NEW COLLEGE

REVIEW
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Acknowledgements

This publication is the result of the initiative and perseverance of undergraduate students in New College at the University of Alabama. They did the work from concept to distribution, proving again that education is experience focused on the imaginative application of theory to practice.
Dean’s Desk

There is a growing concern for improving academic quality at The University of Alabama. University-wide discussions about a core curriculum and the renewed interest in faculty research and publication are two examples of this concern. The New College shares in this concern for the improvement of the academic climate at the University, and the faculty of the New College has engaged recently in a series of deliberations about ways to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience in the New College. These deliberations have resulted in several major changes, including the implementation of a foreign language requirement, an English composition competency requirement, a junior year review—in which students in their junior year have their programs reviewed by a committee of faculty—and the development of this journal, The New College Review.

Even though the New College is an undergraduate division of the University community, it has a responsibility to participate in the University’s efforts toward increased faculty research and publication. Building on an existing theme in the New College, i.e., that students should be active rather than passive in the academic process, the faculty of New College decided to attempt to produce this journal by engaging students in its management and in major editorial roles.

This journal, which we hope to produce annually, will be a joint venture between New College undergraduates and faculty contributors at The University of Alabama. Eventually we hope to have the expenses defrayed through contributions from alumni and others. Even though it is unusual for undergraduates to participate in this kind of activity, we believe that it is appropriate to have undergraduates involved in a major thrust of the University and to have them as active participants.

Sincerely,

Bernard J. Sloan, Dean
This year New College Review explores the concept of research and living together. Rather than engaging the traditional argument over basic or applied research, we examine what research means to the quality of our lives as a human community. In keeping with our identity as an undergraduate publication, our first several articles reflect on our theme from the perspective of three recent New College students. We then turn to articles by persons with faculty experience. Patrick Cotter, a social scientist, looks at the utility of public opinion surveys as a means of allowing citizens to affect research that often bears directly upon them. In the humanities section, folklorist Elaine Katz offers insights into the manner in which our cultural history affects our understanding of ourselves. In the natural science section, Doug Phillips proposes ways of improving our understanding of the environment in which we live. Finally, Cathy Randall looks briefly at the ways in which students at the University of Alabama are performing research on the technological frontier of computers.

As with last year's inaugural issue, this year's New College Review has been conceived and executed by undergraduates of the college.

The Editors
UNDERGRAD

THE VALUE OF RESEARCH

by
Laurie S. Newman
Upon receiving this assignment, my first inclination before beginning the actual composition of the article was to do research. Herein lies the importance of the theme of this edition of the New College Review. Research, in its many varied and universal forms, is an elemental force behind practically every endeavor undertaken in today’s complicated world.

There are those people—myself included—for whom the word “research” conjures up images of wild-eyed, white-haired scientists in bifocals and stained white labcoats muttering to themselves over some vessel of smoldering, mysterious liquid. The experience of writing and, yes, researching this article has altered that image in my mind; I hope that I might pass on that adjustment of imagery to those who read these words.

In order to achieve this end, a logical beginning would be an overview of what research is. One misconception which should be eliminated is that research is scientific—period. In fact, research is much more, being applicable to any field of human endeavor. Research is occurring at this very moment in every department of this university, not just in that succession of buildings on the “scientific side” of the quad. Not only are existing theories and products being researched, but also—and perhaps more importantly—that which could exist. It is this sense of discovery and invention which lends excitement to the prospect of research.

Research is also valuable, however, in bringing understanding to that which does exist. If we take the advice of Descartes, we should doubt everything; that of which we are certain is as subject to revision—or at least reinterpretation—as are those things about which we have our doubts. We must remember that everything is subject to obsolescence—that, once upon a time, many people were certain that the earth was flat, that man could not fly, and more recently, that man could not walk on the moon. Due to various forms of research in varying degrees of sophistication, these misconceptions have been cleared up and the “impossible” accomplished.

But how were the obstacles of closed-mindedness overcome in order to realize these achievements? The complicated answer lies deep within some philosophical brainstorm. More simply, we can see how human nature allows for such dramatic changes. To begin with, we humans are innately curious. Is there anything which we can accept without question? We should hope not. For as long as we possess this invaluable asset, questioning—and therefore research and its resultant discovery—is inevitable. And it is only through questions that we find answers.

But these questions must be asked with an open mind. Prejudice has no place in research to be sure, but it is even more important that one’s mind-set be based on more than mere opinion; in today’s complicated society, we must have the facts—solid knowledge resulting from first-person research.

Not that this means that each of us should begin an in-depth study of scientific principles or embark upon a detailed academic investigation. It only indicates that an expanded inquiry into any topic of individual interest is a desirable goal. Each of us, regardless of our station or IQ, has an area of expertise or interest. In an effort to better mankind and thus enhance our ability to live together, each of us may in this manner make an individual contribution towards an improvement of the whole.

The more informed one becomes on any subject, the more likely that intelligent decisions may be made on that issue. A trend has developed recently in that Americans—who always seem to be short on time—often trust others, i.e., the media, government officials, and/or “experts,” to do their research for them, and sometimes even go so far as to delegate their own decision-making to someone else. This trend should be reversed immediately. Many relevant issues require and deserve immediate personal attention, resulting in conscientious individual decisions.

My view is that each of us has the right to expect a certain amount of research from our superiors, our peers, and ourselves. Ignorance is not bliss; in fact, contrary to the popular cliche, what we don’t know can hurt us. Laypersons—you and I—as much as specialists should attempt to educate ourselves and one another beyond the point of “general knowledge.” A little data in the minds of the many may go a long way toward solving society’s social, political, and scientific problems.

How can “a little data” in the mind of an individual contribute to these potential solutions? The answer may be found in the concept of communication. Many complex situations have been brought to conclusion by communication, and many not-so-difficult problems have proven irreconcilable due to a lack thereof. In order to communicate intelligently, one must possess the facts to back up whatever position he or she stands on. The importance of the ability to communicate cannot be overstressed; it may, in fact, prove to be a sustaining force in society as we know it.

We are fortunate that our society allows for such an exercise of freedom. But this should be a reciprocal arrangement. In 1959, President Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed a symposium on basic research with these words: “America’s first responsibility is to see that freedom is not lost through ignorance, complacency, or lack of vigilance. This applies both to our domestic problems and to those abroad.”
Over two decades later, these words still ring true. Only now, there is an increased sense of urgency about maintaining that freedom. Problems confront our nation and our world which must be solved through the acquisition of new knowledge. Many of these problems threaten not only our basic political freedoms, but our even more fundamental human right to remain alive.

Eisenhower's words were probably meant to arouse national support in the scientific community for a strong defense mechanism. Today these words can, and should, be interpreted differently. In the technological society of the 1980's, we need to acquire the knowledge of how to defend ourselves in case of nuclear war—or better yet, how to prevent the start of such an attack.

We must also learn how simultaneously to stop population growth and feed the world's millions of starving, undernourished people. The United States represents only 5% of the world's population, yet we consume 35% of the world's energy and resources, and we are responsible for 60% of the world's waste. Can't we learn to be responsible for our greediness and compensate for our past indulgences through extending our present and future knowledge to those who are at our mercy?

At this point, research as a means of providing luxuries should be halted, or at least severely curtailed. The crucial problems facing us require our immediate, undivided attention in the research field. Millions of dollars are spent each year in this country, and millions more in others, on industrial and governmental research and development with one goal in mind: increasing the gross national product. This goal should be immediately altered towards improving the quality of life.

