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For those of us with computers in our writing labs, this month's issue of the newsletter has two articles of particular interest, one a lengthy sampler of computer programs for the writing lab and the other a review of an imaginative, useful piece of software. In her introduction to the software sampler, Bonnie Sunstein suggests that we look not for software that merely replaces pencil and paper drills but for programs which make use of the special capacities of the computer to offer unique activities. As an example of what computers can do--and do well, Kathleen Rowan's review of Super Scoop II shows us the power of a simulation game to offer interesting opportunities for writing practice, both in the writing lab and the classroom.

While this month's issue includes articles on electronic help with writing skills, next month's newsletter focuses on the central human component of the lab--tutors. The issue being examined has been called "tutor role confusion," a topic that affects our methods and goals because the question to be considered is whether tutors are facilitators who help others learn or whether tutors are, like classroom teachers, transmitters of what needs to be learned. Tune in next month for some thoughtful--and thought-provoking answers to this critical question.

In the meantime, of course, keep sending your articles, reviews, questions, comments, offers to act as consultants (as you can see in this month's issue, there is a growing list of people willing to offer their services), names of new members, and those always appreciated yearly donations of \$7.50 (in checks made payable to Purdue University and sent to me) to:

Muriel Harris, editor  
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USING COMPUTER SOFTWARE  
IN THE WRITING CENTER

Choosing computer software for a writing center can be a prohibitive task. The computer people drone about our hardware needs, networking our furniture, and re-wiring our buildings. The deans yammer about budgets, management and assessment, and sometimes they give us hardware. The academic departments pine about the articulate, fluent students they used to have, and beg us to create them. The tutors and the students whirl in and out, wishing we could offer more help. There are never secretaries. In the meantime, as always, the writing center director flits among them all, touching down as often as possible to organize the buzzing chaos, and for an occasional moment, glances at a computer catalogue, much of which is written in the jargon of another world. No wonder we are insecure. We don't trust ourselves to make expensive decisions based on other people's ideas and another world's jargon. We forget that we do remain, in fact, the most qualified people to make software decisions for our centers. We are the only ones who can answer these questions:

- \* What will we do with it when we get it, given that we wanted it in the first place?
- \* Who's going to use it, and what for?
- \* How does it differ from the other supports we have?
- \* How much can we get it to tell us that we don't know now?
- \* What will it do to meet our objectives for better writing and better thinking?
- \* What can it do differently to encourage writing and thinking that our current objectives haven't met?

A SAMPLING OF SOFTWARE FOR THE WRITING CENTER

Our most important qualification is that we do know about teaching writing:

- 1. That the best way to teach writing is to get students to write
2. That careful prewriting, multiple drafting, revising, determining audiences, and meaningful publishing strategies make better papers
3. That the best teachers are human, and often are those who work individually with students
4. That the process approach has shown us that we can't hide behind the quantifiable "skills" of spelling, syntax, and grammar--they are the mechanical features of writing
5. That writing critically and creatively comes with structuring and organizing thinking

Appropriate computer software can assist us with each of these objectives, as long as we remember to use our best practices as teachers when we look at software, as we would choosing books for our courses. Our curriculum, the structure of our centers, and our objectives for the improvement of writing should dictate our software choices, not the center's furniture or wiring systems, the administration's assessments, or the students' average SAT scores. Our choices can help us keep more accurate records, help our students revise, allow our personal contact with students to be more meaningful, and eliminate more of the "bookkeeping" of writing papers.

Most lists of software come from computer companies and publishers' catalogues. They are organized generically, by computer or by function. This is a list designed according to the categories and practices we value for the teaching of writing, and for the very special needs of a writing center, to empower the environment and enable an even better interaction between school and center, teacher and student, writer and reader.

Bonnie Sunstein
Rivier College
Nashua, NH

NOTES:

- 1. Since computer software is technological innovation, this list is becoming obsolete as you read it. Look for ads, brochures and catalogues to update it.
2. Our bibliographic convention (with apologies to MLA and APA): category, name: publisher, special features.
3. We have listed software for the three microcomputers most popular in schools: "Apple" refers to the Apple family of computers: the Apple IIe, IIc, and the new IIGs; "Mac" refers to the Macintosh (an Apple product); and "IBM" refers to the IBM family of computers: the IBM PC, AT, XT, and all other computers that are "IBM compatible."
4. Not all software works with all computers, nor do all word processors work with all printers. Check the "DOS" (Disk Operating System) and compatibility before buying software. Software writers are always tinkering, revising and re-publishing. Sometimes there are new versions available for already existing computers or software that was previously unavailable. Be sure that you're buying the latest version, or that you'll know how to get an "upgrade" when it becomes available.

RECORD KEEPING ("INTEGRATED TOOLS": spreadsheet/data base/word processor) Excellent for keeping track of placements, scores, tutor/tutee contacts, hours, numbers of papers, etc.

