

Writing Center Journal

Manuscript 1951

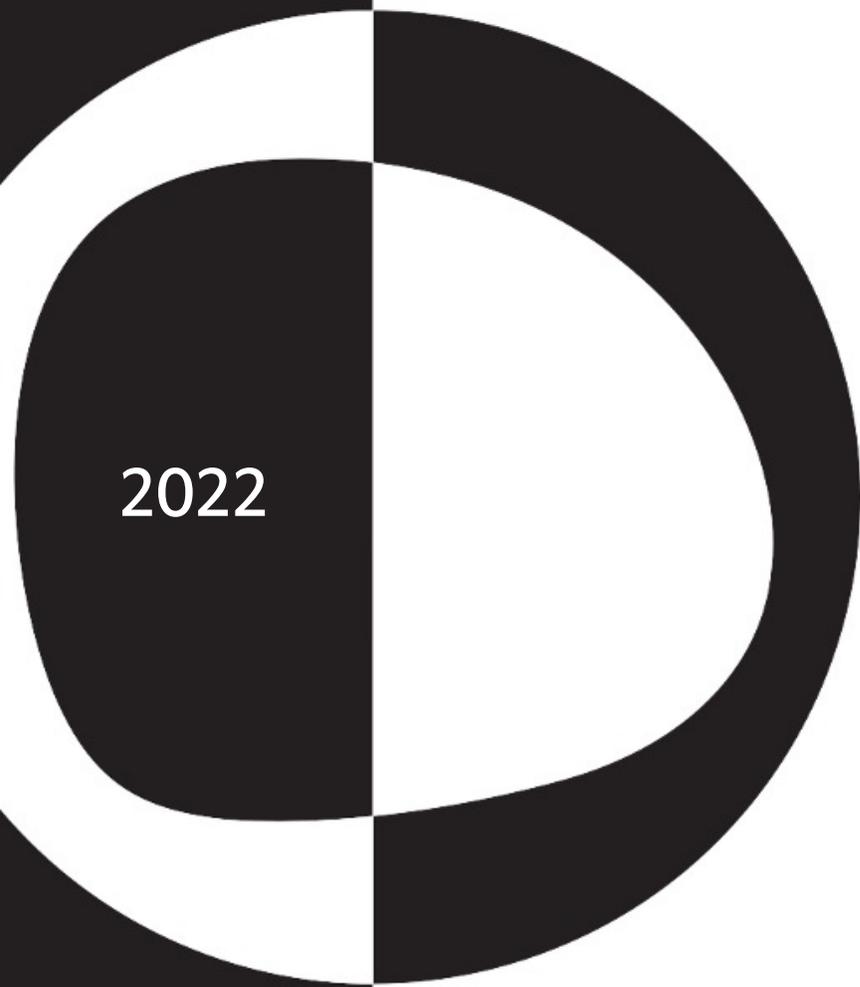
Front Matter

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2022

THE
Writing Center Journal

International Writing Centers Association
An NCTE Assembly

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History of *The Writing Center Journal*

The Writing Center Journal was launched in 1980 by Lil Brannon & Stephen North and remains the primary research journal in the field of writing centers. *WCJ* is an official journal of the International Writing Centers Association, an Assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English. Previous editors of the journal are listed below.