The exponential curve of useful, beneficial research is headed towards a leveling-off point and then towards a gradual, or not so gradual, decline. This plunge may be prevented by directing research toward those aforementioned problems which must be solved in the interest of mankind. At this point, though most of the human population is in the Third World, this majority is virtually unaffected by research.

The most valuable achievement of past research has undoubtedly been its humanitarian dividends. Through research, many lives have been saved, while life has been made infinitely more comfortable for the rest of us. Your humanitarian efforts need not be as grandiose as discovering the cure for a fatal disease, but may be as simple as becoming well-informed on a topic of importance, such as the population problem mentioned above, and then intelligently communicating to others the urgency of the situation and what may be done about it.

Those of us who are graduating in the near future, who are leaving academia behind, or have been away from an academic setting for some time, may not be too excited by the prospect of research. It is often viewed, however misconstrued, as solely an academic endeavor. This is a false assumption. An academic environment may be favorable to research, but it is by no means necessary. It may, in fact, be a hindrance. Schooling, at any level, from grammar school to professorship, often encourages the status quo, resisting and discouraging change. Learning is an individual activity which can occur anywhere. As Dr. James Salem, a professor in American Studies here at the University, states in his essay "On Becoming a Lifelong Learner," "there is no environment that lacks the capacity to educate." We should each take this into account and begin our research process wherever we may be, in whatever position we find ourselves. Though the need for new knowledge has not always been recognized nor encouraged, the pessimists must not be allowed to discourage those of us who choose to forge on. We can look back and cite the achievements of research when we need encouragement, or for evidence to convince non-believers of what can be done. All we need to do is redirect those research energies and dollars toward establishing a new goal—improving the quality of life for everyone.

Laurie S. Newman is a student at the University of Alabama with a depth study in communications and Pre-Law through New College. She was a New College SGA Summer Senator and received the School of Accountancy Award for excellence in accounting.
Research and the Individual

by
Rick de Yampert
I

tnog. That word that might come to one's mind upon entering a library such as the Amelia Gorgas Library on the University of Alabama campus, that is, if one is familiar with E. B. White's essay of the same name. In that essay, White satirically addresses the "Reader's Digest syndrome," in which people gradually become so obsessed with possessing an in-the-know feeling in the face of an ever-increasing tide of new information that the media powers, sensing this public pulse, acquiesce to demand and begin condensing printed and spoken media information to ridiculously short lengths. In its penultimate manifestation, the powers that be produce a six-letter "Word of the Day" such as "irtnog"—totally meaningless but satisfying people's thirst for knowledge and up-to-date news.

Of course, an "intellectual" curiosity thus soothed is falsely soothed, but the dilemma White was concerned with is more relevant now than when he wrote the essay nearly half a century ago. Directly stated, the question is: how can one possibly hope to stay intellectually in tune with the times—these times—when not only knowledge and information are expanding seemingly exponentially, but also access to such is similarly increasing, which ironically makes the task that much more formidable. Thus it is that a library, any size library, makes me pause and think of the Irtnog complex, for one cannot possibly pursue all of, or any sizable portion of, the knowledge that exists.

This circumstance implies several ramifications, each of which particularly concerns the theme of this year's Review: research. Research is a term which is often narrowly defined but which should not and cannot be. The knowledge housed within a library's walls, indeed the knowledge/information that is present anywhere, universally stems from research. Research is the process of which knowledge is the product. However, the research involved could be as tradition defines it: the gathering of data and the employment of the scientific method as such pertains to a particular subject. Or research could be more loosely-defined: research within one's mind, if you will, a process which may or may not be physically active but which is at least mentally active. A research process—pursuit of new insight and new knowledge through exploration of ideas and ideals, selection and discard of facts and speculations, juxtaposition of perceptions which had heretofore remained polarized—can and does continue long after a book or test tube has been put away.

If this latter interpretation seems too liberal a definition, or if it seems to define research as merely being synonymous with "thinking," I suggest that the word "research" be viewed again. Literally research can mean simply "to look again."

Thus one arrives face to face with the ramifications mentioned earlier, reflected in a set of questions. As an individual, how far can we and should we "look at things again," carry out our own research, whether it be of the strictly-defined or loosely-defined nature? To what degree is such research a luxury, or when does it become a necessity? To phrase it yet another way, to what extent are we individually responsible for our own education, and to what extent are we individually responsible for separating truth from half-truth, fact from opinion and speculation?

One specific ramification of the Irtnog syndrome is the seduction of passivity, due in part to the formidable volume of accessible knowledge (that is, one simply foregoes the task of researching some subject area just as one may shun any other challenge), and due in part to ordinary apathy. Both a cause and
existence and if one is so inclined

every county in the country . to
advisories from the FDA . FCC .
depository presently contains over
developments within the Urban

biological surveys of seemingly

for being added per year ).

Country ) to be stored and utilized
everything from geological and

housed in the Main Library

a symptom of this passivity (and

Interlibrary loan and
computer-assisted retrieval
services further illustrate, as does
the basic concept of a library, that
research is inevitably symbiotic:
the knowledge that a library
houses was generated by research
of one form or another, and it
takes still further research by an
individual to utilize this

Neither phase of research is
complete in and of itself. A
corollary of the symbiosis idea is
that research must also inevitably
be characterized by the Hegelian
dialectic process: an individual
discovers a thesis and counters it
with his or her own antithesis, thus
evolving a synthesis—knowledge
gleaned both from one’s own
experience and research and that
of others, and therefore having a
much greater chance of being

This new synthesis must
become another researcher’s thesis
and the process continues. This
dialectic is true for both the
scientist in the lab and the
everyday citizen who peruses his
or her newspaper and faces
today’s political and social issues.
Neither as a people nor as
individuals can we allow ourselves
the false luxury of the arrogant
attitude that present, static
knowledge is enough to confront
the problems of today and
tomorrow.

There is another luxury that
our nation as a whole indulges to
an ever-increasing degree, a luxury
that directly is a result of the
lnnog complex—this luxury is the
aforementioned reliance on
impersonal elites and/or
megastructures to inform us of
what we need to know. The issue
here is one of degree. It is not
only a luxury but oftentimes a
necessity that we have authorities
to let us know how much vitamin
C we need each day, how the
political upheaval in the middle
East will affect our oil-based
economy, what our car exhausts
are doing to the ozone layer, and
so forth. We go to a doctor and
she instructs us to take four
capsules of tetracycline a day and
we will be cured, and we neither

want to nor can afford to doubt
this, and a week later our faith is
vindicated when we feel better.
There is simply so much
knowledge and know-how that any
and every individual must rely
upon, that in effect we must trust
others to research and then
possess our knowledge for us and
to dispense it to us as needed.

Hopefully this produces a
degree of apprehension (but not
paranoia) in each of us. The
degree that we allow trust in
institutions, elites, peers, or
whomever to supply our
knowledge can prove to be the
degree that we allow someone
else to do our thinking for us. To
reiterate, the concern here stems
from the amount, seemingly
increasing, that we as individuals
permit such trust. An anecdote—
indeed a parable—that appeared
in the first issue of the New College
Review bears repeating, I believe.
The speaker is Dr. Ed Pasterini, a
professor in New College:

I sometimes do a lecture
which I call “The Truth about
Stonehenge.” I begin by talking
about primitive astronomy and
then I discuss some of the more
widely-known facts about
Stonehenge. I slowly move into
lesser-known facts, half-truths,
and then into gross
exaggerations, ridiculous
distortions, made-up facts and
blatant lies. I usually get fairly
far along before someone says:
“Hey, wait a minute; how could
we possibly know that?” The
discussion which follows on the
nature of evidence is always a

good one....

