

# THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E W T T L E R

Volume 33, Number 6

Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing

February, 2009

## — FROM THE EDITOR —

The articles in this month's issue of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* focus on expanding the reach of the center and broadening our tutors' perspectives and tutoring abilities. When confronted with the reality of welcoming a new group of non-traditional students to their center, Lauren Fitzgerald, Natasha Kohl, Liesl Schwabe, and Allison Smith had to reconsider how to accommodate those students. This required not only additional training for their homogeneous tutoring staff, who had an inadequate understanding of the needs of these students, but also a revision of the center's publicity materials.

Just in time to start preparing tutors for students who will be bringing in research papers with Works Cited or Reference sections they will have questions about, Susan Mueller offers us an in-depth study of some problems with database citation generators. As Mueller shows us, depending on these programs to produce accurate MLA and APA citations can lead students astray. Mueller also offers suggestions for tutors as they help students understand and learn how to cite sources according to MLA or APA formats.

Finally, Rusty Carpenter details how he and his tutors integrated their online and face-to-face tutoring into multiple ways to interact with students—on-site, by phone, and online. Because of the length of these articles, we were unable to include our usual Tutors' Column this month, but we plan to include another column next month.

◆ Muriel Harris, editor

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## OPENING DOORS TO DIVERSE POPULATIONS—AND KEEPING THEM OPEN

◆ Lauren Fitzgerald, Natasha Kohl, Liesl Schwabe, Allison Smith  
Yeshiva College  
New York, NY

As recent issues of *WLN* attest, writing center workers try hard to open their doors to all writers from their institutions and communities. Along with success stories, however, there are cautionary tales. Writing center tutors risk becoming little more than what Harry Denny, summing up recent scholarship on this issue, calls “colonialist do-gooders” (4), their help furthering the regulation and acculturation of the academy. Steve Accardi puts it this way: “Too often as tutors, we are so concerned with changing and correcting student writing that we forget that we are erasing difference, washing out diversity with whiteness” (6). But at the same time that we need to be wary of trying to change the writers we serve, Nancy Baron and Nancy Grimm remind us that writing centers themselves can—and probably should—be transformed if their staffs confront the difficult issue of racial diversity (60, 61). Serving diverse populations, in other words, is not merely a matter of opening the doors to our centers but, to extend the metaphor slightly, rearranging the furniture if not remodeling the entire space.

The Yeshiva College Writing Center and its ongoing work with graduate students from our university's school of social work offers a particularly rich case in point. Like many writing centers, ours is staffed

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**Manuscripts:** Recommended length for articles is approximately 2500-3000 words, 1500 words for reviews and Tutors' Column essays, in MLA format. If possible, please send as attached files in an e-mail to submission@writinglabnewsletter.org.

primarily by undergraduate tutors who are traditional-aged, native speakers of English, and, like many students at private institutions, usually relatively privileged. And as at many centers, these tutors often work with writers much like themselves. The graduate social work students who tend to use the Center are, by contrast, often female, Latina or African American, working class, non-native speakers of English, sometimes twice or even three times the age of the undergraduate tutors.

At many writing centers, the race, class, language, and age differences between tutors and writers would be enough to warrant careful consideration. Our situation is made richer still, however, by the fact that our center is housed in the undergraduate men's college of Yeshiva University, the first and largest American institution of higher education under Jewish auspices. This means that Yeshiva College, the majority of the writers the Center serves, and all of the undergraduate peer tutors who work there are male and Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Judaism is one of the three main denominations of the Jewish religion. A diverse group of individuals make up the Orthodox community, but they are unified by a strict adherence to traditional Jewish law (*Halacha*). While our students live their lives in the secular world, they observe Jewish codes and rituals as part of their everyday existence. Most maintain Jewish dietary laws (*kasbrut*), pray three times a day, and actively engage in the study of religious texts on a daily basis. At Yeshiva College, half of students' academic schedules are devoted to religious instruction and half to secular studies. The religiously affiliated undergraduate context deeply informs many of the collaborative practices of the tutors and the broader institutional identity of the Center (Fitzgerald).

Moreover, it is only in a very complicated sense that the tutoring in our center risks "washing out diversity with whiteness" since the relationship of this Jewish majority culture to normative American culture and to whiteness is complex. Many scholars on Jewish identity see Jews' whiteness as a relatively recent phenomenon and historically contingent, not necessarily fixed (Jacobson). Yeshiva College students' relationship to whiteness is even more complex because they are visually marked as other: they wear *tzizit* (Jewish prayer fringes) and *yarmulkes* (Jewish religious skullcaps). As a result, at the same time that the undergraduate tutors might have preconceptions about social work students based on race, class, age, and gender, the social work students might also have preconceptions about tutors based on ethnicity and religion. As much as our Center needs to meet the needs of every writer from the University community, whether in religiously affiliated or non-sectarian programs (or both), we have also had to take care not to "wash out" aspects of the Center's identity that are derived from this Jewish context.

Though in many ways our situation is unique, we think that the lessons we've learned can apply to other writing centers. Addressing audience is typical in writing centers, but in our case it has raised serious questions about how to present the identities of tutors and writers. In particular, we discuss two kinds of changes we made to address the needs of social work students while also keeping in mind the undergraduates who make up our primary constituents: Assistant Director Allison Smith discusses the reshaping of our publicity materials, while the Director, Lauren Fitzgerald, and two faculty tutors, Tasha Kohl and Liesl Schwabe, describe a collaborative staff development project aimed at bridging the gap between our Center's populations. Our own complicated roles in this setting, as four women who belong to neither group, is worth acknowledging from the outset.

**Allison:** We began to think about how to open our doors even more to social work students by asking: "How can we expect these writers to understand what we do if our publicity materials don't address the ways that our Center works with them?" We looked at our brochure, and it became clear that it was directed to our undergraduate population and didn't consider the social work students.

After a revision, our latest social work brochure now includes a section on what *type* of help social work students should anticipate, so that they don't come to sessions with unrealistic expectations, only to be disappointed. For example, a section of the brochures begins, "The Writing Center has an educa-

tional mission: Instead of doing your writing, editing, or proofreading for you, tutors will teach you how to do this work on your own.” Because it has been years since many of the returning students have written an academic paper, we also included planning tips and ideas about what to bring to the Writing Center.