Lil Brannon & Stephen North 1980–1984	Neal Lerner & Elizabeth Boquet 2002–2008
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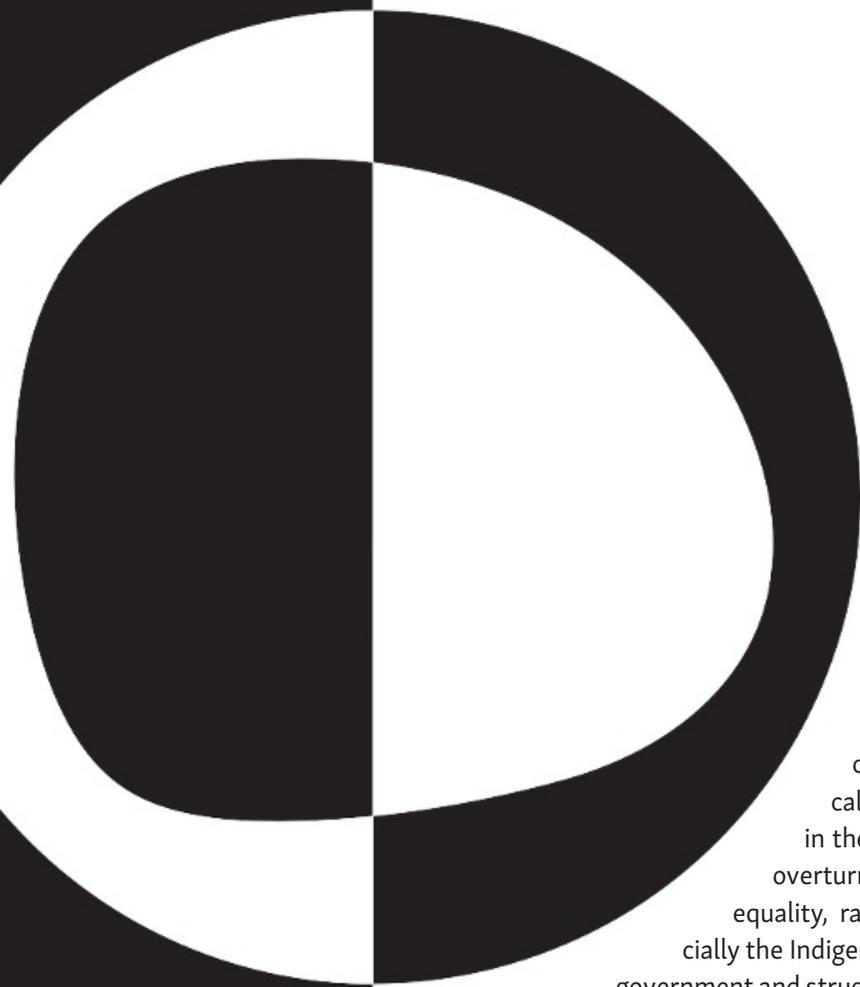
Guidelines for Submission

The current editors invite article submissions of theoretical scholarship and original empirical research on topics of interest to the writing center community. We are also interested in book reviews and review essays; please query via e-mail before submitting reviews. *The Writing Center Journal* aims to reflect diverse contexts and encourages submissions related to a wide variety of institution types and writing centers. Article manuscripts should be submitted via the online portal at submissions.writingcenterjournal.org. Articles are typically between 6,000 and 10,000 words and should follow NCTE’s Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language. Please visit writingcenterjournal.org for the *WCJ* style guide.

WCJ Reviewers

All submissions are reviewed anonymously by at least two external readers; those listed below are members of the active reader pool. We thank them for their contributions to writing center scholarship.

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Editors' Introduction

We write this introduction to issue 40.2 fully aware that the pandemic continues with new variants of COVID-19 on the rise. We all continue to work and write in the face of a difficult political, pandemic, environmental, and economic climate. Those in the United States are alarmed by the Supreme Court's recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, and what that may hold for marriage equality, racial justice, and privacy matters. Those in Canada, especially the Indigenous peoples who continue to suffer abuse by the Canadian government and struggle and fight for Indigenous rights, are wondering how Pope Francis's apology will materialize into concrete actions. Near and far, monkeypox continues to spread, and so does stigmatizing, homophobic, and racist language, which says more about the moral virus of some and the sickness of society writ large than about the actual viral illness. Around the world, people continue to grapple with record-breaking summer temperatures, which suggests quite evidently that we are in the midst of a climate crisis and global warming. Yet, in the United States, a Supreme Court ruling effectively curbs the EPA's ability to reduce carbon emissions and fight climate change. Globally, tragic mass shootings and gun violence have shaken communities to their core, near and far. Internationally, inflation has taken a grip, illuminating once more economic disparity. Today, many are yearning for "normalcy" as we write this introduction. But there is nothing normal about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. So, perhaps that nostalgia for "normalcy" makes visible, more now than ever, how "normalcy" always comes at the expense of those who will never know it.

We know many of the members of the writing center community are angry, hurt, fearful, confused, and tired. Many of us in academic and educational institutions are fearful of what might happen to the Civil Rights Act in this court system. We know that many of us will be facing the fall semester concerned for our tutors, our staff, our colleagues, and our students as rights are being taken away. And while we are equally concerned, and just as upset, we also know the importance of continuing to build our learning communities through scholarship—because the work that we do does matter and has an impact on the people we see in our writing spaces. So, we write this introduction not out of nostalgia for "normalcy," but rather to appeal to you, our readers, to perhaps dwell on and carefully reckon with how this current climate demands something else of us all: a writing center without police and policing; a writing center community premised on the stranger-yet-to-arrive rather than formal representations of identification as the condition for welcoming;

a community made and remade in the *non-name of all*¹ rather than on conditional hospitality and inclusion. The possibilities are endless. But for us, it begins with writing . . . a writing to reach ourselves; a writing to reach others; a writing that unsettles “normalcy”; a writing that reimagines and reweaves futures and worlds; a writing that reaches out.

