

The Writing Center Journal
2007

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The Writing Center Journal's primary purpose is to publish articles, reviews, and announcements of interest to writing center personnel. We therefore invite manuscripts that explore issues or theories related to writing center dynamics or administration. We are especially interested in theoretical articles and in reports of research related to or conducted in writing centers. In addition to administrators and practitioners from college and university writing centers, we encourage directors of high school and middle school writing centers to submit manuscripts.

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The Writing Center Journal

2007

- 1 From the Editors
Neal Lerner and Elizabeth Boquet

Special Feature

- 3 So Where Have You Been...Lil Brannon?

Articles

- 7 Taking on Turnitin: Tutors Advocating Change
*Renee Brown, Brian Fallon, Jessica Lott, Elizabeth Matthews,
and Elizabeth Mintie*
- 29 Someone to Watch Over Me: Reflection and Authority in
the Writing Center
Michael Mattison
- 52 Portrait of the Tutor as an Artist:
Lessons No One Can Teach
Steve Sherwood

Reviews

- 67 *A Guide to Creating a Student-Staffed Writing Center:
Grades 6-12* by Richard Kent
Catherine Oriani
- 71 *The Literacy Coach's Desk Reference: Processes and
Perspectives for Effective Coaching* by Cathy A. Toll
Anne Ellen Geller

74 *Announcements*

82 *IWCA Information*

92 *Information for Authors*



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From the Editors

Absence and presence. We've streamlined this editorial process (for the most part) to such a degree that we do not necessarily need to be together, in the same space, making the final edits and preparing *The Writing Center Journal* to go to press. Yet twice a year, we cross out a day or two, and take over a house or two, to sit side by side with our laptops, working independently together. An absent present in many ways.

Absence and presence as concepts have been quite contested in academic circles over the past several decades, and the articles in this issue call into question the ways in which this contestation comes to bear on our writing center work. Beginning with what has come to be a semi-regular feature, we not only need to wonder where founding *WCJ* co-editor Lil Brannon is now, we also need to wonder why we ever thought she was gone at all.

Ever-present on our campuses—indeed, in our writing centers—are the faculty members for whom students are writing. Though many of them might never set foot in our tutoring spaces, their expectations loom large over our sessions. In “Taking on Turnitin: Tutors Advocating Change,” Fallon et al. consider students’ rights to their own texts in light of the increasing prevalence of plagiarism detection services (especially, obviously, Turnitin.com). What, Fallon and his co-authors wonder, is the role of tutors and of the writing center in resisting the encroachment of corporate interests in intellectual property discussions?

Students, however, are not the only people whose presence is regulated in the writing center. Tutors themselves are subject to surveillance, not only by the faculty members with whose students they work, but also by the directors charged with guiding those same tutors toward more effective pedagogy. Michael Mattison, in his article “Someone to Watch Over Me: Reflection and Authority in the Writing Center,” takes a practice common to most writing center staff education efforts, one which could be considered not only typical but also effective and, indeed, responsible, and lays it bare for our examination. Drawing on Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Mattison exposes potential limitations of reflective practice, particularly when it leads tutors to feel surveilled and to internalize systems of surveillance in a manner that leaves them feeling self-conscious rather than self-assured and anxious rather than self-aware.

While our first two articles rely on absent authority figures, our final article, Steve Sherwood’s “Portrait of the Tutor as an Artist: Lessons No One Can Teach,” explores the importance of presence when tutoring. With the increasing prevalence of online tutoring options, physical presence is no longer a precondition of one-to-one tutoring, and Sherwood reminds us that there are many ways to absent oneself

in interpersonal interactions, even when sitting right next to a writer, talking about a piece of writing. With no one “right” way to be fully present in a tutoring session, Sherwood explores options for tutors seeking to embrace the moment, to think artistically and resist rigid notions of tutoring.

Finally, too often, high school teachers serve as scapegoats for students’ poor writing skills and negative attitudes toward writing. In spite of the important contributions of many writing center scholars, high school centers remain under-represented in our discussions of theory and practice. The two reviews in this issue highlight not only what K-12 writing centers can take from writing center scholarship in general but also what they contribute to the field’s understanding of a developmental model for literacy instruction. Catherine Oriani reviews Richard Kent’s *A Guide to Creating a Student-Staffed Writing Center: Grades 6-12* and Anne Ellen Geller reviews Cathy Toll’s *The Literacy Coaches’ Desk Reference*. Together, these guides encourage us to think about the opportunities for dynamic relationships between and among our different locales.

So Where Have You Been?

by Lil Brannon

Minneapolis, November 2005 IWCA

Dear Jeannette,

Having fun. Wish you were here. You wouldn't believe all of the people (peer tutors and writing center directors). One could even get lost in the crowd, even disappear.

Love,
Lil

Dr. Jeannette Harris
Writing Center
Texas Christian University
Forth Worth, TX

February 2006, Southeastern Writing Centers Association, Chapel Hill

Neal: Hey, Lil. You know that column we are doing for *The Writing Center*

Journal, the “what-ever-happened-to...” Would you think about writing one of these?

Lil: But Neal, I'm here...

Neal: Yes, but...

About the Author

Lil Brannon is Professor of English and Education and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In 1980 she and Steve North were the founding editors of The Writing Center Journal. She has directed Writing Centers at Texas A&M, Commerce (with Jeanette Harris), at UNC Wilmington, NYU, and University at Albany, SUNY (following Steve North). Over the last two years she has been working with the UNC Charlotte Writing Resources Center as faculty advisor.

March 2006, Draft 1

The Absence of Presence

I'm here
but I'm not,
not
in the words
speaking here
but here
somewhere
absent but
present
composing myself
in words.

April 3, 2006, entry in daybook

I'm supposed to be, well, flattered to be asked, "where have you been." It all comes down to words, to writing, to being in print. When it came to the *WCJ*, I thought it important to save space for new voices, new ways of thinking. My voice had been very loud, very present. It was time to stop hogging the space. I wanted to listen to others, to hear ways of understanding that I wouldn't have on my own—we needed new identities.

From "Words Become Us" by Ann Imbrie

But there's a catch in the power of other people's words: they may be eloquent, they may be true, they may serve the purpose temporarily, they may speak like our very souls, but they belong to somebody else. Somebody else earned them in the labor of syntax. Identity doesn't come ready-made. You cannot borrow it, from Mick Jagger or from Milton. Identity comes through the encouraging, exasperating, consoling, frightening but finally willful, sense-making, self-making act of writing sentences.

(Vassar Alumni Magazine)

May 5, 2006, entry in daybook

So I've never stopped tutoring. I may have changed venue, but I haven't stopped tutoring. In the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at University at Albany, SUNY, I enlisted every tutor I knew from our Writing Center to work with me in developing living/learning communities for first-year students—RAs became peer tutors, the Writing Center moved into the residence halls. Then the English

Department fell apart. I left town. Now at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, I'm working in English Education, working with teachers in area schools, using everything I learned in the Writing Center to make classrooms learning communities. Last year our Writing Center Director quit. English needed someone who knew something about Writing Centers to step in. I was the only one, except, perhaps Jennifer, who knew anything. Seems like some things never change.

June 2006, Writing Center, UNC Charlotte

Tutor: OK, Lil, so who is your audience?

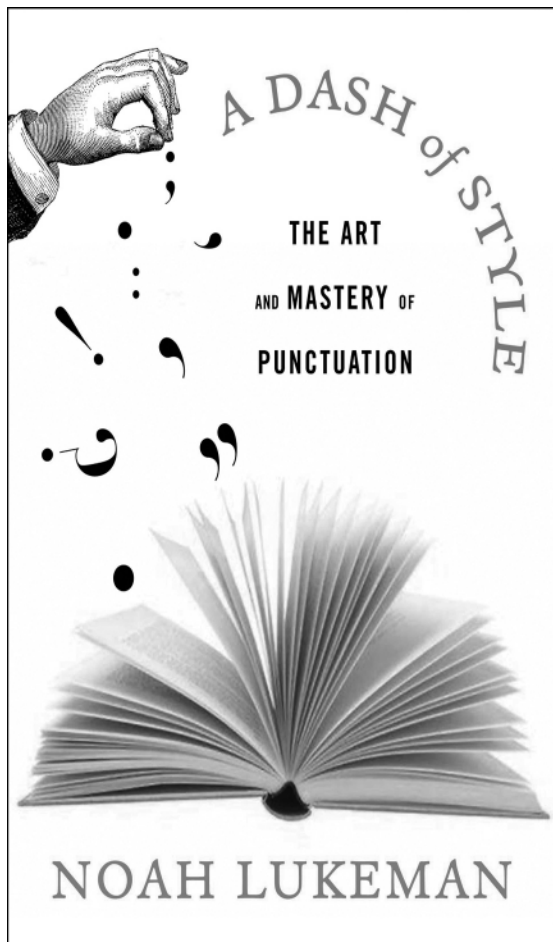
Tutee (Lil): Honestly, I can't for the life of me imagine who cares.

Tutor: Kinda like writing one of those 101 essays, huh?

Tutee: No, worse.

Tutor: What do you mean?

Tutee: I'm writing to folks who think I've disappeared.



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“PITHY, ELEGANT.”

Paul Cody, Ithaca College

“BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN.”

Laura Oliver, University of Maryland

“A PAGE TURNER.”

Brian Roley, Miami University (Ohio)

“GORGEOUSLY DIRECT.”

Ellen Cooney, Harvard University (extension)

“A MASTER CLASS.”

John Burt, Brandeis University

“FLAWLESS.”

John Smolens, Northern Michigan MFA

“GENIUS.”

Dr. Peggy Brown, Collin Community

“THE CONTEMPORARY BOOK ON THE SUBJECT.”

Legendary writing teacher Carol Bly

“SOMETHING TO REALLY CELEBRATE!”

Phyllis Moore, Kansas City Art Institute MFA

*Taking on Turnitin: Tutors Advocating Change*¹

by Renee Brown, Brian Fallon, Jessica Lott,
Elizabeth Matthews, and Elizabeth Mintie

Like many writing centers, ours trained us to respond to writers whose papers might involve plagiarism; we learned to show students how to use various paraphrasing techniques and how to cite sources. In staff meetings, we talked about why it was more important to understand the causes of students' plagiarism than to judge them for it. Then one day, a student walked into our writing center and said that she had submitted a paper to her professor online, as required, only to learn a little later that her paper had been reported to her professor as plagiarized. Visibly upset, this student asked that we help her with this paper so that she could resubmit it and avoid failing the course. She also showed us this statement in the course syllabus: "Students agree that by taking this course all required papers/reports/tests may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism." This was the boilerplate language recommended to pro-

About the Authors

Renee Brown majored in English Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) where she was a writing center tutor. Renee teaches middle school Language Arts in the Pittsburgh area.

Brian Fallon is a Ph.D. candidate in the Composition and TESOL program at IUP where he currently teaches writing in the Liberal Studies English Program. He was the assistant director of the IUP writing center for two years prior to teaching writing courses.

Jessica Lott is an anthropology major at Indiana University of Pennsylvania where she is a peer tutor at the writing center.

Elizabeth Matthews was a peer tutor at the IUP Writing Center and graduated with a bachelor's degree in English and Spanish. She currently works as an enforcement officer at the Domestic Relations Office in Lancaster, PA.

Elizabeth Mintie is a seventh grade Language Arts teacher at Wildwood Middle School in the Rockwood School District near St. Louis. She was a writing center tutor for three years at IUP.

fessors at our institution who chose to use Turnitin.com, a web-based plagiarism detection service, in their courses (Sherwood). Before our tutors had time to decide how best to respond to this experience, other panicked students came in with similar stories. We felt helpless to do anything for these students because we understood so little about Turnitin or their professors' literacy expectations and values. Were the students really plagiarizing? Could Turnitin point the finger at them and cause them to fail the course? How does Turnitin work? The answers to these questions, we discovered, were not to be found easily. Our director, Ben Rafoth, suggested that we investigate and then share what we learned with others at the university and in the writing center community.

As both students and tutors, we had concerns about the Turnitin software being used at our university. It was easy for us to identify with students who felt helpless when dealing with a software program that could seal their fates. We found it harder to identify with the values of their professors and of the Turnitin officials who made students use the program without providing important background information and without helping them to interpret the results. As we began to learn more about the program—more, actually, than we suspected even the faculty knew—we had to confront another question: How much should tutors tell students about Turnitin? If we decided to say nothing, we were tacitly supporting the way Turnitin was being used. If we told what we had learned, we were entering a realm of discourse that we might not be able to sustain and could even get in trouble for. With some encouragement, we decided to keep investigating and to go wherever our search led us.

We began our mission with two goals: What did our writing center staff need to know about Turnitin? and, How could tutors help students who must deal with Turnitin and the professors who require it? As we delved into these questions, we felt a growing sense that we were looking at very different values and expectations when it comes to student writing than we had learned during our training and our combined years of experience. We combed through websites and talked to students and faculty, collecting evidence that was sometimes technical, frequently changing, and often confusing. Our aim was to learn as much as we could about Turnitin and how it affects our peers so that we could tell students, faculty, and others in the writing center community what we had learned and how it might affect them. Although the students who visited the writing center concerned about Turnitin prompted our inquiry, we felt that our findings were best used when we considered the pitfalls and possibilities for tutoring involved. As a foundation for the work we

embarked on, we held to some notions about plagiarism, writing centers, and tutors that we feel are important for grounding this discussion.

Plagiarism, tutors, writing centers: A complicated trio

Our research began with the practical challenge of what to say to students who brought papers to us that had been identified by Turnitin as containing plagiarized material. In some cases, students had received papers back from their professors because Turnitin had flagged them as plagiarized, and they were now being asked to correct plagiarized passages and submit revised versions. These students came to our writing center and said, “Here’s what Turnitin said I plagiarized, so how do I fix it?” In other cases, students were about to submit their finished papers to Turnitin, as they were required to do, and were worried that the program would accuse them of plagiarism. This challenge, though, soon led us in a number of directions that would help us to offer the best advice possible to students and to discover what kinds of roles we as tutors and the writing center play in campus conversations on plagiarism. In order to find the right words to say to students who visit with Turnitin concerns, we had to understand plagiarism better, the stance writing center literature takes on plagiarism, and what kinds of institutional roles tutors can play.

As students, we began to feel that our own perceptions on plagiarism, mainly that it is academic dishonesty, were problematic because what Turnitin had flagged as plagiarism didn’t seem to suggest that students were intentionally being dishonest. With the help of our assistant director, we looked to composition studies for some answers and considered some of Rebecca Moore Howard’s thoughts on plagiarism. Through an exploration of her work, we began to expand our understanding of plagiarism by taking into account Howard’s attention to patchwriting in her *Standing in the Shadow of Giants: Plagiarists, Authors, Collaborators*. Students are often criminalized for being patchwriters, Howard argues, when, in actuality, even the most professional writers are merely sophisticated patchwriters. She establishes a pedagogical space for patchwriting, which she refers to as, “a process of evaluating a source text, selecting passages pertinent to the patchwriter’s purposes, and transporting those passages to the patchwriter’s new context” (xviii). Furthermore, Howard, elsewhere, calls for the replacement of plagiarism with the categories of *fraud*, *citation*, and *repetition* (“Sexuality, Textuality” 488). In addition to Howard, Kurt Bouman has strongly suggested that differences in cultural and academic expectations can lead some students, particularly international students, to make choices that would be deemed wrong by an American academic audience. Given what we learned from our initial exploration into discussions of plagiarism in com-

position studies and what we've witnessed from students with Turnitin concerns, we have decided to reserve the term *fraudulent plagiarism* for instances in which there is, beyond a doubt, true intent by writers to submit work that is not their own. We have made this decision primarily because any discussion on plagiarism should not automatically assume that any text that imitates another text or lacks originality is a result of a criminal act.

With a better sense of how experts in the field define plagiarism, we began to think carefully about what the writing center's stance is when it comes to plagiarism. As we noted at the beginning of this article, an issue for us as tutors centered on what we would say to a student whom we knew was plagiarizing. Luckily for us, this scenario has not happened very often, but we still had to consider what kinds of positions we could possibly take on this issue. Would we establish a set of procedures like tutors Jennifer Herrick and Mark Niquette did in their "Ethics in the Writing Lab: Tutoring under the Honor Code"? Would we casually take a walk with the writer and describe to them what's at stake by choosing to plagiarize? As our research developed, we realized that we had to take a step beyond our training, that our response to such a situation had to be informed by what scholars were saying about the writing center's tempestuous past and present relationship to plagiarism. In their "Plagiarism, Rhetorical Theory, and the Writing Center: New Approaches, New Locations," Linda Shamoon and Deborah H. Burns provided not only a history of this relationship, but some answers to the questions we had about how the writing center might approach the issue of plagiarism in general.

According to Shamoon and Burns, the writing center literature mainly focuses on defending our institutional spaces against accusations that writers receive too much help when they visit. They present three responses to charges of plagiarism that the writing center literature has provided: "[W]e recount the nature of the writing process, we explain the importance of feedback for all writers, and we offer pointers about how peer tutors can negotiate the border between the 'legitimate' practice of giving advice and the 'illegitimate' practice of writing too much on the paper" (184). However, Shamoon and Burns are quick to point out the philosophical discrepancies inherent in these three responses when they are measured against our beliefs about writing and the realities we face while tutoring. The perspective they ultimately endorse is a *social-rhetorical* one that "would make interpellation more conscious because it articulates the constructed nature of subject matter, of disciplinary thinking and questioning, of the related features of the discourse (including paper features), and of the values and expectations of a specific reader or audience" (191). In line with their recommendation to approach tutoring from this

perspective, we believe that our job as tutors is to help students come to new meanings, understandings, and ideas through their writing and to do so while situating themselves in the kinds of disciplinary conversations their teachers expect of them.

This is not an easy task, but what we've learned about plagiarism, particularly in Howard's explanation of patchwriting, tells us that complicated plagiarism issues most likely happen in the writing center more frequently than we may have thought. That is, if all writers are essentially patchwriters and if students are particularly prone to having their patchwriting critiqued as cheating, then we, as tutors, have a dilemma on our hands every time we work with students who are already under suspicion for plagiarizing. Since our job entails walking the line between what type of writing is expected in the student's discipline and how the student is prepared to meet those expectations, we may find ourselves wandering into disciplinary conversations about plagiarism that aren't so pretty. In taking this approach, how we respond to plagiarism cannot be framed in terms of ethics or a misconception of writing center practice, as Shamoan and Burns suggest, because a *social-rhetorical* approach to writing center pedagogy "views the issue of plagiarism as a social and rhetorical construct, and rather than side step the issue of plagiarism by claiming to build a fence around collaboration and tutoring, such a writing center inserts itself into a conversation about the rhetorical and social nature of the disciplines" (192). We are left to ponder how tutors, as the main practitioners in our writing centers, might insert themselves into such a conversation, especially now that Turnitin has presented us with new challenges to our tutoring and to our institutional positions.

Of course, the time we spent researching Turnitin was extensive, and we had the opportunity to present our findings both locally and nationally, but the persistent issue of who is really listening to us, the tutors, kept nagging us throughout this project. During our first presentation to the English faculty here at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), we became aware that showing professors what Turnitin is all about and how it is influencing their teaching could potentially put us in the political hot seat. How would they respond to us, their students, but also their other students' tutors? At the end of the day, the information we had to share was well received and the faculty in our audience were there because they wanted to hear what we had to say, but this was the first time we had to ask ourselves about the potential risks involved in becoming advocates for students who have had bad Turnitin experiences. In considering a political and pedagogical space for our research, we found it necessary to step outside the traditional roles of writing center tutors in order to make claims about how Turnitin was influencing teaching on

our campus. Thinking about Shamon and Burn's social-rhetorical approach to writing center work led us to the conclusion that there was, or at least should be, an arena for tutors to discuss campus-wide issues that affect tutoring. In Harvey Kail and John Trimbur's "The Politics of Peer Tutoring," they argue that, "[l]ocating the sources of knowledge in the social fabric rather than in the power lines of generation and transmission offers a way to talk about peer tutoring that goes beyond the operational model of plugging tutors into the grid" (207). We began to consider the kind of knowledge we could bring to the social fabric of our institution and other ways that Kail and Trimbur's statement informs our situation almost twenty years after they originally made it.

