
German Studies Association

Newsletter

Volume XXX
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Spring 2005

German Studies Association

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Section One Association News

Twenty-Ninth Annual Conference 2005

The Twenty-Ninth Annual GSA Conference will be held from September 28 – October 2 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center Hotel, 509 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53203. All conference registration and hotel reservation booking is online at the GSA website, www.g-s-a.org as last year. The hotel will not accept reservations at the GSA rate by telephone or through the Hilton 800 number or the Hilton online reservation system. GSA has booked a special rate of \$129, single or double, for this conference. By the time you receive this Newsletter, the online registration and reservation system will already have been operative for about a month.

We urge you to register and reserve a room quickly. We expect a high turnout, and we cannot guarantee that rooms will be available at our special rate at the Conference Hotel for those who register late. We have a deadline to fill our block. We are told that the Hilton will not charge a credit card for a reservation at this time. Therefore, it is a good idea to register early and reserve a room.

How to do it? You will need a MasterCard or Visa for GSA registration and any popular credit card can be used for the hotel, including those two and American Express or Diner's Club (but only after the new Diner's Club numbers in partnership with MasterCard have been issued in late May – the current DC numbers cannot be used with GSA!). Why does GSA not accept American Express? There are higher fees to the Association for this. As of May 25 or thereabouts, Diner's Club enters into a partnership with MasterCard and receives a MasterCard account number. Then, GSA will take Diner's Club as well. Look everyone, the world is changing so fast that I am having trouble keeping up with how we input these changes into our system. Please bear with me. We are trying to get the web site to work with all the latest bells and whistles, but be backward compatible for all of you who haven't changed. If you have a credit card ready, go to the GSA web site at www.g-s-a.org and pull down the "Conferences" menu at the top. You will see "Conference 2005." Click there, and you are in to the system.

[Please, everyone, do this for me and for you. Please make certain that you have the latest version of your browser on your computer. At least Explorer 5.5 or the new Mozilla Firefox. The latter is even better, and gets rid of lots of pop-ups. You can get it for free at www.mozilla.com and download it yourself. If you are afraid of using your credit card on the web, get one just for the web. And, please find a computer that moves faster than a turtle. And, please don't hit the "purchase now" button twice. You will buy twice. I guarantee it.]

Right away, you will see that you must logon. If you are a member of GSA, logging on requires your e-mail address on our records and your personal password-ID. If you have any difficulty in remembering your password, the site can help you. Just click, and you will see how you can recover your password. If you have changed your e-mail address, just use the old one on OUR record, with your password, and you will immediately be sent to your member profile. There, you can change your e-mail address to the more current one and even change your password. Once you have examined your member profile to be sure it is up to date, you will notice a column of items on the left.

[Please do not call our office, and please do not ask our Help Desk how to change your e-mail address. Just logon and change it yourself. Piece of cake.]

We have a Help Desk, and it is at **thegsa@earthlink.net** – do NOT send help requests anywhere else, please. Nobody else is as current with help issues as our Help Desk. Do not call the GSA Office. You will not reach the Help Desk, which is only available by e-mail.

If you are not a member of GSA, we may already have a member profile for you. This is possible if you registered for the 2004 Conference. Or, you have been proposed as a conference participant for the 2005 Conference. In those cases, we HAVE A PROFILE for you and you do not have to create one. Just logon, using your non-member profile with your e-mail address and password. You have forgotten your password? Don't worry, just click on "forgot my password," and we will send it to your e-mail address. The Help Desk can help if you don't know how to click on those words.

Do NOT create a second profile. This is a little dangerous in our computer-driven world. You may lose your hotel reservation or conference registration or both. Please stay with only ONE profile per person. The system deletes second profiles periodically, and yours can be lost. Please do not create a second profile. Please do not create a third profile.

The first item you see in the left column after logging on is called READ ME FIRST. This means that you are asked to read this information first, before doing anything else. I would recommend it. Then, just follow the steps. Keep your credit card handy, to enter it when you are asked. You will be asked for it TWICE – once for the hotel, and then for GSA registration.

