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SOUTHERN DISCOURSE in the CENTER

A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

Our Reviewers

If you would like more information about *SDC* or would like to be a reviewer, please email the editors at SDC.editors@gmail.com or visit our web site http://www.iwca-swca.org/SouthernDiscourse.html.

SOUTHERN DISCOURSE in the CENTER
A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation

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Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation (*SDC*) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal published by the Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) biannually from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. As a forum for practitioners in writing centers, speaking centers, digital centers, and multiliteracy centers, *SDC* publishes articles from administrators, consultants, and other scholars concerned with issues related to training, consulting, labor, administration, theory, and innovative practices.

Our editorial board welcomes scholarly essays on consulting, research, administration, training, technology, and theory relevant to writing centers, speaking centers, and digital/multiliteracy centers. Article submissions may be based in theoretical and critical approaches, applied practices, or empirical research (qualitative or quantitative). Submissions are evaluated by the editors, and promising articles are sent to our national editorial board for double-blind review. To honor *Southern Discourse's* historical context, future issues will include special sections that profile the work of regional associations, emerging undergraduate research, and centers across the country, providing a sustained look at regional and national concerns that centers face in the 21st century.

SWCA
Southeastern Writing Center Association

Our Mission

The Southeastern Writing Center Association (SWCA) was founded in 1981 to advance literacy; to further the theoretical, practical, and political concerns of writing center professionals; and to serve as a forum for the writing concerns of students, faculty, staff, and writing professionals from both academic and nonacademic communities in the Southeastern region of the United States. A member of the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), an NCTE Assembly, the SWCA includes in its designated region North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands. Membership in the SWCA is open to directors and staff of writing, speaking, and digital centers and others interested in center work from public and private secondary schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, and to individuals and institutions from beyond the Southeastern region.

The Journal

Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation is the journal of the Southeastern Writing Center Association. Published twice annually, this peer-reviewed journal promotes a community of writing center scholarship within the southeast and nationally while serving as a forum for innovative work across the field. Subscribe to *SDC* by becoming a member of SWCA at http://www.iwca-swca.org

Board Members

Guidelines for Writers

Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation invites articles that engage in scholarship about writing centers, speaking centers, digital centers, and multiliteracy centers. The journal welcomes a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to theoretical perspectives in the center, administration, center training, consulting and initiatives. An essay prepared for publication in *SDC* will address a noteworthy issue related to work in the center and will join an important dialogue that focuses on improving or celebrating center work. Please submit manuscipts through this web site http://multiliteracycenters.uncg.edu/ojs/index.php/discourse/.

Genre, Format, Length, Citation

Most articles in *SDC* will be between 3,000 and 5,000 words. We ask that all articles be documented in accordance with the *MLA Style Manual*, *3rd Edition*. Consistent with traditional writing center practice, *SDC* promotes a feedback model. Articles will be sent out to our national board for blind review and reviewed by our editorial team. *SDC* is excited to work with you.

"Back to the Center" Guidelines for Writers

Alongside scholarly articles, each issue of *SDC* will include an article of roughly 1,500 words that focuses on a specific writing center, speaking center, digital center or multiliteracy center. "Back to the Center" will share a center's successes and hopes for improvement. By incorporating visual images, "Back to the Center" should give its readers an authentic sense of the ethos of the center and of the work done there. What is working in the center? What are the areas that need improving? What are the goals for the center?

"Back to the Center" will also include a section titled "Center Insight." In this section, we'd like to know the numbers: How many sessions are held in the center per semester? How many consultants are working in the center? How many hours a week is the center open? How does consultant recruitment occur? How long is the training process for consultants before they work in the center?

"Consultant Insight" Guidelines for Writers

Consistent with the consultant-writer model of the mutual exchange of ideas, we invite consultants to provide insight into center experiences. This article of roughly 2,000 words can be research driven or can take a more narrative and personal approach that illuminates consultant experiences. *SDC* is interested in both struggles and achievements. The article may focus specifically on one aspect of consulting or it may provide a broader sense of center work.

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From the Editor

SARA LITTLEJOHN

Welcome to the new version of the Southeastern Writing Center Association's (SWCA) journal *Southern Discourse*. As the only regional writing center association with its own publication, SWCA has a rich history in the field of writing center research, and it is appropriate that our journal evolves as our field evolves: *Southern Discourse* is now *Southern Discourse in the Center: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation*. Historically, *Southern Discourse*—under the 17-year leadership of Editor Christine Cozzens—focused primarily on writing center scholarship. As notions of center work expand to include speaking or speech centers, digital centers, and now multiliteracy centers, it is only fitting that we expand our reach of the journal too. More inclusive explorations of center work in *SDC* created space for expanded scholarship, and a much-needed additional print publication in the field. If we think of the deep connection between form and content, our field is enhanced when we offer containers that allow for new considerations of the content to fill them.

The process of shaping *SDC* into a national, peer-reviewed journal has been nearly two years in the making. Because this project has grown out of historical precedent to meet new disciplinary needs, the editorial team has worked to maintain a balance between what was and what will be. We have continued the inclusion of pictures to highlight the importance of human interaction in our field, which was always a distinguishing feature of *Southern Discourse*. In addition, we wanted to stay connected to the hands-on part of center work by continuing to highlight a specific center. This helps contextualize what's happening in our own centers at home, as we see the challenges and successes that others encounter.

New additions to *SDC* include our "Consultant Insight" article. We have reserved this space for research and stories from the trenches. What are consultants dealing with on a daily basis? What solutions have they discovered through research and praxis? It is a privilege to include the voices of students, as they so often have perspective that seasoned professionals can sometimes lose sight of. We will also include a rotating feature that highlights happenings in one of the many active regional center associations. In this way, we hope to share stories, research, and best practices that will enrich our field as a whole.

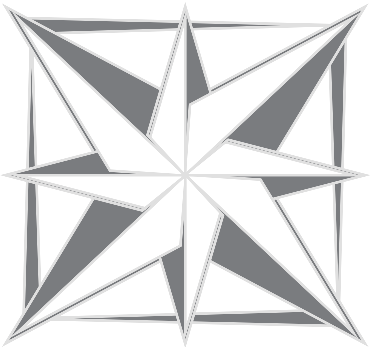
In this issue, we invited authors in the field to contribute articles that spoke to the expanded areas of focus. In particular, articles address online writing center work, visual rhetoric and design, innovative approaches to consultant training, and the value of teaching rhetorical history to new consultants in a speech center. These pieces offer an excellent example of the depth and range of center research. Our special features this issue include an essay written by the winner of the North Carolina Writing Center Network's Undergraduate Research Essay Award, funded by the Christine Cozzens Research Grant and Initiative. This article suggests ways to improve sessions with writers who have learning disabilities. Finally, our Back to the Center feature includes UNCG's own Digital Studio as a way to highlight the growing importance of multiliteracies on campuses and in the field.

As an academic, my professional life has taken a little turn. I have moved into a new position directing a small liberal arts residential college inside the larger UNCG community, and *SDC* Associate Editor Jennifer Whitaker has taken on the position as Director of the UNCG Writing Center.. Though different from my long-standing position as Writing Center Director, my work within the field continues to intersect nicely. As I develop a new multiliteracy curriculum at Ashby Residential College, and it has become a fertile ground for connections between theory and practice: What does it mean to teach a multiliteracy curriculum? In what ways do teaching and technological innovations take flight when we have a classroom and curriculum in which to see them flourish? How does a multiliteracy curriculum impact the centers' support of students and faculty?

I look forward to exploring these and other questions in the coming months as we continue to work on the evolution of *Southern Discourse* into *SDC: A Journal of Multiliteracy and Innovation*.

A Note of Thanks

Shifts of this nature don't occur in a vacuum. Thanks must go to Jennifer Whitaker. Without her, this issue would not have been born. Assistant Editors Sunny Stewart and Catherine Hawkins worked all of last year to get us almost published, and Colin Cutler has stepped into this work at a dead run. Thanks also must go to our new crop of Assistant Editors: Shana Scudder, Stacy Wilder Rice, Mario Augustinovic, Mikayla Brooks, Chelsea Korynta, Emily Lampkin, Laura Melrose, and Olivia Wood.



"We Also Offer Online Services at Interpellation.edu": Althusserian Hails and Online Writing Centers

ALAN BENSON

As writing centers have added online support—in the form of a/synchronous tutoring, instant message-based answering services, collections of handouts, and video guides—a curious shift in their approach to writers has occurred. The drive toward a standardized "look and feel" for university web sites (often implemented via HTML templates that offer little to no opportunity for customization), coupled with a desire to spotlight resources—a sort of digital *copia* made visible in the form of handouts—and the adoption of logo-laden digital tutoring tools, has resulted in writing center websites and online writing centers that often look "professional," slick, and cold. Any evidence of the productive liminality of writing center spaces and work, such as that described by Bonnie S. Sunstein, is hidden behind official verbiage, approved graphics, and standardized interfaces. Like the physical writing centers Sunstein describes, online writing centers are not a space, pedagogy, or academic department; they are a culture of writing that exists between the lines of academic departments (8-9). However, this productive "in-betweenness" is erased by slick web interfaces.

The move online has also meant that writing centers now operate within a different context than their familiar physical-world one. While physical writing centers may be located in "dingy basements or tiny rooms nobody else wanted" (Leahy 43), they are still on (or near) campus, a fact that reinforces their educational mission. Online writing centers exist within the context of

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the school site, but thanks to search engines, writers can visit these sites directly, without navigating through the university site. (The physical-world equivalent would be a *Star Trek*-like transporter that materialized writers inside the writing center without requiring them to walk through campus.) Online writing centers thus operate not only within the context of the school's web site, but also the larger web. This "double presence" is problematic because the web is dominated by online commerce and other immediate-gratification sites that promote an understanding of the medium as a get-it-now, one-click shopping space filled with skimmable content. Online writing center developers are thus caught in a bind: they can develop sites that take advantage of the expectations users have developed in their interactions with popular non-academic websites, but doing so also invites users to engage with the online writing center sites as shoppers or surfers—not writers. Rather than encouraging writers to take ownership of their writing, an online writing center that mimics popular commercial sites may facilitate passive consumption of tips and tricks—a return to the "fix-it shop" narrative the field has long resisted.

This is definitely not to say that making online writing centers look and feel more official is necessarily a negative move. In fact, one could argue that the narrative of "second-hand shabbiness = approachable" is at least as grand as the narrative of openness Jackie Grutsch McKinney unpacks. Yet it is important that online writing centers not simply adopt their schools' online interfaces without question. Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) experts such as Ben Shneiderman and Matthew Turk have shown that computer interfaces have a dramatic effect upon users. Even though the interface is essentially invisible, it has an overriding influence on the interactions taking place within it, serving as a manifestation of ideology and the means by which users are positioned as subjects who are inclined to behave in ways developers want them to.

In his oft-reprinted "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation," Louis Althusser describes ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (109). To the classical Marxist thinking about ideology, Althusser adds the idea of interpellation, the process by which individuals recognize themselves as subjects through ideology. Interpellation operates via what Althusser calls the "hail"—the moment when ideology calls to an individual and that individual, by responding, acknowledges that he or she is subject to ideology. For online writing centers, the "hail" takes place when an individual visits the site in a browser. At this moment, the ideology of the center, the school, and the site authors, made manifest in the interface, interpellates the visitor into a subject position. It is not possible to avoid this act of interpellation, but it is possible to influence how online writing centers hail users.

In this essay, I argue that writing centers, individually and as a field, must follow up on the work done by such writers as Dave Healy, David Coogan, and Amber Buck to examine how online writing centers interpellate writers into subject positions that may not be productive. Rather than simply accepting that writing centers must mimic the school site's overall look and feel or adopt the "best practices" of online usability, online writing center developers have an obligation to consider how the sites they create interpellate visitors. Online writing centers cannot be built without recognizing that the work that takes place in writing centers differs from the typical interaction between user and web site. Most web sites interpellate their visitors as individualistic consumers of information. In contrast, writing center work, both online and off, requires that the writer maintain authority and agency. The tutor is not simply a person fixing a text; instead, she or he is a facilitator of the writer's work. The act of working together on a text requires that writers and tutors interact not as shoppers and salespeople, but collaborators. This major distinction means that online writing centers cannot unthinkingly adapt the best practices of web development, since those practices are rooted in online commerce. Instead, online writing center developers should strive to foster productive online engagement by exploring ways of interpellating site visitors as writers rather than consumers. This approach requires that developers recognize that web interfaces are not only technological; they are also ideological.

Althusser and Interpellation

While the article "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation" was published within a very different media environment than our current one, Althusser's retheorization of the classical Marxist concept of ideology is particularly useful for investigations of online discourse because it assumes interaction as the means of interpellation. In the essay, written during and following the student uprisings that took place across Europe in the late 1960s, Althusser explores a "uniquely ignored" (85) element of Marxist thought: the reproduction of the conditions of production. He recognizes that the behavior of humans in capitalist society could not be sufficiently explained by the traditional conception of the State as a repressive apparatus of power. In the absence of active repression, people still behaved in particularly obedient ways that supported the status quo of class relations and production. Althusser argues that this phenomenon could be explained by ideology, contending that the primary function of ideology—which is inescapable—is the production and reproduction of individual humans as subjects: creating individual agents who live "freely" within ideology (115-116).

In Althusser's conception, ideology constitutes individuals as subjects (116) through the act of interpellation. In a well-known passage, he describes this constitutive act:

> ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the

> individuals (it recruits them all) or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' (118)

When an individual is hailed by a person with authority (the police officer in his example) that utterance is what J.L. Austin and other speech act theorists would term an illocutionary act—it establishes a new reality. In this case, the individual hailed is positioned as a suspect. Not only that, but by reacting (feeling worried) the individual participates in what Althusser terms "the ideological *recognition* function" (116, itals in original). The individual recognizes that the hail is "meant" for her or him and responds in a way consistent with the subject position. Thus the positioning is not an act of repression or force, but of discourse and recognition. Subjects are called into being by ideology and are subjected by an ideological structure, simultaneously "free" while inscribed into a subject position.

Althusser's discussion of ideology is, as he notes, a "first and very schematic outline" of a larger theory of how ideology operates *in general*—a move he links to Sigmund Freud's general theory of the unconscious (107; 109, itals in original). Rather than identifying characteristics of a master ideology in operation in the world, Althusser acknowledges that there are a multitude of ideologies that operate along predictable lines of behavior. Given that there are many different ideologies, it follows that the interaction between ideologies represents moments of negotiation. Individuals positioned in one way based on X ideological assumptions will be in a different position when hailed by Y ideology. While Althusser did not follow this thread in his work, it is clear that the operation of ideology and the privileged notion of the Subject can be considered dialogic. Interpellation both establishes an individual within a subject position and continues to reinforce that position in conversation with other interpellative hailings. Althusser's famous example of a police officer hailing an individual into the subject position of a suspect, while useful as an illustration, oversimplifies the complex interaction between hails and the synthetic role played by the recognition function. The Subject is not recreated individually every time it is hailed; instead, the Subject is an ongoing negotiation of hailings existing within larger systems of ideology. Each new hail can reposition the Subject, but only in dialogue with the Subject's current position and the other hails to which it has responded.

