THE WRITING LAB

...FROM THE EDITOR...

On page 9 of this month's issue you'll find a new addition to the newsletter, a feature that I hope grows and prospers—and attracts many contributions. On WCenter, the electronic listserv for writing center people, there have been numerous discussions about how we decorate our walls, and in December's newsletter, Roy Andrews described his successful efforts in getting teachers' quotations to hang up in his center. It occurred to me that while we post quotations from famous writers and from classroom teachers, we surely ought to take note of well-written quotations from tutors as well. We can use these quotations to decorate the walls, introduce materials in tutor training manuals, and discuss at staff meetings.

So, we'll start with a few of these quotations this month, and include more as they are sent in. I encourage you tutors to contribute brief insights into tutoring. Also, because I'm title-impaired, I invite you to name this section of the newsletter. As a start, I offer the feeble title "Quotable Tutor Quotes," hoping you'll come up with something better.

• Muriel Harris, editor

On leading the writing center: A sort of credo and some advice for beginners and oldtimers, too

A young colleague and I visited as we left a session at the first NWCA conference in New Orleans. We were continuing the conversation the session had inspired when she asked me—with some urgency, some frustration in her voice—"Why don't they tell us how it's really done?" She went on, then, to confess a feeling of inadequacy as a new writing center director. She told me she had "grown up" professionally as a tutor in the writing center and had come to feel confident and competent in one-on-one teaching. Now she needed to supervise the center's staff, plan the program and budget, design and implement publicity—in other words, take care of the many responsibilities of the organization. This was not what she had been prepared for.

I told her a little about my own transition into directing a writing center: how I had made myself a student, not only attending professional conferences and workshops on leadership but

also reading a good deal. We talked a couple more times at the conference and later corresponded. I have thought about her with affection since then. I have thought, too, of her question—and found it troubling.

I think I found her question troubling in part because of an assumption it derives from: If you can tutor in the writing center, you can lead the writing center. One certainly may follow the other, and knowledge of the one is necessary for the other. But the ability to

tutor—even tutor very well—is not equivalent to the ability to direct the program and staff of the writing center. The role of director of the writing center is a leadership role. Yet consider this: As with a number of important roles and responsibilities in life, almost no one is prepared for leadership.

For the past sixteen years, as director of the University Writing Center at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and also as a part of the writing center movement, I suppose I've been learning "how it's really done." My story is not unusual: Starting essentially from scratch in 1981—with almost nothing except an out-of-the-way space—I have built a full service writing center. I haven't done this alone. I've had lots of help and support, but I've also faced some resistance. The University Writing Center now sits at the center of campus, between the student center and the main library, and serves approximately 800 students per semester with a staff of around thirty, including graduate and undergraduate student assistants. We recently launched the University Writing Center On-line, and associated with us is a cyberspace writing center (Barry Maid's project). I don't know it all; but at the risk of sounding like I do, and with a sense of responsibility to my colleagues, both new and "old," I offer some thoughts on leadership from my experience and my research. I am envisioning my audience as new directors. But you "old" directors are welcome to listen in and add your own thoughts, of course. Since it's where this piece began, I've taken a conversational approach in responding to "how it's really done."

Think of yourself as a leader; think of your role as a leadership role.

If you're new at this, it may take some time, but it's valuable to think of yourself as a leader and to consider what leadership means. There isn't one right, ready-made definition. You will come to have your own definition.

An enormous amount has been written about leaders and leadership. What I've read has been very good, quite thought-provoking. In fact, some pieces like Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* are now considered classics. Begin looking for and reading articles and books on leadership; consider including popular books, not just scholarly. Bring your own experiences and values and have a dialogue with the writers and researchers. As you will see below and in my reference list, I've been particularly influenced in my thinking about leadership by Covey, Bolman and Deal, Astin and Leland, Ash, DePree.

I would say that my definition of leadership is feminist. I agree with Helen Astin and Carole Leland, for instance, that leadership is not necessarily synonymous with position (there are "nonpositional" leaders), that leadership means
- working collaboratively with others,
- understanding power as influence for empowering oneself and others, and
- bringing about positive change.

With Max DePree, I believe leadership is an art. There is much room for creativity in leadership, and there are many challenges and satisfactions in it. If you are new at directing the writing center, let me encourage you not to be afraid to be a leader. Begin by thinking of yourself as a leader and thinking of what is encompassed in leadership.

Be proactive.

On the wall beside my desk I have a small poster which reminds me: *The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.* This is it in a nutshell, isn't it? First, you have to consider what the main thing is going to be for your center. Even if you've been told or otherwise inherited the main thing, there is always room for shaping.

In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey echoes what

Peters and Waterman and Astin and Leland and others, too have found: Leaders are proactive. Leaders have "that vision thing." Think first of all: What is the center's mission? To whom? For whom? What is the center known for? What should it be known for? Then think of how to get there. This means setting priorities, putting first things first, planning, and, naturally, revisiting and adjusting the plans. This means preparing a budget that reflects your priorities, then using funds to meet your goals and to fulfill your mission.

Being proactive also means attending to the structure of things. How is your writing center laid out as an organization? Can you draw a flow chart of responsibility? Can you define clearly who does what? Structure includes, of course, those to whom you report, those to whom you are accountable. But remember: We are accountable to those who work under our supervision as well as to those under whose supervision we work. DePree calls accountability a "right" (41).

If your structure is clear, you will be able to delegate, you will know who is responsible/accountable for what. I'm not advocating rigid roles and strict chain of command. I am saying that along with clarity of purpose, clarity of organizational structure can be helpful.

When we "train" the staff, we are proactive. When we work from our principles (first, do no harm; help the writer become a better writer; honor the writer's ownership of the writing; don't do for the writer what she needs to do for herself), we are proactive. When we choose not to react—sometimes it's so very hard—we are proactive. When we respond thoughtfully, balancing courage and consideration (see Covey), we are proactive. I usually ask our staff members, "What is the difference between humans and animals?" Apropos of Tom Hanks in I've-forgotten-which film, someone may say "silverware." I hope, of

course, for someone to say that between stimulus and response, humans may take time and choose what to do or say. All of us would do well to be proactive in this way.

Remember that everyone who works there is a "volunteer."

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal say that to look through the "human resources frame," one of their four "frames" for looking at organizations, is to see that organizations exist for people and not the other way around. Can a writing center leader think otherwise? In fact, can anyone in education think otherwise? (I'm pretty sure some do, but how can this be?)

DePree observes that those working for us could probably find other jobs or activities, but they *choose* to work for us. He reminds us that effective leadership "begins with a belief in the potential of people" (24). What else is the writing center about?

Now the people-management part of leadership is so much more than philosophy. It is where the rubber meets the road. Mary Kay Ash, phenomenally successful leader of her own business, notes that while many today consider the Golden Rule a cliché, "it is still the best key to people management" (1). She reminds us that leaders are dependent on how their people perform, that indeed the success of the endeavor is dependent on how people perform: "People are a company's most important asset" (vii).