We also realized that our publicity materials didn’t feature pictures of writers who look like our social work students. We thought this problem would be remedied by the inclusion of a clip-art drawing of a woman, but we had neglected to notice that this woman was represented as white. Richard Dyer, who focuses on race, gender, and sexuality in visual representation, points out the problems with assuming a white norm in the representational. He argues that because white figures are the standard in Western press, advertising, film, and television, they problematically come to represent not just white people but all people (3). By featuring only white writers and tutors in publicity materials, we were unwittingly contributing to the exclusionary system that Dyer describes.

As we continue to develop our publicity materials, we realize that, like most writing centers, we need to be ever mindful of how we represent our Center so as not to limit perceptions about whom we serve. At the end of the Spring 2006 semester, we created a new full-color brochure and a sign for the entrance of the Writing Center. The faces of social work students were conspicuously absent from both because the photographs for the brochure and sign were taken when many of the social work students were at their jobs, a point we failed to consider when we arranged for the photographer. The updates to our Web pages ([www.yu.edu/writingcenter](http://www.yu.edu/writingcenter)), sign, and social work brochure importantly now feature the faces of social work students. We continue to work on ways that our promotional materials can reflect a sense of all of our students. When a campus newspaper recently featured an article on our Center’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we made certain that the reporter interviewed both undergraduate and social work students. These experiences and the resulting publicity materials remind us that our work in reaching out to all the populations we serve is by no means complete and is very much a task in progress.

**Lauren:** As important as it is to get students into the Center with good PR, it’s just as crucial that the staff be prepared when they arrive. When social work students first began using our Center on a regular basis a number of years ago, this was not yet the case. Not familiar with the conventions of social work papers or APA citation style, many of the tutors were unsure what these students needed to accomplish in their assignments. Others were surprised, even shocked, that these writers, as students accepted to a graduate program, did not have greater mastery over English.

Unsure how to proceed, I decided that the easiest solution would be to hire faculty tutors already prepared to work with this population. On the one hand, these tutors provided more expertise at times that would better fit social work students’ schedules. On the other, as an outspoken undergraduate tutor let me know, bringing in more faculty tutors over the years as the demand increased began to transform the primarily undergraduate (not to mention Jewish and male) identity of the Center. Moreover, contrary to my initial assumptions, some of the undergraduate tutors wanted to expand their horizons and work with these students; as they did so, several social work students started to seek them out.

So our question became “How to prepare the undergraduate tutors to work with social work students?” One answer emerged as part of a relatively new observation component of our tutor educa-

*“ [U]nlike opening doors or remodeling, accommodating diverse student populations isn’t a one-shot proposition. ”*

# TAKE NOTE

## FLORIDA REGIONAL WRITING CENTER CONFERENCE

Call for Proposals

April 17-18, 2009

Tampa, Florida

*"Re-Visioning the Writing Center"*

As most writing centers insist, and many first year composition students recite in their sleep, all writing is rewriting. At the beginning of 2009, as we hope for the best in the face of budget cuts and confront questions of how to quantify the value of humanities – how can we rewrite our place within Academia? What do we as directors, tutors, and instructors have in our sights for the upcoming year? Consider the specific issues that Florida writing centers must confront, the way we are seen in our various institutions, the way we would like to be viewed, and strategies for gaining greater visibility.

Please contact the U. of South Florida Writing Center Coordinator, Kate Pantelides (phone # 813 974 9720, [kpanteli@mail.usf.edu](mailto:kpanteli@mail.usf.edu)), if you have any questions.

Submission Guidelines

There will be three presentation formats: 20-minute individual presentations, hour-long institutional panels, or round-table discussions. Please indicate which format you would prefer in your proposal.

All submissions must be received no later than Friday, February 27th. Creative presentations are highly encouraged. Proposals should be no more than 350 words. Please e-mail all proposals as an attachment to [kpanteli@mail.usf.edu](mailto:kpanteli@mail.usf.edu). Please include your name, institution, level, address, e-mail, and phone number at the top of the proposal. Additional conference information will be posted at [www.usf.edu/writing](http://www.usf.edu/writing).

tion program: because of scheduling constraints, many new tutors observed faculty tutors, sometimes when they were working with social work students. Discussions I had with Tasha and Liesl about their mentoring undergraduate tutors led to a more formalized workshop that they designed and led and which aimed to confront some of the anxieties possibly facing student tutors and to help these tutors understand the cultural and academic realities of much of Yeshiva's social work community.

**Tasha:** In conducting a workshop for the tutors, Liesl and I hoped to provide a space for them to voice their concerns and to give the two of us the opportunity to share practical tools for client validation that might improve tutoring sessions. We focused on two issues: 1) interpersonal interactions, particularly the stressors facing the average Yeshiva social work student; 2) the kinds of writing these students are likely to bring to the Center that are also most likely to make tutors uncomfortable.

Many of these social work students are older, have families for whom they are financially responsible, have been away from school for an extended period of time, are balancing work and school, and have faced a myriad of barriers because of their race, ethnicity, language, and economic status. These points of stress often accompany student tutoring sessions as social work students are frequently insecure about their writing and are often preoccupied by external concerns. It therefore becomes imperative to help peer tutors develop an awareness about the issues facing their clients. Liesl and I felt that by sharing our experiences with the tutors and by offering them concrete tools to make their clients feel more comfortable, tutoring sessions would ultimately become more productive for both tutor and client.

At first, we briefly discussed the importance of eye contact, greetings and introductions, and the possibility of asking some general questions about workload that might help the writer to release some of the anxiety that often accompanies the initial tutoring session. We reminded the tutors that as obvious as these techniques sound, they can be validating for writers and help both parties better prepare for a session. We then asked the tutors who had previously worked with the social work students to share some of their experiences.

