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Mapping a Transatlantic Discipline: The Role of Handbooks in Discipline-Building in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland

Abstract

How have handbooks shaped—and been shaped by—the emerging discipline of writing studies in German-speaking countries, a region in Europe that is home to a rapidly growing community of writing center professionals? This article addresses this question through a translingual review (Scott, 2017) of three recently published handbooks, or reference manuals designed to introduce readers to disciplinary practices or methods: Ella Grieshammer, Franziska Liebetanz, Nora Peters, & Jana Zegenhagen's *Writing Consultations: A Model for the Future* (2012), which helped popularize peer tutoring in the region, Melanie Brinkschulte & David Kreitz's *Qualitative Methods in Writing Research* (2017), one of the first comprehensive surveys of the field's research methods, and Stephanie Dreyfürst, Franziska Liebetanz, & Anja Voigt's *The Writing Fellow Program: A Praxis Handbook for Teaching with Writing* (2018), which capitalized on the spread of peer tutoring to offer a model of adapting U.S.-based writing fellows programs to Germanic universities. This article illuminates the unique role of practice in forging a transatlantic identity for writing studies in German-speaking countries. It shows how the aforementioned volumes, all published in German, collectively invite us to revisit practice as a window onto the cultural and institutional contexts of diverse writing center communities around the globe.

Amidst renewed calls for empirical research (Driscoll & Perdue, 2014), practice has been closely associated with lore in writing center scholarship in the U.S., where it enjoys less prestige than its more celebrated sibling, research (e.g., Liggett, Jordan, & Price, 2011; Scott, 2016). Stephen North (1987) has described lore as a "pragmatic logic and experience-based structure" (p. 24), while Muriel Harris (2002), terms it the "accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs about what has worked, what is working, or what might work" in writing centers (p. 85). Handbooks, which are reference manuals designed to introduce readers to disciplinary practices and methods, have played a role in codifying lore into prescriptive practices in the field, particularly around peer tutoring (e.g., Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2009). Mindful of this, more recent handbooks—such as *Strategies for Writing Center Research* (Grutsch McKinney, 2016) and the *Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors* (Fitzgerald & Ianetta, 2015)—seek to shift practice away from lore by introducing readers to empirical frameworks for writing center work. These handbooks align with recent writing center scholarship that seeks to unsettle practices that have been ossified into limiting beliefs, whether by disrupting persistent paradigms such as the directive/non-directive binary (Kjesrud, 2015), challenging common practices like read-aloud protocols (Block, 2016), or reframing the narrow stories we tell about our work (Grutsch McKinney, 2013).

Yet handbooks, with their commitment to articulating shared principles, are also complex disciplinary artifacts embedded in national research traditions and institutional contexts. This is a dimension that contemporary narratives about lore risk obscuring. In the myth-busting rush, we may be missing opportunities to situate such works in the disciplinary histories of diverse writing center communities. Theoretically informed practice—and the varied methods for studying it—have always occupied an important place within the Germanic writing center community, one of the fastest growing in Europe. Indeed, the history of writing centers in German-speaking countries is intertwined with the genesis and influence of early handbooks. For example, the first writing center was founded outside North America in Bielefeld, Germany in 1993, the same year Otto Kruse's widely circulated primer, *Keine Angst vor dem Leeren Blatt: Ohne Schreibblockaden durchs Studium* (*Have No Fear of the Blank Page: Navigating Your Studies without Writer's Block*[1]), appeared in the first of what are now twelve editions. Handbooks created a shared language for naming problems and opportunities around writing and its instruction, while introducing readers to coherently conceptualized approaches to tutoring, teaching, and learning at Germanic universities. They continue to be important sources of scholarship in a practice-oriented field still without many of the traditional structures of what sociologist Andrew Abbott (2002) calls "stable disciplines,"

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1   All translations from the German are my own.

including degree programs and departments (p. 214). The field of writing studies just received, for example, its first two tenured professorships in Berlin inhabited by former writing center directors. The vast majority of the field's professionals leads writing centers and initiatives funded by external grants, meaning the professionals' contracts are limited and the futures of their centers uncertain. Practice, in this context, is central to the field's professional ethos. And since "research speaks louder than words" at Germanic universities, as writing center directors Katrin Girgensohn & Nora Peters (2012) put it in an article by the same title, the articulation of theoretically informed practice has been an important part of the institutional work performed by writing centers to secure their own futures. It has also paved the way for the establishment of what is now being called *Schreibwissenschaft,* or writing studies, a field that originated largely from within writing centers (Scott, 2016; Scott 2017).