Through our passivity we
place ourselves in such a
vulnerable situation everyday, our
opinions and attitudes being
shaped by limited and limiting
sources which may or may not be
credible. It is not enough simply
to read one’s local newspaper and
then to watch the six o’clock
national news. A visit to a
newspaper office in order to view
the Associated Press wire service
machine churning out volumes of
copy by the minute, which must be
discriminately selected form,
would be enough to convince one of the inadequacies of relying upon one printed source for "all on the news.

A similar, perhaps even more dire, situation exists with television. As Donna Woolfolk Cross writes in her book Mediaspeak, a scathing but astute criticism of television journalism: Despite a steadily worsening economy and growing social inequities, the American electorate remains overwhelming pro-establishment—in favor of keeping our social and economic frameworks essentially the same. Is this because contemporary American society really is "the best of all possible worlds"? Or are Americans simply made to feel that way? How much of what we believe we know is the result of a deliberate attempt to direct our thinking in a particular way?

Probably a great deal more than most of us would like to admit.

Television news promotes the status quo by directing our attention toward a daily series of diverting but unrelated events, and away from deeper social problems that might lead us to question or challenge the current system of doing things.

In the same book Cross praises PBS's MacNeil-Lehrer Report, with good reason:

By avoiding a tidy conclusion, by leaving things unresolved, MacNeil is, in effect, inviting the viewer to think, form judgments, protest, perhaps even take action. As MacNeil explains, "We make each viewer his own pundit—in a sense, his own reporter—looking over our shoulders as we interview, leading sources.... We don't wrap it up in a tidy package. We let the viewer do that. And we know of many families and some large groups of people where the debate continues when we go off the air.

Hopefully the debate will continue—or begin—for more and more people. The key lies in research—individual research—which is not to imply that one must delve into an intensive investigation of any and every issue of concern great or small, be it supply-side economics, abortion, nuclear disarmament, or the effect of amending the local zoning laws. However, research to some degree, informing one's self, is something that every one can and should do, particularly when an issue for whatever reason is somehow more personal than others.

It only takes a trip to a library, a bookstore, or even a newsstand, or a more judicious turn of the television channel, or perhaps most importantly in this age of electronic communications, discussion with others on a person-to-person level. We must not allow ourselves the pseudo-security induced by the Irnog complex. To as great a degree as possible, and it is indeed very possible, we must pursue our own research. Only then can we "know whereof we speak." Only then can we think for ourselves.

Rick de Yampert is a New College student who currently is a Staff Writer for Tusk and Crimson White, two campus newspapers at the University of Alabama. His depth study is writing and contemporary culture.
Personal Research For Personal Decisions

by

Chuck Hammack
Have you ever thought of how many decisions an average person makes in a day or in a lifetime and the results? Let’s start with the simple, reflex action ones, when to get up in the morning, what to wear to work, what to have for breakfast, what time to leave for work, etc. These are the run-of-the-mill type; they require little thought and little effort. But what about the hard ones, the ones that require time, effort, concentration and even agony to make, the ones that will alter your life style and affect you for the rest of your life? Some of these hard decisions are forced on you and you wonder if you made the right decision, or you go around saying “what if?” or “why did I do that?” Then there are other hard decisions that you can make that will bring you much pleasure and comfort. I have made a few of both kinds of decisions in my life and would like to relate some of them, and the results.

I was born in a small town in Mississippi (population 900) and had a normal upbringing for that period of time. I say normal if you consider living on a farm and growing up during the Depression as normal. In my early teens the hot song of the day was “‘Leven Cents Cotton and Forty Cents Meat, How in the World Can the Pore Folks Eat?”’ I graduated from high school—there were nine in my class—and I was one of three who enrolled in college. This was probably the first big decision I ever made on my own. Looking back I think the primary reason I decided to go to college was to get off the farm and to continue participation in sports. My family could not provide any financial aid and the only reason I was able to go was because of an athletic scholarship. However, in those days, receiving an athletic scholarship only meant you could work your way through school; in other words, it assured you of a year-round job in the school cafeteria. I attended college for two years. Then the Japanese forced me into my next big decision: should I enlist or should I wait and be drafted. I decided to enlist, so on 29 March 1942 I was sworn in as an aviation cadet in the United States Army Air Corps. Three wars, thirty years, ten months and two days later I retired from what had become the United States Air Force.

This forced the next big decision on me, where should we live after retirement? After much soul searching and for various reasons we moved to Tuscaloosa. This decision is still up for grabs as to whether it was a right one or wrong one. Anyway, the move here forced me to face the next big decision, what to do? I finally decided to enter the real estate profession, which I did, but found that it was not satisfying my needs. Deep inside me a small voice was saying “continue your education.” While in the military I had attended some classes at the University of California, but was unable to complete enough work for a degree. While debating my further actions, I saw a brochure from the University of Alabama outlining the External Degree Program offered through New College. I made an appointment with New College External Degree counselors and the result of the conference was my next big decision; I enrolled in the External Degree Program at the University of Alabama.

Once this decision was made the next step was to determine the course of study (subjects) I wanted to take. My previous college activity had been directed toward attaining a B.S. degree and after an evaluation of my credits this course still seemed to be the best, with one slight adjustment. During my military career I had participated in all levels of administration and management so I decided to concentrate on subjects I felt I was deficient in, primarily the arts and humanities. I was able to do this because the credits gained from my military experience plus college credits previously gained almost completed the required courses for a B.S. degree. Consequently, I could be selective in the courses I
I wanted to take as many regular classroom courses (as opposed to attending night classes, weekend classes, etc.) as possible, because I was also very interested in gaining insight into the perceptions and philosophies of the present-day college-age student in a classroom environment, rather than in a controlled situation as in the military. For my final twelve-hour project required in the External Degree Program I decided to concentrate on the arts.

To say that my experience in obtaining a degree through the External Degree program was enjoyable would be understating the positive. Some of my classroom sessions were a revelation to me, particularly the ones in American Studies. These were conducted in a seminar-type format with student participation desired and expected. Some of the meetings were beneficial to me, because I could observe today's students in an objective manner. I was also able to take courses in other areas I was particularly interested in such as law, hospital administration, and human resources. But the one segment I enjoyed most was the final twelve-hour project.

During my life I had never given much thought to art other than to see it as a finished product. I had no idea of what was involved in the creation of a sculpture, the design of a building, the painting of a picture or the making of a movie. To obtain a basic background in these areas I did research in the library, read several books on art, architecture and cinematography. Then I attended several movies produced by the American Film Institute and shown by the Art Department. After several weeks of research and study to gain background information my wife and I took a trip to Washington, D.C., and Williamsburg, Virginia, and spent several days visiting the art galleries and museums in these cities. As part of my final project I wrote articles on my impressions of the varied art forms I had observed.

