

1-1-2016

From the Editors

Michele Eodice

Kerri Jordan

Steve Price

Richard Severe

Anna Sicari

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/wcj>

Recommended Citation

Eodice, Michele; Jordan, Kerri; Price, Steve; Severe, Richard; and Sicari, Anna (2016) "From the Editors," *Writing Center Journal*: Vol. 35 : Iss. 2, Article 2.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2832-9414.1794>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries.
Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.



From the Editors

In our previous “From the Editors” columns for *The Writing Center Journal*, we’ve chosen topics related to that issue or relevant to the writing center community overall and offered our collective, shared thoughts. We’ve intentionally avoided summarizing the articles in each particular issue, though. We want *you* to read the issue, and we don’t want to limit the impact of an article by definitively declaring *here’s what you should get out of it*. We recognize that individual readers will find different value in each article, based on their own backgrounds, perspectives, and ideologies. Ideally, we want journal readers to take their differing thoughts and share them with other readers—in staff education workshops, in WCenter discussions, at WCJ Live sessions, at conferences, and in new research projects. From this collaborative thinking can come new ideas and new knowledge about the writing center field.

With those goals in mind, each of us below responds to one article, not summarizing but answering the questions, Why do I value this article? and, What does this article contribute to the writing center community? We offer our individual thoughts not as the final word but as an introduction, which we hope leads to conversations. We invite you to agree with us, to disagree with us, to move the discussion in different directions. We encourage you to share your thoughts with others and to consider what they might value in an article. These types of scholarly exchanges are necessary for the writing center community to collectively grow a rich, dynamic, productive conversation about our field.

Steve. I remember following with frustration the 2009 WCenter discussion that Rebecca Block refers to in her article, “Disruptive Design: An Empirical Study of Reading Aloud in the Writing Center.”



Plenty of definitive opinions were offered about who should read, tutors or writers, and how they should read. While people chimed in with contradictory approaches, there was no real skepticism nor questioning; the success of everyone's approach seemed to be taken for granted, without doubt. But Rebecca Block does ask questions. I'm a fan of Block's article because she not only challenges our long-held, uncritiqued reading practices, but she also offers us a model for how to engage in inquiry. Block pushes back against our reading lore, questioning whether it even matters who reads. She disrupts the tutor-writer reading dichotomy by introducing us to the "point-predict" think-aloud protocol, which she's adapted in an intentional way for her writing center. Finally, rather than relying on gut reaction or her own selective anecdotes, and rather than assuming the effectiveness of her approach, Block studies the protocol by looking at transcripts of what actually happens in tutoring sessions using point-predict versus other reading strategies. Throughout her article, Block shows us how to be disruptive, how to question, and ultimately how to better understand the implications of our reading practices. Block shows us how to learn about our writing center work.

Richard. Michael Rifenburg's article sheds light on the tutoring practices at an athletics writing center geared specifically toward student athletes at a Division I institution. This article articulates an important discussion on the ways our practices in the "campus-wide writing center" may conflict with the NCAA rules and regulations intended for the academic success of student athletes. I especially enjoyed this piece in part because it encourages all professionals in the field to think critically about the work that we do with our student athletes and how intra-institutional relationships are key in ensuring we maintain the integrity of all the resources we provide to our students. Surely we should heed Rifenburg's warnings of the "panoptic gaze of Compliance." With that said, this article is sure to have individuals reflecting on writing center practices in ways they otherwise may not, especially if their institutions do not have a dedicated athletics writing center for student athletes. For instance, do writing center practices, whether those centers are located in a Division I, II or III institution, align with NCAA compliance rules? After reading this article, I do not think I will be alone in questioning if we should pay closer attention to these NCAA rules—and more importantly, if we should consider student athletes as athletes first or writers.

Kerri. I'm so excited to see Jaclyn Wells' article, "Why We Resist 'Leading the Horse': Required Tutoring, RAD Research, and Our Writing Center Ideals," in this collection. Here's why: I've been itching for more manuscripts that merge RAD research with the voice and experience of more personal, reflective writing. Wells' article reminds me

of two favorites: Roberta Kjesrud's (2015) "Lessons from Data: Avoiding Lore Bias in Research Paradigms" (*WCJ* 34.2) and Margaret Weaver's (2004) "Censoring What Tutors' Clothing 'Says': First Amendment Rights/Writes Within Tutorial Space" (*WCJ* 24.2). Wells joins their good company in challenging us to challenge our assumptions; to become more aware of our biases and where they come from; and to lay bare the often uncomfortable but also invigorating experiences that can happen if we let our research yank our cozy old rugs right out from under us. I especially appreciate Wells' reminder that RAD research can only carry us so far—especially if our preconceived notions and writing center "ideals" prevent us from embracing the knowledge we make. As Wells passionately and convincingly argues, "RAD research should drive our practices, [but] no amount of well-formed studies will help us solve important dilemmas and make important decisions before we figure out for ourselves what ideals might be influencing our practices." YES.

Michele. There was something I liked immediately about Sarah Summers' "Building Expertise: The Toolkit in UCLA's Graduate Writing Center." Aside from being a sound study, there was an attempt to locate and name a tension. That tension is the result of possessing both inexperience and expertise as we negotiate a writing consultation—and both the student writer and the consultant embody inexperience and expertise. What ends up being more important is that we make the negotiation more productive if we cultivate a toolkit. Summers reminds us to "consider carefully the metaphor of the toolkit" She describes the toolkit as:

generative, rather than limiting. Tools are meant to stand in for capabilities we don't quite have. If consultants are able to identify gaps in their own knowledge, they needn't abandon the consultation. Instead, they can reach for their toolkit to fill in those gaps. It's important, though, that the toolkit we imagine is not too neat and tidy, with one clear tool for every problem; the consultant's toolkit is much messier.

I like that she didn't make a case for just one fix—like training everyone up to be a generalist tutor. Instead, she argues for expanding our ideas about expertise, including the ability to admit when we don't know something. Summers advocates for framing expertise as a fluid and developing quality for both the graduate student writer and the consultant.

Anna. “The choice to use the writing center is raced, classed, gendered, and shaped by linguistic hierarchies.” This is just one of the many lines that stood out as I read Lori Salem’s article, “Decisions . . . Decisions: Who Chooses to Use the Writing Center?” Salem engages with fundamental questions of our work. For instance, why do we continue to broadcast that writing centers aren’t for remediation, when in fact Salem finds that the students who might benefit the most do seem to be using the writing center. The question then becomes, Why do they decide to use the writing center? And, why don’t other students choose to use the writing center? Through comparative analysis of students who visit the writing center and those who do not, Salem speaks to larger social influences that shape the educational system and complicates the idea of “choice” for students. While Salem focuses her research on the writing center and calls for an entirely new way of thinking about writing center pedagogy (joining scholars such as Nancy Grimm and Jackie Grutsch McKinney), this piece could and should be read by any scholar invested in the teaching of writing.

Michele Eodice
Norman, Oklahoma

Kerri Jordan
Clinton, Mississippi

Steve Price
Clinton, Mississippi

Richard Sévère
Valparaiso, Indiana

Anna Sicari
Stillwater, Oklahoma