and gaining inspiration through like-minded peers. My immersion in the poetics community only amplifies my classroom and departmental contributions and contributions to the culture of Hostos.

In the classroom, I teach writing from the position of a working poet. I envision the classroom as a language workshop, allowing us each to explore and refine our ability to most effectively communicate our truths. Students at Hostos Community College hold within themselves remarkable truths, and stories that need to be heard; as Michael Franti states, "every soul is a poem." My scholarship as a poet nurtures my own strengths so that I may teach and "Return what I received and learned with twice the intensity."

The purpose of this portfolio is to reflect on my personal and professional experiences up to my third appointment at Hostos, and to present a clear vision for my future. In the following pages, my commitment to colleagues, my discipline, and my campus community will be self-evident. With me, I carry the influences and words of Mr. Robbins, Audre Lorde, Alicia Kennard, Tracee Giles-Walker, Pablo Neruda, Professor Olivia Bertagnolli, and my students. Here, I have begun constructing a map. It begins with the Adirondacks, continues in the South Bronx, declares community, and arrives at infinity.

*This is the poetry of the future.*

# TEACHING STATEMENT

*Yoel Rodríguez*

I knew someday I would become a professor. This profession has been my dream since I was a child. I remember my mother calling me and complaining because I did not want to have lunch or dinner. Of course, I was playing a teacher character in front of a blackboard explaining to my friends some new concepts learned in class that day. Even in primary or secondary school, I was always ready to participate in class, to work in groups or to prepare presentations and give them in front of an audience. That was my vision, to be in front of people explaining and helping them to understand what I was trying to communicate and they wanted to learn.

At Havana University, once I met the requirements, I immediately joined the Undergraduate Assistant List. I worked in the General Chemistry and Physical Chemistry Departments with experienced advisors. With these professors you never felt the time pass and you wanted to keep listening to their discussions and explanations. The way that they used the blackboards was simply awesome; that is what really impressed me. With few resources, their classes were more than outstanding. They instilled in me the desire to pursue a career as a professor and an educator. Following their school methods, strictness, precision, and a sense of fairness have become the key to my pedagogy.

As a graduate assistant at Havana University, I was involved in the supervision of an undergraduate student in his Bachelor of Science thesis. I also taught more advanced Physical Chemistry courses to students majoring in Chemistry and Microbiology. What a satisfaction it was to see how the students grew academically as the course advanced! I felt so helpful because I was able to help them understand complex concepts and decide about their future careers. That was something that confirmed to me that I really wanted to pursue this profession, to become a professor.

Enthusiasm and passion are what really best characterizes me as a Chemistry and Physics professor. When the students see those features in an instructor, they can become energized and motivated, and they can be challenged to solve difficult

tasks. Moreover, even when they are not really interested in the discipline, they will likely make more of an effort to gain knowledge and, of course, to be engaged in the learning process.

Indeed, in the learning process, it is essential to establish a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. In such an environment, the students will feel more willing to participate, to share their knowledge and to be active learners. That is why in the first class of the semester, I always comment to my students that I want them to succeed and that I always have time to help them. From the beginning of the course, I have a strong commitment to the students. I like to have a balance between being friendly and authoritarian. I am determined to be strict, approachable and fair, the way I was taught by my admirable university professors. I do not like passive classes where the professor starts talking like a *parrot* and the contribution of the students is almost nil. I do not like classes characterized by one-way communication. Students should become the protagonists during the class and the instructor a facilitator of the discussion and the knowledge. I love to see the students keep asking questions in the class and to allow interactions among the students themselves and between me and them to take full sway. A class should be interactive; otherwise, the learning process does not progress. The students learn from their own discoveries and mistakes. The more relaxed the students feel, the less afraid they will be to make mistakes, and this willingness to make errors is an important ingredient in the learning process.

Another important point that I take into consideration during the difficult learning process is to help students to relate and connect previous experiences and use prior knowledge. Reinforcing the use of mathematics as well as the use of Lab Flow Chart methodology, which is an algorithmic way to represent a chemical or physical procedure in the laboratory, and making use of technology in Chemistry and Physics courses are good components in such a learning process. This way, students learn new concepts without noticing that they are interconnecting different fields such as science, mathematics, and technology, the so-called STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines. Our strategy is to teach chemistry and physics by making them more enjoyable. We need to cultivate our students' scientific curiosity and give them opportunities to develop needed hands-on lab as well as experimental design, so that they will enhance their statistical and computational skills. The students need to be immersed in multifaceted modes of analysis, discovery, problem-solving, inquiry, questioning and critical thinking. They also need to develop their writing and communication skills so that they can be asked to present their findings to their classmates and their professors.