If you have any trouble navigating the process, do remember that we have a HELP DESK. You should write to **thegsa@earthlink.net** and detail your problem carefully. We will try to help you. DO NOT write to me at **thegsa@yahoo.com** because I don't know computers that well, and it will only delay your request and please do not write anybody else in GSA, because they don't either. Last year, a few people wrote our President. I'm not sure where that will get you, but I have alerted Katherine Roper that it could happen. Some people assured me that the Newsletter or the web site said to write to me. I guess that they thought that somebody else writes the Newsletter or the web site. No,

it's me. I don't have a secretary. So, when I responded that they were mistaken, these people got upset. Why? Just please use the HELP DESK. Do not telephone the office, because our staff only answers e-mail requests. Remember, our HELP DESK is there to help you. We are happy to provide answers to your inquiries. I guess that this means that we want you to use the HELP DESK for problems. You will reach Mr. Ramaswamy Vadivelu, and he really will help you. Late in the summer, you may also reach Mr. Martin Hesse, when we put on additional staff. But, above all, do not create a second profile.

Most problems that take place are because people have forgotten their e-mail address or their password. We can help you here, too, but you should use the automated password recovery system to save time.

The next largest group of problems appears to be when people with slow computers or slow connections lose patience with waiting for the computer and click twice on the payment key. Guess what happens? You get charged twice, because you have clicked twice and asked to be charged twice. It's not our fault! We will reimburse you, but GSA has to pay transaction fees to do it. Soooo, please help us keep costs down and trouble to a minimum. Just click once. Really.

The hotel will pick up hotel reservation requests at their speed and their own time. They will then enter the confirmation number on the record, and you will be confirmed. Please do not write or telephone the GSA office and ask for your confirmation of registration or hotel reservation. You can check these yourself online. If it isn't there, we don't have it. But, if it is there, you can print it out. You can also print out your GSA registration as a receipt. This is the only official receipt that GSA offers, so do not forget to print it out if you want it. It is right there, so just print it out and you can make as many copies of it as you want.

Getting airline discounts is difficult these days, but our friends at SignatureDestinations/Calrson Wagons-Lit are there to help you, too. Try writing Wally Jones at wally@signaturedestinations.com and he or somebody else on their staff will do their best to get you the best flights. They can also help with your other reservations for other trips. Their network is good, and they work hard for you.

About the Conference Hotel

The Hilton Milwaukee City Center is a grand hotel with traditional décor. It has been lovingly preserved and renovated, so that the sleeping rooms are modern. There is wireless internet (Wi-Fi) as well as cabled internet service in the rooms. The lobby, and many meeting rooms have golden trim, rich, dark woods, and beautiful chandeliers. Most meeting rooms are self-contained, without movable acoustic walls. We have meeting rooms on three levels, but there are seven high-speed elevators to serve us. All of the parlor suites are on the sixth floor. The Concierge is knowledgeable, and can direct you to the finest restaurants in the city. I mean knowledgeable. Terrific.

2005 Banquet of the Association and Luncheons

This year, GSA bids farewell to its Founder and Executive Director of 29 years, Gerald R. Kleinfeld. In addition to the normal program at the Dinner, or Banquet, on Friday night, Kleinfeld will deliver the address, on German-American Relations. This will be Kleinfeld's first presentation at a GSA Conference, since he never took a slot on the program, fearing that doing so would take a slot from someone else. [since I write the Newsletter, I never know whether to refer to myself in the first or the third person – I alternate, because the first person seems too personal and the third person seems too formal. – please forgive me and my successor will figure out what the best way to do it is.] The Friday Dinner will be our farewell to the first Executive Director, and our first journal Editor. The Saturday luncheon will feature an address by Landesminister Lutz Stratmann, Lower Saxon Minister for Culture. The Friday luncheon is a surprise event – and there will be no announcement of the speaker for that luncheon. Even I don't know what is going on, so we will all be surprised together. We urge you to buy a ticket and see what happens and who is there.

The Latest News

The Search Committee is continuing its task as this Newsletter goes to press. They have been interviewing various candidates. I've kept out of the process completely. It just didn't seem right to me to try to influence the selection of my successor. Their choice will be presented to the Executive Committee in the Thursday meeting just before the Conference. The new Executive Director will be announced on the web site and at the Conference. Both the new ED and Kleinfeld [me] will have some words for the members in the Winter Newsletter. The new ED will take over working with the new Program Committee for the 2006 Thirtieth Annual Conference in Pittsburgh while I close down the Main Office in Arizona through the end of 2005. On January 1, the new ED will be fully operational, with a new office wherever that may be.