I think my experience in the External Degree Program has had a beneficial effect on me. Reviewing past travels I realize how much I missed when visiting Rome, Paris, Madrid, London, and other great cities of the world by not having an appreciation for the art treasures they have to offer. However, I feel there is beauty everywhere; you don't even have to look for it if you know how to appreciate it. To me now, a wild duck is much more beautiful in flight than hanging from a hunter's belt, a mother goose is more beautiful shepherding her young than she is sitting in a roasting pan, and a deer is more beautiful bounding through the forest than in a newspaper photo with lifeless eyes looking at you while his head is being held up by some smirking nimrod.

If you are not satisfied with the way your life is going you can change it. A decision remember that the day you make it is the first day of the rest of your life. Enjoy it.

Chuck Hammack is a graduate of the University's External Degree Program. Now retired from the U.S. Air Force, Chuck lives in Northport, Alabama.
November 22, 1963

After school I walk home
Through leaves piled like Indian mounds
The schoolyard flag has dropped halfway
Like a mailbox flag after the postman.
Has left a brown letter.

My neighborhood is the empty
Street in a western
An hour before high noon.
I draw an imaginary six-shooter.
Leaves die in the wind.

I run through the house
Dropping my books.
My father is home this time;
His eyes are rifle shots.
Mother wrings her string-mop hair.

I watch the news on TV
And ask if Texas is a southern state.
No one answers. I go outside.
And cover myself with the leaves.

Donald H. Harrison
SOCIAL SCIENCE
The Use of Survey Research in the Social Sciences

by Patrick Cotter

In doing research social scientists often conduct surveys. They use this research tool because they believe that the best (or at least a very good) way to find out something about individuals is to ask them. Thus survey researchers say that if you want to study topics such as why individuals form particular groups, or why voters supported a particular candidate, then the best research strategy to follow is to ask the appropriate individuals why they behaved the way they did.

In saying that the best way to find out about individuals is to ask them, survey researchers are making two assumptions. These assumptions are (1) that individuals can tell you about what you want to know, and (2) that they will tell you.

Within reason, both of these assumptions are defensible. First, individuals can report their feelings, beliefs and opinions about a wide variety of topics. In fact, one problem survey researchers encounter is that respondents, many of whom will politely answer any question asked of them, often express opinions concerning topics about which they have little or no information. Users of survey results then must be wary of questions which ask respondents about technical or obscure subjects. Second, most people will participate in surveys. Indeed, many respondents find that participation in a survey is an opportunity to vent their opinions.

Most survey interviewers find that the overly talkative respondents are as much a problem as the uncooperative respondents. Also, while errors certainly occur (i.e. surveys consistently find that more people say that they voted in an election than actually did), most individuals participating in surveys do answer the questions asked them in a truthful fashion.

Social scientists, and others, can use the results of surveys in a variety of ways. Surveys can be used simply to gather interesting information about the opinions and behaviors of individuals. For example, in the Fall of 1981 a Capstone Poll survey found that 85 percent of Alabamians knew who Bear Bryant was. At the same time only 26 percent of the public could identify the incumbent Lieutenant Governor, George McMillan, and only 41 percent could identify the incumbent Attorney General, Charles Graddick. Similarly, a poll of Alaska residents found that only 85 percent of the public knew that Alaska is an independent country.

Surveys are also used in "pure" research. Here investigators are more interested in answering some theoretical question than they are in addressing a practical problem. For example, survey data collected in Alabama have been used to study topics such as (a) why the number of individuals identifying themselves as Democrats or Republicans has declines, (b) what factors help account for increases in the level of political participation among Southern blacks over the last twenty years, and (c) what affects individuals' preferences concerning which level of government should provide
which public services. While these studies may have practical applications, they were conducted, using survey data, primarily to gain a better understanding of human behavior.

Finally, surveys are used to help identify and solve public problems. One way surveys do this is by providing policy makers with information about the preferences and priorities of their constituents. For example, recent Capstone Poll surveys have found that a lack of money is the major reason why students leave the University of Alabama before they graduate. Another survey found that 50 percent of Alabamians say that they do not get all the health care they need because of the high cost of getting that care.

In addition to identifying problems, surveys can help select feasible solutions to problems. While survey results should not be the only factor influencing the formulation of public policies, they are an important source of information concerning how the public is likely to react if one policy alternative rather than another is adopted. For example, a recent survey found that the public is more in favor of the state attempting to attract new industries through more aggressively promoting itself than they are with any attempt to maintain low wages for Alabama workers. The same study found that the public is much more likely to favor an increase in the “sin” taxes of beer and cigarettes than they are an increase in the sales or property tax.

Surveys can also be used to evaluate the performance of a policy. In this way policy makers can identify which policies are performing up to public expectations, and which policies are in need of improvements. Recent surveys have found that citizens of Tuscaloosa and Birmingham are generally satisfied with the quality of the services provided by their city governments. Residents of both cities are, however, critical of street conditions in their neighborhoods. Also, black citizens are more dissatisfied with public services than are white residents.

There are, of course, some situations in which surveys are not an appropriate research tool. Specifically, surveys are of only limited use in gathering information about the past (people’s memories are often incomplete or selective), about interactions among people, and about individuals’ deepseated values and motives.

Even in those areas in which surveys are appropriate to use, they must be employed cautiously. The way in which the respondents in a survey are selected, and the number of respondents contacted, affects the quality and reliability of a study’s results. The wording and order of the questions asked in a survey can also affect a study’s results. Even very minor and seemingly inconsequential changes in the wording of a question may lead to substantial changes in results. Additionally, how interviewers behave, and even who the interviewers are, influence the results of a survey. For example, respondents give different answers to questions about racial issues when they are interviewed by a member of their own race rather than by a member of another race. This race-of-interviewer effect is found even in telephone interviews. Finally, the different types of surveys—mail, telephone and in-person—each have their own biases. Thus the type of survey conducted can also influence the results obtained.

Surveys, then, require care in their use. Their results also require cautious interpretation. The misuse of surveys, or overinterpretation of their results, can lead to serious errors. When used and interpreted properly, however, surveys are an extremely valuable method for social scientists, policy makers, and other “consumers” of research to use in gathering data about individual behavior and attitudes.

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Humanistic Approaches to Folklife Research

by Elaine S. Katz

One has but to observe the progressive increase in bulk of the annual Folklore Bibliography published by MLA to sense how affluent in scholarship American folklore has become since, for example, Richard Dorson first "called on folklorists to study American folklore in the context of the great dramatic movements of American History." Charles Joyner reminds us of the mandate in his 1975 study, "A Model for the Analysis of Folklore Performance in Historical Context." He argues that "folklorists would do well, even while using generations, to approach their subject with a deeper regard for the individual particulars of human experience." I submit, conversely, that whatever the disciplinary perspective or combinations of disciplinary perspectives from which a folklorist approaches performance, event, or, more comprehensively, a nexus of folkloric phenomena—it is time to summon forth a more conscious regard for the humanistic generalizations inferable from the abundance of data on "individual particulars of human experience."

While I include my own study of informant Mary Harper in order to demonstrate my thesis, it is noteworthy that any number of studies examining the folkloric contours of an individual's life could add weight to my argument. So, for that matter, do the very first words of Barre Toelken's recent book. The Preface to The Dynamics of Folklore acknowledges the "lament" of "at least one folklorist . . . that folklore scholarship tends to 'dehumanize' folklore." Indeed, Toelken wastes no time in stating his purpose as "an attempt to provide a partial remedy for that situation by arguing a basic attitude toward folklore study that stresses 'folk' and the dynamics of their traditional expressions." If Toelken's attitude harbingers a new wave of folkloristic sensitivity toward those values under present discussion, then my current proposal for a greater frequency of expressly humanistic approaches to folklife studies—that is, for stressing the folklore—will turn out to have been as redundant as a prescription for putting Christ back into Christmas after the advent of the Millennium.