Since each student learns differently and our Hostos students come from diverse backgrounds, I am always aware of this point when I am teaching my subjects. Patience and dedication should be the key components for these classes. It should not be forgotten that the learning process is an ongoing process. Therefore, we should help our students to not feel frustrated because they may be slower to understand concepts compared to more advantaged students. We should try to use different levels of complexity to explain a new concept. We should encourage the students not to give up and help them to see that they *can* do it. But they first need to learn and comprehend "previous" fundamental concepts that will help them to understand the much more difficult ones. Encouragement, engagement and confidence in our

students are decisive in their path to achieving their goals. As Barak Obama's father in *Dreams from My Father* said, "*Confidence*. The secret to a man's success."

# NETWORKING KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURES—CONNECTED JOURNEYS

*Karin Lundberg*

*Was in einem engeren Gesichtskreise, in unserer Nähe, dem forschenden Geist lange unerklärlich blieb, wird oft durch Beobachtungen aufgehellt, die auf einer Wanderung in die entlegensten Regionen angestellt worden sind.(…) Eine allgemeine Verkettung, nicht in einfacher linearer Richtung, sondern in netzartig verschlungenem Gewebe.*

Alexander von Humboldt[1]

It has not infrequently happened, that researches made at remote distances have often and unexpectedly thrown light upon subjects which had long resisted the attempts made to explain them, within the narrow limit of our own sphere of observation.(…) Organic forms that had long remained isolated, both in the animal and vegetable kingdom, have been connected by the discovery of intermediate links or stages of transition.

Alexander von Humboldt

This quotation by scientist, naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt, who has come to form the constitutive link in my research, teaching and general professional growth over the past few years, exemplifies the thinking of his *universal science* concept that played a pioneering role in the conceptualization of "general education" in the early 19th century. In order to shed light on what is familiar in our immediate environment, to be able "to see"(*Gesichtskreis*) it more clearly, we must venture into the unknown, and open ourselves up to "distant regions" that will uncover and help us to decode what is strange and foreign. Therefore, it is through the reflection of ourselves in what seems foreign that we gain an understanding of who we are and where and how we fit in an interconnected world of phenomena.

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[1] Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos.I.* Bearbeitet fuer die Gegenwart von Hanno Beck, Stuttgart, Brockhaus. 1978.

This insight can be arrived at, not in a linear fashion, but in a web-like (*netzartig*) intricate fabric of the world.[2]

What do we as educators of the new millennium have in common with Humboldt's worldview, which he shared in his public lectures and his writings close to two centuries ago? We, like him, are in the midst of an exciting and unpredictable rethinking of the world. We, like his fellow citizens in Europe of his time, are experiencing a new wave of globalization and exploration of global networks. We, just like his other colleagues in the generation following the Enlightenment, are excited about a new flood of knowledge and information exchange, which is reflected in the move from sources such as the 18th century "Encyclopedia" to our more fluent and accessible world of cyberspace. Finally, the vision of the "cosmopolite," "der Weltbürger," is alive in what we would like to see as a new "global citizenship" of our time. On the other hand, we also find ourselves at a new and baffling crossroads at which inherited forms of literacy and knowledge acquisition are seeing a turn-over to new, multimodal ways of communicating within a complex web of global networks, seemingly light years away from Humboldt's ideas of the world. Indeed, we are sharing knowledge, cultures, goods and ideas at an unprecedented level, while at the same time battling a world of disorder, confusion and economic meltdowns wrapped up in a Gordian knot of the rational and irrational. The analogy to Humboldt, his vision and his world seems to end here. Or does it? Contemporary Humboldt scholar, Ottmar Ette, points to the difficulties in identifying our times, by revisiting Goya's *El Sueno de la Razon Produce Monstruos* and its inherent ambivalence. [3]

Is it the sleeping reason or its dreams that produce the monsters and the madness, that have sprung from Western civilization in the past 200 years? Ette emphasizes Goya's own addition of "Ydioma Universal" to the title of the painting. (Ette, 2002). Here, it seems, lies the clue. The allegory of "reason" as a universal human contradiction speaks a universal language. It is in the imbalance of the mind, its separation from nature, the shortcomings of human communication, and in Humboldt's words, the failure "to see," to recognize oneself in the other, that breed the madness and the monsters that characterized periods of history like the Hitlerian era with their manifestations of evil. These questions remain: Where are we in our times of global communication and trading of information, ideas and knowledge? Are we finally able to overcome what keeps us from seeing the world as one? And what is our role as educators in this complex world-wide web? Humboldt seemed to answer these questions as he expounded on his philosophy of *universal science*.

Is it possible that we, the inhabitants of a century that has seen the fiercest exploitation of the globe known to man so far, benefit from the works of an "over-educated**,"** privileged man, a child of the Enlightenment, a scientist and explorer? Humboldt's *Cosmos,* both as a scientific concept and as a literary work, describes a network of knowledge by emphasizing the attempt to include, and not to exclude. As a scholar and citizen, Humboldt communicated between cultures and sought to bridge and acknowledge diverse worlds, both culturally and physically.

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[2] Humboldt, Alexander von. Cosmos: a sketch of a physical description of the universe. Volume 1. London, 1849-1858. 5 vols.

