THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Volume 31, Number 7 | Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing | March, 2007

– FROM THE EDITOR –

This month's issue of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* begins with a collaborative article about publishing writing center scholarship, initiated at the request of Al DeCiccio and Lisa Ede, two of the leaders of the IWCA 2006 Summer Institute (SI). For their session at the SI on publishing, they invited comments from the editors of the *Writing Center Journal* and the *Writing Lab Newsletter* about publishing scholarship on writing centers. As *WLN* editor, I have attempted to keep my own writing out of *WLN*, but every rule has an exception. So, I have appended my comments here too.

Also in this issue, Bonnie Devet and Kristen Gaetke offer us their research on three organizations that certify writing center tutors and summarize their findings for us in a chart on p. 12. And Soma Kedia, now a graduate of the George Washington University School of Law, looks back at her time as a tutor to see how it expanded her humanity and worldview.

As many of us journey to conferences this month and next, we look forward to putting faces to names we see on WCenter and in the pages of *WCJ* and *WLN*. And as your groups plan for 2008 conferences, please send your announcements to *WLN* so that we can list them on the conference calendar each month. Travel safely, enjoy, and come back brimming with new ideas, insights, and suggestions for how your centers can be even more productive and effective next year.

✦ *Muriel Harris, editor*

INSIDE

WORK IN PROGRESS: PUBLISHING WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

✦ *Al DeCiccio, Rivier College*
Lisa Ede, Oregon State University
Neal Lerner, M.I.T.
Beth Boquet, Fairfield University
Muriel Harris, Purdue University, retired

"Writing, the art of communicating thoughts to the mind through the eye, is the great invention of the world, . . . enabling us to converse with the dead, the absent, and the unborn, at all distances of time and space."
–Abraham Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois, Library Association, February 22, 1860

In the Spring/Summer 2006 issue of the New Hampshire Council of Teachers of English *Newsletter*, Londonderry High School English teacher, Steven Juster, employs the phrase "arm of excuses" to describe how writers of all kinds (from his students to his colleagues) impede their publication and, thus, the dissemination of their ideas and experiences. "I'm too busy." "I'm not a scholar." "I don't have anything original to say." When writers fall prey to self-censoring messages like this, they deprive themselves of the opportunity to contribute to ongoing scholarly and pedagogical conversations. Indeed, as many of us recall, Christina Murphy has commented on the need to strengthen research on writing centers. When

continued on page 2

The *Writing Lab Newsletter*, published in ten monthly issues from September to June by The RiCH Company, is a publication of the International Writing Centers Association, an NCTE Assembly, and is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. ISSN 1040-3779.

Editor: Muriel Harris
harrism@purdue.edu
Managed and Produced by
The RiCH Company, LLC
Richard C. Hay, Founder and CEO
3238 S. 92nd Street
Milwaukee, WI 53227
www.therichco.com
1-888-348-6182

www.writinglabnewsletter.org
support@writinglabnewsletter.org

Subscriptions: The newsletter has no billing procedures but can issue invoices through the Web site. Yearly payments of $20 (U.S. $25 in Canada) by credit card are accepted through the Web site or sent by check, made payable to the *Writing Lab Newsletter,* to The RiCH Company, Attn: WLN. Prepayment is requested for all subscriptions. For international *WLN* subscriptions, please contact support@writinglabnewsletter.org. For IWCA membership and *WCJ* and *WLN* subscriptions, see writingcenters.org.

Manuscripts: Recommended length for articles is approximately 2500-3000 words, 1500 words for reviews and Tutors' Column essays, in MLA format. If possible, please send as attached files in an e-mail to submission@writinglabnewsletter.org.

writing center faculty and staff employ an "arm of excuses," they resist, rather than accept, Murphy's invitation to expand and enrich research in the field.

When we planned our session on Publishing and Writing Center Scholarship for the IWCA 2006 Summer Institute, we wanted to enter into a dialogue with participants about why writing center workers should write and publish, what they could write and publish, and how they might build a supportive community to help them reach these goals. In so doing, we purposely wanted to extend the notion of writing and publication to include both traditional and non-traditional products, those encouraged not only by the *Writing Lab Newsletter* and the *Writing Center Journal*, but also by *Praxis* and *PeerCentered*, for example, as well as those encouraged by our various blogs.

At the start of our session, we asked participants how important writing and publishing is for them. We were pleased to learn that all recognized the central role they play in enriching the writing center community. In addition, we were happy to learn that they wanted to add the writing and publishing of flyers, ads, announcements, histories, reports, and grant proposals to such traditional publications as reviews, articles, book chapters, monographs, and books. We were not surprised that participants wondered about whether or not editors preferred qualitative or quantitative writing, traditional or multimodal genres, single-authored or collaboratively written pieces. Nor were we surprised when they asked us about how their campus colleagues would view their writing and publishing.

In preparing our session, we anticipated that participants would have many questions, so we invited the editors of the *Writing Lab Newsletter* and *Writing Center Journal* to provide a list of suggestions for those who want to resist their internalized "arm of excuses" and share their writing with others in the field. These suggestions appear below. We hope our colleagues reading this piece will augment that advice.

Our discussion touched on many topics. We offered that tenure-track writing center workers should consult with their colleagues, chairpersons, deans, and VPAAs when they prepare their writing and publishing agendas. We reiterated what our editors point out below about the value of reading both broadly and deeply as a way to ascertain the "angle" necessary for a quality piece. We also reiterated what our editors point out below about the importance of making writing a priority, even recommending that, as they develop routines, participants might lower their own expectations about the amount and quality of their writing. (Overly ambitious expectations are, we pointed out, one of the most powerful ways we develop an "arm of excuses" that prevent us from writing and publishing.) We explained how important it is to cultivate and nurture a supportive writing community to help writers accomplish their publishing goals. To this end, we pointed out how much our own writing and publications depended upon our colleagues, our students and tutors, and writing groups in which we are still involved.

We concluded with a group activity in which we asked participants to identify several key goals they have as writers and researchers. We came away heartened by the diverse projects that participants identified—projects that will contribute in significant ways to the ongoing development of the writing center community.

While thinking about this session, we asked the editors of our two publications, The Writing Lab Newsletter and the Writing Center Journal, for the counsel they would provide.