Future Conference Sites

This brings me to future conference sites. I have been busy because finding hotels and negotiating contracts is hard work, and not everyone likes to fly around looking at strange places when they could be teaching, enjoying their family life [I have a dog, who misses me enough.], researching [somehow I have managed to get that done], or whatever. Anyway, here are the results.

We will be meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2006, at the downtown Hilton, just across the river from Mount Washington, and in front of the historic site of the old fort. It also has wireless internet throughout the hotel. In 2007, we will return to San Diego to the Town & Country Resort Hotel that many of you liked so well. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote a snooty article saying that it was incredible to discuss Germany in a hotel with palm trees and swimming pools in a city like San Diego, which seemed to have no connection with

Germany or German-speaking Europe. I wrote a letter to the Editor suggesting that they were wrong, and that one could discuss Germany profitably in any large American city, and wondering what German city was the proper host for the American Studies Association of Germany, but they refused to publish it. We will meet in 2008 in St. Paul, Minnesota at the downtown Radisson on River Walk. It is right downtown, within walking distance of their beautiful cathedral, which is a mini-St. Peter's. For the unfamiliar, Minneapolis and St. Paul seem to have different personalities and you might look for that. In any case, it is a large hotel, and we have taken all of their meeting space. We will return to Washington, D.C. in 2009 at our regular hotel in Crystal City, the Marriott. Everyone liked that hotel, without exception, and it has a great meeting space area. I have kept our hotel room rates at a reasonable level for the entire period, but if you prefer meeting for \$195 – \$225 a night you can let my successor know, and GSA can do that after 2009.

Investment Committee Report

The GSA Investment Committee has broken the Endowment Account into two sub-accounts, a general account, and one which is specifically dedicated to the International Travel Fund. This latter account helps the Conference achieve our goal of internationalization, and ensuring that most of the participants from foreign countries who are on the program actually get there. The GSA investments are diversified, and are held in mutual funds and money market instruments.

Members are advised that donations to the GSA are tax-deductible under U.S. federal laws, as GSA is a 501(c)(3) organization as determined by the Internal Revenue Service.

More Progress on the Web Site

Our web site really works! This is a fantastic achievement, because nobody else quite has what we do. Two hotels have already asked us if they can "borrow" our reservation system for conferences. The member profile system enables YOU to change and correct and update your own record. Previously, this was all done by student or secretarial help. You can imagine what happened over the years. Names were misspelled, addresses, mistyped, people were lost, GSR issues and other mailings got lost, and so on. Countless hours were spent looking for and finding lost records and duplicate records. Members had a hard time trying to help us locate them. Now, it is all very simple – it is all there. All you have to do is to remember how to logon and put down your own password. From there on, all is there. If you want to register for the conference or to propose a paper, the profile stays with you. And, we can communicate with you by e-mail.

We are seeking glitches, and rooting them out. It is a little like building a boat while we are rowing it. We are making improvements constantly. Your suggestions have been wonderful, and we have included whatever we can. The

whole interactive web site process is moving forward rapidly. We have a good design firm, but I beg your indulgence. The concept has been mine, and it is often not so easy for them to translate my wild ideas into code.

We need patience, and forgiveness. Sometimes, things break down. Sometimes, there is a glitch. We need your cooperation. This will make it possible for my successor to run the system.

We've had some trying times. Once, a professor at a distinguished university called me at home on a Saturday afternoon and wanted to book a hotel room. Someone had told him that we do not use the web at all, and that I booked all hotel rooms personally, and he was waiting with his credit card for me to do it. I had been taking a nap. No, I didn't shout and curse. But, it did seem odd, and he realized his mistake in a minute. Once, I got an e-mail from our web programmer. It contained a message from some professor who wanted him to change their e-mail address for them. It was unsigned. Just a line – change this address to that address. Our poor web programmer is busy writing code, and this should have gone to the Help Desk, obviously. Or, even better, the individual should have logged on and changed it themselves. That is what the whole thing is there for. I feel that I am the Dr. No of the Association, always having to tell people “no,” you can't do this, or you can't do that, or you did this wrong, or you didn't comply so you must be excluded from the Conference. Hopefully, my successor will have a secretary to say “no” instead.