Later writers, such as Robert Wess, have built upon Althusser's concept of interpellation to explore this dialogic element of the hail. Giorgio Agamben's 2006 "What Is an Apparatus?," while not explicitly engaging with Althusser, reflects a particularly interesting understanding of ideological relations to humans. Agamben's essay, which interprets Michel Foucault's use of the term *dispotif* (“apparatus”), defines apparatuses as “literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings” (14). Subjects are thus “that which results from the relation and, so to speak, from the relentless fight between living subjects and apparatuses” (14). Agamben’s “relentless fight” represents the ongoing negotiation of interpellation Althusser hints at, a dialogic encounter in which the Subject is formed and positioned through the recognition of ongoing hails.

While there are connections between the two lines of inquiry, the different media environments in which these theorists operate result in very different engagements with the concept of the ideological hail. Agamben argues that, in our current media moment, apparatuses—especially new technological tools—desubjectify users as a means of promoting passive, controlled consumer subjects (20-21). While Althusser’s approach suggests that desubjectifed individuals remain subjects with an illusion of freedom within ideological control (115-116), while Agamben’s concept of desubjectifcation invites consideration of how ideology positions subjects within a technologically mediated environment. In a world experiencing “a massive accumulation and proliferation of apparatuses” (15), individuals cannot avoid desubjectification by destroying new technologies or using them “correctly.” Agamben’s take on the prospects of resistance to desubjectification is bleak, but a return to Althusser shows that there is some flexibility inherent to the act of interpellation via the recognition function. Using the web entails ongoing negotiation of ideological hails, a reality with which online writing center developers must contend.

Online Hails

When users (a loaded term—who is using whom?) visit web sites, they are positioned as subjects in relation to that site’s offerings. Just as individuals can be hailed in different ways within dominant cultural contexts—the police officer’s “hey you!” positions the subject differently than a salesperson’s “hey you!”—they are interpellated in different ways by web sites. That said, the web operates within the larger ideological space of western late-stage capitalism, and the various interpellations share an ideology rooted in commercialism.

While ARPANET, and later NSFNET (the progenitors of the modern global internet), were conceived as non-commercial spaces, a large portion of network communication has always been focused on selling services and items. Indeed, English inventor Michael Aldrich introduced “teleshopping” in 1979, and CompuServe’s “Electronic Mall” dates back to 1984. By the time the National Science Foundation lifted its restrictions on commercial use of the nascent internet in 1991, many early adopters were already considering how networked computers could be used for commerce. The World Wide Web followed a similar path—Tim Berners-Lee and other pioneers initially conceived of it as a means of fostering scientific communication, but it quickly became a commercialized space. According to the United States Census Bureau, e-commerce represented 5.9 percent of all third-quarter 2013 sales in the U.S. (para 1). While this is a small proportion of overall commerce, a 2010 study found that 97 percent of U.S. consumers used the internet to research purchases ("Nearly All"). The web still contains a large amount of non-commercial traffic (primarily in the form of materials uploaded or written by individuals for consumption by their friends), but even this non-commercial material can—and is—repurposed for commercial means, as I explore below.

Given the skewing effect caused by spam—commercial email that is rarely read—and internet video traffic, as well as the vague boundaries of "commercial content," it is difficult to calculate how much of the internet consists of commercial endeavors. Yet it is possible to say that the dominance of commerce online has resulted in a situation where users are almost always interpellated as customers. This phenomenon is particularly important for online writing centers, since much of the "best practices" of web design are predicated on a particular understanding of an audience's subject position. Audiences are hailed as customers, positioning the web content as a means of pushing commerce above all.

The hailing of web audiences as customers results in a particular understanding of web use that is made manifest both on the web and in the usability discourse I discuss below. How are web users positioned? One way of understanding the subject position of web users is to examine how popular sites hail users. According to the traffic-monitoring site Alexa, the five most popular sites in the United States are Google, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo!, and Amazon. While these sites vary in their design, they share certain characteristics. Most notably, the five sites prioritize the act of searching for information. Google and Yahoo! allow users to find material published anywhere on the web (though they both prioritize materials published on their servers), while Facebook, YouTube, and Amazon operate more like closed gardens—their searches focus almost entirely upon material published within the boundaries of their site. Yet while the breadth of their searches varies, the prominence of the search field and the integration of search into every page shows that, to these sites, information is "out there" and meant to be found.

This is not to say that the top five sites are entirely focused on locating others' work. Two of the five sites—Facebook and YouTube (owned by Google)—encourage users to add materials to their site, and Amazon allows users to comment on products. This interactivity challenges the idea that information lives outside the subject, yet it still exists within a commercial paradigm. Both YouTube and Facebook quantify the value of information via "like" or "thumbs up" buttons, and both categorize users' contributions within a larger skein of "related content." In a short piece for *The Atlantic*, Derek Thompson termed this situation the "algorithm economy," a media environment in which the companies use "their best, fastest, most scalable formulas to bring to the fore the few things they think you'll want, all with the understanding that, online, you are always half a second away from closing the tab" (para 5). When sharing material—videos, Facebook posts, reviews of books—individuals are led to believe they are participating in discourse with friends. Yet, it is the algorithms driving the site that determine what other users see; it is possible that the intended audience will never see the material. It is more accurate to describe the act of contributing material to web sites—in the form of files, text, upvotes, or even pageviews—as a deposit into a pool of content that is strategically distributed as a means of building and maintaining marketshare. Users who add to these sites are told, via algorithm, where they fit within a conversation. Their contributions are thematized via keywords, organized into lists, and distributed to algorithm-determined consumers.

The call to add content to YouTube, Amazon, and Facebook (and the subsequent processing of user contributions) creates an intersection that is ideological. The user-facing hail of the interface positions individuals as a subject with the ability to talk about any subject; internally, the individuals are not subjects, but data to be aggregated. This phenomenon is particularly evident on the main pages of YouTube, Amazon, and Facebook, which change to reflect recent activity by the logged-in user. Similarly, Facebook, according to the "Ads Feedback" section of its tellingly named "Interacting With Ads" page, mines users' contributions and history of interaction with material both on and off their site as a means of identifying "ads that will be interesting and relevant to you" ("Ads Feedback"). Increasingly, the site has begun to filter posts as a means of highlighting individual and group posts that have been algorithmically determined to be less valuable to users (Constine). At the same time, it has allowed external advertisers to repurpose personal content (in the form of Likes or comments on commercial posts) into promotional material (Sengupta). The call to contribute to these sites—a hailing of the user as author and valued communicator—hides the fact that the value of the user-provided content lies in its ability to be monetized.

The prioritization of search and the algorithmic construction of web pages to foreground the "interesting and relevant" reflects an understanding of the web user as being primarily interested in quick access to information, not prolonged interaction. These five top sites—as well as many of the less-popular sites—hail their users as impatient subjects. Information must not only be available, it must be immediately at hand (hence the line on Google's search results page: "about X results (Y seconds)"). Along with speedy responses, users are interpellated as independent subjects who want to work on their own. Help is available, but it is in the form of prewritten FAQs and instructions. Some sites integrate intelligent agents (often called "chatbots") keyed to respond to common queries with prepared answers, giving the appearance of live interaction. Yet the primary goal of these sites is to have users work on their own.

These assumptions about users underpin a series of hails by multiple web sites that collectively position web users as subjects interested in amassing knowledge, contributing content with no expectation that its audience will receive it, and working on their own. They value access to large amounts of information and speed over all. While they sometimes contribute material to the ongoing online conversation, these contributions are valued primarily in terms of popularity or easy commodification.

Based solely on the success of these five sites, as well as other social media and search companies, web users respond positively to these hailings. As a result, online usability theory is, as I note below, largely rooted in an understanding of the web as a commercial space catering to users interested in speed and vast amounts of information. Yet writing center work does not prioritize speed or individual authorship. Writers and tutors linger over texts, slowing down to read carefully and collaborate on the infinitely malleable work before them. When the session wraps up, the understanding is that the text is still under revision and that the writer will continue to work through her or his ideas. This is a very different conception of the writer as Subject, one dependent upon a hail that prioritizes careful reading, connection, and reflection. Because of this different approach to the user, developers of online writing centers should hesitate before simply accepting the best practices of the commercial web and must recognize that the widely accepted tenets of online usability may not best serve online writers.

The Role of Usability Research

The similarities in approach to users seen in the most popular sites is not an accident. The growth of information technology has been accompanied by the growth of usability studies, a field that, among other topics, researches and tests human-computer interaction (HCI). Sites tend to hail users in similar ways in large part because they are responding to the work of usability specialists like Jakob Nielsen, Don Norman, Bruce Tognazzini, Jared Spool, and Steve Krug. These researchers and writers have extensively studied how people—primarily, but not exclusively, Americans—read and work with web sites. Nielsen, in particular, has been one of the most powerful voices in arguing for the creation and maintenance of sites that adhere to the best practices of usability.

Building sites that are usable is an admirable goal. It is also essentially a requirement when working within a commercial realm like the web, where multiple vendors compete for consumers. Users hailed into customer subject positions respond in the ways noted above: they want quick delivery of services processed in a predictable way that they handle as much as possible on their own. Customers are individual actors and their interactions are entirely self-directed. The desire for speed also results in what could be termed a shallower engagement with the site; in 2008, Nielsen found that web users read, on average, only 20 percent of the text on web pages ("How Little" para 19).

Because of the pull of commercial needs usability research, as well as popular books like Nielsen's *Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity* and Krug's *Don't Make Me Think Revisited: A Common Sense Approach to Web and Mobile Usability*, takes as a first principle that users are visiting sites as consumers. An example of the discourse is found in the Nielsen Norman Group's recent "University Websites: Top 10 Design Guidelines" report (Sherwin). The report, which serves as the basis of a course the group offers to web designers and developers, suggests principles of design for a university site. The suggestions place the user first (an admirable goal) but they also position the user as a customer of information who is only interested in drawing information from the site. There is no talk of substantial person-to-person interaction, deep critical engagement with the text, or any other elements of writing center work. This advice works very well for one-way flow of information from the university to the user and is not necessarily a failing of the university web sites, nor of the Nielson Norman Group. Yet it supports an interpellation that disrupts the typical working style of a writing center, where both parties in a conversation can contribute substantively.

Negotiating New Best Practices

The dominant narrative of web user-as-consumer means online writing centers operate in a space that, if not hostile to their way of working, certainly works against the typical writing center way of working: slow, critical reading and extensive conversation. While this is not the only way of working with writers on texts, it is one that has been shown to be a valuable contribution to student learning and development as writers. There are certainly new ways of working, and writers such as Beth Hewett have argued persuasively that the field should be open to different ways of working online. In her 2010 text, *The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors*, as well as other works, she illustrates the importance of writing centers capitalizing on the new affordances of online work.

While I agree that clutching to past working styles and valorizing face-to-face work over other ways of working is not a productive strategy, I believe that writing centers should not let limitations in interactivity and unthinking acceptance of the "best practices" of web development be the only considerations when developing online writing center interfaces. Web sites are, as noted above, ideological constructs; they hail subjects into being via their interfaces. Ideally, online writing centers would hail visitors into subject positions that maximize the writers' authority over the text, their ability to collaborate with the tutor, and their agency as creator and reviser. When building an online writing center, developers must consider how the interface hails online writers into subjects and whether the site interpellates writers into subject positions that make the work taking place between writer and tutor more difficult. Given the differing expectations for ideal interaction—the commercial web's valuing speed and independence versus writing centers' prioritization of careful reading and discussion with another person—online writing center developers must negotiate between two sets of best practices: usability theory and writing center pedagogy.

This is also not to argue that developers should not maximize usability. What I am arguing is that online writing center developers should not prioritize usability over the best elements of writing center pedagogy. Online writing center developers should collaborate to create sites that take advantage of the affordances of online interaction without hailing writers into passivity. In his witty, popular text about usability, *Evil by Design: Interaction Design to Lead Us Into Temptation*, Chris Nodder describes the difference between stupid designs and what he calls "evil design." Evil design "convinc[es] customers that the value proposition is in their best interest (financially or emotionally) and by persuading customers to participate even if they are aware of the imbalance in the outcome" (xiv). While Nodder conceives of users as customers, his larger point is important. It is possible to design web sites that do "evil"—that persuade customers to engage in problematic ways.

The goal of online writing center development, then, should be to "evilly" resist the typical hail of web sites and, by this resistance, explore how to draw equally upon usability and writing center theory. Developers should build upon David Sholle's concept of resistance as a "defensive contestation" that blocks "the particular manner in which power is organized" (87). In this formulation, resistance is not simply refusing to change when moving from face-to-face to online. Instead, resistance is a productive act of questioning and synthesis, a means of building upon usability research without simply accepting its assumptions about web users—assumptions rooted in the interpellation of users as customers. The Althusserian conception of ideology is that its hail is inescapable. Online writing center designers cannot claim to build interfaces that are non-ideological, but it may be possible to consciously alter centers' hails and interpellate online writers into subject positions that are more productive for writers.

Moving Toward New Hails

As a field, writing centers cannot prioritize speed and ease over the work tutors and writers are attempting to do online. If online writing center sites adopt the "personalized-for-you" approach of Amazon or YouTube and offer answers (in the form of handouts or FAQs) rather than connections between writers and tutors, they are subtly reinforcing the narrative of the isolated writer working on her or his own. Emphasizing speed and easy access to information also connects users' ability to get writing help with their ability to use the site effectively. If they cannot find what they are looking for, users become problems or failures that must be dealt with via FAQs or other means (such as a phone call to the center). Obviously, this approach to writers is at odds with writing centers' traditional ways of working, which recognize that writing is social and the author is not an isolated agent. So how can online writing center developers resist this organization of power and hail writers in different ways?

To begin, the field of writing center studies needs to explore new conceptions of what it means to build a usable web site. I cannot declare a single best approach, nor will an out-of-the-box solution work with every center. There may be some face-to-face writing center practices that can never translate into online services, just as there are elements of online work that cannot be duplicated in a face-to-face space. However, I can suggest that online writing centers should explore strategies for interaction with writers that resist the widespread interpellation of web users as consumers. All of these strategies share a common approach to design that views the web site as a medium rather than a location. In other words, online writing centers are avenues through which writers connect, not places they go to get answers (or to fix papers). However, to move toward this reconception of online writing centers as media of connection, I propose that developers should focus on three key areas: foregrounding human interaction with peers, disrupting the novice/expert binary, and exploring strategies for slowing down the reader in a productive way (as a means of fostering detailed, critical reading).

