

### **Assignment 3: Asynchronous Collaborative Writing**

Divide up into pairs and select a topic that you want to write about. The result may be fiction or non-fiction. Examples of topics are (just in case you are having a hard time coming up with one of your own):

- \* things from your own experience (what it is like to move away to university, getting used to new cultures, the challenges of university life, ...)
- \* fiction based on existing world from books, television, movies, etc. (new episode or parody of X-Files, Ally McBeal, Friends, Celebrity Deathmatch, The Matrix, Star Wars, Harry Potter, ...)
- \* discussion of issue, idea, past, future, ... (tax cuts, strategic defense, energy shortage, football, manned exploration of space, UFOs, ancient cultures, ...)

These are just meant as examples to get you thinking. Pick a topic that you AND your partner want to write about.

#### **The Media**

For all pairs who have access to capable PCs, you will be using a new piece of software called the Visual Knowledge Builder (VKB). VKB is stable but you should save your work often as it does occasionally lock up (particularly for machines with smaller amounts of RAM.) If you cannot use VKB, you will use either HTML, or text -- let me know if this is the case.

VKB is a different media than traditional text. Text is spatialized in VKB collections (placed in two dimensional spaces.) Besides using location and visual properties, you can create a hierarchy of two-dimensional spaces to place your writings in, create links between elements in different spaces, and make use of any intended or unintended features of the system. You will probably want to try out the history mechanism.

VKB files can be sent as attachments through Netscape and similar mail tools. Just save the attachment (not the text file) and load it in VKB (or drop it on the VKB icon.)

#### **The Process of Writing**

One of the two members should work on the writing for at least an hour (almost) every day and send the result to the other member for work on the following day. Name your file with your last name and the date (e.g. shipman-01-24.vkb) when you send it. You should send a copy of the file me at shipman@cs.tamu.edu. This means that if Dr. Leggett and I were writing together, there would be a series of files such as shipman-01-24.vkb, leggett-01-25.vkb, shipman-01-26.vkb, leggett-01-27.vkb, ...

Each person should have three writing periods each week with no more than one per person on any particular day. The idea is you can trade off Mon/Wed/Fri and Tues/Thurs/Weekend but you are welcome to arrange the timing to suit your schedule. You may want to meet to talk and write together at the start (and perhaps at the end) of this assignment. You can use both last names with the date for those periods (e.g. shipman-leggett-01-28.vkb).

The final file is due by Feb. 16. There should have been at least 8 files sent to me for each pair including the final one and at least 6 should be for individual authoring sessions.

#### **Grading**

Your grade will be primarily based on effort. Follow the guidelines above, send me the files as indicated, and have a "completed" writing (one that is meant to be read by someone other than the authors) at the end and you will get an A.