We are not interested in being plugged into the Turnitin grid just because some faculty and administrators on our campus have chosen to use the program. Instead, we would like to offer up our voice along with the voices of students who have been informed about this decision as a way to cautiously approach what Turnitin means for learning and teaching on our campus. Although the debates about peer tutoring may have focused on collaborative learning in the university, we have reinterpreted our goals in line with Kail and Trimbur in that "[t]he experience of co-learning changes students and helps them to see that the power ascribed to the faculty depends on the students' own sense of powerlessness and [the faculty's] need for omnipotent authority" (209). What we came to recognize at our writing center is that we had an opportunity to inform students about what Turnitin does and how their teachers are using it so they could make informed decisions on how to approach their professors and engage their own texts. If we took the time, together, with students to pose problems with what Turnitin said they plagiarized and explained why it had said so, then we'd be doing productive work in our writing center rather than working to just fix the supposed problem areas of flagged texts. We would, in a sense, have to forgo how the institution intended to use Turnitin and help students in these situations to see the choices they have, to feel more confident in how they use sources, and to identify themselves as writers who intricately manipulate and synthesize texts for their own purposes.

With this complex nexus of plagiarism, writing centers, and tutor roles as a base, we will now turn our attention to how Turnitin works from technological, legal, and ethical perspectives; how students seem to be responding to the increasing use of plagiarism detection services; and how Turnitin limits pedagogical options and opportunities. Finally, we will offer some perspectives on what tutors can do both in their sessions and on their campuses to have their voices heard in a discussion on plagiarism detection services.

How Turnitin works

Understanding how Turnitin functions and the purposes for which it is used by an institution proved vital to any discussion we had about the program. We should note, however, that Turnitin updates the information it provides online regularly, and has done so since we first began our research. The information provided from Turnitin's web site in this article was collected in March 2006. Likewise, the information we present throughout this section is also influenced by the kinds of programming parameters set for our institution, which means that different institutions can customize aspects of the program for their own purposes. What we present in this piece demonstrates the issues that we have dealt with here at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) with our new subscription to Turnitin.

For starters, we found that the corporation behind Turnitin claims to have an educational purpose. In fact, banners on their website tout that they are "focused on education" ("Products and Services"). Turnitin's website hosts an online interface where students can submit work to professors, comment on their peers' work, and review their grades. Although these services are similar to those provided by other educational resources such as WebCT and Blackboard, Turnitin is unique because as "the standard in online plagiarism prevention," Turnitin also claims to "help educators and students take full advantage of the internet's educational potential" by scanning every paper submitted for "measurable rates of plagiarism" ("Plagiarism Prevention").

Bill Marsh's "Turnitin.com and the Scriptural Enterprise of Plagiarism Detection" offers a thorough description of how Turnitin operates, specifically dealing with the way Turnitin "maps identity, codes writing, and manages transgression in the service of broader, historically entrenched values of authorial propriety and educational achievement" (427-428). Our analysis echoes much of the work done by Marsh, and we recommend his article for those who are investigating Turnitin, but we have included our observations since they were not only the results of researching the Turnitin web site but also our own experimentation with the program.

Turnitin's capacity to detect plagiarism is actually based on the matches it makes between similar sequences of text ("Product Tour"). When students or professors submit work on Turnitin's interface, proprietary algorithms convert the text into what Turnitin calls a "digital fingerprint," a unique sequence of code that has meaning only within Turnitin's technological interface. Turnitin's web crawlers compare these "fingerprints" to the 4.5 billion student papers and archived websites Turnitin claims to have in its proprietary database. The database then retains a copy of the

“fingerprint” to compare against future student submissions. When the code sequence of a submitted paper matches a file within Turnitin’s database, Turnitin highlights the matching text and creates a link to the source in its database. The instructor receives an originality report with a color-coded Similarity Index that shows the total percentage of text in the submitted document that matched text from sources in the database. (Again, see Marsh’s article for a thorough explanation of Turnitin’s scriptural similarity and originality reports).

Once a paper is submitted to Turnitin, its “fingerprint” remains in the proprietary database indefinitely (“Product Tour”). This feature distinguishes Turnitin from other plagiarism prevention programs, such as Essay Verification Engine and IntegriGuard, because other programs do not maintain a database of student work. Turnitin claims that retaining these fingerprints does not infringe upon students’ copyrights because the proprietary algorithms it applies convert the text into a new product, the fingerprint, even though they convert it back to its original format to produce originality reports (“Legal Document”). Turnitin’s lawyers explain this sleight of hand as follows: “The fingerprint is merely a digital code, which relays the unprotectable factual information that certain pre-defined content is present in the work...the fingerprint does not include any of the work’s actual contents, and is therefore neither a copy nor a true derivative of the original text” (“Legal Document”). In other words, according to Turnitin’s legal team, the code products of Turnitin’s algorithms contain information about the text rather than the actual text, just as a physical fingerprint contains information about a finger rather than the actual finger. This analogy is questionable, however. A student’s text can, and is, reconstructed from Turnitin’s “digital fingerprint,” whereas a physical finger cannot be reconstructed from a fingerprint.

This reconstruction of text poses an ethical dilemma pertaining to students’ ownership of their work, as well as a privacy issue. Tutors in our writing center found that students who are enrolled in classes using Turnitin are not always aware that the database retains a fingerprint of their work. When we experimented with the program in December 2005, we created a fictional student and then later submitted a small portion of an actual paper that was written for a graduate-level criminology course in April. When we obtained consent to use the paper, we asked the writer whether her professor used Turnitin. She replied that to the best of her knowledge, none of her work had ever been submitted to Turnitin; she had never even heard of the program. However, this was not the case because her professor had submitted her work to Turnitin without her knowledge, and, in submitting her paper for our experiment, we had unwittingly alerted her professor to the possibil-

ity that she might be attempting to submit the same paper for another course. To prevent his misconception, we contacted the professor to explain that we had used the student's paper with permission as part of our research on Turnitin.

In this situation, the originality report flagged 24% of the student's text as matching a document within the database. After selecting Turnitin's option to obtain more information, we received an e-mail message stating that the professor from the course in which the matching paper had been submitted granted permission for Turnitin to send us the original paper from which our submission had ostensibly been "plagiarized." Turnitin forwarded us a copy of the entire paper, including the personal information the writer had included in her heading, specifically her full name and course number. In many courses students are required to put their identification numbers, e-mail addresses, and even contact numbers on their papers; *we* had now discovered that this student information can be forwarded by Turnitin to third parties as long as the original professor—not the student author—grants permission. We had not only obtained the student's entire original paper without her knowledge or permission, but also her full name and course number.

In addition, Turnitin claims to save professors time ("Plagiarism Prevention"). Instructors who use the program still must look at Turnitin's report of the student's paper because this report does not distinguish between properly and improperly cited information. While the option exists to omit marking material within quotation marks and in the bibliography, Turnitin cannot verify that citations are formatted correctly or that students have quoted correctly. As we have noted, Turnitin is able to detect only copy-and-paste plagiarism from within its database; the instructor must still check for copy-and-paste plagiarism from outside of the Turnitin database. Turnitin, however, is not clear about these limitations in the scope of its database, simply stating that it uses "exhaustive searches of billions of pages from both current and archived instances of the internet, millions of student papers previously submitted to Turnitin, and commercial databases of journal articles and periodicals" ("Plagiarism Prevention"). Furthermore, since Turnitin detects only this type of plagiarism, professors must scrutinize papers for other types of plagiarism on their own. Therefore, the timesaving claim made by Turnitin is dubious.

The more we delved into the institutional aspects of Turnitin, the greater our concerns became. The money that institutions use to pay for the license to use Turnitin can come from various sources, depending on the institution. At our university, the funds come from the technology fee that all students are required to pay. This fee is meant to enhance student learning, provide equitable access, and make

graduates competitive in the workplace (“Pennsylvania”). Turnitin charges between \$4,000 and \$10,000 a year for the use of their program, depending on the institution’s enrollment. Bigger schools pay more for the service because it is expected that they will submit more papers to the program. In 2004–05, with approximately 13,500 students, our university paid \$8,100. Meanwhile, Turnitin is a for-profit company that charges licensing fees to institutions that want access to their program. Turnitin’s parent company, iParadigms, had 3,500 member institutions in 2004 and earned \$10 million in annual revenue (Dottinga).

iParadigms reports that it receives over 20,000 papers on a peak day from users in 51 countries (“About”). iParadigms’ other services include iThenticate, a commercial version of Turnitin; plagiarism.org, a website that provides information about online plagiarism and Turnitin; and Research Resources, a website about plagiarism and the Internet (“Products”). Turnitin, backed by its ever-expanding proprietary database, is the star of iParadigms’ corporate agenda. Every new subscription not only generates revenue for the company through licensing fees; it also increases the size of its proprietary database and thus the market value of its product. Student papers remain in the database even after students graduate or schools cancel their subscriptions, so that every paper that enters the database puts iParadigms a step ahead of aspiring competitors. iParadigms’ CEO Tom Barrie boasts, “In very short order, we’ll have it all wrapped up. We’ll become the next generation’s spell checker...There will be no room for anybody else, not even a Microsoft, to provide a similar type of service because we will have the database” (Masur).

“Having the database” is crucial to Turnitin’s business model, which depends upon adding value to its product by continuously expanding the amount of original work it collects from students and other sources and then holds forever. Each sales transaction to a college or university then creates a dependent economic relationship between Turnitin and the university, leaving institutions that might want to choose a different software company to decide between losing access to all of their students’ papers and renewing their licenses with Turnitin.

Furthermore, the legal issues surrounding Turnitin concern the Copyright Law and the Fair Use Law. The Copyright Law covers items such as literary works, musical compositions, musical records, screenplays, and works of art. Items not eligible for protection under the Copyright Law are ideas, facts, titles, names, short phrases, and blank forms. The Fair Use Law determines whether the use made of a work is fair, and several factors are considered in this decision. One is the purpose and character of the use, such as whether the item in question is being used for

commercial or nonprofit purposes. Another is the nature of the copyrighted work and includes the amount and substantiality of the portion of the work in question relative to the copyrighted work as a whole. Finally, there is the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. Turnitin argues that the purpose of the digital fingerprint is to enable the evaluation of works for plagiarism; the purpose of the work itself is to express an idea or information for an academic purpose. Therefore, the purposes of use are not prohibited under the Fair Use Law. This also means that the use of the students' work will not affect its potential market value.

As of December 2005, there was no clear legal precedent for the situation created by Turnitin. Turnitin, however, markets itself largely as an educational tool. It is conceivable that Turnitin attempts to use its affiliations with educational institutions to gain leniency in copyright and fair use laws. Programs affiliated with educational pursuits often argue that special circumstances are required to fulfill their educational mission. Actions that are used to advance that goal are often able to infringe on possible copyrights and are justified because the purpose is the greater goal of education. Turnitin proclaims to be working for education, and the company claims that it should be able to make use of these legal leniencies; others contest the view that Turnitin has the educational system in its best interests.

On its website, Turnitin publishes a statement by its law firm, Foly & Lardner, to reassure readers that Turnitin infringes on no copyrights ("Legal Document"). The statement claims that using Turnitin "does not pose a significant risk of infringement of any copyright in written works submitted to Turnitin for evaluation." Perhaps in anticipation of questions about the violation of copyright laws, Turnitin defends their program on their website in a section called "Legal Document," where they pose a series of questions. The first one asks: "Does Turnitin infringe on student's [sic] copyrights to their work?" Their response to this question is as follows:

Determining whether a copyright exists in a particular work or is infringed by a particular use of the work is difficult[...] [C]asual analysis of these issues will not suffice, especially when the use in question is novel, as is the Turnitin system for plagiarism detection. For that reason, iParadigms[...] sought expert legal advice before launching the Turnitin system, and have continued to do so during its operation. Based on extensive analysis of all aspects of the Turnitin system, we have concluded that its use does not pose a significant risk of infringe-

ment of any copyright in written works submitted to Turnitin for evaluation. (“Legal Document”)

Readers of this response may agree with us that it is vague and evasive, relying mainly on reassurances that the company has received expert legal advice and conducted an extensive analysis, but offering no supporting evidence. The evasiveness continues on page three of their legal document, when Turnitin poses the question, “Is Turnitin’s use of student work ethical?” They respond first by noting:

Each faculty user of the Turnitin system must decide whether the advantages of detecting plagiarism quickly and efficiently, coupled with the ability for peers to efficiently and anonymously review each others’ work, is outweighed by any reservations the faculty user may have about how Turnitin accomplishes those goals. (“Legal Document”)

This statement seems to ignore the question of using students’ original work and focuses instead on the convenience afforded to faculty, suggesting that students will simply have to defer to their instructors’ wishes about handling their work. Students’ rights are often subordinated to the decisions of teachers and administrators, and Turnitin may believe it has the backing of most legal opinions. The question of whether or not it is ethical for Turnitin (and the faculty and institutions who subscribe to it) to use students’ work in the way that Turnitin seems to encourage is left unanswered. The “Legal Document” goes on to state:

In that respect, we believe it helpful to bear in mind that academic institutions and their teachers are not only entitled, but obliged, to award grades to student work based on student input, rather than the intellectual contribution of others. Students should know that not only the content, but also the integrity of their work is subject to evaluation.

Once again, we see Turnitin shifting the focus of the question to what they believe students must do, namely, maintain the integrity of their work. The integrity of students’ work is precisely what is at stake, however, when Turnitin encourages faculty to require that all students submit their work to Turnitin’s proprietary database and holds these works there indefinitely, even sending out copies of the students’ work with personal, identifying information to those who wish to examine it, as we found in our research.

Student perceptions on Turnitin

What do students think about Turnitin? In addition to the panicked writers we met with and the students whose frustration we’ve discussed thus far, we visited an online conversation forum called “Students Hate Turnitin.com.” Some of the posts

were supportive. One student wrote, “I think the concept of Turnitin is good—as somebody who doesn’t plagiarize then I’ve got nothing to worry about. What I don’t like though is the thought of my work being kept on file for future comparison.” Another student believed that if people were against Turnitin, it must be because they themselves plagiarize. “Why else would anyone complain about such a service?” she asked. Also surprising was the seemingly low regard students had for their own work. At least three posts indicated feelings of surrender, suggesting that the moment they submit their papers, the work is no longer theirs. After all, they said, the papers were never copyrighted or protected in any way, and whatever the professors decide to do with the papers is fine with them; this, they felt, was the “cost” of the grade they received in return. On the other hand, there were two responses expressing dislike for Turnitin. One student wondered what happened if “[a] student isn’t comfortable with their assignment being put through this system?” Another student observed the long-term effects of submitting work and “how the information can/will be used.”

Students who deliberately choose to plagiarize are often well aware of Turnitin’s shortcomings. Some of our tutors who are English education majors doing their student teaching had the opportunity to speak with a number of the high school students in their classes about their thoughts on Turnitin. One fifteen year-old student told us that due to “the paper mill plagiarism problem,” his high school required students to submit all papers through Turnitin. We asked if the requirement had stopped students from downloading papers, and he laughed. He explained:

Really, it’s so worthless. Everyone knows how it catches you, so it’s easy to figure out how not to get caught. All you have to do is move things around in a sentence to change the order, or put in some extra words, or put in words that mean the same thing. They say a lot of times it fixes the paper up, actually, because those papers you get online aren’t so good when it comes to grammar or using vocabulary. (Anonymous)

So perhaps, after all, Turnitin leads some students to edit their plagiarism more carefully, even as it poses little obstacle for determined plagiarists.

We wonder whether students realize the full extent of the obstacles Turnitin creates. Consider students who feel attached to their work, whether it is creative or research based. Do they understand how Turnitin benefits financially from having their work in the database? Or, do they realize that their work is easily reproduced whenever a paper is submitted that matches what they’ve written? We found few who expressed serious reservations about Turnitin and what it might mean for them in the future. Those who favored Turnitin seemed to do so because they respected

those who do not plagiarize and wanted people who *do* to get caught. There were occasional complaints on student blogs about the unauthorized retention of student work, but they were relatively mild.

If these scant complaints have failed to get much attention, a 2004 court case involving a student at McGill University in Montreal seems to be having an impact. College sophomore Jesse Rosenfeld failed his assignments when he refused his professor's instructions to submit his work to Turnitin, citing "ethical and political problem[s]" with the system (Grinberg). "I was having to prove I didn't plagiarize even before my paper was looked at by my professor," Rosenfeld stated. A Canadian court sided with the student, and many authorities agreed with his position. Ian Boyko, national chairman of the Canadian Federation of Students, stated, "Of the 20 Canadian universities currently using the site, not one consulted with students in the decision-making process when signing on with Turnitin.com...that in itself shows a lack of respect for students' rights" (qtd. in Grinberg). Boyko further states that students, as authors, should be able to decide where their work goes, period, especially considering that the company makes money from the submissions. This last piece of evidence may be the most damaging to the credibility of Turnitin, which bases the legality of its operation on its purported educational mission.

Tom Barrie, founder and president of Turnitin.com, had strong reactions to the accusations: "This is the first time since our inception in 1998, since millions of papers have gone through our site, that this issue has come up...we are following the letter of the law, and not one of the 3,000 universities who use our service would have signed contracts with us if we weren't" (qtd. in Grinberg). He also disputes that Turnitin withholds student work. Because the papers are imprinted digitally into the system, rather than in written form, he says there is no need for concern. "We don't harm the free-market value of the work—a student can take their Macbeth essay to the market and make millions," argues Barrie. But the claim is at least debatable because once a work is in the database, its content is available to others, even unscrupulous users who could claim the work as their own and take it to the market. Whether the input of the saved work is manifested digitally or otherwise seems beside the point if it is being stored against the will of the writers who crafted it.

Given the responses we've provided from students and the scenarios offered that led to poor solutions to plagiarism issues in student writing, we do not believe the program actually helps to solve the problem of plagiarism. Boyko argues that it does not: "We see the use of sites like Turnitin.com as means of cutting cor-

ners...we think they are a poor substitute for trained individuals” (qtd. in Grinberg). Most teachers feel an obligation that goes beyond producing graduates who have simply met the requirements; writing teachers and tutors, in particular, believe that each student’s experience with writing is at least as important as the ability to follow the rules of writing. And yet the sheer power of electronic solutions is hard to match. Turnitin’s president says there is little choice but to rely on a digital solution because “[h]uman beings cannot detect plagiarism...unless you apply a digital solution, it’s impossible. We have 13 seven-foot, computer racks to determine if a student has lifted one line in an essay from the internet” (qtd. in Grinberg).

Turnitin does make a compelling argument when it observes that human brains do not have the capacity to scan billions of pages to detect every instance of plagiarism; on the other hand, detection is not a simple matter of matching. Whether or not a student has plagiarized requires knowledge of the student, the assignment, and other factors for which human judgment trumps computer power. The controversy over Turnitin will likely continue, and it is bound to find its way back to the courtroom, and much more research is needed on how students perceive and are being informed on Turnitin at their schools. For now, we’d like to take the controversy to spaces where writing is taught, learned, and done.

Some pedagogical limitations of Turnitin

In a typical session dealing with the topic of plagiarism, tutors at most writing centers try first to understand what students do and don’t know about the topic. They explain what plagiarism is and how to avoid improperly using the words, ideas, and research of others. The session might last thirty minutes to an hour. The tutor and writer review when information should be cited, how to handle direct quotes, and how to acknowledge someone else’s words or ideas. Tutors show students how to do relatively easy things like using signal phrases and harder ones like creating summaries and paraphrases. While we may not always be experts on the pedagogy of teaching citation, tutors have developed effective skills for teaching skills related to the use of sources. Sometimes we ask writers to read the original source aloud, and then we use this as a basis for teachable moments, as when a writer struggles to read passages he or she did not write. Sometimes tutors remove the original text by minimizing the computer screen or turning over the paper and asking the writer to recap what he or she has just read. Tutors write or have the student write notes based on what the student is able to remember. These strategies, which Howard advocates in her work on helping students to learn paraphrasing

skills, provide students the opportunity to expand how they think about incorporating sources into their own writing (“Plagiarisms” 801).

At the same time, tutors are trained to steer students away from certain practices. Tutors generally do not teach students to use the computer’s thesaurus as a paraphrasing tool. We do not encourage them simply to substitute words like “splendid” for words like “great” to create an acceptable paraphrase. Avoiding the thesaurus becomes problematic once students understand how Turnitin defines and detects “plagiarism,” however. While most people would agree that a thesaurus can be helpful, it becomes downright essential to using Turnitin when writing something that involves a set of standard or agreed upon terms that professional writers repeat without quoting or citing. We discovered this as we spoke to students who were required to submit papers to Turnitin and had figured out that a thesaurus was almost essential. We wrote and submitted a passage to Turnitin (in December 2005) that used standard terms to define a concept: “Freud discussed hidden emotions and drives as a person’s libido, a type of psychic energy.” When we made minimal changes to the sentence—“Freud talks about concealed emotions and drives as a person’s libido, a kind of psychic energy”—and resubmitted it, Turnitin did not recognize the text as plagiarized. Similarly, we found that changing the syntax of the sentence could also outwit the software. “As defined by Freud, the id is the psychic energy that...” was not flagged as being plagiarized from the original, “The id, as defined by Freud, is the psychic energy that....”

