

focus

on university teaching and learning

Volume 2, Number 2

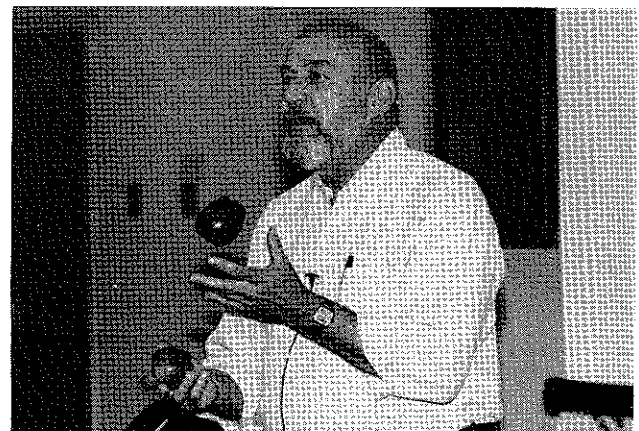
Nov./Dec., 1992

The Act of Teaching

In September, the Office of Instructional Development and Technology (OIDT) presented two workshops with a common theme – the parallels between the classroom and the theatre. In *The Classroom as a Dramatic Arena*, Linc Fisch demonstrated that, like acting, teaching is a dynamic activity. In *Looking For Glotto*, Alex Fancy of Mount Allison University showed broader similarities: the teacher takes on different responsibilities – stage director, prompter, performer. This issue of *Focus* looks at how teachers can enhance their teaching by borrowing some of the techniques of the actor to capture attention, engage the audience, and stimulate response.

Combining Substance with Flair

"Teaching can be alive!" says Linc Fisch. The Lexington, Kentucky, educator believes that "The occasional dramatic element can add special life to our teaching." He suggests techniques as simple as adopting a persona; staging a debate between two scholars with opposing views (you play both parts, of course); placing things on the board or on your desk that will intrigue students as they enter the classroom; using short skits to trigger responses. Even playing some music or wearing a hat can add a new dimension to your teaching and turn your classroom into a "theatre for the mind" where you combine substance with a little dramatic flair to capture your students' attention and interest.



Most of these suggestions are quite simple to carry out and will enliven your teaching.

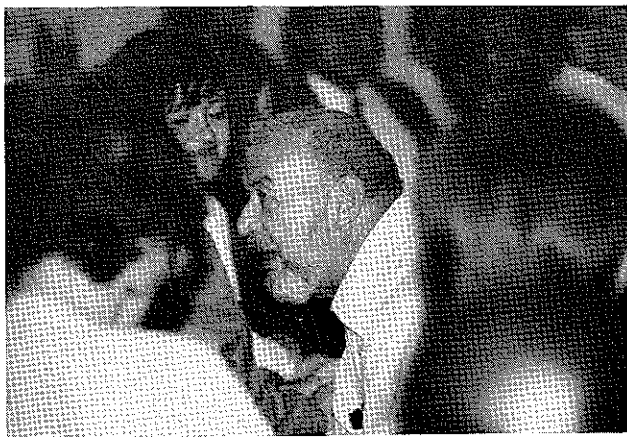
Lessons learned from life upon the wicked stage that can be useful in teaching even if you're not quite ready for prime time

- ✓ Set the stage before you begin.
- ✓ Warm up physically and mentally before you enter the room.
- ✓ Make an energizing entrance and open with an engaging activity.
- ✓ Use simple, appropriate props.
- ✓ Move and position yourself to effect.
- ✓ Show emotion with your body, face, and eyes.
- ✓ Maintain eye contact with many students
- ✓ Compose your presentation as a variety of short scenes.
- ✓ Script your class outline: right column for content and action, left column for materials, timing, and notes.
- ✓ Involve students in class activities.
- ✓ Use simple triggers to elicit response.
- ✓ Exit on your own terms with a stimulating closing scene.

Linc. Fisch

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Not All Bells and Whistles



Linc makes it clear that good teaching is not all "bells and whistles." While teachers don't have to be entertainers to be effective, there is room for improvement in every teacher. "We can still be ourselves and incorporate new means of communication into our classroom activity to enhance our effectiveness," says Linc.