[3] Ette, Ottmar. *Weltbewusstsein*. Velbruck Wissenschaft, Göttingen, Germany 2002.

His concept was built on the interconnectedness within a pluralistic world seen as one. (Ette, 2002) The human being was not to be viewed in isolation, separated from the physical world of botany, zoology, or even geology. The arts, the aesthetics, and the human senses were to play a part in our descriptions, observations and explanation of world phenomena. He spoke of the physical world and the sciences as "ein Weltgemälde," a "painting of the world," an interwoven dialog between human (aesthetic) perception and observation skills and the physical, natural environment. Consequently, his thinking came to be shaped around a transdisciplinary, cosmopolitan or global approach to a world-wide web of knowledge and the sciences that in turn was to be disseminated in the broader public since, in his view, a healthy society rested on broad public knowledge and awareness of the world.[4] Here, it is impossible not to detect the intriguing and inspiring link between Humboldt's universal science concept and the recently outlined effort to define and implement general education skills within our very own learning community. It is in the content, as well as in the interwoven links between disciplines and the capacity to connect that true knowledge transpires and students can place themselves within the broader scope of historic time and place.



*El Sueno de la Razon Produce Monstruos*[5]

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[4] Ette, Ottmar. Humboldt's Relevanz im Netzzeitalter. Humboldt Review 12, 2006
[5] *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*: Plate 43 of The Caprices (Los Caprichos), 1799. Source: Francisco de Goya y Lucientes: The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters: Plate 43 of The Caprices (Los Caprichos) (18.64.43) | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History | The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Humboldt's willingness "to see," to discover oneself in the foreign, his ability to uncover the interconnectedness of cultures and natural phenomena and bring a seemingly disparate pluralistic world to a meaningful network is of immense interest to our own times of ill-defined globalization and an adequate concept for today's intricate web of global exchange.[6] However, what do Humboldt's networks of knowledge and global citizenship have to do with a transnational, transcultural educator in the field of language acquisition in a small community college in the Bronx? As I revisit my own origins, I would like to return to the significance of the introductory quote of "seeing oneself in the foreign" to discover the familiar "im eigenen Gesichtskreis" here.

**GENESIS OF AN ART**

As a child in elementary school, in mono-cultural Sweden of the Sixties, it occasionally happened that a "foreigner" would join our class. Their appearance was different from the rest of the children: they wore different clothing and used body language and manners to which we were not accustomed. They were in other words "strangers," separated from our code of behavior and therefore excluded from our world of communication. Their words were not ours and hence we remained apart. Such was the situation for these children who randomly appeared during the school year in a strange country they were too young to make out on a map. This was also how I was offered my first assignment of "assisting" the newcomers in class. Because they were strategically placed next to me, I helped them out with reading and writing and, over time, these newcomers were mysteriously transformed into speakers of Swedish.

I developed a fascination with these "strangers," their looks and behaviors, the sound of their own words and the way they spent time in the school yard, watching and studying the new world of "the others." They had turned into observers of the unknown and I, on the other hand, had become the mediator with a blurry idea of how to make "the other side" understand the new environment. We walked around the schoolyard exchanging words in our different languages. As a result, I can still count in Finnish, which I was taught while jumping rope in the 1st grade.

Later, as a college student, my plans led me to Heidelberg, Germany, where I enrolled at the University to study German language and literature. I was now under the same roof with students from all five continents: Chinese, Arabs, Africans, Latin- and North Americans, Europeans and more. We were bewildered, but curious, and formed friendships and relationships among each other that came to change my outlook on the world forever. By now my life had found its focus: I lived between cultures, I learned how to negotiate an understanding and to build bridges between customs, religions and ideologies. From that point on, I would absorb knowledge through a lens very different from the idea of the world I had brought with me from the North. Like Humboldt, I had "ventured on a journey to remote regions" and uncovered new dimensions of my "self." How does this translate to the educator I became and the community college I teach at an urban crossroads in the Bronx?

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[6] Ette transforms the Humboldtian science to what he would like to call a new global " Weltwissenschaft" ("world science"). Ette, 2006, p.4

**COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION: COMMUNICATING NETWORKS OF KNOWLEDGE**

Going back to the simple situation in the schoolyard, we can already grasp at the grass- roots level what teaching and learning in a community college with a large immigrant population entails. A community college represents education within a certain community. The "stranger" in the schoolyard was the observer of "the other." By reading the environment, he or she tried to make sense of what he or she saw in the immediate environment. Linking this experience to education, we can identify the individual's interaction as a veritable foundation of knowledge Similar to Humboldt's vision, and the ability to see, observe and make connections, knowledge ultimately means reading and understanding one's environment, to negotiate meaning in one's interactions with the outside world, i.e. in what one absorbs as information or experience. Again, it is in the reflections of "foreign" that we gain an understanding of ourselves. At the bottom of knowledge, therefore, lies language, the written or the spoken word, images, signs, symbols or gestures. Language, therefore, is an indispensable tool in the negotiation of meaning, which ultimately generates knowledge and a mastering of the world around us, through which we make up the fabric of the "Weltgemälde."