I had assumed that race would be the primary point of distance between tutor and client, and many of my discussion questions tended towards this assumption. However, many of the anxieties the young men expressed emphasized the age and gender difference of their clients, as many of the social work writers are women often two or three times their age. The tutors expressed discomfort at having to discuss writing which concerned personal subjects they could not relate to, in part because of the traditional deference between young people and their elders and between men and women in Jewish Orthodox culture. I realize now that I had constructed the workshop based on my own assumptions about our tutors, which caused me to anticipate a different response. At the same time, discussing concerns about age and gender is often easier than admitting racial anxieties, and I do still believe that race must remain an important discussion point with our tutors even if it is not their first concern.

**Liesl:** In my part of the workshop, I wanted to address anxiety undergrad tutors may have about asking what could feel like overtly personal questions in helping a student complete assignments, many of which emphasize acknowledging an individual as part of a larger whole and require students to locate themselves within a wider cultural framework. Often, this is the first time these students have been required to do autobiographical writing, which can be understandably intimidating, particularly if sharing it with a writing center tutor. Many of these essays also focus on experiences of racism, classism, and sexism. Therefore, the students are often not only exploring their experiences growing up or raising a family, but also examining their personal lives through the lens of discrimination.

This situation contrasted sharply with what I understand to be the undergraduate tutors' typical experience of working with other undergraduate writers; in these cases even personal assignments often cover common ground. For this reason, in response to whatever repetitions, tangents, or other writing issues

might surface, the tutors usually seem comfortable asking more pointedly personal questions in order to help edge the writer towards a more comprehensive essay.

We reminded the tutors about the necessity of jointly consulting the assignment requirements and components. Some of the more experienced peer tutors provided important examples of sessions in which referencing the guidelines helped them to phrase (and rephrase) what could have otherwise felt like invasively personal questions. I realized that some of the newer undergrad tutors had simply not yet had the chance to work with any social work students. The anecdotes shared allowed us all to better orient the newer tutors with a more thorough sense of what to expect.

We were able to conclude by discussing the fact that precisely because the approach to and content of many of the social work writing assignments fall outside the perimeters of what many undergrad tutors are familiar with, tutors must defer to the writers as the experts in their own fields. While this is the intentional undercurrent which informs all of our tutoring sessions, the interactions with social work students help to remind student and faculty tutors alike how much more confidence the writer can gain when the tutor must articulate the questions that will ideally serve to illuminate the writer's own sense of purpose.

Furthermore, because so many of the social work students are juggling extensive responsibilities outside of school as well as anxieties about writing, the importance of this kind of validation helps to ground the writer in his or her own authority. It also can bring into the open some of the apprehensions felt by both the writer and the tutor, which is necessarily the first step in alleviating some of them. Working to establish this kind of dynamic, in which both writer and tutor share an understanding of their symbiosis for the sake of the writing, has been, at Yeshiva College, both particularly challenging and rewarding.

By addressing the needs of writers from the school of social work, and in the process confronting some of the difficult issues involved with diversity, our Writing Center has been changed in crucial ways and on multiple levels, including how the Center, the tutors, and its writers are represented and how tutors and writers communicate with each other and reflect on their work. But unlike opening doors or remodeling, accommodating diverse student populations isn't a one-shot proposition. As Baron and Grimm say, this transformation "is the sort of goal that needs to be kept visible on the horizon for a long, long time" (75). We have to be especially mindful of this goal not least because of the constant turnover of writing center clientele and tutors (Tasha, Liesl, and the peer tutors who attended their workshop have all moved on). As a result, the knowledge we have gained through this process needs to be constantly rediscovered by new tutors, both undergraduate and faculty. ♦

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## DATABASE CITATION GENERATORS: GENERATING WHAT, EXACTLY?

◆ Susan Mueller

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Like ours, your writing center has probably seen this scenario many times: the timid freshman (or harried junior) brings in her research paper for review. She is concerned about the usual issues (e.g., correctness, evidence), but when you get to the References or the Works Cited page, you are stopped cold. The citation page before you is incomprehensible. The pieces are there, but they are in such strange order and with such an odd assortment of extraneous elements that you wonder what this student might have been thinking. You politely ask about these entries, and then comes another shock: “Oh, I got the citation from EBSCO with the article. Isn’t it great?”

Students see EBSCO citation generators as an easy, mechanical way to create References or Works Cited pages. While they are correct about both the ease and the mechanical nature of the process, they are wrong to assume that the result will be an error-free page. Often, the citation is clearly wrong and doesn’t respect the formatting conventions of the discipline, any discipline. However, this database-generated citation also provides an opportunity—a teaching moment, if you will—to guide the student into looking carefully at the citation, to suggest revision strategies that accord with appropriate documentation practices, and to illustrate that computers don’t absolve humans from the need for critical thinking. In order to do that, though, our tutors themselves must be able to view documentation critically and to understand that they must know *why* a documentation style works as it does in order to apply its rules correctly. This article will examine some samples from database citation generators, note how they do or do not align with documentation styles, and then consider how a tutor might approach this with the student/writer.

### DATABASES WITH CITATION GENERATORS

Many databases provide their users with formatted bibliographic information if the article is printed or emailed. EBSCO and ProQuest are two of these database providers. The user has the option of requesting that the citation be given in one of several different styles, among them MLA, APA, and AMA.

### MLA

MLA is taught in most high school English classes and is often regarded as the most user-friendly of the documentation styles, so students should have the ability to know whether the final entry is correct or not. The following entry was taken from page 230 of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*:

Youakim, Sami. “Work-Related Asthma.” *American Family Physician* 64 (2001): 1839-52. Health Reference Center. Gale. Bergen County Cooperative Lib. System, NJ. 12 Jan. 2002 <<http://www.galegroup.com/>>.