Through an interest in the Rowland M. Harper collection housed at The University of Alabama Library (the products of nearly six decades' collecting a la the vacuum cleaner method, by a well known botanist employed by the Alabama Geological Survey), I learned in 1977 that Dr. Harper's widow had been living in a Northport, Alabama nursing home. Thus evolved two years' worth of regular phone calls and of intermittent visits. Begun from the perspective of a folklorist interested in exploring folklife traditions in Mary Harper's native DeKalb County, by means of the

This is an abbreviated version of a paper read at the American Folklore Society in 1979.
"oral biography" techniques outlined in Folklore for the Time of Your Life, my work with Mary Harper continued from the broader perspective of a folklorist who is also a feminist and recognizes Mary's value as a role model to contemporary women. But soon my perspective grew wider still.

May Sue Wigley Harper, born in a log house in 1894, was reared in a traditionally folk cultural environment on Sand Mountain in the DeKalb County portion of Northern Alabama, which is located in the southern Appalachian foothills. She referred to herself as "one of the older ones of nine children," meaning the oldest daughter. "I was a young woman in my teens," she was fond of saying, "before I saw a high school or a library or a railroad, or a black man." But she grew up with a healthy respect for the Cherokee Indians who resided in her region before the 1830's. Learning a few of their songs as a child, she later investigated the possibility of a Cherokee bloodline in her family, when she had access to the library at Oklahoma A&M at Stillwater, where she attended college in 1929. As she explains:

...I wrote to Mother...and said,..."They're taking me for a Cherokee, 'cause I came from a Cherokee section of Alabama." Mother said, "If you have any Indian blood it comes from your father's side of the family."

Grandmother Wigley was a Paris, from Paris Island off the South Carolina coast. All these Indians and white folks lived together there for generations. And mother thought some Indian blood might have gotten in us from my Grandma Paris. So I'm kind of proud I got a little Indian blood in me.

Mary also had a strong sense of her Anglo roots, inferred from such childhood guessing games as "Pretty Bird in My Cup," taught to her by a father whom she proudly remembers as "unusual" because "a lot of daddies," unlike her own, "don't have time to spend with children." The game involved the names of species of birds foreign to Sand Mountain but native to parts of the British Isles. Mary's informal education included history lessons in the form of family saga thematically based on the daily hardships rather than political theory of the Civil War, and featuring the motif of the strong-willed woman who refuses to take any nonsense from the Yankee soldiers who dared set foot on her turf. Her education included eschatology garnered from Sacred Harp lyrics long before she understood their theological bases—for she internalized them from the lofty security of her song leader father's arms. And her training also included the mental calisthenics by means of which most youngsters at the turn of the century were conditioned to sharpen their intellects. She recalls how she learned the memorization techniques that later were to serve her on the lecture circuit, by having spent hours with here siblings competing for turns at standing on a tree stump to recite memorized passages from the Bible, long narrative poems, and multiplication tables.

Marie's greatest childhood fears were of legendary bears, real dug wells, and the booger man. And her family saga includes several stories on each of those themes. Hers was a world of game trapping, sheep shearing, homespun, and battling blocks. It was also a time of traditional games and songs, Christmases with taffy pulls and Halloweens spent sleeping atop the house when "thunderation broke out" in the manner of Chivaree. Her socialization derived from further sources of childhood play, especially with corn cob dolls. Into these she invested her early talent for mimicry and close observation, creating little dramas in which the cob dolls represented members of her own community, whom she caricatured so accurately that her mother sometimes felt it necessary to censor her. "That's how I found out what the word sacrilegious means," she would explain:

Well, we had to work in the cotton field. We were on the northern border of the cotton belt, and we not only had to chop cotton but we had to pick it too. We'd have two hours off that we didn't have to work and we'd play cob dolls. We had many different varieties of corn. We'd break the cobs in two and they had a pitted place in the middle, and we'd put a nail in the white ones and dress up the women in skirts and waists. We'd use the red ones for the men. We'd take all the scraps—mother couldn't keep
We didn’t bother to dress
the men. We imagined they had
clothes. When you imagine a
cob’s a man, you can imagine
anything else! We had more fun
with cob dolls: we just had
bushels of them because there
wasn’t any limit, you know, just
our memories. We had dolls to
represent everybody in the
community that we knew. And
when we’d have these two
two hours off, we’d mimic the
whole community. I was just a
little kid, but I learned what the
word sacrilegious meant because
mother said, “You can play
having Sunday school, and you
can talk like Mr. Hiram T.
Graves, the minister, but you
mustn’t preach or pray, because
that would be sacrilegious.” So
we knew we couldn’t preach or
pray, but we could do
everything else.

Her sense of self derived from
a mother whom she had revered
since entering adulthood: “I had
a lot of freedom of choice when I
grew up,” she liked to recall,
“because my mother wasn’t trying
to get her girls married. They had
big families back then, the land
was poor, and she knew the hard
times women had.
She...encouraged us to get a good
education.” Growing up in a Sand
Mountain household replete with
paternal grandparents and an
extended family of aunts and
uncles, a staunch Protestant faith,
and a traditional waste-not-want-
not mode of life equipped Mary
Harper with those values and
qualities long associated with
masculine American culture:
Yankee ingenuity, frontier
endurance, Franklinian enterprise,
Emersonian self-reliance, and
Jamesian pragmatism.

Her father’s failure in business
as a country merchant and
postmaster around 1908,
prompted fourteen-year-old Mary
to formulate a life’s plan that
would do Franklin proud: She
would remember the
circumstances as follows:

We were so poor, you
know, after we lost our home at
the “store place.” We had to
move out on a rented farm
when I was around fourteen.
There wasn’t any land left for
homesteading. I felt very upset
to be on rented land. All my
friends were on their own
places. One morning I was very
much depressed. I stopped and
watched the sunrise on top of
Lookout Mountain, and then I
ran to the house. I had a sudden
inspiration and wrote down on
paper what I was going to do.

First was to study at home
and make a teacher. And
second was to help Dad pay the
debts. Then I was going to help
buy them another home. And
the fourth thing was, I was
going to graduate from college.

One by one, she accomplished
these goals and more.

At seventeen she had learned
enough, studying “in the cotton
seed house to get away from the
kids,” as she liked to tell it, to
pass the state teacher’s
examination. Drawing strength
from her folk cultural upbringing,
Mary Wigley thus launched her
own career, first as a teacher, then
as an undergraduate at Oklahoma
A&M, and, before graduate
school, as a home demonstration
agent—a horse- and-buggy
occupation that required the
physical endurance and wit of a
travelling salesman, and has
resulted in an entire repertory of
anecdotal reminiscences.