Rather than mirroring eBay's "Buy It Now" or Amazon's "Buy Now With 1-Click" approach, where closure is one click away, writing center developers should explore means of usably creating sites that quickly connect writers to a human (via chat or multimedia) and maintain dialogue. This strategy is a productive way to foreground dialogue, as well as to disrupt the conception of internet users as isolated consumers. A quick connection to a human is a way of reintroducing one of the key elements of face-to-face writing center work—discourse between peers—within the structure of a usable site. An example of this approach can be found in the "Talk to Us" feature of the University Writing Center at UNCG.[1] The site includes an embedded HTML5 chat plugin on every page, which works on computers, tablets, and even smartphones. People visiting any of the site's pages can chat live with the Center's staff, make appointments, ask questions, or share short snippets of text. The "Talk to Us" feature represents both the best practices of usability and strategic resistance to those practices. It does not require user-installed software, works on all platforms, and does not disrupt users' progress through the site. Similarly, the feature's prominence on the page (near the top-left corner) and its appearance on every page indicate its importance, but it does not take up a substantial amount of space and does not add significantly to page-load time. Yet it also resists the narrative of speed and independence by explicitly inviting web users to treat the web site not as a place to find answers, but as a means of connecting live with another person. In addition, the "Talk to Us" feature almost always appears in conjunction with photographs (in rotation) of the members of the University Writing Center staff, which resists the facelessness of the web; on every page, the web visitor is reminded that people are available to help. Just as importantly, the Center staff does not use the tool as a means of routing users to handouts or self-help materials; instead, they use it as a means of supporting the interaction between writer and tutor.

The second strategy, disrupting the novice/expert binary, could be explored both via the static text of the page and the interactions between tutor and writer. While, as noted above, readers don't read most of any web page, it is incumbent upon online writing center developers to carefully craft the text so that it hails writers into a position other than as customers coming to have their writing fixed. Developers should experiment with text and interfaces that stress the writer's authority, expertise, and skill. Rather than positioning the online writing center as a place that "fixes" texts, developers can explore ways to hail the writer in a way that maximizes her or his power and ownership of the text. For example, rather than asking "need help with that paper?," online writing centers might ask writers what writing they would like to discuss. Instead of listing the ways a center can repair errors in writing ("we can help you improve your grammar, write a stronger thesis," etc.), perhaps the text of the site could invite writers to share their work with interested readers. The difference is small, but it represents a different interpellation of web users. Rather than positioning the site visitor as possessing a flawed text that needs to be repaired, this approach hails the visitor as a writer possessing a text of value that is being shared with a reader.[2]

Once a session begins, online writing center tutors should stress their own fallibility and their own position as learners themselves. The writer is not sharing her or his text simply to be fixed; she or he is sharing a text from which the tutor will learn something. Rather than adopting a stance of expertise that contributes to an interpellation of the site visitor as a learner, tutors should foreground their own status as peer learners. In my experience, tutors tend to react to their own uncertainty about online sessions by taking on the mantle of expert and projecting an identity of novice onto the writer. Tutors have also voiced a concern about writing "correctly" in the online realm. Directors can help tutors productively engage with writers in online writing centers by giving them space to experiment with online discourse, as well as permission to make errors in their written chats. Explicitly allowing student writers to interact as peers, without stressing about the correctness of their discourse, productively resists the polish of the interface and reinforces the idea that writing—in its early stages—can be a messy thing.

A final online writing center usability strategy could address the issue of reading and the means of fostering deeper critical engagement with the writer's text. In 2000, Nielsen predicted that books would go away by 2007 as readers became more comfortable with reading online and technology improved (*Designing* 5). While the introduction of electronic ink devices like the Kindle make reading on screens more pleasant, it is my experience that students do not read and comprehend screen texts (their own or others') as well as printed texts. That said, I have also noticed my students becoming more comfortable and more engaged with texts they read on the screen. Online writing centers can support the development of writers' reading skills by integrating tools that allow for more engaged reading of texts. Students using highlighting and annotation tools, especially when guided by a skilled writing tutor, may be able to resist the hail of the consumer web, with its focus on speed and shallow reading.

These strategies are not the only ways online writing center developers can experiment with how their sites interpellate visitors, nor are the persistent concerns about the prioritization of speed and the positioning of information as something to search out and consume the only productive avenues of research. At best, they are, like Althusser's essay, "notes toward an investigation." While online centers operate within the same general context of the commercial web, each also operates within the specific context of their individual schools, and proposing a one-size-fits-all "solution" to the issue of online hails is quite simply impossible. In fact, doing so would be as problematic as the unreflective application of usability theories to writing center work. Instead, these suggestions represent three easily accessible means by which developers can experiment with online interpellation. In this experimentation lies the potential for substantive change in writing centers' engagement with online work. Rather than focusing on the hows of technology—how to build sites, how to get people to use them, how to present materials—writing centers have an obligation to consider the how of ideology: by building online writing center sites that productively resist the consumerist hails of the web and interpellate individuals as writers with agency over their work.

1 In the interest of full disclosure, I should note that I was involved in the redesign of the University Writing Center's web site. Many of the ideas explored in this essay derive from this redesign.

2 This act of sharing differs significantly from the sharing taking place on social media. Unlike social media shares, which represent the transmission of an object to be consumed and, ideally, passed on again, this act of sharing represents a writer inviting a reader to encounter a text that still remains a possession of the writer.

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Situated Design for Multiliteracy Centers: A Rhetorical Approach to Visual Design

SOHUI LEE

The story of multiliteracy and writing has been told many times already. One part of the story is how the emergence of computer technology has allowed modern writers to communicate creatively, broadly, and quickly through various combinations and remixes of visual, verbal, and aural features. In her 2004 keynote to the College Composition and Communication Conference, Kathleen Blake Yancey called this creation of new genres of writing through pictures, audio, and video "a tectonic change" (298) for composition studies. Although scholars like Eric Hobson and Jason Palmeri have rightly observed that we have always already created multimodal composition throughout history with calligraphy and picture drawings, Yancey's observation still touches on something critically different about twenty-first-century multimodality, which directly impacts how multiliteracy centers support writing (Hobson 3; Palmeri 5). Revolutionary change in the technologies of writing and communicating continues to transform our culture of production and publication: the audience is no longer only listening or reading in words, sound, and video, but talking back, composing, and publishing in words, sound, and video. As James Paul Gee pointed out at the Computers and Writing Conference in 2013, more people than ever before are both consumers and producers; they are "participants [who]...act and think like designers" (Gee). In our age of YouTube, author and audience are merging. This, in turn, has generated a new interest in visual design: online and offline, in pixel and pencil, and with images and materials.

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However, seeing visual design around us, being saturated in design, and being given the tools to design is (as most composition instructors know) not the same as being able to critically understand and effectively produce visual design. The skills and tools needed to understand visual literacy and produce digital or multimodal texts require instruction and teaching. Thus, another important story of multiliteracy (a story still in the making) is the story of how we teach it. Early in writing studies, Mike Markel noted the importance of visual design with the rise of word processing software, and argued that writing teachers needed to instruct students in "codes of visual rhetoric" (381). Within this last decade, a growing number of composition scholars have argued for teaching design principles as a means for helping students create visual and multimodal compositions (George; Yancey; Selfe; Wysocki; Graham, Hannigan, and Curran). In writing center studies, few explore the topic, although visual design theory lies at the heart of multimodal pedagogy. Introducing the idea of "multiliteracies centers" in 2001, John Trimbur forecasted how writing centers will need to attend "to the practices and effects of design in writing and visual communication" (30); however, only Jackie Grutsch McKinney led the way in exploring how tutors might discuss "practices and effects" of design principles.

Although McKinney's suggested design principles are useful and important, the application of the principles, by themselves, fall short in fully explaining the visual design of multimodal genres such as videos or research posters. Composition and writing center studies have generally presented design principles as a fixed set that can be plugged in as needed, and they often privilege print or static two-dimensional communication practices. By situating design, multiliteracy center practitioners have an opportunity to reinforce the profoundly rhetorical practice of visual design and to integrate design theory more meaningfully into workshops and consultations. In this essay, I argue for a way to approach visual design in multiliteracy centers that is both new and also familiar, in that it is rhetorically responsive to audience and media environment. Situated design involves approaching visual design as a critical extension of the composition process. Alongside rhetorical considerations of audience, purpose, and media, I propose that multimodal composers study their design approach, reflect on the dimensional affordances of media, and then choose relevant design principles. Most writing centers and multiliteracy centers have a pedagogy shaped by a broad interdisciplinary mission: to inform and support writing and communication across disciplines for a range of audiences working on diverse media. This unique mandate to colleges and universities makes the practice of situating design more applicable to multiliteracy centers; moreover, situated design allows centers to fold design into their existing writing center practice and theory, strengthening and unifying their ways of rhetorical doing. By proposing a decision process that situates visual design, I hope to initiate further conversation on how multiliteracy centers explore and practice their engagement with visual design theory to teach multimodality.

Our Rhetoric of Design

Published several decades ago, Roland Barthes' "Rhetoric of the Image" in *Image Music Text* made a case for visual rhetoric and semiotics: visual language not only relays messages differently from verbal language, but also possesses its own "stock of signs" (19). Barthes' article was one of the earliest visual analyses joining rhetoric and visual design; only recently has rhetoric and visual design re-emerged in composition studies, and interest has shifted from examining how design supports written texts to how design theory frames the production of visual texts. For instance, early scholarly conversations about visual text focused on how visuals support traditional essay writing. Pamela Childers, Eric Hobson, and Joan Mullin's 1998 study *ARTiculating: Teaching Writing in a Visual World* related visual expression to verbal text, arguing that visuals can help students discover ideas, organize information, and overcome writer's block. By 2002, writing scholars discussed visual "production" in composition classrooms. Diana George's *College Composition and Communication* article "Analysis to Design" urged composition instructors to provide students with concrete skills to both examine and produce visuals (George). Also, in Cynthia Selfe's "Toward New Media Texts: Taking Up the Challenges of Visual Literacy" and Anne Frances Wysocki's "The Sticky Embrace of Beauty," both published in 2004, design emerged as a critical (if controversial) tool for teaching multimodal composition.

For multiliteracy centers, the most significant arguments for teaching design theory are introduced in Margaret Graham, Katherine Hannigan, and Paula Curran's "Imagine: Visual Design in First-Year Composition" and Jackie Grutsch McKinney's "New Media Matters: Tutoring in the Late Age of Print." Graham, Hannigan, and Curran argue that composition instructors fail to fully explain "the aesthetics of the visual," which comes at a cost of "lead[ing] students to assume that visual elements and design principles are irrelevant, ornamental, or at best subordinate to rhetorical considerations" (25). In light of this problem, they demonstrate how visual elements and design are introduced in composition courses. Recognizing the same need for design pedagogy in writing centers, McKinney recommends in "New Media Matters" that tutors learn specific design language to communicate how visuals shape arguments.

Dimensions of Situated Design

While McKinney's article and Graham, Hannigan, and Curran's study provide a list of design principles, their recommendations diverge dramatically from one another and reveal how design principles were selected to support different dimensional forms of media. McKinney presents four design principles: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. Graham, Hannigan, and Curran, on the other hand, offer principles of variety, repetition, balance, focal point, and proportion, which are maintained by four visual elements of line, color, shape, and space (see Table 1).

McKinney/Williams	Graham, Hannigan, and Curran	
Design Principles	Design Principles	Visual Elements
contrast	variety	line
repetition	repetition	color
alignment	balance	shape
proximity	focal point	space
	proportion	

Table 1. Comparison of Design Principles presented by McKinney and Graham, Hannigan, and Curran.

McKinney's design principles are drawn from Robin Williams' *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, in which Williams acknowledges a selective focus on four principles. While not explicitly stated in the book, Williams appears to have chosen these principles to help beginners design static two-dimensional print formats. According to *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, which features the design of business cards, flyers, and newsletters, the principle of "alignment" is especially important for visual and text-based layout of documents like newsletters. "Proximity" is another design principle that is particularly relevant for design on two-dimensional space such as on a page; the principle relies on the visual process of grouping and helps readers scan related texts and visuals.

Likewise, Graham, Hannigan, and Curran's selection of principles reveals an interest in visualization techniques. As faculty in the English Department and the College of Design at Iowa State University, Graham, Hannigan, and Curran argue for teaching design theory alongside rhetorical theory in order to help students improve how they interrogate and produce visual texts by "drawing, painting, photographing, or sculpting" (31). Thus, unlike Williams' selections, their principles consider how design supports "texts" in both two and three dimensions (25-31). For example, the principle of proportion asks the designer to identify relationships between two or more visual elements (such as comparison between color values or between sizes of images). For two-dimensional artifacts, the issues of proportion of visual elements are contained within the boundaries of print space such as the page, poster, or computer display; however, for three-dimensional artifacts such as outdoor sculptures, proportion includes size and mass in physical space. Graham, Hannigan, and Curran's attention to physical "space" allows for multidimensional conceptualizations of visual design that consider the depth of the visual area and even visual effects shaped by time.

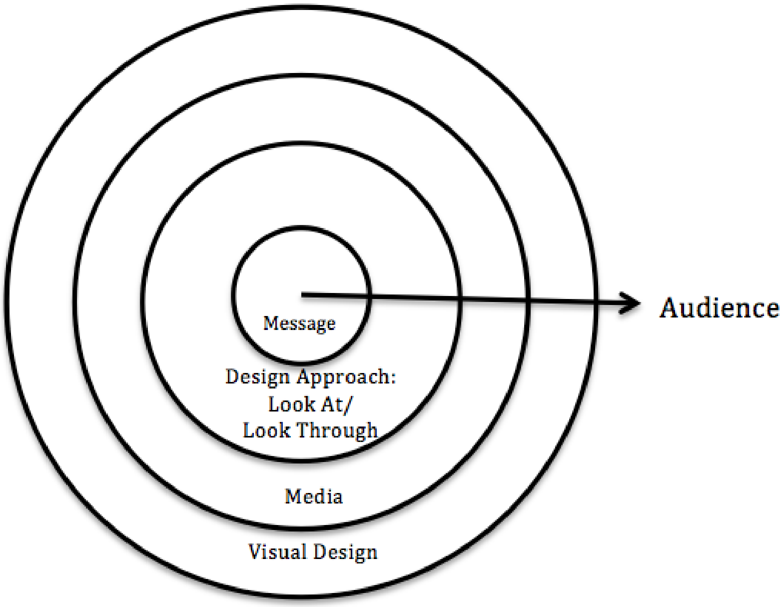

Figure 1. D-M-V Model of Situated Design.

By drawing a comparison between the list of visual design principles by McKinney/Williams and by Graham, Hannigan, and Curran, I hope to show that design principles not only vary, but also support a range of dimensional media forms. This is not to say that the McKinney/Williams list of design principles are not valuable, but that the selection and application of design principles require rhetorical decision-making. To aid students, I propose teaching a visual design process called situated design in which the rhetor assesses design approach and media situations before designing. To visualize the approach, I provide the Design Approach-Media-Visual Design (D-M-V) Model, illustrated in Figure 1, recommending the three stages of a design decision process. The stages (D-M-V) reflect how the design message, in its route to the audience, may filter through "Design Approach," "Media," and "Visual Design."