Given the transatlantic histories of writing centers in the region, handbooks have also been critical sites for negotiating transnational scholarship on writing. Just as writing centers have, practical manuals in German-speaking countries have drawn generously from U.S.-based research to develop new models of writing instruction responsive to local contexts. While the recent flood of German-language handbooks to appear on the market has raised concerns among practitioners about quality control, the field's most widely cited manuals situate their claims in research on communicative processes and practices (e.g., Bräuer, 1996; Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012; Grieshammer, Liebetanz, Peters, & Zegenhagen, 2012). Their authors are active in (and, in some cases, founding members of) professional organizations dedicated to writing research and pedagogies, such as the German *Gesellschaft für Schreib-didaktik und Schreibforschung* (Society for Writing Didactics and Research; hereafter *gefsus*), founded in 2013; the Austrian *Gesellschaft wissenschaftliches Schreiben (*Society for Academic Writing; hereafter *GeWissS*), founded in 2009; and the Swiss *Forum wissenschaftliches Schreiben* (Forum for Academic Writing; hereafter *Forum*), founded in 2005. As these dates suggest, the field is still in the early stages of its establishment but rapidly developing. This makes practice, as represented through handbooks, a particularly dynamic object of study. Handbooks are also notably refreshing because they express less anxiety than their U.S.-based counterpoints about the practice-based or applied nature of much of the field's research (see, for example, Maid, 2006). Indeed, the field appears to own this aspect of its methods with pride.

My article fills a gap in writing center scholarship on both sides of the Atlantic by engaging in a translingual review of three recent and influential handbooks published outside the U.S.—in this case, Germany. Translingual reviews offer thickly descriptive, contextualized representations of writing research cultures where the language of publication is largely not English (Scott, 2017). My goal is to introduce English-speaking audiences to sources

that showcase the distinctness and vitality of Germanic research and practice around writing and its administration. As a writing center professional who earned her doctoral degree in comparative literature, a field whose methods depend on fluency in other languages, in-depth study of other research traditions and cultures, and transnational frameworks, I believe I have been uniquely, if humbly, situated to do this work. Since 2013, I have been studying the disciplinary history and contours of writing studies in German-speaking countries, spending summers in the archives, in German writing centers, and at conferences hosted by European universities to keep my finger on the pulse of this vibrant and rapidly growing field.

I begin the article with a discussion of Ella Grieshammer, Franziska Liebetanz, Nora Peters, & Jana Zegenhagen's widely acclaimed *Zukunftsmodell Schreibberatung: Eine Anleitung zur Begleitung von Schreibenden im Studium* (*Writing Consultations: A Model for the Future—An Introduction to Guiding Students through their Studies*) (2012), the first German-language handbook dedicated to consultations, a cornerstone of writing center work. Next, I turn to Melanie Brinkschulte & David Kreitz's edited collection *Qualitative Methoden in der Schreibforschung* (*Qualitative Methods in Writing Research*) (2017), the premier manual on qualitative methodologies in the field. It appeared at a moment when record numbers of peer tutors and peer tutor alumni were entering the field as directors of newly founded centers and as scholars of writing studies. I conclude with a review of Stephanie Dreyfürst, Franziska Liebetanz, & Anja Voigt's *Das Writing Fellow-Programm: Ein Praxishandbuch zum Schreiben in der Lehre* (*The Writing Fellow Program: A Praxis Handbook for Teaching with Writing*) (2018), the only handbook on either side of the Atlantic dedicated to writing fellows programs. I illuminate how a U.S.-based concept like "writing fellows" was not simply "exported" to Europe but rather repurposed and, indeed revitalized, to meet regional needs. Second only to the proliferation of peer tutoring at writing centers in Germany in the 2010s (Ruhmann, 2014b), writing fellows programs are arguably the "next big thing" in writing center practice.