We might feel the state of the world is fraught, so we turn to Roxanne Gay, who offers hope: “So much of what is possible is, in fact, in our hands” (“The Case Against Hope,” 2019). In context, Gay’s message was specifically directed to college graduates, warning against hope, or at least, a passive hope, and instead calling for awareness that the world, is in fact, “on fire,” and that we do have more agency than we often think we do: “We can act” (Gay, 2019). Writing centers can be such centers of action and can be the type of spaces where informed dialogue and critical thinking happen through a commitment to learning and reading and sharing scholarship. How many of us have already had difficult conversations with the people who walk into our spaces, ranging from helping a student get in touch with an advisor to talking with a tutor about resources on campus for birth control? Likewise, similar to what we see happening globally, we are aware that in the field of writing studies and writing center scholarship, informed dialogue is difficult to have. Conversations can feel stunted, as many of us take to social media to quickly respond to an issue or topic; and as the world has moved online, with so many people struggling in so many different ways, perhaps the writing center community, like many other communities, is not even given the time to read, write, and reflect—which is so important when it comes to informed dialogue, to learning from differences and tensions. We hope that readers of this issue can find the time to dialogue with the articles in this issue and with the authors, to reflect on the ideas offered, and to create actions for our communities; informed dialogue, based on research and scholarship, is necessary now more than ever. As writing center professionals, we know that the work of reflecting, listening, and sometimes gently challenging is necessary as we continue to promote learning in our spaces, so we can act for the better. So, while the world may be on fire, may we find it in us to sow seeds of care, love, and hope as we participate in one another’s lives.

As editors of the *WCJ*, we believe our scholarship makes an impact: It helps us do better and be better, and it demands we embrace learning generously. To act, to have informed dialogue, is often difficult work, and there is much good work in writing center scholarship that discusses such difficulties. Travis Webster, in *Queerly Centered: LGBTQA Writing Center Directors Navigate the Workplace*, opens with such an act, as he discusses addressing the *Pulse* massacre to his staff, who needed guidance and support, and the difficulties of this work, especially as an openly gay director: “I offered my office for *Pulse* conversations for anyone who needed support. In my office, I heard fear and anger. . . . My tutors feared similar events could take place specifically at our center given our very ‘out’ social justice mission. . . . This work was somewhere between profoundly rewarding and deeply uncomfortable” (3). Acting matters. Texts like this help prepare us for conversations we will inevitably have with our students, staff, and tutors, as we learn from this study and the insights gathered.

As editors, we believe in the importance of keeping scholarship accessible to our communities, particularly during such difficult times when so many communities feel isolated and alone. We are even further committed to highlighting voices of junior scholars, scholars of color, scholars from underrepresented institutions and marginalized backgrounds. We know major change won’t happen overnight, but our actions matter: diversifying the reviewer pool, encouraging and mentoring junior scholars, reaching out to writers from a wide array of institutions, including HBCUs, HSIs, MSIs, tribal colleges, two-year universities, community colleges, and colleges outside the United States. We encourage readers to reach out to us right now as we continue to work together during such difficult times: How can we make our community better through scholarship? How might our scholarship create needed learning communities beyond academia, transforming the way people think and dialogue? How might our scholarship impact state policy, and in what ways might we better work with our professional organizations such as IWCA and NCTE to create more accessible, inclusive, and equitable environments?

The articles in this issue represent and highlight the important acts and work of writing centers, ranging from everyday acts and practices of writing center work and administration to more global concerns of the implications of writing centers, asking readers to reconsider their pedagogies, practices, and policies, and even their viewpoints on writing center work through scholarship and, hopefully, informed dialogue. The articles in this essay might complicate an understanding you have on a particular topic—they might even challenge you. We want to encourage readers to see that challenging and disagreeing on an issue often makes for a better community, one of diverse learners who seek to be better through questioning and interrogating our work, our ideas, and our assumptions. This issue takes on topics such as better supporting dissertation writers, understanding social media use and being more intentional with this tool, examining and creating veteran–novice tutor relationships for mentorship and professional development, investigating the complicity of U.S. higher education and writing centers as a modern/colonial and neocolonial tool, and developing and assessing virtual graduate writing groups. In this issue, we have a review of another text that asks for the writing center community to act—through testimony, witness, and “creative truth telling”—and challenges writing center lore through antiracist pedagogy and lived experience: *Counterstories from the Writing Center*. We’re encouraged by so many writing center professionals and scholars continuing to create scholarship for dialogue, and we hope readers find community through this issue as we continue to learn so we can act—for the better.