Whether you have a staff of three or of thirty, how you interact with them is crucial. Here are just a few "rules" for leadership of your staff, on whom your success and the writing center's success are very much dependent:
- Help your staff members understand and embrace the center's mission; help them see themselves as the embodiment of the mission. This is especially crucial if you have a constantly changing staff

who haven't helped determine your mission and goals.
- Show in every way you can that you value your staff members and their contributions, that you believe in and will support their growth toward their fullest potential. What I'm suggesting is more than attitude; it is action, the action of mentoring.
- Be conscious of the destructiveness of condescending, patronizing behaviors; always act with respect.
- Teach your staff how you want them to perform by both precept and example.
- Give correction when it's called for privately, straightforwardly, briefly, and firmly.
- Work to create a supportive community among staff members.
- Listen to your staff members.
- Try to respond rather than react; especially avoid defensiveness and panic.
- Have and make clear your boundaries so that you can function and not become enmeshed with others.
- Balance courage with consideration. Whenever possible—I really want to say always—be honest, be kind. I've never been sorry for the times I've been kind.
- Keep in mind that education need not be an adversarial, competitive endeavor.

We include in our staff manual expectations for conduct and ethics; the associate director and I emphasize these expectations in our training. We also try to model them. DePree writes
> Leaders must take a role in developing, expressing, and defending civility and values. In a civilized institution . . . , we see good manners, respect for persons, an understanding of "good goods," and an appreciation of the way in which we serve each other . . . . To be a leader means . . . having the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who permit leaders to lead. (21-22)

Ignore the political at your own risk.

We have to face it: However well we may structure and organize the writing center, however well we may train our staff, however satisfying we find working with staff and students within the writing center, we cannot stay in the writing center. The writing center is a safe and comfortable place—after all, we've intended it to be—and we benefit from this safety and comfort just as others do. But to be a successful leader, you cannot stay "inside" all the time; you have to venture out.

I confess I have often found it less than comfortable outside the writing center, for instance, in the department. This may be so because within the writing center we collaborate toward shared goals, whereas within the department we often do not have shared goals and, with separate and sometimes conflicting goals, we compete. Bolman and Deal call this the "political frame," an arena where competitors scream and struggle. (Think of Bolman and Deal's "arena" image the next time the department meeting heats up! Well, okay, so not every part of education is non-adversarial, non-competitive.)

And, what do we struggle over? Scarce resources. I'll give you an example. When the Department of English here was divided and our new Rhetoric and Writing department came about, the faculty who went with Rhetoric and Writing were told we'd be able to move to a different building. Space is a scarce resource on our campus, and it soon became understood as a scarce resource within our fledging department. I went into the negotiations over the division of space in our newly assigned building knowing what the writing center needed. I stated it. I restated it. I thought that since what I was asking for was only reasonable, there would be no conflict. I was wrong. Both the writing center's and the department's needs were eventually met, but I was naive and unprepared for the "arena." The screams there were pretty loud, and my ears are still ringing.

It may be helpful to think of the areas where there are scarce or finite resources as the "arena." If you've been around higher education for any length of time, you have seen how space, money, recognition—the ingredients in our move to the new building—are fought over. It's also helpful to accept that there may be those within or beyond the department/unit of which you're a part who do not particularly wish you or the writing center success, who may misunderstand or resent what you do, the resources you oversee, your leadership role; there may be those who, whether they are aware of it or not, view the writing center as a competitor for scarce resources.

Be aware that competition for scarce resources is, indeed, political. Bolman and Deal would say "negotiate." And with Bolman and Deal and Covey (and others), I would also suggest that we examine our own "zero sum" thinking. We can often choose: Rather than struggling with others over a small remaining piece of the pie, we can be among those who think and act creatively, who see and move beyond limits, beyond scarcity.

Remember to keep your balance.

I recently completed a study of four women leaders in higher education. (You'll recognize three as early leaders in the writing center movement: Jeanette Harris, Jeanne Simpson, Joyce Kinkead; the fourth, Lynn Bloom, has been a leader in writing program administration.) I studied their careers and interviewed them individually and together, seeking to learn something of what Burt Bennis and Warren Nanus have called the "bone marrow" of leaders. I found what I call a "both/and" ability, an ability to integrate, in particular to act with
- *both* commitment to self *and* commitment to others;
- *both* courage *and* humane values;
- *both* independence *and* collaboration.

"Both/and" is balance. Bloom put it fairly dramatically: "I decided I would never ever be exploited again or condone exploitation." There, in a dozen words, is balance of self with others. As lore has it, Rabbi Hillel teaches: *If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?* A good credo for any leader. I learned—and it was a privilege—from these women and the stories they told me from their lives and careers. Perhaps one day I'll write that article. Suffice it to say here: We do well to remember our balance—and to have role models ourselves who can help us remember that leadership, like so much of life, is a fulcrum indeed.

Figuring out "how it's really done."

When many of us oldtimers learned "how it's really done," we had to learn by the seat of our pants. We were often in isolation on our campuses, connecting and sharing at regional conferences, finding support from colleagues through this publication. (Thank you, Mickey Harris, for the *Newsletter*.) We had to figure it out as we went along. Here, in summary, is some of what I (and others as well) have figured out about leading the writing center:
- Attend to your own integrity; especially be honest and keep commitments.
- Have confidence in yourself; show it in your bearing. If you are young and a beginner, this may take some "acting as if . . . ." (Jeanne Simpson reminds women that for certain situations we should wear our menswear jackets with padded shoulders. She puts it more colorfully; ask her.) I do want to distinguish between confidence and arrogance. Arrogance is one of the curses of higher education.

- Act with grace and dignity. And keep the kind response at the ready. I know: easier said than done. But ideals can help keep us reaching, growing. We, too, have potential.
- Experience and share joy. I have to give Jeanne Simpson credit here also, but I agree. You may even have to remind yourself to have some fun.

DePree observes that "leadership is not an easy subject..." (11). I think this is so in more ways than one. He writes

> The goal of thinking hard about leadership is not to produce great or charismatic or well-known leaders . . . . The signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers. Are the followers reaching their potential? Are they learning? Serving? Do they achieve the required results? Do they change with grace? Manage conflict? I would like to ask you to think about the concept of leadership in a certain way. Try to think about a leader, in the words of the gospel writer Luke, as "one who serves." Leadership is a concept of owing certain things to the institution. It is a way of thinking about institutional heirs, a way of thinking about stewardship as contrasted with ownership. (12)

DePree goes on to say that "Leaders are also responsible for future leadership" (14). It is in that spirit that I have written this piece. If you are new at this, you're doing a lot of figuring it out as you go along. An Estonian proverb is true: *The work will teach you how to do it*. But today you also have us oldtimers, and we have a responsibility to you, a responsibility to share what we've learned about "how it's really done." Do expect this of us. Don't be shy; stay in touch.

Sally Crisp
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Little Rock, AR

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Bloom, Lynn. Personal interviews. 1995.

Covey, Steven. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.

DePree, Max. *Leadership is an Art*. New York: Dell, 1989.

Peters, Thomas, and Robert Waterman. *In Search of Excellence*: *Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*. New York: Warner, 1982.

Simpson, Jeanne. Personal interviews. 1995.

