



## From the Special Issue Editors

---

When we speak of the growing phenomenon of worldwide, or global, writing centers, it is hard to know exactly what we speak of. Can we really gain a picture of writing centers from an international perspective without knowing the local cultures or educational contexts, much less the specific meanings of new and adapted terms, such as “consulting” or even, “writing centre”? A global issue of this journal that was truly comprehensive would, of course, be impossible in print: how many contexts? articles? pages? However, a regional, transatlantic perspective provides at least some insight into the complexities as writing centers, and scholarship about them, expand across the Atlantic Ocean. We are thus pleased to share with our readers this special issue of *The Writing Center Journal*, which provides a historical and theoretical lens through which to view global developments: transatlantically.

Historically in the United States, writing centers—initially focused on a laboratory method of instruction by *doing*—were established in institutions of higher education to address U.S.-based educational concerns. These early writing centers, which were often connected to first-year composition programs, expanded as the range of students entering universities grew and diversified. (Long-time readers of this journal will be familiar with work on this topic by Peter Carino [1995], Beth Boquet [1999], and Neal Lerner [2009], among others.)

Transatlantic writing centers have developed historically from two distinct educational traditions. The first is national universities with a region's own educational expectations, typically not including writing programs or first-year writing courses; and the second is American-style universities, with

educational structures taken directly from the U.S., including, quite often, writing centers, writing programs, and first-year writing courses (Archer & Richards, 2011; Carlino, 2012; Harbord, 2010; Bräuer, 2002; Garcia-Arroyo & Quintana, 2012; Procter, 2011; Ronesi, 2009). In countries where English is not a home language for most students or faculty, writing centers are often located in language centers or English departments (Barnawi, ed., 2018; Harbord, 2010; Molina-Natera & López-Gil, 2019). Many non-U.S. centers, then, have a decades-long sustained engagement in writing center studies—with both reformulations and novel practices emerging (e.g., Scott, 2017).

Outside the U.S., the first writing centers were established in Canada in the 1960s, also using the laboratory method (Procter, 2011). In Europe, writing centers were established in the 1990s to support students in their very isolated, unstructured, and unguided writing processes (Bräuer, 2002). The 1990s also saw new writing centers in South Africa and Kenya, to support larger courses and/or diversifying student bodies (Archer & Richards, 2011; Wambua, 2020). The earliest writing centers in the Middle East and North Africa region were established in the 2000s to support students in English language and writing (Barnawi, 2018). Writing centers in Latin American countries mostly have a more recent history of establishment, growing dramatically since the 2010s (Molina-Natera & López-Gil, 2019), created not only for remedial reasons, but also to support language learning (Molina-Natera, 2017).<sup>1</sup>

Since these originating moments, transatlantic writing centers, which have evolved in their own right, as well as the study of how they have and are expanding, have much to offer our increasingly international writing center community of readers and scholars. In a special section after the introduction, “An Introduction to Transatlantic Writing Center Resources,” we present a timeline, covering Europe and the Americas, including professional organizations and scholarly venues with a focus on writing centers, writing programs, and academic writing.

Conceptual reasons, in addition to the historical, also shape the growth of writing centers worldwide. Writing centers seem to be one of those paradigm-changing ideas that not only “flo[w] widely,” but become even stronger while they flow (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008, p. 221). From a theoretical perspective, this expansion of an institutional concept in higher education can be labeled *diffusion* (Scott, 2001), meaning that practices and concepts spread in a wide-ranging manner, with institutions undergoing mimetic processes in re-

---

1 While not part of the transatlantic region, we note that there is an active writing center community in Asia that began in the 1990s, often located in English programs (Chang, 2013; Okuda, 2020; Song, 2018; Tan, 2011) and in Australasia in the 1990s, generally located in language or academic support units (Emerson, 2012; Gonano & Nelson, 2012; Purser, 2012; Vered, Thomas, & Emerson, 2019).