FROM NEAL LERNER AND BETH BOQUET, EDITORS, *WRITING CENTER JOURNAL (WCJ):*

- **Write, a lot**. Everyone puts off the act of writing. Writing is hard to do. But it's essential to make space for writing, whether that means blocking time off on the calendar, closing your office door, going off campus, giving yourself a "writer's retreat," in other words, doing whatever it takes. Follow the advice you give to students: Write before you know what exactly it is you want to say; write while you're still reading; write without stopping. Write. Not easy, but essential.

- **Read, a lot.** Figure out what subjects journals are publishing and how what you want to say might add to that conversation. Read deeply enough to know what's already been said on your topic and widely enough to contribute some new insights. Study current issues of journals you might be submitting to (see the list in the sidebar on page 6). Know their formats and look carefully at their guidelines for contributors.

- **Work with a writing group.** Seek feedback on your work before submitting it for publication. Journal editors and reviewers are very generous readers, but they are ultimately evaluators when responding to submissions. As we all know, there is no substitute for a peer-response group whose purpose is to help you discover what you want to pursue about an idea and how you might gather evidence. Even a response group of one can be powerful—seek out response from those in the field whom you think would give you an honest, careful, and critical reading, and be sure those responders are regular readers of the journals to which you're sending your work.

- **Look around your centers, your lives, your workplaces.** Talk to your staff members, tutors, and writers. There's lots to write about, whether that's understanding why, after all, we think tutoring works in the first place or how the many tensions of schooling come to bear in a session or how the writing center is positioned institutionally or what makes writing instruction meaningful for students or many, many more topics. Use these observations to ground your ideas in evidence, experience, and data.

- **Figure out your angle and make it meaningful for you and for your readers**. Once you've looked around and discovered a topic that interests you—and maybe even interests the rest of your staff—ask yourself, what are the broader implications of this set of questions? How am I framing this problem so that it tells my audience something not only about my writing center but about writing centers in general? The two of us began our writing center careers, for example, fascinated by the history of writing centers and how practices were represented in the literature. We were both simply interested in reading about those early labs and clinics. From there, we had to ask ourselves what, if anything, could we make of some historical moment or string of similar moments? Into what broader framework (philosophy of education, New Literacy Studies, post-modernism or post-structuralism) might these occasions fit? How does our particular interest contribute to the conversations currently going on in the field (or maybe to conversations we're not having yet, but we should)?

- **See your old work with new eyes**. Turning a previous work (e.g., conference talk/paper, thesis, dissertation) into a book or article is a very, very difficult process of rearticulation, and it fails more often than it succeeds (and we say that both as writers and as readers of such at-

tempts). If the core idea is good, we often advise writers to start fresh around that core idea and not get locked into those previously written words that might not serve the project well. We get a fair number of submissions that are nicely crafted graduate seminar papers or conference talks, but don't work as *WCJ* articles because the audience and purpose are completely different.

- **Support your professional organizations and the publications in the field.** Keep your memberships current and urge your libraries to subscribe. Bookmark your favorite online sites and check them frequently. Purchase books from the presses that support work in the discipline. Our practice benefits from the circulation of knowledge and from challenges to received ideas and wisdom. The more numerous and varied the opportunities for the dissemination of knowledge, the better. Our publications need both readers and writers, and that means you!

FROM MURIEL HARRIS, EDITOR, *WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER (WLN)*

Given the extensive, insightful comments Neal Lerner and Beth Boquet have offered about writing for publication, I don't wish to rehash what they've suggested. Instead, I will turn to more localized comments about writing for a particular publication, which in my case is the *Writing Lab Newsletter* (*WLN*):

- **Keep in mind the audience you're writing for**. Just as we ask student writers to keep audience concerns in mind, we also have to be aware of the readers we're writing to. Every publication has a target audience, and editors and reviewers look for relevant, appropriately written articles. *WLN*, for example, is a publication intended for people in writing centers and focuses on one-to-one interaction with students, the aim being to offer useful discussions of research, methods of tutoring, insights about any aspect of writing centers, informative material on administration and/or pedagogy, and so on. The keys here are the notions of "useful" and "easy to read." Yet some potential authors send manuscripts relevant only to classroom teaching, an indication that they probably never saw an issue of *WLN*. While authors are encouraged to write in a relatively straightforward and informal manner for *WLN*, other manuscripts sent in are seminar papers that still read like seminar papers or that lapse into highly jargonized, MLA-quality obfuscation or that read like technical research reports requiring specialized audiences. And because writing center tutors and administrators don't have much influence on general pedagogy for classrooms, manuscripts in which the author lectures classroom teachers on how to manage or structure their classrooms are not considered appropriate for publication in *WLN*. Manuscripts that are sent to the wrong journal can be rejected not because they aren't worth publishing but because the writer sent them to a publication that is not appropriate for that essay.

- **Aim to contribute to and not merely repeat the scholarship that has already enlarged our insights and knowledge.** Some potential authors write to capture what they have just discovered about the basic principles of collaborative learning or non-directive tutoring, and that's a great exercise for personal benefit. But reporting on the really "basic basics" that most people already know is not exactly fascinating reading. To be publishable, articles should have new, fresh, insightful approaches to topics, not "wow. . . we are practicing non-directive tutoring" or "our tutors are being trained in one-to-one methods." Exciting as these basic discoveries are for the discoverer, the essay that results is not relevant to most readers who already have made those discoveries. In other words, keep reading in the types of scholarship that interest you, be aware of what's going on or current in the field. Seek to make a contribution of your new knowledge or insights or experience that can expand your readers' thinking. Having said that, I need to backtrack a bit because the intended readers for *WLN* are both experienced and novice writing center directors and tutors. Some articles

in *WLN* may seem a bit basic for readers who have worked in the field for years, but in the world of writing centers where new directors are constantly entering the field, there needs to be a publication that informs these newcomers too. The Tutors' Columns in *WLN* are for tutors both newly jumping in and for tutors looking for new approaches to add to their repertoire or writing that shares experiences they have had but haven't reflected on.