Calendar for Writing Centers Associations

February 3-5: Southeastern Writing Center Association, in Savannah, GA
Contact: Christina Van Dyke, Dept. of Languages, Literature, and Philosophy, Armstrong Atlantic State University, 11935 Abercorn St., Savannah, GA 31419-1997; phone: 912-921-2330; fax: 912-927-5399; vandykch@mail.armstrong.edu

February 26: Northern California Writing Centers Association, in Berkeley, CA
Contact: Liz Keithley or Luisa Giulianetti at ncwca@uclink4.berkeley.edu. Phone (510) 643-7742; http://slc.berkeley.edu/ncwca.htm

March 24-25: South Central Writing Centers Association, in Fort Worth, TX
Contact: Jeanette Harris (j.harris@tcu.edu), Texas Christian University or Lady Falls Brown (L.Brown@ttacs.ttu.edu) Texas Tech University.

March 25: Northeast Writing Centers Association, in Keene, NH
Contact: Anne Szeligowski, Gateway Community-Technical College, 60 Sargent Drive, New Haven, CT 06511. E-mail ASZELIGOWS@aol.com; fax: 203-789-6976. Conference web site: http://www.mcp.edu/as/wc/wc.html

March 30-April 1: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Lansing, MI
Contact: J. Pennington, Lansing Community College, Lansing, Michigan. E-mail: Jill_Pennington@lansing.cc.mi.us. Conference website: http://www.lansing.cc.mi.us/~penningj/ecwca2000.htm

April 1: Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Rockville, MD
Contact: Jeannie Dadgostar, Writing and Reading Center, Montgomery College, 51 Mannakee Street, Rockville, Maryland 20850. E-mail: jdadgost@mc.cc.md.us

Sept. 28-30: Midwest Writing Centers Association, in Minneapolis, MN
Contact: either Suzanne M. Swiderski at <sswiders@loras.edu> or Larry D. Harred at <larry.d.harred@uwrf.edu

November 2-4, 2000. National Writing Centers Association in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Baltimore, MD Conference website: http://www.english.udel.edu/wc/mawca/nwcacon.html

Book Review

Gillespie, Paula and Neal Lerner. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2000. 182 pp. (Order from Allyn & Bacon, PO Box 10695, Des Moines, IA 50336-0695; tel: 1-800-278-3525; fax: 1-515-284-2607; e-mail: ab_professional@abacon.com. Price:$16.00, plus shipping &handling.)

Reviewed by Bruce Pegg, Colgate University (Hamilton, NY)

Hi! Welcome to the Writing Center. My name's Bruce, and I'll be your tutor today. Now, you are Neal, right? And you must be Paula. Nice to meet you both! Did you both help yourself to coffee? Good, then why don't we sit over here and talk. Before we start, though, let me just say that I'm going to contradict so many of the things you say in your book. I know I'm supposed to listen and ask a lot of questions, but this session is going to be a little different. With your permission, I'd like to give you my feedback and comments; I hope you don't mind working this way.

Anyway, let me begin by saying how much I enjoyed the different perspective you provide with your book. We've seen a number of these books recently in the Writing Center (your professor must have given you all the same assignment, huh?) and what sets yours apart, as another tutor around here, Jim McDonald, has pointed out is the way that you incorporate tutors' voices throughout the whole book. You do this not just through transcripts of actual tutoring sessions, but through the tutors' own analyses of each stage of the tutoring process. The first chapter begins from the perspective that we all bring a number of diverse experiences to the job, and you begin with our voices expressing those positions rather than assuming that we all start from scratch. Then, throughout the text, you bring in the tutors' voices to assure us that our own feelings about tutoring are perfectly normal. Caroline and Stephanie's accounts of their first tutoring sessions in the "Tutoring for Real" chapter, for example, filled with their fears, anxieties, and triumphs, perfectly mirror most tutors' experiences. And the last chapter ends with

the comments of a tutor who acknowledges that even after all the training, observation, and practice tutorials, she still makes mistakes.

It's comforting to hear from others who have blazed the trail before us. Your analogy of tutoring being a process, like writing itself, is tremendously helpful, and the voices of our peers help emphasize that message. It's no coincidence that the style and the tone are in perfect harmony with this message and its intended audience: you use the collaborative "we" throughout the book to reinforce the idea that we all face these issues throughout our tutoring careers, regardless of our experience.

You know what else I liked? You make self-reflection a key part of your book, and stress its importance for good tutoring. You not only provide the great examples of real tutors engaging in self-examinations of their tutoring process that I mentioned earlier, but you also incorporate different techniques for tutors to structure these reflections on their tutoring. Of all the tutoring guides that I've seen, yours is the only guide to provide a structured method for such an exercise and to make it such a central component of tutoring practice.

Jim McDonald has also suggested that there was another section in the book that was unique to your approach, and that was Chapter Nine, the chapter on reading. I think he's right; I don't remember any of the other books dealing with this issue of how problems in meaning in a text may not reflect problems in the way a writer is trying to express ideas but in the way the writer is reading them. And you give some re-

ally sensible advice on the strategies we can give to writers to help them read better. This is something we largely ignore when we tutor, and something that we would all do well to incorporate into our sessions.

I have one criticism, though, and maybe we can spend some time in our session today working on it. Throughout your book, your thesis is that the non-directive approach to tutoring is the best one to take. I seem to remember someone, Irene Clark, who has suggested that this may not be the only effective method of tutoring, and that sometimes a more direct, hands-on approach, may work and may not produce some of the ethical dilemmas you point out in the last two chapters. You do get around this by nearly always providing a number of options and alternatives when you suggest techniques and approaches to situations, demonstrating that there is room for other tutoring techniques when working with different kinds of writers. Perhaps the best illustration of this is in your chapter "Working With ESL Writers," where you suggest that minimalist techniques may not be useful in tutoring non-native speakers (NNS). You rightly suggest that having the writer read his or her paper aloud may not work when that writer's problems with pronunciation may impede the progress of the tutorial. You also suggest that a more directive approach, of pointing out errors to the NNS writer rather than having them figure them out though Socratic questioning still places the responsibility for revising on the writer. In the end, though, perhaps you are right when you suggest in the conclusion to this chapter that ultimately the distinction between directive and non-directive approaches

is not as meaningful as some would suggest.

But this was such a useful book that such criticisms are minor. Overall, I love the way you talk to me, the tutor, and the way that you incorporate just the right amount of history and theory to make this academic without being pedantic. In many ways, this is a peer tutor's guide to peer tutoring, but with plenty of invitations for tutors to investigate the professional literature further, both in the compact "recommended readings" section at the end and throughout the text. And though

this is a training text, there are also plenty of things here for even the most seasoned tutor to think about. The structure of the book, which takes the tutor from theorizing to observing to practicing to tutoring, makes this ideal for a peer tutoring course, but it could also work quite effectively in other training settings (there's that flexibility you talk so much about!).

Well, I see that our time's almost run out. I guess my only real suggestion would be for you to think about whether a discussion of more directive tutoring approaches would be benefi-

cial to the book, but otherwise I think this draft is very strong and comprehensive in its scope. I hope you both come back again, and I look forward to seeing what else you have to say in the future!

————————————

Works Cited

Clark, Irene Lurkis. "Collaboration and Ethics in Writing Center Pedagogy." *Writing Center Journal* 9.1 (Fall 1988): 3-12.

McDonald, James C. "Textbook Publisher Tutoring Guides: A Review Essay." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 24.2 (October 1999): 6-9.