Notice that the appropriate URL (and the one given here) is the URL for the subscription service. It is neither the persistent link to the article nor the URL from the location bar. To quote *MLA Handbook for Readers of Research Papers, 6<sup>th</sup> edition*, “If you know the URL of the service’s homepage, give it, in angle brackets, immediately after the date of access, or you may simply end with the date of access” (Gibaldi 229). Compare this to the citation from EBSCO:

Youakim, Sami. “Work-Related Asthma.” *American Family Physician* 64.11 (01 Dec. 2001): 1839. Biomedical Reference Collection: Comprehensive. EBSCO. [Library name], [City], [State abbreviation]. 17 Apr. 2008 <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=byh&AN=5646278&site=ehost-live>>.  
<!--Additional Information:  
<Persistent link to this record: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=byh&AN=5646278&site=ehost-live>>  
End of citation-->

Comparing these citations, the differences are legion:

- The correct citation is double spaced, while the generated citation is single-spaced.
- Instead of showing the volume year (as the first citation does), the entire date (day/month/year) is given in the second entry.

- The MLA handbook citation has no issue number, but the database citation does. Since the article is *continuously paginated*, as the handbook points out, issue numbers are irrelevant to locating the article, so they are not included in the citation.
- The first citation gives the range of pages for the article. The second gives only the first page.
- Instead of giving the URL for the database or even the URL of the library database from which it was accessed, the second citation gives the *persistent link* for the article. The persistent link is given a second time in the additional information. [Note: a *persistent link* is not the same as the URL that appears in the location bar when the user has accessed the article. The location bar URL reflects the path that the user took to reach the article, and it won't necessarily work again. The persistent link is a permanent designation for that article, reliably returning its user to that article in the future.]

Now look at the same article entry taken from the ProQuest Medical Library database's citation:

Sami Youakim. "Work-related asthma. " *American Family Physician* 64.11 (2001): 1839-48. ProQuest Medical Library. ProQuest. \*\*\*INSERT Library name or system, City, State\*\*\*. 17 Apr. 2008 <<http://www.proquest.com/>>.

In this entry, the URL is correctly given and it is double spaced, both unlike the EBSCO example. However, this one also has its share of errors. To wit—

- The author's name is shown first-name-first rather than last-name-first.
- The periodical name is neither underlined nor italicized.
- The issue number is given even though the journal is continuously paginated.
- It is left justified rather than having a hanging indent.
- The page range is wrong.
- The database name should be underlined, and it is not.

These are not isolated examples. Of eight MLA citations randomly selected from two EBSCO searches, the average number of errors per entry was 3.38. None were double spaced. All included the persistent link, which is a gray area. MLA doesn't mention or require this. Of six MLA citations randomly selected from one ProQuest search, the average number of errors per entry was 5.83. Only one was double spaced, none had hanging indents, and the authors' names were all in first-name-first order.

## APA

The second documentation style that students commonly use is APA, used in the social sciences. The following citation is taken from page 279 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.* It is for an abstract retrieved from a database.

Fournier, M., de Ridder, D., & Bensing, J. (1999). **Optimism and adaptation to multiple sclerosis: What does optimism mean?** *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 22, 303-326. Abstract retrieved October 23, 2000, from PsycINFO database.

See ProQuest Medical Library's APA citation below:

Marijda Fournier, Denise de Ridder, Jozien Bensing. (1999). **Optimism and Adaptation to Multiple Sclerosis: What Does Optimism Mean?** *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 22(4), 303-326. Retrieved May 14, 2008, from ProQuest Medical Library database. (Document ID: 976886231).

This is closer to the correct citation than the MLA example, but there continue to be discrepancies between this and the APA manual. See below:

- Names are given completely with first-name-first, then last name, rather than last names given first with first initials.
- Every major word in the article's title is capitalized rather than only the first word.
- The issue number is included even though the journal is continuously paginated.
- It doesn't specify abstract, although I did retrieve an abstract.
- It gives a document ID, but going back to this database, there was no clear way to use it to find the article.

Like the MLA citations, the APA citations were flawed. Of ten APA citations taken randomly from one ProQuest search, the average number of errors per entry was 7.5. None of these entries used hanging indents, the authors' full names were used uniformly (rather than first initials), and their names were shown in first-name-first order. All were single spaced. None of the journal titles were in italics. EBSCO fared somewhat better. Of ten APA citations retrieved in two searches, the average number of errors per entry was 4.2. However, none of the entries was double spaced, and only the authors' first initials were given even when the article provided both first and middle names or both initials.

## AMA

American Medical Association documentation style is quite different from MLA or APA. It uses a citation-sequence method of documentation, which lists sources on the References page in their order of occurrence in the paper. AMA also uses abbreviated titles of journals as indicated in the *Abridged Index Medicus*, which is included in PubMed (a database published by the National Library of Medicine).

AMA style's perspective on citing format (i.e., print or online) is different from MLA's. Since the concern is the difference between versions, it matters whether an online article is a PDF file or an HTML file; a PDF file is an image of the print document and won't change, while HTML files may be corrected or amended. AMA style requires its users to give the version of the source that they used, but it is suspicious of URLs, especially those taken from location bars. It specifies users include the DOI (digital object identifier number) or the PMID (PubMed identification number), not the URL, when those identifiers are available. No date of access is required with either a DOI or a PMID (Iverson, et al. 65). While students adapt fairly easily to those general concepts, they still must understand the characteristics of the source (e.g., journal or magazine, paginated by issue or continuously paginated) in order to document it correctly. Therein lies the rub.

The following example was taken from page 65 of the *AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors, 10<sup>th</sup> edition*.

*Example:*

1. Kitajima TS, Kawashima SA, Watanabe Y. The conserved kinetochore protein shugoshin protects centromeric cohesion during meiosis. *Nature* 2004;427(6974):510-517. DOI:10-1038/nature02312.

Notice EBSCO's citation for this example below:

Kitajima T, Kawashima S, Watanabe Y. The conserved kinetochore protein shugoshin protects centromeric cohesion during meiosis. *Nature* [serial online]. February 05, 2004;427(6974):510-517. Available from: Biomedical Reference Collection: Comprehensive, Ipswich, MA. Accessed April 23, 2008.

<!--Additional Information:

Persistent link to this record: <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=byh&AN=12183937&site=ehost-live>>

End of citation-->

Once again, this is far different from the accepted AMA format:

- It has no citation number.
- It uses a hanging indent.
- It designates *Nature* as a serial online, but the article is a PDF copy of the print version.
- It uses the whole date, not the volume year.
- It gives the database, its city and state, the date of access, and the persistent link (as additional information) instead of the DOI.