The immigrant student community can be identified in a very similar way. The students live in a community, which is partly their own and partly belongs to "the other." They are constantly faced with the task of interpreting a different set of codes and behaviors, of negotiating meaning in an environment and in a language they do not yet own. At the same time, a large immigrant student body forms a culture in itself, with shared values and social behaviors. This is the inseparable dichotomy in which immigrant college students exist and where we as educators step in. I would like to compare it to what we identify as the "half moon." We perceive the moon as "half" because we see only the illuminated part, while the other half remains invisible, albeit still in existence. In many ways, this illustrates the co-existence between students and faculty members. We each only see one side of each other's worlds; and we constantly need to shed light on the other half in order to form an understanding of the whole. Therefore, being in between, our greatest challenge as scholars and instructors is to find the tools required to negotiate between these two entities which ultimately renew and enrich a community that generates new forms of culture that others will name over time.

Consequently, as a faculty member in the field of English language acquisition, my foremost goal is to offer students the tools of communication in an academic environment that strives towards what at this point, I believe, is best defined as a network of "global literacy." As I described before, these tools empower the students to negotiate meaning as a form of knowledge. The three main pillars in my teaching are therefore the following: communication (language), learner -centered knowledge acquisition (content), and finally academic skills-building (methods and strategies). Consequently, the acquisition of academic language skills has to be closely linked to purpose and context, which creates the very challenge for the instructor, who constantly navigates the students within this triad of language, content and purpose. The end result is a communication of facts, opinions and critical reflections, which are expressed in essays, journals, summaries, research projects, and oral presentations. In the four years I have been at Hostos, I have been fortunate to constantly grow in this area, to apply my teaching philosophy in fruitful

and creative ways which embrace the transcultural and interdisciplinary scope of knowledge and communication that can form the foundation for global citizenship that Humboldt described through his vision of world-wide networks.

# REFLECTIONS ON BEING A COLLEGE TEACHER

*Miriam Laskin*

I am a graduate of New York City's public schools - from first grade through graduate school. The only exception was my time at SUNY Stony Brook, where I received my MA and Ph.D. in English. My MLS is from Queens College Graduate School of Library and Information Studies. During the first year of my doctoral program, I was thrown into teaching an English composition course and I almost sank, soon into the semester. I was terrified of being the teacher in the front of the room. Nothing in my many years of school had prepared me for this except listening to and observing my own teachers. By the second or third week of the semester, I came down with a really extreme strep throat and I wasn't sure whether I'd ever live to teach again (and I must have been a bit unsure about whether living and teaching was better than dying of strep throat!).

Getting so sick was an overly dramatic reaction, I know, but I'm trying to underline a common experience of anyone who teaches in college. At least CUNY has a writing fellow program which, as we at Hostos know, does offer some support for college teachers-to-be. If there was anything positive to be gained from being tossed to the wolves—oops, I mean, the students—it may be that this sadistic entry into the role of teacher may be part of a (un)natural "weeding" process, favoring those who are too stubborn or too brave to quit in their first year of teaching.

My first, full-fledged teaching experience was in 1974 when I was assigned a Freshman Comp course at Stony Brook. I'm pretty sure I wasn't very good at it. I continued teaching English, mostly on the developmental and first-year level, as an adjunct Assistant Professor for many years. At times I would have only three courses in one or two different colleges. At other times, I found myself teaching five courses at five different institutions. My years of adjunct teaching gave me an understanding of the hardships of this peripatetic way of life. However, it took me until 1997 to realize that I had burnt out as an English adjunct. I enrolled in the graduate library science program at Queens College and in June, 1999, earned my MLS—exactly twenty years after being awarded my Ph.D. in English.

A few months after I was hired in March of 2001 to be the coordinator of instructional services and a reference librarian in the Hostos Library, I ended my long adjunct career. Now I have another ten years of teaching and librarianship under my belt. The contrast between being the "authority figure" in front of the classroom and being an ally of our students as they struggle with learning how to learn and how to do research, is something that has given me more of a perspective on the meaning of "teacher." It is not only in the classroom that one is a teacher. It is pretty much everywhere—once you have accepted that identity.

