

## Obituary, Vern Williamsen

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1993 was a pivotal year for thinking about how we *comediantes* might use the Internet, including this new thing called the World Wide Web, to disseminate and study the Spanish *comedia*. Gutenberg had already made available a lot of European literature, and Dante and Shakespeare were also available by computer, although in pre-graphic, Unix-based format. I gave a talk in El Paso that year about how the Internet might be of interest and use in our studies, and Meg Greer organized a workshop on the digital *comedia* at Princeton. (I remember that Meg, Sharon Voros, and I were there, but for the life of me I cannot remember whom else!) There were some amazingly grandiose plans, all of which required significant coding skills and significant funding. Meanwhile, Vern Williamsen was just doing what Vern did, working away on his own project, which included typing the entire *corpus* of plays into Mira de Amescua into WordPerfect. I wasn't there, but evidently it was J. T. Abraham's work with Vern that led to the idea of posting Vern's WordPerfect files online. J. T. and Vern then went to work on making available most of the plays currently in the AHCT digital collection, this time in HTML format, and encouraging others to type out the texts of plays. I provided several plays, as did David Hildner, along with a few others. (All these files are still available on the AHCT website.) Among the early adopters in the service of literary analysis was Miguel Garcí-Gómez at Duke, who devised his own system to take the HTML versions of the plays and make them searchable for a number of analytical purposes (<http://mgarci.aas.duke.edu/cibertextos>). When I took over the maintenance of the AHCT website, I reformatted all the pages (over 2500) and added a search utility on the entire collection. For the most part the AHCT collection has remained the same, and interest in making new plays available on our website has waned in light of the well funded Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes in Spain (<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com>).

On a more personal note, I first met Vern at the MLA in the late 1970s; he seemed to have an encyclopedic knowledge not only of the plays but also of the most amazing trivia regarding the plays, the playwrights, and the culture of Golden Age Spain. We had the chance to get to know both him

and Clara better when we were both waiting for planes at the Providence airport after the 1983 AIH conference at Brown. Of course, the very next year we all met in an empty bank building in downtown El Paso to sign the papers to create and incorporate the AHCT.