By situating each of these handbooks in recent developments, I offer readers a map of practice in this transatlantic field. The translingual review offers one way of studying the myriad ways concepts migrate across borders, as research is refined in response to local traditions and changes in higher education. Such transnational research of handbooks offers the *WCJ's* largely North American base of subscribers a wider lens for understanding the diversity of writing center practice and scholarship around the globe.

A Model for the Future: The First German Handbook on Writing Consultations

As its title suggests, *Writing Consultations: A Model for the Future—An Introduction to Guiding Students through their Studies* (hereafter *WC*) shares the "bright with promise" ethos prevalent in early writing center research in the U.S. (see Gillam, 2009, p. 7). Coauthors Grieshammer, Liebetanz, Peters, & Zegenhagen served as early advocates for individualized writing instruction at universities in German-speaking countries. Published in 2012, the handbook appeared at a moment of unprecedented growth in the writing center community. In their preface, directors Gerd Bräuer & Girgensohn (2012) mention being "astonished" by just "how many institutions of higher education have founded writing centers and offer writing consultations," a "new development," they note, resulting in a "snowball" effect of training-the-trainer initiatives that "keeps on rolling" (p. vii). Unlike in the U.S., early metaphors for writing center work do not envision an optimistic future in order to secure belonging from the "parent" discipline of composition (Gillam, 2009, p. 7). Instead, the authors represent the cornerstone of writing center work, the consultation, as a transformative, new approach to disciplinary teaching and learning at universities. In the absence of first-year composition and other general education requirements, writing centers have been the traditional home of research on writing and its instruction in the region (e.g., Frank & Lahm, 2013; Ruhmann, 2014b; Santa, 2009; Scott, 2017).

WC fills an important gap in this landscape as the first handbook on tutoring written in German (Grieshammer, Liebetanz, Peters, & Zegenhagen, 2012, p. ix). When *Writing Consultations* was first conceptualized in 2008, seven centers existed in Germany (p. xii). By the time the first edition appeared four years later, this number had skyrocketed to thirty-six (p. 276) and is now well over sixty (Schreiblabor, 2019). The authors of *WC* are all first-generation peer tutors trained by either Bräuer at the University of Education in Freiburg or Girgensohn at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt an der Oder (p. xii). Bräuer & Girgensohn were the first to adopt a peer tutor model in their centers in the 2000s (Bräuer & Girgensohn, 2012). In the previous decade, Germany's handful of writing centers were operated by academic staff (Ruhmann, 2014b). *WC* contributes to the discipline by theorizing the concept of collaborative learning at the heart of peer tutoring and introducing new generations to its practices. The handbook, which is widely used and cited (Bromley & Scott, 2020), likely helped spread the peer tutor model to colleges and universities in the region, where it has become a gold standard (Scott, 2017, pp. 45–46).

The transatlantic origins of this model are visible in the handbook's organization. *WC*'s authors cite Kenneth Bruffee's (1978) theoretical writing

about peer tutoring as one of their three greatest influences, alongside Carl Rogers's (1999) person-centered approach to consultations and Anglophone and Germanic theories of writing processes (p. ix). Notably absent from *WC* is anxiety about lore: handbooks like Paula Gillespie & Neil Lerner's *Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring* and Donald McAndrew & Thomas Reigstad's *Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences* are cited in the same breath as empirical research on writing competencies (p. ix). This melding of influence signals that the authors see scholarship and practice as intertwined. Throughout the book, they translate difficult research into direct and lively prose in an effort to invite readers into the fold of this new and growing community. The book's first half, titled *Going into Consultations*, is dedicated to theory and serves as a primer for newcomers to the field. In the first chapter on writing competencies, for example, readers find syntheses of research on writing processes and development, followed by diagrams and tables that visualize the same. The second half, titled *Using Strategies in Consultations*, translates theory into practice by providing readers with examples of exercises, handouts, and conversational moves tutors can use to help writers learn about the writing process and advance their own projects (p. xi). This focus on practical tools is important at this early stage of writing centers' development because it helps uninitiated readers envision what writing consultations look like on the ground. The handbook also showcases the innovative, theory-based practices developed at the writing centers where the authors launched their careers.