Reviewed by Nicole Hein, Emerson College (Arlington MA)

Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner's first collaboration, *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*, culls voices from across the border between professional and student writers and creates a lively conversation about how to best teach writing one-to-one. The chapters ground readers in the practical basics of tutoring, such as how to observe sessions and take notes, but they also invoke theoretical balance. The authors explain paradoxical concepts such as tutor/editor and control/flexibility, "contrasts [that] attest to the complexity of the work." While the book is clearly geared toward the peer tutor (and toward the teacher of peer tutors), the intense focus on the sessions themselves—how individual tutors and writers communicate with each other—transcends the specified audience. Tutors in writing centers without manuals and veteran tutors looking for new ways to reflect upon and improve their theory and practice will find this book particularly useful for its thoughtful discussions about the "challenging and rewarding" task of tutoring writing.

One of the book's major strengths lies in its innovative structure. The chapters are clearly intended to stand alone as well as build upon one another, lending the book well to class-

room use and staff development meetings. The busy adjunct tutor also benefits from this modular set up. A chapter here and there between classes gives us time to reflect on each aspect of tutoring: methodology one day, specific troubleshooting needs another. The preponderance of tutor stories creates a friendly, thoughtful atmosphere for the exchange of ideas; "the contrast between 'novice' and 'expert' is blurred as the center becomes a place of collaborative learning, not just for writers, but for the staff as well." Hearing the voices of tutors, writers and the authors in tandem catalyzes the reader's own metacognitive learning. Rarely will you turn a page in this book without recognizing a major "paradox" of tutoring that deserves the careful re-evaluation that these authors give.

One of the pleasures of reading this book lies in the fresh look given to traditional topics in writing center theory. Unlike some texts, the language is accessible and the citations are integrated cleanly, engaging tutors who may be new to academic discourse. The major draw of this book, however, is in the chapters about less familiar topics, such as reading in the writing center, examining expectations, on-line tutoring, ethics and discourse analysis. These additions elevate *The Allyn and*

Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring above current tutor-training offerings.

In the well-handled chapter on reading, Gillespie and Lerner note that when writers face difficulties pulling a paper together, occasionally "the problem is with the writer's understanding of what he has read." In typical fashion, the authors (re)introduce SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) reading strategies to their audience(s), giving tutors one method that may help writers reflect on their assigned reading. Veteran tutors will be pleased to see processes of reading given the same weight as processes of writing in this textbook. The authors also explore the concept of co-constructing meaning with examples and non-examples of successful tutoring. These contrasts benefit any tutor who has found herself skirting the edges of co-constructing confusion. Instead of simply listing a problem and offering a bromide, the authors offer a solid strategy for improvement and a starting point for further exploration of the influence of reading on writing.

The chapter "Examining Expectations" also adds much to the book. While we often take for granted the idea that goals and unspoken expectations play a role in our interpersonal

discourse, rarely have writing tutor training manuals examined how these factors come into play within a session. Even fewer seem to agree on what constitutes an "effective session." This chapter does not flippantly prescribe answers to these dilemmas, but instead strives to make tutors aware of their own ability to shape a session with their unconscious assumptions. By extracting tutors' ideal notions of how to conduct a successful session, Gillespie and Lerner are able to initiate an exciting discussion about how to set a mutually beneficial agenda. Here, the tutor stories stand out. The frustration and success of fellow tutors who are to varying degrees aware or unaware of how their assumptions shape their tutoring methods will inspire tutors to consider their own power to influence the writer's ability to learn.

Unfortunately, the intriguing ethics chapter seems a little thin. Ethics is not the shortest chapter in the book, but Gillespie and Lerner provide surprisingly few suggestions on how to "give writers a voice in determining how a session is run," especially when that session involves one of the self-labeled "challenges to the ethical tutor." The authors also skim over the reality that some writing centers may practice proofreading policies or may encourage tutors to write on student papers, leaving the problem area of maintaining personal ethics within institutions without clear goals unexplored. The adjunct tutor in particular will be disappointed by the suggestion that she offer to write her center's mission statement if none exists. Perhaps the personal nature of determining writing center ethics is the reason for this more vague use of tutor stories. Certainly, not every ethical dilemma can be given full treatment in an introductory text, but given the thorough job the pair performed on other difficult topics, like troubleshooting and discourse analysis, tutors will have high expectations for a more complete discussion.

The book above all else engenders confidence in tutors of all levels of experience. With every chapter comes new discoveries, new complications that add depth to the central idea of how helpful talking about writing can be. Wisely, Gillespie and Lerner saturate their text with tutor's experiences, both frustrating and rewarding, proving to tutors that they are not alone in their sense of paradox, the push and pull between the extremes of doing too much or not enough. Adjuncts working in vastly different writing centers will benefit from Gillespie and Lerner's intense discussion of tutoring goals and possible methods to best meet those goals.

Reviewed by Alice Gillam, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

This fall I taught our university's peer tutor preparation class for the first time since 1993. After a hasty perusal of new textbooks for such courses, I chose Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner's hot-off-the-press *Allyn & Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring* because the text, which is organized to "mirror the structure of tutor training," does so in a way that seemed consonant with my notions of how tutor training should be structured. I, too, like to begin with attention to the tutors' prior experiences and assumptions about tutoring, and I find it necessary to offer an overview of tutoring "basics" early on since our tutors begin to tutor after only three weeks of training. As the semester progresses, we revisit these "basics," focusing on particular topics, considering how theoretical frameworks can guide and complicate practice, and reflecting on the particulars of the new tutors' experiences. Too often, after choosing a textbook for a course, I find that text does not fit my curricular goals or pedagogical approaches as well as it first appeared it might. Happily, this was not the case with Gillespie and Lerner's text, which facilitated my curricular goals in exemplary fashion and at the same time introduced me to new and useful tutor training concepts (the control-flexibility continuum) and strategies (the use of discourse analysis to analyze sessions).

As suggested above, the opening chapter ("Why Tutor?") asks tutors to consider what brought them to tutoring while Chapter 4, "Examining Expectations," returns to this topic of prior experience to probe and question the assumptions implicit in those experience and to illustrate how such assumptions can become "inflexible rules" which work against effective tutoring. Chapters 2 and 3 offer overviews of the writing and tutoring process and present both as requiring a balance between "control" and "flexibility." Chapters 5 through 8 offer specific instruction in various training activities: observing other tutors, engaging in "mock" or practice tutorials, taking notes as the writer reads aloud, and so on. Chapter 11, "Discourse Analysis," also fits with these "training" chapters in that it offers guidelines for analyzing audiotaped sessions, a common requirement in tutor preparation classes. The remaining chapters, Chapters 9, 10, 12-14, deal with topics commonly addressed in tutoring texts such as "Working with ESL Students" and "On-line Tutoring" as well as with some topics less commonly addressed such as "Reading in the Writing Center" and "Writing Center Ethics."

