



Dear Colleagues and Friends:

Thanks to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), we continue to develop our website, capturing the 12 years of meaningful work on our CLTL project.

Our gathering at Henderson House on September 19th was particularly useful in this context, allowing us a chance to collect material and to capture important insights from judges, probation officers, and facilitators. The documents, video, and hundreds of photographs taken that day will certainly enrich the website and help provide a deep understanding of the CLTL program for all those around the country, and the globe, who are interested in our ongoing efforts.

Tam Neville has given us a wonderful account of that meeting at Henderson House, and, as always, we appreciate her hard work writing this newsletter. The newsletter, together with the growing number of texts and visuals already collected, will become part of the permanent record of our achievement. We'd also like to acknowledge the efforts of our graduate student, Sparsh Parimoo, who formatted the newsletter.

As we outlined at the meeting, our NEH project is an important opportunity to demonstrate how literature can make a difference in our lives. We want to create a comprehensive vision and inclusive understanding of how CLTL has contributed to that purpose. I believe we are a significant community working to achieve that lofty goal.

We currently have nine CLTL groups running in Massachusetts and several in other states, and I am now working to secure full funding for our program next year. I am also looking forward to our next meeting together—probably in May.

In the meantime, please continue to develop the homepages for your individual programs and please send us additional essays—teaching strategies, comments on specific readings, key issues, etc.—for the website. I know how busy you all are, but your commitment and energy remain crucial to the ongoing success of CLTL.

Thank you so much for all your good work—and please keep the vision.

Keep reading,
Bob Waxler

The Story of Our NEH Grant

In May 2003, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded Changing Lives Through Literature a 13-month, \$180,000 grant to develop a new website under the “Exemplary Education” category. Work on the website began just after June 1, when the four principals of the grant (Bob Waxler, Jean Trounstone, Larry Jablecki, and Taylor Stoehr) met in Boston for three days to hammer out the parameters. At that time, Project Web Manager Don King gathered preliminary ideas as the Core Four (as they would become known) developed the main components of the website. On July 25th, our web developer, Marc Lalosh, began construction of the website, building on the CLTL logo and design created by artist Harry Bernard.

By mid-September, at the time of the CLTL September 19th conference, a sufficient number of pages and documents had been loaded to demonstrate the website’s features. At our gathering at Henderson House, Marc and Don were able to navigate through the website, showing video clips and the interactive (and now live) feedback form, among other pages.

The CLTL September 19th Conference

Co-Founder Bob Waxler opened with announcements on funding, then went on to tell the group about the new website, which was the primary reason for the gathering. He thanked the web team of Don King (Project Web Manager) and Marc Lalosh (Principal Web Developer).

Site development was not yet completed, but the group was able to view sample pages from each of its main features. They watched with delight while small video clips were animated by clicking on a photo. Other features of the website include a Discussion Forum, an “About CLTL” section that contains the history and philosophy of the program and subcategories titled: For Students, For Instructors, For Probation Officers, and For Judges.

A section titled “Programs” includes Start a Program, Follow a Program, and Results and Evaluations. The other main sections are “Key Issues,” “Resources,” and “Outreach.” Among many others, the website will include a subcategory titled Teaching Specific Texts (a.k.a. lesson plans).

Under “Key Issues,” the website states that the originators do not support any particular point of view but seek to present the program in all its diversity, which is in keeping with CLTL philosophy. The general consensus in the room was that the CLTL site is both attractive and substantive, with an uncluttered and visually pleasing design.

Jean Trounstone, Co-Founder of the Women’s Program, explained the site structure and provided details about some of the more important sections.



Judges' Panel: "Reflections from the Bench"

The panel included Judges Robert Kane, Elliott Zide, Thomas May, Joseph Dever, Joseph Reardon, and Marie Jackson. Judge Kane began, explaining that the panel discussion would go well if the members were willing to "get into the swamp and be comfortable with confusion, questioning, and curiosity."

Judge Kane: "Why do we as judges take time to work with CLTL?"

