



## From the Editors

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The broad range of specialized scholarship presented in issue 37.2 shows clearly the continued growth of writing center studies, a field that is developing robust subspecialties within itself. This specialization in scholarship speaks, as Doug Hesse notes in his 2019 *College English* article, to the maturity of a discipline. In the writing center world, this maturity can also be measured, sadly, by the recent deaths of two luminaries: Kenneth Bruffee and Christina Murphy. We note their loss and appreciate their extensive contributions.<sup>1</sup> In the following pages, Harvey Kail, a former student of Bruffee's and guest editor of a 2008 special issue of *The Writing Center Journal* dedicated to Bruffee and the Brooklyn Plan, reflects on Bruffee's impact.

In his remembrance in this issue, Kail describes Bruffee as an “academic activist” (p. 18). We see Bruffee as modeling a way a writing center can engage with those outside its doors. He showed that the writing center discipline can have a voice and even rhetorical force, and he caused academia to envision the potential of undergraduates, including those considered “academically underprepared,” working together to make knowledge. The keynotes for the 2018 International Writing Centers Association Conference, printed here, each advocate for types of inclusion; in their proposals we can trace elements of Bruffee's ideas.

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1 We point readers to the thoughtful tributes to Murphy on *WLN's* blog *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders*, <https://www.wlnjournal.org/blog/2019/02/christina-murphy-a-memorial/>.

The concept of writing centers as activist spaces is certainly not a new one, but we are struck by the confluence of several things: Kail's description of Bruffee as an academic activist; the recent considerations, unfolding in academic journals and the contemporary press, of the role of print journals; and the new direction for journals called for by one of this issue's book reviewers. In his review of Elisabeth Buck's *Open-Access, Multimodality, and Writing Center Studies*, J. Michael Rifenburg calls for an external operations editor, who would collaborate with authors to distribute and more effectively communicate their work to the broader public. We wonder how the implementation of Rifenburg's idea could address some of Hesse's concerns about an "erosion of faith in the whole enterprise [academia], especially as a public good" (2019, p. 394).

It sometimes feels easiest in editorial introductions to celebrate the accomplishments of the field. However, we recognize the need for more nuance in the field's understanding of what makes an activist writing center and for more complexity in how we conduct research and with whom. As editors, we continue to invite submissions, conceived from many angles, that take on this work, even as we acknowledge its unending, challenging, and thereby exhausting nature. This multidisciplinary approach is important if we are truly to enact the diversity our keynotes promote, and even expand the activism Bruffee began.

We are therefore excited to showcase, in a revised, printed form, the keynotes from the 2018 IWCA conference. Kendra L. Mitchell and Robert E. Randolph's "A Page from Our Book: Social Justice Lessons from the HBCU Writing Center" reflects powerfully on race, racism, marginalization, citizenship, language, and intersectionality, underscoring the whiteness of our field and calling for—and moving towards—theory and practice that is more deliberate and inclusive. We note resonances with Asao Inoue's 2019 CCCC Chair's Address, "How do we language so people stop killing each other, or what do we do about white language supremacy?" and the collective call, across the writing center and composition worlds, to foreground historically marginalized voices and to work more assertively to bridge divides, despite the discomfort often accompanying that work. The second keynote address, "Learning from/ in Middle East and North Africa Writing Centers: Negotiating Access and Diversity," brought together virtually Amy Hodges in Qatar, Lynne Ronesi in the United Arab Emirates, Amy Zenger in Lebanon, and the conference audience in Atlanta. Hodges, Ronesi, and Zenger's address also focuses on complicating conversations about diversity, particularly with respect to language and accessibility. Both keynotes ask writing center scholars and practitioners to expand the scope of their work institutionally, linguistically, and geographically. Both also build on the work of Nancy

Grimm's 1999 book *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, which continues to resonate with scholars as they negotiate the changing political landscape.