Clearly, I think this book has much to commend it, but let me mention several strengths that I particularly appreciated. First, as other reviewers have noted, Gillespie and Lerner foreground tutors' voices in a way previous texts have not. The contrasting concepts "tutor/editor, novice/expert, process/

product, control/flexibility, tutor/ teacher" which are used throughout the book as a conceptual framework are introduced by and grounded in tutors' stories of why they tutor. Additionally, the bits of dialogue and more extended "sample cases" are convincingly authentic, not reducible to simple examples of what to do and what not to do. Sometimes, the tutorial dialogues included in other tutor training textbooks have seemed canned to me, doctored to be unrealistically ideal or too obviously bad to be useful for discussion. By contrast, these snippets of dialogue and more extended examples are rich and complex, not easy to interpret simply in terms of "good" or "bad." As a consequence, they provoked lively discussions in my class. For example, several of my tutors identified somewhat uncomfortably with Adria, the tutor discussed at length in Chapter 4, and defended her sometimes directive tutoring as potentially justified, depending upon the circumstances.

A second strength is Gillespie and Lerner's use of theory. They introduce just enough theory to demonstrate the scholarly research and theory that lie behind writing center practice without

making their text into one more appropriate to graduate courses in literacy or composition studies, critical or educational theory. Moreover, they present theory as a critical lens for informing and critiquing practice, not as an authoritative basis for directing practice. In Chapter 2, for example, they present a brief history of writing process theory in which they make clear the usefulness and limitations of idealized models of the writing process. In translating this theory into recommended tutoring practices, they recommend questions rather than prescriptive guidelines for assisting writers in developing "control and flexibility" over their writing processes. Similarly, in Chapter 9, "Reading in the Writing Center," research and scholarship on reading is translated into strategies for helping students to become more self-conscious, critical readers.

Last, the book does an admirable job of presenting the complexity of tutoring in a way that is exciting and challenging rather than intimidating and discouraging. Partly this is achieved through a balance of sound, common-sensical advice, for example, about what questions to ask at the beginning of a session and about how to take notes while the writer

reads aloud and discussions of more complicated topics such as the way in which our "unconscious" ideologies affect our perceptions of and interactions with others (41-43). This effort to make tutoring accessible to new tutors yet to address its challenges and difficulties is apparently intentional, and they refer specifically to the delicacy of this balance at several points: "So have we hopelessly complicated tutoring at this point? We hope not" (43). I was grateful for this effort, and so were my very smart tutors. New tutors need encouragement, to be sure, and to feel that it is within their abilities, even as novices, to be of assistance. Yet they are quite aware from the outset of the ambiguity of their roles and the contradictory expectations entailed in writing center work. Thus, they appreciate honest acknowledgment of these complexities and challenges and the opportunity to discuss them.

Coupled with an anthology of writing center literature, such as *Intersections* or *Landmark Essays on Writing Center*s or a course packet of the teacher's own design, Gillespie and Lerner's *Allyn & Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring* offers a sound, eminently teachable introduction to peer tutoring.

Quotable Tutor Quotes

We tutors get paid to be walls. When a person is speaking to a wall, his voice bounces off it and comes back. Sometimes it sounds really distorted and bad, and sometimes it sounds really cool. The tutor's job is to take the information that the student lays out and bounce it back in such a way that the student can see if his essay makes him wanna puke or smile.

David Keesey
Yeshiva College Writing Center
Yeshiva University
New York, NY

[Students and tutors] are not partners in completing the writing, but partners in the writing process, one complementing the other. The process must be one of pull and push; not pushing information and ideas into their minds, but pulling ideas from the students, while pushing these ideas to a higher level of reasoning and writing.

Lester Franklin Jewell
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TUTORS' COLUMN

Can it be you that I hear?

Makiko nervously came to her first conference with me, speaking softly and self- consciously in timid English. She had left her family in Japan only three months ago to study in the U.S. Her three-page paper on Japanese film had a circular quality about it, an aura. It alluded to the Japanese masking of emotions and the distancing parents feel as children become independent and Western. I wondered if that was how her parents felt toward her now that she was here. Makiko's paper was full of grammatical battles, but her written voice was arresting. It brought life to her paper in spite of its technical defects.

As a Rhetoric Associate and teacher of English as a Second Language, I have learned about grammar and also about something more important to me—Voice. In *Elements of Style,* Strunk and White discuss the writer's personal Voice: "Creative writing is communication through revelation—it is the Self escaping into the open" (67). Makiko's paper is a good example of this; her English was not perfect, but her paper's message was personal and poignant.

I believe that good grammar does not make good writing; however, a strong Voice does. I know I am not alone in this belief; many teachers and writers have expressed the same idea. This is something I try to remember in my individual conferences with student writers, particularly those who are learning English, and it is something I would like to remind all teachers or tutors who hold individual conferences with student writers.

In Makiko's conference, I based our discussion on the strengths of her pa-per so that she could build upon them. We talked about the relationship between the writer and the audience, and she decided to add more explanation of traditional family values in Japan in order to communicate her ideas better. I then helped her straighten out some noun clauses. Grammar instruction was secondary in the conference—important, but only a detail. (How many rules could I possibly cover effectively in a twenty-minute period, anyway?)

Like Makiko, Eduardo has been in the U.S. only a few months. Entering the room he says, "Heelloo," with over-pronounced vowels, a finger on his steel-rimmed glasses. I have seen his papers in various drafts: first in cursive Spanish, then in first-grade-print English, then with dark arrows and corrections in Spanish, then English print with an even slant and monkey-tails. Eduardo writes in a college-ruled notebook instead of on a word-processor until he has a grasp on the translation. He finds it easier to write than to speak because it gives him time to process language rules like mathematical formulas. The Voice in his writing reveals his systematic approach to language; it is cautious and formal.

In his writing, Eduardo sometimes gets almost-but-not-quite-right words. For example, "level of life" and "educationless" instead of standard of living and uneducated, "a homeless-ness" instead of a homeless person, "carton houses" for cardboard houses, and "irresponsibles parents." These aren't exactly dictionary-solvable problems, but word experience problems. Eduardo knows he can add "-less" to a word to negate it or "-ness" to make it a noun, and that he must arrange his words backwards (adjectives before nouns). He already knows that sometimes the easiest translation isn't the most accurate, but doesn't always know (or remember) when.

In our conferences we talk about his Voice, and how it relates to his topic. We discuss the thesis he wants to prove, supporting examples, and organization. We talk about problem words last. Eduardo writes "uneducated" and "standard of living" on flash cards before leaving to revise. These and other words appear to be grammatical secrets held only be the natives, but they are secrets like the Pythagorean Theorem that Eduardo can master.

Melissa, another student writer, has more experience with English than Eduardo; she came from Venezuela over a year ago. Her writing style contrasts sharply with Eduardo's methodic, staccato voice. Her sentences run like loose goats and are decorated, as is her speech, with lipstick and "like." Her paper tells about her secret desire to become a beautician.

Melissa's speaking voice and writing Voice are identical. During our conference, we worked on simplifying the long sentences of one paragraph (she thought of it as giving her paper a haircut), while still preserving the quality of her speech. We also looked at some of her grammatical mistakes, which were similar to Eduardo's. For example, Melissa described the state of a trial, "they do not have enough proves." She also used "theirselves," and in one paragraph she wrote the word "were" four times when she meant "where." With a short explanation of the two words (they're like two different brands of shampoo), Melissa fixed the paragraph and is not likely to repeat the mistake.