- PFS File (Apple, IBM, Mac): Software Publishing
Appleworks: (Apple): Apple
ZyIndex (IBM): Zylab
MasterFile (IBM):
Lotus (IBM): Lotus Development Corp.
Jazz (Mac): Lotus Development Corp.
MultiPlan (spreadsheet), Microsoft File (database)
Microsoft Chart (Mac): Microsoft

DRILL AND PRACTICE ("CAI"-Computer Assisted Instruction) A caveat: Be sure to preview CAI software before you buy it; look at types of exercises. Can they be done just

as efficiently with a workbook, a pencil, and a teacher's manual? Are the authors English teachers or computer programmers? Are the skills appropriate? Is the purpose of the exercise clear to the student? Is it useful? Can the student use the feedback diagnostically or heuristically? Remember-- a computer can quantify and can keep track of hundreds of sub-skills for hundreds of students.

**GrammarLab** (Apple, IBM): Little, Brown, Inc.

**M-ss-ng L-nks** (Apple, IBM): Sunburst. A unique program, designed to create true student/text interaction. Can be modified for texts specific to courses--ESL, readings from your own freshman reader, etc.

**SAT drill**: available for most computers from many publishers

grammar drill packages: available for most computers from many publishers

COMPLETE WRITING PACKAGES (Integrate pre-writing, organizing and thinking strategies, revising and editing capacities with an internal word processor or with a designated external word processor)

**Computer Writing Resource Kit** (Apple, IBM, Mac): D.C. Heath. Works only with selected word processors

**HBJ Writer** (IBM): Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich. Integrated with word processor and revising program

**Writer's Helper** (Apple, IBM): Conduit. Eleven different programs, integrated with external word processor

**The Writing Workshop** (Apple): Milliken. Totally integrated large package with many disks including its own simple word processor.

PREWRITING ("Invention": heuristics, outliners, genre-based organizers--we have not included word-game programs). For a more intensive review, see Parham, Charles. "Conquering the Dreaded Blank Page."

Classroom Computer Learning Sept. 1986: 39-44.

**Complete Writer** (Apple): Learnc. Must be used with Bank Street Writer

**Prewrite** (Apple): Boynton/Cook. Teacher can add questions

**Homework Helper**: Writing (Apple): Spinnaker

**SEEN** (Apple): Helen Schwartz/PO Box 911/Rochester, MI 48063. Oriented toward

literature

**ThinkWorks** (Apple): Megahaus. Outliner, "idea processor" for Applesworks.

**Interactive Writing Tools** (Apple): Britannica. Six "modes": expository, narrative, poetry, business and friendly letter, newswriting; integrates with "The Writer's Assistant" software.

**Proteus** (Apple, IBM): Research Design Associates. Uses several common approaches: "looping"--freewriting, focusing, freewriting again; "cubing"--define, compare, contrast, argue for and against; and "5 W's".

**Quill** (Apple, IBM): D.C. Heath. Includes word processor and five "planners," methods of sharing writing. Teacher can add questions

**TOPOI** (Apple, IBM): Hugh Burns/Air Force Resources Lab. Based on classical rhetorical strategies. Public domain.

**Think Tank** (Apple, IBM, Mac): Living Videotext. Allows and creates flexible manipulation of outlines.

**Max Think** (IBM): Max Think. Allows and creates manipulation of outlines, clustering of ideas.

**Calliope** (Apple, Mac): Innovision. Processes ideas visually, in a non-linear way

WRITING ("Word Processors" refer to the software packages, not the computers themselves. Think about the level of sophistication at which your students need to write; how much text they can put on a disk, what kind of formats they need to use, etc.)

SIMPLE:

**Magic Slate** (Apple): Sunburst. 20, 40, or 80 columns; can do subscripts, footnotes

**Bank Street Writer** (Apple, IBM): Broderbund and Scholastic. Most popular grade school word processor. Has speller, data base, story starters, many "support" software programs available.

**Homework** (Apple, IBM): Sierra On-Line

MORE POWERFUL (amount of space, choice of formats, editing and text mobility):

**AppleWriter** (Apple): Apple. Simple to learn.

**FrEd Writer** (Apple): San Diego Tech Center. Very similar to Apple Writer. Public domain--free, can be copied.

**Applesworks** (Apple): Apple. Integrated with data base and spreadsheet; most

popular in this category.

**MouseWord** (Apple): International Solutions. Write/edit mode and format mode, has mail merge, modem link, and glossary similar to MacWrite

**MouseWrite** (Apple): Roger Wagner Publishing. Similar to MacWrite, pre-configured for 13 printers.

**PFS Write** (Apple, IBM version, "Writer's Assistant"): PFS. Has data base, but 5 page limit in memory.

**Electric Pencil** (IBM).

**MacWrite** (Mac).

**MOST POWERFUL** (commonly used by professionals):

**Wordstar** (Apple, IBM)

**MicrosoftWord** (Mac, IBM)

**Word Perfect** (IBM)

**Displaywrite I** (IBM)

**REVISING** ("Diagnostics"--scan text, highlight usage and grammar errors.) For a more intensive review, see Kovacs, Deborah. "Turning First Drafts into Final Drafts." Classroom Computer Learning Oct. 86: 36-39.