Design Approach: Transparent and Opaque Design

We begin the first of these, "Design Approach," the philosophy that informs how visual elements and principles will be applied for a specific communication situation, soon after we know the project and the audience. Amongst visualization scholars, there are two general but competing thoughts for what makes good visual design. For a lack of better terms, I call these two approaches "transparent design" and "opaque design." The disagreements in approach have to do with what scholars believe to be the ultimate purpose of design and function of graphical communication. In *Envisioning Information*, Edward Tufte, for instance, argues that the primary focus of visualization should be on the data rather than the "data containers," and ideal design of information-rich visualizations such as tables or charts should be "transparent and self-effacing in character" (33). By contrast, designers like Connie Malamed assert the value of data containers, maintaining that effective graphic design improves cognition, draws connections and relationships, and delivers "emotional content" (210). Opaque design, for Malamed, is design that asks to be looked at and is itself the source of information. Thus—to borrow terms from Richard Lanham—while transparent design asks viewers to "look through" design to see information inside, opaque design invites viewers to "look at" design for information or message. Another perspective, provided by Lanham, contextualizes the practice of transparent and opaque designs through Western literacy history and offers an important resolution to the dueling philosophies through rhetoric. In *Electronic Word* and *Economics of Attention*, Lanham explores the concept of "Look Through" and "Look At" in terms of how audience is asked to visually experience meaning and see written language. He believes the design of text invites audiences to look "through" text to retrieve content, or invites audiences to look "at" the manner of its expression. Lanham credits the digital computer with re-immersing our academic field in an appreciation of nonverbal means of creating meaning including communication through graphic design (Lanham, *Economics* 180). Moreover, the dynamic and "expressive space" of the computer invites the audience to continuously oscillate between "looking through" and "looking at" text (Lanham, *Economics* 19). For Lanham, transparent or opaque design of text is not an "either/or" problem; it is a "both/and" environment of new media.

What does this idea of oscillating design mean for multiliteracy centers? Rather than adopting one philosophy over another, multiliteracy center practitioners might ask students to take Lanham's theory into account, recognizing the dynamic possibilities of design for new media and for non-digital multimodal work. I view transparent design and opaque design as residing on two ends of a sliding spectrum of design approaches: on one extreme end, transparent design holds that the medium carries the message while opaque design assumes that the medium is the message. Most visual and multimodal messages, however, reside somewhere in between, depending on purpose, media, and needs of the audience. For instance, a scientific audience in an academic journal may prefer visual work that displays information or arguments mainly through transparent design, focusing on clarity and accuracy. On the other hand, a more general audience with less understanding or interest in the subject may require more motivation to engage with the information—that is, a visual method of connecting or identifying with the issue or data. Yet in both cases, some degree of opaque design or transparent design may be necessary in different parts of a visual project.

Conversations on transparent/opaque design theory and Lanham's notion of "Look Through/At" design can help bring focus to the rhetoric of design. For instance, at

Stanford University's Hume Center for Writing and Speaking, I lead research poster workshops for students in a range of disciplines from Earth Science to Education. When creating posters, most students usually apply transparent design without thinking; they treat research posters as abbreviated forms of scholarly articles or lab reports, which are primarily read, not seen. In order to counter this perspective, I introduce examples of research posters illustrating how design can curate viewers' understanding of data and information. Students learn, for instance, that traditional "newspaper column" layout of research posters is organized to make its content transparent, but also to order each section of the poster in recognizable templates. Nonetheless, some elements of opaque design remain important to the "newspaper column" template, because colors are used to highlight data, unify subheadings, or direct attention to key sections. Though less common, research posters can also draw attention to visualizations of research results. These "visualized" research posters use opaque design layout to feature visualizations prominently while graphically reinforcing a theme or message. In the workshops, I invite students to discuss and practice transparent and opaque design approaches as they work on poster layout and data visualizations. They consider questions such as the following: How can the design change the way the audience sees, understands, and remembers data or information? How should strategies in transparent and opaque design respond to the needs of a general or specialized audience? Questions like these can help students understand how design is flexible and responsive to rhetorical contexts.

Dimensions for Design: Media and Visual Design Elements

In my proposed D-M-V Model for situated design, the first interpretive stage asks the rhetor to consider his or her "design approach," whether it leans toward transparent or opaque design. The next two stages in the design process provide additional features to the message: media and visual design. By media, I mean the range of visual media types in two or three dimensions that might be published, displayed, or shared (i.e., paper, Internet, PowerPoint, presentations, posters, sculptures, or curated displays). In the "media" stage, rhetors might further specify whether media are static or dynamic. Detailed examples of each category of visual media type appear in Table 2; but, briefly, static two-dimensional forms might include print flyers or essays; dynamic two-dimensional forms include video and stand-alone slideshows; some static three-dimensional forms include product packages and research posters; and, finally, dynamic three-dimensional forms include kinetic sculptures and live presentations (with or without slideshows).

While earlier I presented the D-M-V model with three recommended stages (design approach, media, and visual design), Table 2 expands the stages to present a detailed decision process for situated design. Six sections in Table 2 are presented

<table>
<tr><td>Project Purpose/ Message</td><td colspan="4">What is the purpose of the project? (To teach, to argue, to inform, to sell, to engage, to entertain/enjoy, to reflect, to gain appreciation, etc.)
What is the message or point of the project?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Audience</td><td colspan="4">Who is the intended audience? How much do they know about the topic or message? What does the audience care about? What is the best way to engage and interest them?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Design Approach</td><td colspan="4">Transparent (Look Through) → Opaque (Look At)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Media</td><td>Static-2D</td><td>Dynamic-2D</td><td>Static-3D</td><td>Dynamic-3D</td></tr>
<tr><td>Examples:
Flyers,
Print ads,
Static webpages,
Print essays,
Print or static infographics</td><td>Examples:
Animated web sites,
Video games and apps.,
Film and video,
Dynamic infographics,
Stand-alone slideshows</td><td>Examples:
Product packages,
Billboards,
Manipulatives,
Furniture,
Museum displays,
Sculptures,
Picture books,
Scrapbooks,
Research posters</td><td>Examples:
Wind sculptures,
Modern art (i.e., Rothko Chapel),
Fountains,
Performing arts,
Theatre (set design),
Live presentations (with or without slideshow)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Visual Elements (Visual Design)</td><td>Color
Line
Shape
Texture</td><td>Color
Line
Shape
Texture
Motion and/or Change</td><td>Color
Line
Shape
Texture
Mass
Space</td><td>Color
Line
Shape
Texture
Mass
Space
Motion and/or Change</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Design Principles (Visual Design)</td><td colspan="4">Focalization (also dominance, emphasis, proximity, focal point)
Unity (also harmony, containment)
Repetition (also rhythm)
Balance</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Alignment
Contrast</td><td colspan="2">Proportion (also scale)
Variety</td></tr>
</table>

Table 2. Decision Process for Situated Design: Audience, Approach, Media, Visual Design. The list of visual elements and design principles are not comprehensive but represent some commonly cited concepts in design that may be helpful guides for organizing and strategizing visual design.

in descending sequential order, starting with project purpose and ending with visual design; however, the arrangement of the first half of this order would undoubtedly vary based on project requirements or assignment prompts. Ideally, visual design is determined at the end of the process, because design strategies build on initial understanding of audience, design approach, and media.

To understand the importance of dimensional forms of media and its connection to visual design, it is critical to understand the concept of "visual elements," also known as design elements or art elements, which are the basic building blocks of design principles. While design principles provide design goals, visual elements are used to enact these principles. Graham, Hannigan, and Curran identify four visual elements, but there are at least nine crucial visual elements working in two or three dimensions.

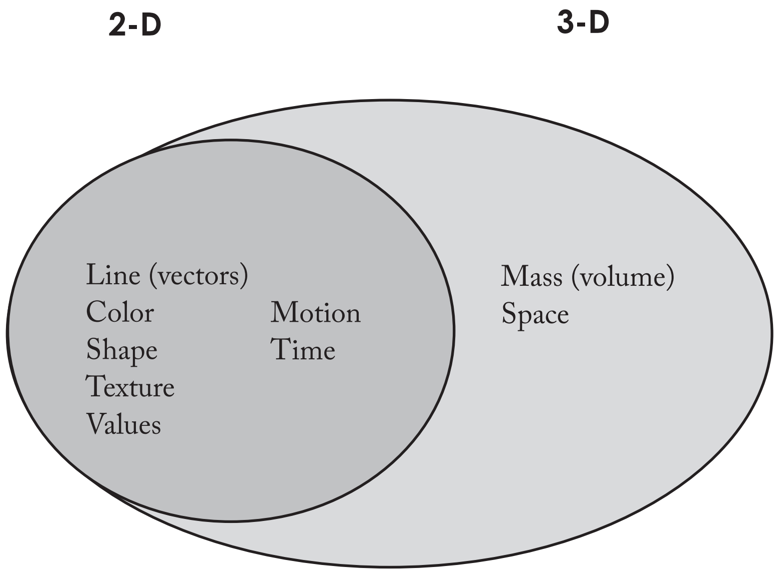

Figure 2. Diagram of Visual Elements in Dimensional Forms (2-D and 3-D).

Two-dimensional designs include shapes and forms like a circle or square; by contrast, three-dimensional forms include shapes and forms with depth or volume like a sphere or cube. As shown in the diagram in Figure 2, two-dimensional visual projects share visual elements with three-dimensional visual forms. In two-dimensional drawings, blurred effects in comic drawings might relate motion without time; with the advent of the computer, animation effects provide motion within the context of time. Three-dimensional visual works such as wind sculptures (or kinetic sculptures) work in motion as part of their design. Finally, while mass and space might be implied in two-dimensional visuals, physical mass and absolute space (defined by area, volume, and distance) are visual elements belonging solely to three-dimensional forms.

Four Principles To Rule Them All?

Having considered design approach and media, the rhetor finally situates design by exploring the last stage of the design process: visual design. While visual design is defined in numerous ways depending on discipline and profession, I emphasize a rhetorical approach. Visual design is the rhetorical combination of art elements (such as color, line, scale, and texture) composed to produce an overall effect for an audience or for a purpose, which design professionals call "design principles." In this section I discuss eight design principles listed in Table 2, but I will argue that four primarily support two dimensions or three dimensions. The other four design principles (focalization, unity, repetition, and balance) may be considered "common" principles, because they are frequently applied to both two- and three-dimensional forms.

Design Principles for Two Dimensions or Three Dimensions

Scholars in the design field often disagree over which principles are the most important, but they generally acknowledge that they "are not strict rules, but rules of thumb that might even oppose and contradict one another" (Agrawala, Li, and Berthouzoz 60). However, design principles are useful guidelines only if rhetors are aware that principles are organizing tools that can be selected (or omitted) to help the audience perceive and appreciate the aesthetic, functional, and rhetorical properties of visual products. Students, for example, might select design principles by considering how they can support two-dimensional or three-dimensional designs. Alignment and contrast are examples of design principles that are frequently applied to two-dimensional visual work. The design principle of alignment, which I discussed earlier, refers to the lining up of graphic and textual elements on the page from the top, bottom, middle, or sides (left or right justified). The design principle of contrast refers to the use of contrasts in value (light and dark), color, size, and other visual elements as a means of creating pictorial elements that stand out or generating visual interest. Both of these are main principles in graphic design of print and web pages.

While two-dimensional visuals consider graphic layout in page space, three-dimensional visuals require principles of design involving physical space. In interior design and architecture, for instance, proportion and scale are important to drawing attention to a working space that people inhabit. Scale refers to a design principle that attends to size between two or more objects in three-dimensional space relative to human scale. Related to scale, size proportion considers the relative size or ratio of one object to another, such as proportion of a sculpture to a building. The principle of variety refers to the combination of two or more elements (such as texture, mass, movement) to generate visual interest and engagement.

To explain how selecting design principles in light of media dimensions is crucial for how center practitioners frame multimodal composition as a rhetorical activity, I return to my earlier example of the research poster. Because the research poster is a multimodal genre with three dimensions, design principles such as scale and proportion are as important to research posters as principles of alignment and contrast. As large visual displays of science- and humanities-based research, research posters are sometimes taped or glued on large poster boards, but also can be silk-screened onto fabric. They can have shape and texture, but more importantly, mass and space. The research poster's dimensionality is directly relevant to how students understand the strategy of layout and font size, since research poster design requires legibility and visibility in space that varies greatly (hallway wall, foyer, large conference halls, classroom, etc.). While students may desire specific sizes of text for title, headers, and body copy, multiliteracy centers may want to resist providing merely a list of font size guidelines such as "85 pts" for title, "40-55 pts" for headers (Welhausen). Given alone, guidelines of font size tend to be prescriptive (assuming or privileging a particular poster size and shape), and discourage critical reflection on design motivations. However, by discussing strategies of proportion (such as the title font size relative to the rest of the poster) and/or scale (title font size relative to physical display space to maximize human interaction), research poster workshops can teach students to assess and select effective font size based on the poster size, location, and even the type of audience interaction desired.

Four "Common" Design Principles and Examples

Unlike the four principles of alignment, contrast, scale, and proportion, the following visual design principles are frequently cited by designers as common principles for both two- and three-dimensional work: focalization, unity, repetition, and balance. Here, I'd like to illustrate the four principles with an example of a student's print infographic: Chloe Colberg's "Saving Our Rhinos," created for my multimodal composition course called "Information Design: Visual Language of Graphic Communication." Workshops developed for the Hume Center have been greatly informed by composition courses I teach at Stanford University, where I first introduced design language. In addition to the student example, I will also present Don Yeomans' "The Stanford Legacy," a public outdoor sculpture at Stanford University. Together, these two works demonstrate how focalization, repetition, unity, and balance work similarly and differently across dimensional forms.