As in the MLA and APA citations, errors occurred in varying degrees in the EBSCO AMA citations I examined. Of eight randomly selected entries from three searches, the average number of errors per entry was 5.75. All these entries had a hanging indent. There was also confusion about what constituted a serial online. ProQuest fared more poorly. Out of eight randomly selected AMA citations from three searches, the average number of errors per entry was 6.25. All authors' names were given fully (no use of initials) and were given in first-name-first order. DOIs were not properly cited. Unless the original article used *et al.* correctly and listed only part of the names, the database listed all authors, no matter how numerous.

Now, the databases do not necessarily expect writers to use their citations as they are. ProQuest provides the following statement and link at the bottom of the screen under !ATTENTION: "Ensure the accuracy and completeness of your bibliography by following these instructions." The link leads to a page of templates and examples that assume the user understands the characteristics of the periodical in question (e.g., continuously paginated). However, the templates are not easy to read and therefore not easy to use, and they are wrong in some aspects, such as capitalization. EBSCO has a similar link with equally problematic information. So there is better information in these databases, but it isn't provided in a way that a student can easily use. But what about a writing tutor?

### A WRITING TUTOR'S RESPONSE

Given the mantra of writing centers—to make better writers, not just better papers—the writing tutor has to find a way to make this problem comprehensible to this student, to use it as an opening for a lesson on citations. The student needs to understand what is wrong with the citation in order to correct it and to understand the underlying logic behind the change. Without this knowledge, documentation will never be more than a series of unrelated bits of information, and the user will likely never be capable of using documentation styles well, with or without a manual in hand. So what should a tutor do to help this student document properly?

In order to demonstrate to students that the citations they are using are wrong and guide them to ones that are correct, the tutor should (1) ascertain the writer's experience level with that style; (2) show the writer a correct example of the style, preferably using a reference; (3) refer to the underlying discipline (e.g., social sciences) in explaining this style to the writer, pointing out why these characteristics exist, (4) then use that example to guide the writer in comparing the two citations.

### DETERMINE THE WRITER'S EXPERIENCE LEVEL

First, the tutor needs to find out what the writer's actual experience is with this documentation style. How much does he know about this style and the information it requires? Does he understand the order? For example, a tutor might begin by chatting with the writer about his MLA experiences, asking specific questions about what he remembers about formatting, about volume numbers and pagination, about URLs. Responding to the tutor's questions should serve to refresh the writer's memory, making the subsequent transition from the incorrect citation to the correct one relatively easy.

### SHOW A CORRECT EXAMPLE

Showing the writer a correct citation is a good idea. This clarifies the student's thinking. If the writer has little experience with the documentation style at hand, then a correct example is critical to the writer's understanding of the problem. The tutor finds a correct citation of this style and goes over it with the writer, explaining each element and why it is there. (This would be a good opportunity to introduce a reference manual into the conversation, both to eliminate any questions about the citation's validity and to model the reference manual's use for the student.) The less experience the student has with a style, the more detailed and precise the tutor's description needs to be.

## TAKE NOTE

### EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ACADEMIC WRITING

Call for Proposals  
June 30-July 2, 2009  
Coventry, England  
*"The Roles of Writing  
Development in Higher  
Education and Beyond"*

The European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (EATAW) is a scholarly organization and listserv that brings together those involved or interested in the teaching, tutoring, research, administration, and development of academic writing in higher education in Europe. EATAW currently has some 600 members from all over the world (<<http://www.eataw.eu/>>). The EATAW 2009 conference website is <<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/eataw2009>>.

To submit a proposal for a presentation, workshop, round-table, or other type of contribution to the conference, please use the web-based abstract submission system on the 'Submit a Proposal' page of the EATAW 2009 conference website: <<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/eataw2009>>.

The original deadline for proposals was January 31, but the conference chair, Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams, has generously extended the deadline for *WLN* readers to February 18, 2009.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Writing Centers in Japan: A Colloquium

Tuesday, February 17, 2009  
University of Tokyo, Komaba  
Tokyo, Japan

The colloquium will be held at the Media Lab 2, 1st Floor, Building 18, Komaba Campus, The University of Tokyo., from 1-5 p.m. Presentations and discussions will be in English.

Faculty and tutors affiliated with, or interested in, writing centers in Japan or elsewhere are encouraged to attend. More information is available at the following URL: <<http://aless.ecc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/wcij2009.html>>.

If you wish to attend, please contact Professor Tom Gally, Komaba Organization for Educational Development, Managing Director, ALESS Program. Telephone: 03-5465-8744; e-mail: [cwpgally@mail.ecc.u-tokyo.ac.jp](mailto:cwpgally@mail.ecc.u-tokyo.ac.jp).

## REFERENCE DISCIPLINARY VALUES

As the tutor explains the citation to the student, she should relate it to the values of the discipline that uses this documentation style. This provides the student with a rationale for the differences between styles. It also gives the student a “big picture,” making the specifics of documenting easier for the student to remember and to accept.

For example, the tutor might explain the difference between APA’s treatment of authors’ names (last name, first initial) and MLA’s treatment (last name, first name) by referring to the difference between the social sciences and humanities. In the social sciences, the focus is on the research findings, not on the authors’ creativity or individuality, as it is in the humanities. Giving only a first initial shortens the author’s name and makes it less personal, therefore making the name less emphatic in APA than in MLA. In another example, the tutor might explain AMA’s organization of its References page (i.e., order of occurrence in the paper) by pointing out that AMA is a medical style. It emphasizes research findings, not authors, since the value of the findings must go beyond the authors’ work. Listing the sources in their order of occurrence on the References page de-emphasizes the authors’ names. AMA also regards the findings (i.e., the article’s content) as stable and lasting, which explains the permanent nature of its article identifiers, DOI and PMID.

## COMPARE CITATIONS

Once the tutor has gone over the correct example, she must segue back to the student’s citation. At this point, the tutor might ask the student to compare the two citations, element by element, explaining what he would keep, what he would discard, and what he would change in his original citation. As the student progresses, the tutor follows along, commending the student when his decisions are correct and interceding when they are not. This enables the student to implement what he has learned and to own the correct citation he develops.