- **Challenge yourself to answer your own questions.** The best writing, as we all know, is writing in which the author is engaged and interested. For writing center people, we have dozens of questions about our centers that need answers. Use those questions to start off on some research or reflection, and when it's appropriate, share your answers in a larger context with others in the field. Think of all the questions we need answers to: Why do some students resist coming to the writing center? Why are there so many one-timers? What are student attitudes toward tutorial help? What are some of the vexing problems tutors cope with? What is an optimum time length for a tutorial? What types of training do tutors find most useful? How does the center's environment affect the tutorial? How can we evaluate tutors without disturbing the tutorial? What actually happens in a tutorial? What benefits do tutors derive from their tutoring experience? What are some useful or effective ways to publicize the center? How effective are online tutorials? What is different about tutoring online vs. face-to-face tutoring? How do we help students with learning difficulties or physical disabilities? What additional training do tutors need for online tutoring? What software is useful? What do we learn from all the data we collect? How can we explain ourselves to the campus? What do administrators find valuable about our work? What are some sources of funding? How do we manage to work with individual differences in the short time we have with each student? I could go on and on, but my point is simply that in addition to helping students find topics to write about, we are swimming in a sea of potentially interesting topics that truly need answers.

- **Write for others beyond your local context**. Because many of us start by reflecting on our own centers, some essays stay too locally focused. Try to remember that *WLN* is read in writing centers across the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia (no subscribers yet in Antarctica, but we're hoping…). Those hundreds of readers who work in different contexts are not likely to be interested in a list of statistics about a particular writing center unless the statistics are relevant to some larger point being made. Similarly, listing names of people involved with the center, just to acknowledge them publicly, is equally uninteresting to, for example, a reader in Turkey or Singapore. Articles written to prove to the larger writing center world the glories and success of that particular center generally don't have much content beyond "hey, aren't we great." This too is not a useful contribution to the literature of writing centers, even though the author may be justifiably proud of what's been accomplished. However, a study of how that center achieved its success, in terms of how that might help other struggling centers, can be useful.

- **Send off a manuscript only when it has been carefully edited and proofread**. Sadly, some articles sent to publications still need basic proofreading or some minimal knowledge of MLA citation format. Reader/reviewers to whom I send manuscripts graciously try to not to respond negatively when they get a sloppily edited manuscript, but the author of such a manuscript has lost some credibility because of minor lapses and mistakes. And if the article does get revised and is finally publishable, editors have to spend a lot of time cleaning up small infelicities and looking up missing page numbers or volume numbers or figuring out how to rewrite an unintended fragment or confusing dangling modifier. Try to check the particular style and format of the journal you're submitting a manuscript to. For example, for *WLN*, I try to capitalize Writing Center or Writing Lab when that is clearly the name of a particular center being discussed and to use lower case when the author is dis-

NEWS

SWAP SPOT

In my very first job at my local public library, I managed one of its most popular services—The Swap Table. To this day, I drop off my well-thumbed copies of *Family Handyman* and other magazines and exchange them for my unknown neighbor's copy of *Wood*.

It's this spirit of exchange that inspired a group of writing center directors in the Pacific Northwest to establish a library of materials to share. Our collection includes mission statements, tutor training manuals, annual reports, assessments, and other professional development materials. We hope this collection serves as a model of what the IWCA could do internationally. But for now, if you'd like to access—or better yet, to contribute—to this growing library, please visit our URL: <http://www.acadweb.wwu.edu/writing-center/DDO.htm>.

Roberta Kjesrud
Writing Center Coordinator
PNWCA President
Western Washington University
516 High St., CH 03
Bellingham, WA 98225-9124
360-650-4566
Roberta.Kjesrud@wwu.edu

Neal Lerner and Beth Boquet have complied a list of venues (and their Web sites) that regularly publish articles on writing-center issues:

Across the Disciplines: http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/
College Composition and Communication: http://www.ncte.org/cccc/pubs/ccc
College English: http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/ce
Composition Studies: http://www.compositionstudies.tcu.edu/
Dangling Modifier: http://www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling_Modifier/
Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy: http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/
Praxis: A Writing Center Journal: http://projects.uwc.utexas.edu/praxis/
Southern Discourse: Contact editor Christine Cozzens, ccozzens@agnesscott.edu
Teaching English in the Two-Year College: http://www.ncte.org/pubs/journals/tetyc
WPA: Writing Program Administrator: http://www.wpacouncil.org/journal/index.html
Writing Center Journal: http://www.writing.ku/edu/wcj/
Writing Lab Newsletter: http://writinglabnewsletter.org

✦

cussing writing centers as a field. That takes time when I'm preparing manuscripts for the layout in the desktop publishing software I send to the printer, and I am grateful for authors who are aware of these small stylistic matters. Most editors of academic publications do so on a volunteer basis, despite busy lives and other responsibilities, so such time-saving efforts by authors are noticed and greatly appreciated. In a similar manner when people send in manuscripts of conference presentations, the manuscript needs to be revised so that the wording does not indicate the essay was written to be orally presented on a specific day. (Some people will leave in "as the theme of this conference reflects . . . ." or "I'm delighted to be here today," etc.)

- **See if the editor will respond to queries about potential topics for essays to submit.** For *WLN*, I'm glad to respond to queries, though it's hard to offer much feedback if the query is too general. And sending a manuscript is usually not an "accept/reject" matter. In the case of *WLN*, if there's content that can be developed into an article, I or a reader/reviewer are usually happy to work with the author through one or two revisions. After all, we as writing center people are committed to collaboration, and I've found reviewers who are truly glad to be mentors or second readers. I hope, however, that this doesn't encourage potential authors to merely send in a draft in order to get suggestions for what to do next. We all are busy and can't take on too much of this online tutoring, even though it is often very rewarding both to the potential author and to the person helping that writer. In the case of Tutors' Column essays for *WLN*, the tutor trainer or director, usually very well-intentioned, wants the tutors to get published in the Tutors' Columns. That mentoring is important, but sending in the whole class's final essays or the best five or ten to see if any are publishable, shifts the work of sifting through the pile to the editor and reviewers. So many essays require many reviewers to spend time with each, along with corresponding back and forth. So the plea is to be VERY selective and send in only those that do have the potential to be published. (An old cliché comes to mind here about tossing spaghetti against the wall to see what sticks.)