The principle of focalization refers to the way in which visual elements (such as line, shape, or mass) are arranged to capture the viewer's attention as primary points of interest and direct the viewer's gaze to certain parts of the visual work. Focalization is also called a variety of other names: dominance, emphasis, proximity, and focal point. Regardless of the name, the purpose of this organizing principle is to help provide salience and hierarchy of viewing. In "Saving Our Rhinos" (Figure 3), Chloe Colberg's focalization strategy includes using the color red and rhino footprints to prioritize the major parts of her infographic. The bright cluster of

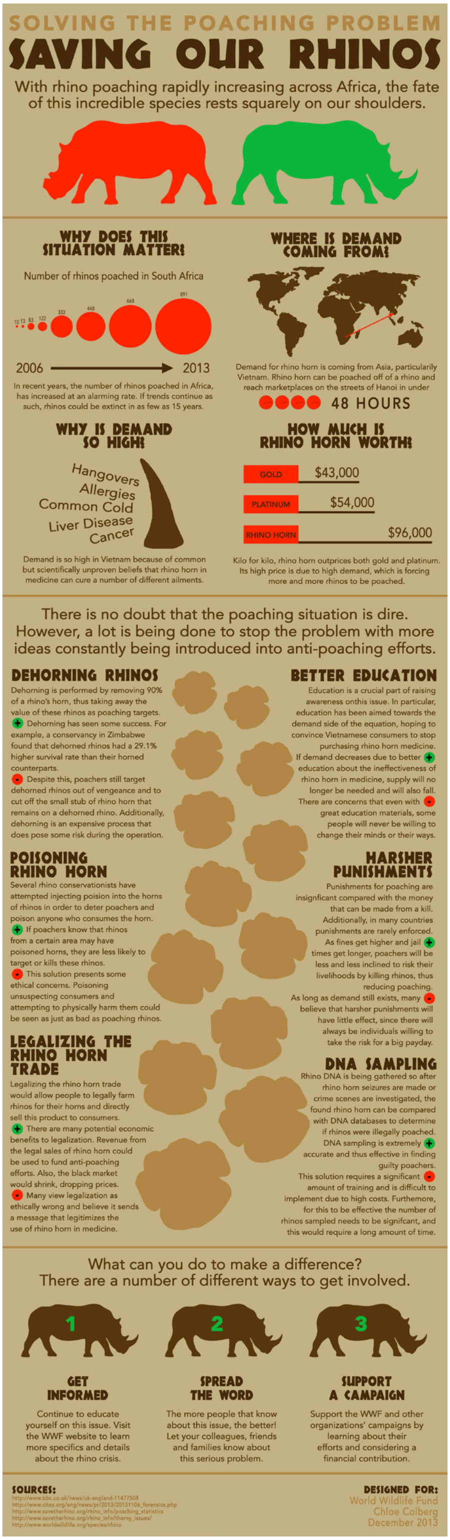

Figure 3. Chloe Colberg. Infographic. "Saving Our Rhinos." Fall 2013. Stanford University.

Figure 4. Don Yeomans. Totem Pole. "The Stanford Legacy." 2002. Stanford University. Photo: Sohui Lee.

red graphics (rhino, circles, boxes) draws the eye to the top of the infographic as it relates the crisis in rhino poaching. Chloe provides another focal point with a line of rhino footprints in the second half of the infographic, pulling our eyes downward as the tracks widen. The rhino tracks demarcate and unify the second section of infographic, while reminding readers of the rhino theme. In three-dimensional forms, focalization works in the same manner, as a means of drawing attention; however, designers can use setting in space as a means to focalize objects. Focalization can be seen in landscape design, where an object or an activity area draws attention by being placed on or along a line such as a pathway, or framed within shaped hedges. Don Yeomans' piece "The Stanford Legacy" (Figure 4) is focalized by being placed at the edge of the lawn, "framed" by sequoia groves. While the elongated shape of the Totem Pole repeats the long silhouette of the sequoias, the lighter cedar wood stands in sharp contrast against the thick green leaves.

Another important principle, unity refers to how the various visual elements work together to achieve a "unified" overall message or effect. Chloe's infographic creates unity through consistent use of symbolic colors: The dark green used at the top right rhino connects readers visually with a "solution" at the bottom of the infographic, quantifying ways readers can get involved with three green numbers. In three-dimensional forms, unity might appear in a collection of sculptural works or within the design of a specific work of art. In Yeomans' "The Stanford Legacy," the colors blue and sienna create unity, visually connecting each figure of the totem pole and inviting the eye to catch each facial expression along the vertical length of the pole.

The principle of repetition refers to strategic repetition of form, color, image, lines, or texture to lend balance, focalization, and unity in visual design. Repetition might come in the form of direct duplication, alternating pattern, or sequential change. In Chloe's infographic, repetition appears in low-resolution rhino icons or rhino tracks to visually reinforce the theme of the dwindling number of rhinos, unify the infographic, and direct the eye. In the totem pole, repetition appears in color and shape of the mouths and eyes, lending unity and focalization to each figure.

The last principle of balance refers to the use of visual elements to create visual symmetry along an invisible fulcrum line (along a horizontal or vertical axis) to distribute the viewer's gaze and maintain their attention. Chloe's infographic is balanced in vertical symmetry—the rhinos at the top literally reflect this symmetry in their mirrored forms. Likewise, one can observe vertical symmetrical balance in the totem pole itself, but as a sculpture in public space, balance includes the sculpture's position in a plaza, which opens in front of the Crown Law Library. In fact, viewed in the greater space of the plaza, the totem pole on the left side of the library is aligned with another columnar sculpture—an equally tall piece, metallic and modern, by James Rosati—flanking the right side of the library.

In evaluating the three-dimensional design of Yeomans' totem pole, one cannot consider the design principle of balance without its context in physical space, set within landscape (sequoias) and in light of its proportional/spatial relationship to buildings and other structures.

Conclusion

To borrow from Wysocki, students can "talk analytically about design," (151) but it is up to instructors and consultants to provide students with the tools by which their analysis may be framed. My "D-M-V" (design approach, media, visual design) model for situating design is one attempt to more deeply integrate design theory into writing center practice; situated design asks students to apply design rhetoric through an assessment process that involves reviewing the dimensional affordances of media and selecting appropriate design principles. Currently, multiliteracy centers mainly handle two-dimensional composition, which may call into question the usefulness of reflecting on two- and three-dimensional forms. Even if students primarily work with two-dimensional forms, I believe the concept of situating design is valuable and necessary. Dimensional awareness and design principles support the aim of multiliteracy centers to increase students' understanding of how to compose a visual or multimodal argument. Layered onto discussions of audience, argument, and purpose, center practitioners can provide students with theoretical knowledge and tools for supporting the selection of design principles. To situate design in dimensional and design contexts, then, is to teach design rhetorically and to promote a reflective, critical practice that has been the heart of writing center work.

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Back to the Center

University of North Carolina Greensboro's Digital ACT Studio

LINDSAY SABATINO

The Digital ACT (Action, Consultation, and Training) Studio focuses on written, oral, aural, and visual communication in digital environments. We are currently the only resource on the University of North Carolina Greensboro's (UNCG) campus that provides a place for designers to collaborate with consultants who are professionally trained to assist with rhetorical, visual, and aesthetic design choices of digital projects.

Consultants help designers think and learn about rhetorical choices (audience, context, purpose), aesthetic elements and visual design, the designing process, goals and plans for revisions, and design products. In a typical day, we provide consultation support on a variety of projects, such as slide presentations, videos, podcasts, web design, posters, brochures, and animation. Through supporting multi-faceted needs, the Studio's identity continues to evolve and construct itself in innovative and productive ways.

In the Fall of 2012, the Digital ACT Studio—physically located in the University's main library, beside the Digital Media Commons (DMC)—began serving the UNCG community to provide a complementary service to the University Writing and Speaking Centers. The opportunity to expand our support was made possible when Undergraduate Studies was awarded a Federal Title III Grant to fund the Studio for five years. Together, the Writing Center, Speaking Center, and Digital ACT Studio form UNCG's Multiliteracy Centers.

The Digital Studio had a soft launch in Fall 2012 and officially opened in Spring 2013. The Studio provides UNCG with a cutting-edge facilitation of student communication learning. In our first year of operation, we conducted 61 consultation sessions and in our second year, we reached nearly 2,500 students, faculty, and staff through consultations, orientations, and workshops. The

Digital Studio Consultant Shaquana works with a designer on his web design project.

growth of the Studio in its short time of operation shows its integral contribution to academic learning enhancements at UNCG. Within the first few years of any new service, rapid growth is expected, but by being flexible and diversifying our efforts, we have significantly increased our impact on the campus.

Navigating the Studio's Identity

As a new director of a new program, I have been exploring how we can meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff, while keeping true to our foundational pedagogical practices. Some of our substantial growth can be attributed to establishing clearly articulated goals and objectives, reaching out to faculty, staff, and students, and conducting workshops for faculty and classes.

A part of navigating our Studio is laying the groundwork. In order to provide a more concrete, tangible, and presentable identity, I created quantifiable goals and values integral as a way to measure our impact. These values, to name a few, include helping students, faculty, and staff become more effective designers, more digitally persuasive with written, oral, aural, and visual communication in digital environments, and understand forms and media, the composing process, and its rhetorical effects as a part of composition in a digital world. We also aim to help faculty and staff create, design, and assess digital assignments and pedagogies that reflect best practices of digital rhetoric. With the goals established and quantifiable, it has made it easier to share our ideas with the campus.

One way we have increased awareness and reached more designers is through working with instructors to understand how they can effectively include digital projects in their curriculum. We discovered early on that the best way to reach students was through the faculty. We work with instructors to develop their students' digital communication skills and create engaging, effective, and innovative class assignments. I discuss with faculty the pedagogical practices of including digital assignments in their courses, articulating what they hope students learn from completing these assignments, and whether they, as instructors, are willing to push themselves out of their comfort zones. As a result of these conversations, the Studio has become integrated into instructors' curricula.

In Fall 2013, we developed seven different workshops that instructors can request for their classes in order to provide students and instructors with more assistance. These workshops include Introduction to the Digital ACT Studio, Storyboarding & Planning, Best Practices for PowerPoint, Best Practices for Web Design, Poster Design through PowerPoint, Visual Design Elements, and Mini-Consultations. In addition to prompting designers to think about rhetorical choices and visual design elements, the workshops provide students with an understanding of how the Studio can help them by demonstrating our practices in action and giving them the opportunity to meet some of our staff. Consequently, the workshops encourage students to meet with consultants on their own. As expected, once we channeled our efforts into the classroom and collaborated with instructors, we saw a drastic increase in the number of designers visiting the Studio. This model has proven to be fruitful for the students and instructors as the instructors have reported noticing a difference in their students' work as well as sharing that our collaboration has enhanced their ability to teach digital projects. Before the start of the Fall semester going into our third year of operation, I have already received a number of requests from faculty to meet with me, discuss their assignments, and schedule workshops.

Recently, the Studio was asked to provide support to students, faculty, and staff for an e-portfolio grant research project. Within this new role, we are developing support and resources and balancing the growing demands of the Studio as they intertwine and diverge from the e-portfolio project. The e-portfolio support includes training consultants to recognize and understand the different pedagogical implications of showcase portfolios

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CENTER *in*SIGHT

The University of North Carolina Greensboro is a public university in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. It enrolls approximately 18,450 undergraduate and graduate students.

- **Director: Lindsay Sabatino (since 2013)**
- **Staff: Director, assistant director, and 8 undergraduate and graduate consultants**
- **Hours Open Per Week: 39**
- **Number of Consultants Working Per Shift: 1-3**
- **Number of Designers Reached in 2012-2013: 61**
- **Number of Designers Reached in 2013-2014: 2,467**

UNCG students focus on their project displayed on the large-screen monitor in the Digital Studio.

versus composition process-oriented portfolios in multiple disciplines. Also, we are developing face-to-face and asynchronous online resources, workshops, and piloting online synchronous consultations to provide personal assistance to distance learners. With a limited staff of eight student employees and having only one to two working at the same time, we are learning how to balance the demand of the e-portfolio project while still increasing our current services. Our role in this project will develop our services, accelerate our growth, and further shape our identity.

Challenges of Physical Space

As awareness of our Studio is increasing, we find a growing need for more physical space and to have space designated solely for our services. Our location within the University's Library has provided both benefits and challenges. Being located in the lower level of the Library offers us increased foot traffic, resources and equipment, collaboration with the Digital Media Commons staff, and opportunities to have conversations with students and faculty about ways we can assist them. As a result of two programs sharing a similar space, the understanding and uses of space between the Library and Digital Studio can be conflicting at times: the DMC has a vision for space, equipment and resources to be collectively shared, while the Digital Studio needs dedicated space, equipment, and flexibility in order to best assist designers and guarantee sessions.

While the Digital Studio has access to two consultation rooms and two media rooms, these rooms are also available to the public when not in use by the Studio. As a result, students are often using them to study; and therefore, when our consultants need the space and technology for a session, we must ask the students to leave. At times, this causes mild tension between the library patrons and our consultants. Additionally, the Digital Studio has no centralized location and is outgrowing its current space. Since the space is open access, there is no waiting area or place to direct students to wait while consultants finish another session, which also makes it difficult for consultants to find students once they are available. As a result, this creates a lack of visibility within the lower level of the Library and unnecessarily diminishes the Studio's impact and presence. The Studio also has no community space for staff and it becomes challenging to develop the culture necessary to cultivate shared knowledge and pedagogical practices, critical thinking, professional development, and personal investment. As the library prepares to renovate and design more areas within the lower level, we are hopeful that our dedicated space will increase as well as our visibility and impact on campus.

New Realms of Composing: Using Technology Meaningfully

Digital studios and multiliteracy centers face the added factor of emerging technology, which involves using technology meaningfully. My initial understanding of using technology meaningfully was rooted in the rhetorical and aesthetic practices of how designers make choices in the ways they compose and display information. For example, when designers plan the production of a video, they have to choose angles from which the video is shot, the music playing in the background, the font of the text that appears on the screen, and so on. Designers may also have to decide whether or not they will include the video of the interview they filmed, or use the person's voice in conjunction with images and text that flash across the screen. This multitude of decisions produces different results and the designers have to determine what affect they are hoping to have on their audience based, on the context and purpose of their film.

We are also exploring the practicalities of using new technology, such as drawing tablets, green-screen technology, and 3-D printing, in order to promote creativity within sessions. As we continue to carve a niche for ourselves, fulfill our mission, and preserve pedagogical practices, we aim to integrate these technologies in our services. Specifically, we are considering ways to use drawing tablets in consultation sessions to emphasize the importance of the designing and composing processes and not solely focus on final products.

As the Digital ACT Studio becomes more multi-faceted, so will our identity across campus. Digital studios and multiliteracy centers provide new possibilities for writing centers, and we are eager to help designers learn how to communicate effectively in digital media.

Digital Studio Consultant JD engages in dialogue about the projects of designers.

Yes ... And with Me: Mutuality and Improvisation as Methods for Consultant Development

KERRI BRIGHT FLINCHBAUGH

Fluid identities, dynamic contexts, and increasingly complex ideas of what it means to be literate are all issues writing centers (WC) and consultants encounter on a daily basis. While WC administrators and directors use various approaches, strategies, and tools to prepare consultants for WC work, the field as a whole benefits from increased focus on multiliteracies and the plethora of options they offer. Specifically, approaching consultant identity and development as a particular kind of critical literacy can provide fresh and engaging ways to explore consultant identity, as well as expand notions of literacy.

Multiliteracy offers a broader idea and scope of literacy in response to increasingly diverse and globalized societies while also accounting for the flourishing range of texts, modes, and media that writers have access to (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, and Gee 61). One way multiliteracies have been taken up by writing center studies is through an exploration of multimodal composition (Sheridan and Inman 6). The rapidly changing landscape of literacy within and beyond the university calls for writers to integrate audio, visual, and verbal components into their compositions in increasingly complex ways. The New London Group offers a conception of multiliteracy as an alternative to the limitations of traditional pedagogy that focuses on the negotiation of linguistic and cultural differences in our society (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, and Gee 65).

