

St. Lawrence University

CTL Technology for Teaching Grant Proposal

Name: Jonathan Gottschall

Department: FYP

Phone: 5305

Project Title: Computerized Content Analysis

Dates of Project: Spring Semester 2004

Total amount requested: 706\$

OFFICE USE ONLY:

CTL Director: _____ Date: _____

Total amount approved: _____

Applicant notified: _____

Final report received: _____

I am writing to apply for a Technology for Teaching Grant for my upcoming First Year Seminar, Generating Knowledge. In recent First Year Seminars I have been conducting large scale, collaborative content analysis projects with my students. Members of these seminars have been participants on research teams with the goal of producing and disseminating new knowledge (usually about questions in psychology and/or literary studies). I try to engage students deeply and personally in the content and skills components of the FYS by involving them in real, important, professional-level work. The goal of the seminar is to give students an “on the job” introduction to the process by which scholars and scientists generate new knowledge: from the first recognition of a problem that needs to be solved, to gathering data, to conducting literature reviews, all the way up to the formal dissemination of findings at professional conferences and/or in journals. While my goals for these seminars have been ambitious, the quality of student work has exceeded my expectations. Members of my seminars have given several presentations at professional conferences in literary studies and psychology, at SLU undergraduate conferences in science and literary studies, and they have served as co-authors for six academic papers--two have been accepted for publication in significant journals, two have been conditionally accepted pending revision, and two more articles are still under review.

In the upcoming semester I intend to push our research in a slightly different direction. In the past our results were based on the results of multiple human coder content analyses of literary works. This methodology allows us to approach certain categories of questions quite effectively, but it closes off other avenues. To explore some of these neglected avenues, computerized content analysis software can be very helpful. Some of these programs are freely available on the internet. However, free programs tend to be crude, and are run out of DOS instead of the much more user-friendly windows format.

I am requesting funds to purchase two things. First, a good content analysis software package--I can purchase a good program, windows based and accessible to students, for about 150 dollars. I am also requesting 500 dollars in order to purchase a good scanner for the project. What computerized content analysis lacks in subtlety it makes up for in brute analytic power. However, in order to get the software to help us analyze text we first need to scan the appropriate texts into the machines (our texts, mainly specific collections of traditional folk tales, are not available on-line).

There *are* scanners available on campus, but we need something that is fast and always available. We need to scan and analyze several thousand pages of text before March 3-6 when we travel to present some of the results of our work at the North Eastern MLA's. Using the scanners on campus for this task is simply not possible. IT informs me that the publicly available scanners are mainly for images not text – they take around 20 seconds per scan no matter how low you set the resolution. If we can't get access to a faster scanner we will have to scrap the project.

Of course, the benefits of this expenditure won't be limited only to students in this particular FYS. First, I may well call on these technologies in future iterations of this

FYS and, second, once we are finished with the scanner it can be donated back to IT for the use of all SLU students and professors. IT has helped me identify a relatively affordable scanner capable of scanning pages in 2-4 seconds.

In sum, I think this proposal meets the grant criteria for a Technology for Teaching grant:

- Gaining access to these technologies will allow me to push the course in a new and innovative pedagogical direction
- It will allow me to continue involving students in highly successful collaborative research projects
- It will help me do a better job of giving students an unorthodox introduction to the research and communication skills components of the FYS

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- 1) Computer content analysis software program: TextPack 7.0: 100 Euros (c. 136\$)
- 2) HP Scanjet 8200 Digital Flatbed Scanner: 470\$
- 3) Taxes, incidentals, fluctuations in prices, fluctuations in strength of dollar against the euro: c. 100\$

In the event that the committee finds it possible to grant one of these requests but not the other, the scanner is the indispensable technology. We can probably make a crude freeware analysis program work; the project can't go forward without faster scanning capability.