**MECC Readability** (Apple): MECC (Minnesota Educational Computing Corporation)

**MECC Editor** (Apple): MECC. Works with AppleWriter

**Ghost Writer** (Apple): MECC. Works with six standard word processors.

**Homer** (Apple): Charles Scribner's Sons

**Sensible Grammar** (Apple): Sensible Software. Works with AppleWorks, AppleWriter, PFS:Write, WordPerfect, and most ProDos word processors.

**Grammatik** (Apple, IBM):

**Writer's Workbench** (IBM):

**MacProof** (Mac): ALP (Automated Language Processing) Systems Writing Corp. Part of a "networked" writing system, designed for entire labs.

**NoteBene** (Mac, IBM): Dragonfly Software (available through MLA). Integrated data base/bibliography/word processor

**SPELLERS** (Built-in dictionaries that scan text, highlight spelling errors). For a more intensive review, see Eiser, Leslie. "I Luv to Rite! Spelling Checkers in the Writing Classroom." Classroom Computer Learning. Nov/Dec. 86: 50-57.

**Bank Street Speller** (Apple): Broderbund. Works only with Bank Street Writer.

**Sensible Speller** (Apple, IBM): Sensible Software. Works with most word processors

**MegaWorks** (Apple): Megahaus. Works with AppleWorks, and includes mailmerge.

**Webster's New World Spelling Checker** (Apple, IBM): Simon and Schuster. Very complete, works with most word processors.

**The Reference Set** (IBM): Reference Software. Includes a built-in thesaurus, works with most IBM word processors.

**Speller** (Mac): Hayden

**MacSpell** (Mac): Apple

**MacSpellWrite** (Mac): Assimilation Process

**The Right Word** (Mac): Microsoft. Works with Microsoft Word, includes a thesaurus

**PUBLISHING** ("graphics" programs; allow for pictures, layout, paste-up; good for newspapers, booklets, flyers and newsletters)

**StoryMaker** (Apple): Scholastic. Combines graphics and text

**Bank Street Story Book** (Apple): Mindscape. Uses joystick, Koala pad for drawing, has text editor

**Newsroom** (Apple, IBM): Springboard. Combines headlines, fonts, columns, "clip art."

**MultiScribe** (Apple): StyleWare. Includes complete word processor, fonts, type-styles and sizes, and custom designs such as those in the Mac software.

**Fontrix** (Apple): Data Transforms. Allows versatile typesetting and graphics. Can be combined with standard word processors.

**Printshop** (Apple, IBM): Broderbund. Headlines, "clip art," many choices of fonts and sizes.

**Fantavision** (Apple): Broderbund. Does animation; can be used creatively with scripting exercises.

**MacPaint** (Apple, Mac): Apple. Uses mouse for drawing, has enormous choices of fonts, borders, sizes, shades, etc.

**FullPaint** (Mac): Apple. Like MacPaint, only better. Can manipulate direction.

**Mac the Knife** (Mac): Miles Computing. Does drawing.

**Click-Art** (Mac): T/Maker. Has many clip-art drawings to choose from.

**McPix** (Mac): Magnum. Similar to Click-Art.

**Microsoft Draw** (Mac): Microsoft. Clip-art programs to add to Mac text.

**PageMaker** (Mac): Aldus. When combined with word processor and clip-art, can do professional looking layouts.

**MacPublisher** (Mac): Boston Software Pub. Also does layout.

**ReadySetGo** (Mac): Manhattan Graphics.

Developed by graphic artists for sophisticated effects.

### OTHER IDEAS FOR THE WRITING CENTER:

1. Some writing-game programs offer interesting subjects and formats; here is a partial list of ones worth looking at:

**Storytree.** Creates "branching" stories.

**Suspect Sentences**

**CompuPoem.** Formulaic poetry writing. Sensitizes students to elements of a poem.

**SuperScoop.** News writing format.

2. Public networks ("bulletin boards"), accessible by modem and telephone line, can offer wonderful communication links to other writing communities and research resources. Here are two:

**The Source** (a date-based library)

**Participate** (a network of computerized college writing teachers and centers)

Bonnie Sunstein  
Rivier College  
Nashua, NH

and

Joan Dunfey  
Lesley College  
Cambridge, MA

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### COMPUTER SOFTWARE REVIEW OF SUPER SCOOP II

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Writing tutors and teachers are well aware of the difficulties associated with teaching research skills. Teachers cannot follow students around the library, and yet students need some guidance in deciding (1) what information is relevant to their research questions, (2) which aspects of this information are most relevant, and (3) which statements, ideas, or words should be quoted or paraphrased in their written products.

One way of teaching bases for these decisions is to use simulations designed for personal computers. In the February 1986 issue of The Writing Lab Newsletter, I reviewed Peter Owens' simulation, **Super**

**Scoop I**, and recommended it to tutors and composition teachers, as well as journalism instructors. Now Owens, a professional writer and professor at Southeastern Massachusetts University, has produced **Super Scoop II**, and once again I can recommend its use in labs and writing classrooms; however, **Super Scoop II** is more demanding than **Super Scoop I** and may be best used in intermediate collegiate writing classes or tutorials.