sponse to what they consider to be a “must-have.” For example, the current proliferation of writing centers globally suggests that more university stakeholders now think of writing centers as essential. Several factors have contributed to this proliferation, all components of larger global educational trends: more students and more diverse students, as well as university curricular adjustments to these changes to the student body; the increasing interdependence of job training and higher education; English as the language of scientific communication; the internationalization of curricula; and the impact of the Internet on teaching methods and mediums, as well as on resources. The United States, not surprisingly, has been influential. For example, these trends, as mentioned above, are actively exported by U.S.-based universities, and some trends are taken up by universities outside the United States as schools look for models. It is also important, however, to remember that transatlantic influences have shifted over the centuries: “The most powerful academic systems, such as those of Germany and France in the 19th century and the United States at present have traditionally pioneered academic thinking and curricular trends” (Altbach, Reisburg, & Rumbley, 2009, p. 18). As this 2009 UNESCO report notes, swings in the directionality of influence can and do change. Perhaps another shift is imminent: the articles in this issue of *The Writing Center Journal* underscore the presence of multi-directional influence.

John W. Meyer & Evan Schofer (2007) identify the “rapid diffusion of fashionable models of what an educational system should look like” (p. 53), generally occurring from more powerful states to less powerful states; sometimes the diffusion of ideas from country to country can happen quickly, too quickly for reflection. For writing centers, this problem is exacerbated when the models adopted are themselves reflective of what Christiane Donahue (2009) has described as,

simultaneously presenting the United States to the world as a homogeneous nation-state with universal courses, sovereign philosophies and pedagogies, and agreed-on language requirements, while ‘othering’ countries that have different, complex, but well-established traditions in both writing research and writing instruction, presenting these countries as somehow lacking or behind the times. (pp. 213-214)

For example, some traditional approaches to contrastive rhetoric have contributed to this “othering” by focusing our attention on aspects of writing that differentiate texts based on cultural norms, expectations, or linguistic features, even while helping us to pay attention to these issues within our institutional practices and de-normalizing our rhetorical patterns and discursive forms.

When new, “fashionable” models adopted by writing centers are based on “othering” assumptions, non-U.S. writing centers may be inadvertently adopting structures that are not appropriate for their specific circumstances and, indeed, might not have been educationally sound models to begin with. In

the face of global trends, universities all over the world devise diverse solutions that may appear standard, but that are never standardized in their effects since these solutions are adapted, incorporated, or resisted in ways that are ultimately rooted in particular times and places (Krücken, Kosmützky, & Torka, 2006, p. 8). Research shows clearly that the simple act of adapting models and labeling them with the same terms does not necessarily imply that schools embody or incorporate similar practices (e.g., Boyadjieva, 2007; Mazza & Sahlin-Andersson, 2005). Instead, then, of considering writing center work in terms of “diffusion,” which stresses irrational, unintentional, and even unconscious processes, writing centers should turn to newer conceptual frameworks in organizational studies or in education, which use the terms “translation” and “editing” or “shape-shifting” (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008; Cowen, 2009; Harbord, 2010). These terms show how ideas in writing centers can undergo reflective, intentional translations to local contexts, resulting in “edited” versions that fit the needs of those who have adopted them—and even create new meanings.

True to the tradition of this journal, this special issue brings together long-form, sustained explorations of topics, comparing perspectives on the wide-ranging histories, cultures, languages, pedagogies, and practices of transatlantic writing centers.<sup>2</sup> It is important for U.S.-based readers of this issue to understand that, in much of the contemporary transatlantic region, Tracy Santa’s observation about Europe holds true: “the writing center *is* the writing program” (2009, p. 3). Furthermore, many writing centers in this region are strongly connected to campus-wide learning centers or language centers, particularly in countries where English is not a home language.

This special issue, then, showcases scholarship that demonstrates the many ways in which transatlantic writing centers are “editing,” “translating,” and “shape-shifting” all aspects of writing center work. We hope that readers will find the ideas in these pages inspiring for their own transformational work.

