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*If you come from the Mountains of Mourne,*

*Or Killarney's lakes so blue,*

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*Applicants with other predilections should contact:*

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### **Sample Easy Rider Dissertation Abstracts**

*Applicants who fear that their corporate manual would not qualify as a dissertation should read these abstracts filed by LL&C/H&SS and accepted by RPI administration. Both Dissertation Abstracts International and ProQuest Digital Dissertations published them. The first "dissertation" disappeared from RPI Folsom Library shelves several years ago. Perhaps the librarians in their embarrassment never shelved it.*

Abstract #1: The needs of the information society have thrust into prominence those who produce the technical information needed to work with computers. As a consequence of society's need for technical information, those who develop and produce that information are called upon to translate the technical capabilities of complex computer systems into a form that enables readers to perform needed tasks. Since the information they produce is an integral part of the product, it follows that these "information developers" must work as an integral part of the product-development team, not as post-facto wordsmiths who clean up the writing done by product developers. To function in this capacity, they need an information-development process that is consistent with the product-development process. They must adapt their writing skills and strategies to the product-development environment in which they work, while at the same time meeting the needs of their audiences, a group that continues to grow in number and diversity as the use of computers evolves. Developing information in this environment is not simply following a set of rules for communicating correctly, but is a process for converting detailed technical information into information that enables users of high-technology products to do the tasks that they want or need to do; it is not merely describing the structure of those products and the functions that are available. Rather, it is a rich, detailed process that involves gathering requirements; setting objectives; producing specifications to meet those objectives; producing drafts according to those specifications; editing, reviewing, and testing those drafts; producing final versions of the information and distributing them to customers; updating and redistributing that information in response to product changes and reader response; and measuring and assessing the quality of the information that has been produced and the process used to produce it. While the process is well defined in many of its aspects, it also possesses many implications

for further research and development efforts by [real] academic researchers and industrial practitioners alike.

Abstract #2: In light of the significance of the tutorial as an introduction to the computer for many new users, it is important to understand how we can develop effective instructional material. The purpose of this study is to determine if we can use findings from research in programmed instruction to develop online tutorials, and to determine if students learn more using computer-assisted instruction than programmed instruction. The tutorial designed for this study teaches elements of the BASIC programming language and simple editing procedures on the IBM Personal Computer. The independent variables are step size, response mode, and medium; and the dependent variables are success rate, posttest score, and completion time. Forty students at a 4-year liberal arts school completed the hard copy version of the tutorial, and 40 students from a 4-year technological school completed the online version of the tutorial. An additional 16 students from the liberal arts school also completed the online tutorial. As hypothesized, active, constructed responses have a significantly greater affect on participants' learning of the instructional material (as measured by posttest scores) than passive, multiple-choice responses. Findings also show that participants who complete the small step size versions of the tutorials have a greater success rate (answer more questions correctly as they go through the tutorial) than those who complete the large step size tutorials. There is no corresponding relationship, however, between step size and posttest scores. In other words, participants who complete the large step size versions of the tutorial score just as high on the posttest as those who complete the small step versions. Results also indicate that in this study, for the instructional material tested, participants who complete the online version of the tutorial score higher on the posttest than those who complete the hard copy tutorial. The online tutorial also takes participants longer to complete than the hard copy version; however, the difference in time is not due to the effect of the medium alone. It is the result of an interaction effect of medium and step size. Finally, this study indicates that participants rate both the online and hard copy tutorials about the same in how much they like the tutorial and how effective they think it is as a teaching tool. Future research directions and implications are discussed.

*For details and names of the authors send a letter to the editor.*

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