There have been challenges for me, as there has been for every teacher, and I will share a few. One of the most fundamental challenges I faced when I began teaching English on the developmental and freshman level was how to teach grammar and sentence structure. English grammar is not as neat as Spanish or Danish (two languages I know). It's not as neat as a lot of other grammars. But I had learned grammar mainly by osmosis - as I learned to read, and it was through reading obsessively as I grew up that I understood how a sentence works. By the time students reached my college classes, however, my method of learning English grammar as an infusion integrated into the novels I read while growing up wouldn't work with them. Of course, as any good English teacher would do, we did a lot of reading together, and I would point out some of the vocabulary and grammatical constructions in the service of discussing "style"—and I did it without distracting from the essay or story. But I knew that I had to teach myself English grammar—particularly verbs—by actually comparing the way verbs in English are organized in comparison to Spanish verbs and verb forms. So I sat down with my English grammar manual and next to it, one of the most helpful language books I've ever used, *502 Spanish Verbs*. I often tell students, even today, that they don't really remember or learn something until they've worked at putting it into their own words, whether on paper or orally. It was a lesson I found out by becoming clear enough about the English verb forms and tenses so that I could explain them to my students.

Another challenge faced especially by English teachers is the need to assign essays at least every other week (allowing a week turnaround time and the students a week to review and edit the first draft). Along with assigning essays, of course, is the task of reading, commenting upon, and grading them. Lots and lots of essays. I spent years trying out different ways to give my students appropriate and helpful feedback on their writing. Of the minor but nevertheless psychologically interesting discoveries I made, is that using a red pen on student essays is a lousy idea. It's too punitive looking. So I changed over to purple or any other color that would contrast enough with the students' pen color. (Yes, for most of my English-teaching career, most of my students didn't have access to computers or even typewriters.) I also gradually learned not to correct every error. I would pick out the two or three grammar, spelling or punctuation problems a student had and concentrate on those. And I would only correct an error the first time it came up in an essay. Early in my teaching career, I would correct every grammar or punctuation error, and then all the student had to do was re-draft the essay using my corrections. I recognized that I wasn't helping them by doing their work for them. And I learned pretty soon that if you are correcting and commenting on a student's essay, you had better start off with at least one positive comment; hopefully I would find more than one to make, but sometimes it was hard.

Much of my life in the classroom, including teaching research workshops, has been spent working to stay creative and flexible and in trying to find new and more effective ways to get points across; to keep the class interested; to provide emotional and practical support; to keep students motivated to pass the course—or to leave the library workshop with some clear ideas on how to approach their research. It always felt important for me to keep my developmental English students in a positive state of mind, and engaged with the curriculum because all their work during the semester came down to a pass or fail on the standardized essay test. In terms of being flexible and creative, I learned to change horses in the middle of the stream if one of them showed signs of breaking down. That analogy will also serve to point to one of the ways I learned to help my English and my information literacy students understand a point if I felt that I was losing some of them. Analogies and examples of theoretical or difficult points are great tools. I never just leave a general or theoretical statement go by without adding either a quick example to illustrate, or an analogy that I hope will help clarify the point. Making sure to be tuned in to where the students "are at" in their levels of vocabulary and understanding of a subject is a springboard for being creative in the moment. I'm sure most teachers will agree that you sometimes have to think on your feet, be a good improviser and actor. Being animated, energetic, funny and as cool as possible (without looking like an older adult trying to act like a teenager) are worthy goals. Every time I've ever taught a class, including our library workshops, I use so much energy that I'm exhausted for a while after the end of the class.

I cannot forget to mention two of the most truly important attributes for a teacher: a good sense of humor, with a full quiver of jokes or other ways to make students laugh. Most teachers will admit that laughter helps learning in the classroom and in the relationships between student and teacher. And finding ways to teach using humor helps students remember whatever is being taught. The other important attribute for a teacher runs parallel to a sense of humor—that is, a teacher needs to be able to laugh at herself, in front of her students, at least once in a while. Don't take yourself that seriously, even if you are the "authority" in the room, with a "professor" or a "doctor" in front of your name.

Hand in hand is the ability of a teacher to say, "I don't know the answer to that!" It's a myth that perhaps many students and teachers believe in: the teacher knows everything. But that is impossible and there is no reason to try to come up with a plausible "explanation" of something when you really have no idea of whether it's the right explanation or not. In fact, I found that my students had more respect for me if I sometimes admitted I couldn't give them an answer on something. If it was something I should have known, I'd tell my students that I would find out and bring the answer back to them—which I would do.

As an English teacher, I welcomed the challenge of trying my best to maintain a one-on-one relationship with each of my students. I'm not sure why this felt necessary to me, but I think it had to be tied to my own experience as a college student. If the teacher never spoke to me or I to the teacher except during a class discussion, I felt the teacher was distant from me and my learning experience. I hated it when a teacher would not know my name, and so I had some strategies to learn my own students' names. I would create what I called a "name circle" at the beginning of the semester where we'd go around the circle saying our names after repeating the names of everyone who came before us in the circle. I would urge them to see me outside of class hours for any reason, and would make sure to have a private mid-semester conference with each one. During that conference I would balance the line between being too encouraging when a student was not doing well at all, and not working at it, and being too discouraging. Mostly I think I gave pep talks, while pointing out clearly what was going well in their work and what they needed to continue to concentrate on. By the end of the semester I would feel as invested in their success as they felt; and sometimes more. I would try to keep my tears from welling up and falling down my cheeks whenever I had to tell a developmental writing student, "I'm sorry. You didn't pass the exam." It would feel as much my failure as theirs. But my tears were because I knew they were trying hard not to feel like a failure.