Given that the first writing centers in the region were inspired by U.S.-based centers and research, readers might assume that North American frameworks predominate the handbook. While the influence is palpable, particularly in the representation of peer tutoring and cognitive models of the writing process, the manual overwhelmingly engages with Germanic sources to theorize academic literacies and the tutoring of writing. Through a bibliometric analysis of the reference page, I found that 79% percent (or 80 of the cited sources) were German-language publications; 19% (or 19 of the cited sources) were English-language publications, with all but two of these sources originating in the U.S.; 2% (or 2) were German translations of British sources. These numbers synchronize with a recent empirical study of *JoSch: Journal der Schreibberatung* (*JoSch: Journal of Writing Consultation*), the premier journal for writing studies in Germany, launched in 2010 by writing center professionals Liebetanz, Peters, Patrick Kowal, & Simone Tschirpke at the European University Viadrina. In the first twelve issues of *JoSch*, 78% of sources were cited in German, 19% in English, and 3% in other or multiple languages (Scott & Bromley, 2019). The prevalence of Germanic citations in *WC* signals its belonging to a distinctly Germanic field with its own foundational texts.

Interestingly, the greatest percentage of English-language sources appeared in the first four chapters: the introduction (100%, or 4), the chapter in-

troducing the concept of writing consultations (66% or 2), the chapter defining writing competences (29% or 4), and the chapter theorizing writing processes (66% or 3). This trend evinces the early influence of U.S.-based scholarship on the field's self-understanding. Writing process research in particular has been a core part of the identity of writing center practitioners (e.g., Ruhmann, 2014a; Scott, 2017) and remains a vibrant subfield in the region (Dengscherz, 2017; Dreyfürst & Sennewald, 2014; Knorr, Heine, & Engberg, 2014; Sennewald, 2017). The remaining twelve chapters cite no—or only one—English-language source or German translation of an English-language source, suggesting that a strong base of local literature exists on these topics. These chapters focus on writing strategies, reading competencies and processes, academic reading and writing blocks, guiding principles for writing consultations, consultation timelines, conversation techniques, the giving of feedback, the navigation of writing or reading difficulties, and writing center advocacy.

The handbook's close attention to the role of reading in writing consultations may be of particular interest to readers in the U.S., where reading has only recently been recognized as critical to writing center practices (see, for example, Carillo, 2017). The traditional focus in the Germanic context on reading and writing process theory stems in part from the genre of academic writing frequently assigned at universities when writing centers were first created: the *Hausarbeit,* or lengthy research paper requiring what Esther Breuer & Kirsten Schindler (2016) have called "independent, self-regulated student learning" in the absence of explicit writing instruction (p. 93). Not only does the genre demand sophisticated reading practices (Kruse, 2012), it also requires writing process knowledge previously not taught elsewhere at German universities. The founders of Germany's first writing center in Bielefeld attributed "inadequate knowledge about the writing process" to students' struggles with writing, causing them to "fail to distinguish between the different stages of text production, trying to work concurrently on steps belonging to different stages of the writing process, […] thereby overtaxing themselves" (Frank, Haacke, & Tente, 2003, p. 170). As German universities have transitioned to competence-oriented teaching in the wake of the Bologna Accords, the genres of writing assigned have diversified and the explicit teaching of writing, and the competencies associated with it, has increased (Breuer & Schindler, 2016, p. 98–99). This has positioned writing teachers and centers as a newly "integral part of university life and research," according to Breuer & Schindler (2016, p. 99). With this, writing studies itself has become what some writing center professionals are calling an "organizational field" with a critical mass of practitioners who share an understanding of their discipline and are more comfortable interacting with each other than those outside their domain (Brinkschulte, Doleschal, Girgensohn, Jörissen, & Rheindorf, 2017, p. 61).