**Super Scoop II** simulates a journalistic situation in which students act as reporters for a local paper. Their editor assigns them to cover a dispute between a wealthy land developer and a group of conservationists. The land developer is apparently responsible for illegally destroying a pond and killing the pond's wildlife inhabitants; however, he denies this. To find out the truth, students must select (from a list of 19) the most appropriate interviewees, and (from a list of three) the public documents most likely to shed light on the legality of the developer's actions. Just as in real life, though, students have limited time in which to interview sources, read documents, and attend to interruptions such as distracting phone calls.

Tutors or teachers could work with this simulation in several ways. For example, in small groups or one-to-one tutorials, participants could discuss reasons for selecting interviewees (e.g., Should those interviewed first be people who know the most about what has happened or those whom the reporter knows and trusts most?) In large groups, as Owens suggests, **Super Scoop II**'s interviews and documents could be projected on a screen and a whole class could recommend the interviews selected and the statements to be quoted in a news column. In the *Instructors' Manual*, which Owens provides, there are many good suggestions for using **Super Scoop II**, such as ways of monitoring and guiding students' note-taking processes. In addition, the *Student Manual* gives students information on local government, environmental law, strategies on organizing their notes, and tips on writing news stories or news analyses.

I used **Super Scoop II** with ten students in an upper-level writing course. In general, my students found the program interesting and enjoyable, though because the simulation has no clear villains or heroes, some students were frustrated with

the ambiguities it presented them. **Super Scoop I** paints its simulation (about a woman transfused with the wrong type of blood) in legal and moral black and white. **Super Scoop II**'s case is mottled gray; hence, "solving" it is somewhat less emotionally satisfying. However, my sense is that **Super Scoop I** and **II** might be best taught back to back, with **Super Scoop I** being assigned first to engage students' interest and **Super Scoop II** being assigned second to give students an appreciation of the moral murkiness of many public issues.

**Super Scoop II** also has a special feature. Unlike **Super Scoop I**, it allows students to ask (i.e., type in) questions for some of the interviewees. The program is designed to recognize certain key words, and just as it happens in real life, it recognizes some good questions and ignores others. Consequently, students need to read the Student Manual's tips on asking questions before they work with the computer simulation.

Both **Super Scoop I** and **II** are easy to recommend to writing labs and composition instructors because they are effective contexts for teaching research and, as Owens says, for making the process of writing "visible" to students and instructors. My only quibble with **Super Scoop II** is that its manuals are marred by typos. The **Super Scoop II** package sells for \$65.00, and includes a program diskette, archival copy, Instructor's Manual, and Student Manual. It is designed for the Apple II family of microcomputers with 48K memory, DOS 3.3, and one disk drive; it is available from COMPRESS, a division of Wadsworth, P.O. Box 102, Wentworth, NH 03282: tel.: 603-764-5831.

Katherine E. Rowan  
Purdue University

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TO: New Writing Tutors

FROM: Mary Dossin, Writing Skills  
Specialist, State University of  
New York-Plattsburgh

By now most of you have had at least a few tutoring encounters and have learned a lesson all teachers/tutors know well: some

sessions go better than others. Enjoy the good ones. The times when you really "click" and know you're being helpful are fun and stimulating and should make you feel good about yourself and the skills you're acquiring.

What do you do, however, when things don't go well? How you handle these sessions is what really determines whether you will grow as a person and as a tutor. Self-criticism, self-examination is part of being a professional. None of us has it all together from the beginning--or even long past the beginning. We learn as we go along by taking a problem-solving approach when things don't go as well as we'd planned and hoped.

I suggest the following steps when you are disappointed in a tutoring session. They are the steps I follow myself. Think carefully about the questions; write out answers; talk things over with another experienced person.

1. OBSERVATION: What actually happened? (Stick to facts.) What was said? done?
2. ANALYSIS: What went wrong? What might I have done to make the session go better?
3. JUDGMENT: Where do I go from here? (If constructive change is going to occur, it has to start with you!)

There is nothing easy or automatic about answering these questions or about taking the action that your answers may imply. The only certainty is that slapping a negative label on the student (unpleasant, hostile, lazy, difficult) solves nothing and prevents the growth and change on your part that may make future tutoring sessions more productive. Blaming the tutee is as much a cop-out as students blaming poor performance on tough profs and unfair tests. Remember, one of the qualities you are modeling for the students you tutor is a constructive, problem-solving approach to challenges and difficulties.

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# The Tutor's Corner

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## TWENTY MINUTES IN THE LIFE OF BOB THE TUTOR

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To train peer tutors, the Purdue University Writing Lab has an undergraduate training program. Aside from attending class once a week and participating in tutorials with tutors already working in the Lab, we are required to write about what we have seen other tutors do. The purpose is not only to get us to notice the subtleties of the job, but also to observe the differences in style that make each tutor, and tutoring session, unique.

So there I was, sitting next to the "pro." The first student was a young woman, fresh out of high school. She seemed quite distressed because she had been led to believe she was a good student in English. Now, however, she was discovering a whole slew of troubles she never thought she had. "Don't worry," Bob exclaimed encouragingly, "it was not time lost. You can always use what you've learned!" And I suppose this is the gist of what people do in the lab. They try to build on what the students know. The lady could write a nice descriptive paper, using common sense and common knowledge, but she couldn't write a persuasive paper. That's what scares me about my tutor training class; I am always afraid I won't "recognize" the student's problem once I actually begin tutoring. And even if I do, what do I say then?