Annemieke Meijer and Joy de Jong explore the work of writing centers in the Netherlands, not only reflecting on their history, but also highlighting

---

2 Some previous conversations in U.S.-based publications have explored global writing centers, including transatlantic centers. See, for example, *WLN*'s blog *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders* and many international pieces in *Praxis*, *WCJ*, and *WLN* (for example, Chang, 2013; Ronesi, 2009; Scott, 2017). Important work on writing centers outside the United States has been published in English in the *Canadian Journal for Studies of Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie*, as well as the Canadian Writing Centres Association blog, and in Europe's *Journal of Academic Writing*, which has published selected papers from the Conference of the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (EATAW) since 2015. Profiles of many European and Latin American writing centers are also included in *Writing Programs Worldwide* (Bräuer, Carlino, Ganobcsik-Williams, & Sinha, eds., 2012). The following pieces, in particular, may be of interest to readers: Broekhoff, 2014; CWCA, 2020; Graves, ed., 2017.

how quickly writing centers there have been taken up throughout most of the university system. Their work asks readers to reflect on the directive/non-directive debate in tutoring: assertively non-directive tutoring is the common practice in Dutch writing centers, even as students and tutors conduct sessions in English as the shared academic language, but not usually home language.

Further explorations of translanguaging appear in Olga Aksakalova's piece on a new writing center in Russia. Considering the transition among monolingual, multilingual, and translanguaging approaches, Aksakalova shares how this writing center facilitates translanguaging and transcultural approaches that transform power dynamics to emphasize both collaboration and negotiation. With this, she also asks us to reflect on the many ways that the prefix *trans*, with its emphasis on moving across/beyond, shapes our perspectives, in terms of space, borders, language, culture, collaboration, and negotiation, themes pervasive throughout this issue.

Connecting across cultures is not always a smooth process, however, as Stefanie Everke Buchanan shares in her analysis of a German-Australian writing center collaboration. While she discusses her initial bewilderment at the very different approaches used in Germany and Australia to support students, stemming from, as she discovers, the fact that these approaches are rooted in distinct educational histories: the German approach, modeled on the U.S. perspective, which understands writing as central, with language skills subsumed underneath writing, and the Australian approach, modeled on the United Kingdom perspective, which understands academic language as central, with writing skills under this language umbrella.

Moving to a country with very new writing centers, namely Argentina, we offer a piece by Fabiana Castagno, Gaby Luján Giammarini, Sonia Lizarruri, Estela Moyano, María del Carmen Novo, and Diana Waigandt. These authors argue that their work to develop writing centers and writing programs is in service to Argentina's mission to democratize higher education, meeting students of all backgrounds at their points of need. This piece can be read in conversation with Lori Salem's 2016 *WCJ* article, which focuses on the need for U.S. writing centers to develop with more attention to the demographics of students who actually choose to use the writing center—namely more diverse, less academically prepared, and less socioeconomically privileged students than the whole student body. The coauthors of this piece show that in Argentina, writing centers and writing programs have been created specifically to support these similar students who are new to the university.

Thinking transatlantically can bring new insights into how writing centers define themselves and reflect that identity back to others, especially within changing contexts. Ira Allen, Emma Moghabghab, and Kathleen Saville consider how archives shape a center's identity, and these authors suggest "flash archiving" as a reasonable practice to capture usually overlooked writing

center ephemera while conserving time and resources. The authors examine two writing centers in Lebanon and Egypt that have employed this meaningful activity; the authors find that flash archiving enabled these centers to reflect on, and thereby potentially strengthen, relationships and projects between writing centers and stakeholders within and even beyond the university, such as migrant workers.

One method of identity-making is the choice of scholarly resources on which a center draws for guidance. Andrea Scott's article profiles three handbooks, or reference manuals, that have played a key role in writing centers in the German-speaking world; writing centers in Germany began in the 1990s, and German writing centers are among the oldest in Europe. Scott's piece considers a general tutoring handbook, a handbook specific to writing fellows programs (that includes everything a center needs to start operations in this area), and a handbook examining writing studies research methodologies. While general tutoring and methods handbooks should be familiar to many U.S. readers, a handbook for writing fellows is quite new. Scott shows how these handbooks, which are regularly cited by German-speaking scholars, have shaped the emerging discipline of writing studies in this region.

