



Editor's Keyboard

Gregg Sapp

On the Pleasures and Perils of Writing

Writers are a notoriously difficult group to work with. There is something about that resonant phrase, "It is written . . .," that makes writers assume that, once

they've successfully managed to wring words from their minds into some appropriate digital or analog medium, their job is done and all that is left is for the editor to stand back and admire their handiwork. Being asked to revise work is thus not only disappointing and intellectually difficult, but it can sometimes almost come across as insulting. I believe, though, that good writing is more about revision than creation.

I am the worst writer that I have personally ever had to edit. Without a doubt, of all the writers whose works are contained in this or any other issue of *LA&M*, I am the most frustrating for me to have to deal with. For one thing, I never meet my own deadlines. I tend to wait until the entire issue is finished before I sit down to compose this column. The reason, I suppose, is justifiable, since I try to offer some integrative perspective on its contents, but the bottom line is that the writer in me takes liberties with deadlines that the editor in me cannot tolerate. This creates a fair amount of cognitive dissonance, which is only relieved when, finally, the issue is done.

There is something, though, that is uniquely and quintessentially satisfying about finally getting your words into print, for then it seems real, or "It is written . . ." I like to think that, although some writers will still have quibbles with the finished products, the end product of the author/editor interaction is mutually rewarding.

These thoughts about the give-and-take, the frustrations and the payoffs, the pleasures and the perils of writing are not unique to the process of writing, however. They are actually embedded within almost all processes of

human communication, which brings me to the theme of this issue: Human Resources Management. How can you both criticize and inspire at the same time? How can you manage conflict while at the same time cultivating consensus? How can you take a group of diverse people, each with distinct objectives and values, and mold them into a team? I do not think that there is any issue in management more difficult than finding the right means of communication, for the right situations.

Let's look at some of the contributions in this issue. First, the career of Evaline Neff, so richly chronicled by Debra Engel, provides a good role model for grappling with the complexities of human resources management. The feature articles, Patricia Promis's on "A Case for Emotional Intelligence," William Fisher and Lisa Rosenblum's on "Becoming a First-Time Public Library Director," and Michelle Crump, Carol Drum, and Colleen Seale's on "Establishing a Pre-Tenure Review Program in an Academic Library" all seem to emphasize one skill above all others: *communication*. Other examples may come from our columnists' views: from Julie Todaro's misadventures with her mother, to John Lubans's wondering about the lost cultures of Rock Canyon Gorge, to Bob Moran's assertion that complaining is just a waste of time. It's all about *communication*. Such a simple thing; something that we all probably think we do fairly well; and, yet, such a profoundly important part of managing people . . . and, as our YBP award-winning writer Miriam Matteson might point out, that is a theory that must be put into practice.

So, I think that communication, too, is more a matter of revision than it is of original utterance. We'd all profit by keeping that in mind, before we speak in the first place. Written words can be edited, but spoken words cannot so easily be forgotten.

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