Perhaps it is my personality, but I know I preferred not to rely on the exact same syllabus each semester, whatever course I was teaching. After a few years, I knew what I had to convey to cover the course content and I preferred to experiment with new lessons, new readings, new jokes, new charts, new assignments. After some years, I also realized that, in order to learn research basics, a teacher does not have to assign a long research paper. I experimented with different types of active learning that involved some research. I began to break down (or scaffold, as we say) the process into discrete parts and help them with due dates and feedback for each part of the whole. I also learned that students didn't know how to paraphrase correctly and that long research papers encouraged them to plagiarize like crazy. And I learned that it could be as effective to assign an annotated bibliography with very carefully thought-out requirements about how to set up their choice of topics so that it was harder for them to cheat on the assignment.

Out of the thousands of students we teach over a long career, there will not be very many who stand out years later in our minds, and not very many who will make it a point to tell you how much they appreciated the work you did with them on their way to success. However, I do have some memories, both from my time in the English classroom and the Library. There was the student in my Freshman Comp class at BMCC who wrote me an anonymous love letter one summer. My admirer asserted that I must remember her because she was always the one who was looking at me during class. Go ahead, laugh! And no, her hint didn't help me narrow down the possibilities at all. She remains anonymous.

Last year, a woman left me a voicemail message. She said she really wanted to talk to me. She said she had been my student at BMCC a very long time ago and left her name and phone number. Her name rang a bell, though I couldn't conjure her image. I called her and she told me that she had been in my class sometime in the mid-1980's and that I had changed her life by one thing I had said to the class. Neither of us remembers what the class was discussing, but she told me that at one point I looked out over the class and said, "I *cannot believe* you don't know who Malcolm X is, and that you haven't read his autobiography!" This woman was of Afro-Caribbean descent and had not heard of him. She said that my remark made an impression on her and she began to read not only Malcolm X, but also other African-American writers. She told me it was transformative and that after she graduated from BMCC, she continued in college and entered the nursing program at Lehman College. She got her nursing degree and after working as a nurse and raising her daughter to adulthood, she decided to go on for her Master's in Nursing.

She was almost finished and wanted to teach public health to nurses. We were both crying by this time. I told her to get back in touch with me when she was ready to teach and I would love to see her working at Hostos.

My time at Hostos has been a richly rewarding experience and I've never regretted going back to school to get an MLS and become an academic librarian. But during my first couple of years at the Hostos Library, I had to learn a new role: not the authority figure in front of the classroom, who knows she wields some power over students because they will receive grades for the course; no, I couldn't say something to a student in the library and have them listen to and respect me just because I was an adult and a faculty member. I had to learn a very sweet lesson: that a librarian is the students' ally. We get to help them every day and receive thanks (from most of them) in the moment. "Thank you for helping me with this, Professor." And it is always a great thing for me to be approached by a Hostos student who says, "I just wanted to tell you that I got an A on that paper you helped me research." It's very sweet to be able to share in students' victories. I get students who come back to our library, like one young man did today, and hold up their new Hunter College, or John Jay, or Baruch College ID card, grinning from ear to ear.

I have one or two especially good memories of how students can give back to a librarian, their ally, not their stern authority figure. A couple of years ago, halfway through the Spring semester, I was called over by a student I had worked with a few times. He was younger than many of our students and was a bit of a "tough kid." He was in a rage caused by stress and panic. He was trying to write a paper for a history course and having a difficult time. And he was very unhappy that his teacher was so exacting. He told me that he was going to drop the course and gave me an explanation about how he was taking four other courses and he just didn't feel he could do it. I told him, "Wait. At the very least, talk to your history teacher before you withdraw." And when he added that he was supposed to graduate that spring, I tried to persuade him to hang in there and not to drop the class. I didn't really think this pep talk would work, but a few weeks later, he showed up at the library. I asked how things were going. He told me he had decided to stick it out and not drop the history course. And that he had found out how fascinated he was with history! I almost leapt for joy at that. In fact, this young man did graduate and came back the following Fall to do a little research at the library. And to show me his John Jay ID card.

