

Looking “Behind the Scenes” at Book Publishing

Editors' note: To many of us, the book publishing process can be a bewildering if not daunting experience. Whether you're authoring a text, as many NWP associates have done or may eventually do, or both authoring the text and moving it through production as Ed Osterman and the NYCWP have done with Literature for My Classroom: What's Out There?, the process always yields something new, something unexpected . . . something you definitely wish someone had told you before. With that in mind, the editors of The Voice asked Osterman to recount for our readers something of his experience. Following is his response:

I will always have two specific memories about the experience of putting this book together. First, there was the enormous energy and commitment that our team of editors brought to the task of creating one publication from three anthologies. Over an eight-day period in July 1999, Carmen Bardeguéz-Brown, Jennie Chan, Sarah Katz, Lisa Lauritzen, Barbara Martz, Barbara Sheinmel, and I discussed what to include, checked bibliographical references, and worked for hours in a computer room on Lehman College campus. Lisa and Sarah were our skilled coordinators, designing systems and templates that made our work easier. Each day, people arrived promptly, spent hours at the computer, and took only short breaks for lunch or rest. Though we worked amicably together, we had very little casual talk. The group was focused, meticulous, and devoted to assembling a polished finished product.

Second, I will also remember the months of worry and work that followed. In October of that year, we discovered that the computer file that contained the longest and most important section of the book had been damaged by a virus. Fortunately, John Dono, who coordinates

user and program support services for Lehman College's Information Technology Center, and a few of his colleagues, were enormously helpful in converting the file into another program, thus preserving the work. It took several more weeks to get the text back to its original form, proofread and edit the drafts, and then do one final round of proofreading yet again. The proofreading and editing were particularly challenging since the bulk of the book is full of bibliographical details. By the time we were done, about fifteen additional New York City Writing Project (NYCWP) teacher-consultants had read, edited, or proofread at least one portion of the monograph, and Marcie Wolfe, director of the Institute for Literacy Studies, and I had been through the entire text several times. I think few of us had any idea how complex and arduous this process was to become.

In the end, then, this monograph is truly the product of the NYCWP community. It reflects a collaborative spirit on every level, and we are pleased with the results. We hope other teachers will be pleased with it as well.

—ED OSTERMAN
NEW YORK CITY WRITING PROJECT