WC anticipates this potential early in the field's development. The handbook's conclusion features a call to readers to join the emerging field of writing studies as writing center professionals. "A new field is emerging," the authors proclaim, "and you can participate in its formation" (Grieshammer, Liebetanz, Peters, & Zegenhagen, 2012, p. 279). Less than a decade later, readers have taken up this call. The list in *WC* of professional organizations, writing centers, and conference and publication venues have all expanded exponentially since its publication (pp. 275–281). If one thing is clear, writing consultations are no longer a model *for* the future at universities in the region; they are a widespread model *in* the present, the long-term future of which writing center professionals are seeking to secure. The euphoria of new beginnings has been replaced by the pragmatism of discipline-building, as is clear in the next two handbooks.

Taking Stock of the Discipline: *Qualitative Methods in Writing Research*

If *Writing Consultations* (2012) was conceptualized as the field was just beginning to professionalize in Germany, then Melanie Brinkschulte & David Kreitz's 345-page edited volume *Qualitative Methods in Writing Research* (2017; hereafter *QM*), which appears just five years later, shows the field at the moment of its maturation. Writing center directors Brinkschulte & Kreitz are among the first to survey the field's knowledge-making practices in German amidst a rising tide of published research and professional activities (see Becker-Mrotzek, Grabowski, & Steinhoff, 2017; Knorr, Heine, & Engberg, 2014). What is writing studies?: the book asks this question implicitly and answers it by comprehensively examining the field's core concepts, methods, and objects of study. *QM* mirrors, in this way, recent attempts in the U.S. to identify threshold concepts in the field (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015; Malencyzk, Miller-Cochran, Wardle, & Yancey, 2018). Yet it differs insofar as Brinkschulte & Kreitz's volume appears much earlier in the discipline's history. In the past several years, writing centers have become fixtures of universities, particularly in Germany where, due to a special governmental program from 2011 to 2020, federal seed funding for them has been particularly generous, even as their collective future is imperiled by the absence of stable internal funding and disciplinary structures such as departments (Girgensohn, 2017; Ruhmann, 2014b). In this context, to name writing studies as a field with its own methods and objects of study is to assert its authority in the disciplinary landscape of universities in German-speaking countries.

QM appears amidst a wave of efforts to build capacity for quality, peer-reviewed research in the German-speaking research community. In 2017, the first permanent series in writing studies were established at two scholarly presses. The "Writing Studies" imprint is now housed at Böhlau Press in Vienna

and sponsored by Austria's *GeWissS*. The "Theory and Praxis of Writing Studies" series, of which *QM* is the first volume, is published by W. Bertelsmann Press and sponsored by Germany's *gefsus*. As the series' inaugural volume, *QM* frames every book that follows. It complements recent disciplinary efforts to compile core texts in writing center research and practice (e.g., Dreyfürst & Sennewald, 2014) and to institutionalize writing centers in the disciplinary landscape of universities (Girgensohn, 2017). As more writing professionals conduct doctoral and postdoctoral research in the field, the region's professional organizations have begun to collaborate to offer workshops on research methods (e.g., Brinkschulte, Doleschal, Girgensohn, Jörissen, & Rheindorf, 2017).

The most recent of these workshops was offered at the 2019 joint conference of *gefsus, GeWissS,* and the *Forum*. The conference's theme, "Writing Studies: A New Discipline?—Transdiscursive Perspectives" *(Schreibwissenschaft: eine neue Diszipline? Diskursübergreifende Perspektive)* appears to extend the volume's discipline-building ethos. *QM* offers a descriptive snapshot of these developments. It appeals to disciplinary newcomers eager to gain an understanding of the field's methods while also addressing seasoned researchers looking for ways to answer the conference's call amidst a rapidly growing body of research. *QM* offers scholars, its imagined audience, a wide range of "authentic" examples of qualitative empirical research conducted by its 23 contributors (p. 12). Instead of writing an encyclopedic reference work on methods, as is common, Brinkschulte & Kreitz asked its contributing scholars to walk readers through an aspect of their research processes—from data collection to analysis to publication—in order to ground discussions of approaches in actual studies of relevance to the field (p. 11).