- **Check the submission guidelines for the publication you intend to submit your essay to.** For *WLN*, I greatly appreciate potential authors having read the guidelines for submission on our Web site (http://writinglabnewsletter.org), asking authors to keep within the 3000-word limit and to use MLA citation format when needed. Occasionally, I'll get a 6000- or 10,000- word manuscript that was likely a reject from elsewhere, so the author tried another venue without attending to the guidelines for *WLN*. Like many other publications, *WLN* does not consider manuscripts currently under consideration by multiple publications. Because of space limitations, *WLN* can't include pages and pages of handouts and endless pages of tables and files of research results. One or two short tables may be needed, or a single one-page handout that may be necessary or useful to readers can be included.

- **Write, write, write, and share, share, share**. Writing center people are a well-known modest bunch, and new people entering the field are unnecessarily hesitant to seek publication. But, in fact, they often have much to contribute and need to join the conversation. There's a great deal to learn, investigate, reflect on, and research in our young field, and we depend on new voices, often with the kind of fresh perspective we need to add to our knowledge. In short, WRITE! ✦

THREE ORGANIZATIONS FOR CERTIFYING A WRITING LAB

✦ *Bonnie Devet and Kristen Gaetke*
College of Charleston (SC)

Assisting clients who are wrestling with a thesis or struggling with pesky comma splices, writing lab consultants often do not realize that they are growing as tutors, learning the fine art of one-to-one instruction. Faculty, too, may have a limited perception. Not understanding how tutors are trained, they frequently misperceive a lab as being a mere Jiffy Lube shop where clients drop off papers. A prime role for a director, then, is to help consultants see that they are advancing as tutors and to show faculty that the lab adheres to high standards of training. How can a director carry out both of these Herculean tasks?

There is a way. A director can seek help from national organizations which have established certification criteria for training tutors. Showing that a lab meets tutoring standards on a national basis means a director has a fighting chance to dispel misperceptions about the lab. It must be noted, though, that "certification" is not "accreditation," with the latter assessing a lab's entire mission whereas "certification" means evaluating just the tutor training. While, at present, no national accreditation for writing labs exists, three organizations can certify a lab's training: the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), the National Tutoring Association (NTA), and the Association for the Tutoring Profession (ATP).

A lab cannot belong to all three groups; no director has enough time to complete each organization's paperwork. A choice must be made carefully, as well, making sure it is Shakespeare's marriage of true minds, especially since following an organization's tutorial standards is a long-term commitment. So, then, which one should a director choose? Since 1991 the College of Charleston Writing Lab has been a member of CRLA because it was the only organization available at that time. But now that more organizations exist, a peer consultant Kristen Gaetke and I became interested in researching all of them, using criteria which writing lab directors would find useful: date of founding, size of membership, standards and verification for certification, costs to be certified, opportunities for research/publications, and any distinctions associated with the organization. Though the organizations' standards for certification are equally applicable to math, reading, or language labs, this paper focuses on writing labs' concerns to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of each group.

Our research reveals subtle but important differences among CRLA, NTA, and ATP. In fact, with a mass of details associated with each certifying organization, it might be helpful to think of the three groups as nested Russian dolls. From out of the oldest organization—the CRLA—come the other two, each trying to offer something new but still partaking of the first organization. (For a summary, see the table on page 12: "Organizations for Certifying a Writing Lab.) Gentle readers, though, be warned. With so many details for each certifying organization, it might be wise to follow Bette Davis' famous advice of "Fasten your seatbelts."

COLLEGE READING AND LEARNING ASSOCIATION (CRLA)

The College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), founded in 1989, currently boasts 705 certified college programs in America and Canada (Crockett). Originally a group for reading and learning specialists, CRLA has broadened its membership and established certification training standards general enough for any college program, be it math, learning, reading, or writing. For example, to be certified

NEWS

WRITING TUTORIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON, IN

Writing Tutorial Services (WTS) is part of the Campus Writing Program (CWP), a writing-across-the-curriculum program.

Qualifications: M.A. required, Ph.D. preferred, and five years of experience in the following: college-level administration; faculty instructional consultation; and college-level writing instruction and tutoring. Requires an ability to work collaboratively with faculty, administrators, and staff from many campus offices, and to coordinate services with staff from residence halls, libraries, and other instructional support units. Please provide letter of application, CV, and contact information for three references with your on-line application materials.

Inquiries to lplummer@indiana.edu. Listing and application procedures at <http://www.indiana.edu/~uhrs/>.

at what CRLA labels its first level or "regular" certification, a program must provide ten hours of training in at least eight of the following topics:

1. definition of tutoring and [a] tutor['s] responsibilities
2. basic tutoring guidelines
3. techniques for successfully beginning and ending a tutor[ing] session
4. some basic tutoring do's
5. some basic tutoring don'ts
6. role modeling
7. setting goals/planning
8. communication skills
9. active listening and paraphrasing
10. referral skills
11. study skills
12. critical thinking skills
13. compliance with the Ethics and Philosophy of the Tutor Program as set by each lab. (CRLA)

Most of these topics—broad enough for any type of lab—are often the basis for the tutoring standards set by the other two certifying organizations. Regular certification also requires consultants complete at least twenty-five hours of tutoring.

In addition to regular certification, CRLA certifies programs at the Advanced and Master levels. For each level, consultants must review the previous level's topics, receive ten more hours of training, and complete twenty-five additional hours of tutoring. A director sets up the Advanced and Master levels of training so that consultants seeking these certifications could, for instance, train new consultants, conduct staff meetings, deliver papers at conferences, and read articles on composition theory in order to show how they would apply the concepts to their work.

In addition to tutor training topics, CRLA has other important features. It certifies only programs, not individual tutors, and only programs at the post-secondary level. The other two organizations NTP and ATP, noticing this limited approach, have moved in to cover the open territory. CRLA makes no on-site visits to inspect the troops. Instead, a lab submits an "application packet" which includes such information as the training agenda and descriptions of activities for training in CRLA's categories. If trainers offer a course, they submit the syllabus, textbook titles, worksheets, and handouts. After CRLA certifies the program, lab administrators, then, certify their own tutors, checking that each has completed the requirements. CRLA's fees are based on the certification level, be it regular certification ($100), advanced ($150), or the highest level master ($200) (CRLA).