Kerri Bright Flinchbaugh is the Assistant Director of East Carolina University's Writing Program where she develops and directs WAC professional development and resources, coordinates programmatic assessment, and serves on the leadership team for Tar River Writing Project. She is currently working on a PhD in rhetoric, writing, and professional communication.

In this context, Kevin Leander and Gail Boldt describe literacy-related activity as "living its life in the ongoing present, forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in unexpected ways at times" (1). The types of critical literacies the New London Group discusses under the umbrella of multiliteracy may offer a lens to illustrate the power dynamics involved in the construction of consultant identity, particularly as those identities are often tension-filled binaries such as directive/non-directive, teacher/student, expert/novice, and peer/tutor.

These consultant identities have been discussed extensively throughout the history of WC scholarship (Trimbur 22; White-Farnham, Dyehouse, and Finer 3; Nicklay 16; Healy 43; Mick 36; Latterell 110), but in all of these conversations, the conflicting nature of the identity of peer tutors can cause a confusion of agency and cognitive dissonance for both the consultant and the writer (Trimbur 23-25). In addition, when referred to as peer tutors, students may also have trouble digesting their hybrid role of peer and teacher, leaving them with questions, such as *If I am qualified to tutor, am I still a peer? If I am a peer, how am I qualified to tutor?* When consultants must navigate a less fixed and more fluid sense of their roles or identities in order to adapt to shifting context, the potential for role ambiguity and role conflict increases (Healy 43-45). Staying too long in this "no man's land" of dichotomous identities can lead to a crisis of loyalty and identity for some, resulting in behaviors like withdrawal, rejection, or evasion of responsibilities (Trimbur 23; Healy 45). However, through professional development that includes a focus on mutuality through "yes, and" pedagogy, consultants can develop a critical literacy of writing center identities in order to manipulate these often conflicting roles.

In order to generalize to writing centers more broadly, I first begin by interrogating the complications of consultant identity at the local level, by introducing the East Carolina University Writing Center. I then discuss the WC's policy statement using discourse analysis to determine how the roles of consultant identity are constructed by and represented to others. Next, I analyze the results of a consultant survey on authority and power in this WC, followed by consultant reflections on the survey results. After focusing on relevant findings from the survey, I suggest that the theory of mutuality and literacy-improvisation are fresh and flexible approaches for consultant development, which can both support the exploration of the fluid nature of consultant identities and help consultants engage in a critical literacy of consultant identity.

Contextualizing the Local Center

East Carolina's writing center serves the second largest university in North Carolina, which averages 27,000 full-time undergraduate and graduate students each semester. Around 22% of students are distance learners, and 28% of undergraduate students are considered ethnic minorities. At the time of this research (2012-2013 academic year), this peer-tutor WC was staffed with sixteen undergraduate and graduate students from across the disciplines. Most consultants worked with writers face-to-face, but two to three responded to student writers asynchronously through the online writing lab. Consultant training and development included weekly professional development (PD) meetings during the academic year along with mid-term and end-of-the-year evaluations. The writers who visit the WC are typically graduate and undergraduate students from across the disciplines, but the Center is also open to faculty and staff. On average, around 700-750 writing consultations are held each semester for a total of approximately 1,500 sessions per academic year.

Discourse Analysis of the Center's Policy Statement

At ECU, the WC's web page, especially its Policy Statement, constructs a complicated image of power and authority in the WC (see Image 1 below). Specifically, the semiotic construction and complex communicative functions of the statement produce conflicting images of consultant identity/authority and the consultant-writer relationship, while also constructing a conflicting image of the WC itself.

UWC Policy Statement

1 The University Writing Center (UWC) supports student writing development through one-to-one tutorial interactions and peer response groups. Our services are best used if students and/or their professors identify what, exactly, they would like to accomplish during their time working with a writing consultant. This means that students should come prepared to discuss their assignment and where in the writing process they think they are in completing the assignment. This might also mean that teachers who send their students to the UWC send along the assignment and some indication of writing problems that the writing consultants can help the student remedy.

2 Writing Consultants are also trained in helping WI course instructors set up peer response groups. A Consultant can come to a faculty member's class and arrange for students to help each other with their writing assignments. The Director of the writing programs will assist in the first such session and provide guidance in subsequent ones.

3 Writing Consultants will NOT do the following:

- evaluate an entire piece of writing,
- grade or anticipate a grade on a paper,
- edit a piece of writing dropped off by students, or
- do any writing whatsoever for a student.

Rather, the University Writing Center staff has been instructed to teach specific skills in writing, revising, and editing.

4 When a student comes to the UWC or one of its satellite sites, the student should come ready to learn new skills. Writing consultants have been trained in methods of teaching those skills.

5 Because the UWC has as its goal that instruction of skills, we generally do not work with students on their writing on the day that an assignment is due. We feel that this does not allow for ample time for a writer to consider our suggestions and implement them in a revision. Please visit the UWC with enough time to revise.

Image 1

While the first sentence of paragraph 1 appears to serve a defining function for the WC, other aspects of the paragraph create mixed messages about consultant identity. For example, in the last sentence of paragraph 1, consultant identity is constructed as either healer or enforcer (or both?) because the text instructs writers who visit the WC (or the instructors who send them) to bring the writing assignment and "some indication of writing problems that the writing consultants can help the student remedy." Here, the writer is represented as a remedial student with writing problems, and the consultant appears to either be a pharmacist or medicine woman who inoculates the writer and restores the writing to its "proper condition" ("Remedy"). In the legal connotation of remedy, consultant authority could even be perceived as extreme, "enforcing a right or redressing a wrong" ("Remedy"). While these interpretations offer several possibilities for consultant and writer, the language of the policy statement does not represent them as peers.

The third paragraph's textual structure is the section most likely to draw the reader's attention. The bulleted list's visual arrangement, location, and pattern highlight the textual elements while clarifying its message (Kostelnick 193). The central message seems to be one of either boundaries or protection. The all caps NOT injects a disembodied voice of authority, drawing on language genres of information giving, objective authority, and modal constructions. This authoritative voice seems to play two possible roles: one limits the identity and authority of both consultant and writer, creating prescribed roles for each, and/or the other protects the consultant and the WC itself. As a result, writers and instructors unfamiliar with the WC are offered a picture of what the center and consultants are NOT—they are NOT evaluators, editors, or ghost writers—rather than what or who they are.

The line immediately under the bulleted list, however, begins to explore what consultants are: "the [UWC] staff has been instructed to teach specific skills in writing, revising, and editing." This description sends a mixed message about consultant identity, as both the instructed and the instructors. While the consultant serves and answers to a greater authority, consultants are also teachers of skills. In the first part of the description, the consultant is a peer of the writer she works with. The writer is writing for a higher authority—her instructor/evaluator—while the consultant is also working to meet the needs of the authority of the protector/limit creator. But the second aspect of this section lacks any "peerness" because the consultant teaches specific skills to a student writer.

Paragraph 4, overall, encourages writer passivity. The student writers are instructed to simply show up at the WC, bring the knowledge of her/his instructor (in the form of an assignment), and listen to the knowledge of the consultant. The first sentence prepares the student to expect to "be a student" when she comes to the WC: "come ready to learn new skills." There is no mention of what the writer can contribute to a writing consultation other than the writing assignment, which is as much a contribution of the student as it is an insertion of instructor voice. The consultant appears to be an additional type of instructor (a "little teacher" perhaps?) as they are described as trained in methods of teaching (Mick 36).

In fact, although this WC is described as a peer-tutoring center, the word peer does not appear anywhere in its Policy Statement. Yet, the role of consultant in a consultation is regularly discussed at WC meetings, and WC administrators and staff see consultants as learners as much as teachers. In the same way, the university promotes the WC to the campus community as a learning space for both writer and consultant, yet the Statement fails to address both the role of "consutant as learner" or the other various and more flexible aspects of the WC roles.

These contradictions could be a result of the Policy Statement's attempt to achieve multiple purposes at once. Considering the audiences of instructors and even some writers, the WC may deliberately underplay the idea of consultants as learners because they may fear that this aspect of consultant identity could diminish consultant ethos and credibility when working with writers: If the consultant is a student, could they really help other students with writing? Nevertheless, by attempting to anticipate these concerns, a conflict of identity emerges. The more skillful consultants become, the further they are from existing as peers in a collaborative relationship (Harris, "Collaboration" 375-376). The statement leaves readers with a mixed message about consultants' and writers' roles and identities.

This WC Policy Statement accomplishes multiple purposes and addresses multiple audiences, but there is at least one voice and one major part of the document missing. The statement is found under the "About Us" section on the site's menu, but who is Us? Reading this statement, one could assume Us is some position of authority as there is no evidence of a student, peer, or consultant voice in the document. As it is a peer-tutoring center, the inclusion of student voices would benefit the web site and, hopefully, more effectively speak to the student-writer audience. Were a student to read the "About Us" section, she or he would get little to no sense of who the "us" specifically is. In a revision of this section, I would argue that the consultant voice needs to be more explicit.

Consultant Survey in the Center

In an effort to examine how actual identities compared to the identities created for consultant and writer in the WC's Policy Statement, in fall 2012, consultants in the WC participated in a survey on their perceptions of comfort/confidence, authority, mutuality, and "talk time" during writing consultations. Twelve consultants (of sixteen total) present at a weekly meeting completed surveys. Using Grounded Theory to classify, code, and interpret the qualitative data collected, two themes of identity emerged involving consultant engagement in a discourse of charity/helpfulness about their work with the WC and use of a "yes, but" pattern when considering some aspects of mutuality. While the consultants discussed their role in a consultation, they reported feeling more like an equal than a teacher. Yet, when discussing the writer's role, consultants perceived writers to be more like a student than an equal. Their qualitative explanations reflect a similar conflict. Ideas coded as reflective of mutuality are often followed by ideas conflicting with it. For example, one consultant explains, "I like collaborating with the students in their writing, but they often defer to my guidance" and "I frequently try to engage and make sure they feel comfortable and realize I'm a student. But mostly it errs on the side of me being the teacher." Another consultant simply states, "I like to have discussions with students but sometimes it just does not go that way." Overall, this "yes, but" pattern occurs 14 times within their responses.

This repetition seems to echo "I am a peer, but the writer is stuck in the role of student," or "I want to be mutual, but there are many obstacles." The consultants recognize or desire a situation grounded in mutuality, but either in their minds or the mind of the writer, there are many obstacles. For answers to why consultants may feel this way, Jennifer Nicklay points to how individual writing center communities are structured. Considering the existing focus in WC literature on minimalist strategies (Lerner and Boquet 5), along with the reportedly low use of directive statements by consultants in ECU's writing center, it is important to contemplate if and how the Center can support consultants' critical literacy of consultant identity.

The culture of higher education generally and academic writing more specifically tends to promote this "yes, but" dynamic, where colleagues may acknowledge what others articulate with a yes, but then challenge that point of view with a but. Critical pedagogy—and its drive to dig deeper, to go beneath surface meanings and to engage a continuous process of learning and unlearning—is at the root of much of this discourse (Shor 129). While a "yes, but" pedagogy can be an effective and meaningful experience, it could also lose its value if the but becomes an automatic response rather than a thoughtfully constructed response like the kind Ira Shor advocates for. Two critical literacies for (re)considering and subverting this "yes, but" theme are the theory of mutuality and its enactment in literacy improvisation activities.

Mutuality in the Center

Writing centers overflow with binaries like directive/non-directive, teacher/student, expert/novice, and peer/tutor. Without a framework to facilitate consultant negotiations of their often-conflicting identities and discourses, these complexities may result in an uneasy existence for consultants (and student writers). Writing center administrators need a better way to prepare consultants for the conundrum of conflicting identities that the above binaries might inspire.

Mutual writing conferences abide by three basic ideas: equal and interactive discourse among developing writers, knowledge being a result of discourse, and writers gaining agency by operating in a "middle space" between their own experience and the expectations of the discourse community in which they strive to achieve a voice (Wallace and Ewald 3-5). Mutual writing consultations are

1. A way to transfer academic knowledge in a peer's voice and language in a way that can benefit both writers,
2. An academically social setting where peers can reach new critical understanding and redefine themselves as learners,
3. A way to raise awareness of the fact that writing is a social artifact, not a product of an isolated process, and
4. A method we can use to develop a writing consultation discourse through a heuristic that promotes mutuality (see Appendix 2 for additional information).

Mutuality recognizes that everyone has knowledge to share and gain, knowledge that challenges the idea of a linear plane where the more experienced and skillful consultants become, the further they get from being peers in a collaborative relationship (Harris, "Collaboration" 375-376).

For example, one strategy from mutuality that a consultant could include is the use of authentic, open-ended questions that require a writer's evaluation and experiences. Rather than asking questions, even if they are leading questions, as minimalist tutoring encourages (Brooks 2), using authentic questions engages both the tutor writer and the student writer as interpretive agents and knowledge makers. Because authentic questions have no one correct answer—only conclusions that consist of more questions—conversation increases in a knowledge community, which can lead to better quality of writing and better quality thinking. These types of questions also validate student writers as thinkers and participants in the session. While there is no doubt that authentic questions promote learner engagement, they are especially relevant to fostering engagement in literacy, which involves "not just comprehension but 'lived through' experience" (Nystrand and Gamoran 283), clearly valuing thinking not as something someone else has done previously but as something both tutor and writer are expected to do together.

Another possible strategy of mutuality involves the tutor modeling her own composition practices verbally and/or visually. Again, this strategy may go against

Jeff Brooks' minimalist tutoring rules of not having a pencil in your hand while tutoring (3), but it does give the student writer a chance to see the tutor as a peer writer who also faces difficulties at times and has developed different strategies to help overcome such difficulties. Writing consultants can use statements such as, "When I face this type of issue at this point of my writing process, I usually try this. If that doesn't work, I may try that. Have you ever faced a similar situation before?... How did you handle it?" This kind of modeling can transform a situation of two students sitting together, struggling to understand authority or agency, into one where two writers are sitting together discussing their writing processes.

Literacy-Improvisation in the Center

By engaging mutuality theory in writing consultations, consultants can disrupt complex power issues and conflicting identities and explore possible answers about potentially dichotomous consultant identities. Both writing and consulting involve imagination, improvisation, and enactments (Rice 378). The overarching rule of improvisation calls for "accepting all offers" (Fishman et al. 237), which can empower writers and consultants to trust one another's intelligence and imagination and to collaboratively construct meaning. Viewing consultations as improvisational performances bridges social situations and agency, allowing consultants to respond effectively to shifting contexts in these social interactions (Goffman 25). On the symbolic stage of the WC, actors work together without a script, guided by the flexible structure of a consultation. Consultants adapt in order to build with writers, make discoveries, share knowledge, and embody the participatory culture of a WC.