One more story of what teachers live for, at least partly. That same semester I also gave a pep talk to this funny, not-really-motivated student who was personally quite charming, but who didn't seem to take important things that seriously. One day in conversation he admitted that he was doing just "C" level work. And that even though his brother had graduated the year before, he himself wasn't planning on going to his own graduation, even if he passed all his courses. That was the graduation where Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor was going to be our keynote speaker. I said to this student that he really must not miss his graduation. How many people get to graduate and get hugged by a Supreme Court Justice—one who had grown up in his very neighborhood? I also told him that he should really push himself to do the very best he could with his courses and not settle for a mediocre grade. Like my conversation with the other student, I didn't think what I had said was going to have an effect on this charming young man who didn't take himself

too seriously. But a couple of weeks later, he came up to me and told me that he had taken my words to heart and had turned on the effort to do as well as he possibly could. Just as the semester was winding down, I was teaching one of our last library workshops. The young man opened the classroom door and in his inimitable style, poked half his body into the classroom, looked at me and the students and shouted at the top of his lungs, "Professor Laskin! I love you!" and closed the door again. I am sure that I blushed, and the students in the workshop were amused. He did graduate and he did get a big hug from Justice Sotomayor.

I believe teaching is a calling. I am not sure whether there is an innate "teacher gene" but if one is an observant and self-reflective person, teaching is a continual search for knowledge, understanding, relationships, and excellence. Teaching insinuates itself into your soul. You become Teacher, from which there is no escape. Thank the goddesses.

# TEACHING STATEMENT

*Angel Morales*

It was April 1997 in a small municipal theatre named Teatro Fenix in my hometown of Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, when I was working as a lighting designer in the local high school production of *Los Soles Truncos* by René Marquez. Inside, the stage was filled with almost twenty boys and girls, aged sixteen to eighteen, who worked on the scenery with their teacher. The space vibrated with activity. The theatrical properties to be seen included large trunks, a rocking chair, pieces of white fabric, antiques, and the beginnings of an architectural blueprint of an Old San Juan house. Among the simultaneous activities underway one could hear the student actors reviewing their lines, and the technical director giving instructions on how the lighting instruments should be placed. Everyone was at work at some responsibility. From time to time, the teacher, standing in the middle of the stage, summoned the students to make decisions about the creation of the set. As they continued working and consulting each other in enthusiastic activity, I was amazed to see how powerful and educational this collaborative process could be. I never had the opportunity to take a theatre class in high school since my school did not have such a program, and what I was witnessing was exciting and productive.

Was it drama? Was it theatre? Was it education? The answer, of course, is that it was all three, for what I was watching at work was the process of implementing everything the students had been studying in the classroom. They were "doing it" in a real setting and learning how to be responsible in a group. Students were exposed to develop and to expand their capacities as they undertook demanding tasks. They were also doing research about the time period, and working with the professional staff of the theatre. That combination of amateurism and professionalism attracted me in such a way that it was then when I decided I wanted to devote part of my professional life to educational theatre, and producing theatre in schools.

At Hostos Community College, I have had the privilege to expand the principles I learned in graduate school about educational theatre that resembled what I first experienced in 1997. I learned that communication is an integral part of the theatre. When the students in the Acting class discuss what their dramas will be about, who will play which parts, and how it will all take place, communication is enhanced. They also learn about communication in their character roles, working through the characters' situations verbally and nonverbally. The drama itself encourages them to become more effective in their use of language.

What I have loved the most about teaching Acting and Introduction to Theater has been watching the students release their creative potential through writing and performance. The writing of monologues and the performance of improvisations and scripted scenes has not only been fun for both the students and me, but also rewarding because we have learned about the problem-solving process, explored new ideas, and exercised imagination generating solutions and synthesizing the diverse elements of theatre.

One of my greatest achievements as a teacher has been to encourage creative thinking by providing a climate in which the student can try and fail without being afraid of taking risks and exploring. For example, I have had several students in the Public Speaking and Acting classes who are extremely self-conscious or apprehensive. They simply do not want to "be the center of attention." Through role-plays and small-group discussions they have discovered and believed in their personal worth and creative potential. Working "in role" has provided them with some sort of "safety" in the classroom, so that they are not afraid to make mistakes.

I would say that bringing the students that participate in the productions to the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival has been a highlight in my teaching career at Hostos. The festival is a tremendous, high-impact educational practice where our students have been transformed and have had the opportunity to take workshops, audition for scholarships, and mingle with other students from senior colleges. As their mentor, I have witnessed how traveling is an essential part of an education. It gives them another perspective of the world, and they learn by participating in healthy competition.

I am so excited and fortunate to use theatre as a teaching and learning tool. Learning through theatre gives students an opportunity to find the relevancy of their class work and communicate it in an exciting way to others. I will always use theatre as a powerful tool that can be used to enlighten and better the society, and clarify understanding in the classroom. I feel I have just performed my first act, and during the intermission I will reflect upon the work I have done during the first act in order to continue with the other acts of this wonderful play I am devising.

## *THE GREAT DEBATERS:* GENESIS OF A REFLECTIVE STATEMENT

*Robert F. Cohen*

When I saw *The Great Debaters* this week, all my instincts as an educator were once more confirmed. The film echoes my belief that education is the great equalizer and that without it we could never make the progress that we need to make in our society. It tells the moving story of how the members of the debating team from Wiley College, a small "Negro" institution in Texas, wrested the championship cup from their esteemed opponents, the members of the Harvard University debating team. This victory was celebrated by an enraptured audience in Harvard's Memorial Hall and by impassioned listeners to the broadcast that was being transmitted simultaneously over the nation's radio waves. Absent at the moment of triumph, but not at all surprised about his students' success, was their teacher and debating coach, Mr. Melvin B. Tolson, who had imparted in his protégés the love of learning, an appetite for questioning the authenticity of facts and sources, and the confidence needed for independent work.