To help readers make sense of the contributions, Brinkschulte & Kreitz name in the introduction and unit prefaces core constructs in writing research. In the introduction, they describe writing studies as a form of "applied" research "from praxis for praxis," with roots in the interpretive social sciences, applied linguistics, and U.S.-based writing studies and writing center research (pp. 12–13). Whereas writing research published in German once focused primarily on studying the writing development of school children and professionals, the authors explain that a growing body of interdisciplinary, empirical research now attends to academic writers and writing at universities in German-speaking countries (p. 13). One branch of this research is dedicated to the writing process. Influenced by the cognitive approaches of U.S.-based research from the 1980s, writing process research in German-speaking countries represents writing as an "individual, structured process in which situational context is embedded" (p. 13). Examples of writing process research included in the volume are "Qualitative Analysis of Writing Processes with the Aid of Screen-Capturing" (2017), by German linguist Esther Breuer, and "Retro-

spective Interviews in Writing Research" (2017), by Austrian linguist Sabine Dengscherz.

Other subfields, Brinkschulte & Kreitz argue, focus on writing development more broadly, defined as the study of why and how writing competences emerge (p. 13). Such research encompasses studies of writing consultations, institutional contexts, and writing center best practices (p. 14). All researchers search for authentic writing questions and consultation constellations to study and, as is common in writing studies, make generous use of mixed (p. 14) and qualitative (p. 11) methods. Interestingly, "exploratory" is often used as a synonym for "qualitative" research in the volume, highlighting the volume's interdisciplinary and experimental ethos (p. 12). A 2017 inquiry conducted by *Forum* showed that 50% of the 49 survey participants claimed to work interdisciplinarily in writing didactics and to use methods such as interviews and qualitative content analysis to study the development of writing competencies (cited in Brinkschulte & Kreitz, p. 12). Qualitative, interdisciplinary research is thus central to the field's self-understanding.

Readers in the U.S. may notice both overlaps and departures from methods commonly cited in writing center studies in the U.S. Whereas Grutsch McKinney's (2016) *Strategies for Writing Center Research* highlights discourse analysis, interviews, surveys, field work, and action research as key methods, *QM* chooses not to flag surveys and action research as prominent. Methods from linguistics feature much more prominently, given the early and continued role of linguists in the field's formation (see Ruhmann, 2014b). The methods encompass the use of keylogging and screencapturing in a study of the role of internet use in academic writing (Breuer, 2017) and "dialogue-consensus/structural mapping technique," which includes integrated problem decision reports, keylogging, screencapturing, and cue-based retrospective interviews in a study of reflection about the writing process among university writers (Heine & Engberg, 2017).

After surveying methods in the first half, *QM's* remaining sections help readers imagine ways of moving from data to insights to publication. Three approaches to data analysis are highlighted, namely grounded theory (to analyze interviews with students about their writing productivity) (Sennewald, 2017), qualitative content analysis (to measure writing fellows' understanding of their roles) (Kirschbaum & Rothärmel, 2017), and discourse analysis (to study rhetorical moves in writing center consultations) (Grieshammer, 2017). The third unit offers advice on how to write an article after collecting and analyzing data. It includes two contributions, one with general advice on academic writing (Wimmer, Kreitz, & Brinkschulte, 2017) and another introducing software that can aide with qualitative data analysis (Weber, 2017). The volume concludes with two chapters on how to integrate research into writing center practice. For example, Ulrike Lang's (2017) contribution shows

that researchers can "work backwards" from the materials they have created for workshops and consultations to study writing center practices in ways that differ from surveys and action research (p. 304).

In less skillful hands, these chapters would present readers with a dizzying amount of information. Brinkschulte & Kreitz's signposting throughout helps readers experience the field's breadth of writing research with the aid of orienting core constructs. Collectively, the contributions show how Germanic writing studies has grown into an interdisciplinary and vibrant field with writing center professionals still driving much of the conversation given their position as experts of writing processes and their facilitation at Germanic universities. In this sense, the volume appears to have shaped and reinforced the working definition of writing studies articulated recently by *gefsus* (2019) on its homepage:

> Writing studies is an emerging discipline that concerns itself with writing processes using diverse perspectives and methods. It is informed by the results of writing research and writing didactics. The lively discourse between, through, and across disciplines shapes writing studies.