## CONCLUSION

At present, databases such as EBSCO and ProQuest don’t effectively discriminate between various documentation styles. They mix and match conventions, such as using MLA’s hanging indent in an AMA example. These databases use their own internal formatting rather than looking to the standard disciplinary norms. Typically, the citations they provide to students reflect some of the characteristics of a citation style but not all, and they reflect no basic understanding of any style’s underlying assumptions. Pagination—either continuous or by volume, spacing, capitalization, presentation of dates—and links are all issues that seem to be in dispute here.

As flawed as these generated citations seem, they do provide opportunities to show students the basic workings of documentation and to enable students to identify errors generated by Web-based applications. Tutors must use these peculiarities to demonstrate the differences in styles to writers. No documentation formula releases its user from the thoughtful application of critical inquiry or careful scrutiny, but it can provide an opportunity to develop these skills with our support. ♦

♦  
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## WRITING CENTER DYNAMICS: COORDINATING MULTIMODAL CONSULTATIONS: THE UWC'S MULTIMODAL CONSULTATIONS

◆ *Rusty Carpenter*  
*University of Central Florida*  
*Orlando, FL*

Steven Johnson sees the machine not as an attachment to our bodies, but as an environment, a space to be explored (24). Likewise, the spaces that our writing centers now inhabit need exploration and explanation. Although as writing center practitioners and scholars we understand that we cannot necessarily replicate face-to-face (f2f) consultations in virtual writing spaces or even over the phone, our goal at the University of Central Florida (UCF) was to integrate these types of consultations into our existing system without compromising our mission statement and consulting philosophies. The synchronous nature of phone and online consultations supports the University Writing Center's (UWC) mission of helping to "foster the community of scholarship and shared leadership at UCF through peer consulting, a form of collaborative learning which involves students in each other's intellectual and academic development." The University Writing Center is a nonremedial peer consultant service for undergraduate and graduate students at UCF. Consultants work with writers at every stage of the writing process—from the prewriting stage to finalizing revisions.

In addition to our large main campus in Orlando, FL, UCF also has multiple regional campuses and several specialty campuses, including a hospitality management campus, film and digital media campus, and a health sciences campus, which will also include the new College of Medicine. As we added complexity to our busy face-to-face consultation services, it became necessary that we expand the UWC to keep up with UCF's growing student population of more than 48,000, as I discussed in "Using RoCs to Inform New Training Methods," a preliminary discourse analysis based on our pilot online writing lab, KnightOWL ("Using RoCs" 10).

In informal conversations around campus and in the UWC, students expressed their need for more accessible resources, including consultations. To address students' needs, we explored options for an online and phone consultation program. Regardless of campus or research travel, students would have access to this resource. In building our online and phone services into the UWC, we established "modes" of consultation, "resources which allow the simultaneous realization of discourses and types of (inter)action," as Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen help explain (21). Thus, the consultations at our UWC are highly multimodal, which also made the UWC a more dynamic place to coordinate. At times, consultants are online, but sometimes they work with students over the phone or f2f. For instance, a consultant might first consult f2f and the next hour over the phone, and the third hour online. Consultants and consultations are constantly changing and fluctuating. We wanted to appeal to students who were more comfortable having their consultations over the phone and others who would prefer an online chat. In both modes, the student and consultant work with the same document on the computer screen while discussing the writing over the phone or in our online chat space. We offer the phone and online consultations through our service that we have named "KnightOWL."

### KNIGHTOWL'S HISTORY

We began piloting KnightOWL during the fall 2005 semester with graduate thesis and dissertation writers. During the piloting stages, we offered online and phone consultations on a space-available basis when there were openings in our f2f schedule. During 2005-2006, KnightOWL helped 42 writers in 81 consultations. After the year-long pilot, we opened our KnightOWL consultations up to all students. During the fall 2006 semester, our first full semester with KnightOWL, we offered 61 hours of online and phone consultations in addition to 163 f2f hours per week, a substantial increase. Our UWC is largely run by students for students, and we wanted KnightOWL to be no different. The transition to a consultant-run system, as opposed to a system managed by UWC administrators, was one that we put a great deal of thought into before implementing. Our goal was to create a program that would expand and complement our current f2f consultation options, making the UWC a more dynamic space to coordinate. The process required us to integrate technology into the UWC in such a way as to create harmony among consultants and administrators, establishing a new virtual space that follows the same policies and philosophies as our physical space. Integrating this new practice into the UWC would not be an easy

task. If it was going to happen, it was up to UWC administrators to ensure a smooth transition, or to create “harmony,” staying in tune with Beth Boquet’s theme of “noise,” among our writing consultants (xiv), the kind that comes from f2f consultations within the walls of our center. Technology is a powerful resource. “The very presence of a certain technique or technology can alter the goals and aims of a society as well as the way people think in articulating their ideas,” Thomas J. Misa explains (265). KnightOWL consultations not only affected the way students visited the UWC. They also affected the culture of the UWC, changing the way consultants interacted with each other and students.

### **THE CHALLENGE: INTEGRATE KNIGHTOWL CONSULTATIONS INTO THE EXISTING SYSTEM**

When we began offering KnightOWL consultations, students contacted me directly, and I scheduled them manually. We were dealing with a limited number of students—thesis and dissertation writers. The challenge we faced was to integrate KnightOWL consultations into our system. For face-to-face consultations, we use what we call our “Online Scheduler.” The Scheduler allows students to book appointments online from any computer, and students can schedule appointments as they see fit. Consultants can also check their appointments through the Online Scheduler. From an administrative standpoint, we found it important that both students and consultants were able to schedule, view, and manage all appointment modes—f2f, online, and phone. We felt that this would help consultants embrace the new system and have an active voice in the transition process.

