The authors of *Word Processing in a Community of Writers* write, "Computers have often been associated with educational programs that are rigid and prescriptive. But taken instead as a flexible medium for exploration and dialogue, word processing offers writers a powerful, liberating technology" (40). With this argument focussing the whole of the text, the authors take on the difficult task of integrating word processing into a rhetoric for first-year composition classes. I say "difficult" because the authors must first address a problem all rhetorics face: the activities must be general enough to be useful for the many contexts in which writing occurs and yet specific enough to help writers struggling with individual pieces aimed at particular audiences. Add to this the problem of incorporating general practices of word processing into the already broad framework of a rhetoric, and the task becomes formidable. The key question becomes how general the description can be while remaining useful for students and instructors using specific software packages. A third difficulty relates to the technology itself: technological changes occur so rapidly that by the time a computer text is written and goes to press it is often already outdated. Recognizing this problem, many authors try to leave their texts sufficiently open to admit new applications of computers as they become available. But, once again, the task is one of finding the right blend of specific computers-and-writing activities and the more general guidelines that we teach by.

The authors of *Word Processing in a Community of Writers* are aware of the many problems inherent in writing such a text. Their avowed purpose is to show how computers can be used to create a community of writers, and they do this by presenting word processing "as a context, not the subject, of a class on writing." With this goal in mind, the authors present a variety of strategies for incorporating word processing into writing classes. Some of these strategies are more successful than others.

The book is divided into two parts: (1) "A Model for Exploration, Correspondence, and Revision"; and (2) "Additional Resources." As the first title suggests, the authors regard the first section as the book's core, the teaching model around which they orchestrate the technology. And this is perhaps one of the greatest strengths of their text: at no time does the reader feel overwhelmed by computer technology. It is always something in the background to help the student perform the acts of writing a little more easily, a little more comfortably. The second section, containing only three of the book's ten chapters, is devoted to on-line searches, collaboration with computers, and other applications, such as spelling checkers and style.
analysers. The two parts of the book are followed by an appendix that includes a good summary of the basic commands of three popular word-processing packages for MS-Dos environments, two for the Macintosh, and one that's commonly used with other Apple computers. A four-page glossary of computer terms along with "A Select Annotated Bibliography" completes the text.

Part One largely follows the pattern of rhetorics devoted to process approaches to writing instruction. The first chapter is essentially an introduction; the second emphasizes "explorations," a term the authors use to denote prewriting activities; the third highlights "correspondences," a term used to capture the intent of peer responses; and the fourth discusses revision. The next three chapters cover argument, "the researched essay," and editing and proofreading. Throughout these chapters are twenty-four "invitations to write" and five small columns of text labeled "computer tips."

The authors view the first seven chapters as a "circuit" through which they expect students to move when working with various pieces of prose. The authors repeatedly use a metaphor that encourages students to think of writing as a circle and cycle, presenting the terms "centrifugal" and "centripetal" to describe the reaching outward and inward that finally brings writers around to discovering their major points. The authors provide excellent student examples of exploratory writings, as well as "correspondences" or responses to other students' writing; the authors then invite students to write—exercises that often use word-processing strategies to help improve students' strategies for undertaking these tasks.

These seven chapters mention little, however, about some of the newest and exciting applications of computers. As members of Bread Loaf School of English's Program in Writing, they are intimately acquainted with BreadNet, an electronic conference that brings together students and teachers from all over the country. They include a two-paragraph description of BreadNet in the next-to-last chapter, but I would have benefited from learning about some of the writing projects that BreadNet students have worked on together.

Part Two includes chapters on on-line searches, "extended collaboration," and descriptions of software that writers might find useful. The chapter on extended collaboration seems misplaced. In it the authors describe a process of "musical computers," in which students respond to or create a writing that other students add to by moving from computer to computer. They then extend this process to include longer segments on which students collaborate in groups. It might have been more appropriate to place this chapter on collaboration among the first seven chapters.

The success with which the authors are able to integrate effective word-processing teaching strategies to complement the many acts of writing varies considerably. The text, for example, advises each student to keep a correspondence disk in which he or she has classmates respond to a number of pieces of exploratory writing. Students responding to their classmates'
prewriting mark the entries with their initials and the date. The authors admit that this is cumbersome at first. I would argue that it's always cumbersome. To systematically keep disks (which must necessarily be back-up files) for twenty student writers in a first-year composition class and make them accessible to the rest of the class, as the authors suggest, is fraught with difficulties. One might also question having students respond to one another's prewriting, which some students are reluctant to share. However, the authors do present other, more effective word-processing strategies. Having students separate their paragraphs by inserting lines and then writing summary statements to help them see the relationship of the ideas they've presented is useful. Other invitations to write include setting up master files with questions that can be used for more that one piece of writing, using split screens to move between more than one text, exploring search and replace functions for revision, and scrambling and unscrambling sentences in paragraphs.

From a writing instructor's point of view, one of the more interesting and worthwhile parts of this book is what the authors term a "select annotated bibliography." In this final section, the authors discuss the theories, articles, and books in composition theory and computers that have been most useful to them and that inform their rhetoric text. Unfortunately, the authors list the wrong names of the editors of *Writing On-Line* (James Collins and Elizabeth Sommers should be listed instead of M. Collins and N. Sommers) and an incorrect title for Colette Daiute's book, *Computers and Writing*. Nevertheless, this addition to a rhetoric is helpful to textbook committees trying to select a first-year composition text in keeping with the theoretical underpinnings of their particular program.

Throughout *Word Processing in a Community of Writers*, the authors are careful to avoid attributing writing improvement directly to computers; instead they speculate (wisely, I think) as to the benefits that might accrue as the result of using word-processing and computers. Their book offers students and instructors many useful strategies for making computers integral to a writing class. Much of the time they succeed in balancing general information about computers with specific ideas for writing instruction, placing computers squarely in the background.