Turnitin is marketed as a campus-wide “technological solution,” so various departments in schools, colleges, and universities across the nation ask students to submit their papers to their instructors through the program. Many instructors use Turnitin to compare “textual similarity,” meaning identical or nearly identical strings of words and phrases, which they believe is a key step in the detection of plagiarism (Sherwood). Considering only textual similarity as a way to identify plagiarism is a limited way of looking at the problem, however, and causes distress for students who seek to learn the appropriate discourse practices of their field of study and the writing center tutors trying to support them. In our writing center, we have met several students who were writing field-specific papers in the sciences and social sciences. These papers relied heavily on precise definitions and standard vocabulary. In a paper on Attention Deficit Disorder that one of our tutors wrote in December 2005, the three types of ADD, as defined by the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association), a widely accepted psychological manual for diagnosing disorders, were listed. The section of text that Turnitin flagged as plagiarized was, “the DSM-IV: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive-impulsive,

and combined.” This string of words matches other strings of words that exist with high frequency in cyberspace because these are the precise names of the subcategories of the disorder ADD, in the order in which they appear in the DSM-IV. The paper was not plagiarized, but the terminology being used was too specific for the software to interpret intelligently. Tutors and students will continue to struggle through sessions with papers like this one because concerned students have determined that they must change the order in which the subcategories are described in order to circumvent the identical binary coding that Turnitin matches and marks for “textual similarity.” Should students have to change what they know is right because their institution’s computer software does not?

Even when students deliberately copy text from another source, Turnitin does not consistently identify this type of fraudulent plagiarism. Kurt Bouman points out that there are many levels of plagiarism. There is a clear difference, for example, between a student who inadvertently paraphrases a source incorrectly and a student who fraudulently downloads a paper from a paper mill and submits it as his or her own writing. Since Turnitin cannot distinguish a student’s intent as it scans the paper, the program often marks appropriate paraphrasing as inappropriate and lets inappropriate paraphrasing slide. As part of our investigation, we conducted a test to determine whether we could submit a plagiarized text without being detected by Turnitin. We began with a text from DigitalTermPapers.com, an online paper mill. We were able to view, on the mill’s website, the first 150 words of a sample essay written on *The House on Mango Street*, and so we copied and pasted this publicly available text into a word processor and submitted the document to Turnitin in February 2005. Surprisingly, the originality report came back with only the first sentence flagged and a similarity index of 10%. When we clicked on the highlighted text to see what Turnitin had matched to our text, it displayed a page of nonsensical strings of words and sentences from an obscure website. An instructor evaluating the originality report would not have been able to determine that we had directly copied the text from a publicly available Internet paper mill, even though that is the type of website Turnitin claims to target with its web crawlers.

Most paper mills require accounts and passwords, thereby placing them beyond the reach of Turnitin’s web crawlers. Turnitin claims that this is not a significant weakness of their program since it retains a copy of every paper submitted within its database. As soon as a student submits a paper purchased from a paper mill, that paper can be compared to future submissions (“Turnitin Virtual Tour”). In response to this, paper mills have begun to offer custom-written papers that are guaranteed not to be detected by services such as Turnitin. The website EssayMall.com adver-

tises “original, well-balanced, and thoughtfully-written custom essays” which are checked by a “licensed plagiarism detection program to ensure one hundred percent originality and authenticity of work” (“Custom Essay Value”). Prices range from \$11.79 per 330-word page with five days’ notice to a steep \$29.79 per page for twelve hours’ notice; however, the company assures prospective buyers that the quality of its products, coupled with its originality and confidentiality guarantees, is worth the price. As long as the company is true to its guarantees, students who fraudulently plagiarize through custom paper mills such as EssayMall.com are safe from Turnitin detection.

Thus, we question Turnitin’s ability to be a campus-wide “technological solution” to plagiarism, which brings us to even more serious questions about the program’s pedagogical limitations. From the information we’ve presented here, the program itself is in no way a panacea for plagiarism issues. From our discussion throughout this section, we would like to point out two major differences between students who accidentally plagiarize and those who, as in the cases of students who buy papers off the Internet, fraudulently plagiarize. Believing that Turnitin will function as a “cure all” detracts our attention from asking why or how students plagiarize and places an emphasis on what they plagiarize. The danger in such a focus is that the teaching of proper paraphrasing may be overlooked for the simplest solutions to preventing plagiarism that we’ve demonstrated, such as using the thesaurus function in Word. This approach may not happen in composition classrooms, but we wonder about those students with whom we met who were simply required to fix the problems rather than being told how to paraphrase and cite properly. Turnitin offered no advice to these students on how they might begin to cite and paraphrase properly. Furthermore, in our more extreme example of fraudulent plagiarism, Turnitin failed to catch the work that was purchased from paper mills. The question for us, then, is whether or not Turnitin actually has any pedagogical purposes on its own? A teacher can surely use the program to some pedagogical ends, but what does it say about the pedagogical claims being offered by Turnitin when the program is more than likely going to flag issues of accidental plagiarism and totally miss cases of severe fraud? The point is that we cannot and should not forget about the kinds of responsibilities we have to young writers as tutors and teachers just because we now have the ability to compare cases of textual similarity.

What's a tutor to do? Some thoughts on practice and advocacy

Back in the comfort of our own writing center, we pondered one more question: To what extent can the writing center change the momentum when an institution has decided to adopt a program like Turnitin? At the very least, tutors and directors can try to make their faculty aware of the limitations of Turnitin and the need to interpret its reports carefully.

Tutors who begin to learn about Turnitin software soon confront the question of what to tell others. To what extent, for example, should tutors become a political voice for or against the program? Arguably, knowing more precisely what Turnitin can and cannot do could strengthen its support among faculty, students, and perhaps even tutors. Some might say that it is helpful to know that Turnitin cannot determine fraudulent from inadvertent plagiarism, and that it cannot even be counted on to help detect fraudulent plagiarism. And then there is the cost. Is it appropriate for tutors who learn the price their institutions pay for a Turnitin license to share this information with their peers? Are the stakes in this debate higher if Turnitin is funded entirely through student fees?

At times, we felt it was our duty to take what we had learned, and the discourse we had developed to articulate it, and become politically active on our campus. The more students who go to their professors and complain about Turnitin, we reasoned, the more likely the professors would be to unite and to ask the university to curtail its use or at least to request better training measures that critique the use and implications of Turnitin. On the other hand, many of the students using Turnitin are first- or second-year undergraduates. Is it appropriate for their tutors to increase the anxiety level of these students by telling of *potential* horror stories about the “plagiarism detector”? At our university, as in many others, tutors are employees of the school. As university employees—and without tenure—do we have license to speak against an institutional practice? If we were to publicly oppose Turnitin, how might this impact the writing center and the broad support our center enjoys from faculty and administrators? Would we reduce ourselves to “bitching buddies,” willing to bash professors who use Turnitin and possibly creating the misconception that we believe plagiarism should be tolerated?

What we found in our own tutoring was a space for honest discussions about the program and approaches to dealing with a professor who may not be entirely aware of how the program works. Initially, during sessions that dealt with Turnitin issues, we told students everything we had learned about the program; we told them as we have addressed earlier, how it works and what this means for the work that they are doing. There was something empowering about these conversations because stu-

dents were given the kind of information they needed to address seriously how they were being implicated in the mix between their writing, their teachers' beliefs about plagiarism, and the use of the program. We shared the stories and the information we had collected not to strike fear in the hearts of anxious students but to give them a sense of what they're really dealing with and the kinds of options they had. As we saw more students with similar issues, our Turnitin information blitzes turned into focused pieces of advice that worked well for students at our university.

In efforts to be both honest and supportive to students, we first told them that it was important to speak with their professors about the situation. Beyond teaching students how to properly paraphrase and cite, the students here needed to know that it was ok to ask professors questions to point out that Turnitin was flagging parts of their papers that they had merely cited or in which discipline specific discourse was being used that would represent common knowledge in their field. In addition to trying to open up lines of communication between students and teachers, we also encouraged students to share their stories about Turnitin with other students, to let others know that there's much more than meets the eye with this program and that students have a stake in how this program is being used because it affects them both scholastically and financially at our institution. Our approach, in a nutshell, was to create avenues for discussions on Turnitin that tutors and other students could take in discussing problems of plagiarism and plagiarism detection services with faculty and other members of the University community.

As for us, we dealt with the questions we articulated earlier about the political implications of our exposé of Turnitin, our outreach to faculty, and our relationship to other students with the utmost seriousness. With our initial questions about the program and how it was used answered, we decided to become intellectually engaged with what we had learned. We presented our findings to faculty and students at our institution, and in doing so, we posed ethical, legal, and financial problems with the program that prompted faculty to think carefully about how to use Turnitin in their classes. In addition to the outreach we did locally, we brought what we had learned to the IWCA/NCPTW conference in Minneapolis, where we heard even more stories about Turnitin, both positive and negative, that have helped shape our current approaches to the Turnitin dilemma on our own campus. We would recommend that other tutors do the same—to find out more about how things on their campuses work and to become engaged in conversations about various campus issues at both local and national levels. As tutors, we see a lot that other people at our institutions either take for granted or barely recognize, but we do

have the ability and opportunity to speak up on those often glanced over issues and to reach out to fellow students and our faculty.

Coming back to our own research, we think that writing centers have a greater obligation to the Turnitin debate, however, which begins by acknowledging that many students are never taught what plagiarism is or how to avoid it. Many high school teachers decide that citation skills can be taught in college, while many college teachers outside of English departments decide it is not their responsibility to teach writing. For students who have had little or no instruction on how to cite sources, Turnitin is not the answer. Writing center staff should press their faculty and administration to offer all students the opportunity to learn how to document their sources before they require them to use Turnitin. Second, writing center staff should promote in-service education for all instructors who use Turnitin so that they are familiar with the program and learn to use it in limited, pedagogically sound ways. And, finally, we believe that all members of the writing center community need to keep up with technological innovations related to plagiarism detection so that faculty can be warned against and tutors can be prepared to deal with programs that are potentially detrimental to the educational process in composition.

NOTES

¹ We would like to thank our writing center director Ben Rafoth for his support and guidance while we researched, wrote, and presented this piece. We would also like to thank our fellow tutors Anna Bloom, Gretchen Burger, and Jon Derr who embarked on this research project with us and have since graduated. Their efforts set the foundation for our presentations and this publication.

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Someone to Watch Over Me: *Reflection and Authority in the Writing Center*

by Michael Mattison

*I know I could always be good
To one who'll watch over me.*

—George Gershwin

*The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of
observation.*

—Michel Foucault

Journaling/Journeying

In the fall of 2003, I found myself in my department chair's office, curious as to what had prompted his invitation. It was my first semester as a faculty member and Director of the Writing Center, so perhaps this was a standard sit-down meeting for all new faculty, a mid-semester check-in to see how things were going. Perhaps it was a chance for the chair to offer some advice on how to cope with finals week, or (even more valuable) to share some fishing tips.

Instead, my chair opened our conversation on a disturbing note.

"A couple of your consultants came in to see me because they were worried that you were spying on them."

There was no accusation on his part, no raised eyebrow or sidelong glance, but my mind whirled about, wondering what in the heck he was talking about and how I would be accused of spying and what this meant to my position and why all of a sudden the office felt so warm.

"Spying on them?" I said.

About the Author

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“Yes. They say that the new consultants are taking notes about everything that happens in the Center and reporting back to you.”

Reporting back to...ab-ha.

That was it. All the undergraduates who work in the Writing Center have to take a 300-level course in the fall semester, and as part of the course they spend a few hours a week in the Center, observing at first and then consulting. This first semester, I assigned reflective journals; the new consultants were supposed to be taking detailed notes, so they could think through our practices and pedagogy, and then they turned their journal pages in to me so I could respond. Some of the veterans must have been a bit unnerved by the practice.

“Those are journals,” I said. “The students are supposed to write about their experiences in the Center and reflect on them.”

“It’s a pedagogical tool, then,” said my chair.

“Yes, definitely,” I said. “I’m not spying on anyone. I wanted to give the new consultants a chance to think through various issues and ideas, to do so in a relatively ‘safe’ textual space, one that’s read differently than a formal paper. And, the journal is a place for them to generate material that might be useful for them in their final essay.”

I took a breath, and was prepared to cite from Toby Fulwiler’s *The Journal Book*, and to run through John Bean’s taxonomy of journal assignments in *Engaging Ideas*. Or, if given enough time, to quote John Edlund, the Director of the Writing Center at Cal Poly-Pomona: “Journals focus the learner’s attention, help clarify thinking, and help both the student and the instructor figure out what the student knows and what remains to be learned. Journals also provide an opportunity for dialogue between the student and the material, and between the student and the instructor.” I was further going to argue that Donald McAndrew and Thomas Reigstad strongly suggest assigning a tutoring journal in a consulting course so that students can “jot down impressions and observations of their tutoring experiences [...] as the course unfolds” (137).

I was going to say all this, but my chair held up his hand.

“Well,” he said, “that’s what I thought. I just wanted to bring it up and let you know what I had been told.” He tapped a few papers on his desk, signaling the matter and the meeting closed.

I thanked him and walked back down the hall to the Center. Spying on my consultants? That hadn’t been my intention at all. Consider the assignment prompt:

Tutoring Journal

This is sort of a catch-all, a place to record your responses to readings and your ideas about your tutoring experiences. You should look to write 3-4 pages a week, and you should bring your journal to class with you. Sometimes, I will ask you to respond to specific prompts or questions, or to write an extended journal entry (such as an evaluation of a tutoring session), and I will occasionally collect pieces of the journal. I'll also collect the whole journal towards the end of the semester, along with a cover letter from you highlighting what you believe to be the most important sections and why.

Obviously it is a learning tool for the new consultants.

And, I told myself confidently, this whole incident undoubtedly had less to do with the journals than it did with the fact that this was my first year as Director. I had taken over for a retiring director who had run the Center admirably for more than twenty years; there was a well-established routine and, yes, I had gone and changed some things. I asked for evaluation forms from writers at the end of every session; I changed the long-standing staff meeting time; I asked the consultants to re-focus their energies during their scheduled hours—to read the latest articles on consulting strategies, to update our handouts, to revise our publicity materials. Admittedly, I was trying hard to impress the department with what I could do as a director, and I was asking the consultants to put forth a lot of effort, to change a few of their habits. No doubt, too, I probably was not always as genial as my predecessor—he is a very pleasant person. Some of the veteran consultants were understandably thrown off by the changes.

But spying? No. I was not spying on them. Heck, I was in the Center so often that I really didn't need anybody else watching things for me. Besides, even if the journals did provide me with a few additional insights into the workings of the Center and the consultants, there was no harm in that. As the Director, I am responsible for the work that happens within the Center, so it is best for me to be as well informed as possible. If there is a difficult session, or a disagreement between consultants, I should know of such things. Would not most of those responsible for a writing center agree? We aim to provide a positive, productive consultation for every writer. We are in charge of maintaining our pedagogical integrity of the centers. We are keeping our reputations (perhaps our funding) secure. We need to have some measure of oversight. In addition, I think it is important that writing center directors and administrators have a window into how individual consultants are viewing themselves as consultants, to hear how their sessions go so that we are best

able to prompt them towards any necessary reconsideration. That's not spying, but rather good mentoring. That's part of the "dialogue between student and instructor" that Edlund talks about.

By the time I made it back to my office, I decided that the incident could be rather easily dismissed. True, I would need to address the discontentedness of the veteran consultants, would need to reemphasize the goals I had set for us as a center, but I could rest easy in knowing that I was not setting myself up as Big Brother.

That was then.

Today my argument does not seem as sound as it once did. In fact, it sounds a bit tangled, maybe even contradictory, certainly a little heavy-handed. For one thing, I talk about and defend assigning a journal so that consultants can reflect on their own behavior, but the complaint I received concerned consultants observing and reporting on the sessions of others. Those seem to be activities that should be bifurcated rather than conflated. And then, in defending the right of a director to oversee the activities in his or her center through such means, I hear perhaps the slightest echo of Alberto Gonzales's Senate testimony of February 2006, when he defended the government's right to eavesdrop on conversations:

Our enemies operate secretly and they seek to attack us from within.

In this new kind of war, it is both necessary and appropriate for us to take all possible steps to locate our enemy and know what they are plotting before they strike.

That's a loaded comparison, yes, and it risks trivializing the national conversation we are having on security—but I also take my lead from Lad Tobin, in *Reading Student Writing*, who offers "profuse apologies for taking such profane license" in his comparison of British imperialism and student writing, and then goes on to make his point based on that comparison anyway. As Tobin says, defending his connection, "there is something important we can learn" (16).

For me, the comparison I am making highlights some of the complex issues on authority that are rippling below the surface of an assignment such as a reflective journal, especially one that asks consultants to watch (over) others. Regardless of the fact that I did not intentionally set out to spy upon my consultants, or to keep track of every movement in the Center, those journals in the first semester *did* offer a look at the Center and my consultants that I would not otherwise have had. For instance, one new consultant mentioned that she listened in on a session in which a veteran was short and sharp with a writer. I responded:

I was disappointed, obviously, to hear about the one session you overheard, with the consultant being rude to the writer. It's difficult to do,

but if you know the consultant, and think she might be having a bad day, you might just try mentioning to her how the session sounded to you. I'm not sure we always are aware of how we're treating people, especially if we have other things on our minds.

Another new consultant compared two sessions that she had as a writer, one positive and the second less so, and I responded to her thoughts:

The first session sounds productive and student centered, while the second one sounds like an example of how not to approach a paper. If nothing else, you can take that with you and remember how it feels to have the grammar brought up when what you're looking for is a response to LOC. I also apologize you felt disappointed with the session. I'm trying to make sure we have a positive attitude from all consultants, but that does not always happen. I do think, though, that when we have an unproductive session as a writer, it helps us as a consultant.

(That's looking for the silver lining, I guess.)

These responses trouble me now; they certainly were not initiating any dialogue between me and the consultants under discussion. Instead, I was criticizing certain consultants, without their knowledge and to their peers. I also, at least in my first response, asked the consultant to try and address the situation rather than taking on that responsibility myself—and certainly these observations put the new consultants in an uncomfortable situation in regard to their relationships with the veterans.

This exhibition of authority, as a teacher and as an administrator, seems wrong, and I would be hard pressed now to defend it with Fulwiler's or Edlund's or McAndrew and Riegstad's work. The journal in these instances was not being used so much as a pedagogical tool as it was a piece of espionage equipment—there was an Orwellian presence created. That presence, enacted as it was by the new consultants, worked to keep separate the two groups—veterans and new consultants. My assignment established (or enforced) an us-vs.-them relationship; the new consultants were seen as outsiders, arriving pen and paper in hand to observe and report back on the behavior in this strange new place known as a writing center. No wonder the two veteran consultants felt compelled to walk down the hallway to the chair's office.

Surprisingly, though, I still do not believe this incident to be of major concern. Rather, I find the difficulty due to a lack of communication on my part, and one that I can (and have) resolve(d). Though I took the time to explain to my class why I wanted them to keep a journal, I never had a full-staff discussion on what such a practice would mean for all of us. If a group of new consultants is observing, then

the veterans should be aware that they will be observed—there should be a dialogue about the process. Had I had the foresight to have such a discussion, I think I would have avoided this situation. That belief is strengthened by the fact that I have since had such discussions, and the consultants have responded well. For instance, each year I ask the students in the consulting course what recommendations they have for the following year in terms of assignments, course structure, etc. When I asked the class that did the journals what recommendations they had, they suggested a more formal observation report. I told them that they would be the ones under observation, and they, after a moment's pause, agreed. We also decided we would encourage the new consultants to talk with the veterans after the observation, so that both could share their impressions of the session. This open communication now marks our observations of one another in the Center.

In addition, we schedule pre-semester meetings every fall, in large part so that the new consultants can meet the veterans in a relaxed setting. Over juice and coffee and pastries, the two groups talk and share thoughts about writing center work, and I emphasize that we will be working and learning together. This interaction helps defray, I believe, some of the anxiety that can naturally arise when a new consultant comes in to observe a veteran's session. They are no longer pitted one against the other—a spy reporting back to the director—but rather collaboratively engaged in reflective work that will benefit them both.