Brad Hughes, Elisabeth Miller, and Nancy Linh Karls’s article, “Listening to the Outliers: Redefining the Curriculum for Dissertation Camps,” examines tensions between dissertation camps’ benefits and limitations. In their study, the authors found tensions around four key parts to dissertation camp curricula: developing writing habits and schedules, sustaining a community of writers, focusing on the drafting stage, and emphasizing cross-disciplinary collaboration. As the authors write, “We invite colleagues to listen carefully to the outlier responses and to respond critically to those responses . . . in collaboration with other campus partners, we can focus attention on and better address some of these issues through a more inclusive, accessible approach to leading and teaching these camps overall.” This essay has implications for revising dissertation camp curriculum, but also has implications for writing center workshops and work with graduate students, encouraging readers to rethink their pedagogies to better address the complexities of a diverse group of writers.

Xuan Jiang, Jennifer Peña, and Feng Li explore how pairing veteran and novice tutors in ongoing professional development affects transfer. Working from the site of a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and under the effects of the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors used surveys and interviews to draw out the effects of voluntary pairing of experienced and newer consultants where mentoring happened in a variety of contexts, from structured meetings to observed sessions. The article represents a compelling discussion of methods, particularly around quantitative analysis and its interpretation. Novice tutors, the authors report, perceived improvement in oral and written communication, even as they came to the pairing experience with high personal assessments of their intercultural fluency skills. The project will push readers to think about ways in which they might take it up in dialogue with the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Project and design relevant studies of their own.

Brian Hotson and Stevie Bell develop a decolonial framework, perspective, and lens in their exploration of the entanglements and complicities of higher education and Western writing centers with global neocolonialism. “Writing Centers and Neocolonialism” is an appeal to the global community of writing centers, as well as to the International Writing Centers Association, to take global neocolonialism seriously, as well as the various ways it unfolds within spaces/places such as writing centers, inflicts itself on everyday practices of policy-making and literacy and rhetorical instruction (e.g., salvation, conformity, assimilation), and transplants its grip with local, national, and global ambitions. Ultimately, Hotson and Bell’s vision for a writing center begins with a careful reckoning, both with how international writing centers are neocolonial enterprises, as well as how

everyday actor-agents become entangled and complicit in maintaining the status quo, and extends outward toward a demand for something else.

Amanda May's article, "On Networking the Writing Center: Social Media Usage and Non-Usage," presents findings from a study on writing center social media use and nonuse in which the author surveyed 244 writing centers on their social media presence. The study provides a more in-depth examination of writing centers' social media use, including their intentions with social media and their targeted audiences, and enters an ongoing conversation on the perceived purpose of a writing center to outside administrators, while also encouraging writing centers to produce more multimodal writing on these platforms. This essay is a necessary intervention in the lack of scholarship in writing center studies on social media usage of writing centers, specifically, and provides data that encourages future scholars to examine such tools in more depth.

Wenqi Cui, Jing Zhang, and Dana Driscoll presents findings from an empirical investigation on how to best support advanced graduate writers working on dissertation writing. Through a RAD (replicable, aggregable, and data-supported) approach, the article offers evidence-based practices (e.g., mini lessons, goal-setting, check-ins, peer review workshops) based on a virtual graduate writing group program (consisting of 38 participants) at a mid-Atlantic writing center at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Ultimately, Cui is able to illustrate positive change in graduate writers' writing abilities, behaviors, and progress, supporting their claim that graduate writers need persistent and multidimensional writing support (e.g., skill-based, draft-based, time-based, emotion-based). They offer their study as one model for other writing centers to develop and refine their own models of support for graduate writing.

In this issue's book review, Alex Hanson provides an overview of Wonderful Faison's and Frankie Condon's edited collection, *Counterstories from the Writing Center*. Focusing on the experiences of people of color as administrators, tutors, and students in writing center spaces, *Counterstories from the Writing Center* aims to address the often performative nature of antiracist and social justice work in writing centers, especially those housed in predominantly white institutions or operated primarily by white writing center administrators. Hanson is careful to note that the authors in Faison and Condon's collection are not offering white writing center administrators a "how-to" for antiracism but, rather, an opportunity to engage and reflect on their own practices and learn how to better support both the students of color who enter writing center spaces and the tutors of color who work there. *Counterstories from the Writing Center* is essential reading for any writing center person looking to engage more critically with the works of antiracism and social justice.

We do hope readers have the time to enjoy and engage with the scholarship in this issue and to reach out to us as we continue to build our communities through difficult times. We hope the scholarship helps us in having more conversations and dialogues as we all aim to act—to do better.

Anna, Romeo, Eric, and Harry

Note

1. Acosta, A. (2012). Hinging on exclusion and exception: Bare life, the US/Mexico border, and los que nunca llegarán. *Social Text*, 30(4 113), 103–123.

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