### **THE SOLUTION: CREATE A MORE DYNAMIC VIRTUAL SPACE**

Using the existing Online Scheduler, we had to create a more dynamic virtual space where we could schedule KnightOWL appointments for both phone and online consultations. It’s important to mention scheduling first before we discuss integrating KnightOWL consultations into the system. The consultants submit schedule requests at the beginning of the semester, blocking out times when they’re in class and time for other commitments. I then build the schedule for internal use, using seven consultation modes, according to the level of the consultants. Graduate consultants work with graduate students, and undergraduate consultants with undergraduate students. Consultants are scheduled to work each mode during the day; the modes are face-to-face (at the graduate or undergraduate level), phone, and online. A basic schedule would include graduate, undergraduate, and desk consultants. We schedule KnightOWL consultations during popular times of the day (i.e., afternoon and early evening) or as we have the staff available. Here’s a description of each of the seven consultation modes:

*Graduate:* Graduate f2f consultation

*Undergraduate:* Undergraduate f2f consultation

*Desk:* Manages the flow of traffic in the UWC, answers phones, helps students sign in, and makes KnightOWL or f2f appointments

*KnightOWL Online Undergraduate:* Undergraduate synchronous online consultation

*KnightOWL Phone Undergraduate:* Undergraduate phone consultation

*KnightOWL Online Graduate:* Graduate synchronous online consultation

*KnightOWL Phone Graduate:* Graduate phone consultation

In a given hour, we might have a Graduate consultant for f2f, an undergraduate for f2f, a desk consultant, and both phone and online KnightOWL consultants working concurrently in the UWC. Internally, the consultants are scheduled from 9 a.m. – 8 p.m., with a maximum shift of five hours for a consultant. Using this schedule, consultants know exactly what mode they’re consulting in and for how long. They can also help one another retrieve papers, transfer phone calls within the UWC (for KnightOWL phone consultations), and answer student questions. On the public, student side, all hours are entered into the Online Scheduler so that students can book appointments on their own. The electronic schedule mirrors the

internal schedule but is publicly accessible. Once the schedule is set, it is set for the semester. Students can see whether there are f2f, online, or phone consultations available during any hour, day, or week.

When we opened KnightOWL consultations to all students, we built generic KnightOWL consultants by modality and status. A KnightOWL consultant might be scheduled as “KnightOWL Phone Graduate” in the system. The corresponding consultant on our internal schedule would take the consultations, and the student would know, through scheduling on the Online Scheduler, that the consultation would be over the phone or online. That is, f2f appointments are made with named consultants, but KnightOWL appointments are made based on the student’s modal preference (online or phone) and consultant availability. We also had to arrange a system for phone and online writers—one where we could assure reliable service.

## PHONE

Students who schedule phone consultations via the Online Scheduler call the UWC’s main line just before their scheduled consultation. The desk consultant answers the phone at the front desk and transfers the call to the KnightOWL station, which is in a separate part of the UWC. The consultant takes the phone consultation from there. Important to the process is the reliability of the desk consultant. We needed the third party to field the phone call and make sure that the KnightOWL phone consultant is prepared to take the call. The desk person is responsible for transferring the writer and ensuring that the writer’s call does not disconnect, which would be frustrating for the student.

## ONLINE

KnightOWL online consultations take place in a secure chatroom hosted by LivePerson ([www.LivePerson.com](http://www.LivePerson.com)). To sign in, a student goes to our home page ([www.uwc.ucf.edu](http://www.uwc.ucf.edu)), clicks on “Scheduler,” and then looks for the “Click Here to Chat With Us Live!” portal that takes the student to the chat area where the consultant is waiting. When students sign in, they go into a virtual waiting room, and the consultant then accepts the student. Different from WebCT’s chat feature, LivePerson offers a secure area where consultants and writers can work without fear of interruption. Consultants are still working from the UWC, but UCF students can have their appointments from anywhere in the world, even Afghanistan (Carpenter, “Enhancing Diversity Initiatives”). Students sign into the chat area, complete a brief pre-chat survey, which includes identification information, and the online consultation begins.

## STUDENT SUBMISSIONS, CONSULTING PHILOSOPHIES, AND KNIGHTOWL

It was important that our KnightOWL online consultations were synchronous. Our fear with asynchronous consultations was that they would not encourage a peer-to-peer dialogue about the student’s writing. Joanna Castner also articulates this concern with asynchronous consultations in that a “lack of dialogue between consultant and client promotes the wrong idea about the goal of writing centers and the nature of the writing process itself” (120). The ongoing dialogue is what Stephen North simply calls “talking,” the essence of writing center methods (443). We feared that the asynchronous consultation, although used successfully at other writing centers throughout the country, would have promoted more directive discourse than the supportive, peer-to-peer discourse that consultants employ on a regular basis.

For all KnightOWL consultations, student writers submit their papers to a designated e-mail address. All consultants have access to the papers there and can pull them at any time. Consultants will typically pull a paper at the beginning of the consultation, not before. This process is similar to our f2f policies in that



### INTERNATIONAL WRITING CENTERS WEEK-2009

Kathryn Nielsen-Dube, a member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) Board, reminds us that International Writing Center Week this year is February 8-14. (The celebration is always the week that includes Valentine’s Day.)

For those not yet familiar with this celebration, she explains: “International Writing Centers Week is an opportunity for people who work in writing centers to celebrate writing and [for everyone on campus] to become more aware of the important role of their individual campus/community writing center. The ‘inaugural’ celebration began in 2006 and is celebrated in writing centers around the world.”

We are all invited to share anecdotes, ideas, and successes from previous years by posting to the WCenter listserv.

consultants do not review papers before the scheduled appointment time. The student and consultant work through the paper together, synchronously.

## HOW OUR CONSULTANTS HAVE RESPONDED

Initially, consultants were hesitant about the new consultation modes. Weekly UWC seminars and online training discussions revealed that some consultants were reluctant to embrace the online mode especially. For example, one consultant mentioned that she felt disconnected from the student when consulting online. To encourage an open dialogue, consultants are free to make suggestions for the system and offer to help revise existing resources. We've also integrated new KnightOWL training methods into our consultant training sessions, weekly Friday seminars, and professional development projects that mirror our f2f training. This way, consultants can draw parallels and discuss differences between KnightOWL and f2f consulting, which has become an important part of our training program. As with any transition, we have experienced some technological glitches, overlap, and miscommunication. This is to be expected with any new program; however, as a writing center, we know that we must quickly learn from these experiences and adapt our practices.