Now, though I admit to poorly handling the request for observation through the journals, I will still defend my right to know of events in the Center, and I do not necessarily regret the outcome of the first year—the two consultants who voiced their concerns to my chair did not return to work in the Center the following fall. Neither was fired, but I also did not make any attempt to convince either to stay. The journal entries, though they spoke of specific incidents that I otherwise would not have noticed, did not provide a picture vastly different from one I already had seen through writers' evaluations and my own observations. There were moments of unprofessional behavior that I would not and will not allow for in a center. I certainly do not view any consultant as an "enemy" and would not advocate taking "any step necessary" to observe a session, but I still think it beneficial to look in on the consultants' work—that is my role as administrator and mentor. In short, I regret the display of my authority through the journals, not the authority itself.

Why Isn't This a Conclusion?

The essay could conceivably end here. Short, yes, but quick, clean, and (the writer hopes) fairly efficient. Through my lack of communication about the process

of observation, I created an uncomfortable situation for several of my consultants. Recognizing that, I made some changes and have found good results; I would also encourage others who advocate for observation between consultants, whether through journals or more formal observation reports (e.g., see Lerner and Gillespie; McAndrew and Reigstad) to strenuously promote conversation between observers and those observed. Even better, I could conclude by saying that the students in this year's consulting course, when asked for their recommendations, requested a more informal approach to observations in the Center—instead of formal observation reports they wanted, yes, a journal.

My course has come full circle.

Yet there is still the other half of the reflection equation—observation of one's own activities. No consultant has explicitly accused me of forcing her to spy on herself, but I wonder if I could not make the accusation myself. Consider Lynn Fendler's claim that journaling, "which is usually intended as a means by which teachers and students get in touch with their own and each other's thoughts, can also be considered to be a form of surveillance and an exercise of pastoral power" ("Teacher Reflection" 23).¹ According to Michel Foucault, whose work Fendler uses, pastoral power "cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets" ("Subject" 214). The journal, rather than a safe textual space for students to question, critique, and explore, is instead a window onto their world that can be utilized by a teacher (or director) to keep order (see also Anderson).

And what of McAndrew and Reigstad's claim that a tutoring journal's "main goal is to encourage tutors to capture insights into their tutoring experiences that might otherwise have been lost or forgotten, and to have them engage in continuous self-assessment" (137-138)? The journal, in this description, is a place to "capture insights," to record what one does and then to continually ponder those actions—to assess oneself as a tutor.² That assessment might be viewed by those who are asked to do it as spying—much as the veterans considered the observation sessions an unwanted intrusion. Granted, I could hedge here, and argue that my journal assignment was intended mostly to have students reflect on the readings for class and on the happenings in the Center. It was to be a catalogue of the semester, an overview of all that they experienced, rather than an evaluation of their work as a consultant. However, I assign other reflective work to consultants, and that work *is* explicitly intended to prompt them to consider their own consultations. Every semester they record and reflect on a session with a writer; they read and reflect on their evaluations from the past term; they consider what they might change about

their approach or their consultation style; they reflect on my work as director. In short, our writing center is heavy on reflection. And it is reflection that asks for “self-assessment.”

Not only that, my requests often assume (at least partially) a negative evaluation. For instance, when I ask the consultants to review their evaluations from the past semester, I prompt them to tell me what they want to “work on” for the coming term; what is it about their consulting style and approach that they would like to change? What comments from writers gave them pause and suggested a new approach? There is the assumption that there are aspects of their approach that need changing—just as spying assumes some unwanted activity that needs to be controlled. When they record a session with a writer, I want them to evaluate how well the conversation went. Was it mostly a conversation? Or more a directive exchange? How well did they establish the rhetorical context? How well did they establish a rapport with the writer?

Such reflective work is grounded in educational literature. Edith Kusnic and Mary Lou Finley write that “[e]ducators have long understood the importance of self-reflection, and the resultant personal development, as central to the college experience” (5).³ They go on to argue that “student self-evaluation makes learning real to students,” and that, as teachers, we should pay “attention to what students say in self-evaluations, [so] we can more appropriately guide their learning and development” (11). David Boud, Rosemary Keogh, and David Walker, in *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, encourage “teachers and learners to adopt a clear view of the role of reflection in their own teaching and learning and consider the range of approaches which is available to them” (15). The authors claim that “the concept of reflection is an important and practical one in education” (17).

These are essays (and collections) that influenced me greatly as a writing teacher—reflection has been a cornerstone of my pedagogy. I wrote my graduate school exams on reflection: how reflective work can benefit students in a composition classroom and how reflective work can influence and enhance a (writing) teacher’s practices. I was informed and inspired by Kathleen Yancey’s *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* and Stephen Brookfield’s *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. I wrote an article about prompting students to reflect in a composition course based in large part upon the work of Donald Schön (Mattison). The use of a tutoring journal in my course was built upon all of this past work—all the ideas and many of the reflective practices transitioned easily for me from the classroom to the writing center.

They have for others, too, as there is support for reflection in the literature regarding writing centers, specifically as it relates to staff education. For instance, Gail Okawa et al. “advocate critical reflection as being of major importance in tutor training, emphasizing the manifold nature of this reflection, the way it moves among text, tutor, student, and tutor trainer” (12). Their article describes the work of two different tutoring programs, and both programs “invite students to transpose theories of cultural difference to their own life histories and subsequently to the students they tutor” (12-13). Both programs mention the use of some type of journal. There is also Anne DiPardo’s emphatic request: “Most of all, we [consultants] must serve as models of reflective practice—perennially inquisitive and self-critical” (144).

Or there is Bonnie Devet and her practice of prompting consultants to consider their choices:

So that consultants have a chance to brag as well as to reflect on what they have done with clients, I ask questions that do not elicit only one-word answers, such as, “What do you think was your best technique you used with the last client?” “What problems did you encounter?” and, then, “If you could re-do the last session, what would you do differently?” Each of these questions evokes long responses. As consultants talk, they begin to understand what they have done well or not so well in their sessions. Such self-reflection is an effective means to learning.

Devet’s questions echo those I ask of consultants. And an assignment from Tammy Conard-Salvo, from her course that prepares students to work in the Purdue Writing Lab, echoes one of mine:

As we approach the end of the semester, I want you to be introspective and complete a self-evaluation of yourself as a tutor. Write **at least 3** paragraphs and describe your sense of your own tutoring style. Identify what you feel your strengths and weaknesses are. Include some goals you have as a peer tutor. For example, what would you like to work on? What skills and attributes would you like to build and how can the Writing Lab help you accomplish this? (Emphasis original)

In short, those of us who educate writing center workers often require reflection.

Jane Bowman Smith offers an argument for why we do so. Bowman Smith’s goal is to have her “tutors-in-training [...] begin to think like tutors rather than like students” (13), which means they will be able to “tutor almost instinctually, moving away from consciously rehearsed questions to a natural conversation with the student writer” (15). The idea is to avoid a set response to a situation in favor of one

that appreciates the individual complexity of each. To achieve that transformation from student to tutor, Bowman Smith relies upon a series of observations/reflective papers, each building upon the last in order to help the students in class learn how to become “reflective practitioners,” a term from Schön, upon whose work Bowman Smith relies. And, she says, the connection to Schön’s work in our field is fairly easy to find: “What we generally have accepted as best practice in training tutors (observing tutorials, role-playing, tutoring in a mentored situation, writing about learning, conferring) is actually well-grounded in Schön’s theory” (6).

And I can return to Yancey’s work, particularly “Seeing Practice Through Their Eyes: Reflection as Teacher” and its discussion of reflection for writing center staff. She also links her use of reflective work in a consulting course to Schön’s ideas, distinguishing in particular between “*reflection-in-action*, a reflection that aids the tutorial as it helps determine both the shape and substance of it,” and “*reflective transfer*: the process by which a single tutoring event and/or several tutoring events are reviewed and understood as a part of practice *theorized*” (191 italics original). In other words, a consultant can reflect on a session *during* that session in order to choose the best possible route for a writer, or a consultant can reflect on a session *after* the session in order to understand that session within a larger picture—the session can provide guidelines for future sessions that might be similar. Most of the assignments I give consultants aim to prompt reflective transfer; what have they learned from a session that can help them in the coming weeks. At the same time, we talk as a group about reflection-in-action, about being aware of our choices during a consultation, and I have referenced Schön’s work and terms in these conversations.

For Yancey, as for Bowman Smith and others, the reflective work helps writing center staff grow and learn: “I expected that tutors, through reflection, would learn more about their practice, would learn to theorize it, would begin developing a tutoring identity” (195). And Yancey suggests, as one exercise, “keeping a log” of sessions, a similar suggestion to McAndrew and Reigstad’s tutoring journal. A reflective log, for Yancey, “fosters tutorial agency and learning” and it “encourages a habit of mind: of monitoring one’s own practice, of believing that the tutor can assess practice and enhance it, and can theorize” (197). Here again is the idea of continuous self-assessment.

What strikes me about most all of the literature on reflection is how firmly the authors believe in the positive power of reflection. This is a tool for learning, for growth, for coming to an understanding of theories and practices, for relating theory to practice. Whether the area is architecture (what Schön focused on) or writ-

ing centers, reflection can help those within to become more competent practitioners. When there are questions raised, they are not focused on the practice itself so much as on the design. For instance, Yancey notices that not all of her tutors develop as she expected, and she wonders how she could have “anticipated” and “intervened” in their process. One tutor in particular “overidentified” with the students he worked with; the solution, for Yancey, once she understood that a “duality of identity and separation/difference” was “part of the process of becoming a tutor” was to “include it in class as a specific exercise” (200). An appreciation for reflection begets more reflection.

I do not mean to mock or criticize Yancey’s decision; she makes solid arguments here and elsewhere for the benefits of reflection, as do others. What I do want to do, though, is put forward an idea from Fendler, about the seductiveness of reflective practice: “It seems that the idea of a reflective practitioner has won the acceptance of many authorities today. Cartesian rationality, Deweyian educational aims, Schönian professionalism, and individual agency endow reflective thinking with a seductive appeal that has tended to deflect critical appraisal” (“Teacher Reflection” 23).⁴ Certainly I can appreciate the seductive nature of reflective thinking, having been swayed by its charms for many years. Yet I recently have had reason to question more closely my appreciation for and acceptance of reflective thinking. Specifically, in the spring of 2006, I received from my consultants reflective letters that considered their evaluations from the previous fall and that talked about what they wanted to work on in the coming term. Two of those letters stood out.

In the first letter, the consultant wrote about watching herself as she worked with writers:

Maybe I’m **thinking too much**...I’ve been finding myself **really self-conscious lately about everything I do**: style of speech, choice of words, and so much more [...] I’m sure every tutor has these same concerns, but they seem to be daunting me in the process of consulting, though I also think being conscious and not just ‘going with the flow’ of a consultation is important. (Emphasis added)

The second letter also dealt with being conscious about one’s actions during a consultation, but in a slightly different manner:

In certain consultations **when I am aware** of why I am making certain choices, I feel that every comment I make, every direction I head with a writer, has a purpose. Not a minute of those consultations is wasted. There were times last semester when, usually after the consultation was over, I realized that **I lacked sort of conscious awareness** of what I

was doing and why. Some consultations got away from me, and I think in some cases, the writer, too. (Emphasis added)

For me, there are worrisome aspects to both letters: the idea of being “daunted” by concerns about each choice made in a consultation, and the idea that every choice should be watched lest a consultation “get away.” These consultants are monitoring their behavior, are talking about reflecting-in-action during a consultation, and they seem hindered by the process.⁵

Though neither consultant has walked down the hall to my chair’s office and suggested that I am spying, I still, reading these letters, feel as uneasy as I did that day three years ago in my chair’s office. There are similar concerns here about observing, about monitoring, about watching over someone. There are similar questions about authority, about power relationships, about the interactions between the consultants and me. Yet this line of discussion is more troubling than the previous. Questioning the structure of an observation exercise is one thing, but questioning the practice of reflection itself is another. In the first instance I was simply reconsidering the “how” of an activity—I looked to be more careful about the communication between veteran consultants, new consultants, and me. Questions about the value of reflection itself, however, strike at the heart of my pedagogy.

But I am here following Yancey’s dictum: “Read the data” (196). She says that the documents she collects from her tutors teach her “how tutors learn to become tutors,” if she is willing to examine the evidence: “From the data, I look for particularities, for difference, for patterns; I theorize.” The reflective letters from my consultants are the data I have, and I want to read and examine them to see if the learning and growth I had hoped to encourage have been hampered.

Keeping Watch

To help with my theorizing on the consultants’ responses, I want to bring in thoughts from a couple of (perhaps expected) sources: Jeremy Bentham and Foucault. In his “Panopticon Papers,” Bentham proposed a plan for the construction of a “Panopticon Penitentiary House,” a circular facility where “the cells” are “occupying the circumference” and the “the keepers” occupy “the centre” (194). Furthermore, the keepers are “concealed from the observation of the prisoners,” which allows for an “invisible omnipresence.” The prisoners would never know when they were being watched, unless the keepers decided to let them know. Such omnipresence is driven home by the epigraph to the essay, Psalm 139: “Thou art about my path, and about my bed; and spiest out all my ways.”

Bentham's work has been famously commented upon by Foucault, specifically in *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault argues that the Panopticon "must not be understood as a dream building; it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system" (205). That system is "polyvalent in its applications" and "[w]henver one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used."

Those under the power of the Panopticon—be they inmates, patients, students, workers (Foucault mentions all of those groups)—are affected by the possibility that they may be observed at any time:

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action. (201)

The keepers do not need to be watching at all times as the responsibility for overseeing behavior has switched to the inmates:

[T]he perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. (201)

The inmates are constantly monitoring their own behavior, disciplining themselves without the need for oversight.

When I look back to the original reflective journal assignment and the observations of the veteran consultants, I can place the veterans in the role of the inmates and the new consultants in the role of the keepers. The surveillance, though, was not permanent, and the keepers were not hidden; they were in plain sight, taking notes. The power relationship was not independent of me, either, as the keepers/consultants were reporting back to me with their work. There was not a panoptic schema. Yet what of a request for "continuous self-assessment" on the part of the consultants? How different is that from "a state of conscious and permanent visibility"? When I ask consultants to question themselves and their actions throughout the semester, when I ask them to be reflective practitioners, am I not arranging for permanent surveillance? Though I do not watch every consultation or ask them to write on every one, I am still pushing them to be constantly thinking of

their behavior as consultants—to watch over themselves. They become keepers and inmates together, a fused identity that no doubt could prove troubling.

Look again at the first letter: “Maybe I’m thinking too much...I’ve been finding myself really self-conscious lately about everything I do: style of speech, choice of words, and so much more.” The consultant has become hyper-aware of her actions, of the choices she makes when working with a writer. Normally I would applaud that attentiveness, thinking that such awareness (reflection-in-action) would open up more possibilities during a session. Yet such awareness is “daunting” her, and she sounds overwhelmed. The second letter also speaks of the importance of being aware: “In certain consultations when I am aware of why I am making certain choices, I feel that every comment I make, every direction I head with a writer, has a purpose. Not a minute of those consultations is wasted.” The consultant is keeping watch on his actions, making sure he knows why he is taking each step. Otherwise, a session might “get away.” Every choice, then, is under surveillance; there is a permanence to his (and by extension my) gaze. Both consultants seem to be feeling what Foucault terms the “constant pressure” of the panoptic schema: “[T]he constant pressure acts even before the offences, mistakes or crimes have been committed” (206). They are treading carefully through their sessions, watching to avoid an offense or mistake.⁶

If, though, consultants are taking on the role of keepers, then one of the questions concerns *what* they are keeping—what is being guarded in this instance? Recall that the second letter speaks of purposeful decisions, of un-wasted time. There is an ideal consultation implied here, a perfect route through a session. I wouldn’t suggest, given my conversations with this consultant, that he believes there is only *one* way to handle every consultation, but it does seem from this letter that there is a *correct* way for each consultation. Or rather, a “normal” way. Reading the letter I cannot help but think of Foucault’s mention of the “binary division and branding” that often accompanies authority (199). We divide the world into distinct groups—“mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal”—and look to supervise or correct those who do not fit into the ideal category. Grimm has pointed out, also through Foucault’s work, that writing centers and consultants can act as supervising agents in a university—“Writing centers correct, measure, and supervise abnormal writers in order to meet the standards set by the institution” (7)—but might not directors function as supervising agents for consultants? Can (and do) consultants believe there is a normal/abnormal divide between the sessions they conduct? The responses here suggest that they do.

So does another response, one from a consultant outside of my own center, one who took a peer tutoring course at Purdue and who was responding to the self-evaluation assignment from Conard-Salvo cited earlier.⁷ Here is the first line of the student's second paragraph: "My weakness is that I am tempted to take ownership of the paper (yikes!) but I also feel that since I am aware of this, I will be careful not to." The consultant is arguing against a certain approach to her work—it is a "weakness." There is a wrong way to interact with a writer, by taking ownership of the paper, but that can be avoided if one is "aware." (And how rich that "(yikes!)" is in meaning. The word is emphasized with an exclamation point while simultaneously hidden within parentheses—it is a celebration of the observation while also a condemnation of the behavior.) Now, the question I raise is *not* whether or not a consultant should take ownership, but rather why the consultant views her choices as a matter of right or wrong. It is an either-or situation, a choice between normal and abnormal behavior. She will take care not to do something; my consultant will make sure that consultations do not "get away." They will strive to avoid being "abnormal" consultants.

In doing so, however, what is lost? Perhaps we want consultations (and writers) to "get away" sometimes. Consider Elizabeth Boquet's desire to have consultants operate "on the edge of their expertise" in a "higher-risk/higher yield" model of consulting (81). For Boquet, "we do our tutors a disservice when we 'train' them in ways that suggest that we are more concerned with their being competent than with their being truly exceptional." In her re-conception of staff education, consultants will be urged not to worry about mistakes, but rather accept them as part of the process and incorporate them into the consultation: "The real skill lies in figuring out what to make of those mistakes" (81). Making mistakes, though, means that a consultation has "gotten away." Something did not happen as it was supposed to, as the script said it would. My worry in reading the consultants' work, strangely enough, is that reflective assignments are hindering the very pedagogical flexibility they were designed to encourage. When I ask my consultants to be reflective practitioners, I hope that they will be better able to respond to the twists and turns of any consultation, that they will be able to assess their work in the midst of a conversation and change direction accordingly. Yet the responses here suggest that being asked to be aware of their choices leads consultants to view some choices as correct/normal and others as incorrect/abnormal. Asked to explain and defend themselves and their work, they are put in a position where they look for the "right way" to consult. Lost is the ability to improvise and play. The reflective assignments

have contributed to a “continuous self-assessment” that does not allow for much freedom or exploration. It aims more for competence.⁸

From the Tower

Obviously, such a situation bothers me. Before, with the reflective journals and my request for observations of others, I was bothered by the display of authority, not the authority itself. I am comfortable setting certain *professional* parameters. Here, it seems the inverse: I am not bothered by the display of authority—assigning reflective exercises designed to prompt thought and growth as consultants—but by the authority granted me through these practices. The consultants seem to be finding certain *pedagogical* parameters that I had not intended to create. Foucault writes that, “In this central tower [of the Panopticon], the director may spy on all the employees that he has under his orders [...] he will be able to judge them continuously, alter their behavior, impose upon them the methods he thinks best” (*Discipline* 204). In the writing center, where every consultation is unique, I cannot claim a “best method” approach to working with writers.

So where does this leave me?

Well, for one thing, I am rethinking the relationship I have with my consultants. As much as I might wish to describe the relationship as one of teaching, or mentoring, the more proper term, I believe, is “governance,” as defined by Foucault: “To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others” (“Subject” 221). It is not so much that I am dictating particular actions as I am creating an environment that will “encourage” those actions.⁹ For Foucault, “what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future” (“Subject” 220). My actions as director do influence what is possible for the consultants—professionally *and* pedagogically—and I believe I have been trying too hard to finesse my authority in different situations. That point was brought home to me by one of my consultants, commenting on an earlier draft of this essay: “It seems to me that in looking for places to share power, experienced practitioners often share it only in situations that are relatively easy for them to control, should something go awry. [...] Constant consultant self-assessment is great, but how about consultant assessment when it comes to something that materially ‘matters.’ Why couldn’t I self-assess myself into a \$3/hr raise, or self-assess my grade last fall?” He’s right. And his comment pushed me to try and better come to terms with the authority I already hold, rather than trying to re-imagine a different con-

sultant-director relationship. I do govern, and I do not necessarily need to resist that role. I *am* “guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome” (Foucault, “Subject” 221) for consultations.

Yet power can be wielded in different ways; not every government needs to inculcate fear in its citizenry. As I structure the “possible field of action” for consultants, I can look to make that field as open and inviting as possible, and look to revise what Foucault terms the “regulated communications” that help “ensure apprenticeship and the acquisition of aptitudes and types of behavior” that I believe are necessary for writing center work (“Subject” 218). The reflective assignments are such communications.