Keeping your Profile Updated

This is really pretty much about the above, except that the emphasis is different, and I don't want anyone to misread or make a mistake. You are really responsible now for keeping your GSA profile updated. Our Help Desk will help you do this, and make every effort to have this as painless as possible. An updated profile will keep GSR coming to the right address, make certain that you are properly listed in the Program, and even later help us to know how to select you for a committee or for book reviews. It doesn't take much time. You need to let us know your address changes anyway, your university affiliations as a matter of course, and anything new that will help us do what you would like. If you would like to be a commentator or moderator at a future conference, our profile system will soon add this feature.

GSA News on the Web Site

This is the spot for news about the Association. But, soon we will have more info. We will have links to other sites, to events in German Studies, and to grants and activities of interest to members and non-members alike. The GSA web site is conceived as interactive, which means that you enter data in it, too. Remember as well, it is a way to keep costs down, and to keep down the number of staff people GSA needs to operate an association of our size and complexity.

Do You Want to be Considered for a GSA Committee?

Surprisingly to many, GSA is not run by a few people, or by a clique, but really by the membership. This is true, even though I have been here since the beginning, because this was my philosophy, and has been the philosophy of all presidents and members of the Executive Committee since then, as well. So, many of the decisions are committee decisions. Do let us know what committees you may be interested in serving on. How? Just drop a line to **thegsa@yahoo.com** and I will see that it gets to the right person. You don't like some of our decisions? Again, drop a line. A couple of years ago, some people had a few questions about hotel sites. Instead of sitting on your question, and wondering whether this or that decision is a good one, write to GSA.

Saying "no" on Audiovisual Requests

We have a budget. Audiovisual equipment is expensive, expensive, expensive to rent. There is also generally a 20% service fee plus lots of tax. No, I did not relent this year. I negotiated with the Milwaukee Hilton and they gave us fabulous rates. So, almost everyone got accepted. Program Director David Barclay was delighted. We didn't have to say no very often. Please do not regard this as a sign of the future. It is a sign of the past. Rates go up every year, not down.

Withdrawal from the Conference

Another "no" item. If a presenter withdraws from the conference after April 1 without sending the Executive Director an acceptable excuse before the conference takes place, that person must be excluded from conference presentation for three years, according to a decision of the Executive Director. This especially includes no-shows because, by definition, they have submitted no acceptable excuse. The reasoning behind this was that the other members of the session have a weaker session, and people who wanted to be on the conference program and would have come have been barred from presenting by someone who had no genuine reason not to be there. Although I did not vote for this rule, I am charged with executing it. Not a pleasant task. Do bear this in mind. It is enforced. And, do not think that nobody will notice if you do not appear. We will know. All of this started in our Seattle meeting when a tearful untenured assistant professor told us that her entire session was a no-show, and that she was the only person who showed up, and that she could not get attention for delivering her paper because nobody was there. Not being there without an excuse is considered unprofessional.

Funding for International Participation in the Conference

Our funds are limited, but available. They are considered second resort – which means that the person who may need them should try elsewhere first, in their own country. If they are unsuccessful, they must apply by e-mail to the Executive Director, at **thegsa@yahoo.com** and ensure that a vita is available. Students may not apply. Expenditures are not reimbursed, but GSA normally will provide an

airline ticket and other limited assistance. Therefore, it is important to write BEFORE purchasing an airline ticket. Other ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) societies have since adopted our procedures. They are relatively unbureaucratic, but professional. It is important to write before our funds become exhausted.

Other Events at the GSA Conference

It is possible to schedule no-host or hosted cocktail parties or small meetings of other societies that are “affiliated” with GSA. For further information, contact the Executive Director.

International Flights now have less Legroom than Southwest Airlines

Discount airlines in the United States now have more space between seats than coach class on international flights of major carriers. This is bad news for frequent traveling scholars, especially large people. However, if you are five-foot-two and weigh 125 pounds, you still have a hard time moving your legs and it is impossible to use a large laptop. Even opening a book is tough. East Coast residents have it easier, of course, because they have much shorter flights, and generally fly nonstop. West Coasters have longer flights, but also have nonstops. It is the “middle of the continent” people who must change planes, and have even longer trips that have the greatest risk of DVT, or deep vein thrombosis, a life-threatening blood clot that can form at any time and in people of any age. Actually, if you are a West Coaster, and do not get up during the longer flight, you are probably at greater risk than a “middle region” person, who has to change planes and walk around.

