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From the Editors

Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa lanetta

Compiling this issue, our penultimate as *WCJ* editors, has caused us to reflect on the growth of the field over the past several years. Perhaps this reflection was inspired by Dana Lynn Driscoll and Sherry Wynn Perdue's "Theory, Lore, and More: An Analysis of RAD Research in *The Writing Center Journal*, 1980–2009," which both taxonomizes for the reader the evolution of replicable, aggregable and data-supported articles in *WCJ* and calls for more such research in writing center studies. Seemingly in concert with Driscoll and Perdue's analysis, we have noted the increasing number of empirical studies that have appeared in the pages of this journal—and this issue is certainly no exception to this trend.

In "Listening to Revise: What a Study about Text-to-Speech Software Taught Us about Students' Expectations for Technology Use in the Writing Center," Tammy Conard-Salvo and John Spartz teach us not just about the ways in which text-to-speech software might facilitate revision, but about what we can learn even if a project is, as Conard-Salvo and Spartz describe, a "failed study." We think that you'll find "Listening to Revise" engrossing for its methodological clarity, useful for its data, and, really, just a straight-up good read. It's rare, after all, to see a manuscript begin with an admission of failure and then to progress to make success from it. And we take it as a sign of writing center studies' increasing sense of its own identity, as well as its increasing security as a field of study, that we can admit such "failures" and then move on to create productive, important knowledge from these events.

On a similarly empirical note, in "Comparing Technologies for

Online Writing Conferences: Effects of Medium on Conversation,” Joanna Wolfe and JoAnn Griffin demonstrate some of the fundamental similarities between face-to-face tutoring and online conferencing. We found this manuscript particularly engaging in the ways in which it makes evidence-backed assertions to challenge the lingering suspicions of online tutoring as an ethical mode of writing center activity. Readers will also appreciate the ways in which Wolfe and Griffin use data to describe the affordances and constraints of a variety of tutoring modes.

Even while the essays in this issue call for us to assess with a sharp eye our daily practice in the writing center, and to root these practices in evidence that can be shared with others, the book reviews by Harry Denny and Catherine Oriani draw our attention to other kinds of arguments—and other forms of evidence. For, as Oriani asserts in the opening to her review of Dawn Fels and Jennifer Wells’ edited collection, *The Successful High School Writing Center*, this volume “offers a timely counterpoint to quantitative assessment as well as corporate top-down structure and authority in education.” Perhaps, then, the writing center provides an ideal space to balance those evidence-based practices—practices lauded by Driscoll and Perdue and performed by Conard-Salvo, Spartz, Wolfe, and Griffin—with an attention to individualized learning that counteracts some of the more baleful effects of standardized testing?

Just as the writing center community is embracing the challenges of empirical research so too are we increasingly confronting issues of social justice that writers and tutors inevitably live and so bring into our centers along with their drafts and ideas. In his review of Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan’s collection, *Writing Centers and the New Racism*, Harry Denny draws our attention to this important resource, even as he reminds us that we still have much work to do.

We hope this description does justice to a rich issue of *Writing Center Journal*. The works that appear here, we think, not only stand to improve our current practice but augur an exciting future for the field. So enjoy the issue—and the future!