By far the best part of our conference was building on and refining what was already good about Melissa's paper—her style. A computer can produce correct grammar, but it can never imitate Melissa's Voice, and neither can I. It really isn't any more difficult to correct cross-language grammar errors than the errors of native-speakers. What I have learned about teaching grammar to writers from other language backgrounds applies to all writers. That is, we learn best mastering a few simple patterns at a time. Too extensive a lesson on grammar is counter-productive; if Melissa begins filing her nails in a conferences, I change the subject. I know I don't fare well under fire for misplacing indirect objects and forgetting the personal "a" when I attempt to write in Spanish, and I'm afraid if I littered her paper with grammatical corrections, it would seem overwhelming. Melissa might leave the conference feeling she had written poorly, not realizing the strengths that her paper really has—among them her individual Voice.

Sona, an English major from Korea who speaks several languages fluently, wanted my help to make her papers more than just grammatically correct. She was asking me to do what Muriel Harris and others call "reformulation," or helping her write prose that sounds more "native-like" (117). This is not hard for me to do in practice, but morally it makes me uncomfortable. Perhaps the discomfort arises because I am afraid of taking away her Voice: Sona's paper is good, and I am tempted to re-arrange, cut, and add until it becomes perilously close to being mine. To clarify Sona's meaning and clean up redundancies, I reformulated a few passages. I tried to honor her request and still keep my influence to a minimum because I want the writer, native-speaker or not, always to have control of the paper. Sona's paper needs her unique Voice, and not mine.

Foreign students are not the only writers who generate word tangles and confusing grammar, but sometimes their technical errors seem more daunting than those of native-language students. Conference tutors, like me, must remember that underneath their grammar and phrasing problems is their Voice, their Self. The speaker in Thomas Hardy's poem, "The Voice" asks, "Can it be you that I hear?" (850). My goal in one-to-one conferences with student writers is to help them find and uncover their Voice. To do that, we work on organization, on clarity, on grammar, but these are secondary to the real issue—a means to the end. Like the speaker in Hardy's poem, I am listening for the development of Voice, listening for writers that say, *Yes, it is my voice you hear.*

Jennifer Jones Bowman
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Northern California Writing Centers Association

Update

February 26, 2000
Berkeley, CA

There is now a web site for the conference that includes a downloadable registration form and additional information about the conference: http://slc.berkeley.edu/ncwca.htm The correct phone number for further information is (510) 643-7742.

Midwest Writing Centers Association

Call for Proposals
September 28-30, 2000
Minneapolis, MN
"Opening Writing Centers to Diversity"
Keynote Speaker: Alexis Pate (tentative)

MWCA solicits proposals from writing center administrators and tutors on topics relating to student, language, cultural, and technology issues. For a full call and a printed proposal form, please mail a request to MWCA 2000 Conference/ Call for Papers C/o The Macalester College Learning Center, 1600 Grand Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55107. For questions about the conference, please contact either Suzanne M. Swiderski at <sswiders@loras.edu> or Larry D. Harred at <larry.d.harred@uwrf.edu>. Proposal deadline: April 3, 2000.

Virtual success: Using Microsoft NetMeeting in synchronous, online tutorials

In his introduction to *Wiring the Writing Center*, Eric Hobson points out that, like those lured by the possibilities of the 19th century American land rush, today's educators are being attracted to "seemingly endless possibilities for incorporating computers and electronic communication technology into the classroom and other learning environments"(ix). Unfortunately, like their historical predecessors, many educators are making decisions about using technology with little guidance or forethought. One of the emerging frontiers of electronic communication in education is synchronous technology, which is widespread in commercial use and which more closely resembles face-to-face education than do other online platforms. While many commentators have discussed the theoretical and practical uses of these other online platforms, little attention has of yet been given to synchronous tutorials. Even Hobson's book, the most up-to-date on the subject of technology in the writing center, provides no detailed account of how synchronous tutorials have actually worked. An account of this type is sorely needed to open the discussion of its capabilities and limitations and to facilitate the progress of others interested in experimenting with this type of "virtual" tutorial.

Indiana State University's writing center has joined what will likely become a growing number of centers to experiment with synchronous technology. We have incorporated Microsoft NetMeeting 2.1 into our OWL, learned its applications, trained some of our peer tutors to use it, and presented our experiences at the 1999 NWCA Conference. To date, we have logged more than a dozen tutorials among our writing consultants and have engaged in one tutorial with a person previously unfamiliar with NetMeeting. Despite encountering some frustration during this development, we have had enough success to go online, and our account of our developing use of NetMeeting, should, I think, be helpful to those contemplating investing time and money into such a program.

Before explaining our experiences in using NetMeeting, let me explain what it is and does. NetMeeting 2.1 is a software program produced by Microsoft, which can be downloaded for free from Microsoft's web page. The program runs on PC compatibles (read: not Macintosh) set up with Microsoft Windows 95 or 98 with at least a 486/66 processor with 8 megabytes of RAM (Pentium with 12 MB of RAM recommended). It can also run on Microsoft Windows NT(R) version 4.0 with at least a 486/66 processor with 16 megabytes of RAM and Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 service pack 3.

NetMeeting offers three means for synchronous communication: chat, document, and whiteboard. For writing center purposes, most of the discussion about a client's assignment, paper, and ideas will be presented in the chat box, which provides an area where clients and consultants can take turns writing to each other. The document box allows a client to send his or her paper to the writing consultant who then formats it and puts it on screen for both to view alongside the chat. One of NetMeeting's useful features is that it allows users to scroll within these boxes and to manipulate, save, and print their contents. NetMeeting also supports audio and video communication, but the equipment needed to do so is costly, and because it is not yet likely that many users would be so equipped, we have yet to experiment with these options. Yet, with the advent of less expensive audio and video capabilities, future online tutoring will become even closer in experience to that of a face-to-face tutorial. The third means of communicating, the whiteboard, allows users to communicate visually using drawings or diagrams. While the whiteboard can be helpful when a diagram is necessary, we have chosen to work primarily with the chat and document features, using whiteboard only when necessary, because we found that two boxes, as opposed to three, are viewed more easily on screen.

A few words about setting up this system. Since NetMeeting is a free download and since most newer computers possess the specifications mentioned above, employing NetMeeting has no up-front cost. Cost will come from hiring technical support to download NetMeeting and integrate it into your center's web page, and from training tutors to use it. Having technical support is vital. Our technical assistant helped us overcome some potentially crippling obstacles to make the program accessible to our users. One situation occurred when we tried linking up with our clients on Microsoft's Internet Locator Service (ILS), a series of five networked lines, which support an internationally used chat service. Because of heavy user traffic on these lines, we found we could not be assured that either we or our clients could access a specified line for a tutorial at a predetermined time. After some thought, our technical assistant wisely suggested we drop our use of the network altogether in favor of having users call a direct line, known as an IP address. This not only allowed us to hold our online tutorials as scheduled, it also reduced the possibilities for non-writing center clients to interrupt our sessions, as could have happened on the more public ILS.

Our technical assistant also helped us with another problem that plagued us mysteriously for months. One of the difficulties of using NetMeeting comes in formatting the screen so that both parties can see the chat and document boxes fully

side-by-side. Oddly, when connecting between two specific computers, we would inevitably face formatting difficulties wherein what was seen on one computer screen differed from that seen on the other. Trying to format both screens correctly sometimes took an entire hour, leaving no time to address writing issues. What we attributed to a gremlin in the program was a minor matter of making sure both computers had similar display size settings. With a few clicks of the mouse, things were set right, and another confounding obstacle overcome.