Carriers have dropped seat space to incredible levels, too small for midgets. Air France is one of the biggest violators, with seat pitch at only 30 inches for some of the seats in their 747/777 aircraft. Northwest is one of the best with 32 inches in their A330-220s, but some other of their planes have only 31. All are generally from 30-32 inches in seat pitch, a very small area. Some airlines, like American, have 31 inches for some rows, but 32 inches for many more rows. The trick is, you don’t know which, and sometimes the airline doesn’t either, because they may substitute a different aircraft. Web sites like seatguru.com do not have such information. In other words, there is a different amount of space on the same aircraft, up to an inch difference. At one time, international flights generally had two inches more in coach than domestic. Now, this is no longer the case. It is a matter of money. Less seat pitch, more passengers. So, if you are flying the transatlantic route regularly, it is a good idea to get up and walk around a bit during the flight, visit the bathroom often, and watch out for the food carts. This is a good idea for older people, but not bad advice for younger ones, either. A 24-year-old passenger on a transoceanic flight not too long ago died at the airport just after leaving her aircraft. It was DVT.

GSA Election Results

The results of the GSA elections are:

Elected to the Executive Committee were Dagmar Herzog (History, Michigan State University), Carol Anne Costabile-Heming (German, Southwest Missouri State University), and Suzanne Marchand (History, Louisiana State University). They are all elected for three-year terms, beginning in January, 2006. Re-elected as Secretary-Treasurer for a three-year term was Gerald A. Fetz (German, University of Montana). All of the By-Law amendments passed.

Where are the other sections of the Newsletter?

I thought that you would never ask. Actually, we don't need most of them, and I am conducting a survey to see what it is that you want in the Newsletter. Most of the items that used to be in the Newsletter are available online everywhere, faster than we can get them out in print. The Newsletter was always late with grant app news, for example. So, one of our projects is to get the online links on to our site, where you can click any time and find info. It appears to me that the only things we need in the Newsletter are the Association News in one place, and the chat article on Computers, which people have seemed to want, plus occasional essays on German studies, teaching, and ideas. These have come in from time to time. When we have completed our survey, my successor will look again at the structure of the Newsletter and redesign it, using it for what seems useful in the future. Some people want notices of colleagues who have passed away, others want some more general topics, which don't work too well online. Again, please do write me at thegsa@yahoo.com and let me know your own ideas on the Newsletter. I will pass the info on to my successor. We want GSA to serve the members, after all. For moving things to the web, it all more or less depends on how fast we can get the web site to be fully interactive and each of you to feel more comfortable with the web site.

Letter from the President

April 2005

Dear Fellow GSAers,

The impending retirement of Gerald Kleinfeld as the founding Executive Director of the GSA has taken center stage in the first months of 2005. Gerry has been working intensely to prepare for the transition, devoting abundant time and energy to establishing online procedures for an ever-expanding array of membership activities, negotiating conference sites through 2009, and making lists about the state of the Association to convey to his successor in a "how-to" visit next January, which will mark the official handing over of the reins. His cheerful reassurances about his confidence in the ability of members to see the Association successfully through this time of transition have been most welcome.

A number of people are involved in planning events to celebrate Gerry's 29 years of service at the Milwaukee conference, and these will be highlighted by his having accepted the invitation to offer the banquet address on Friday night--the first such address he will have given to the Association. We hope to have a brief printed program about this and other events to distribute at the registration desk. If any of you have ideas or questions about the celebration, please e-mail me, and I will direct them to the appropriate person(s).

As to the search for Gerry's successor, this first-time process has had to be invented at every step of the way. As noted in the last newsletter, the Executive Council established a Search Committee consisting of Gerald Fetz as chair, Patricia Herminghouse, James Retallack, and Helga Welsh. During its evolution, the Search Committee came to include remaining members of the Executive Council: Sara Lennox, Diethelm Prowe, and myself (with Gerry Kleinfeld having recused himself from any participation in the search). These seven people set about contacting Executive Committee members, past officers, plus numerous others to solicit input. By mid-February, through many phone calls and e-mails, an amazing list of several dozen potential candidates had been assembled. The Search Committee then launched a new round of communiques to identify those who might be a possible fit. Despite Gerry's assurances in the winter newsletter that the job had become increasingly manageable, most of those people declined graciously to be nominated, giving a range of understandable reasons, even as they contributed thoughtful ideas. Indeed, these exhilarating contacts underscored members' wide and deep commitment to the Association. In early April the Search Committee met face to face for the first time in San Francisco and began phone interviews with candidates who had agreed to submit application materials and had had encouraging discussions about support from their institutions. Between phone interviews, the Search Committee intensely discussed priorities for evaluating candidates' qualities and subsequent stages of the process. At the time of this writing, that process is still underway. We hope it will come to a conclusion by the end of this academic year, when the Executive Council, on behalf of the Search Committee, will convey its recommendation to the Executive Committee for its approval. Once that stage has been completed, we will make an announcement on the GSA website.