A teacher does not require "acting lessons" in order to be good, but preparation, rehearsal, and critical analysis, coupled with a dedication to the teaching role, can turn teachers who have mastered their disciplines into master teachers.

Teaching Tips

Dramatizing a key concept will give it prominence and students are likely to remember it. For example:

In an introductory Psychology lecture, the professor pulled out a balloon, burst it, and continued lecturing without comment. Later, she burst another balloon.

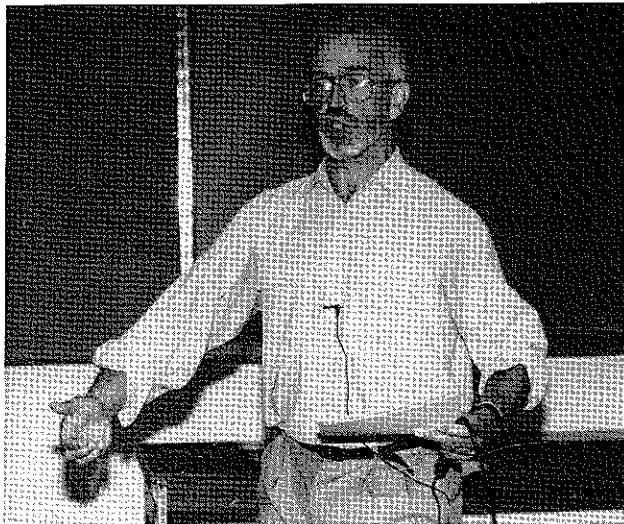
This time the audience was much less shocked, their reaction less startled. She then explained that she had demonstrated the phenomenon of habituation: as human beings get used to stimuli, their response is less pronounced.

In a lecture on legal witness and the giving of evidence, several students rushed in to the classroom, created a disturbance, and left. The intervention had been planned by the teacher, but was unexpected by the students.

The students were then asked to give verbal testimony as to what had happened. So the teacher illustrated the various problems associated with using evidence from witnesses.

Adapted from: Gibbs, Graham, Sue Habeshaw and Trevor Habeshaw. 53 Interesting Things to Do in Your Lectures. Avon, U.K.: Technical and Educational Services, Ltd. 1984.

Teaching Personae



The role of the university teacher is a complex one, according to Alex Fancy, Mount Allison University.

Fancy, winner of the Association of Atlantic Universities 1991 Distinguished Teacher Award, was the presenter of **Looking for Glotto**. The session, the Second Annual Celebration of University Teaching, was an Office of Instructional Development and Technology presentation.

In the guise of Professor Paul E. Glotte, Alex Fancy explored the various roles teachers play in the classroom—actor, director, scriptwriter, critic, and technician. The theatrical analogy helps him uncover and reflect upon the challenges of teaching.

Teaching is at its most effective, says Fancy, when students are no longer an audience of spectators, but rather active performers in the classroom.

Instructional Development Resource Centre

The Office of Instructional Development and Technology has developed a Resource Centre of books and articles on teaching and learning in higher education. These materials may be borrowed by full- and part-time faculty members, and graduate students. Our 33-page bibliography is available for consultation. Below is a sampling of books in our Resource Centre under the topic of "Instructional Strategies." Watch future issues of *Focus* for New Acquisitions.

Brown, George and Madeleine Atkins. Effective Teaching in Higher Education. London: Routledge. 1988.

Galbraith, Michael W. (Editor). Adult Learning Methods. Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company. 1990.

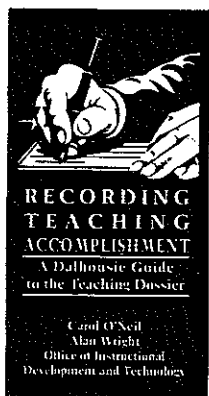
Gibbs, Graham, Sue Habeshaw and Trevor Habeshaw. 53 Interesting Things to Do in Your Lectures. Avon, U.K.: Technical and Educational Services, Ltd. 1984.

McKeachie, Wilbert J. et al. Teaching and Learning in the College Classroom: A Review of the Research Literature. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan. 1986.

Menges, Robert J. and Marilla D. Svinicki (Editors). College Teaching: From Theory to Practice. No. 45 in the New Directions for Teaching and Learning series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. 1991.