Rather than working in a binary model of peer or "little teacher" (Mick 36) or in a hyper-critical and more traditional academic "yes, but" discourse, WC consultants and directors can focus on the flexibility and dynamic identities regularly enacted in consultations. Relating the theory of mutuality to the practice of dramatic improvisation opens up various opportunities for consultants to practice and play with the various roles they enact in the WC. Literacy improvisation activities provide opportunities for consultants to construct and embody various approaches to composition, consultations, and collaboration while considering the (dis) connections among language, power, and actions. By viewing these identities as performances, or "postures" (Harris, "What's Up" 31), consultants and writers gain the ability to adopt and shift to alternate identities appropriate for purpose and context, responding to writers' individual unique and dynamic strengths and needs. Drawing on the "yes, and" mentality offered by dramatic improvisation encourages the acknowledgement of others' ideas and then builds on them by "and-ing" on in similar or different directions. Literacy improvisation activities incorporated into consultant professional development provide the space, time, and structure to explore and embody the collaborative nature of WC work along with the dynamic identities regularly enacted by consultants. This approach asks consultants to take risks, think critically, and perform for others engaging in the form of a different, non-written literacy.

What makes improv useful to WC work—and consultant development in particular—is the way that it pivots on a notion of literacy and co-creation of a dynamic text. As such, we have come to think of the work we do with improv as literacy improvisation. Utilizing Tina Fey's rules of improvisation, Assistant Director of the UWC at ECU, Erin Herrmann, and I have constructed a working definition of literacy improvisation. Fey offers four rules for the type of improvisation that may be familiar to people who have ever watched an improv troop of actors at a club or on television: 1. Agree. 2. Don't just say yes. Say yes, and. 3. Make statements. 4. There are no mistakes… Only opportunities. These rules offer consultants concrete actions—respect, contribute, create, and adapt—that enhance rather than prescribe or limit their professional and identity development. This literacy provides a context for embodiment, practices, and understanding of the fluid roles and identities of consultants as writers, consultants, or teachers. Literacy is not just discourses; it is an ability to think critically about discourses and use them to explore possibilities of agency (Alexander 19). Literacy improv embodies these four actions as a way to explore and understand the various approaches and identities consultants can utilize in the center.

Consultants, of course, participate in improvisation everyday: writing is riffing; consulting is riffing. Improv is an engaging and relevant method for consultant development as it encourages consultants to practice effective responses to shifting contexts, to explore the flexible nature of consultations and consultant identities, and to practice a "yes, and" discourse, which in turn helps build a "yes, and" culture in the center. Those who spend time engaged in play, as Stephen Nachmanovitch notes, readily adapt to changing contexts and conditions (41). This flexibility is invaluable for writers and consultants alike.

As illustrated below through the exploration of the application of literacy improvisation, this method engages embodied writing/literacy (Banks 22) in ways that connect it effectively to the work of multiliteracies. With this multiliterate approach to consultant development, literacy-related activities are living in the on-going present, forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways (Leander and Boldt 22). They are saturated with emotions and affect, helping keep the distinction between description and prescription sharp and opening up possibilities to imagine what else may be going on. A body in motion is immediate, unfolding in relation to its own potential to vary, and there is a relationship between the body and the indeterminacy—its openness to "becoming" from one moment to the next. Each movement is not a dull repetition: it is contributing something new to the world (Massumi 12). Rather than being stagnant, consultants are moving and embodying the fluid nature of consultant identities and roles and the action of consulting.

By using a combination of literacy-improvisation activities and the discourse of mutuality, consultants can explore and rehearse dichotomous identities while empowering both writer and consultant. Engaging in and being empowered by improvisation in writing consultations encourages a shift to a "yes, and" mindset and culture of a WC, where one acknowledges the place from which another is coming and then builds on that starting place by "and-ing" the person. For example, one may say, "I see what you are saying, and I want to add this" or "I see you are saying X and I see Y as a point of difference or as something else to be considered." In improv, participants build trust and can be better prepared through such activities as "Yes, and…" (see Appendix 3 and 4 for examples). In the writing center, literacy-improvisation activities can help consultants build a "yes, and" culture and develop and practice a "yes, and" discourse that promotes mutuality and contributes to consultants' critical literacy of identity.

A Conclusion in the Center

At ECU, we are starting to play with these ideas and engage in some of these conversations in our WC. Recently, our consultants have initiated two anecdotal but significant initiatives. The first is the writing of a new Mission and Policy Statement for our WC web site. After examining the current statement together, consultants expressed discomfort in its dichotomous identity and policy representations and collaboratively revised the statement so that it now focuses on writing-centered engagement, active learning, and collaboration. The other consultant-driven initiative is a reconsideration of their title within the WC. While considering writer perceptions of our WC, the consultants started wondering if the term "consultant" sounds too clinical or business-like. One term being considered is mentor, as they want to convey a more social and supportive relationship with writers.

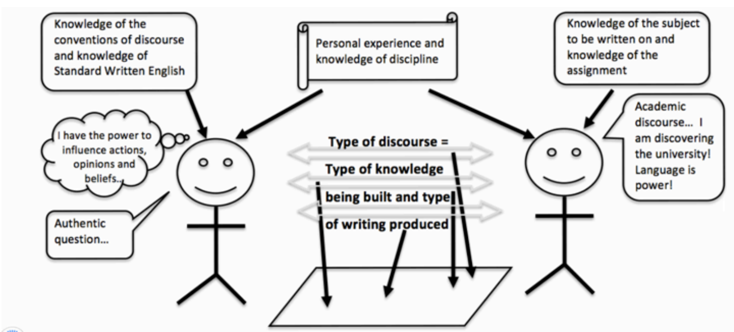
The unique position of WCs and the collaboration they cultivate results in a richly complex community with equally rich and complex literacies. Within WC communities, consultants, writers, and literacies are present, forming relationships and connections across disciplines. WCs are spaces where there are no mistakes with writing, only opportunities (they are the world of "yes, and"). They are places to share knowledge and build on knowledge and experiences, places to be prepared to meet each individual writer in ways that feel refreshed and flexible. Mutuality theory and literacy improvisation offer methods to keep our minds open and our identities nimble.

Appendix 1

Survey question #17: What is your perception of your role in a writing consultation as a UWC consultant?

Role	Average	Standard Deviation
Equal-teacher	48.50	10.60

Appendix 2: Mutuality in a UWC Setting



Appendix 3: Literacy Improvisation Activity 1

These improvisation activities were developed by Dr. Lil Brannon and Lacy Manship at UNC-Charlotte.

Yes, and . . .

We live in a "yes, but" culture, where we acknowledge what others tell us with a "yes" and then contradict their point of view with a "but." In order to share energy and power in improvisation, the culture shifts to a "yes, and" culture, where one acknowledges the place from which another is coming and then builds on that starting place by "and-ing" the person with how alternatives build from that place (for example, "I see what you are saying, and I want to add this" or "I see you are saying X and I see Y as a point of difference or as something else to be considered." In improvisation, the ensemble builds trust and moves energy through the ensemble through the following "yes, and" activity.

The activity:

1. The ensemble gathers in a circle.
2. Member A of the ensemble sends energy to another by looking directly at that member (Member B) while simultaneously pointing to him/her. Member B acknowledges with a "yes" that he/she is being pointed to and this "yes" signals that the other member may have her/his place in the circle. Member A begins to walk towards Member B to assume his/her place in the circle.
3. Member B then point to another member in the circle (Member C). Member B must wait in her/his place until Member C acknowledges with a "yes." Member B then walks towards Member C to take his/her place in the circle while Member C points to another member and receives a "Yes."
4. The process continues throughout the ensemble.

Appendix 4: Literacy Improvisation Activity 2

Tableaux

In this improvisation, the ensemble creates a shared portrait of a word. The group embodies their various definitions of the word, bringing together their shared and disparate socio-cultural histories in order to create a complexly rendered representation of the concept.

The activity:

1. Freewrite about the word or concept in order to get ideas out on paper and flowing.
2. Each member of the ensemble poses in a way that represents the word or concept in his/her view.
3. Members of the ensemble arrange themselves, in their poses, with each other, linking their "definitions" in ways that illustrate their connections/ disconnections.

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Training Speech Center Consultants: Moving Forward with a Backward Glance

LINDA HOBGOOD

Viewed from this perspective, rhetoric is a teaching discipline in a sense that brings more complexity and dignity to teaching than either the modern research university or the contemporary business college might allow. —Michael Leff

If a man is fortunate he will, before he dies, gather up as much as he can of his civilized heritage and transmit it to his children. And to his final breath he will be grateful for this inexhaustible legacy, knowing that it is our nourishing mother and our lasting life. —Will and Ariel Durant

The commitment to a student-staffed speech center is at least twofold: though critical space allocation decisions as well as equipment purchase and placement required for successful operation are necessary and necessarily draw attention, the same kind of concentrated and thorough reflection is needed in considerations of staff training. Peer consulting, to be effective, calls for training that is intensive and extensive, theoretical and applied, but it should also prepare student consultants to faithfully reflect the nature, scope and state of the rhetorical art. Speech center consultants are better prepared to meet a greater variety of requests for assistance if they comprehend the study of rhetoric as a scholarly discipline and the character of rhetoric that spans disciplines and extends beyond the discourse of the academy.

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Such training is not only possible but is best accomplished by incorporating a historical component in the training course, one that acquaints trainees with the heritage of the discipline and those who have contributed to it as teachers, practitioners, and philosophers. This argument cites advantages that include, but are not limited to, the potential for deeper epistemological and pedagogical understanding. When students training to become speech consultants examine rhetoric's theoretical origins and trace its modes of inquiry, they have the opportunity to regard critically and to appreciate more fully the ubiquity and nuances of rhetoric, which frequently inspires an earnest sense of responsibility to the task of consulting and a dedication to conveying to peers the gravity of a person's engagement with spoken discourse.

While acknowledging the implications and challenges of assuming a historical perspective that includes the rhetorical dilemmas, I believe the educational benefits outweigh the burdens. Among the more significant effects of a training course that features a historical overview is the development of accountability on the part of consultant trainees for the precepts they decide to uphold, the means by which they come to their understandings, and the theoretical positions they decide to privilege or represent favorably to their peers. These students become, in a sense, conscious and prudent caretakers of the knowledge they seek to share, and this effect is good for the speech center client, good for the student consultant, and good for the study of rhetoric.

Description and Analysis of the Course Component

One third of the course, the initial five weeks of a fifteen-week semester, engages enrolled students in a study of the history of the discipline of rhetoric. Readings include anthologies and synoptic histories such as those by James J. Murphy and Richard Katula, Craig R. Smith, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, Douglas Ehninger, and James A. Herrick, recent translations of the writings of scholars of antiquity, particularly George Kennedy's translation of *On Rhetoric* by Aristotle, and accounts of the teaching of rhetoric from classical times to the present, including excerpts from the writings of Quintilian, and studies by Donald Lemen Clark, and Edward P.J. Corbett.

Students work individually and in groups researching scholars and philosophers from each of five commonly recognized but arbitrarily divided time periods to acquire and attempt to assemble an understanding that is comprehensible and, for their purposes, coherent. Tracing the treatment of classical concepts considered fundamental across eras, we attempt to analyze fluctuating attitudes toward rhetoric that influenced its teaching. From the historical survey, as a class we examine pedagogy as it pertains to patterns of instruction in rhetoric and communication over time. Texts aiding the transition from a historical survey of scholars and theory to an analysis of teaching approaches include a wide range of works, from popular to scholarly. Mortimer Adler, Fred Antczak, Tom Shachtman and Reid Buckley complement the essays presented in special issues of *Communication Education*[1] and *Southern Speech Communication Journal*.[2] The remaining course components include shadowing exercises, practice in consulting, and critical review of current procedures with a view toward improvement. Project proposals are presented orally and submitted in written form.

The intensity of the rhetorical component, because it is compressed to fit the first few weeks of the semester, may have a distilling effect. Five weeks is just enough to whet the intellectual appetites of those who are intrigued by the history of the discipline, and it is probably more than sufficient to provide grounding in the origins of the art to those who are primarily interested in acquiring skills necessary to develop their student consulting expertise. While one student confided at the end of the course that she had considered dropping the class when she realized we were not going to commit additional time expressly to the study of classical rhetoric, not every class member displayed such keen interest in the scholars of antiquity. Approximately equal numbers of students complained that we move too quickly through the historical component as those who considered five weeks more than ample time devoted to what is intended to be a practicum experience. Most if not all the students in each class in theory and pedagogy gained confidence with an essential vocabulary of rhetoric and seemed to appreciate knowing sources of the terms and concepts and the movements that spawned them.

Over the seventeen years I have been teaching this course, the students have seemed genuinely interested in studying the work of the Sophists from a rhetorical-theoretical vantage, then revisiting their contributions to the pedagogy of rhetoric. They have been more receptive to ideological and cultural charges brought against rhetoric, and they can grasp, with time as context, the need to understand clearly such attacks in order to determine where they themselves would stand. It helps the trainees to understand the tumult of the art and the tradition that has included an intense disdain for rhetoric. Being able to locate historically an emphasis on logic or style, perceiving the popularity of theories associated with Ramism, belles-lettres, or the elocutionary movement, and observing changing political impulses and commensurate regard for rhetoric in practice and in teaching lends dimension to each student's consulting acumen as it develops and is nurtured by an expanded awareness. They can discover, for example, Plato's way of using rhetoric to disparage it as "cookery," and they can recognize rhetorical strategies employed by leading characters in his dialogues. With such understanding, the consultants can more fully appreciate and even be inspired by Plato in what Professor Jerry Tarver calls "one of the rare moments when he was not attacking rhetoric: 'Then the conclusion is obvious, that there is nothing shameful in the mere writing of speeches. But in speaking and writing shamefully and badly, instead of as one should, that is where the shame comes in'" (414).

This new awareness of rhetorical context and history can create a temptation for consultants to convey so much information that they risk overwhelming clients in their enthusiasm for certain topics. The trainees discover the need for discernment and attention to disposition. (This is especially true of newly trained consultants; the veterans on the student staff delight in tempering that enthusiasm, as they all too often see their own "past selves" in the behaviors of the fledgling class.) Conscious of audience needs and imposed time constraints, consultants learn to adapt the sharing of critical information to the climate and tenor of the appointment and to adjust to each individual or group they assist. For their part, the clients leave a speech center appointment knowing that the consultant who passed along valuable material has at least a basic knowledge of rhetoric, its background and significance according to rhetorical theories from the classical to the contemporary.