As for research opportunities, CRLA's members can join special interest groups focusing on topics, such as peer tutoring; they can also write for the CRLA's newsletter or for its peer-reviewed *Journal of College Reading and Learning* (Barnes) and present at CRLA's national and regional conferences. Besides being the oldest of the three certifying organizations, another distinction for CRLA is that it is the only tutoring association endorsed by the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE). In fact, as the first national certification group, CRLA has become the organization against which the others define themselves.

NATIONAL TUTORING ASSOCIATION (NTA)

The National Tutoring Association (NTA), founded in 1992, certifies a wider range of groups than CRLA, seems to be more hands-on when training directors, and offers writing tutors a special certification that would help to impress faculty.

While CRLA validates only programs at the post-secondary level, NTA certifies both programs and individuals, whether it is a school district, government agency, college, university, or even professional tutors not

necessarily associated with a school or government group. It does not, however, certify commercial groups like Tutors.com (Ayaz, "Small"). Working with so many types, NTA currently claims 50% of its members are college programs, 30% private practice tutors, and 20% high school and middle school programs (Ayaz, "Telephone"). NTA is also proud that only tutors make up its membership, unlike CRLA, which administrators can join.

NTA has a different relationship with a director than does CRLA. While CRLA permits lab coordinators to design a training program fitting their labs' needs, NTA is more restrictive, requiring a director to receive training from NTA by one of four methods. The lab director can ask an NTA trainer to come to campus for $1500 (not including travel expenses); then, the lab director would receive training along with the tutors. Or, a lab director can attend NTA's annual national conference to get training (The registration cost is usually about $450.). A third and less expensive way for a lab director to become an NTA trained person is to attend a regional training session for about $159. Finally, a lab director can host a regional conference at his or her campus so that the director receives the NTA training at no additional cost (Ayaz, "Telephone"). NTA, then, has a more hands-on approach to training directors than does CRLA.

Having to be an NTA-trained director may make a writing center coordinator hesitate to consider NTA; however, NTA does offer something the other organizations do not: it certifies tutors for their expertise "in tutoring a specific skill set" (Symons). For example, NTA offers a certification called "Tutors with Expertise in Writing," where the tutors have been trained in categories NTA lists as "the process of writing," "pre-writing techniques," "editing," "grammar," "tutoring business writing," "WAC," and "creative writing." This certification—specifically focused on what writing labs do so well—would be a boon to a director trying to show faculty the high standards to which the lab adheres.

Of course, standards must be verified. But, with no on-site visits, NTA asks schools to submit a "Program Evaluation Plan" showing how the lab's progress is measured, what data are used for measuring progress, how tutors are monitored (copies of tutor time logs, for instance), and how clients are evaluated for their progress (NTA). As is apparent, the amount of paperwork can be daunting.

How many have become NTA members? As an organization for both peer and professional tutors, NTA is much larger than CRLA, with a membership of 6,000 tutors, of whom at least 1,200 are peer tutors. Its membership is also more widespread; besides the United States and Canada, NTA can be found in Colombia, England, Finland, Germany, Micronesia, and Turkey (Ayaz, "Telephone").

Directors, ever cautious about business relationships creeping into the academy, might pause when they visit NTA's Web site, which links to SureSource, Reading Advantage, About Learning, and TutorTrac. Is NTA sanctioning the services of these organizations? The Executive Director Sandi Ayaz explains:

> NTA has no business relationship with any of these companies and does not sell their products. . . . We only state that these folks have been long time supporters of tutoring in general and that they do business with many of our members who are quite happy with their services and integrity; as such, they might be a good place to begin a discussion ("Another"). And with budgets ever tighter, a director may ask what will it cost to be part of NTA. Fees vary, depending on whether NTA is certifying a student tutor, a program, or a single professional tutor. (See table.)

A director interested in research opportunities should know that NTA provides a newsletter and a listserv where tutors discuss current trends and teaching strategies. Also available is a research award up to $2000 for studies that examine the best strategies for tutoring or for work that uses demographic research (Ayaz, "Telephone").

TAKE NOTE

THE INTERNATIONAL WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION AND THE SOUTH CENTRAL WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION

2007 Conference Registration
April 12-14, 2007
Houston, Texas
Conference theme: *"A Space for Writing: Writing Centers and Place."*
Keynote speakers:
Valerie Balester and
James McDonald

Registration is now open. See the Web site for details: <http://ahss.ualr.edu/iwca/default.asp>.

Finally, who endorses this organization with such a labyrinth of offerings? Interestingly, it is the CRLA. When an individual tutor seeks certification, CRLA recommends NTA since CRLA evaluates just programs, not individuals (CRLA).

ASSOCIATION FOR THE TUTORING PROFESSION (ATP)

As if the two certification choices were not complicated enough, a newcomer has arrived on the block: the Association for the Tutoring Profession (ATP). Newly founded in February 2004 and already with 600 active members, ATP certifies only individuals in any type of school or in workplaces (ATP), with certification at the three levels of associate, advanced, and master, levels sounding like those offered by its arch competitor NTA.

However, as a fledging group, ATP separates itself by stressing its independent-democratic approach, its certification for directors, its on-line training, and its low costs. Proclaiming its independence, ATP has no outside corporate interests, meaning, as its President Jim Valkenburg explains,

> ATP will offer information about products that are relevant to the tutoring professions, but ATP is not a part of or funded by any corporation. We maintain this stance to ensure the integrity of the professional development opportunities we offer as well as our certification. I know that CRLA does not have any direct corporate ties [either]. (Valkenburg)

Differentiating itself further from the other national groups, ATP also emphasizes its democratic governance, relying heavily upon its members to share strategies and to cooperate with other organizations, schools, and businesses. As part of its grass-roots appeal, ATP claims it "is governed by and guided by its [own] members," instead of a small group of board members (ATP).

ATP possesses other distinctive features. It was the first national organization to offer certification to directors, with this certification being available at two levels: Tutor Trainer or Master Trainer (Valkenburg). For both levels, a director must be a member of ATP, submit two letters of recommendation, and provide evidence of professional development during the previous three years, including training offered or approved by ATP itself. In addition, for the level "Tutor Trainer," the applicant must have conducted at least forty hours of training, while for a "Master Trainer," one needs fifty more hours.