Like using technical support, having ample time to learn the NetMeeting system and training consultants to use it is important. Our center director, Peter Carino, and I each spent an hour or two a week for nine months "playing" on the system and an hour each week for five of those months training four tutors to use it. This was, by no means, a cost-prohibitive process, especially since, during this time, we really came to understand how well NetMeeting worked and in what ways it would differ from a face-to-face tutorial.

Here is an excerpt of a successful session we held involving a person previously unfamiliar with NetMeeting, but who possessed above average computer skills and confidence in her writing. You will see that, with the exception of an initial formatting step, a NetMeeting tutorial works the same as a face-to-face tutorial; all the same areas are covered, including introductions, talk of the assignment, negotiation of the session's agenda, and discussion and manipulation of the paper itself. However, to get an accurate feel of this session, observe the time each communication is relayed. Realize that these communications didn't occur as quickly as you might read them. Unique to a NetMeeting session, there was a consistent time lag that is the product of having to communicate through writing without verbal or visual aid. Things began this way:

2:09:22 PM: **Consultant**: "Hi! I'm Susan. Welcome to the writing center! Can you send me your document?"

2:09:39 PM*: Client: "I'll try"*

2:11:49 PM: **Consultant**: "I got your document and am now going to try to format it. Just hold on for a minute while I work on this."

2:11:56 PM*: Client: "ok"*

2:12:56 PM*: Client: "Should I keep waiting?"*

2:13:30 PM*: Client: "There it is! Now what?"*

2:13:45 PM: **Consultant**: "OK. I've formatted. Let me know if you can see both the chat screen and the document at the same time. Also, if you haven't hit collaborate, do so now."

2:15:09 PM*: Client: "Yes, I see both screens and seem to have hit 'collaborate.' OK to go."*

With formatting completed, the consultant moved on to discuss the client's assignment and needs:

2:15:29 PM: **Consultant**: "Okay, great. Can you explain to me what your assignment was, and what you'd like to work on with this paper?"

2:16:27 PM*: Client: "The paper is supposed to be much longer, 2-3 pages, I think. I only have about 1. So I guess work on development and description. It's for a [Freshman English] 101 class. Not a big deal."*

2:17:18 PM: **Consultant**: "Okay. What type of a paper is this? Descriptive, narration, what? Did you have a specific topic?"

2:18:17 PM*: Client: "It's a description of the difficulties of coming to college. Personal experience kind of thing.*

Having viewed the paper, the consultant continued:

2:20:07 PM: **Consultant**: "Okay. That makes sense. I can see that you're describing some things about your personal experience. It seems like you have a lot of different ideas,

though. Almost one new one in each sentence. Perhaps you could expand each major idea into its own paragraph?"

2:20:50 PM*: Client: "I'm not sure what you mean. Which are the major ideas?"*

2:21:50 PM: **Consultant**: "Well, first you talk about not having enough time and energy for all your work. Then you talk about why you chose ISU. Then you talk about what high school was like as opposed to college. And so on. Can you see how those are each very different ideas?"

2:23:17 PM*: Client: "Yeah. So. One paragraph to talk about each of those things? I don't know what more I can say about not having enough time and energy.*"

2:23:57 PM: **Consultant**: "Yes, that's the idea. To expand an idea like that, try giving some specific examples of when or why you are so tired."

2:25:34 PM*: Client: "You mean, like, I'm up at 6:00 to finish homework for my 8 o'clock. Then I'm in class until 12. Then I work until 8, and still have all my homework to begin. Something like that?"*

2:26:14 PM: **Consultant**: "Yes! Great!! Use specific examples like that. Try plugging some of that (you can expand more later) into your actual document, and see how it sounds to you."

The client then made some additions to the document and responded:

2:29:36 PM*: Client: "How's that?"*

2:30:55 PM: **Consultant**: "Good start. I think you've started expanding your ideas pretty well. We can do that with some of your other main ideas, too. But before that, I have a question for you. . . .

The part of the session you've just read lasted about twenty-one minutes. It continued for another twenty. The first two sentences of the client's initial paper were developed into two paragraphs that preceded what became the final paragraph, which essentially comprised the whole of her initial paper.

While more development and revision is desirable, the paper was improved, and, more importantly, the client was given the useful experience of developing her ideas from sentences into paragraphs. When asked, both the client and the consultant agreed that the session was successful. That the session did succeed in so far as it did can be attributed partly to the client, who was interested in improving her writing and able to handle NetMeeting's technical demands, and partly due to the session's focus on a single area of work—idea development—which was a manageable task in the time available. However, had the client wanted to cover several areas—development, thesis, grammar, wordiness—efforts would likely have bogged down, leaving neither the client nor the consultant feeling quite as satisfied.

Although the session was successful, it differs significantly from a face-to-face encounter. Lengthy exchange times make obvious that this session was much slower and less efficient, something that is typical of a NetMeeting experience. To get full sense of this difference, take into consideration these statistics which we've formulated based on this and other of our training tutorials:

1) Set up time from host and student connection on NetMeeting to sending and formatting document for discussion averages twelve minutes.
2) The average time for exchange in communication from one person to another lasts seventy-four seconds.
3) Allowing for set up time and ten minutes at the end of a session to do paper work and prepare for the next session, only thirty-eight minutes are available for use in discussing a client's writing.

Thirty-eight minutes may not be much to work with given a seventy-four second rate of communication exchange. What makes this system so slow? Several things. First, new and infrequent users of NetMeeting must rely on reading directions. If they don't follow directions, they are likely to get into trouble, and it will take time for a consultant to troubleshoot them.

A second problem is attention span. Sitting passively for seventy-four seconds between communications inevitably causes one's attention to fade. Unfortunately, eyes that wander from the chat box can easily miss the other party's response, especially because NetMeeting offers no buzzers or bells to alert a user to an incoming response as do some email systems. In observing our tutors at work, I noticed that they frequently did not see a message appear as it came on screen, but only did so several seconds later. This sort of delay contributes quickly to the length of their exchange time. As a result, we tell our clients to be patient and to "keep your eyes on the screen, especially the chat box, to see if you need to reply to the consultant. If reading from a hard copy of your paper, check your screen regularly. Wandering attention will only slow the session and further reduce productivity."

Unfortunately, slow exchanges and short attention spans often leave users with a desire to feel like they are doing something, anything. As a result, one of the first things a bored or frustrated user will do will be to take control of the mouse to try to speed things up or affect some change. This is very problematic as it leads to a third problem, which we have come to call "mouse wars." Mouse wars begin because NetMeeting allows only one party at a time to control the mouse. So, if the consultant is typing a message into chat or is scrolling through the document box and the client grows impatient and decides to take control of the mouse, for example, to send the consultant a new message, the consultant will not be able to finish his or her task. In reaction, the consultant might then try to take back the mouse, which in turn stymies the efforts of the client. Struggles for control of the mouse, in effect, paralyze the two-way process, leaving both parties frustrated while they watch valuable time slip away.