We conclude the issue with the introduction of four book-length resources, some new and some foundational, as always with guidance from our Book Reviews Editor, Steve Price. The first, introduced here by Nadja Sennewald, is a book that will be intimately familiar to writing center practitioners in German-speaking countries: Hanspeter Ortner's 2000 *Schreiben und Denken* (translated by Sennewald as *Writing and Thinking*). This book has fundamentally shaped the way that German-speaking centers approach supporting writers and training tutors. The book profiles types of writers and thinkers, and Sennewald highlights the ways that Germanic writing centers have developed specific tutoring strategies to support that type of writer best—an idea that brings into relief how transatlantic writing centers have evolved differently.

The next three reviews feature recently published resources that, while useful to all writing center scholars and practitioners, may be especially meaningful to those interested in reflecting on multilingualism, tutor training with an international perspective, and the influence of culture on writing. Reflecting on how we can support writers working in all languages, Svetlana Koltovskaia reviews Noreen Groover Lape's 2020 *Internationalizing the Writing Center: A Guide for Developing a Multilingual Writing Center*. Lape addresses the dominance of English-medium writing centers and argues that writing centers can and should serve students at all levels of proficiency in all languages. Supporting multilingual students is always an important area to incorporate in tutor training, and we're also happy to present a review of a new tutor-training collection, Nathalie Singh-Corcoran's review of Karen Johnson & Ted Roggenbuck's 2019 open-access digital edited collection, *How We Train Writing Tutors*;

this collection might be particularly useful to international scholars who find that the latest scholarship can be cost-prohibitive or difficult to access or ship to international locations. We conclude with a 2016 collection that might not be familiar to U.S.-based readers: Kathy Shine Cain profiles *Exploring European Writing Cultures*, edited by Otto Kruse, Madalina Chitez, Brittany Rodriguez, & Montserrat Castelló. In this collection, contributors describe the ways in which writing is (not) taught and supported in higher education across Europe; their work contextualizes the real and potential roles writing centers take on in different countries.

As the material included in this special issue shows, we have a great deal to learn from our colleagues working in and on transatlantic writing centers. Pam, Kara, and Eliana note that this special issue would not have been possible without the contributions, insight, and guidance of our coeditor, Katrin Girgensohn. Katrin is a premier scholar of writing centers and writing studies, having published an in-depth study on writing centers in the United States with a perspective on the institutional work of writing center directors (Girgensohn, 2018). She established the writing center at the European University Viadrina in Germany in 2007 and holds one of the first professorships in writing studies in Europe. Katrin has also promoted a network of European writing center professionals, showcasing the effectiveness of peer tutoring across the region and hosting countless national, regional, and international conferences, including the European Writing Centers Association's 2014 conference and 2019 Summer Institute.

Together as co-editors of this issue, we bring diverse perspectives from writing centers across the transatlantic region. We hope readers find the issue useful as they reflect on and expand their writing center work in what is a challenging time in higher education. The scholarship herein, drawn from a global call for submissions and strengthened through peer review by global scholars, highlights a robust transatlantic writing center conversation that reaches deep into—and beyond—the transatlantic.<sup>3</sup>

---

3 As this issue was going to press, we learned of the death of Dr. Lisa Ede, a scholar well-published in these pages and elsewhere, whose work will continue to have longstanding influence on the writing center community. Our thoughts are with all who are feeling her loss.