The time was 1935. The nation was still paralyzed by the grip of the Great Depression, and history, as we know it today, would soon unfold. Against the backdrop of a chronology of events that has brought us up to the present through various "reference points" currently designated by historians as the Jim Crow South, the Second World War, the Holocaust, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Age of Technology, and the Digital Age, the students of the debating team were to assume prominent positions in society that would change the face of their, and our, world. One of them, whose eloquent speech on the virtues of civil disobedience brought the Memorial Hall audience to its feet, was James L. Farmer, Jr., the founder of C.O.R.E., the Congress of Racial Equality.

Through Mr. Farmer's and others' efforts, the life of the "Negro" in the United States has been transformed significantly since the momentous debate. One sign of progress involves the integrity of a name and who gives it to whom: Now, instead of being identified in terms determined by the white majority, "Negroes" refer to themselves as "Blacks" or "African Americans." Another sign of progress lies in the fact, plain and simple, that one of the serious contenders for the Presidency today is an African American. Surely, despite the many inequities that still exist in the lives of African Americans and other minority groups in this country, one cannot ignore these important guideposts on the road towards progress, and as an educator, I do not think it would be presumptuous of me to say that a good part of the progress made in our nation's recent past was given its impetus in response to the miracle of education.

You can understand my dismay when I learned that Denzel Washington, the director of *The Great Debaters*, fictionalized the truth when he "moved" the venue of the debate from the University of Southern California to my *alma mater*, Harvard University. Nevertheless, in the spirit of "debate," let me say that despite this modification of the real story, the "truth" of the film still rings loud and clear, and the parallel that I wish to draw between Mr. Tolson and myself and the students at Wiley College and our students at Eugenio María de Hostos Community College remains, I believe, equally as sound. Although Hostos Community College is not Wiley College, and the current year, 2008, is not 1935, I do not feel so different from the debating coach; nor are my students so different from the members of the debating team.

I affirm a deep affinity with Mr. Tolson in the imaginary dialogue that I have been having with him, and I know that he would agree with my personal pedagogy. Like Mr. Tolson, I want my students to develop resilient minds that will embrace the truth and seek to discover it – a pursuit that will be possible only if they cultivate within themselves the building of *cathedrals of thought*, whose infrastructures, when balanced soundly on beams of pure reason and logic, will permit them to read, write, speak, and think rationally. This, of course, is a very difficult enterprise to embark upon. However, it can most probably be achieved through much trial and error by finding ways to develop students' "reading-thinking-debating brains" through an exposure to the full scope of human knowledge on issues that will make them ponder not only the immediacy of their personal situation but also their broader responsibility towards the welfare of humanity. Imagine how important such an education is for Hostos students who, like their Wiley College counterparts, come from a disenfranchised segment of society that "yearn[s] to breathe free"[1] while at the same time seeking acceptance from the mainstream. Our mission to educate our students is indeed a sacred one because with the promise of an education our students will prosper. They will also have a more assertive voice in determining the future course of the society in which they live.

The guiding principle behind all my actions in the past three years has therefore been to exercise my students' "reading-thinking-debating brains" against the canvas of a general liberal arts curriculum. It is through this medium that I believe we can accomplish our mission, which is to help students to erect *cathedrals of thought* within the connective tissues of their minds so that they will be able to realize their goals not only as students but as citizens of the world.

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[1]   Words borrowed from Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus."

# TOUCHSTONE

## 2013 CALL FOR PAPERS

*La piedra de toque de la enseñanza es el interés que produce...*

In linking the power of teaching to a broadening of our vision, Eugenio María de Hostos affirmed the power of education. In honor of our namesake's belief, we have created Touchstone, a new journal devoted to the scholarship of teaching and learning and published yearly by the Magda Vasillov Center for Teaching and Learning. We are now looking for contributions for our second edition.

Call for Papers in English or Spanish:

- Original scholarship on teaching and learning (5-7 pages).

- Short articles (2-5 pages) on:

  - Best practices
  - Technology in the classroom
  - Assessment and evaluation
  - Classroom-based research
  - WAC and beyond
  - Reviews of textbooks and scholarly works; and
  - Creative works on teaching and learning.
  - COBI projects
  - General Education
  - Conference reports
  - Teaching challenges
  - Personal Reflections

Send your articles in MLA style (endnotes only) to Touchstone's editors by December 31, 2012. For more information, contact: Carl James Grindley (cgrindley@hostos.cuny.edu) or Kim Sanabria (ksanabria@hostos.cuny.edu).

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