Upon having earned a
master’s degree at Columbia
College in Chicago, Mary began a
career during the Depression as a
nationwide lecturer on “Forward
Planning and the Economics of the
Home.” She viewed this part of
her career as instructive because
of the content of speeches which
emphasized the inherent
distinctions between a high scale
and a high standard of living—a
lesson learned experimentally
during her Sand Mountain
childhood and reinforced
intellectually while she attended
college classes. She regarded her
early life as historically valuable
by reason of regional influences.
Hence, when she became
widowed, she wrote her
autobiography. The manuscript,
which ironically she promised
herself to live to be a hundred
only to see in print, concluded
prior to the days of her courtship
and very harmonious marriage from
1942 to 1966. She married at the
age of forty-nine, and virtually
supported both her aging parents
in Sand Mountain and her
underpaid botanist husband in
Tuscaloosa by practicing the
economics of the home which
had been the content of her
lectures.

Her personal narrative
courtship story is my favorite of so
many narratives recounted into my
tape recorder:

They used to tell me when I
was studying before I got my
Master’s degree, when I’d run
up on something I’d want to
know about the South,” now,
you write to Dr. Roland M.
Harper, “He’d answer my letter,
but he never would keep up the
correspondence. He’d heard me
speak in 1936 at the University
of Alabama. It was a big crowd,
I remember, and he came up
and spoke to me afterwards. But
I didn’t hear anything from
him for eight years.

I wrote him a letter one
cold February night, and I got
quite personal with him and
asked him how did it happen he
just never did get married. And
I reckon he thought I wasn’t
immune to being interested. He
had just been relieved of taking
care of his mother, and he
never had had enough money
to support a wife. But he didn’t
wait.

He walked out to our
house. He pretended that he
wanted to be walking. He
walked all over Alabama. He
didn’t have a car. There was a
plant he wanted to look up at
Collinsville in the valley, and so
he walked from Collinsville out
to where we lived. I can remember seein' him come down the road. He had kind of a limp. One leg was a little bit shorter than the other.

We were burning kerosene lamps and living out in the country. And pumpin' water out of the well. Anyway, he saw we were just poor country folks. I think that encouraged him more than anything else, because he saw I wasn't used to any luxuries. He proposed the first time he came. He was sixty-four and he never had been married, but he was intent on doin' it just right. And so he asked Dad for me. I was forty-nine years old. And I remember what Dad told him. He said, "Well, she's old enough to make up her own mind."[12]

While she was proud of her independence, Mary Harper would refute such epithets as "feminist" or "career woman." She was fond of recalling her husband's answer to "why it was that it took so long to get interested in me." The reply: "Well, I thought you were just a career woman." That was the last kind of woman he wanted," Mary would chuckle. While she accepted the traditional role of the American woman as a helpmate whose concerns center on the home, her acquired values and life practices provide a role model to contemporary women, including feminists.

Just as written literature may be studied in terms of humanistic values inherent in the text, in context, and even in the life of the author, so should those humanistic values born of folk life-styles be perceived as suitable material for examination in the terms of the text, cultural context, and life of the transmitter. Indeed, the particulars of Mary Harper's life imply folk traditions which contribute to the unself-conscious actualization of such well-nigh mythopoetic qualities as independence, resourcefulness, and native wit. These qualities, while generally cherished as part of our cultural ethos, are usually overlooked in practice when elitist educational and economic goals are set. We who are educator-folklorists must begin to consider it part of our responsibility to show students how to evaluate not just lore, but folk-lore—in much the same way that we attempt to show them how to evaluate great poetry, drama, and fiction in elite literature—that is, in terms of human nature and universal human values.

As feminist, folklorist, and humanist, I am gratified by the work that has and is being done to substantiate evidence that the woman quilter, for instance, and her product are worthy of the attention and critical appraisal long relegated to elite forms of expressiveness. I have to admit that I admire the folk whom I study. They have become my role models, in many instances my heroes. However, I am as guilty as the next folklorist of a certain brand of reticence which I can only attribute to the exoteric factor in folkloristics. Aware that folklore has too long been regarded as an academic stepchild in the family of traditional disciplines, folklorists in America take great pains to project an image of cool professionalism. Thus, we are careful to adhere to a strict empirical methodology and to make sure that our colleagues in such fields as history, anthropology, and English know it.

What gave me the impetus to make my insights explicit was an observation by Deborah Bowman in a review of my own book. In my view her boldness placed her on a par with the child who dared to point that the emperor wasn't really wearing any clothes, for she declared: "You will feel the author's inspiration on each page for she is sure that collecting folklore is good for you. And while she doesn't come right out and say so, it is obvious that she feels an awareness of folk traditions has tremendous potential for curing some of the ills of our society." Deborah's fearlessness in pointing out the naked truth has yanked me out of
my safe closet for once and for all.

Humanist psychologists have availed themselves of a now established professional option not to restrict themselves to reportage of observations without evaluation or identification of inherent values. Why not the same option in folkloristics? Perhaps the present suggestion might gain prestige if it were given a one-term name that could be included in our vocabulary of weighty professional jargon—something like “humanistics”! Actually, the working definition of humanism which I find most applicable for present purposes comes straight out of a commencement address delivered at Bennington College in Vermont in 1970 by Kurt Vonnegut. Here is what he told the graduating students:

I know that millions of dollars have been spent to produce this splendid graduating class, and that the main hope of your teachers was, once they got through with you, that you would no longer be superstitious. I’m sorry—I have to undo that now. I beg you all to believe in the most ridiculous superstition of all: That humanity is at the center of the universe, the fulfiller or the frustrator of the grandest dreams of God Almighty.

If you can believe that, and make others believe it, then there might be hope for us. Human beings might stop treating each other like garbage, might begin to treasure and protect each other instead.

The suspension of disbelief about our universe, to which Vonnegut would have us commit ourselves, becomes every day less difficult in the light of such new theoretical insights as those set forth, for example, in sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson’s On Human Nature. Wilson foresees the end of theology as we know it. But if it is indeed true, as he insists, that the genetic factor to distinguish Homo sapiens governs neither the use of language nor the ability to reason in the abstract, but the proclivity toward religion—and we remember that one man’s religion is another’s superstition—then the greatest arena we have for exercising freedom of will is that in which we may shape our own attitudes about the “grandest dreams of God Almighty,” Him—or Herself.

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EXPLORING ALABAMA’S LONG-TERM ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL OPTIONS:
A NEW DIMENSION FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

by
Doug Phillips

Having remained largely rural and undeveloped, Alabama has not yet encountered environmental disruption to the extent as exists in many highly developed states. On the other hand, we are beginning to experience some serious environmental complications, and, with the South expected to attract the lion’s share of the nation’s growth during the remainder of this century, these complications are sure to increase. The type of economic development that occurs in an area can have profound impact on the natural surroundings. Consequently, guarding our natural environment is a major challenge facing those who plan for the future development of Alabama. Since the University of Alabama has taken a leadership role in pursuit of economic growth for the state, it is therefore appropriate that this institution also lead in a similar fashion to insure protection for Alabama’s great natural heritage.

Environmental Concerns Already Evident

The Southern Growth Policies Board, in a 1978 analysis (Guiding Growth in the South) projects that “the South is expected to accommodate over half of the population increase for the entire nation in the years between 1980 and 2000.” It concludes that “the already hard-to-balance Southern growth management equation of economic development plus environmental protection will become even more difficult [as expansive growth occurs”].