## References

- Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2009). *Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution*. A report prepared for the UNESCO 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. UNESCO.
- Archer, A., & Richards, R. (Eds.). (2011). *Changing spaces: Writing centres and access to higher education*. Sun Press.
- Barnawi, O. Z. (Ed.). (2018). *Writing centers in the higher education landscape of the Arabian Gulf*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Boquet, E. H. (1999). "Our Little Secret": A history of writing centers, pre-to post-open admissions. *College Composition and Communication*, 50(3), 463–482.
- Boydjjeva, P. (2007). Diversity matters. Lessons from a post-communist country. In G. Krücken, A. Komützy, & M. Torka (Eds.), *Towards a multiversity? Universities between global trends and national traditions* (pp. 108–131). Transcript.
- Bräuer, G. (2002). Drawing connections across education: The Freiburg writing center model. *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, 5(3), 61–80.
- Bräuer, G., Carlino, P., Ganobcsik-Williams, L., & Sinha, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places*. Parlor.
- Broekhoff, M. (2014). A tale of two writing centers in Namibia: Lessons for us all. *Journal of Academic Writing*, 4(1), 66–78.
- Canadian Writing Centres Association (CWCA). (2020). *Winter 2020 Blog*. <https://cwcaaccr.com/category/cwcr-rccr-blog/vol-1-winter-2020/>
- Carino, P. (1995). Early writing centers: Toward a history. *Writing Center Journal*, 15(2), 103–115.
- Carlino, P. (2012). Who takes care of writing in Latin American and Spanish universities? In C. Thaiss, G. Bräuer, P. Carlino, L. Ganobcsik-Williams, & A. Sinha (Eds.), *Writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places* (pp. 485–498). The WAC Clearinghouse; Parlor Press.
- Chang, T. S. (2013). The idea of a writing center in Asian countries: A preliminary search of models in Taiwan. *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, 10(2). <http://www.praxisuwc.com/chang-102>
- Cowen, R. (2009). The transfer, translation and transformation of educational processes—and their shape-shifting? *Comparative Education*, 45(3): 315–327.
- Donahue, C. (2009). "Internationalization" and composition studies: Reorienting the discourse. *College Composition and Communication*, 61(2), 212–243.

- Emerson, L. (2012). Developing a “Kiwi” writing centre at Massey University, New Zealand. In C. Thaiss, G. Bräuer, P. Carlino, L. Ganobcsik-Williams, & A. Sinha (Eds.), *Writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places* (pp. 313–323). The WAC Clearinghouse; Parlor Press.
- García-Arroyo, M., & Quintana, H. E. (2012). The ups and downs of the interdisciplinary writing center of the InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico, Metropolitan Campus. In C. Thaiss, G. Bräuer, P. Carlino, L. Ganobcsik-Williams, & A. Sinha (Eds.), *Writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places* (pp. 333–340). The WAC Clearinghouse; Parlor Press.
- Girgensohn, K. (2018). Collaborative learning as a leadership tool: The institutional work of writing center directors. *Journal of Academic Writing*, 8(2), 11–23.
- Gonano, K., & Nelson, P. (2012). Developing students’ writing at Queensland University of Technology. In C. Thaiss, G. Bräuer, P. Carlino, L. Ganobcsik-Williams, & A. Sinha (Eds.), *Writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places* (pp. 43–53). The WAC Clearinghouse; Parlor Press.
- Graves, R. (Ed.). (2017). The future of writing centres in Canada, part 2. [Special section]. *Canadian Journal for Studies in Discourse and Writing/ Rédactologie*, 27, 1–94.
- Harbord, J. (2010). Writing in Central and Eastern Europe: Stakeholders and directions in initiating change. *Across the Disciplines*, 7. Retrieved from <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/articles/harbord2010.pdf>
- Johnson, K. G., & Roggenbuck, T. (2019). *How we teach writing tutors*. <https://wlnjournal.org/digitaleditedcollection1/index.html>
- Krücken, G., Kosmützky, A., & Torka, M. (2006). *Towards a multiversity?: Universities between global trends and national traditions*. Transcript Verlag.
- Kruse, O., Chitez, M., Rodriguez, B., & Castelló, M. (2016). *Exploring European writing cultures: Country reports on genres, writing practices and languages used in European higher education*. ZHAW Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften. (Working Papers in Applied Linguistics 10). <https://digitalcollection.zhaw.ch/bitstream/11475/1056/5/Working%20Papers%20in%20Applied%20Linguistics%20Nr.%2010.pdf>
- Lape, N. G. (2020). *Internationalizing the writing center: A guide for developing a multilingual writing center*. Parlor Press.
- Lerner, N. (2009). *The idea of a writing laboratory*. Southern Illinois University Press.

