[These notes were published in the newsletter, Matrix., published for a year or two by the students in the Department of Communication, Computing and Technology in Education at Teachers College. Lou Forsdale, long the key professor in Communication and Education, was retiring at the end of the semester.]

Marie M. Taylor, Editor
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Dear Marie:

You asked for my view of the direction the Department will be moving in. Here goes! I hope you won't mind if I use an aphoristic style.

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Metaphors.. To me, a department is somewhat like a car -- it has no direction inherent to it. Rather it sits there, capable of going in most any direction, waiting for people to drive it somewhere. We've all gotten *in* the Department, much as we might get in a car, and now we have to drive it and thus give it direction.

A department chairman, however, is not at all like the driver of a car, equipped with predictable controls -- accelerator, brakes, steering wheel, and signals. Academic groups define their directions through a more spontaneous, collective choreography. To some degree the department chairman may be like a choreographer of dance, and in some long established, highly fonna1ized disciplines, a department say of English, the choreographer might be like the master of classical ballet. In our department, in contrast, we deal with the novel and unpredictable and we need a choreography inspired with synchronized improvisation, with the *lead* moving from one to another as each catches it, moves with it, and then lofts it up for another to catch in turn.

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My crystal ball. Many people have been getting in and out of the car, so to speak, and one of its designers is planning to retire. The lay of the land is changing too and we've switched to expensive, highly refined gas. *VAAROOM!!* Where are we heading? Here are my predictions about particulars that presently agitate some.

I predict that this year the Department will conduct a search for a junior professor specializing in communication theory. The person to be appointed will join the Department next fall and will teach successful courses on the application of communication theory to educational problems. This new professor will join productively in the growing research and development program of the Department. Some current doctoral students in communication and education will find the new professor to be a key resource in their dissertation work, but many will not do so and will finish up their work under the direction of faculty members already here, in this Department or in related ones. The main responsibility of the new professor will be to develop his or her own professorial persona, not to carry on the persona of someone else, and the person we appoint will indeed be someone who develops over the next five to ten years into an intellectual leader of the field.

I predict that during this time, the convergence of seemingly diverse media into a powerful communication ensemble creatively controlled by users will continue, with the result that the overlap of different programs in the Department will increase and the uniqueness of each will decrease. Some current anxieties will simply wither: sophisticated digital equipment will become tools that everyone expects to work with, in the sense both that they are entitled to work with them as the necessary tools of the field and that they are responsible for working with them as the givens of sound practice. The distinction between communication and communications will become less salient; the Department as a whole will become known as a center of "applied, technological humanism." Courses will be displaced by an increasing number of self-paced, computer-based tutorials with the real educational activity of the Department taking place in participation in projects, a cross between apprenticeship and studio-design work. The test of what we know, teach, and learn will increasingly be in the quality of educative tools we develop and implement.

I predict that a lot of external funding will flow to the Department and a truly sophisticated technical
environment will be installed within it. Any anti-intellectual stigma that once may have been associated with educational technology will disappear: the ability to design and evaluate practical applications with the equipment soon to be available will require hard-won mastery of communication theory, cognitive psychology, and computer science. The Department will become highly selective in its admissions and its enrollment will increase modestly in size and the rate at which its majors complete their studies will also increase. The average age of its students will drop fairly significantly. During the next five to seven years, the Department will be able to justify the addition of two more new faculty members although the mix of their academic and technical interests cannot now be predicted. Within Teachers College as a whole the Department will become increasingly controversial as developments with which the Department will be associated will be perceived as disrupting the pattern of activities of which other departments are the custodians. This resentment will have little effect because the Department will be economically strong and its members will have numerous significant joint projects with important faculty members in other parts of the College.

Those are my predictions, as I see them on the particular evening on which I am writing them. Surely they are off. But as Cervantes once said, "the road is better than the inn"; or as Goethe put it, "the height charms us, the steps to it do not; with the summit in our eye, we love to walk along the plain." We live in historical time, and historical time gives us maps that are perforce like the maps of the middle ages -- the interesting places to which we might journey are yet uncharted. Some perceive those unknown yonders as frightening and so they fill the uncharted terrain in with images of fantastic monsters. Others perceive these places as lands of hope and depict them filled with palaces and other wonders. Until we get there they will be uncharted and when we get there they will be, then, simply part of the familiar present, neither monstrous or palatial. From our vantage point now, what should concern us is our skill and confidence in driving down roads we have never traveled before to places we have not yet been.

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Academic leadership. I began in the halcyon days when academics were in short supply. One nice winter day, when I had only begun to work on my dissertation, the phone rang -- "Would you be willing to come interview for an assistant professorship in the history of education?" "Well. . . . But you know. . . . Uhh, OK, I guess." And suddenly I was at Johns Hopkins, having been wooed through the visit by various professors, now waiting with talk to the Dean.

And I waited, an eternal half-hour or so. The Dean then received me and apologized for being late -- he had been embroiled in the tenure review of a controversial astrophysicist that had taken longer than planned. I'd gotten myself primed as an interviewee to capitalize on all opportunities to ask questions and here I pounced -- "Being a dean must be very difficult. A few minutes ago you were evaluating an astrophysicist and now you're interviewing an historian of education and an hour from now it may be a medievalist or who knows what. How do you make judgments when faced with such diverse specialists?" The Dean smiled and without hesitation retorted, "I just look for people who are smarter than I am and when I find them, I just do my best to provide them with the right conditions for their work."