One change I am making is to have consultants share more of their reflective work with one another, as they now do with their observations. Too often in the past, I think, I have been their only audience for these self-assessment assignments, and as Foucault notes in *Discipline and Punish*, part of the power of the Panopticon is derived from keeping the subjects within separate from each other:

Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication. The arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. And this invisibility is a guarantee of order. (200)

The consultants need to be subjects in communication; they need to have lateral *visibility*. Listening to one another, sharing their self-reflections, will help them expand the possible choices they have during a consultation.

For instance, this semester the veteran consultants are writing their reflective letters not to me, but to our incoming graduate assistant. Though he is not new to writing center work, he is new to our center, and his status will allow the consultants to teach him about their practices while describing how those practices fit in with the particulars of our center. That type of letter establishes a different role for the consultants as writers than does a letter to me. In addition, we are going to institute biweekly forums on our BlackBoard website this year, the forums to be led by the consultants and focused on questions and concerns that they have. (Our first forum was already claimed by a consultant who has been wondering, based on her own observations and on a few of the evaluations we’ve received, how everyone talks with writers about reading their work out loud.) Both of these changes should move

the consultants away from being “objects of information.” I also want, in coming years, to design a more structured mentoring program between new and veteran consultants. The former do currently observe the latter, and afterward they often talk over the sessions, but I also imagine that the veterans could write introductory letters to the new consultants, again giving the veterans a new audience as they reflect on their work, and that those letters could grow into a longer correspondence that benefits both parties.

Another change I want to make is to give the consultants more of my own reflective work. I have previously discussed their reflections with them, and certainly shared my own thoughts and opinions on their choices during the consultations in question, but I have not recorded and talked on my own consultations, at least in a forum available to them. They have not really observed me at work (the hours I consult do not overlap with a majority of the consultants’ schedules), and the act of demonstrating is key when creating reflective practitioners, according to Schön: “A coach demonstrates parts or aspects of designing in order to help his student grasp what he believes she needs to learn and, in doing so, attributes to her a capacity for imitation” (107). No, I do not want my consultants to conduct their sessions as I would mine, but Schön is not advocating total imitation; he only sees it as part of the learning process. Coach and student (director and consultant) need the opportunity to see one another’s work, to talk about the choices each made and why: “The coach’s or student’s reflection on his own or the other’s performance can yield a description that highlights subtle moves, or reveals the understanding that informs surface variations” (112). In my push to avoid too much authority as an administrator, I think I have neglected to understand how my own work and experience should be part of the learning process for consultants. They need to hear me talking with writers and then explaining my choices, and they need to be able to analyze and question those choices.

In addition, I can continue to offer explanations on why reflective work is considered valuable. When consultants read the handbook we have in our center, they find the following: “Every semester we will talk about how to improve as consultants, reflecting on our work and on that of our co-workers. We will read articles on consulting/tutoring, and talk with various members of the campus community about writing and responding to writing.” *We will* do this type of work, a phrasing that does aim to indicate that everyone (director included) will be engaged, but that also carries an “or else” quality—the practice can be viewed as more of a disciplinary procedure than a learning opportunity. But if this article (along with Yancey’s,

perhaps) is offered to the consultants, then maybe they will be less daunted by the process, more able to use reflective work to hone their consulting ability.

Pessimistic Activism

By no means are these suggestions about reflective assignments intended to truly conclude the matter. I am hopeful the changes I make will prompt the consultants in productive ways, but I am also aware that I will need to pay attention to their responses, to be wary of how my requests can affect them and their work. I have to avoid the “seductive appeal” of reflective work and constantly remind myself that there is a danger in asking consultants to watch over themselves. This danger does not mean that I avoid such assignments, but that I remain alert to the possible repercussions. In other words, reflective work is like a sharp knife. You wouldn’t try working in a kitchen without one, but you would also take care when handling it.

To be aware of danger is what Foucault recommends as well: “My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy, but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism” (“Genealogy” 231-32). The experiences I’ve described here have heightened my understanding that the administrative decisions I make can possibly damage the relationship between me and my consultants, or between consultant and consultant, or even between consultant and writer. This does not mean that any assignment or practice—journals, observations, letters of reflection, taped consultations—should be excised, but that each should be carefully considered from various angles.

To end, I want to offer one more snapshot from my center, one more instance where questions of authority are raised. Our writing center conducts email consultations, and our consultants respond to submitted essays in letter form. After a consultant types up a response letter to an essay, she saves the letter to a shared folder. The folder can be accessed through any one of three computers—my computer, the graduate assistant’s computer, and the consultants’ computer. After the letter is saved, the graduate assistant emails it back to the writer (to avoid any overlap or lost responses). One of the graduate assistant’s responsibilities is to read through the responses and to work with the consultants as they shape their letters. I, too, on occasion, read through the responses. In the spring semester of 2006, I read one of the response letters and was bothered by it. Mainly, the approach was not one I was comfortable with (e.g., “you have a focus problem,” wrote the consultant, placing the difficulty with the writer rather than the text). So, I printed the response letter, asked my graduate assistant to delay sending it, and scheduled a meeting for the next morning with the consultant.

When the consultant read his letter, he immediately sensed what was off in the tone, and was a little shocked at himself. And I was happy with his reaction—we were reading the piece in much the same way. He then went and revised the response, putting together a marvelous letter, in fact. But what did I demonstrate in that interaction? We got to talk on how to respond to a writer in a letter—a conversation that has been ongoing in our center since we began email consultations—and we brainstormed ways of talking about a particular essay that would encourage the writer to return to revise the essay. These are positive outcomes, aligned with the type of reflective work that Schön would endorse. But did I not also demonstrate that I can find and read any response at any time? That my gaze extends outward to each of my consultant's sentences? This is the panoptic machine at work, and exactly what Dave Healy worried about in 1995, in his article "From Place to Space," which considered various administrative issues for an online consultation service. He wondered about "the prospect of self-regulating behavior among tutors aware that every response they make to a client's writing can be monitored" (190), and he too brought in Foucault and the idea of panopticonism.

So, did I truly consult with my consultant in a way that will encourage *him* to return to *his* work? Will my consultant now write with me looking over his shoulder each time? Should he? He said he will "slow down" in his future responses, and I wonder if it might be because he feels my hand gripped figuratively to his shirt collar, or to his pen. As Foucault argues, "[h]e who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power" (*Discipline* 202).

I can't answer those questions about my consultant. Yet. But I do know I can now better recognize the danger in such a situation, and I can work (and am working) to make such an interaction with my consultants productive rather than punitive. Should this consultant slow down in future responses because he feels me over his shoulder as a coach, prompting and reminding and suggesting approaches to use, then the conversation we had was a good one. If he becomes tentative in his approach, worried that he might somehow make a "mistake" when responding to a writer, then I have not handled the situation in the best way possible. The only way to determine how he, or any other consultant, is affected by my authority over their responses is to check with them. I need to build upon the conversation we had about his response, talking *about* that conversation and its effect upon his work as a consultant. Through such dialogue I make myself more visible; through such dialogue the consultant has a say in our relationship; through such dialogue we can begin to disassemble the panoptic machine.¹⁰

NOTES

¹ Fendler elsewhere ("Making Trouble") gives an extended analysis of the practice of journaling from two stances: critical modernism and postmodernism. One of the key points as relates to this article is Fendler's claim that "postmodern analyses of pedagogical practices such as journal keeping have tended to highlight multiple and contradictory ways that power was exercised" (184-185).

² I do want to make explicit the connection implied here between journaling, reflection, and self-assessment. McAndrew and Reigstad seem to assume that the first necessarily leads to the third, even though they suggest that the writing in a student's journal might be "impromptu *or* reflective" (137, emphasis added). Certainly they make a good case as to why to ask students to reflect on their work in the course, but they are less clear as to how and why the journal work can lead to such reflection. And, they give little space as to the specific type of reflection that would be termed "self-assessment." It is one thing to reflect on the happenings in a center, to muse about the pedagogical implications of an author's argument; it is another to focus on oneself as the object of reflection, to offer an evaluation of the work that one does as a consultant.

³ I have elsewhere (Mattison) discussed various forms of reflection, as well as the process of "self-assessment" as described by Hilgers, Hussey, and Stitt-Bergh. The point most important to echo here is that the type of self-assessment asked for in McAndrew and Reigstad's consulting course would most likely follow the "Kafner Model," which says that "self-monitoring provides an individual with feedback that allows the individuals to discriminate between his or her current level of behavior and some significant social or individual standard" (5). Consultants new to a writing center are not necessarily looking to change regular behavior as they are looking to develop their behavior as consultants, and develop it in a way consistent with the current practices and pedagogy of the center they are associated with. However, the reflection activities I assign to veteran consultants align more with the model from Cavior and Marabott, and Bellack, Rozensky, and Schwartz, which "holds that the power of self-assessment derives in part from the way it interrupts stereotypic behavior change" (5). As long-time consultants, the veterans (and I) need to interrupt our common habits in order to re-see them. The distinction is

by no means hard and fast, but it is helpful to consider reflective practice beyond the general sense of the term.

⁴ In "Tutor Training and Reflection on Practice," James Bell questions whether or not "systematic reflection on practice [would] help tutors conduct more sessions where students were active and learning more" (81). Bell concludes that "[t]en hours of reflection-on-practice exercises do not necessarily change tutors' thinking in ways writing center directors might regard as positive" (88). It is a "cautionary" tale about reflection, but Bell's caution is more that reflection alone cannot educate consultants/tutors, not that reflective practices have a negative effect on them.

⁵ The possible fusing of keeper-inmate identities in writing center staff reminds me of Sondra Perl's work on the composing process of experienced and inexperienced (skilled and unskilled) writers. Perl describes how the latter can be slowed down by the editor in their heads—they are constrained by a desire to get it right that keeps them from producing material. Perl writes: "Editing intrudes so often and to such a degree that it breaks down the rhythms generated by thinking and writing" (333). That editing sounds much like a type of surveillance, a continuous assessment of one's writing that prohibits the generation of material as it looks to follow the rules and regulations of well-written prose. A writer is unable to peer beyond the sentence.

⁶ I do want to note that these letters are from two consultants whom I consider to be excellent, and my reading of their letters in this manner should not reflect negatively on the work that they do. They are caring, concerned readers who receive outstanding evaluations from the writers they work with. My thinking here is that I, and my emphasis on reflective work, have somehow limited the consultants in terms of the options they feel they have available to them. They have, too, read this work and have graciously given me their permission to use these excerpts.

⁷ The self-evaluations were posted online, on Conrad-Salvo's course site; I wrote to the consultant and she generously agreed to allow me to cite her work.

⁸ The distinction between "being aware" and "going with the flow" is also reminiscent of Elbow's between "first-order thinking and second-order thinking." As Elbow writes, "First-order thinking is intuitive and creative and

doesn't strive for conscious direction or control. We use it when we get hunches [...] Second-order thinking is conscious, directed, controlled thinking. We steer; we scrutinize each link in the chain" (55). And while Elbow values both, the consultants cited here seem to distance themselves from "first-order thinking." There is not the trusting of hunches, the willingness to be undirected and to perhaps make mistakes. There is instead intense scrutiny of each decision.

⁹ Consider too Margaret Weaver's "Censoring What Tutors' Clothing 'Says.'" In the article, Weaver talks of how her tutors resisted the idea of a "dress code" for their center, but did express a desire for Weaver, as director, to "encourage appropriate attire" (19 emphasis added). How delicate that shift from rule to encouragement.

¹⁰ An earlier version of this essay was presented at the 2006 Rocky Mountain Peer Tutoring Conference, and the author thanks his fellow directors for their feedback, particularly Clint Gardner. Also, thanks to Christopher McGill for his careful reading, and to the two *WCJ* reviewers for theirs.

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Portrait of the Tutor as an Artist: Lessons No One Can Teach

by Steve Sherwood

A university employee, Nancy, recently brought to me an idea for a nonfiction book about coping with thyroid cancer. In remission and awaiting word on her latest diagnostic scan, Nancy began our tutorial by excitedly reviewing the many and sometimes amusing lessons about life and family she had learned from her ordeal. As she explained, the book gave her a chance to explore her long-dormant writing skills, work on a project worthy of her time, and pass along what she had learned to other cancer victims. Her personal investment in the project was high, and the intensity with which she listened to my every word of encouragement and advice certainly raised the stakes for me. As we discussed where to begin and the book's potential commercial appeal, I felt edgy and alert—a condition heightened by Nancy's sudden jumps from idea to idea. I wanted to offer support but not build false hope, so I tried to balance any assurance that she had good ideas with a realistic assessment. She asked hard questions about working in a mixed genre—in her case, autobiography combined with elements of a “how-to” manual that might eventually become a sort of humorous *Chicken Soup for the Cancer Survivor's Soul*. Some of her questions I simply could not answer, in part because many of her ideas remained half-formed and success would hinge on her persistence and writing ability. But I improvised suggestions based on some experience with creative nonfiction, a slight familiarity with “how-to” books, and secondhand knowledge of cancer-survival stories. Nancy left our ninety-minute brainstorming session with an attitude of eager determination to continue working. As good sessions sometimes do, this one left me feeling used up but exhilarated—an intellectual version of runner's high.

About the Author

Steve Sherwood directs the William L. Adams Center for Writing at TCU. In addition to a number of essays about writing center work, his publications include *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, 3rd ed. (2007, with Christina Murphy), *Writing Centers: An Annotated Bibliography* (1996, with Murphy and Joe Law), and the novel *Hardwater* (2005).

I mention Nancy because our session was far from a routine tutorial—if there is such a thing—and because she prompted me to push myself creatively and intellectually, growing in the process of trying to help her grow. Writing center practitioners, including peer tutors, often experience the elusive, artistic aspects of writing and tutoring while struggling to make sense of the insensible, so we know the difficulty writers have in trying to capture the ideas and images that flash into their minds. In this essay, I want to explore the artistic aspects of tutoring that we can learn but that no one can simply teach us. It's a topic few writing center scholars write about—at least by that name—perhaps because “artistic” sounds ill-defined and expressionistic.¹ But if we accept the claim, made long ago by Isocrates, that learning a complex art such as rhetoric requires talent, training, and experience,² we should also accept that we learn the rhetorical art of tutoring in much the same way. To become artists at the job, we must begin with a certain amount of talent for writing, speaking, and interacting with people. A lot of the learning that goes into our development as writing tutors involves direct training, aimed at helping us handle specific situations and categories of writers, writing assignments, and rules of engagement. But the ultimate teacher, experience, often pushes us into unknown territory in our efforts to understand what a writer is trying to do and to help him or her succeed. As I will argue, a vital part of our education involves experience in reacting to and learning from four elements of artistry: (1) surprise, (2) circumstance, (3) improvisation, and (4) flow. To become artists, in other words, we must learn to cope with and embrace surprise, to spontaneously meet unexpected circumstances, to improvise appropriate and effective help for writers, and to remain open to what researchers call “flow” experiences. Some peer tutors appear, like beat poets, to come to the job equipped with a jazz-like talent for improvising solutions to novel problems, and developing this talent is perhaps the key to the writing tutor's art. Those who have this ability, I would argue, can ultimately achieve a degree of artistry both related to—and dependent on—their artistry as writers.

What Is “Art”?

Before arguing that the work tutors do in the writing center is equivalent to the work of a poet or sculptor, let me take the time to establish what I mean by “art.” Philosopher Larry Shiner, who has examined historical conceptions of “art” and “artistry,” says, “Today you can call virtually anything ‘art’ and get away with it. One reason for the explosion in what counts as art is that the art world itself has taken up the old theme of getting ‘art’ and ‘life’ back together. Gestures of this kind have lurched between the innocent and the outrageous” (3). Perhaps I am guilty of com-

mitting an outrage by applying the term “art” to the writing tutorial, but I hope not. By “art” I mean something akin to the terms *ars* and *techne*, by which the ancient Greeks and Romans referred to such diverse activities as “carpentry and poetry, shoemaking and medicine, sculpture and horse breaking” (19). *Ars* and *techne* described processes leading to works that had practical application, and the ancients made no distinction between fine art and craft or between artist and artisan (5). As Shiner says, there were “only arts, just as there were neither ‘artists’ nor ‘artisans’ but only artisan/artists who gave equal honor to skill and imagination, tradition and invention” (17-18). The distinction between artist and artisan is a recent one, he adds, with the designation of artist usually referring to one to whom the words “inspiration, imagination, freedom, and genius” might apply and that of artisan referring to one to whom the words “skill, rules, imitation, and service” (111) might apply. As these definitions suggest, an artist is a breaker of new ground and a maker of unique works or experiences while a competent artisan follows rules, learns how to perform a particular task repetitively, such as making a wooden bowl, and replicates this performance many times, striving not for uniqueness or originality of expression but for successful imitation of the original product.

The Tutor as Artist vs. Artisan

Applying these terms to the writing center, one can speculate that a tutor who performs as an artisan would take a similar approach to each tutorial, seeing tutoring as a repetitive, rule-bound task she can master through diligence. No doubt all of us act as artisans at some point in the work week, approaching particular tutorials as run-of-the-mill. Some tutorials—for example, a request for help with APA style—might qualify as routine. In fact, much of the training peer tutors undergo prepares them to be artisans—to follow the rules directors set for them (and this training is a necessary part of their development). Consider, for example, the recipes and scripts directors give neophyte tutors to help them survive their early tutorials. One such recipe I use in training divides a tutorial into seven steps: (1) greet the client, (2), discuss the assignment, (3) set a focus for the tutorial, (4) read the paper, (5) evaluate strengths and weaknesses, (6) give suggestions for revision, and (7) end the tutorial gracefully. Such a list, like a standard essay structure in a composition manual, has some value because tutorials will usually include these steps (though not necessarily in this order). But directors expect tutors to develop far beyond the need for such recipes, and those who do not would presumably continue to do the work of artisans.

By contrast, a tutor who performs as an artist would view each tutorial as a potentially unique event, a chance to experience instances of creativity, engage completely in the moment, and effect change in the writer and herself—without ever pretending she could fully master the art. Such a tutor would view any rules laid down during training as flexible rather than binding. Of course, one cannot seriously suggest that rules do not apply to writing center work, so often constrained by the needs and requirements of student writers, professors, the university, the profession, and society itself. A tutor sits at the nexus of conflicting forces involving ethics, practices, and social customs and can never feel quite sure that what she is saying or doing in a given situation is ethically, practically, or socially correct. And yet, in the service of student writers, she must speak and act. Through experience, she will have practiced the art form enough to learn how to navigate safely through these forces and devise a suitable response to a particular rhetorical situation. Postmodern theorist Jean-François Lyotard argues that all writers should work as artists do, “without rules in order to formulate rules of what *will have been done*” (qtd. in Vitanza 163, emphasis in original). As Lyotard suggests, rules apply only in hindsight to a specific writer’s project and may not apply to the next project or to the work of another writer. Each writer invents her own “rules” through experience and cannot teach them to others. An artistic tutor operates in a similar way, helping writers work through projects in order to gain insights into what they have done and are trying to do. Where elements of the artistic merge with workaday realities, where a tutor relies not only on established rules and existing skills but also on the impromptu creation of an appropriate response to each rhetorical situation, tutoring departs from the recipes of the artisan and attains some of the aspects of a fine art.

Cultivating a Taste for Surprise

One might begin building an artistic approach to tutoring by cultivating a taste for surprise, which has intimate connections to invention, wit, and writing. Indeed, one entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *wit* as that “quality of speech or writing which consists in the apt association of thought and expression, calculated to surprise and delight by its unexpectedness.” Humor theorist Arthur Asa Berger argues that surprise is a necessary element of comic invention, saying, “Humorists, like all creative people, live in a world of chance, . . . where random happenings and accidents suggest possibilities to be explored and developed” (171). Sigmund Freud notes the relationship between wit and invention in his discussion of the sudden insights that occur when a person’s mind bypasses logic through what amounts to a

“short-circuit” (182). As Freud explains, a joke is especially pleasurable when it connects ideas that ordinarily are “remote and foreign” (182). V. K. Krishna Menon cites a similar mechanism—“hopping”—by which humor forges surprising, yet creative and potentially useful, ideas by skipping logical steps and leaping to an association less clearly logical. Hopping allows a person to perceive indirect or metaphorical connections among objects, people, or ideas that a logical approach might miss.