Helpful policies, procedures, and documents have come from consultant suggestions. For instance, we now have detailed websites for KnightOWL phone and online consultations. Based on consultant feedback, we also have standard protocols for student e-mails and paper attachments. Students put their names and appointment times in the subject lines when they e-mail their papers. We also developed a series of KnightOWL-specific handouts for students, which consultants refer to and distribute when students have questions. A graduate student in a technical writing course also revised our website based on her personal research and KnightOWL's needs. With the help of UCF's Digital Image Processing Lab, we were able to develop a logo for KnightOWL as well, and the image has become a mascot for the UWC at UCF.

As students continue to use the services and praise our efforts, consultants are increasingly able to see the value in having a program that supports all students regardless of location. In fact, consultants work with UCF students in other parts of the country as well. Relocated students often book a series of KnightOWL appointments throughout the semester. One UCF student had a phone consultation from her houseboat on the coast of Florida. Other UCF students have used KnightOWL from Michigan and Georgia. Without KnightOWL, these students, as well as many others, would not have writing support available. It is critical, with a growing campus and traveling researchers, that we continue to build KnightOWL and other programs like it so students, regardless of location and distance, will have the same access to writing support as those students living in our city and on our campus. Currently, UCF houses approximately 8,100 students on campus or in campus-affiliated housing. UCF also boasts a large graduate population, at 7,100 students. To meet students' needs, in a given year we will employ approximately 40 consultants.

Additional consultation "modes" undoubtedly added complexity to the coordination of an already busy UWC. In some ways, adding these modes even changed the language of our center and the way we think about our work. Consultants transition quickly from mode to mode; that is, from f2f to phone to online. They also discuss strategies from consulting students in these different modes during our weekly seminars and online discussions. I attribute these developments not only to our capable staff but also to the time we put into developing (and experimenting with) our system.

Our UWC has undergone significant changes since the pilot stages of KnightOWL. With the addition of online and phone consultations, we plan to implement even more new scheduling software into our center, which will allow consultants and students to have more control over their searching and scheduling options.

The new system will allow for multiple “centers,” as they are called in the new system (TutorTrac). Students will be able to search for online and phone availabilities specifically, without sorting through f2f options.

Our center is now more reliant on technology, but it is technology that allowed us to grow beyond our four walls and into an active and more dynamic virtual space. When talking about building a more dynamic UWC, we’re not only making the “joyful noise” that Boquet describes. We also create what Don DeLillo might consider “white noise,” the chatter generated through media and technology (310). However, this noise can also be joyful if we embrace forms of technology for the advantages they afford us. Technology allows us to expand and intertwine our services in ways we never thought possible, enmeshing f2f, phone, and online services seamlessly. Students once limited to f2f consultations now have a dynamic array of consultation options, facilitated on a daily basis primarily through their peer consultants. Students benefit from the more dynamic UWC, one with choices that fit the student’s preferred mode and schedule. The dynamic UWC is a more challenging place and space to coordinate, but the rewards are well worth it. Consultants have embraced the dynamics of the UWC, and students have come to rely upon and expect multimodal consultations. Writing center practitioners exploring options for online or even phone consultations should consider the dynamics involved as they build or expand their own resources. The structure offered here may be widely applicable beyond our UWC to other expanding centers around the country. ♦

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# CALENDAR FOR WRITING CENTER ASSOCIATIONS

**February 7, 2009:** Arizona Writing Centers Symposium, in Phoenix, AZ

**Contact:** Jeanne Simpson: Jeanne.simpson@asu.edu; Registration website: <<http://studentsuccess.asu.edu/rsvp/>>.



**February 19-20, 2009:** Middle East—North Africa Writing Centers Alliance, in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

**Contact:** MENWCA newsletter link on the website: <<http://tcc.qatar.tamu.edu/symposium.aspx>>.



**February 21, 2009:** So. California Writing Centers Conference, in Moorpark, CA

**Contact:** Kathryn Adams: kadams@vcccd.edu; 805-378-1400, x 1696.



**February 26-28, 2009:** Southeastern Writing Center Association, in Greensboro, NC

**Contact:** Hope Jackson, SWCA Chairperson: 336-334-7764; jacksonw@ncat.edu; Conference website: <[cas.ncat.edu/~swca](http://cas.ncat.edu/~swca)>.



**February 28, 2009:** Northern California Writing Centers Association, in Gilroy, CA

**Contact:** Natasha Oehlman: natasha\_oehlman@csumb.edu; 831-582-4614 or Kimberly Smith: ksmith@gavilan.edu. Conference website: <<http://www.gavilan.edu/writing/NCWCAConference2009.html>>.



**March 27-28, 2009:** Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in York, PA

**Contact:** Cynthia Crimmins (crimmin@ycp.edu) or Dominic Delli Carpini (dcarpini@ycp.edu). Conference website: <[www.ycp.edu/lrc/mawca2009](http://www.ycp.edu/lrc/mawca2009)>.



**April 2-4, 2009:** South Central Writing Centers Association, in Georgetown, TX

**Contact:** Elisabeth Piedmont-Marton (piedmonte@southwestern.edu) and Cole Bennett (bcb00b@acu.edu).



**April 3-4, 2009:** East Central Writing Centers Association, in West Lafayette, IN

**Contact:** Linda Bergmann (lbergmann@purdue.edu) or Tammy Conard-Salvo (tosalvo@purdue.edu). Conference website: <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/ecwca>>.



**April 4-5, 2009:** Northeast Writing Centers Association, in Hartford, CT

**Contact:** Katherine Tirabassi; 603-358-2924; e-mail: ktirabassi@keene.edu



**April 17-18, 2009:** Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association, in Ellensburg, WA

**Contact:** Teresa Joy Kramer; kramert@cwu.edu. Conference website: <<http://www.pnwca.org>>.



**October 22-24, 2009:** Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Rapid City, SD

**Contact:** Christopher Ervin (cervin@usd.edu) or Greg Dyer (greg.dyer@usiuouxfalls.edu).



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