Another notable feature of ATP is that, unlike CRLA and NTA, it is the first national association to regularly offer training workshops on-line (Valkenburg), with recent topics being "Tutoring the ESL Student," "On-line Academic Support," "Academic Support Programs for Developmental Level Students," and "From Outcomes and Objectives to Assessing Your Academic Support Program." While NTA is also planning on-line workshops, only ATP, currently, provides this feature.

Although ATP maintains its rebel image by keeping its costs low (e.g., a peer tutor pays only $10 for certification; see table.), it is very much like the other organizations in that it makes no on-site visits. A certification applicant only submits a packet describing the training program and its materials along with letters of recommendation supporting the application (Valkenburg).

As a new group, ATP is now exploring research opportunities for its members by offering two research grants of $500 each for projects about the tutoring profession. Researchers awarded these grants present their findings at ATP's annual conference and have their work published in its on-line refereed journal *Synergy*.

Interestingly enough, as much as it tries to distinguish itself from the others, ATP has adopted CRLA's training topics and accepts documented training from CRLA's accredited programs as part of the ATP's certification criteria. So, ATP is tethered to CRLA, and "membership in both organizations is common" (Valkenburg).

CONCLUSION

Even with the differences among CRLA, NTP, and ATP, it does seem a waste that there is not just one organization to substantiate the work of labs. The fragmentation represented by the three groups means each organization loses its importance or significance. Nonetheless, the three do exist. So, can any one of the three certifying groups be endorsed as the best? Directors must choose, based on which would serve their needs most effectively and how much time they can devote to completing the Olympian-high piles of paperwork the three groups require.

The presence of these certifying organizations, though, means they are feeding a need, a need for labs to validate their existence. From their first appearances on college and high school campuses, labs have fought the good fight of justifying themselves. The existence of CRLA, NTA, and ATP demonstrates labs still, unfortunately, must travel a long and winding road if they are going to explain themselves to their campuses. With the help of the certification agencies, however, this journey may be easier. ✦

WORKS CITED

Association for the Tutoring Profession [ATP]. Home page. No yr. 25 Jan. 2006. <http://www.jsu.edu/depart/edprof/atp>.

Ayaz, Sandi [Executive Director]. "Small Inquiry [about] NTA." E-mail to authors. 17 Dec. 2003.

---. "Another Small Inquiry about NTA." E-mail to authors. 27 March 2006.

---. Telephone interview. 17 Feb. 2006.

Barnes, Tina [Coordinator of Certification]. "Inquiry about CRLA." E-mail to authors. 3 March 2006.

College Reading and Learning Association [CRLA]. Home page. No yr. 25 Jan. 2006. <http:// www.crla.net>.

Crockett, Ann [Coordinator of Certification] "Inquiry about CRLA." E-mail to authors. 1 March 2004.

Davis, Bette. *All About Eve*. Dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz. 20th Century Fox, 1950.

National Tutoring Association [NTA]. Home page. No yr. 25 Jan. 2006. <http://www.ntatutor.com>.

Symons, Laura [Editor-- Newsletter]. "Inquiry about NTA." E-mail to authors. 2 March 2006.

Valkenburg, James [President]. "Inquiry about ATP." E-mail to authors. 16 Feb. 2006.

NOTE

[1] Recently, the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA), which, as its name implies, supports personnel in learning centers, announced a Learning Center Leadership Certification for "learning center directors and learning assistance professionals" (<http//www.nclca.org>). Because this paper examines the certification of tutoring programs and tutors for writing labs, NCLCA—with its lack of certification for programs and with its wide focus on learning centers—was not considered.

✦

TAKE NOTE

WHAT'S APPEARING ON WRITING CENTER WEB SITES

In recent WCenter discussions on the uses of space in the writing center, some interesting content has been mentioned on various writing center Web sites:

- Barbara Biasiolli, Director of the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) at St. Mary's University, notes the virtual tour of their LAC: <http://lacweb.stmarytx.edu/tour/>.
- Chloe Diepenbrock, founding Director of the Writing Center, at the University of Houston Clear Lake, notes the tour of their writing center (and the magnificent artwork on display there): <http://tinyurl.com/35ka9p>.
- Valerie Balester, Executive Director of the University Writing Center, at Texas A&M University, offers the page with the layout of their writing center: <http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/assets/virtualtour/>. They also have videos of lectures at TAMU given by Jon Olson and Cheryl Glenn, plus some podcasts on <http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/about/>.

Organizations for Certifying a Writing Lab (2006)

	College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) (founded 1989)	National Tutoring Association (NTA) (founded 1992)	Association for the Tutoring Profession (ATP) (founded 2004)
Number of Members	705 Colleges	6000 Tutors	600 Tutors
Who is Certified	Only post-secondary programs	Individuals (peer or professional tutor) and programs	Only peer and professional tutors
Cost of Certification	Program certification: • First level: $100 • Second levels: $150 • Third levels: $200	Individual certification: • Elementary to high student: ranges from $3 .00 to $5.00 • Post-secondary peer tutor $7.00 • Paraprofessional $15.00 • Professional $45 • Administrator/Director $50 • Tutor Trainer $100 Program: • K-12: $50 • Post-secondary: $100 • Private practice from $150-$250	Individual certification: Peer tutor Ranging from $10 (associate or first level) to master ($30.00). Trainer • First level (Tutor trainer) $40 • Second (Master trainer) $50
On-site visit to Evaluate Program	none	none	none
Conferences/ Opportunities for Research and Publishing	• Annual National Conference • Special Interest Groups • Special Meetings for Tutor Training • Newsletter and journal	• Annual National Conference • Regional Training Events • Newsletter and journal	• Annual National Conference • Newsletter and journal
Distinctions	• Oldest national certifying organization • Its tutoring topics used by other organizations • Endorsed by NADE	• Only tutors can be members • NTA Trainer needed • Offers "Expertise in Writing"	• First to offer on-line workshops • First to offer certification to lab directors • Members determine goals and objectives
Web site	www.crla.net	www.ntatutor.com	www.jsu.edu/deoart/edprof/atp

