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Editorial

At the close of a particularly long day in May of 1979, I gathered together three sets of papers which wanted marking that night and hurried off to a meeting of my high school English Department. I arrived in time to hear the chairperson announce that members of **The University of Michigan's English Composition Board** would conduct a three-day **Workshop** for teachers of writing throughout Michigan in June. Since two of these **ECB** instructors had conducted a one-day **Seminar** on the teaching of writing at our school in March, and since I had profited from their presentation, I was interested in hearing more about the **Writing Workshop** to be held in June of 1979.

For our faculty, as for other faculties who had participated in **ECB** Outreach **Seminars**, only a limited number of **Workshop** places was available. Those of us who wished to attend outnumbered the available places. So we resorted to English department democracy: We drew straws.

With long straws in hand, my colleagues and I (with 125 other teachers of writing from Michigan schools) studied theory and practice in the teaching of writing at the **University** that June. With **ECB** members as **Workshop** leaders, we explored our mutual concerns as teachers of writing. Together we began and renewed professional friendships; and at the close of the three days, together we decided to extend our mutual **Seminar-** and **Workshop-**experiences by founding a newsletter to continue our discussions about the teaching of writing. Out of this decision, the **ECB's fforum** was born.

After accepting an invitation to become the first editor of *fforum*, I dreamed of its resemblance to the Roman forum and the Greek agora before it — marketplaces which formed the centers of public business and open discussions in their respective societies. Once our brain child was conceived, I felt much like a new mother — uncertain and insecure — as I asked thinkers and teachers in our discipline to contribute their thoughts about the teaching of writing to issues of our newsletter. My anxieties were quickly dispelled. My first two calls were to Ken Macrorie and Ed Corbett, teachers who need no introductions to teachers of writing anywhere. Both were willing to address a small group of their colleagues in Michigan whose dialogue about the teaching of writing had begun in the **Workshop** of June, 1979. Since its fortunate first issue in October, 1979, *fforum* has continued to be nurtured by teachers who write with clarity and grace. In June, 1980, the **ECB** conducted its **Second Annual Writing Workshop** for yet another group of 125 teachers of writing in Michigan. In this second gathering, many of us who had participated in 1979 joined with **Workshop '80** participants to extend our dialogue. And our numbers have been growing ever since.

Even as members of the **English Composition Board** have

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travelled throughout the country to talk about **The University's** writing program, and as *fforum* has made its way south to Australia, north to Alaska, east to Nigeria, and west to Hawaii, our state-wide group has expanded into a national community committed to learning from one another as we teach literacy to our students.

This year, a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation enables us to strengthen and extend this network of people interested in the teaching of literacy: In June the **English Composition Board** will sponsor a three-day **Conference on Literacy in the 1980's**. The **Conference** is to be preceded by one three-day **Workshop** and followed by another. The first is for teachers invited from eleven states and the District of Columbia; the second, for Michigan teachers of writing who have attended either **Workshop '79** or **Workshop '80** or one of the 250 ECB Seminars on the teaching of writing held in Michigan's schools during the past three years. The overlapping structure of this event — **Workshop I >Conference< Workshop II** — will provide teachers of writing in Michigan and elsewhere with the opportunity to benefit from one another as well as from twenty persons who will deliver papers at the **Conference on Literacy in the 1980's**.

In this issue of *fforum*, eleven workshop leaders describe the seminars that they will conduct in June. Because these descriptions reflect many of the theoretical concerns and pedagogical practices current in our discipline, they are likely to be of interest to those who are unable to attend our **Workshops** as well as to those who will participate in them; therefore, we invite those of our readers who will not be with us in June to read these descriptions and to correspond through *fforum* with those seminar leaders from whom they may desire to obtain more information.

The centerfold of this issue is devoted to the **Conference on Literacy in the 1980's**, to be held in Ann Arbor from June 24-27. Open to all who wish to attend it as well as to all who participate in one of the two **Workshops**, the **Conference** will address two important questions of the next decade: What will be the educational, vocational, and professional demands for literacy? How will literacy be taught? The particular interests and experiences of the wide variety of persons presenting papers during the **Conference** will guide us as we try to answer these crucial questions and to construct an agenda for our work in the next decade. I hope to see many of you here in June — to greet old friends and to welcome new ones into our growing community.

Patti Stock

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