But here was Bob: he had to sort out the student's frustrations of having believed she was a good writer, the many conflicting notes from her teacher as translated by the student, and finally his own personal feelings. How did he focus it all on the word "persuasive?" First, he asked many questions. They ranged from the topic of the paper to the student's organization and the teacher's expectations. I suppose that's the way he figured she needed to learn how to be persuasive in her writing. But how do you teach that? Bob used a three-dimensional strategy which he divided into three columns on paper: influence, appeal, and rationale. Each time the student's work applied (or didn't apply) to that approach,

he made her explain why, so she could understand what she was supposed to do. I think she liked it because it was not only clear, but also followed her textbook, Four Worlds of Writing. It suddenly dawned on me that her inexperience made her especially dependent on such a tactic. Later, once she has practiced writing more, she might stray from such a strictly directive method. But at the moment, it seemed to be what was best for her.

The second student, Scot, was an entirely different person, and with him, Bob switched tutoring styles. Scot was wearing a large cowboy hat, a big belt-buckle (and I assume boots, but I didn't check), and talked with a Southern twang. Bob, who is also tall and lanky and actually looks like Wild Bill Hickock, couldn't prevent his own Arkansas accent from resurfacing. So, in contrast to the combination of charm and fatherly advice he had used with the previous student, Bob was now chumming it with one of the guys. Scot loved it. This joking exchange made him totally uninhibited. "So what seems to be the problem today, Scot?" Bob asked. "You're looking at it!" Scot answered.

I wondered what I would have said-- probably something about his hat! Scot's paper was supposed to present a problem and offer a solution, and it nearly did so, except for some very confusing trains of thought. But what struck me the most was less that the overall paper was successful, but that the language was clumsy. This first instinctive response annoyed me. Why was my first thought negative? Bob returned to that aspect of the paper, but only after having made a positive comment: that Scot's paper was good.

And now, how do you show people they have clumsy writing style without offending them? Bob appealed to Scot's mathematical mind to point out some simple grammatical errors. For example, to indicate agreement between possessive pronouns, Bob asked, "Do you mean this problem is "mine" or "theirs?" That

was flattering, I thought. Then, for the wandering thoughts Scot had indulged in, Bob used what seemed to be a great workingman's analogy. I am sure he's used it with other students when appropriate; nevertheless, considering Scot's personality, this particular analogy was superb. It roughly went like this: "Thoughts are like plugs on an electrical cord. If you want the current to go through, you must plug one cord after another . . . . And if I hired you to plug the cords and you didn't do it, I'd fire you! Go do it!"

So that's the idea. What works for one person doesn't necessarily work for another; however, if it makes sense, do it. Scot seemed to be down-to-earth, and a concrete example made perfect sense to him. The first student (and shame on me for not remembering her name), on the other hand, was very attached to a more conservative, conventional approach. And that made sense for her. I guess, in the end, what counts is the tutor's flexibility.

Nicole Roger-Hogan  
Peer Tutor  
Purdue University

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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Seventh Annual Developmental  
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We seek proposals that will define what is being and what should be done to promote writing literacy. The deadline for receiving proposals is January 12, 1987. For further information, contact:

J. Steven Fletcher, Coordinator  
Developmental Writing Conference  
Writing Center  
1501 West 49th Street  
Norfolk, Virginia 23508  
(804) 440-4112

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WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM:  
A FACULTY SURVEY

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Recently, as an aid in developing an English For Academic Purposes course, I surveyed 153 university professors in the following disciplines: Art, Chemistry, Computer Science, Curriculum and Instruction, Marketing and Management, Mathematics, Political Science, Pre-Engineering, and Psychology. Basically, my survey asked questions over three broad areas: 1) what types of writing tasks were considered the most useful and were assigned most often; 2) what types of writing features were considered most and least important in terms of evaluation and in terms of causing writing errors; and 3) how effectively tutored were students enrolled in these disciplines by Writing Center staff. This research procedure netted 123 responses (an amazing 80.4% response rate) and the English for Academic Purposes course was developed. More importantly, the data gained from this survey helped our Writing Center implement a Writing Across the Curriculum Project. It is because of this usefulness that I briefly outline the major findings from each major, and I hope that other writing center personnel can use this data also.

A. Art

In terms of popular writing tasks, 62.5% of the Art professors assigned article summaries compared with only a 54% usage rate among all the professors. Also, the majority of the Art professors listed appropriateness of tone and style to the audience as one of the least useful writing features for Art students to master. In addition, the Art professors suggested that the Writing Center should focus more strongly on developing written analytical and descriptive techniques for its students.

B. Chemistry

As might be expected, all the Chemistry professors assigned lab reports, while this writing task was not assigned a great deal across all departments. Also, another writing task considered most important by Chemistry professors, but not ranked high by the surveyed faculty as a whole, was the short answer exam. Furthermore, these Chemistry professors considered appropriate terminology a useful writing feature for

their students to master although this feature was not ranked as one of the three most useful features by the professors as a whole.