Here is an example of what happens when both parties struggle for control of the mouse. Again, note the times of each exchange, and you'll see how much time was wasted in what was an unproductive session. To be fair, this session was conducted among our own consultants, who as friends, were not abiding by the same codes of politeness as they would with real clients. Nonetheless, you can see their senses of frustration explode as mouse wars cropped up out of a formatting problem. The conversation began:

    2:18:27 PM: **Consultant**: "O.K. Give us a couple of minutes to read through your paper."
    2:19:44 PM: **Consultant**: "Please let me read the paper. . . ."

Here, you can see in the consultant's plea that she has been interfered with by the client, who for no clear reason after seventy-seven seconds tried to take control of the mouse. Another minute passed, and as the consultant scrolled in the document box, the format on the user's screen shifted so that only half the document could be seen beside the chat box. (This shift was the result of the two parties having computers with incompatible display sizes.)

The consultant wrote:

    2:20:59 PM: **Consultant**: "If the format changes on your screen, tell us and we will fix it. We won't know that anything is wrong unless you tell us."

Nearly a minute later, the client returned with:

    2:21:50 PM: ***Client***: *"That's what I've been trying to type, but you kept stealing the mouse, trying to read the paper. Why did you move the paper? We can't see anything but the right 1 and 1/2 inch of the paper now."*

The conversation continued to grow more intense as the parties used capital letters to express their frustration with one another:

    2:22:29 PM: **Consultant**: "WE DID NOT MOVE THE PAPER."

2:23:31 PM: **Consultant**: "QUIT TAKING CONTROL, WE CAN'T HELP YOU IF YOU KEEP TAKING THE MOUSE . . . . HOLD ON"

2:24:10 PM: **Consultant**: "Does that help?"

2:25:28 PM: ***Client***: *"No. There is a margin on the right of the document that's a good 2 inches. . . we can see it and about the right 1 inch of the words, and nothing else. And by the way . . . WE DIDN'T MOVE THE PAPER EITHER. AND IT'S RUDE TO TYPE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, IT MAKES IT SEEM LIKE YOU'RE YELLING AT YOUR CLIENT!!!!!!! Please be kind."*

The above example shows what it is like to use NetMeeting when things go wrong—here as problems in formatting screens led to mouse wars. Such difficulties can be expected to occur, especially as new clients and newly trained consultants interact. For this reason, as we have found, it is important to take considerable time to train consultants and to discuss the process of using NetMeeting. Following each of their training sessions, I asked consultants to write down their observations and express their feelings. After the above session, one of our consultants Susan wrote: "There is a ghost in the computer! Every time the consultant started scrolling, the client's screen moved and the formatting kept readjusting itself. This was frustrating for both parties. We also had quite a time fighting over the mouse. No work on the paper was really accomplished. . . ."

Fortunately, as I have mentioned, before we became too discouraged, our technical assistant solved the formatting problem, and, in doing so, really made the process of communicating easier. Even so, we anticipate that mouse wars will persist unless dealt with. As a result, in our NetMeeting Protocol sheet, which presents basic online etiquette that clients will download along with user directions to NetMeeting, we have outlined the mouse wars problem and provided clients with ways to avoid it: First, we suggest that before engaging NetMeeting, clients print out a hard copy of their papers (the consultants will also do so upon receiving them) to avoid unnecessary use of the mouse in scrolling within the document box. This will do much to reduce the need for using the mouse altogether and will also give clients the ability to look at the entire document as quickly as they wish. Second, we suggest that clients wait for the consultant to finish a task and to communicate back to them before trying to take control of the mouse. This is essential online courtesy. If this rule is violated, mouse wars will likely ensue and also the sequence of the dialogue will fall out of sync, causing neither party to understand what the other is responding to. As we hope to convey to our clients, the old adage of waiting your turn really applies when using NetMeeting.

While mouse wars is a major contributor to NetMeeting's slowness, a fourth and more fundamental reason can be traced to NetMeeting's limitation of communication to the written word. As Eric Hobson correctly points out, a real difficulty arises when consultants have no use of "paralinguistic cues" to define roles, to signal collaboration and turn taking, or to express empathy or emphasis (xxiii). In response to this difficulty, one of our consultants, Tory, wrote, " It is so much easier to articulate ideas when you are face-to-face with the client. . . . It is so hard to choose words sometimes. . . ." As Tory and the other consultants responded to clients' questions and demands, they would often sit and think, sometimes out loud using hand gestures and facial expressions, before typing their responses. As the consultants themselves observed, dealing with complex tasks, as for example with explaining grammar, becomes especially difficult and time consuming if a consultant isn't equipped with the language to do so. Because such situations leave clients with long, frustrating waits for replies, we suggest that consultants periodically update clients with brief interjections like "I'm still here" or "Give me a minute to work on this. Thanks for your patience." However, sometimes long delays can even prove too much for consultants, leading them, as Michael Spooner has suggested, "to intervene instead of teach—actually to modify the student's text in the course of responding to it" (8). A way out of these problems may be to take time pressure off both parties by extending the standard fifty-minute session. With more time, consultants likely could accommodate clients in a more relaxed and thorough manner. Yet, as we have discussed in our training sessions, the downside to this option might be that it will benefit papers more than the fatigued writers themselves. Clearly, we will need to monitor this issue once we go online.

Two questions come to my mind as we prepare to go online. First, is NetMeeting an effective tool? Answer: a qualified yes. It does not replace a regular face-to-face tutorial; it simply isn't as efficient, and crippling technical errors are ever a possibility. However, NetMeeting creates possibilities where none would otherwise exist. It provides a service to commuter students, distance learners, and the hearing impaired who may not be able to use our regular services. With a greater emphasis being placed on serving these constituencies, NetMeeting's importance shouldn't be overlooked. Moreover, while not as efficient as a face-to-face tutorial, NetMeeting can effectively accommodate someone willing to work on a small or single task. Additionally, NetMeeting offers an advantage that a typical face-to-face tutorial lacks: the ability to print and save both the changed document and the dialogue with the consultant for future examination. This feature, as Muriel Harris and Michael Pemberton note, carries with it a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it should allow writing center staff to stop worry-

ing if clients will remember what occurred during a session. On the other, it will increase clients' abilities "to appropriate tutor's words as their own"(Harris and Pemberton 154). By the same token, it will also allow writing center staff to monitor their sessions for purposes of self-evaluation and allow them, in turn, to examine how online tutoring practices might evolve from more traditional ones. It may also provide the center with a means of showing faculty and students, concerned with our services, how such sessions work.

Another issue to ponder is NetMeeting's cost-effectiveness. Despite its low set up cost, administrators may want to know who and how many people will be served by programs like this. My guess is that over the next few years, NetMeeting, like most new technology, will be slow to catch on within the academic community. I base this judgement on information presented at the 1999 NWCA Conference by the writing center staff at Virginia Tech University, who announced that they had performed roughly forty tutorials during the second year of using their synchronous, on-line program. Is such a number cost effective? Hard to tell. Conclusions will vary among institutions. However, as technology improves and as its cost lower, we will likely see an increasing use of programs like NetMeeting, especially as efforts to accommodate distance learners, commuters, and the hearing impaired continue to expand. As long as we treat this use as an addition to and not a replacement for the face-to-face services already provided by writing centers, NetMeeting and other online tutorial programs should prove their worth in the long run.

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