In the haphazard wordplay of the writing center tutorial something similar sometimes happens. There is often an element of surprise in our conversations; things happen that no one can entirely predict. Our give-and-take dialogue can sometimes generate unexpected links between ideas (for example, Arnold Schwarzenegger as radical feminist), which can strike tutor and student writer as amusing yet, in a backhanded way, illuminating. These short-circuits or instances of hopping help create a set of circumstances that may never happen again, but out of which fragmented notions combine in unexpected patterns. And some of these patterns may prove both creative and valuable—at least to the student writer. Last semester, for example, I observed a conversation between a peer tutor and student writer that took a surprising turn thanks to what looks like a case of hopping. Assigned to write an essay on invention processes, the writer was—ironically enough—stuck for an idea. During a collaborative brainstorming session with him, and as if thinking aloud, the tutor asked, “Why do so many people come up with great ideas in the shower?”

Without hesitation, the student said, “Steam.”

After a brief silence, the tutor asked, “Steam?” They both laughed, but the student nodded with unshakable confidence and repeated, “Steam.”³

A discussion followed as the tutor pressed him to elaborate on this absurd notion, and together they drew a cause and effect chain leading from steam to heat, from heat to relaxation, from relaxation to revelation, and from revelation to invention. The student’s surprising and illogical leap led to a good paper topic, and I later praised the tutor for being alert and open-minded enough to take pleasure from and run with the student’s idea. Such moments may not occur in every tutoring session, but as Truman Capote reveals in a *Paris Review* interview, surprise is an essential element in his own and other writers’ creative processes. As he says, “In the working-out, infinite surprises happen. Thank God, because the surprise, the twist, the phrase that comes at the right moment out of nowhere, is the unexpected dividend, that joyful little push that keeps a writer going” (Hill 297). The surprises that occur during tutorials can—if embraced—also bring unexpected dividends for

a tutor and student writer, giving them experience with what may become an important element in their artistic processes.

Responding to Contingency and Circumstance

Although saying so may sound paradoxical, surprise is the rule within the contingent, circumstantial setting of the writing tutorial—and in responding to surprise, a tutor must rely to a great extent on her own spontaneity. After all, when she goes to work each day, she has no way to anticipate the sorts of questions she will have to answer or the challenges she will face. Unlike a classroom teacher, a writing tutor cannot rely on lesson plans. And even when she can prepare, thanks to appointments aimed at resolving particular issues, she cannot predict the circuitous paths the conversation will take. Writers may interject, ask unanticipated questions for which the tutor has no definite answer, and express misunderstandings the tutor must attempt to address on the spot. And students are right to put tutors on the spot, to ask questions, to lead the conversation astray, to misunderstand points, and to resist advice, especially when doing so leads them to deeper understanding of their own ideas and writing processes. Students often ask such challenging questions as “If Hemingway can use sentence fragments, why can’t I?” Or they bring us essays that may fail to meet a professor’s assignment but do so in clever and interesting ways, and these essays put tutors in the uncomfortable position of deciding whether to advise the writers to take the safe or the risky road. Writers also tie themselves into stylistic or ethical knots, which they ask tutors to help untie. Last semester, for instance, a young man came to our center asking for help with a journal assignment due the next day. Twenty minutes into the session, the tutor assigned to work with him came to my office and explained her dilemma, one we had never faced before. For the past three months, the young man—a kinesiology student—should have been keeping a journal of his efforts to use diet and exercise to achieve specific personal fitness goals. His problem, which had become ours, was that he had not written a single entry. He wanted the tutor to help him write them now.

“We can’t help him cheat, can we?” she asked.

“No we can’t.”

“And yet he’s so desperate I want to help him somehow.”

“What would you do in his place?” I asked.

She made a bad joke about killing herself, and then said, “I guess, I’d write from memory, changing pens to make it look like I’d done the journal all semester. But that would be cheating too, wouldn’t it? He could go to the professor and beg for

mercy. If he tells the truth, maybe the professor will let him write the journal from memory, for partial credit. And that wouldn't be cheating then."

"Not bad," I said, impressed on a number of levels with her thinking. "The professor may fail him anyway, but it's probably the best we can do."

By wrestling with such moral or practical dilemmas, tutors learn to think on their feet. In the process, they become increasingly sensitive to what the ancient Greeks called *kairos*, a rhetorical principle with several definitions, including "fitness for the occasion" (Bizzell and Herzberg 44), "opportune moment, right time, opportunity" (Poulakos 57), and "the situational forces that induce, constrain and influence discourse" (Enos, *Roman Rhetoric*, 16). Rhetorical situations tend, like tutorials, to unfold in unique, unpredictable ways and defy prefabricated responses. A sense of *kairos* helps one understand the social context surrounding the act of speaking or writing and provides clues about how to proceed. A tutor who has developed a keen sensitivity to *kairos* is more likely than those without this sensitivity to read a situation well enough to determine the most appropriate response to a particular student writer's work. For example, although some students have no trouble accepting frank criticism of their writing and welcome honesty as a key to revision, others may respond to honesty by suffering an emotional meltdown. In dealing with sensitive students, an artful tutor would walk a line somewhere between honesty and diplomacy, delivering just the right dose of candor. As John Poulakos observes, "Springing from one's sense of timing and the will to invent, *kairos* alludes to the realization that speech exists in time and is uttered both as a spontaneous formulation of and a barely constituted response to a new situation unfolding in the immediate present" (61). A person who understands the contingent nature of discourse, Poulakos says, "addresses each occasion in its particularity, its singularity, its uniqueness" (61), making her "both a hunter and a maker of unique opportunities, always ready to address improvisationally and confer meaning on new and emerging situations" (61). In plainer words, she becomes more adept at improvisation, and her process comes to resemble those of the mid-twentieth century beat poets, like Alan Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, who claim to have done their best work in bursts of spontaneous composition. As Rick Moody writes, the beat poets shared "a devotion to spontaneity" (qtd. in Plimpton xi) and considered their first, raw words to be poetry—"the only requirement being that the poetry *was not to be rewritten*. First thought, best thought" (emphasis in original, ix). Writing centers exist because of a widespread belief in the power of revision. And in this way, our ultimate goal could not differ more from that of the beat poets. But by engaging student writers in conversation, and giving them advice, we often rely

on the principle of “first thought, best thought” (ix), drawing on a repertoire of techniques and experience, and using our creativity and our “ear” to improvise a response that sounds right in a given situation.

Improvisation as a Key to Artistry

Improvisation is, as Donald A. Schön has observed, an essential aspect of professional artistry in nearly any field. Facing a problem that goes beyond her experience, a professional improvises a solution in a way similar to the process of jazz musicians, who, by “listening to one another, listening to themselves, ... ‘feel’ where the music is going and adjust their playing accordingly” (30). Elizabeth H. Boquet makes a similar observation in *Noise from the Writing Center*, where she applies the metaphor of musical improvisation to tutoring. As she says, “The most interesting improvisations work because they are always on the verge of dissonance. They are always just about to fail. They are risky. But when they work well, they are also really, really fun. They leave you wide-eyed” (76). Opportunities for improvisation, and for such wide-eyed moments, occur often in tutorials thanks to the continual need to react to changing circumstances. A tutor’s preparation for such work comes primarily from her regular experience with improvisation—a capacity Quintilian calls “the crown of all our study and the highest reward of our long labours” (X. vii. 2-3). However, to provide such experience, several writing center directors use exercises invented by famed improvisational acting groups such as the Groundlings—both in their work with student writers and in tutor training. For instance, in “From Stage to Page: Using Improvisational Acting to Cultivate Confidence in Writers,” Adar Cohen recounts how she has used improv exercises to stimulate creativity and bolster confidence in struggling writers. At Boise State University, Michael Mattison uses a number of improvisational exercises he picked up in theatre classes to prepare tutors to react constructively to the unexpected. These exercises include

a free-wheeling, risk-taking, community-building, expectation-dropping, laugh-inducing series of skits that prepare us as a group to role play in mock consultations and then move on to real consultations. It is a first step in the process of educating consultants to trust in themselves and their instincts and to take some risks in their consultation work. (11)

These skits often hinge on “what if” questions that lead to scenarios that could unfold in the writing center, Mattison says, such as “What if a student has plagiarized?” or “What if someone hits on me?”(12). These improvised scenes and other

exercises, he says, “lead to more freedom and creativity in our consulting work and also help us better connect with one another” (13).⁴

A key to effective improvisation is riveting one’s attention on what is occurring in the moment. Patricia Ryan Madson, author of *Improv Wisdom: Don’t Prepare, Just Show Up*, says, “To improvise, it is essential that we use the present moment efficiently. An instant of distraction—searching for a witty line, for example—robs us of our investment in what is actually happening. We need to know everything about the moment” (36). An artistic tutor must also bring to each moment an awareness of and investment in what is actually happening. Consider, for instance, what might occur when a student writer brings to the center a project that, on the surface, looks like a simple, well-defined exercise but—in concept or execution—is actually complex and difficult. Such a situation might occur because a writer is trying to push beyond his or her current ability level or beyond the boundaries of a particular genre. Or it might occur because a teacher has issued an assignment that sounds straightforward but, on reflection, is a complex tangle. And sometimes students come up with quirky ideas that make a certain amount of sense, such as one student’s comparison of J.D. Salinger’s Holden Caulfield to Shakespeare’s Hamlet. A distracted tutor who fails to recognize the hidden complexity and difficulty in a project may attempt to use tutoring or writing strategies that have worked on past projects—only to share in the writer’s puzzlement and frustration when these strategies founder. The tutor may even assume, since her strategies have proven sound in the past, that the fault lies in the student writer or in the assignment rather than in her failure to attend to and embrace the moment.

On the other hand, a tutor who brings to a tutorial the rapt attention of a beat poet or jazz musician, and who views each encounter with a writer as a potentially unique event, increases her chances of detecting and rising to the challenges posed by a deceptively difficult or complex writing project. An existing technique or combination of techniques may work well. But if the tutor’s current repertoire of strategies does not work, she may find herself stretching (or bending) her mind in an effort to understand the problems well enough to help the writer improvise solutions. Madson argues that a heightened awareness helps improvisational actors to surprise themselves with “images, solutions, advice, stories” (36) which may already lurk in their minds or hide in plain view. She urges her readers to surrender to the moment—to “[t]rust your imagination. Trust your mind. Allow yourself to be surprised” (36-37). Those who give in to the moment—or go with the flow—may not only gain a greater sensitivity to *kairos* and become more adept at improvisation but also reap other benefits.

Going with the Flow (Experience)

After all, investing all of one's attention and abilities into a complex task, such as assisting someone with a piece of writing, can lead to what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls an "optimal" or "flow" experience. As Csikszentmihalyi says, "When all a person's relevant skills are needed to cope with the challenge of a situation, that person's attention is completely absorbed by the activity" (53). In such moments, people become so absorbed in what they are doing "that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing" (53). All the aspects of the task, complex as they are, appear to form a harmonious whole (41). As those who experience flow step outside of themselves and their ordinary concerns to focus on the task, their perception of time warps, either speeding up or slowing down (49). As Csikszentmihalyi says, "The combination of these elements causes a sense of deep enjoyment that is so rewarding people feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it" (49). Flow is, he suggests, why people find enjoyment in work that others find routine and even boring.

Both Richard Leahy and Lynn Briggs have applied the concept of "flow" to the writing center. Leahy looks at flow primarily from the writer's perspective, seeking ways to help student writers recognize and take advantage of their "flow experiences" (155). Briggs applies "flow" directly to the tutorial, seeing a tutor's total absorption in a person or text as akin to meditation—and potentially transformative for both the tutor and writer. As she says, Viktor Frankl's three ways of gaining meaning in life—doing good work, connecting with others, and undergoing personal change—"often intersect in the writing center—writers bring work they have created into a setting where they plan to encounter someone and change themselves (even if the change is only to be a better writer). The writing center is a site where people can use the text they have created to make transformative connections" (88). In her own case, Briggs's close work with a particular writer led to revelations about her practice, feelings of invigoration, and personal growth as a tutor. And I believe my session with Nancy, the cancer survivor, also qualifies as a flow experience. Our conversation became a dance of intellects, a push and pull of wits. Both of us were intensely involved in this act of communication, I trying to understand her ideas well enough to help her analyze, develop, and organize them, and she trying to make clear both what she hoped to do and how much the writing of her "how to" book would mean to her personally. The time passed quickly, and when the session ended, instead of falling back wearily into my chair, I felt refreshed and elated.

The stretching, striving, improvising, and growing I do during tutorials first attracted me to the job and provide a good reason to continue doing it. As far as I'm concerned, the lessons I learn as a writer and tutor from such "flow" experiences are an intended product of tutoring—of lesser importance than the learning of student writers, perhaps, but still important because they keep me vital, engaged, and eager for the next session. As tutors help people achieve their potential as thinkers and writers, after all, the tutors become more adept at these arts themselves. Of course, not every writing center encounter is satisfying or results in a flow experience. Some tutorials are frustrating events—often because either the writer or tutor is unwilling for whatever reason to fully engage in the work. Wayne Booth's observation about the complexities, difficulties, and frustrations of teaching applies to tutoring as well. As Booth says,

Teaching is impossible to master, inexhaustibly varied, unpredictable from hour to hour, from minute to minute within the hour: tears when you don't expect them, laughter when you might predict tears; cooperation and resistance in baffling mixtures; disconcerting depths of ignorance and sudden unexpected revelations of knowledge or wisdom. And the results are almost always ambiguous. (219)

The fact that Wayne Booth found teaching impossible to master should give the rest of us—even those who have tutored for decades—a sense of the challenges we and our peer tutors face in attempting to master our own rhetorical art form. Writers learn by experimenting, failing, and trying again. And by working alongside student writers in this process, tutors not only learn lessons about writing but also about how to help writers improvise solutions to the often surprising and ambiguous problems they face. This shared adventure onto unfamiliar ground can test a tutor's intellect and abilities, and sometimes he or she will on some level fail. For example, a peer tutor in the writing center I direct recently experimented with humor during a session involving a paper about Flannery O'Connor's use of biblical symbolism. Noting that the student had cited a biblical passage without making a transition back into the paper, the tutor said, "Try to introduce and summarize quotations. As you can see, this one sticks out like a big biblical zit." The writer took offense and complained to her teacher, who complained to me. I suggested that, in the future, this tutor read the students with whom he works a little more carefully to gauge their tolerance for humor, but at the same time I felt a grudging sense of pride. He's a good writer, his advice is nearly always sound, and he cares about his work. What I like about the incident is his attempt to lift a tutorial out of the mundane. This tutor is in the process of becoming, in John Poulakos's words,

“both a hunter and a maker of unique opportunities...[,] ready to confer meaning on new and emerging situations” (61). His joke qualifies as a surprising, spontaneous act of improvisation, and during the tutorial he obviously engaged fully in the moment. Though his sensitivity to *kairos* could use some tweaking, and his joke did not result in a flow experience, he has many of the qualities—including an ability to learn from failure—that he will need to make a run at becoming an artist.

Portrait of a Budding Artist

That such a tutor can evolve from artisan to artist became clear to me recently after I witnessed such a transformation. Three years ago, I hired Ben Graber—an honors student—based on a very good writing sample and the recommendation of a trusted faculty member. A tall, stocky, introverted young man who always carried a book, Graber struck me initially as only a fair candidate for the job because of his personality. He seldom spoke without prompting and seemed withdrawn, reluctant to meet my eyes when we talked. But he did good work during his first semester—in spite of the untimely death of a close family member. At the start of his second year at the center, when I began to train a new group of tutors, Graber spoke to the group about his experiences in the center with a level of sensitivity and self-assurance that surprised me. And I soon began getting feedback about his work from students who appreciated not only his gentle manner but also his insights into their needs and abilities as writers. He became someone whose intuition I trusted—to the extent that I sometimes let this undergraduate religion major assist graduate students in English, history, and divinity with their writing.

In fact, Graber’s responses to writing assignments for our center’s tutor training course impressed me enough that I invited him to compose an essay about his experiences as a tutor and present it to a regional writing center conference. In this unpublished essay, which he delivered in April 2006 to a conference of the North Texas Writing Centers Association, he reflects on several tutorials that taught him lessons about his work. During a session with a neuroscience major struggling to make sense of social issues raised in literary works, for example, he realized the problem lay in the young man’s inability to go beyond scientific reasoning to discover relations among seemingly unrelated ideas. What the student needed, Graber believed, was to adopt an artistic vision, a way to look “*between the data*” he had gathered in order to forge connections and meaning. As Graber writes, “It’s a matter of aesthetics: can you see these data, and then look between them and see why they fit together in the way they do? Can you find something beautiful in the way the two authors argue their opposing cases, or how another two came to the same conclu-

sion from such radically different angles? How do you teach that?” As I later told him, experienced writing center professionals often ask such questions.

Although he offers no definite answers, Graber raises similar, and even more insightful, issues about other tutorials, including one involving a student who disclosed in an autobiographical essay for a composition class that, at eleven years of age, she had been the victim of a rape. This disclosure at first stopped Graber cold. As he writes,

What was I doing reading about this? What business did her professor have knowing this, for that matter? How many people knew this about this girl? But here I was, and she'd brought her paper to me, and now I was within this privileged circle of those to whom she could share this kind of experience, because I was supposed to be helping her to make it read better, to make it seem more real to those who were presumably to try and attach a grade to this revelation [.]

The tutorial raised a number of moral and practical dilemmas. It challenged Graber to respond sensitively to a situation he had never before encountered. It made him wonder about the nature of his role as a tutor. It frightened him—on several levels. And it called into doubt what he thought he knew about his job. As he asks, “Who was I to tell her to think of [the rape] as being *like* something, or as connected to something in a way that is as beautiful and powerful as the original experience was tragic and frightening and cruel and hideous? But that was the only thing I knew how to do.” Afterward, he gave this difficult session a lot of thought and realized, among other insights, that tutoring “would not be a safe job; we’re in the business of helping people to put their lives on display, or at least to publish their lives for a select audience, and it’s something very serious.”

In response to the risky and consequential moments he faced on the job, Graber synthesized a tutoring philosophy based in part on his own “commitment to see teaching as the art of conveying the ability to think artistically.” As he explains, when meeting challenges with which he cannot cope by using standard techniques,

I can only hope to be a sort of Zen master, urging the novices to focus, to stare into themselves until inspiration strikes and enlightenment is achieved. There are only so many facts to be learned in writing; once you learn them, you have all the tools of a sculptor but can just as easily end up with a pile of rubble as a recognizable statue when you try to use them.

While presenting this part of his essay Graber paused to glance up at the professionals in the audience and add, “You all probably know this better than I.”

Do we? I wondered at the time. Many writing center professionals would hesitate to describe tutoring as a fine art or themselves and their peer tutors as artists. But those who remain aware that tutoring “is impossible to master” (Booth 219) and yet willingly confront, learn from, and exploit the ambiguous moments when ideas unexpectedly unify or fragment do think and act like artists. By embracing surprise, refining their sensitivity to *kairos*, developing a capacity for improvisation, and cultivating a taste for “flow” experiences, they have achieved a high level of *ars* or *techné* and, in the process, gained valuable insights into writing, rhetoric, and human nature. Can these professionals pass their insights along to peer tutors? I’m not entirely sure they can—at least directly. Formal training plays a key role in the development of any artist. Like all of the peer tutors who work in our center, Graber took a noncredit course, read about writing center theory and practice, wrote about his experiences, engaged in mock tutorials, and participated in discussions. Yet he (and several others) moved beyond his formal training and beyond the status of artisan. Graber may have come to the job with a greater potential than most to develop into an artist—thanks, as Isocrates suggests, to talent and an ability to learn from experience. Each tutor possesses a different mix of aptitudes, and no writing center director can anticipate all the quandaries a tutor will face in the writing center, so I doubt we can devise a training program to mass produce artistic tutors. But we can caution them against complacency and help them see ambiguous, frustrating, frightening, or difficult tutorials as chances to explore, improvise, reflect, and grow. And by incorporating practice tutorials and improvisational exercises into training, we can give tutors some preliminary (and safe) experience with unusual and challenging situations. Such stage-managed experiences may, in a limited way, help to prepare them for the real thing—and provide a foundation on which to build their own techniques and philosophies of tutoring. After that, maybe the best we can do for the ones who show artistic promise is to step back and let them make their own discoveries.

NOTES

¹ Several scholars write about similar concepts, placing them in the context of Zen philosophy. For example, see Gamache and Murray.

² In *Against the Sophists*, Isocrates said, “Ability, whether in speech or in any other activity, is found in those who are well endowed by nature and have been schooled by practical experience. Formal training makes such [persons] more skillful and more resourceful in dis-

covering the possibilities of a subject...” (14-15).

³ The anecdotes and examples in this article are personal observations drawn from day to day work in the writing center, not part of a formal, sustained research project.