- Mazza, C., & Sahlin-Andersson, K. (2005). European constructions of an American model: Developments of four MBA programmes. *Management Learning*, 36(4), 471–491.
- Meyer, J. W., & Schofer, E. (2007). The university in Europe and the world: Twentieth-century expansion. In G. Krücken, A. Komützy & M. Torka (Hrsg.), *Towards a multiversity? Universities between global trends and national traditions* (pp. 45–62). Transcript Verlag.
- Molina-Natera, V. (2017). The history of US writing centers and the emergence of writing centers in Latin America: An interview with Neal Lerner. *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, 14(2).
- Molina-Natera, V., & López-Gil, K. S. (2019). Estado de la cuestión de los centros y programas de escritura de Latinoamérica. *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, 78, 97–119
- Okuda, T. (2020). The writing center and international students in a Japanese university: A language management perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 39(4), 778–791.
- Ortner, H. (2011). *Schreiben und Denken*. de Gruyter.
- Procter, M. (2011). Talking the talk and walking the walk: Establishing the academic role of writing centres. In D. Starke-Meyerring, A. Paré, N. Artemeva, M. Horne, & L. Yousoubova (Eds.), *Writing in Knowledge Societies* (pp. 415-439). WAC Clearinghouse.
- Purser, E. (2012). Teaching academic writing at the University of Wollongong. In C. Thaiss, G. Bräuer, P. Carlino, L. Ganobcsik-Williams, & A. Sinha (Eds.), *Writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places* (pp. 55–68). The WAC Clearinghouse; Parlor Press.
- Ronesi, L. (2009). Theory in/to practice: Multilingual tutors supporting multilingual peers: A peer-tutor training course in the Arabian Gulf. *Writing Center Journal*, 29(2), 75–94.
- Sahlin, K., & Wedlin, L. (2008). Circulating ideas: Imitation, translation, and editing. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, & R. Suddaby, *The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism* (pp. 218–242). Sage publications.
- Salem, L. (2016). Decisions...decisions: Who chooses to use the writing center? *Writing Center Journal*, 35(2), 147–171.
- Santa, T. (2009). Writing center tutor training: What is transferable across academic cultures? *Zeitschrift Schreiben*, 22(7), 1–6. [https://zeitschrift-schreiben.ch/globalassets/zeitschrift-schreiben.eu/2009/santa\\_tutor\\_training.pdf](https://zeitschrift-schreiben.ch/globalassets/zeitschrift-schreiben.eu/2009/santa_tutor_training.pdf)
- Scott, A. (2017). The storytelling of writing centers outside the US: Director narratives and the making of disciplinary identities in Germany and Austria. *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, 41(5–6), 10–18.

- Scott, W. R. (2001). *Institutions and organizations*. Sage Publications.
- Song, L. (2018, February 21). Joining the momentum of writing center establishment in China. *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders, WLN*. <https://www.wlnjournal.org/blog/2020/04/writing-center-spotlight-daystar-university-writing-and-speech-centre/>
- Tan, B. (2011). Innovating writing centers and online writing labs outside North America. *Asian EFL Journal*, 13(2), 391–418.
- Vered, K. O., Thomas, S., Emerson, L. (2019). From the margins to the centre: Whole-of-Institution approaches to university-level literacy and language development in Australia and New Zealand. *Across the Disciplines*, 16(3). <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/australasia/intro.pdf>
- Wambua, B. (2020, April 2). Daystar University Writing and Speech Centre, Nairobi, Kenya. *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders*. <https://www.wlnjournal.org/blog/2020/04/writing-center-spotlight-daystar-university-writing-and-speech-centre/>