In Milwaukee at the Executive Committee meeting and, later, the business meeting, I hope, in concert with the incoming Executive Director, to launch a process of long-range planning for the GSA as it enters its fourth decade. We want such planning to involve the input of as many members as possible. If you have ideas, please get in touch with me. We want, also, to encourage members to attend the business meeting on Friday afternoon, both to bid farewell to Gerry in that venue in which he has been such a visible presence and to discuss how to plan for the ongoing role of the Association in furthering German studies.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Milwaukee to celebrate the many years Gerry has dedicated to the nurturing of the Association.

Sincerely,
Katherine Roper
kroper@stmarys-ca.edu

Section Two

Computers and Software

Prices Drop Again

Prices of PCs and Macs have dropped again. What should you do? Well, with Dell selling computers for \$499 and Apple entering the price game for the first time with the Mac-Mini for \$499, what are your needs and your options?

Look, more and more business is being transacted online, and more and more research sources are also online. You need two things – a fast computer and a fast connection. If your university provides you with free access, that is great – assuming that you only want to use the computer in the office, and assuming that the university will upgrade your computer and its software to new levels. These are pretty big assumptions, and don't work for most faculty. First of all, most university departments in the humanities and social sciences get the back hand of the finances. They get cheap computers, with cheap innards, and cheap software. Once they get this, dumped on the faculty, nothing changes. Getting a newer, updated model, is like getting an 8 or 9% raise. Happens slightly less often. The sciences, of course, get it all. They need it, says the Administration, and by the way, grants pay for it. When was the last time that overhead on grants or the grants themselves bought computers for a German Department – or, perish the thought, a History Department or Political Science Department? Don't bank on it. In one university I know, the History Department gets the Chem Department cast-offs.

The connection may be fast, but the computer may be slow, or its memory too little, or whatever. I am typing this on an 800mh Mac. The ones in the store are 1.8 gh, or more than twice as fast. Is yours as fast as mine? No, well you probably notice it when accessing the web. You may not notice it when using Microsoft Word, unless you have a big document, but the web is the key.

You need lots of memory and lots of speed. Try paying for something online. It takes forever, and you may be tempted to hit the "purchase now" key twice. Do it, and you've paid twice. And, you are more likely to be hit by viruses.

What to do? Well, you need a modern computer at home and a modern connection at home. Then, you can even work at home and do so in confidence. This means broadband, not dialup, and it means migrating from the all-traditional gsmith@myuniversity.edu to something faster. If you do, you may even wander to VOIP. What the darn is voyp? More about that later. Should you get a PC or a Mac? Well, if you buy a PC expect to be attacked by 1000 viruses before the new smell wears off. Macs are not invulnerable, but they have only 6% of the market and fewer people write viruses for them. It's safer. Also, almost everything is transparently invisible and nobody will know that you have a Mac. Of course,

you can still buy a Dell or Gateway or that new Chinese product, an IBM under a different name. You will probably be happier with a Mac.

The Mini takes up almost no space at all, and you can get it with more memory, more storage, and Bluetooth for just a bit more. You can get a bunch of other Macs for reasonable prices, instead, and you will surely be happy. They work for educators, professionals, and graphic artists. Try plugging a digital camera into a Mac and watch it do its stuff automatically. But, above all, get a broadband connection and enter the modern world. Safely.

VOIP? VOYP? WHAT did he say?

Well, this is “voice over internet protocol.” The biggest brands are Packet8 and Vonage. You call the telephone company and tell them goodbye. Then you plug a device into your broadband router, plug a phone into it, register your telephone number (which you keep), and you are in. You can choose your area code, and call anywhere for less money than you are paying now. There are some glitches, and sometimes the voice quality is not so good, but you are saving money and can do it anywhere you find a broadband connection, even in a hotel room or at Starbucks Coffee shop. Look into it. It may be coming on like gangbusters. Your home telephone company is worried. The Packet8 connection device costs \$50 and they are offering a \$50 rebate on it now. No, you read it right, and this is not a misprint.