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Quotations that keep coming to mind.

If you do not expect the unexpected, you will not find it; for it is hard to be sought out and difficult. **Heraclitus**.

Education is not what it is said to be by some, who profess to put knowledge into a soul which does not possess it, as if they could put sight into blind eyes. On the contrary, . . . the soul of everyone possesses the power of learning the truth and the organ to see it with. . . . **Plato**.

What makes man essentially good is to have few needs and to compare himself little to others. What makes him essentially wicked is to have many needs and to depend very much on opinion. **Rousseau**.

One capacity can govern the other, but none can cultivate or form one external to itself; each ability bas the power, only within itself, to fulfill itself: of men who would teach and act, too few understand this. **Goethe**..

One day, when Weber was asked what his scholarship meant to him, he replied: "I want to see how much I can stand." What did he mean by that? Perhaps that he regarded it as his task to endure the antinomies of existence and, further, to exert to the utmost his freedom from illusions and yet to keep his ideals inviolate and preserve his ability to devote himself to them. **Marianne Weber** about Max Weber.

Ah! It is clear! To propose that life is "principally" this or that is supremely dangerous, for in an instant it will be "exclusively" either this or that. Then terrible things happen. . . . It would be an easy job to exist if we could do things unilaterally. But -- and here is the problem! -- to live is to travel at one time in every direction of the horizon; to live is to have to do with both this and that. **Ortega y Gasset**.

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The stakes of the time. What do people say who want *not* to be inconvenienced by historic changes in the terms of activity? They say that all the expectations about the new technologies and education have been announced previously: educational TV**,** programmed instruction, visual literacy, film in education, radio in the schools -- after hoopla, the effects of all have been minimal. Ah! Praise be to normalcy, to which all deviant expectations will be coddled back by sovereign conventionalities.

Look deeper. The creation, distribution, and application of knowledge to human concerns is the vital function educational activity performs for the species. Natural selection relative to this

function controls the large processes of development. We have at least one clear historical example: printing, a technological development, changed the conditions controlling how people created, distributed, and applied knowledge to human activity and the concomitant changes to education were thorough-going and ineluctable.

Printing was exceptional, however. Many later changes in communications media have merely facilitated the exchange of information without having had significant effect on how people create, distribute, and apply *knowledge* to their concerns. Knowledge involves much more than information. Knowledge comprises storable, recallable, explainable theory, based on tested information, which can be used to cope inrelligently with the myriad vicissitudes that information, moment by moment, discloses to us. Media changes that simply affect the capacity to exchange information will not alter education, although they may accentuate the relative lack of knowledge and heighten the need for education, as the telegraph, telephone, popular press, motorized transportation, radio, film.,television and telecommunications have surely done over the past hundred years.

Is digital electronics, in action, like all these other media changes, something that facilitates the exchange of information without significantly affecting how knowledge is created, distributed, and applied to human concerns? Or will digital electronics significantly alter the character of creating, distributing, and applying knowledge? History is working on the answer to this question, through us, among others. Digital electronics is being applied deep within the infrastructure of knowledge as a complex set of tools facilitating the established procedures for creating, distributing, and applying knowledge. If these tools are simply transparent, facilitating the process without altering its character, the stakes of the time are not great. But if the tools are in fact transformative, then the stakes are very high and all that seems familiar and secure is at risk. In 1487, who would have anticipated the historical eclipse of abbeys and the like?

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Dangers. The Department is at a nexus that will be increasingly dynamic and controversial within an institution whose capacity to support intensive activity has been emaciated by prolonged economizing. Everything is problematic. We face a terrible strain of working at the forefront of intellectual problems that are among the most demanding, most subtle, most complex, while also having to design and install a technological base that is quite unprecedented in an institution such as ours. My worry, a deep worry, is that the institution will generate brave talk on the intellectual side, creating ever-widening committees of involvement, while it drags along on the technological side, unable to commit space, manual labor, a decisive administrative will, all the unsung, concrete efforts needed to install, cleanly, efficiently, with a minimum of distraction, the technical base without which we will be unable to sustain the intellectual effort.

As I see it, far too much of the intellectual energy available for creative work on the substantive problems of using the new technologies in education is being consumed trying, sometimes successfully, sometimes haplessly, but never easily, to get space freed, equipment installed, activity organized. If we do not find better ways to provide ourselves with the right conditions for our work, whatever happens with the stakes of the times, our role will have been marginal.

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I'm sorry to end on such a problematic note. The practitioners of corporate communications prescribe that any problem should be described only as an opportunity. Of course, our problem is an opportunity, too, for we have the problem because we are, unlike many other schools of education, beginning to build an interesting technological base for our work. But by training and

inclination, I am a critic, not a corporate communicator, and as critic I feel bound to point to the problem as such. When we have met it head on and mastered it, then I'll gladly say that indeed it was an opportunity.

With good wishes.

Robert McClintock