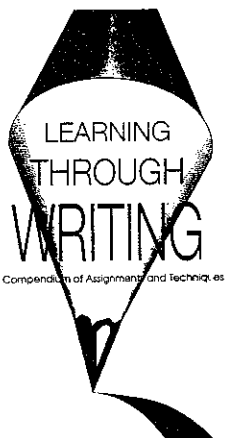
Neff, Rose Ann and Maryellen Weimer (Editors). Classroom Communication: Collected Readings for Effective Discussion and Questioning. Madison: Magna Publications, Inc. 1989.

OIDT Publications



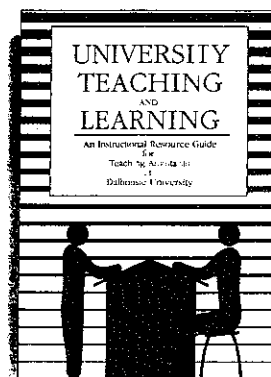
Recording Teaching Accomplishment: A Dalhousie Guide to the Teaching Dossier, now in its Third Edition, offers step-by-step advice on compiling a teaching dossier, with actual examples provided. This Guide has been very well received, both on campus and off, with orders received from over 60 institutions in Canada and the United States.

Learning Through Writing: A Compendium of Assignments



and Techniques gives useful examples of tasks to encourage student writing across all disciplines.

University Teaching and Learning: An Instructional Resource Guide for Teaching Assistants at Dalhousie is designed to give teaching assistants, and faculty, too, tips on teaching and organization, as well as information on support services which can enhance the teaching experience.



These publications may be borrowed from the OIDT Resource Centre or purchased for \$5.00 on campus or \$6.00 by mail.

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focus feature

Do you want to know. . . The names of the ships built in Lunenburg in the 1850's? What Rudyard Kipling had to say to Archibald MacMechan? What sights greeted the Earl of Dalhousie as he toured the province as Lieutenant-Governor in 1818?

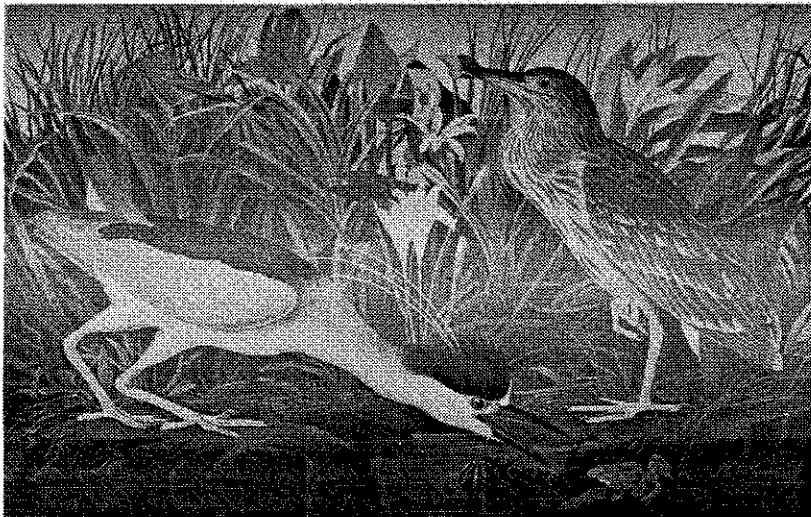
Would your students' learning improve if they could. . . See 19th Century botanical drawings? Read the personal correspondence of the authors they are studying? Reflect upon the artifacts of a given people and time?

Dalhousie's Art Gallery, Special Collections Department, and University Archives are rich – and often overlooked – resources. Each of the three facilities has a cornucopia of materials to complement your in-class teaching, to add diversity to your instructional strategies, and to support faculty and student research. This special *Focus Feature* turns the spotlight on these resources.