Jump Drives

Backup a problem? No it isn't. Just buy one of these keychain jump drives for about \$50 and stick it into an empty USB port, and you can copy to it as if it were another hard drive. Also, you can carry it with you to somebody else's computer and work on your stuff in their place. It hangs on a keychain, and looks like a charm. It works like a charm, too.

Now, I was just reading in a computer magazine about a program that helps you back up your hard drive when you want to upgrade your laptop and replace the old hard drive. What nonsense! Just use a little jump drive.

Metapass

Everybody is trying one or another password device. Here is another. It looks like a little keychain drive. However it is supposed to remember all of your passwords. You just plug it in the USB port and you are ready to go. It has a little keychain hanger on it, so that you can take it with you and your house and office keys. To access it, you need its password, but then it gives you the passwords to everything else you stored – including your GSA password. Does it work well? I don't know. Please somebody try it and let me know. You can get it from www.metapass.com for \$100.

Sharp Actius MP30

Whoever thinks up these names for products? I expect soon to be able to buy Colgate XM-45 Plus Toothpaste. Anyway, this is a new notebook from Sharp, and it lists for \$1899. More than a Mac, and not worth it to my view. However, it is really small, weighs only 2.8 pounds, and has a lot of stuff packed inside. The keys are tiny, as is everything else, but it works well on a cramped airline seat. The screen is 10.4 inches diagonally, which is not bad, but it is bright, and that is good. How they decided to make it without a single firewire port, I don't know, but they did seem to put a lot into the small package. Take a look at it.

Put a Tiger in your Tank?

By the time you receive this Newsletter, Apple will have introduced System 10.4, code-named TIGER. This advance, over PANTHER, the current operating system, has several hundred features. The most useful for academics is the desktop search program, which can blitz through your hard drive in seconds. For your children (or yourselves), it offers seamless integration with the iPod. If you don't already have an iPod, you should, and put your favorite music on it. There are a bunch of new speakers out there if you ever want to plug it in and listen to it that way. But, seriously, Tiger is a genuine advance on an already good and robust system. Macs don't crash, they don't give problems, and they resist viruses because few people bother to write them for Macs. Microsoft will have a search capacity like this in its new operating system, which it anticipates releasing next year. Apple executives chuckle that Mac is far ahead, and getting more distant all the time. Frankly, the way Mac is integrated with digital cameras is just remarkable, and you can do more and more. Now that there is the MacMini, for \$499, there is even a low-cost version. And, the quality control appears to be good, too. For all those people who were complaining that they had difficulty entering umlauts and the like in the GSA web site, I guess that I should respond that none of those persons had a Mac. All Mac users had an easy time of it. [Of course, the Windows users largely forgot that they could always create their stuff in Word, copy, and paste it into the web site. A bit laborious, I admit, when you couldn't get the umlauts into your text otherwise, but Windows users have always had to scramble to put in foreign language text. Using that operating system is a little like watching a hippopotamus dance. It may work, but it is less than graceful.]

Following up on the Scotch Tape Store

After Saturday Night made fun of the new, small, specialty stores opening up, which specialized in a single, minor product, I guess that I was nonplussed when I passed an ink-jet cartridge refill store this past week. Yes, you bring in your used ink-jet cartridges, and they refill them for you. They probably sell ice, too. Refilling ink jet cartridges can save a lot of money. You can buy refill kits anywhere, but the quality of the ink varies. Most of the major outlets sell ink with

reasonable quality. I'm not sure whether you think that your prose is intended to last for the ages, but 5 years is probably enough? Or, 10?