In Alabama conflicts associated with development and environmental protection are already on an unprecedented increase. According to the U. S. Soil Conservation Service, prime farmland in Alabama is being lost to other forms of development at a rate of up to 20,000 acres annually. Considered extensions of water and sewer lines have been cited by the Alabama Farm Bureau as unnecessarily inviting sprawling growth into rural areas. A number of independent investigations have raised serious questions about the desirability of several large-scale transportation development projects which have extensive adverse impacts on the cultural and natural resources along their corridors.

In addition to these and many other broad changes affecting Alabama, there are a host of less pervasive but equally significant problems which demonstrate the increasing dilemma we face. For instance, Little River Canyon, a feature recognized and publicly valued through much of the eastern U. S. for its unique natural qualities, is on the verge of being altered by extensive subdivision development. Another such example is the thus-far unprotected status of the Cahaba River, one of three streams rated as most ecologically significant in the Southeast but which is under mounting threat from growth pressures.

With Alabama’s rate of population growth now greater
than the national average for the first time in history (as determined by the 1980 census) a number of concerns are posed for the future. According to the Alabama Coastal Area Board, mounting problems and conflicts surrounding continued development in the state's coastal area are cause for concern in this region. Statewide, several citizen groups have documented a rising incidence of chemical contamination from generating sources within our borders; and these groups have recently had their concerns augmented by the new attention Alabama is receiving as a likely repository for large amounts of toxic and hazardous waste materials from across the nation. Projected timber and mineral extraction has raised questions among both the Alabama Department of Conservation and the Alabama Geological Survey about further losses of remaining hardwood forests in Alabama and about possible damage to fish and wildlife habitat.

Although Alabama is not presently growing as fast as are several neighboring states, impending future growth has prompted many to wonder if Alabama will eventually become another overcrowded and overdeveloped state. The serious environmental problems experienced in other parts of the nation have created a heightened awareness that Alabama is yet a very special place. The State's rural character and remaining remote and wild areas are not only increasingly unique but, in their natural condition, are also becoming more important to such major ecosystem functions as ground water recharge, species diversity, and nutrient recycling.

State agencies have taken note of the growth dilemmas beginning to emerge. In a publication entitled Guiding Growth in Alabama (1977), the Alabama Development Office points to a number of general problem areas specifically related to economic/environmental complications. These include: 1) conflict between economic development and environmental quality goals, 2) loss of open space, critical natural areas, and agricultural lands, 3) deterioration of urban cores in large older cities, and 4) absence of a process for intergovernmental conflict resolution, coordination of development, energy facility site location, and other growth guidance activities. ADO officials have summarily posed three questions which must be brought to public attention and which must be thoroughly explored in an effort to determine the best growth options for Alabama:

How can the state continue its primary goal of rapid economic development and still retain the most valued of rural Alabama's values—a quite, clean, uncrowded living environment free of what is considered the social blight of the urban areas?

How can certain valued features of the land and waters of the state be retained for posterity without undue economic costs to the public or private landowner?

How much of the state's growth should be left free to the market place mechanism and what should local and state governments do to encourage growth in a manner that best serves the public good?

Need for Broader Perspective

Clearly, complications associated with expanding economic development in Alabama include more than the familiar concerns of pollution and litter. Beyond these generally recognized problems are more complex issues involving altered ecosystems, diminishing natural areas, and a changing landscape, all of which will ultimately bring a host of changes in lifestyle and culture for the people of our state. Thus, in a most important sense, any choice of directions for economic growth in Alabama is also a choice of related outcomes for the state's physical and social character.

Logically, it would seem that such an obvious relationship has already been thoroughly considered. However, despite an assortment of public pronouncements by various officials that Alabama "can have both" economic growth and environmental protection, Alabamians have not yet adequately explored all possible options for achieving this aim. Very little can be found in the way of innovative directions for future economic development. Stimulating traditional types of industrial and commercial development, attracting population growth, and pursuing activities with potentially high
Research and planning for the economic development of our region therefore requires a broader perspective than has historically prevailed. It requires an investigation of questions that are largely beyond the normal dealing of most politicians, lawyers, economists, and others who administer the daily functions of this state. For instance, how does one relate economic development in our region to the fact that water use per capita is doubling every decade or so? How does one reconcile rapid expansion of conventional industrial production, which already generates over 75 billion pounds of hazardous chemical wastes annually, when only about 10 percent of the resulting waste is being disposed of in an environmentally safe manner? What will be the likely psychological effects of continuing losses of such valued freedoms as close access to healthy woodlands and otherwise relatively pristine surroundings? And, what are the long term ecological implications for further encroachments on our remaining wild and remote areas. Upon which philosophical/ethical premises should natural resource policies be derived?

The complexity of many issues surrounding economic development and environmental and social change is immense. Economic research in such standard areas as projecting growth trends, assessing resource availability, and developing improved energy technologies must be vastly broadened if we are to address intelligently the full scope of issues at hand.

Need For New Efforts in Public Education

While broadened research is a necessary ingredient for achieving the best long term future, it alone will not suffice. In order for research efforts and consequent planning and policy decisions to be most effective, there must also be substantial public understanding and support.

State planning officials recommend a strategy of "public information and education" to help bring about greater citizen enlightenment. However, in Alabama today there is little public education conducted in response to this recommendation. Since the fate of the state's natural heritage is a central concern herein, the current status of environmental education in Alabama is an appropriate example.

Though the state is gradually losing many important aspects of its natural environment, as yet there is no mandated public environmental education in Alabama. According to the ERIC Center for Science, Math, and Environmental Education,(Environmental Education: A State-by-State Report), "Alabama has no coordinated program for environmental education either for students or for adults...no statewide curriculum has been developed, nor has a comprehensive adult program been formulated...There is no environmental education legislation in Alabama. Alabama has no teacher certification for environmental education."

New Possibilities for The University of Alabama

The complications and concerns discussed above suggest the need for coordinated, broad-spectrum involvement by the academic community in helping to explore more fully future economic and environmental options for Alabama. In addition, to enable our democratic processes to work most effectively, it is crucial that the institutions of education play a larger role in delivering information and education to achieve wider public awareness of the issues and consequences associated with these options.

There are, no doubt, a number of ways to promote broader University involvement in long term planning for Alabama's future. One possibility is to organize a variety of University programs, offices, etc. into a freely operating "think tank" for exploring all aspects of possible economic and environmental alternatives. Such a group would consider both philosophical and practical questions in conjunction with related social issues posed by various alternatives and their likely impact on lifestyles of Alabamians.

Several programs at the University are already engaged in an assortment of activities associated with economic development and/or environmental arrangement. These could be assimilated for the purpose of addressing the broader issues discussed above. Including pertinent educational functions, an initial cluster might include the following:

Bureau of Educational Services and research
Cartographic Lab
Center for Administrative and Policy Studies
Center for Business and Economic Research
Center for Economic Education
Center for the Study of Southern History and Culture
Geological Survey of Alabama
Marine Environmental Science Consortium
Mineral Resources Institute
Natural Resources Center
Office of Academic Affairs
Office of Energy and Environmental Law
School of Mines & Energy Development
U. S. Geological Survey
Key State agencies which such a "think tank" structure might serve include the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, the Alabama Development Office, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Alabama State Office of Planning and Federal Programs, and the Alabama Department of Education. Assistance could be provided to these agencies by recommending and helping to implement procedures for long term resource planning and public education. There are many needs and opportunities for research and education that would better prepare our citizens to make decisions about options for Alabama's future. The kind of university structure presented above might:

1. Work with State agencies in constructing multi-faceted models for long term growth, involving such concepts as "ecological design," carrying capacity analysis," and "innovative management" strategies.