Judge Zide: "I wanted to make probation more credible and offenders more accountable. This happens in CLTL. Changes come about in probationers' lives when we ask them to reflect on what they do, slowly and deliberately, through texts."

Judge Reardon: "Seeing the same offender in court again and again can be discouraging. But working with CLTL is invigorating."

Judge Kane: "There seems to be a paradox between the rhythm of violence and the rhythm of reading. What is it that changes for the offender?"

Judge Zide: "Reading is non-threatening.

Issues that would never come together, come together in this program."

Judge May : "Literature engages the feelings—rage, anger, the desire to hurt. Offenders learn what triggers set these off and how to avoid them."

Judge Dever: "A philosophy I have is that the offender is totally self-absorbed, yet has no sense of self-worth. Violence comes from this subjective combination."

Judge Reardon: "No one wants to reflect on their failings. But in CLTL, probationers are not talking about themselves but about characters in literature. Men start to relate to a character. Some even use the first person and come to own a character. Through this process, probationers come not to like what they're doing."

Judge Kane: "What are the risks a judge takes when he or she joins a CLTL class?"

Judge Zide: "The biggest risk we face in participating in CLTL is that we will lose our impartiality. In this program, the 'we' and the 'them' disappear – We are they, and they are us."

Judge Kane: "When we think of the form of criminal justice, I think we'd say it's something monolithic, militaristic – 'Do this, do that.' But this program is in the form of questions. Why is this rehabilitation? Why do we believe in this program that is not ordering people around but asking them to think?"

Judge Reardon: "I've talked with clinicians about how you stop recidivism. They say the answer is in getting the offender to internalize the messages you are trying to give them. In



CLTL, we approach them in a non-threatening way and allow them to internalize the messages that violence is wrong, that it's good to be thoughtful and compassionate. We've been trying to teach them by sending them to jail, which does not work."

Judge Dever: "What makes us unique is that CLTL makes the probationers think, the POs think, and the judges think. We all do this together. I can't think of any other program that does this."

Judge Kane: "Bob Waxler named the program *Changing Lives Through Literature*. Does that describe us?"

Judge Marie Jackson: "[Probationers] see that we are no different from those who lived a hundred years ago. This gives them a perspective that in turn brings about change."

Judge Dever: "Yes, the name captures our goal because we are optimistic about a better world."



Judge Kane: "What would you say about surprise as a factor in learning?"

Judge Zide: "One surprise for the probationers

is they find out they have the potential to read, understand, and communicate to others. The program forces people to say things they didn't think they could say out loud."

Judge May: "Probationers are surprised to find they can talk with judges and disagree."

Judge Reardon: "Students learn they can speak out. They begin with a low self-image but the gradual sense of gaining a voice raises

their self-esteem."

In conclusion, the judges spoke enthusiastically about the value of the indirect, non-threatening, and reflective aspects of literature. CLTL is an invigorating and heartening experience, compared with the discouraging effects of seeing repeat offenders in court every day.

Help Wanted

Thanks to all of you who have submitted essays, forms, teaching methods, etc. We still need people though to write additional pieces, including essays on "key topics," lesson plans, and teaching strategies. And we could use help in developing our annotated list of texts and our list of links to other sites. A list of the topics for the "key issues" essays follows (if you have other topic ideas, feel free to submit those too): "What Do We Mean by Changing Lives?," "The Democratic Classroom," "Gender Issues," "Enforcing the Rules," "Honoring Perspectives," "Inquiry into Themes," "Sentencing Issues," "The Shadow of Schooling," "Success and Failure," "Why Conversation?," "Why Reading?," and "Writing in CLTL."

| Lunch Break |

The lunch break allowed conference attendees to mingle and exchange ideas and experiences as they ate. Group and individual photographs were taken for use on the website. In addition, several participants offered testimonials about CLTL on video. The testimonials comprise a body of evidence that CLTL does in fact change lives and remains an effective tool for helping offenders gain insight into their behaviors.

After lunch, the group of 60+ people reconvened for the afternoon's program. Led by Probation Officer (PO) Wayne St. Pierre from New Bedford District Court, the panel of seven POs offered their perspectives on the struggle between ensuring that probationers

meet the standards set for them and the POs' human desire to demonstrate compassion.