### C. Computer Science

One important variation from the norm by the Computer Science faculty was that 50% of these professors assigned a previously unlisted writing task, program documentation, as the second most commonly assigned written work. Program documentation and short answer exams were also listed as the writing tasks most useful for Computer Science majors to master. Finally, appropriate terminology was listed as one of the most useful writing features for students to learn.

### D. Curriculum and Instruction

The Curriculum and Instruction faculty listed article summaries, group writing projects, case studies, and lesson plans as writing tasks often assigned. Also, case studies and group writing projects were the writing tasks these professors stressed as useful for students in this field.

### E. Marketing and Management

In the Marketing and Management department case studies were assigned most often by 72% of the faculty. Similarly, case studies were listed most often as the most useful writing assignment for students in the field. Finally, this was one of two departments surveyed that felt that the Writing Center needed to institute more "strenuous standards" in tutoring because too many "awful writers were failing Management classes."

### F. Mathematics

This department stressed article summaries as one of the most commonly assigned writing tasks, and this same task was also listed as one of the most useful tasks assigned to Mathematics students. The Mathematics faculty was one of two faculties to view the fulfillment of assignment requirements as among the three most important features for their students to master. Also, 83% of the Mathematics respondents felt that most undergraduate students had been effectively taught/tutored in English before arriving in Mathematics classes. Finally, these Mathematics

professors wanted more critical thinking techniques tutored, and this faculty, as did those from Marketing and Management, wanted the Writing Center to develop "higher" tutoring standards.

### G. Political Science

Again, besides the usually stressed writing assignments, 50% of the Political Science professors assigned article abstract writing tasks. All the Political Science respondents felt that most undergraduate students had not been effectively taught/tutored in English before they enrolled in Political Science classes. Finally, several of the Political Science faculty stated that they had designed their own subject-specific writing classes for their students.

### H. Pre-Engineering

The Pre-Engineering faculty noted that article abstracts were among their most commonly assigned writing tasks and that both article abstracts and lab reports were considered the two most useful writing tasks for Pre-Engineering students. As with Mathematics, the Pre-Engineering faculty viewed fulfillment of assignment requirements as being a very useful writing feature for their students to master. Also, this faculty was the only one to stress the usefulness of correct spelling for its students. Finally, these professors suggested that the Writing Center could improve by asking for more input from the students' major professors.

### I. Psychology

Article summaries were chosen by 60% of the Psychology professors as one of Psychology's most useful writing tasks. Also, 20% of this faculty felt that Psychology students need "extensive opportunities to explore different writing styles."

### Group Trends

Over 50% of the respondents assign the following tasks: short answer exams, essay exams, documented research papers, analysis papers, and article summaries. However, all the writing tasks, with the exceptions of article abstracts, short answer exams, sets of instructions, and lab reports, are assigned at least once or twice a semester by 57% of the respondents. These four

exceptions are assigned more than three times a semester by the following response percentages: article abstracts (53.8%), short answer exams (50.6%), sets of instructions (53.0%), and lab reports (74.2%). It should be noted that lab reports are assigned more than six times a semester by 54.8% of those who assign them. However, the three most useful assignments across all majors are the documented research paper, the analysis paper, and the essay exam.

In addition, when grading students' written assignments, most professors place a high degree of importance on overall paper organization, content quality, and development of ideas. These professors place moderate importance on appropriate terminology, appropriateness of tone and style to audience, and fulfillment of assignment requirements. Most professors also place low to moderate importance on correct punctuation, correct spelling, correct idiomatic usage, and grammatical correctness. Similarly, the three most commonly useful writing features for students to master for future success in their majors are content quality, development of ideas, and overall paper organization. The three least useful writing features most commonly chosen are correct punctuation, correct idiomatic usage, and correct spelling.

Ray Wallace  
University of Hawaii at Hilo

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#### RESISTING AND ACCEPTING WRITING CENTERS: A PERSONAL VIEW

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During the past few years, having been involved in the writing centers of two San Francisco Bay Area community colleges, I have been struck both by the differing reactions of English teachers to the writing centers and also by the way these reactions determine the success of a center. At one college where I worked, few full-time English teachers were interested in the center, which as a result was divorced from the English Department. But at another school, the faculty were generally enthusiastic about working in the center, and this enthusiasm, along with dedication, produced a highly functional center. The causes of some teachers' resistance to writing centers, as well as the motives of other teachers who welcome such work,

clarify some problems associated with the creation and maintenance of successful writing centers.

I became involved in writing centers at a school in desperate need of one, for many of its students were not profiting from traditional classroom instruction. A brief history of the writing center's creation and development helps explain faculty resistance to the center. I began teaching a mini-class in the school's learning center, and in the course I had complete liberty to address students' needs directly. As student demand increased, this class--now labelled "the writing center"--moved out of the learning center, but it was still located in the library. When the writing center increased enrollment and employed tutors, a full-time faculty member was appointed director, for I was a part-time teacher with many obligations outside the school. The center's professional working force consisted primarily of part-time instructors.