The Dalhousie Art Gallery

The Dalhousie Art Gallery functions both as an academic-support unit on campus and a public art gallery. It offers a stimulating year-round program of historical and contemporary fine art exhibitions, lectures by art historians and critics, presentations by artists, and a regular film program. Artworks from the gallery's Permanent Collection (dating from the 17th Century to the present) are available to researchers, students, and art historians as a valuable teaching tool, as are the gallery's large collection of fine art journals, exhibition catalogues, and brochures. Recent exhibitions at the Dalhousie Art Gallery have included "William Blake and his Contemporaries" and "Woolford and the Earl of Dalhousie in Nova Scotia." The Annual Dalhousie Student, Staff, Faculty, and Alumni Exhibition celebrates the artistic talent of the university community. The theme of this year's exhibition is "The Year of Medicine and the Environment." The Exhibition takes place from December 18 - January 10.

Mern O' Brien, Art Gallery Director, may be reached at 494-2314.



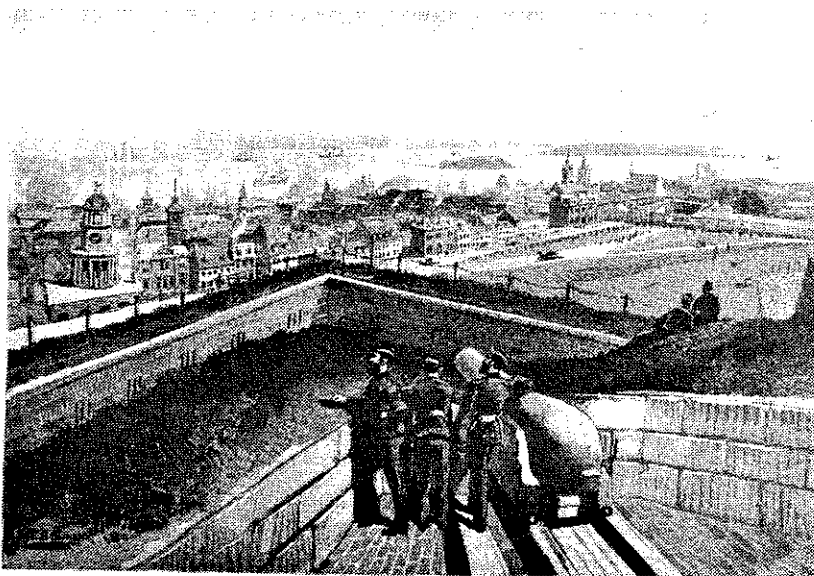
J.J. Audubon. Night Heron or Quabird *Ardea Nycticorax*, L. no 9-1. Chromo litho. – N.Y.: J. Bien, 1860.

Special Collections Department

Special Collections, fifth floor, Killam Library is an interesting blend of the very old and the very new. Within its collections can be found a 14th Century vellum manuscript and the M.A. theses presented by 1992 Dalhousie graduates. The Library's oldest, largest, smallest, rarest, most beautiful, most fragile, and most significant printed works are in the twenty special collections. Altogether Special Collections consists of approximately 80,000 items.

Over the long history of the University many significant individual works and collections, many of them subject-specific, have been donated or purchased to meet the teaching and research needs of the academic community. All subject areas in the arts and sciences are represented. The most significant collections are the Rudyard Kipling Collection of first editions, manuscripts, and letters; the Sir Francis Bacon Collection of more than half the known editions of Bacon's writings; the J.J. Stewart Collection of pre-1900 Maritime imprints; the William Inglis Morse Collection of pre-1821 imprints in all subject fields; the Modern Australian Literature Collection; the Canadian Small Press Collection of English language creative writing; the Nova Scotia Creative Writers Collection; the Canadian historical Map and Print Collection, and the Music Collection of recordings and scores. Novanet provides bibliographical access to less than half the material in Special Collections, so come and visit to see what Special Collections has to offer in your field. The Special Collections reference staff will be pleased to help you.

Karen Smith, Special Collections Librarian, may be reached at 494-3615.



Schell, Frederic. Halifax, from Citadel. Toronto: Belden Bros., 1882. Engraving.

Dalhousie University Archives

Dalhousie University Archives are located on the fifth floor of the Killam Library. Established in 1970, the Archives house university records and the private manuscripts of many people associated with Dalhousie. It also has archives in the following areas: Theatre, Business, Music, and Nova Scotia Labour History. Shipping records dating from the 18th Century and a large collection of business catalogues, theatre and music programmes are also kept in the Dalhousie University Archives.

Dr. Charles Armour, University Archivist, may be reached at 494-6490.