The POETICA Project
Programme for Orientation, Education and Telematics Implementation in Critical Analysis

It is part of the remit of Learning Development Services (LDS) at the University of Sunderland to facilitate the take up of new telematics technology by the University's Schools to enhance and enrich their teaching and learning provision.

Students in the areas of the Humanities and the Arts have traditionally been neglected as more technologically-oriented departments have forged ahead with their own developments on the Internet.

Early Discussions
In discussion with the English Studies staff in the School of Art, Design and Communication, it was felt that the first steps in bringing new technology into teaching and learning would be to design a discrete, functional package that academic staff could deploy in, say, a first year undergraduate programme. This would be a first-level package that students from a wide range of backgrounds could study. Students often enter an English degree from access courses and so have not studied texts over as long a period of time as their A level counterparts. A period of very careful systems analysis therefore took place. This ensured that the application of new technology was carried out in a way sensitive to the needs of those involved who had never used computers or telematics technology before.

POETICA — The Advantages
The World Wide Web hypertext pages developed on the Internet offer the following advantages:

1) English students learn their way around the Internet as they study.
2) The electronic courseware is available telematically anywhere on campus.
3) The courseware is available anywhere in the world which means it is available:
   - to students on placement in Europe
   - to school pupils and FE-students considering their degree options
   - to partner universities planning to share course materials
4) We avoid problems of waiting for set books at the library when 120 students are all on the same module.
5) New work can quickly be added to update the course, for example, new poetry, new essays, new course notes, and new questions.
6) Continuous, computer-marked formative assessment is available to every student at all times. This saves the lecturers’ time for marking longer essays and for giving smaller seminars and one-to-one tutorials.

POETICA — Poetry on the Web
POETICA aims to help students apply an understanding of stylistics to literary language, with the intention of equipping students with the necessary tools for the close analysis of poetry. This Internet application allows us continuously to develop new tools and new critical techniques which will involve the students more actively in the texts they are studying. It means that our course is permanently on show to the countless millions who use the World Wide Web, acting as a kind of prospectus for English academics the world over. Excitingly, it offers a whole new way of viewing and publishing contemporary literary texts. In seconds a new writer can reach many, many more readers than Eliot, Yeats or Keats ever dreamed of reaching. Our project makes real Roland Barthes' myth of the writer on holiday. It is now feasible that critics will be able to read fresh, new verse on Sunderland's web pages from their laptops at home (or on holiday) and e-mail us comments for inclusion in the course or submit their reviews directly to their journals for publication; all in a matter of hours rather than the conventional period of six to nine months. This will enliven the literary scene tremendously and more closely link academic life with the world of literary reviewing — breathing fresh life into contemporary poetry.

Undergraduates will also be able to witness the debates surrounding the work of practising poets. This proximity to the creative process will highlight for them the relevance of new poetry and help them to understand the role of the poet in today's society.

POETICA is now available at http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/charlie/POETICA.html

see also:


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