Gefsus, whose founding executive board consisted of six writing center directors (including Brinkschulte), a writing consultant, and a freelance writing trainer, sees itself as an explicit "part of the movement to establish writing studies" as a field. Brinkschulte & Kreitz's volume may be said to be contributing to the same. It reflects the unique institutional position of writing center professionals in the region to shape broad and diverse scholarly conversations about writing and its delivery in higher education. If writing center studies has been represented as being in the midst of an "unpromising present" in the U.S. (Lerner, 2014), the inverse appears to be the case across the Atlantic, where practitioners showcase with enthusiasm an expansive and inclusive field.

New Directions in Writing Fellows Programs: Transatlantic Research and Praxis

Published one year later in 2018, *Das Writing Fellow-Programm: Ein Praxishandbook zum Schreiben in der Lehrer* (*The Writing Fellow Program: A Praxis Handbook for Teaching with Writing*; hereafter *WFP*) pivots readers back to practice in a user-friendly guide to creating and sustaining writing fellow programs. At the time of publication, coauthors Stephanie Dreyfürst, Franziska Liebetanz, & Anja Voigt hailed from writing centers at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main in the West and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt an der Oder in the East. During the past decade, these centers in Germany's "two Frankfurts" have been among the most innovative in the region. They jointly launched the first writing fellow programs in Europe

in collaboration with writing center professionals at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

WFP is an artifact of this transatlantic partnership and of several years of research and exchange. It does a tremendous service to the field by consolidating research and practitioner knowledge into one comprehensive handbook. No comparable resource exists in the U.S., where knowledge about writing fellows programs is fragmented, consisting of isolated articles (e.g., Hall & Hughes, 2011; Regaignon & Bromley, 2011), glosses in handbooks (e.g., Fitzgerald & Ianetta, 2015, pp. 157–161), and a lone special issue of *Across the Disciplines* (Hughes & Hall, 2008).

Even as it leans on U.S.-based research traditions, *WFP* does not simply import research and praxis. Instead, it envisions itself as engaging—and helping others engage—in an act of "transfer."[2] Indeed, the concept of transfer is richly theorized in a guest contribution by Tobias Jenert of the Institute for Economics Pedagogy in St. Gallen, Switzerland, in a chapter subtitled "Why It's So Difficult to Copy What's Good" (p. 26). While imitating successful initiatives is tempting, Jenert cites research to argue transfers mostly fail at universities. After a honeymoon period of enthusiasm, members of the adopting institution often begin to doubt the model will work at their institutions because their local contexts are so different. Jenert thus argues it's essential to grapple with challenges head-on in the planning phases. Importing models may seem efficient, but Jenert reminds readers that effective transfer is actually time and resource intensive (p. 27). To be successful, he encourages institutions to ask themselves a series of challenging questions: what does the original program purport to solve, and what assumptions are embedded in it? How will the initiative be developed and implemented? How much of the "transferred" product should be adapted to the new context, and how much should be kept the same? What resources and conditions are needed along the way? (p. 28).

WFP uses these questions to guide the structure and motive of the book. The first section introduces readers to the history of writing fellows programs in the U.S. and their transfer to Germany. The next section provides an overview of the sequencing of programs. Readers are presented with fourteen steps to adopt so that students receive timely and helpful feedback on well-designed assignments. The chapter also includes the basic conditions that must be in place in order for a program to succeed. These include the training and ongoing mentoring of writing fellows in feedback and assignment design; faculty development for participants; and the creation of a range of program materials, from

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2   This melding of Germanic and American influences is reflected in the sources cited in the handbook. Roughly half the sources cited in the references are Germanic and half are U.S.-based. Of 79 sources cited, 39 are published in German, 38 in U.S. English, and 2 are U.S.-based writing center sources translated into German.

publicity resources, such as brochures, webpages and emails, to handouts on different writing strategies to handbooks for fellows and faculty, among others (pp. 41–45). The next chapter helps writing professionals "pitch" programs to their constituents, clarifying what students, faculty, and fellows stand to learn from the experience.