Following the keynotes, six articles highlight path-breaking research on a wide range of topics. Grant Eckstein's work explores two concepts perennially of interest to *WCJ* readers: tutorial directiveness and multilingual students. In his comparative empirical study based on more than 400 surveys, Eckstein finds that all writers report similar, directive tutorials, even as L1 writers expect reflectiveness, Generation 1.5 writers expect negotiation, and L2 writers expect directiveness.

Two articles draw on recent research in R. Mark Hall's 2018 IWCA award-winning book *Around the Texts of Writing Center Work*, which calls for scholars to look closely at writing center internal documents to make new discoveries. Candis Bond's article is a comparative study, examining first-generation and multigeneration students' needs for writing support as expressed in students' appointment forms and consultants' post-appointment reports. Analyzing hundreds of these forms, Bond finds that while consultants prioritize all writers' expressed concerns, the expressed concerns of first-generation students differ from their non-first-generation peers; and consultants provide different kinds of feedback to each group. Both Eckstein's and Bond's studies suggest the need for more attention to writers' backgrounds and potential biases in sessions, ideas our keynote authors would certainly endorse.

Rebecca Nowacek, Andy Hoffman, Carlyne Hurlburt, Lisa Lamson, Sareene Proodian, and Anna Scanlon likewise investigate hundreds of consultants' conference records, finding that changing the language that prompts these tutors' reports alters what is recorded. These authors demonstrate that more reflective prompts also inspire a broader culture of reflection and transfer of learning.

Like the article by Nowacek et al., another piece helps practitioners build a culture of research in their centers. Coauthors Joseph Cheatele, Kenlea Pebbles, Alexis Sargent, Colton Wansitler, Autumn Laws, Rachel Wahl, Michael Carroll, and Rohitha Edara reflect on the benefits and challenges of complex collaborations. Their narratives show how research conducted by a team of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty has implications for community building, knowledge generation, and professional development.

Turning from evaluating the research process to encouraging current researchers, Nadine Fladd, Clare Bermingham, and Nicole Westlund Stewart explore different mechanisms for supporting graduate students' writerly lives. Because of the extended nature of graduate-level projects and students' in-term obligations, dissertation boot camps have emerged

as a primary mode of support. Examining survey data from boot-camp participants, the authors find that three dissertation boot-camp models—online, retreat, and sustained—all lowered anxiety and procrastination and boosted self-confidence, goal setting, and the number of days spent writing each week.

Julia Bleakney and Sarah Peterson Pittock rethink Jo Mackiewicz and Isabelle Thompson's linguistics-based work in order to measure student revision. Bleakney and Pittock examine how tutor talk is linked to the extent of first-year writers' revisions of their work. Analyzing 10 sessions, the authors categorize hundreds of moments of tutor talk and show how students consequently revise; the article's case studies demonstrate how, in the most successful sessions, motivational and cognitive scaffolding and instruction lead writers to transfer writing center learning to their own revision process.

We close with the introduction of an important addition to our editorial team. We are delighted to have Steve Price, former *WCJ* co-editor, rejoining the journal in a new role. He is the journal's first-ever book-review editor, and in this capacity, he takes a long view of the field's evolution. Steve introduces his vision for the book-review section later in the issue. Welcome back, Steve!

We are pleased to bring you book reviews, articles, and keynotes that delve into the ways writing centers are expanding in location, scope, activism, and accessibility. In this issue, we celebrate a diversity not only of identities but also of methods. As a whole, 37.2 captures the wonderful complexities and interconnectedness of the field and hints at future directions. These directions will inevitably involve the kinds of ongoing discussions about media formats raised by Hesse and others. Even while we recognize the constraints of print media, we value the steeping of ideas inherent in *The Writing Center Journal's* rigorous, iterative peer review and the particular reading experience offered by the physical journal. Readers can become not just immersed in substantive, thought-provoking arguments but also, we hope, mobilized.

## References

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