Most full-time faculty either avoided the writing center entirely or rarely frequented it. Occasionally full-time teachers would log a few hours in the center, almost always to balance their loads for one reason or another. Hence for some full-time faculty, the center became a sort of dumping ground of lost units. But a number of full-timers never entered the writing center, and even worse, few communicated with the staff working there. A direct result of this failure to communicate was that we helped students on assignments with which we were unfamiliar. A more serious result of full-timers' apathy was the lack of an established curriculum.

Some resistance to the writing center may have been due to its physical location. Because the center began within the learning center, some teachers associated it with clocking in, clocking out, issuing tapes and booklets, and other such manual labor. When the writing center moved out of the learning center, it was still in the library, physically apart from the English Department.

Teachers who ventured in the writing center did perceive that it differed fundamentally from the learning center, but they often behaved like visitors who had come to observe the progress of students in their composition classes. Perhaps these teachers, working one-to-one with students,

did not get the "high" they got when performing before a class; perhaps the intensity of individualized instruction drained them. For whatever reason, their residences in the center were brief.

The true cause of this resistance seemed all the more enigmatic when I met a different English faculty excited about their center. At this second school, the number of full-time and part-time teachers working in the writing center was well balanced, and we held regular meetings in order to improve the curriculum. Further, the center was surrounded by classrooms in which traditional teaching occurred. In short, I got the impression that this center was truly part of the English Department.

Both the full-time and the part-time teachers working in this center admitted a very practical reason for wanting to work there: although the center had required much initial planning and still demanded ongoing curriculum development, it demanded little or no daily preparation, and teachers rarely needed to carry sets of papers home for correction. Usually teachers would simply show up for an hour or two and leave, and this lack of outside work encouraged many instructors to take a class or two in the center.

Certainly more commendable motives also involved teachers in this center. They were all aware of the effectiveness of one-to-one teaching. Unlike the classroom, the center enabled them to address individual students' writing problems directly and to adjust their level of communication to the students' level of comprehension. In addition to receiving satisfaction from visible improvement in students' compositional skills, many teachers had humanistic interests in the students' life experiences, the subject matter of their essays.

While the motives which involved teachers in this writing center may have varied, all instructors seemed to possess an unquestioning acceptance of the writing center's value. In contrast, teachers at the first school where I worked not only lacked motivation to work in the center, but also seemed to resist the underlying validity of a writing center's existence within an English department.

The feelings which discourage individual teachers from participating in writing cen-

ters may be at work in a faculty's decision not to create a center in the first place. I do not think that economic pressures are valid causes for a faculty's resistance; the economic disadvantages of writing centers seem to be an excuse. Most colleges already have tutorial programs, and if tutors meet students in the presence of an English teacher, a writing center is created. A modest writing center may employ a single instructor working a few hours a week. If student demands increase, the English department could then either restrict enrollment or expand the program, depending on the administration's willingness to make serious economic commitments.

The real cause of resistance by individual teachers and by English department faculties apparently stems from a simple fear of the unknown. Some faculties are frightened of new programs because of unforeseen commitments; some instructors fear writing centers because, as instructors, they feel they must teach traditional classes. It is easy to become complacent about one's work, but the best teachers welcome challenges and investigate innovative pedagogical methods which may improve their departments, their teaching, and most importantly, their students' writing.

Marc Wolterbeek  
University of the Pacific  
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WRITING LAB CONSULTANTS

In addition to the names listed in the December 1986 issue of the Writing Lab Newsletter, the following people have offered their services as consultants.

Mrs. Ellen Mohr has volunteered to act as a consultant to schools starting writing labs. She notes that she has been "with the Johnson County Community College Writing Center for seven years and director for four." She describes the Center's program as "multifold in that we not only have a drop-in service, but we also offer one-credit courses and we go out to classes in all disciplines to talk about strategies for specific writing assignments." She can be contacted at the following address:

Mrs. Ellen Mohr  
Communications Division  
Johnson County Community College  
12345 College Blvd. at Quivira  
Overland Park, KS 66210  
Tel.: (913) 469-8500, Ext. 3497

Kurt R. Emmerling has also offered his services "and the services of The Program for Academic Success (P.A.S.), to any prospective writing lab instructors. P.A.S. is nationally recognized for its work in all aspects of educational development, and our tutorial work in writing is no exception. I would be more than happy to assist any writing lab director in need of consultant or inservice aid." Contact him at the following address:

Kurt R. Emmerling  
Humanities Specialist  
Program for Academic Success  
Point Park College  
201 Wood Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
Tel.: (412) 392-3887; 392-3886

William Pendleton has offered his services as a consultant for high school or college writing centers. He notes that "I'm more experienced at the college level, but I have done some consulting for a nearby high school. Contact him at the following address:

William Pendleton  
Dept. of English  
Randolph-Macon College  
Ashland, VA 23005  
Tel.: (804) 798-1506

Elizabeth Spaeth has volunteered her services as a consultant for post-secondary labs. Contact her at the following address:

Elizabeth A. Spaeth  
Writing Lab Director  
College of St. Benedict  
37 College Ave.  
St. Joseph, MN 56374  
Tel.: (612) 363-5927

Ellen Brinkley notes that "because of my experience with college centers and in developing the Madeira High School (Cincinnati) center, I would be glad to help those interested in establishing new centers, especially in secondary schools. Contact her at the following address:

Ellen H. Brinkley  
Dept. of English  
Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

Beverly Lyon Clark notes that she has "more experience with post-secondary labs." Contact her at either of the following addresses:

Beverly Lyon Clark  
office: Dept. of English  
Wheaton College  
Norton, MA 02766  
Tel.: (617) 285-7722 (Ext. 491)  
home: 236 Sixth Street  
Providence, RI 02906  
Tel.: (401) 831-7976

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20th Annual Conference of the  
Western College Reading and Learning Assn.