After providing this context, the next major unit of the book showcases sample program texts—first from the writing center at Goethe University, a large, established university, and then from the center at European University Viadrina, a smaller, more experimental one—to show how materials have been adapted to different local contexts. A wide variety of sample program texts are included, from artifacts of the application process for faculty to sample cover letters from students addressed to fellows to sample comments on papers. These institutional artifacts are followed by a slim and practical chapter on how to assess writing fellow programs. The remaining sections of the book include a sample Writing Fellow Handbook for Faculty and a sample Handbook for Writing Fellows, each roughly 35 pages and made available digitally at a companion website for easy access and revision.

The comprehensiveness of *WFP* allows it to accomplish something paradoxical. It renders visible the tremendous amount of labor involved in building successful writing fellows programs while equipping readers with tools for making the process less daunting. The book's sharing of resources helps even the most experienced practitioners imagine how to adapt writing fellow programs to their own institutions. The wealth of flow charts, tables, and authentic program materials saves readers from reinventing the wheel at every stage of the process. These richly theorized models help ensure "quality control" for writing fellows programs as copycat initiatives proliferate in the region, thanks to the widespread availability of federal grants earmarked for teaching and learning initiatives.

If Dreyfürst, Liebetanz, & Voigt have "translated" U.S.-based approaches to writing fellows programs into local practice, I hope the field will consider engaging in reverse translation: translating back into English and U.S.-based contexts the contents of this tremendously accessible and comprehensive handbook. It would likely become a staple resource for directors who have such programs or would like to initiate them.

The handbook *WFP* is also important because it marks an important juncture in the history of writing centers in the region, namely the arrival of peer tutoring as a successful writing center model in German-speaking countries. It capitalizes on the widespread presence of peer tutors who can be trained to help cocurricular centers impact the teaching of writing in the disciplines. Such curricular partnerships are now perceived as important to the long-term sustainability of writing centers in the region. In her keynote address at the 2014 European Writing Centers Association Conference, Swantje

Lahm (2014) argued that curricular inroads and partnerships with faculty are necessary to help writing centers avoid an inward-looking focus that could contribute to their marginalization—and institutional vulnerability. In addition to enhancing the teaching and learning of writing in the disciplines, writing fellows programs offer a collaborative and strategic path to institutionalizing writing center work at Germanic universities.

Conclusion

Together these three handbooks, *Writing Consultations*, *Qualitative Methods in Writing Research*, and *The Writing Fellow Program*, offer a portrait of a diverse and emerging field closely wedded to practice and active in discipline-building. As such, they are rich primary sources for studying the history and culture of writing center studies in different locales. We see in *Writing Consultations* early enthusiasm for writing center consultations at a moment when the peer tutor model, piloted in Freiburg and Frankfurt an der Oder, began to spread across the region. In *Qualitative Methods*, we see a maturing field coming to terms with its core methods and objects of study and the practice-based values underwriting them. In *The Writing Fellow Program*, we observe writing center professionals helping their peers think through the challenges of transferring programs from one regional context to another and anchoring the teaching of writing in the curriculum.

While U.S.-based scholarship often attends to the ways in which lore limits the kinds of questions we can ask (Kjesrud, 2015) and practices we can imagine (Grutsch McKinney, 2013), the above handbooks invite us to consider the reverse. What does theory-based practice reveal about the cultural and institutional contexts of diverse writing center communities around the globe? Handbooks, with their commitment to articulating shared principles, are critical sites for negotiating transnational scholarship on writing while building and advancing local research cultures. They participate in discipline-building by synthesizing core constructs, setting high standards for disciplinary work, and fostering communities of practice within a field still without many of the traditional structures of disciplines. "[D]isciplines," Abbot (2002) has argued, "provide crucial supports for and definition of academic and intellectual identity" (p. 210). Effective handbooks accomplish the same, translating research into a flexible set of principles and practices that bind a community.

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