TUTOR'S COLUMN

"EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT LIFE I LEARNED AT THE WRITING CENTER"

✦ *Soma Kedia*
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

I'm sure tutors and directors alike have heard it: "Why do I need to take a course to become a writing tutor?" Here at George Washington University's Writing Center, we're interviewing our next crop of undergraduate tutors, and time and time again we are asked to explain the long, involved, three-credit training process. I certainly sympathize; it's been six years now since I took Penn State's "Peer Tutoring in Writing" course during my sophomore year of college, but I clearly remember the initial condescension I felt. Sure, *some people* might need a course to teach them about writing and tutoring, but not me. *I* was the darling of all my high school English teachers; *I* had won a scholarship in creative writing; and, like many prospective tutors, *I* "edited" all of the English papers that were ever written in my dorm—I even *loved* red pens and grammar. And, of course, I was an English major; writing was *my* domain. I was the empress of good writing at 19, and this little tutoring course (which didn't even count towards my major) was just a formality for someone like me, just a hoop to jump through until I could start getting paid for what I was already doing.

Well. I hardly need to detail the enormous change in my "tutoring" style that was stimulated by this peer tutoring course. All of us have observed the transformation from simple, callow underclassman to enthusiastic collaborative learning advocate: the shift from "I" to "we"; the development of questioning technique; the new compulsion to find the positive aspects of every piece of writing; the realization that a clear thesis is, in fact, more important than the zealous denunciation of passive voice and comma splices; and the unbidden urge to write encomiums to Ken Bruffee and hold ritual burnings of red pens. And besides learning the benefits of a tutoring style which includes active listening, praise, non-directive questioning, and a hierarchy of concerns, the peer tutoring course also instilled in me a drive to keep reflecting on and improving my tutoring technique. My initial dismay at the course requirements (a weekly online journal and scads of response papers) slowly but surely turned into a robust understanding of reflection, conversation, and response as part of the learning process.

But this is all par for the course; these outcomes read like the "goals" statement on a tutoring course syllabus. What was less predictable was the impact that this "little" tutoring course would have on the rest of my life: on activities I was a part of in college, on career preparation and career goals, even on my personal relationships. I was not prepared to have writing center philosophy seep into my very being—to have my subsequent interactions in and out of the writing center

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Elmborg and Hook win 2007 ACRL Instruction Section Ilene F. Rockman Publication of the Year Award

CHICAGO James K. Elmborg, associate professor, School of Library and Information Science at the University of Iowa, and Sheril Hook, coordinator of Instructional Services at the University of Toronto, Mississauga, have been chosen as the winners of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Instruction Section (IS) Ilene F. Rockman Publication of the Year Award for their book, *Centers for Learning: Writing Centers and Libraries in Collaboration,* Publications in Librarianship #58.

This annual award honors Ilene F. Rockman's professional contributions to academic librarianship in the area of information literacy. The award recognizes an outstanding publication related to instruction in a library environment published in the preceding two years. The full announcement is at <http://tinyurl.com/3ysyv8>. Jane Cogie's review of the book is in *WLN* 31.3 (November, 2006): 6-8.

governed by a creed that turns accepted hierarchical structures on its head. Sitting around our round tables every day and talking with people about their writing became the standard by which I evaluated all other educational endeavors. Perhaps more remarkably, collaborative learning became a means for me to escape my own wonkish tendencies—like many tutors, I am an introvert at heart, but tutoring compelled me to really converse with people: to listen, without judgment, to the words of people from many different walks of life. At its core, peer tutoring teaches us how to relate to other people.

We can begin to see why writing center work is often considered an act of radical social action when we examine its impacts not simply on the people who pass through on their way to their next class, but also on the people who drive the center—its tutors. After only a few months as a tutor, I started to see the world through writing-center colored spectacles, perceiving ways that leadership could be less about directing and more about listening; ways that mentorship could be less about advising and more about exploring; and even ways that friendship could be less about approval and more about respect. Writing center work made me less focused on the "I," on myself, on my own merit and my unfounded arrogance towards the people around me. Tutoring was teaching me that collaboration wasn't simply a buzzword used by touchy-feely liberal arts professors, but was actually a vibrant and dynamic concept that enhances organizational outcomes, critical thinking, and personal growth as well as academic discourse.

Quite frankly, I learned that collaboration is fun: despite lurid memories of group projects in mainstream classes, when directed appropriately, collaborative conversation could be as enjoyable as dinner at a Thai restaurant with friends. (In fact, some of my best collaborative work *has* come from dinners at Thai restaurants with friends.) Aha! I thought; collaboration really *is* the conversation of mankind! We who work in writing centers are lucky not because we get paid to edit papers and move words around a page (as enjoyable as that is), but because we get paid to sit around the Burkean parlor and talk about writing and tutoring and ourselves. We live in a perpetual community of writers and learners that is the envy of my writer friends who are not involved with writing centers. And besides being fun, it serves our mission well: the staff's engagement in energetic collaborative discourse can model for other students the excitement of being part of an academic collective.

Tutoring also had more direct applications for me. As a camp counselor, I discovered that using collaborative learning theory as a coaching tool could help a painfully shy fourteen-year-old boy find within himself the courage to stand on stage and sing alone by the end of the summer. And as I took on leadership positions in student organizations and in the writing center itself, one of the most beneficial results of my tutoring experience was the change in my "executive" style as a result of collaborative learning theory. Collaboration as applied to leadership began to suggest not mere delegation of menial tasks, but rather recognizing and interweaving the unique strengths of each member of a group. This involved not just *using* those strengths but actually integrating them with the rest of the team's, allowing everyone to draw upon the others to bolster their weaknesses and to influence others with their own talents. As I've since confirmed through leadership positions both in and out of the writing center, no one's strengths stand alone, but are best served in conjunction with others. Gathering constant feedback, focusing on higher order concerns rather than administrative details, commending group members for their contributions—all of these leadership lessons were learned at the round table. Collaboration within an organization became the pinch of salt that brings out the flavor of true teamwork.