⁴ As sources for improvisational exercises potentially useful in tutoring or tutor training, Mattison, Cohen, and others recommend Keith Johnstone’s *Improv*, Milton Polsky’s *Let’s*

Improvise, Viola Spolin's *Improvisation for the Theatre*, and Patricia Ryan Madson's *Improv Wisdom: Don't Prepare, Just Show Up*.

⁵ I would like to thank Michael Mattison and Ben Graber for sending me copies of their soon-to-be published essays. I would also like to thank the editors of *WCJ*, the reviewers, and my friends at TCU, especially Dave Kuhne and Cynthia Shearer, for reading drafts of my manuscript, suggesting a more apt title, and guiding my revision.

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Review: A Guide to Creating a Student-Staffed Writing Center: Grades 6-12

by Catherine Oriani

Richard Kent short-changes himself by naming his latest book *A Guide to Creating a Student-Staffed Writing Center: Grades 6-12*, for he offers would-be as well as veteran writing center directors far more than the title suggests. Considering the paucity of publications on the market addressing secondary writing centers, as well as the scope of Kent's work, he would have been more than justified in calling his book *A Guide to Creating a Writing Center: 6-12*. Indeed, Kent's work is the most comprehensive guide to secondary writing centers since the 1989 publication of *The High School Writing Center: Establishing and Maintaining One*, edited by Pamela Farrell.

Primarily, Kent has drawn on his personal experience as a high school writing center director but has also gathered the insights of other perceptive and dedicated writing center directors and personnel. In addition, his current roles as Assistant Professor of Literacy and Director of the Maine Writing Project at the University of Maine provide valuable vantage points from which to observe the efforts and functioning of secondary writing centers.

I appreciate Kent's relaxed, conversational style as he introduces the reader to his motivation for establishing a student-staffed writing center: "I carried stacks of papers home to 'correct,' just as my own high school English teachers had. For hour upon hour, I penciled marginal notations and comma corrections. [...] We English teachers know the drill" (2). Kent soon questioned the value of his efforts and recognized how little his techniques mirrored the productive relationship between his editor and himself as they discussed "draft after draft." But in contemplating a model that mimicked his personal experiences, he quickly realized, "I could not be

About the Author

Catherine Oriani has initiated and directed three high school writing centers and is presently coordinating the writing center at Garden City High School on Long Island. She is a former president of the Northeastern Writing Centers Association and at-large representative to the National Writing Centers Association, now known as the International Writing Centers Association.

the primary editor for my many student writers if I wanted them to produce a good deal of revised writing during the course of the school year” (3). The National Writing Project has suggested “Learning to write requires frequent, supportive practice” (NWP). Student-staffed centers are viable options in meeting this goal. By staffing his writing center with as many as 55 students, the Mountain Valley High School Writing Center was able to conduct over 1300 writing conferences in a single quarter.

Although Kent’s particular situation prompted him to create a student-staffed writing center, he acknowledges the necessity of establishing a writing center that responds to the specific make-up of a given institution, and therefore, he provides an overview of the types of writing centers one might emulate. “Looking at the variety of writing centers should encourage you to develop the kind that fits best for your school, district, and community. Do not feel limited” (16).

Indeed Kent not only implores the reader not to feel limited, but also presents wide-ranging and even inspiring materials that will prove helpful to would-be, novice, and veteran writing center directors alike. In other words, Kent gives the reader abundant ideas, examples and resources for either establishing a writing center or improving one. There’s no reason to feel limited.

In “Planning and Organizing,” Kent guides the reader through the political minefield that accompanies writing center efforts because a writing center represents “a radical change on many fronts” on the secondary level. As a consequence, “this change can cause challenges” (19), he warns. Kent displays political astuteness as well as humor when he says, “Remember: You can have as many assistant or associate writing center directors as there are English teachers in your school!” (24). He emphasizes the need to make the establishment of a writing center a process-oriented project that is as inclusive as possible. He directs the reader to valuable resources that validate writing center pedagogy and suggests compiling these materials into packets for the perusal of the principal, other administrators and colleagues. Lastly, he reminds the reader of other potential sources of support such as business partners, university affiliations, and the media.

The following chapter, “Staffing and Training” addresses specifically student-staffed writing centers more so than most chapters in this book, but once again, much of the material is applicable across the board. The personal touch that is the hallmark of writing center work is demonstrated through Kent’s use of letters while training his student “editors.” Kent states, “Letter writing helped me come to know my student writers and helped them come to know me as a teacher” (35). I can imagine that letter writing over the summer also strengthens habits of thinking and

writing among his editors-in-training and helps to build the kind of rapport that engenders trust and understanding. For an in-depth examination of the course through which Kent trained student editors, he directs us to two of his earlier publications, *Room 109: The Promise of a Portfolio Classroom* and *Beyond Room 109: Developing Independent Study Projects*. Also Kent suggests many resources from books to journals to websites that may prove helpful.

I was personally inspired by the next three chapters, "Operating a Writing Center," "Working Drafts: Writing Centers in Action," and "Resources and Activities" for the sheer abundance of possibilities offered through the lists, case studies, suggested resources and examples of actual materials created and used by a variety of centers. For instance, a list of quotations for use on promotional items includes, "I love revision. Where else can spilled milk turn into ice cream?" (Katherine Patterson, qtd. on 71), and "I'm writing a book. I've got the page numbers done" (Steven Wright, qtd. on 72). I found myself marking item after item in these chapters because they promised outlets for publication, ideas for handling scheduling, exercises for understanding, and so much more.

While the scope of *A Guide to Creating Student-Staffed Writing Centers: Grades 6-12* goes well-beyond what the title implies, I was somewhat disappointed on two counts. I wish Kent would have provided more discussion on the virtues of student-staffing and more research to support its effectiveness. At the very least, I wish he had directed my attention to resources that could supply such discussion or research. Also, while he makes numerous references to readings that apply to writing center work in post-secondary as well as secondary institutions, I wish he had made more of an effort to highlight publications that address secondary writing centers directly. Unfortunately, although these works exist, they remain largely unknown.

I thank Richard Kent for writing a book that has re-energized me in my role as a writing center director. I'm certain other veteran directors will welcome this comprehensive assemblage of ideas. By the way, it will also serve as a fabulous guide for those seeking to establish a student-staffed writing center.

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Review: The Literacy Coach's Desk Reference: Processes and Perspectives for Effective Coaching

by Anne Ellen Geller

I had heard about Cathy Toll's *The Literacy Coach's Desk Reference* because I've worked closely with middle school and high school literacy coaches in the Worcester (Massachusetts) Public Schools as a part of a Carnegie Corporation funded grant to Clark University and the Worcester Educational Partnership. The Schools for a New Society grant¹ funded similar initiatives in six other cities—Boston, Chattanooga, Houston, Providence, Sacramento and San Diego—and each city's partnership focused on slightly different goals. Worcester set out to create smaller learning communities within the city's large high schools, create changes in curriculum and instructional method, offer more professional development and more opportunities for dialogue about best teaching practices, and provide greater attention to literacy and numeracy across the curriculum (especially at the ninth-grade level). Each high school developed a literacy coach position², and I became a consultant, advisor, mentor, and co-learner to those literacy coaches. Literacy coaching work in public schools can be difficult when classes are large, teachers are frustrated, and bureaucracy rules at the district level. Yet literacy coaching work in the public schools can be equally satisfying when teachers work together to think through grade-wide or discipline-wide issues, new teachers are supported, and experienced teachers become interested in pedagogical experimentation.

What was my position at Clark University?, the Worcester literacy coaches would ask when I began working with them. "I have your job but on a college campus," I would reply. And I do believe that any writing center or writing program director who consults with colleagues on assignments or student writing, who is invited to departments to talk about students' writing in the discipline or the major, or who speaks into institution-wide curricular issues or assessment of literacy (what high

About the Author

Anne Ellen Geller is Assistant Professor and Director of the Writing Center and Writing Program at Clark University. She is one of the five co-authors of The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice (Utah State University Press, 2007).

school literacy coaches face as a “school improvement plan” [Toll 182]) has the opportunity to work as a literacy coach. Readers who are not currently working with literacy coaches or with K-12 teachers might not see themselves as literacy coaches, but Toll’s book reminds us that as leaders on our campuses, we can make it our goal to develop our colleagues’ habits of mind and habits of interaction (16) around literacy issues we identify as important to all of us and to our students’ learning.

With every chapter I read of Toll’s book, I became more convinced that I would return to *The Literacy Coach’s Desk Reference* again and again just as she hopes coaches might, “to remind [myself] of important processes to use when coaching,” “as a review before going into a new or challenging situation or as an opportunity to fine-tune [my] practices as [I] reflect upon them” (5). But I’ve also decided I would offer the book to writing center tutors, in particular because of how Toll sets up each chapter—whether it is about how to arrange individual conferences with colleagues or how to gather information through questioning or how to facilitate disagreement—with an overview that presents “What,” “Why,” “How,” “To Think about in Advance,” “To Think about During,” and “To Think about After.” While the black-line masters of literacy coaching worksheets and records don’t feel that useful to me personally, for others they may provide structure for planning work with colleagues or keeping records of work with colleagues. Almost all chapters offer a transcript of a sample coaching conversation (smooth ones and difficult ones), what Toll calls a “vignette,” not a “script” (6). This is a book that offers ways of thinking about work with our teaching colleagues that is truly consonant with our writing center practices—deep listening, honest questioning, prioritizing co-learning and co-teaching, reflection, stewardship and leadership. This is also, then, a book that should remind us that we should always strive to take our best conferencing practices into our work beyond the writing center.

The Literacy Coach’s Desk Reference has seven sections and twenty-six chapters, much too much rich information to summarize here. But some chapters feel notable to me. I like the way Toll slows down the processes of individual conferences with colleagues, and separates how we might think about and plan for and reflect on that work as a series of chapters that build on one another: “Getting Started,” “Focusing,” “Gathering Information through Questioning,” “Setting Goals,” through “Planning for...” and “Forwarding...” the “Action.” In these chapters, discussions of “unproductive questions” (31) are interspersed with provocative stances of philosophy. Take the single question Toll uses to open her work with her colleagues, a question “that demonstrates recognition of teachers’

strengths and yet allows teachers to tell something about a struggle or challenge that they are encountering” (31): “When you think about the reading and writing you want your students to do, the teaching you want to do, and the classroom you want to have, what gets in the way?” (31) And consider Toll’s reflection on her own question: “This question assumes that teachers do indeed have a vision for their work and that they are indeed striving to make that vision a reality, but that things get in the way...the question recognizes teachers’ desire to succeed and to help their students succeed but also acknowledges that there are obstacles to this work” (31). It’s no surprise once we hear this to find the care Toll takes in focusing goals on students (50), in reminding readers that coaches shouldn’t step away from relationships when teachers are most successful if coaches hope to help sustain that teaching success (68), in demanding that we acknowledge the difference between “model” lessons that offer “best practices” and “demonstration” lessons that offer “possible practices” (156) and “further teachers’ movement toward their goals” (157).

I also appreciate the four chapters Toll devotes to difficult group dynamics in her section on Processes for Group Meetings. “Facilitating Disagreement,” “Addressing Varying Levels of Participation,” “Addressing Competing Claims,” and “Addressing Intimidation” present difficult scenarios we all face—the small group participant who attempts to dominate conversation or intimidate others, the “lone outlier” who is unlike the rest of a group in “perceptions, experiences or opinions” (105)—and discusses them for what they can teach us about teaching and learning with one another in groups. The literacy coach can “honor group members’ wishes to agree to disagree” or can take a risk and “challenge the disagreement” (107). Allowing groups to agree to disagree may be our attempt to keep everyone happily or comfortably involved in inquiry together, but Toll reminds us that “Addressing disagreement does not mean erasing it” (107), for “disagreement represents divergent views, and divergent views bring richness and variety to collaborative efforts” (107). “Literacy coaches can play important roles in helping members of a group tolerate difference and pay attention to their own reaction to it” (108), and “fair, open-minded, and respectful” coaches who are reflective can facilitate learning and help the group move ahead and even benefit from differences among its members” (109). There are too many situations to list—for example, the cross-disciplinary assignment workshops I’ve facilitated or committee meetings I’ve attended in which a faculty member with one view of student writing tried to intimidate others—in which I might now hear Toll’s advice in my head. True writing center leadership would require attention to these potentially divisive issues, and we can learn much from Toll’s book about how to attend to the “disagreement that is

essential for healthy, productive professional learning teams” (104) without giving up on collaboration.

In her conclusion to *The Literacy Coach's Desk Reference*, Cathy Toll leaves us with a list of “concepts, beliefs, and practices” she’s “tried to emphasize” (207). First on the list is: “Literacy coaching is most effective when it begins with teachers’ interests, needs, and concerns, and, therefore, literacy coaches are wise to develop the habit of listening and learning before all else” (207). With this, Toll reminds me of William Ayers, who writes at the very beginning of *Teaching Toward Freedom: “Teaching, at its best, is an enterprise that helps human beings reach the full measure of their humanity. Simple enough to say, and yet, in countless ways, excruciatingly difficult to achieve, and so it is worth restating and underlining”* (1). *The Literacy Coach's Desk Reference* is a rather simplistic reference book of process. But it is surprisingly complex for what it suggests about how slowly, thoughtfully and inquisitively literacy coaches, or writing center and writing program directors, for that matter, must collaborate with colleagues through the excruciating difficulty of teaching. To find the full measure of our own teaching humanity, Cathy Toll might say, we need to embrace and appreciate our own learning even as we embrace and appreciate the learning of others.

NOTES

¹ For a program overview, see <http://www.carnegie.org/sns/index.html>, and for Worcester see <http://www.carnegie.org/sns/pub/page13.html>.

² For more information about literacy coaching and more resources related to literacy coaching, see <http://www.ncte.org/collections/literacycoach> or <http://www.literacycoachingonline.org>.

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Announcements

Please note: For the most current list of writing-center related announcements, go to <http://writingcenters.org>.

Award Announcement: At this year's NCPTW conference, IWCA Vice-President Michele Eodice was the recipient of the 2006 Ron Maxwell Award for Distinguished Leadership in Promoting the Collaborative Learning Practices of Peer Tutors in Writing. The Ron Maxwell Leadership Award is given to a professional in the organization who has contributed with distinction to undergraduate student development through promoting collaborative learning among peer tutors in writing.

Past recipients include Kathleen Shine Cain and Michael Rossi (2005), Harvey Kail (2004), Jean Donovan Sanborn (2003), Ben Rafoth (2002), Kevin Davis (2001), Jean Kiedaisch (2000), Molly Wingate (1999, the inaugural Maxwell Award).

Conference Announcement: Southeastern Writing Center Association 2007 Conference, "Static and (dis)Harmony: Tuning into Writing Centers in the Music City," February 8-10, 2007, DoubleTree Hotel Downtown – Nashville, TN, Keynote Speaker—Elizabeth Boquet

Music City, U.S.A., serves as the perfect location to discuss the issues of noise, sound, static, and silence in the writing center. Home of the Grand Ole Opry, Nashville serves as the center of country music but also supports jazz, blues, bluegrass, and gospel. Songwriters, publishers, producers, artists all come to Nashville to learn the business, whether in school, hands-on in the studio, one-on-one with mentors, or even through observation in the local bars.

Tutors, directors, administrators, and other members of the writing center community are welcome to attend. More info at www.mtsu.edu/~uwcenter/swca2007

Conference Announcement: Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association, April 27-28, 2007, at Whatcom Community College, Bellingham, WA. Theme: "Let's Talk about Talk." Keynote speaker: Muriel Harris. For more information, contact Sherri Winans, swinans@whatcom.ctc.edu.

Conference Announcement: Southern California WCA Conference, February 10, 2006, California State University-San Bernardino. A Conference for Tutors Led

by Tutors. For more information, see <http://writing.mckenna.edu/socalwca/> or contact Carol Haviland, cph@csusb.edu.

Call for Papers/Participation: European Writing Centers Association (EWCA) Conference, June 19-22, 2008, in Freiburg, Germany. *Initiating Writing Center Work—Connecting Secondary, Higher, and Professional Education*. This conference call encourages discussion of concepts of institutional development to set up writing centers and to integrate writing center work into discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary instruction and learning. This call also looks for training programs for writing/reading experts who work in the writing center and beyond. In addition, presentations on experiences with genre-specific support and the facilitation of writing/reading work aiming for the needs of other educational fields outside of the writing center's institutional home base are strongly encouraged. Proposals should not only present practical ideas on writing center pedagogy but also show how these ideas are emerging from current writing center theory and research.

More information about the conference will soon be available at <http://ewca.sabanciuniv.edu/eng/>. Please submit your proposal online any time before February 01, 2008.

Call for Proposals: The Graduate Research Network (GRN) invites proposals for its 2007 workshop, May 17, 2007, at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. The GRN is a full-day, pre-conference event at the annual Computers and Writing Conference, free to all registered conference participants. We welcome those pursuing work at any stage, from just beginning to consider ideas to projects ready to pursue publication. Participants are also invited to apply for travel funding through the CW/GRN Travel Grant Fund. Deadline for submissions is April 20, 2007. For more information or to submit a proposal, visit our website at <http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/~writling/GRN/index.html> or email jwalker@georgiasouthern.edu.

Call for Proposals/Conference Announcement: Midwest Writing Centers Association 24th Annual Regional Conference, "Writing Center Crossroads: Community, Conflict, Change," October 25-27, 2007, Kauffman Foundation Conference Center, Kansas City, MO.

MWCA invites you to join us in considering crossroads within writing centers, theories, and practices. We encourage proposals that explore community, conflict, creativity, and change. Proposals should include name(s) of presenter(s) and institutional affiliation, presentation title, presentation format, a 50-word abstract, and

a 500-word description. Presentation formats include the following: individual papers, multi-media presentations, panel discussions, roundtable discussions, performance pieces, poster presentations, special interest groups, and full- or half-day pre-conference institutes. Proposals for ongoing writing activities that conference participants could interact with throughout the conference are welcome too. Proposals may also be submitted to reserve workspace for groups working on collaborative projects during the pre-conference institute day. More information and proposal submission forms are available at <http://www.usiouxfalls.edu/mwca/mwca07>. Questions about the CFP may be directed to Thomas Ferrel at ferrelt@umkc.edu. Submissions deadline: March 9, 2007.

Call for Postcards: The Temple University Writing Center is hosting a community art project inspired by PostSecret.com. We're looking for writers, students, teachers, and tutors to tell us something about the inner life of writers. Check out the secrets we've received at <http://www.temple.edu/wc/postcards>.

Like what you see? Want to contribute your own? Do you have an epiphany, a revelation, a story, or a secret about yourself as a writer, or writers you've known, that you'd be willing to share with other writers? If so, write it on a "postcard," or scrawl it on some cardboard, or paint it onto cotton, or chisel it onto stone tablet — well, okay, maybe not a stone tablet—and send it to us. The more creative the better. Send the card to: Jaime Lynn Longo, Postcard Project, 201 Tuttleman Learning Center (008-00), 1809 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122.

Call for Submissions: *Community Literacy Journal & Forum*. We're pleased to announce the inauguration of Community Literacy Journal. The mission of the Community Literacy Journal & Forum is to provide a place where academics and other community literacy workers can share ideas, learn about activities and projects, discuss theory and practice, and share resources. For us, literacy is defined as the realm where attention is paid not just to content or knowledge but to the symbolic means by which it is represented and used. Thus, literacy makes reference not just to letters and to text but to other multimodal and technological representations as well.

Articles in the fall and spring issues will address research in community literacy; rhetoric and community literacy; regional aspects of community literacy; and technology and community literacy. A list of upcoming articles is available online. For subscription information, please visit us at <http://www.communityliteracy.org>

Call for Submissions: *Young Scholars in Writing: Undergraduate Research in Writing and Rhetoric* seeks theory-driven and/or research-based submissions from undergraduates on the following topics: writing, rhetoric, composition, professional writing, technical writing, business writing, discourse analysis, writing technologies, peer tutoring in writing, writing process, writing in the disciplines, and related topics. Submissions to this refereed journal should be 10-20 pages, in MLA format, and should be accompanied by a professor's note that the essay was written by the student. Please send four copies of manuscript without author's name on manuscript. Please include author's name, address, affiliation, email address, and phone number on separate title page. Send inquiries and submissions to Dr. Laurie Grobman, Editor, Penn State Berks, P.O. Box 7009, Tulpehocken Road, Reading, PA 19610-6009. E-mail inquiries to leg8@psu.edu.