2. Work with State agencies in establishing a statewide system for improved public education and participation in planning activities.

3. Work with State agencies in identifying and inventorying state natural areas assessing ecological values, in establishing a statewide "natural heritage program," and in developing other innovative approaches for natural area preservation.

4. Develop state-oriented environmental education materials and programs for use by public schools, state parks, business and civic groups, etc.

5. Assist State agencies in implementing statewide systems for environmental education.

6. Assist Regional Economic Development Councils in exploring various options for future growth.

7. Assist Regional Economic Development Councils in informing citizens and generating more enlightened public participation in planning activities.

8. Analyze long term relationships between resource management strategies and economic and social effects, and to assist State agencies in policy formulation.

9. Assist State agencies in clarifying aspects of conflict between economic and environmental goals.

10. Assist State agencies in examining feasible approaches to such controversial issues as land-use planning, establishing protective corridors for "wild and scenic river" designation, and preservation of wild life habitat and endangered species.

11. Assist various conservation groups in identifying regionally significant natural areas and establishing programs for the preservation of species diversity.

12. Assist State and Federal agencies in research activities such as a) projecting an optimum human population for the region, b) examining appropriate limits to some forms of growth and development which involve land alteration, c) establishing indices and measuring regional ecosystem variables.

Regardless of the particular approach taken, now is the time to begin analyzing the broader issues confronting Alabama's long term future. The economic choices we make will do much to shape the lives of Alabamians in the year 2000 plus. Will they be living in a "quality" environment as defined by a greatly diminished land base with consequent heavy regulation and artificial management of both their outdoors and their personal lives? Or will they be living in a quality environment as defined by a modest population and plentiful countryside, forests, and open spaces where the systems of nature are still operating without excessive intrusion. Unless the right directions are chosen, at risk may be some of the richer remains of America's natural heritage which today make Alabama a uniquely special place.

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COMPUTER BASED RESEARCH: A MODEL

by

Cathy Randall

Computer-based research has been responsible for hundreds of honors students working together at the University of Alabama for the past fifteen years. In 1968, the National Science Foundation funded a Computer Based Honors Program at the University of Alabama. It was the culmination of a dream of Dr. Charles L. Seebeck, first Director of the University’s Computer Center.

Dr. Seebeck noticed that interest in the computer generated in academically superior students an enthusiasm about learning in general and research in particular. He concluded that providing an opportunity for undergraduate honors students to become involved with computer-based research would be an ideal mechanism to enhance their learning. Primarily, a Computer Based Honors Program would expose honors students who would pursue a major field of study other than computer science to the new world of computer-based research. Furthermore, such a program would give the students an opportunity to acquire expertise in the application of research techniques and computing technology to their chosen major fields of study.

Twenty entering honors students are selected each year and given a broad, accelerated introduction to computer hardware and software in the freshman year. During the remaining three years, each student will assist a member of the University faculty with a computer-oriented research project. The topics over the years have ranged from art to zoology. One student, after studying Bach’s concertos, programmed the computer to write its own concerto in the style of Bach. When performed for a group of Bach experts on the University’s music faculty, it temporarily fooled them into thinking that it was a new Bach discovery. The project formed the basis of a program entitled “The University of Alabama’s Computer—An Evening of Creative Arts.” In addition to the organ performance of several computer-composed chorales in the style of Bach, poetry composed by the computer was read, slides of modern art designed by the computer were shown, and a dance that was choreographed by the computer was performed.

Other projects have included:

1. Assisting a professor of management science in completing a highly sophisticated management simulation game now used for instruction in many of the nation’s schools.
2. Using a heuristic reasoning program to arrange furniture in a room and to evaluate each arrangement on the basis of both practical and aesthetic values.
3. Converting a data-management package from one computer language to another, necessitating the learning of both languages.
4. Assisting divisional registrars with programs that process student academic records.
5. Assisting in the design of a helicopter flight simulator.
6. Developing programs so that a calculator could be used as a small computer with applications to medical school.
7. Designing a course to teach consumer science students how to use home computers.
8. Assisting a research mathematician in the preparation of programs which analyze partially ordered sets using isomorphisms with matrices with 0 and 1 elements and polynomials.

Interaction with and manipulation of a computer is absolutely impossible without the employment of precise logic. Acquiring a certain level of mastery of the machine changes forever the way the students think. Through their involvement in such research efforts, the honors students have acquired countless skills that have enhanced their capacity to see the world and themselves more clearly. Foremost has been the acquisition of the ability to think logically and...
precisely. Such competence also overcomes one of the greatest obstacles to surviving in the world of the future: fear of the computer. Living together in the future will by definition mean living with the computer, and the Computer Based Honors Program students will never be intimidated by it. The grasp of the fundamental notion that it is only a tool, a means to an end and not an end in itself, is one of the first steps in learning to live successfully in the world of the future.

The experience in research methodology is the most practical learning experience possible. It provides an opportunity for students to work as they will after graduation. They tackle problems for which there are, as yet, no answers. So they break down the problem into components that can be solved. If they do not possess knowledge which is required to complete the task, they must identify it and acquire it on their own. They also learn that, due to the constraints of time, they must restrict their learning about a topic to the portions that are most needed for the specific task at hand.

The students work independently and therefore must learn to motivate themselves. They also must work as part of a larger group and must share their knowledge with fellow researchers. Often the faculty director of the research project learns a great deal from the Computer Based Honors Program student about computers allowing the student to assume a teaching role. Experience in research provides a greater opportunity to be creative and to use the imagination than does the traditional teaching/learning process.

The common denominator of computer literacy breaks down barriers between students of different interests. They realize that computer technology and research techniques are useful in every field, and the very process by which discovery is made serves as a foundation upon which the students may build and upon which they may depend in the world beyond the university. Finally, experience in computer-based research and mastery of some of its technique may allow them to live more and work less. The research process will enhance the future quality of the lives of the students in the Computer Based Honors Program and they will predictably affect the future design of lives remote from theirs and from the University of Alabama.

Dr. Cathy Randall is Director of the Computer Based Honors Program, a department of New College.
Majic

Nanny sends me to her home,
twenty fenceless miles through shaggy bushveld
where Baobab tree camouflage lynx and loomslange.

Through the Khoekhoen gras I trod
to the Venda Kraal,
mud huts covered with berry-dyed masks
topped with thatched roofs.

In charcoal and crimson
he squatted, decked in buck hides and tinted beads.
The bits of ivory shells
and bits of lions teeth he trucked,
scattered to a Christian cross below fur covered feet.
Sipping spiced water, shivering,
he muttered to his fellow gods,
he chanted to his fellow gods.

Nanny sends me back to her home in the bushveld
to the medicine she knows.

Tracey Curie
New College: innovative & interesting

New College, at the University of Alabama, is just what its name implies—a new approach to undergraduate education. Designed for the independent and highly motivated individual, New College offers each student the opportunity to create and pursue a personalized program of study. This program can be innovative and interdisciplinary; it can involve non-traditional approaches to academic problems and off-campus learning experiences; it can lead to a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree; it can prepare the student for graduate school in innumerable areas, for teacher certification, and for entrance into medical and law schools. Using a variety of innovative educational concepts, New College draws freely from the diverse scholarship of the entire University community and offers programs as original and as exciting as the students who create them.