Maybe you think all of this is just a fancy way of saying that the act of tutoring is some newfangled type of psychotherapy, or, in modern parlance, life coaching. All Freudian and Oprah moments aside, though, on a less personal level, tutoring has helped me be aware of the world in a different way. Raised in the semi-rural suburbia of eastern Pennsylvania, my first real exposure to the dire poverty and social injustice in the U.S. and around the globe came when I was assigned to read Jonathon Kozol's *Amazing Grace* in Freshman Comp. But while that book certainly gave me a greater appreciation for the complexity and pervasiveness of global social issues, it was not until I began tutoring that I started to actually conceptualize means for old, accepted institutions to be made less hierarchical, less merit-based, more cooperative, and more inclusive. Christina Murphy has described tutoring as a "socio-political act of revolution" and notes that numerous other writing center theorists have claimed the

centrality of writing center work to the subversion of traditional academic strictures. I too, began to see that the collaborative interactions that can be so transformative on an individual level have relevance beyond one-to-one communication. I began to be able to imagine their effect on other social systems such as corporations, governments, community improvement projects, and yes, academia. It would probably be too cheesy to declare that tutoring has prepared me to take on the world (so, of course, I…won't), but it might be appropriate to say that it has given me the tools we all need to be cognizant of systemic injustice and to attempt (working with others, of course) to coax those systems into a disposition informed by the lessons of collaborative learning.

It might seem anti-climactic at this point to end with one of the most well-known impacts of tutoring on the tutor: the improvement in their own writing. It's certainly a familiar line to hear a tutor talk about how much his writing has improved through tutoring—the burden of having to articulate complex writing concepts both sharpens and deepens our understanding of their application. But even more significantly, tutoring has taught me to regard writing in a completely different way. My renewed understanding of writing isn't simply about the use and manipulation of language and concepts; I could have gleaned that from reading a few dozen well-placed novels and scholarly articles. What I've really learned is that writing—and life—must be both intensely impersonal and intensely personal; both are about making connections with other people while somehow balancing our own identities, and then looking at that zany mix of relationships, and how they are shaped by the words on the page, with both detachment and tenderness. Tutoring teaches us to navigate these associations: the writer learns to become more impersonal about her work and the tutor gets drawn into the intricate and sometimes convoluted world that has been created when a person lays words on a page. The traditional eradication of the dichotomy between teacher and student also leads us to smudge the line between writer and audience. To wit, writing, as this strange blend of the objective and the subjective, is not the solitary craft that I used to view it as. Writing—even the driest of course papers—is a way to interact with the world around me, to present it to others is a new way. The simple act of writing, even when I'm sitting blurry-eyed in front of my computer screen at four a.m., is already a collaboration.

Transitioning into strong yet pithy conclusions has never been my strong point, so I will simply leave you with a short (or not-so-short) anecdote: on the walls of the Writing Center at Penn State, we've had many objects—Tibetan prayer flags, spelling bee awards, tutor-decorated bulletin boards, staff writing, Christmas lights, book recommendations, and a little rubber Tasmanian Devil that was never claimed from the lost and found. But our most permanent installation is a slightly modified poster of Bob Marley that reads: "Get up, stand up, stand up for your WRITE." I have to admit that despite the poster's prominent place in our center, I always wondered what it actually meant. I saw that poster every week for three years yet never got beyond the clever interchange of the homophones "right" and "write." Was I supposed to be making some sort of word association? Did it mean that we were supposed to "stand up" for writing and if so, was some sort of picket line involved? Maybe we were standing up for the right to write? Was this even something that could ever be understood by someone who preferred grunge to reggae? I felt like Kevin Smith in *Mallrats*, staring at the abstract picture but never seeing the sailboat.

Now, six years later and reflecting on all that I have gained through my writing center experiences, I may finally understand Bob's message. In our spaces, we learn that writing is so much more than the way we put words on a page: writing is conversation, leadership, even therapy. Writing is subversive social action. And above all, I've learned that writing is a shared enterprise, a dialogue, a collaboration between a writer and her world. I thought I was going to simply hone a craft, but ended up learning something I really needed to know: writing is community. And that is certainly something I want to stand up for. ✦

WORKS CITED

Murphy, Christina. "If You Believe that Tutoring is a Socio-Political Act of Revolution, You Might Just Be a Peer Tutor—Or Maybe Not." *The Dangling Modifier* 11.1 (Fall 2004). 16 Apr. 2006 <http://www.ulc. psu.edu/Dangling_Modifier/Articles/oldArticles/Fall-2004_web_Tutoring_Act_Revolution.htm>.

✦

CALENDAR FOR WRITING CENTER ASSOCIATIONS

March 3, 2007: Northern California Writing Center Association, in Sacramento, CA
Contact: Cheryl Smith at smithc@saclink.csus.edu and Dan Meltzer at melzer@saclink.csus.edu. Conference Web site: <http://ncwca.stanford.edu/>.

March 15-17, 2007: East Central Writing Centers Association, in Bowling Green, KY
Contact: Barbara Toth, 419-372-8319; btoth@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

March 30-31, 2007: Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association, in Radnor, PA
Contact: John Nortlof, e-mail jnordlof@eastern.edu, phone: 610-341-1453. Conference Web site:<http://www2.mcdaniel.edu/mawca>.

April 12-14, 2007: South Central and International Writing Centers Associations, in Houston, TX
Contact: Dagmar Corrigan at corrigand@uhd.edu. Conference Web site: <http://ahss.ualr.edu/iwca>.

April 28, 2007: Pacific Northwest Writing Centers Association, in Bellingham, WA
Contact: Sherri Winans at Whatcom: http://faculty.whatcom.ctc.edu/swinans. Conference Web site: <http://www.acadweb.wwu.edu/writingcenter/PNWCA.htm>.

Oct. 25-27, 2007: Midwest Writing Centers Conference, in Kansas City, MO
Contact: Thomas Ferrel at ferrelt@umkc.edu. Conference Web site: <http://www.usioux-falls.edu/mwca/mwca07>.

June 19-22, 2008: European Writing Centers Conference, in Freiburg, Germany
Contact: Gerd Braeuer at braeuer@ph-freiburg.de; Conference Web site: <http://ewca.sabanciuniv.edu/eng/>.

THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

Muriel Harris, editor
The RiCH Company
3238 S. 92nd Street
Milwaukee, WI 53227

Address Service Requested

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #5654
Milwaukee, WI