Trends for PCs

If you are thinking of purchasing a new PC, many of the old rules still prevail. You should get a fairly large sized hard drive, since programs are getting bigger, and you may want more of them. Second, you should get a substantial amount of memory. At least 512, but more is even better. Whether you order this as part of the package, or see if you can find a less expensive source and find someone to install it for you, it is a good idea to buy more than comes with it. Not only will the computer run faster and better, but it will help you to multitask if you have more memory. The computer's speed is an important factor. See what is offered, and do not get the lowest speed. Some people say that this is not very important, but I disagree – unless you are using a laptop as a temporary computer. There, on laptops, speed is not as essential as on your desktop. You don't do that much on a laptop. You also want pretty good graphics on your desktop, and you should tell the salesperson that you are probably not interested in games. Games require a different setup. If you are interested in a wireless keyboard, know that they go to sleep if you don't type on them for a few minutes, and it takes a few strokes for them to wake up. If that will annoy you, don't get one. That's just a battery saving device, and is normal. Firewire is a good thing to have and multiple USB 2.0 ports, but you can always add a USB hub if you don't have enough of those. Most of the kind of software that you want is sold at the university store for a bargain price, but it will probably come with fatware – software already installed that you will not need. There is a good delete program in Windows XP. By the way, get the professional version rather than the home one. Don't get a monitor smaller than 15 inches in diameter, but do spend the money for a flat one. It will look better and take up less space. You might spend the extra money and get yourself a Dymo Labelwriter. This will attach to the computer and print out addresses on labels for each letter you type. It works pretty automatically, and is a terrific time saver. Stuffing envelopes into a printer, or sheets of labels, or writing addresses by hand, or keeping a typewriter around just for labels, is silly. Dymo is terrific, easy, takes up hardly any space, and also can store addresses on your hard drive for frequent use. Why do anything else?

Even the *Wall Street Journal* suggests considering an Apple laptop, because of quality, resistance to viruses, and all-around utility. So, if that is so, do think of an Apple desktop. One magazine I have been reading, and which is dedicated to PCs, remarked that a switch to Mac OS is intuitive. There is no learning curve. When you turn it on, you already know how to use it. It's weird. You just sort of click where you think that this must be it. It always is. "...current Windows user doesn't need any training in order to perform tasks very easily," they wrote. Not switching because you haven't time to learn a new operating system is "a non-issue." Don't try to imagine it. It works. In fact, you will have an easier time adapting to a Mac than you will upgrading to the new Windows next year, code-

named Longhorn. Reluctantly, *Laptop* magazine recommended the Mac over a PC for everyone except a “power-user” who wants every last muscle and bit of software out there. For the rest of us, anybody with internet interests and word processing plus other various normal needs, should buy a Mac. However, if you are wedded to a PC, then you really need to install the very best anti-virus software from the start, either Norton or McAfee, buy a subscription to their service, and update it regularly. When you do install the PC at home, be sure that you have a firewall, and get a good router from your home broadband service.

If you are going to buy a PC Laptop

Don’t forget what I wrote above, but make sure that you have a Centrino Pentium M processor and wireless – G service. There are some pretty sleek machines available from Systemax. The heavier one, at 6.5 pounds, with a large screen, goes for \$999.99, while the lighter one – as you expected – is more expensive at \$1599.99 pricing when I wrote this. The latter is rated a Best Buy by *Laptop* magazine, and looks pretty good. It has a 12 inch screen.

Wi-Max? I just now heard of Wi-Fi!

Intel has been working on a new way to access the internet. Called Wi-Max, this is intended to succeed Wi-Fi, and is about six or seven times as fast. Not only that, it will virtually eliminate the need for DSL and cable modems, the way most Americans get internet now, and allow telecoms to break into the market. No wonder Verizon and other companies have been secretly, or not so secretly negotiating with Intel. The powerhouse chip producer expects to have a Wi-Fi/Wi-Max chip on the market in two years, and that would revolutionize the entire access issue. Whole towns, cities, whatever, could go online together. You heard it here. Hang on, the world is changing again.

Passwords Again

Well, I finally found a password protector that I think I can live with. It is Passwords Plus from DataViz. These are the people who make MacLinkPlus, the utility that allows Macs to read any files on almost any software from PC or Macs. They are into the 15th iteration of MacLinkPlus, and it is a very user-friendly software. You just drag the file on top of its icon, and the software translates it into something you can read on your computer, with an application you already have. Neat stuff! Anyway, Passwords Plus does NOT take over your computer, you will be happy to hear. It just resides in a safe place and has its own password to enter it. Once you enter it, you can read any password for any site that you have stored inside. The list is easy to manage, and it is easy to enter anything you choose. There are a variety of templates that you can select, and it seems to work well in the trial (full) version I have. I’ll be trying it for a while yet, and see how good it is. Of course, since Mac is upgrading its OS, the first challenge will be to see if it works with Tiger, OS 10.4, the new system.