April 9-12, 1987

at the Marriott Hotel, Albuquerque, NM

The Western College Reading and Learning Association is a group of student-oriented professionals, administrators, faculty and staff interested and active in the areas of reading, learning assistance, developmental education and tutorial services. For more information contact Gwyn Enright, Academic Skills Department, PSFA 141B, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182.

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 WORKSHOPS THAT "WORK"
 

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A writing center's prime objective is, of course, helping as many clients as possible through every stage of the writing process. One way of assisting clients is by one-to-one tutorials, individual help that cannot be matched for the intensity and satisfaction which client and tutor both receive. Besides the tutorial, there is another means for reaching large numbers of clients. For the last eleven years the tutors at the University of South Carolina Writing Center have presented free, sixty-minute workshops open to the school and the community at large. If other writing centers are thinking about offering workshops, our experience has shown which topics are less likely to attract participants and which are highly successful.

As might be expected, any topic which is too broad or too vague should be avoided. For instance, tutors found that "Arrangement" covered so much material for a sixty-minute presentation that they did not know what to exclude and what to keep. Besides giving tutors difficulties, "Arrangement" was too obscure a term to interest students or the community. Even though arrangement is one of the five parts of rhetoric as described by the ancients, few students (and fewer members of the community) recognized the importance of the subject. So it was no wonder that out of the three times presented, this topic drew only fifteen participants.

Another kind of topic to avoid is one which does not fit the philosophy of a writing center. We discovered that subject-verb agreement and spelling rules were two such workshop topics. Since our Writing Center tutorials concentrate on the entire writing process, not just grammar or spelling, tutors felt workshops on subjects and verbs or on "i before e" rules would portray the Writing Center as only a grammar mill, not a center for help with all stages of writing.

Which topics worked? The perennial favorites or the ones which have accounted for 73% (2583) of the total number (3526)

of participants over the last eleven years have been:

"Essay Exam: Targeting Your Answers"  
(508 participants--usually offered twice a term)

"Sentence Style" "Sentence Combining,"  
"Sentence Skills," "Sentence  
Patterns" (combined total 444)

"APA Style," MLA Style," and "Term Papers"  
(combined total 314)

"Punctuation and Mechanics: The Nuts and  
Bolts of Good Sentences" (311)

"Writing about Fiction" and "Writing about  
Poetry" (combined total 302)

"How to Revise Your Writing" (256)

"Writer's Block: Starting Your Paper More  
Easily" (216)

"Invention Techniques" (also called  
"Discovering a Topic") (126)

"Creating Flow: Coherence in Your Writing"  
(106)<sup>2</sup>

These workshops reveal what the clients believe is most helpful to them as writers. They are worried about those elements which instructors are most likely to mark, namely the intricacies of punctuation, like the pesky comma, the mysterious semicolon, and the elusive apostrophe ("Punctuation and Mechanics"). These workshops also show that clients want help with the more global concerns of writing. They want help with the initial stages of writing ("Writer's Block" and "Invention Techniques"). They also want to know how to keep "flow" in their writing ("Creating Flow"), how to generate impressive sentences ("Sentence Style"), and how to revise their work ("How to Revise Your Writing"). This list of "popular" topics also shows that the clients wish to perform effectively in their literature classes as well as in their non-English courses (workshops on the "Essay Exam," "APA Style," and "Term Papers").

Of course, no writing center should exist solely to present workshops; a writing center or lab should help clients individually as well. However, workshops can serve a vital purpose for any writing lab. By attracting participants, they are excellent publicity devices which show students how a writing center staff can assist them when the clients sign up for individual tutorials. Workshops can "work" for a writing lab.

Bonnie Devet  
University of South  
Carolina  
Columbia, SC

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, records for seven semesters are not available.

<sup>2</sup> Two of these workshops ("Writing about Literature" and "Writing about Poetry") were offered for the first time last spring, while the others have been presented off and on for eleven years.

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## 4C'S MATERIALS EXCHANGE

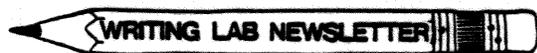
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Each year, during the 4C's special interest group meetings, the National Writing Centers Association sponsors a materials exchange. This exchange provides writing center people with an opportunity to share ideas and learn about programs at other colleges or universities.

Please participate in this year's exchange by bringing 50 copies of something from your center: brochures, sample hand-outs, flyers, advertising gimmicks, course descriptions, annual reports, evaluation forms, etc.

Please be a presenter at this year's convention by bringing your materials to the exchange.

If you have any questions concerning this year's exchange, please contact Robert Child, Department of English, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907. (317) 494-3723



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