

## COLLOQUY

With this issue, Word Ways is printed in Times New Roman, the third typeface to appear this year. Richard Sabey called the editor's attention to the deficiencies of a sanserif typeface such as Arial. He wrote:

People often choose Helvetica [a typeface almost identical to Arial] to set text that would have been better set in another typeface. Although Helvetica is an excellent display face, well-suited for use in large sizes, it is worse as a body text face, for setting large quantities of text in a small size. This is because it is a sanserif face. The shapes of sanserif letters means that in some cases two letters can look like one. If letters are letterspaced to avoid this problem, then the letters of a word can break apart. There is not so much of a problem in a serified face, where the serifs keep the important strokes apart, yet help "tracking" and help to make the letters of each word cohere.

If there's one legibility problem which most often forces me to read sanserif text more closely, it's r and n together looking like m. Here are some examples:

Many a modern computer system includes a modem

Turn over onto your tum

The waves churn so much that my chum and I on the boat can't tell stem from stern

The contest is open to all comers from all corners of the country

I ate an ice-cream cornet while watching the Hale-Bopp comet

A successful gamer might garner his winnings

Larn (learn) what I say or I'll lam you with the leam I use for the leam-hounds

Lions homed in on a horned gnu, who met his doom near a doorn-tree

An old man with no teeth in his gums gurns as he tells me this yarn while I eat a yam

So keep sanserif typefaces for headings, but for large quantities of text for me to *read*, give me a serified typeface!

Dan Tilque calls the attention of Word Ways readers to the fact that one of Jeff Grant's May 1997 alphabetic clusters, glyCYLGLYCYLGLYCYLGLYCine, contains a nineteen-letter internal palindrome, perhaps the longest one known.

Susan Thorpe responds to Richard Sabey's note in the August Colloquy "Although I agree with Richard Sabey when he says that shorter words are often preferable to longer words, I believe that the case in question is rather special. Richard says that MATHEMATIZATION is no improvement on the shorter word MATHEMATICS. However, we only require the two invariant letters E and I (as the fifth and ninth letters of the word). Every additional letter increases the chance of introducing a third invariant. My reason, therefore, for rating the longer MATHEMATIZATION

superior to the shorter MATHEMATICS is that it manages to avoid a third invariant in spite of having more letters, all potential invariants."

Sir Jeremy Thorpe writes "I particularly enjoyed Susan Thorpe's AEIOUY article. She has searched well, and I only have a few additions to offer as follows: (1) If I HEAR YOU for ieayou, why not I HATE YOU for iaeyou? (2) If EIGHTY-THOUSAND for eiyoua, why not NINETY-THOUSAND for ieyoua? And would not both carry their hyphen more naturally as ordinals (e.g., NINETY-THOUSANDTH)? (3) FOUR AND EIGHTY fills ouaeiy, (4) FIRST DUKE OF ARGYLL fills iueoay...I would rank examples using consonantal Y lower, e.g. I would prefer MY SPOUSE AND I to YOUNG-ENGLANDISM for youeai. I would also rank lower OED spellings with I for J, U for V and Y for I." Finally, he notes that HEAVY-GOING lacks a U.

Rex Gooch writes "Partly because our terminology is not well defined, authors should start their articles by defining the terms they use. Take the Elucidators article. I passed a public examination at the age of 17 in Desargues Theorem, and know that a vanishingly small percentage of the population (even of mathematicians) here ever studies it, so it's a little tough to drag it in. Again, I studied Graph Theory under the French reinvigorators of the subject in Geneva, but have no memory of the "famous" Petersen graph (whereas Königsberg is famous). I don't see why we have to confuse matters by using the word *scrubs* when *tile* is perfectly good; there are very many meanings of scrub already without adding to the confusion. And what, pray, is a bone pile?"

Susan Thorpe filled in the vcvccvccvv pattern in "Near-Alternating Vowels and Consonants" with AKOLOUTHIA (under akoluthia in Webster's Second). Rex Gooch suggested OVARIALGIA for this pattern, as well as the hyphenated OED entries AUDIT-HOUSE, OUT-ACHIEVE, and EASEL-PIECE, as well as IELEFLOURE, an obsolete variant for gillyflower, for the vvcvccvccv pattern. A number of the illustrative words were rather rare; Rex suggested more well-known alternatives such as BLITHESOME, QUOTATIONS, EXIGENCIES, REINITIATE and EROTOMANIA.

Although Susan Thorpe didn't allow coinages in "AEIOUY Words", Ed Wolpov proposes the hole-filler UndErcAnOpYIng ("the deciduous forest is undercanopied with facultative commensals"). He notes that other holes can be filled by various United States placenames like Marion KY, Dawson Springs KY, Paul Smiths NY, Echo City UT, Heyburn IA, Collista KY, Hoytsville UT, Pulaski NY, Utica NY, Gully MN, and Cyrus MN. He adds "I suspect that Echo City and Hoytsville, with 270 and 405 inhabitants in 1940, and no sign of them on a current Utah map, may not have survived."

Jeff Grant said "I really enjoyed Rex Gooch's excellent work on word ladders" but adds that DISSEISERS is not needed at the start of the word ladder in the middle of page 213.