Probation Officers' Panel: "Control and Compassion"

Probation Officers Heather Rocheford, Bob Hassett, Wayne St. Pierre, Teresa Owens, John Christopher, Hank Burke, and Bill McCormack took part as members of the panel.

PO St. Pierre : "How do you strike a balance between nurturing and sanctioning, compassion and control?"

PO Rocheford: "For me the balance is 90% compassion and 10% control."

ACPO Hassett: "In the Lynn Court, probationers are assigned by a judge, whereas in Lowell, I recruit. Many problems never arise because we're pretty careful about who we screen in. We allow two excused absences per term. If a probationer misses a class, he or she has to come in with a synopsis of the text we covered the day they were absent. We ask the probationers to take the course as seriously as we do. I feel it's up to the POs to set and maintain the standards of the course."

PO St. Pierre: "We need to be consistent and fair across the board. I think people will take sanctions if they're given consistently. For example, if you miss a class, 'this' is what happens, and it happens to everyone who misses a class. Doing this helps eliminate negativity. If you screen well and prepare the probationers well, you can eliminate many problems. We emphasize that the class is an opportunity, not a punishment. Consequently, if someone hasn't done the reading, they get sent home, they don't even come into the classroom. I exert group pressure by saying that judges and POs have busy lives, and if they did it, you can too."

PO Owens: "I try to be right up front with what's expected. If you can tell that they

haven't done the reading, I talk to them after class or the next day. Immediacy is very important. Sometimes we ask for something written and sometimes we ask the student to do something creative like an oral presentation on what we've read. I stress that we, the POs, are part of the group and that I'm doing the same reading and writing that they are doing. Everyone has a responsibility to everyone else in the class."

PO Christopher: "We are involved in learning – that's the bottom line. Peer pressure helps. In Dorchester, we have an all-male group. Men are competitive and will get on the case of someone who doesn't do the work – I'm doing it, you do it."



PO Burke: "We get some referrals from the judge, but most of our students are voluntary. We're not ogres; we'd rather encourage people than crack the whip. We understand that things happen, cars break down, etc. I do ask them to call if they can't come in and tell me what's going on. If they miss a class, they have to deliver a book report to the rest of the class. In our court, the POs work with the class before the judge and facilitator come in. We get the business done and then ask them about their reading and if they feel comfortable with what we're doing. Our feeling is that you start with a good set-up and then keep the pressure up. For myself, before the semester begins, I bring candidates into

the office and say, 'Here's one of the books we'll be reading. Read the back cover out loud to me and tell me what it says.' Just from that short test we can tell who can and cannot be part of this group. In Lynn, Michelle has a reading group that meets between classes."

PO McCormack: "We had some people who had real trouble reading and we hooked them up with the Literacy Council on Cape Cod. Once they reached a certain level they were able to come back to class. This was a very positive thing. We also set up help sessions with the POs during the week. During the 2nd week, we send a letter congratulating them on being selected for the CLTL class and we repeat our expectations in the letter."

PO St. Pierre then opened the discussion to other attendees.

Professor Waxler: "We talked in the morning session about how literature opens the heart, and the kind of risks this poses for the judges. How does this work for the POs? Does it make a difference in the way you do your job?"

PO St. Pierre: "If you don't know the person and they commit an offense, the response is automatic. You don't have to think about it a whole lot. But if you know the person's story and you know the difficulty they're going through, you may think, if that happened to me, I probably would have done that too. It makes you weigh out the sanction a lot more."

Judge Reardon: "I think it's more dangerous for the POs to enter this class than it is for the judges. The POs have to enforce the rules. I'm very appreciative that that shield is there."

PO Christopher: "Changing Lives Through Literature is treatment, not punitive medicine."

Professor Trounstine: "What is it that drives you personally to join this particular program,

versus a drug program or a parenting program?"

PO St. Pierre: "When I first heard about the program from Judge Kane, I thought he was nuts. But what made me get involved was that I could see that what we're doing doesn't work so why not try something else. When I tried CLTL and got a taste of it, that was it. I never looked back."