Call for Submissions: *Currents in Electronic Literacy* is moving in a new direction, and we welcome your contributions. Foregoing the long article format, *Currents* hopes to highlight emerging trends in the field of electronic literacy by featuring now only reviews—but “reviews” broadly conceived. In addition to books, then, we are soliciting also reviews of software, websites, blogs, conferences, parallel academic programs, and pedagogical practices. Please visit us online to see our upcoming issue themes and submission guidelines: <http://currents.cwrl.utexas.edu>.

Currents in Electronic Literacy is an online publication of the Computer Writing and Research Laboratory (CWRL), a project of the Division of Rhetoric and Writing at the University of Texas at Austin. *Currents* publishes work addressing the use of electronic texts and technologies for reading, writing, teaching, and learning in fields including but not restricted to the following: literature, rhetoric and composition, languages, communications, media studies, and education.

Call for Submissions: *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* is an online refereed journal which publishes webtexts—projects designed specifically for the World Wide Web including nonlinear structure and/or new media. We are interested in submissions for these sections:

- Topoi: full-length webtexts about rhetoric, technology, and/or pedagogy. Editors: Cheryl E. Ball and Beth Hewett, kairosed@technorhretoric.net
- Praxis: short teaching-specific webtexts about technology in classroom settings. Editors: Colleen Reilly and Joyce Walker, kpraxis@technorhretoric.net
- Reviews: webtexts that review books, journals, websites, and other technologies. Editors: Rich Rice and Gail Corso, kreviews@technorhretoric.net

Please send the following materials to the section editors:

- An email outlining the webtext's goals and how it fits Kairos' editorial emphasis.
- A current URL of the webtext or a zipped collection of its files (must be under 3 mb).

For more information, please see our Web site at <http://english.ttu.edu/kairos>.

Call for Papers: *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, a monthly publication for those who work in the tutorial setting of a writing lab, invites manuscripts. Authors are invited to submit articles, book reviews, papers presented at regional conferences, reports of writing lab conferences, articles by tutors, and news of regional groups and/or specific writing labs. Recommended length is 10 to 15 double-spaced pages for articles and 3 to 4 pages for tutors' essays for the "Tutors' Column," though longer and shorter articles are also invited. Please use MLA format. Send your manuscripts via e-mail to submission@writinglabnewsletter.org. The e-mail "cover letter" should include author's name, mailing address, phone/fax numbers, and the name of the attached file. If necessary, send a hard copy and an electronic version. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with postage that is clipped, not pasted, to the envelope. Subscriptions to *The Writing Lab Newsletter* are \$20 per year for subscriptions mailed in the U.S. and \$25 for subscriptions mailed to Canada. International and digital subscriptions are also available by contacting support@therichco.com. For editorial questions, contact Muriel Harris at harrism@purdue.edu. Subscriptions to the *Writing Lab Newsletter* may be ordered at <http://www.writinglabnewsletter.org/subscribe.html>. *WLN* and membership in the International Writing Centers Association may be ordered online at <http://www.iwcamembers.org/>.

Call for Papers: *Composition Studies*, first published as *Freshman English News* in 1972, is the oldest independent scholarly journal in rhetoric and composition. *CS/FEN* publishes essays on theories of composition and rhetoric, the teaching and administration of writing and rhetoric at all post-secondary levels, and disciplinary/institutional issues of interest to the field's teacher-scholars. Each issue includes Course Designs, an innovative feature on curricular development in writing and rhetoric of interest to teachers at all post-secondary levels. *CS/FEN* also includes lengthy review essays, written by rhetoric and composition's leading authors, of current scholarly books in the field.

See the journal web site for all submission guidelines. Those wishing to submit to Course Designs are strongly urged to see the full project statement, also avail-

able from the web site. Those interested in writing review essays should forward a letter and CV to the editor. All unsolicited manuscripts are reviewed blind by two external readers. *Composition Studies* is published twice each year (April/May and October/November). Subscription rates are: Individuals \$15 (Domestic) and \$20 (International); Institutions \$25 (Domestic) and \$30 (International); Graduate Students \$12. Back issues are available at \$6. Send all inquiries to: Carrie Leverenz and Ann George, Editors, *Composition Studies*, Texas Christian University, Department of English, TCU Box 297270, Fort Worth, TX 76129. E-mail: compositionstudies@tcu.edu; website: <http://www.compositionstudies.tcu.edu>.

Call for Submissions/Publication Announcement: The Penn State's online peer tutoring newsletter, *The Dangling Modifier*, offers articles regarding unique problems in tutor/tutee interaction and innovative ideas to meet the diverse and changing needs of student writers. The editorial staff encourages contributions of articles, input, questions for the "Tutor Guru," and more.

Please visit us at http://www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling_Modifier/, and please continue to encourage your peer tutors to submit their work to us at danglingmodifier@psu.edu.

We request that the manuscripts be 500 words or less. Please include name, e-mail, title, and college information for each submission. Manuscripts can be submitted via email at danglingmodifier@psu.edu. At the discretion of our staff, accepted manuscripts may be e-tutored before publication.

Call for Submissions: *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* is a project of the Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC) at the University of Texas at Austin. *Praxis* represents the collaboration of a group of undergraduate and graduate UWC consultants and English Ph.D. students and instructors. We invite article submissions and proposals from writing center practitioners, administrators and consultants alike. We especially encourage writers to submit articles related to an upcoming issue's theme. Responses to the previous issues' articles and editorials are also welcome. Please see <http://lovecraft.cwrl.utexas.edu/praxis> for submission guidelines or more information.

Call for Submissions: *IWCA Update: The International Writing Centers Association Newsletter*. *IWCA Update* is published twice per year: one issue in the Winter/Spring semester (late January/early February) and the second in early Fall semester (late September/early October). The newsletter is circulated to all current


members of IWCA and *Update* contributors. The purpose of *IWCA Update* is to provide IWCA members with the most current information about the organization and its work. *Update* is also dedicated to providing for writing center professionals a forum in which a wide range of information and writing can be found, work that is important to the field and might not otherwise find publication. Finally, *IWCA Update* strives to provide up-to-date announcements, calls for proposals and/or submissions, information on awards, discussion/review of publications, and information on IWCA, IWCA regional, and other writing-related conferences.


Submissions for the fall issue should be received by no later than July 31st. Submissions for the winter/spring issue should be received by no later than December 1st. All submissions should be sent via email to Danko@calumet.purdue.edu. Each submission should be sent separately. Please include your full name, as you would like it to appear in the newsletter, current title/position, institution, and complete contact information in the email. Each electronic submission should be in an MS Word document attached to the email *AND* pasted into the email message itself. For submission guidelines or for more information, contact Nita Danko, Update Editor, at Danko@calumet.purdue.edu.

The Writing Center Journal

C Advertising Rates

All ads appear on interior pages and in black-and-white only.
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International Writing Centers Association

Membership Form

The Assembly: The International Writing Centers Association, an NCTE Assembly, was founded in 1983 to foster communication among writing centers and to provide a forum for concerns. Comprising directors and staffs of writing centers at universities, two-year colleges, and public schools, the IWCA is governed by an Executive Board that includes representatives from the regional writing center organizations.

Publications: The IWCA sponsors two publications. The *Writing Lab Newsletter*, edited by Muriel Harris at Purdue, provides a monthly forum for writing center concerns during the academic year. *The Writing Center Journal*, edited by Neal Lerner and Elizabeth Boquet, offers in its two issues per year longer articles on writing center theory and research. The IWCA also sponsors the International Writing Centers Association Press.

Awards: IWCA offers the following awards: (1) an award to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to writing centers, and (2) awards to recognize outstanding publications on writing centers. In addition, small grants are available to graduate students whose research focuses on writing centers and to researchers seeking external funds for writing-center related projects. IWCA also supports regional association conferences with speaker grants.

Meeting: The IWCA Executive Board meets twice a year, once during NCTE and once during CCCC, and during an International Writing Centers Association conference in alternate years. At NCTE, IWCA sponsors either a day-long workshop, or an Active Writing Center; at CCCC, the assembly sponsors a special interest session, along with an exchange of writing center materials. Executive Board meetings are always open to the membership.

Name: _____

Preferred Mailing Address: _____

Options	U.S.	Canada	Overseas
IWCA Membership	\$20	\$20	\$20
Membership + <i>WCJ</i>	\$35	\$40	\$40
Membership + <i>WLN</i>	\$40	\$45	\$65
Membership + <i>WCJ</i> + <i>WLN</i>	\$55	\$65	\$85

Make checks payable to IWCA; mail to Ben Rafoth, IWCA Treasurer, 110 Leonard Hall, Indiana Univ. of PA, Indiana, PA 15705-1094. (724) 357-3029, brafoth@iup.edu. IWCA cannot send out invoices nor process purchase orders.

For more information on the IWCA, see <http://writingcenters.org/>.



International Writing Centers Association
An NCTE Assembly

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IWCA Web Site

For information about the International Writing Centers Association, visit the IWCA Web site at: <http://writingcenters.org/>.

Computer List

Writing center personnel with Internet access may be interested in a list devoted to discussion of writing center practice and theory. WCENTER is for anyone interested in writing centers. To subscribe to WCENTER, contact Kathleen Gillis at kathleen.gillis@ttu.edu.

WCENTER archives are available at http://lyris.acs.ttu.edu/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=wcenter&text_mode=0&lang=english.



International Writing Centers Association Research Grants Guidelines

Purpose: The International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) serves to strengthen the writing center community through all of its activities. To encourage the advancement of existing theories and methods and the creation of new knowledge and support of new colleagues, the IWCA offers its Research Grant and Graduate Research Grant. These grants support quantitative, qualitative, theoretical, and applied projects associated with writing center research and application. The Graduate Research Grant supports projects associated with a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation. While funding travel is not the primary purpose of these grants, we have supported travel as part of specific research activities (e.g., traveling to specific sites, libraries, or archives to conduct research) or to disseminate research findings that this grant also funded. However, this fund is not intended to support solely conference travel; instead, that travel must be part of some larger research program stipulated in the grant request.

Award: \$500–\$750

(Note: IWCA reserves the right to modify the award amount.)

Application: Complete application packets contain the following items (electronic applications accepted):

1. Cover letter: Addressed to the current IWCA President, the letter should do the following:
 - request IWCA's consideration of the application.
 - introduce the applicant and the project.
 - specify how grant monies will be used (materials, travel, conference registration, etc.) in an itemized budget.
2. Project Summary: 1–3 page summary of the proposed project, its research questions and goals, methods, schedule, current status, etc. Locate the project within the relevant, extant literature.
3. Curriculum Vitae

4. For Graduate Research Grant only—Letter of Support: Please include a support letter from the thesis/dissertation director.

Process: Proposal deadlines are January 1 and July 1. After each deadline, the IWCA President will forward copies of the complete packet to the Board for consideration, discussion, and vote. Applicants can expect notification within 4–6 weeks from receipt of application materials.

Stipulations:

1. IWCA support must be acknowledged in any presentation or publication of the resulting research findings.

2. Copies of resulting publications or presentations must be forwarded to IWCA in the care of the Executive Secretary.

3. Recipients must submit a final project report to the IWCA Board, in care of the Executive Secretary, due within 12 months of receipt of grant monies. If the project extends more than one year, recipients must file a progress report to the Executive Secretary at the one-year point.

4. Recipients are strongly encouraged to submit a manuscript coming out of the supported research to one of the two IWCA-affiliated publications, *The Writing Lab Newsletter* or *The Writing Center Journal*, or to the IWCA Press, with the understanding that they are willing to work with the editor(s) and reviewer(s) to revise the manuscript for potential publication.

For information or to discuss the project's fit to the award's guidelines, contact the current IWCA President. Names and addresses of the President and Board members are available on the IWCA Homepage at <http://writingcenters.org/>.



IWCA Honor Roll

Muriel Harris Outstanding Service Award

- 1984 Muriel Harris
1987 Joyce Kinkead
1991 Jeanette Harris
1994 Lady Falls Brown
1997 Byron Stay
2000 Jeanne Simpson
2003 Pamela Childers

Outstanding Scholarship Awards

- 1985 Stephen North, “The Idea of a Writing Center”
Donald A. McAndrew and Thomas J. Reigstad, *Training Tutors for Writing Conferences*
- 1987 Edward Lotto, “The Writer’s Subject is Sometimes a Fiction”
Irene Lurkis Clark, *Teaching in a Writing Center Setting*
- 1988 John Trimbur, “Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?”
Muriel Harris, *Teaching One-to-One*
- 1989 Jeanette Harris and Joyce Kinkead, “Computers, Computers, Computers”
- 1990 Richard Behm, “Ethical Issues in Peer Tutoring”
Lisa Ede, “Writing as a Social Process”
Pamela B. Farrell, *The High School Writing Center*
- 1991 Lex Runciman, “Defining Ourselves: Do We Really Want to Use the Word ‘Tutor?’”
Jeanne Simpson and Ray Wallace, eds., *The Writing Center: New Directions*
- 1992 Alice Gillam, “Writing Center Ecology: A Bakhtinian Perspective”
Muriel Harris, “Solutions and Trade-offs in Writing Center Administration”

- 1993 Anne DiPardo, “Whispers of Coming and Going’: Lessons from Fannie”
Meg Woolbright, “The Politics of Tutoring: Feminism Within the Patriarchy”
- 1994 Michael Pemberton, *Ethics Column in Writing Lab Newsletter*
- 1995 Christina Murphy, “The Writing Center and Social Constructionist Theory”
Joan A. Mullin and Ray Wallace, eds., *Intersections: Theory-Practice in the Writing Center*
- 1996 Peter Carino, “Theorizing the Writing Center: An Uneasy Task”
Joe Law and Christina Murphy, eds., *Landmark Essays on Writing Centers*
- 1997 Peter Carino, “Open Admissions and the Construction of Writing Center History: A Tale of Three Models”
Christina Murphy, Joe Law, and Steve Sherwood, eds., *Writing Centers: An Annotated Bibliography*
- 1998 Nancy Grimm, “The Regulatory Role of the Writing Center: Coming to Terms with a Loss of Innocence”
- 1999 Neal Lerner, “Drill Pads, Teaching Machines, Programmed Texts: Origins of Instructional Technology In Writing Centers”
Eric Hobson, ed., *Wiring the Writing Center*
- 2000 Elizabeth Boquet, “‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions”
Nancy Maloney Grimm, *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*
- 2001 Neal Lerner, “Confessions of a First-Time Writing Center Director”
Cindy Johaneck, *Composing Research: A Contextualist Paradigm for Rhetoric and Composition*
- 2002 Valerie Balester and James C. McDonald, “A View of Status and Working Conditions: Relations Between Writing Program and Writing Center Directors”
Jane Nelson and Kathy Evertz, eds., *The Politics of Writing Centers*
- 2003 Sharon Thomas, Julie Bevins, and Mary Ann Crawford, “The Portfolio Project: Sharing Our Stories”
Paula Gillespie, Alice Gillam, Lady Falls Brown, and Byron Stay, eds., *Writing Center Research: Extending the Conversation*

- 2004 Neal Lerner, "Writing Center Assessment: Searching for the 'Proof' of Our Effectiveness"
Michael A. Pemberton and Joyce Kinkead, eds. *The Center Will Hold*
- 2005 Margaret Weaver, "Censoring What Tutors' Clothing 'Says': First Amendment Rights/Writes Within Tutorial Space"
Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth, eds. *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*
- 2006 Anne Ellen Geller, "Tick-Tock, Next: Finding Epochal Time in The Writing Center"
Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman, eds. *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring*



IWCA Graduate Student Research Award Recipients

- 1986 Evelyn J. Posey, "Microcomputers, Basic Writing, and the Writing Center"
- 1987 Mary Kilmer, "Writing Centers and Content-Area Courses"
- 1989 James Bell, "Perceptions and Behaviors of Writing Center Tutors"
- 1991 Eric Hobson, "Centering Composition Instruction: The Roles of Writing Centers in Composition Programs"
- 1995 Deborah D'Agati, "Writing Center Tutor Training and Classroom Response Groups"
- Neal Lerner, "Teaching and Learning in a University Writing Center: An Ethnographic Study"
- 1996 Stuart Blythe, "Conceptualizing the Technologies of Writing Center Practice"
- 1999 Anne E. Geller, "'A Big Tangled Mess': New Graduate Student Tutors Reflect on their Experiences in the Writing Center"
- 2001 Eliza Drewa, "Reconstructing Practice, Reconstructing Identity: How Tutors Move from Orthodoxy to Informed Flexibility"
- Sarah Mitzel, "A Descriptive Study of the Interpersonal Concerns of Writing Center Users,"
- Melissa Nicolas (Dunbar), "Feminization of Writing Centers: Fact and/or Fiction"
- 2002 Kerri Jordan, "Power and Empowerment in Writing Center Conferences"
- Francien Rohrbacher, "Are Writing Centers Polite? An Exploration of the Patterns and Effectiveness of Politeness in Writing Center Tutorials"
- 2003 Rebecca Day, "Tutoring Deaf Students"
- Katie Levin, "How are the Educational Epistemologies of Tutors Constructed and Enacted in Writing Centers?"
- 2004 Karen Rowan, "Graduate Student Administrators and Administrative Professional Development in the Writing Center"
- Amanda Beth Godbee, "Outside the Center and Inside the Home: Exploring Relationships Among Environment, Community, and Effective Tutoring"
- 2005 Mary Pyron, "The Effects of a Writing Center for Helping Secondary Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students Achieve Academic Success"
- Jessica Clark, "An Investigation of the Quality and Quantity of Collaboration in Writing Center Tutorials"



IWCA Research Grant Award Recipients

- 1999 Irene Clark, "Student-Tutor Perspectives on the Directive/Non-Directive Continuum"
- 2000 Beth Rapp Young, "The Relationship Between Individual Differences in Procrastination, Peer Feedback, and Student Writing Success"
Elizabeth Boquet, "A Study of the Rhode Island College Writing Center"
- 2001 Carol Chalk, "Gertrude Buck and the Writing Center"
Neal Lerner, "Searching for Robert Moore"
Bee H. Tan, "Formulating an Online Writing Lab Model for Tertiary ESL Students"
- 2002 Julie Eckerle, Karen Rowan, and Shevaun Watson, "From Graduate Student to Administrator: Practical Models for Mentorship and Professional Development in Writing Centers and Writing Programs."
- 2005 Pam Cobrin, "The Influence of Tutor Visions of Revised Student Work"
Frankie Condon, "An Extracurriculum for Writing Centers"
Michele Eodice, "An Extracurriculum for Writing Centers"
Neal Lerner, "Investigating the Histories of The Writing Laboratory at University of Minnesota General College and the Writing Clinic at Dartmouth College"
Gerd Brauer, "Establishing a Transatlantic Discourse on Grade School Writing (and Reading Center) Pedagogy"
Paula Gillespie and Harvey Kail, "Peer Tutor Alumni Project"
Z. Z. Lehmberg, "The Best Job on Campus"
- 2006 Tammy Conard-Salvo, "Beyond Disabilities: Text to Speech Software in the Writing Center"
Diane Dowdey and Frances Crawford Fennessy, "Defining Success in the Writing Center: Developing a Thick Description"
Francis Fritz and Jacob Blumner, "Faculty Feedback Project"
Karen Keaton Jackson, "Making Connections: Exploring Relationships for Africam American and Other Students of Color"
Sarah Nakamura, "International and US-educated ESL Students in the Writing Center"



Information For the Authors

The Writing Center Journal's primary purpose is to publish articles, reviews, and announcements of interest to writing center personnel. We therefore invite manuscripts that explore issues or theories related to writing center dynamics or administration. We are especially interested in theoretical articles and in reports of research related to or conducted in writing centers. In addition to administrators and practitioners from college and university writing centers, we encourage directors of high school and middle school writing centers to submit manuscripts.

Guidelines for Submission

1. Manuscripts should be between 4,000 and 8,000 words and should include a list of works cited. Manuscripts should follow the NCTE Guidelines for Non-sexist Use of Language and the MLA Handbook, 6th edition.
2. Submissions to *WCJ* should be made via e-mail as an MS Word attached file to both nlerner@mit.edu and eboquet@mail.fairfield.edu.
3. Manuscripts judged by the editors to be appropriate for the journal are submitted for blind review to two external readers. Approximately fifty percent of manuscripts submitted to *WCJ* are sent out for review. Manuscripts are accepted for review with the understanding that they have not been submitted or published elsewhere.
4. Receipt of a manuscript is acknowledged with an e-mail message. Authors are notified of decisions on the disposition of manuscripts within 8–10 weeks of submission.
5. Copyright of all articles published in *The Writing Center Journal*, including the right to reproduce them in any form or media, is assigned solely to *WCJ*.

For additional information, go to www.ou.edu/wcj.