PO Owens: "If I take the chance, I get so much back from the program. It's wonderful to do something that makes a difference, something beyond the usual day to day. Getting to know my probationers in the program has brought me a lot closer to what I believe a PO should be."

Important Notice

The CLTL website currently under construction is available for viewing by CLTL participants. Please note: the website is not ready for the public. The address is: <http://dev.cltl.umassd.edu/>. If you'd like to provide any feedback, use the live "Submit Feedback" form found on the website.

Out of State Reports

The Probation Officers' panel was followed by reports from out-of-state guests.

Arizona—Moses Glidden: "Our probationers earn two college credits for taking the course, which runs for ten sessions of three hours each. We read two novels and a long string of short stories. I'm interested in getting people to realize that their own lives are full of little stories. When they come in, I ask them to write for fifteen minutes each. I ask them to write about one scene that takes place at one time, in one place with one set of characters. I ask them to use the "Three D's": detail, description, and dialogue. Then the students read them aloud. After two or three classes

the students look forward to this exchange and this builds connections. Writing is a great tool. It tells us who we are, where we're going, and why."

Kansas—Cherie Muehlberger: "I've been involved in this program for about four years. We meet at the local community college. We also have a juvenile program that meets in local libraries, and we're working towards a full women's



program. In terms of my own involvement, I've used this program as part of my master's thesis. Because of this, I've developed an evaluation for the course and also a set of objectives. When people come into the program, they immediately see what our expectations are. In this way, the program has become part of my own education. We also want to make our program a college credit course."

Maine—Julia Walkling: "I work with the Maine Humanities Council in cooperation with the Maine Department of Corrections. We believe in the power of being in a discussion that is a level playing field where all ideas are valued equally – there are no wrong ideas. Of interest is the fact that in Maine, the probation officers are not connected with the courts, so participants are selected by probation officers rather than sentenced by judges."

Connecticut—Brian Sullivan: "We currently run two programs at a community college.

This spring, we added classes at Trinity College and Yale and we hope to get one started at Wesleyan College. Within one year's time, we could have five new programs at neighboring colleges and universities and perhaps a sixth at the University of Bridgeport. People are excited about the program in Connecticut, but they still have trouble opening their checkbooks. We're trying to raise money. It costs \$30,000 to lock someone up. We can do fifteen programs with that."

Rhode Island—Dorothy Donnelly: "One thing we hope for in the future is to involve not only English Departments but History, Philosophy, and Psychology departments as well."

Rhode Island - Linda Palazzo: "I wear two hats. I am the prosecution officer on campus and also a Level 2, Non-violence Trainer. The CLTL class came to visit one of my sessions at the Non-Violence Center. The class was made up of students recently arrested on campus. Meeting with probationers was a good learning experience. Together, the two groups studied some of Martin Luther King's writings."

Closing Comments

Bob Waxler wrapped up the day's efforts by thanking everyone. As always, he reminded us to "**Keep the Vision!**"



CLTL would like to thank the NEH for supporting the CLTL website and this newsletter. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Help Build a Homepage

One item we all agree is crucial for our website is a homepage for each individual program. Such a web page is an exciting opportunity for you to create a site for your own local CLTL community. At the September 19th conference, we ran a brief workshop to give everyone present a chance to begin organizing the efforts. Please keep the following in mind:

- < If your group was able to meet and agree on who would create and maintain the homepage, please be sure to let me know who you are.
- < Anyone who has already committed to a program homepage and hasn't yet begun work should initiate the gathering of material now. Please get the information to Beth by December 12th.
- < If your program has not yet lined up an individual responsible for putting this together, please consult with each other. We'd like every Massachusetts program, and state, and nation represented in all our wonderful variety. Please try to send the material by December 12th.
- < If you need help or a template, email Beth at ctl@umassd.edu.
- < Be creative. We have created a standard format but we can tailor the page to your vision. See the example from Dorchester at: dev.ctl.umassd.edu. Click Programs, click Homepages, click Dorchester. Please remember that this website is not live, and the URL should not be shared just yet.