A training course that privileges rhetoric works best in the midst of a thriving and full-fledged department of rhetoric and communication studies. Theory and pedagogy with a historical component supports and is supported by course offerings and independent study opportunities in rhetoric that enable in-depth and wide-ranging research in rhetoric and philosophy, rhetoric and politics, rhetoric and culture, and rhetorical-critical approaches, if only because student speech consultants frequently wish to pursue a deeper understanding of the art they are helping to convey. With options such as interpersonal communication, speechwriting, rhetorical theory and criticism, rhetorical history, memory, and media studies, the consultants bring back to the speech center new ways of looking at artifacts and innovative ways to examine texts. As consultants, they put to use the rhetorical knowledge they bring, applying and testing almost immediately their new understanding. This kinetic opportunity embeds and preserves their understanding of rhetoric in action as the consultants learn by doing.

Students in theory and pedagogy have also discovered complementary interests across the liberal arts curriculum—in classics and in classical languages, religion and philosophy, comparative literature, education, psychology, history, and political science—where knowledge of rhetoric benefits them explicitly. Rhetorical knowledge acquired in the training course and applied across academic fields is a powerful aid to a trainee's consulting abilities as it serves interdisciplinary aims of the speech center. When the consultants are familiar with the varied coursework that brings their peers to a practice session, the possibility for mutual understanding of the assignment increases. Even more important is what is possible when client and consultant can communicate in the same disciplinary "language." Faculty members tend to prove this in frequent requests for speech consultants to work with their students who "also have some knowledge of our discipline, or better yet, have taken [the] course."

Drawbacks exist to learning history from someone other than a scholar specifically trained in its tenets and outside the history classroom in a context that is essentially rhetorical, but the effects may be more valuable than detrimental. Discussion of the lessons of history in any classroom forum reminds students of its persistent import to the pursuit of knowledge and, as with rhetoric, its inescapable quality. Questions as to the nature of rhetoric likewise invite speculation as to history's special imprint. Possibilities for scholarly inquiry abound.

Implications

A theory and pedagogy course that whets the intellectual appetite comes at an epistemological cost. Knowledge-making can be indiscriminately sobering, a threat to students' deeply and fondly held illusions. Learning eventually leads to self-examination, a practice simultaneously healthy and humbling. Contoured to invite such reflexivity, a speech center training course taught from a historical perspective needs to reckon with the claim that history is hardly immune from rhetorical scrutiny and vice versa. To this end, a university's receptivity to integrative coursework that includes approaches suggested by David Zarefsky's "four senses" can stimulate the student whose interest is focused on what happens when events and discourse are subjected to the imbricated methods of inquiry employed by history and rhetoric according to any of the four combinations Zarefsky suggests, including the history of rhetoric, the rhetoric of history, rhetorical events understood from a historical perspective, and historical events viewed from a rhetorical perspective (26-30). Some of the most stimulating class discussions arise when we consider Zarefsky's claim: "Facts do not speak; they must be spoken for" (20).[3]

The opportunity to apply theory, recognition of the ongoing need to question and reflect, and the stimulation to find out more are all consequences of the training course designed to include rhetorical history. As satisfying as these outcomes may be, there are troubling effects of this model. Often, there is not sufficient time within the semester to develop competence in critiquing group discussion or interpersonal effectiveness, which has implications because of the means by which one qualifies for the practicum. While too many prerequisites would diminish the pool of qualified applicants for consulting, delay eligibility to apply to the center, and limit consultants' years of service on the staff (and our center takes pride in the fact that one does not need to major in communication to be a student speech consultant), these factors can leave a gap in student trainees' knowledge, a gap that needs to be filled during the training course.

It is worth noting that the vast majority of faculty who assign students to come to our speech center do so for the purpose of practice for formal prepared public discourse, rather than for reasons relating to less formal discussion. The training course thus structured supports the rhetorical bent of our center and the character and culture of the university it serves. Nevertheless, emphasis on rhetorical-historical pedagogy marginalizes (or treats inadequately) something else. Little time remains for reviewing the relationship between techniques of organization including outlining that so often make a difference to students who come to the center for help. It is perhaps irresponsible for a speech center to count on other courses to satisfy the need to teach methods of speech outlining and organization, information that is distinctively advantageous to the beginning public speaker. Focusing on rhetorical history also reduces attention to training in listening effectiveness, something essential to students preparing to consult with clients. While the course accords time for teaching listening techniques, and though the trainees have abundant opportunity to practice listening in the shadowing sessions, there has never been sufficient time for formally analyzing listening abilities in class beyond standard quizzes and homework assignments to gauge retention and assess understanding, which is a significant concern as teachers consider the inclusion of rhetorical history in the training course.

Discussion

Nevertheless, consultants trained in this way can gain a heightened sense of responsibility for conveying rhetorical precepts, precepts they understand because of the inclusion of a historical component in the training practicum. Each year, I review the historical component, and because of the background in rhetoric students gain I usually intensify this part of the course. Working in tandem, the newly trained keep the more seasoned consultants aware and accountable for the material they convey in consultations. Clients benefit from a consultation that is rhetorically grounded, and they have well-placed trust in the reliability of the information they gain in the feedback phase of the appointment. Students and consultants have a greater appreciation for the scope and potency of rhetoric, thanks in part to the history unit included in the preparation for consulting. In any number of the courses offered by the Communication department, students can expect to encounter the nature of the rhetorical art—as civic, aesthetic, rational, and revolutionary, and in theory and pedagogy, class members are likewise asked to consider these perspectives, but with the imminent prospect of sharing this knowledge as they understand it and defending it with conviction for their peers in speech center sessions, which those who teach can readily appreciate.

Finally, a course designed as described contributes to a spirit of engagement that is in keeping with the liberal arts tradition. Students continue to be perplexed when pressed for an answer as to "what is so important about going to a liberal arts university?" Yet, one purpose of a liberal arts education is to further scholarly inquiry, which involves faculty encouraging the desire and the means for younger scholars to become part of what Adler terms the "Great Conversation."

Rhetoric is foundational to such a conversation. Students, especially those who will serve as speech consultants, need to locate the "place" of rhetoric in the academy and in the conversation as they discover the rhetorical qualities of the conversation itself. Leff offers a compelling discussion of the role of rhetoric in education. His observations concerning "disciplinarity" (as evidenced by attendees at his 2003 NCA conference presentation titled "Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Rhetoric") assume responsibility for rhetoric in the academy, noting the typical claims by members of both English and Communication departments that rhetoric is "their discipline." Still, he points out:

> On the other hand, a lot of people study rhetoric seriously but think of it as an interdisciplinary activity that necessarily crosses the boundaries of the various human sciences. For these scholars it may seem parochial and artificial to fix rhetoric in disciplinary accouterments. Rhetoric, after all, pertains to modes of argument and expression that apply to most if not all types of discourse, including the types produced within academic disciplines. And in a strong formulation of this perspective, rhetoric becomes more than an aspect of discursive practice—it opens a general perspective on life—a mode of being in the world, and this is not the stuff of disciplinarity but of something far more exalted. (1)

The larger context that Leff articulates for rhetoric can find purchase in a speech center, available to all and staffed by consultants trained to apply theory beyond disciplinary confines, a center that presents a genuine opportunity to offer such perspective as Leff describes. Whatever else may contribute to this, the rhetorical nature of the training course makes it possible for students and then clients to make connections to their liberal arts education by applying what they have learned in their classes.

Furthermore, asserting that rhetoric appropriately belongs to both "big" and "little" perspectives, Leff insists:

> The difference between these two positions is real and substantial, but they are not mutually exclusive, and under the right circumstances their recognition might yield a productive (and thoroughly rhetorical) competitive collaboration. That is, interdisciplinary rhetoric can act as a check against disciplinary rhetoric turning into a dreary set of routines. Disciplinary rhetoric can act as a ballast

> to stabilize the ethereal tendencies of big rhetoric. Neither side should try to discard or trivialize the view of the other. (2)

Student consultant training that reflects such a "both/and" appreciation for rhetoric as Leff's quote addresses has the potential to make the consultations that occur at a speech center qualify as among the "right circumstances" Leff hopes for. A speech center may be the very setting in which an understanding of rhetoric as disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and extra-disciplinary abides. Much depends on the student consultants and the form their training takes. Leff writes:

> From the Ancient Greeks to the present, there is a continuous tradition (if I may use that word) of teaching students to write, speak, argue, and express themselves. To see ourselves as part of that tradition gives us a sense of identity that persists across time and circumstance even as time and circumstances change. (5)

The training course, when it includes a component on the background of the art of rhetoric, creates a situation conducive to sharing the sense of identity to which Leff refers and regards as significant. When founded on training that seeks to help students claim that identity for themselves, consulting at the speech center enables the trained consultants to share with their peers the theories and methods they have studied, to help student clients apply that knowledge, and to assert their identity as purveyors of the art in the process.

Conclusion

Explicit attention to the history of the discipline of rhetoric strengthens any speech center training course. Benefits offset any disadvantages to this approach, and benefits extend beyond the obvious. Peer consultants whose training includes material foundational to the discipline are more likely to identify with that discipline in a manner that upholds tenets and contributes to the pursuit of excellence.

These experiences with rhetorical history are based on seventeen years of teaching the theory and pedagogy course at the same university, where circumstances have been favorable for this method. Class sizes have been manageable, permitting the numerous assignments prompted by this approach and fostering many opportunities to observe the historical component's validity. As others consider this approach to teaching the training course, it would be helpful to compare results in the short and long term, according to various enrollments.

Motivation on the part of student clients and consultants matters, of course, but any speech center will operate more effectively where faculty and administrators treat seriously the goal of competence in public expression. The most highly trained consultants can hardly be expected to compensate for speaking assignments that carry little grade weight, or that satisfy nothing beyond a pass-fail requirement. Such assignments will invariably produce speeches that reflect precisely the disregard for rhetoric that is implied. Though design of a speaking component is not the subject of this essay, it speaks to a relevant question. Beyond the boundaries of a communication department, whose concern does a cross-curricular appreciation for excellence in public expression become?

The impetus for raising the level of expectation for students' spoken discourse may be most persuasively generated by those with greatest concern for the treatment of and prospects for rhetoric throughout the academy—the young men and women trained to work in the place where "big" and "little" rhetoric converge. It is reasonable to believe that these purveyors and practitioners of the teaching art would desire and demand the best from their peers, given the opportunity that consultations at a speech center present. Once trained, consultants can and wish to be reliable stewards of the knowledge they have sought to acquire.

The prevailing attitude toward both the idea and the operation of a speech center at any institution plays a key role. Faculty and students quickly gain a sense of administrative appreciation or equivocation for such centers. A speech center will reflect and enact a university's mission, and it can do that with distinction, so long as consultant training is regarded as integral to and representative of that school's overall approach to learning.

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1 See Walter R. Fisher's "When Teaching Works: Stories of Communication in Education," *Communication Education* 42:4 (October 1993), 277-367.

2 See "A Symposium on Liberalizing Influences: Great Teachers," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* (Winter 1982), 107-134.

3 This is reminiscent of Richard Weaver's reminder in *Ideas Have Consequences* that "the supposition that facts speak for themselves is of course another abdication of the intellect" (58).

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Consultant Insight

Promoting Independence: Conducting Efficient Sessions with Learning-Disabled Students

ORY ALEXANDER OWEN

Collaborating with and supporting students with learning disabilities during their writing processes is often an overwhelming concept for writing center (WC) consultants. Many learning-disabled (LD) students need to gain the skills to become more self-sufficient, in order to live as independently as possible. Through structured and focused WC sessions, consultants and WC administrators can promote higher-order thinking, self-concept skills, and independence in LD students.

Problems arise when LD students become insecure about their writing, avoiding direct, thought-provoking questions from consultants. In "Teaching Writing by Teaching Thinking," Leif Fearn states, "learning is by definition intense, and to the extent that it demands change, it is affectively complex" (175); therefore, sessions should be conducted without any regard to a learner's attempt at avoidance. LD students deserve sessions that demand intellectual growth, just as non-learning-disabled (NLD) students do. WC sessions ought not be "dumbed down" or drastically altered simply because a LD student is frightened or surprised by a request to engage in a higher level of thought and analysis than what he or she is used to. In order to foster greater levels of intellectual and functional independence and growth, WC consultants should

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introduce structured and demanding strategies when conducting sessions with LD students.

Context For This Research

For the purposes of this work, a LD student will be defined as a student who has any disease or impairment that may prevent him or her from completing university-level coursework as easily as a NLD peer. This can include, but is not limited to, students with Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or Asperger's syndrome; students who are considered high-functioning autistics; and students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, or dysphasia. While several of these disorders are not commonly considered learning disabilities, they most certainly affect a student's ability to learn and write, thereby directly affecting the work that is done in university WCs.

The presence of LD students in postsecondary education is becoming more and more prevalent (Cosden and McNamara 2). Students with learning disabilities typically enter into the university setting in one of two ways: 1) as a regularly enrolled student who takes classes amongst NLD peers, or 2) as a participant in a specialized program separate from regular courses. For example, the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG) makes both options available to LD students, based on their individual needs and skills. UNCG's specialized program, Beyond Academics, focuses on helping LD students become self-sustaining. In order to function independently, LD students must have some basic writing abilities, which creates a need for a WC that is able to work with these students without instilling a sense of dependency within them. WCs should support LD writers in a way that promotes independence, self-concept, and self-efficacy. However, this can prove to be a difficult task if WC consultants aren't fully aware of the types of problems that LD writers are likely to face in their writing.

LD students face a number of difficulties when it comes to composing written discourse; in fact, writing difficulties are "believed to exceed students' other academic difficulties" (Li and Hamel 29). This makes the role of WCs within LD students' academic experiences even more critical. When visiting university WCs, LD students likely will be struggling with one or both of two main problems: the body of their discourse (e.g., structure, clarity, organization), and/or their discourse's conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) (Li and Hamel 34). That said, many LD students will likely also arrive to a WC session without any content, as LD postsecondary students often have trouble brainstorming ideas or generating content (Li and Hamel 34). This inability to develop content in the prewriting stage may originate from the fact that many LD students do not realize that they already have a great deal of information available to them (Li and Hamel

38). Unawareness of this knowledge can frequently be related to a self-concept or self-efficacy deficiency (Cosden and McNamara 3). According to Merith Cosden and Joanne McNamara, LD students "report poorer self-esteem and perceptions of their skills than do" NLD students (3). In this way, without the belief that he or she has the necessary skills to succeed in written composition, a LD student will likely have a harder time conversing during WC consultations.

These difficulties are just a few of the struggles that a LD student may face. In order to better support these students, no matter the difficulties they are facing, WC consultants need to have an arsenal of dynamic tools and strategies available to them, so that they may conduct more structured and focused sessions.

Strategies for Improved WC Sessions

WC consultants should seek to accomplish six goals when working with LD students:

- Identify the difficulty or difficulties that the student is experiencing and communicate that the consultant has a plan to help him or her work through these problems;
- Empower the student with positive feedback and suggestions in order to boost his or her levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem;
- Ask critical-thinking and rhetorical questions often;
- Be firm and persistent by keeping the session focused and disregarding attempts to avoid responding to the consultant's questions;
- Be helpful, but not to the point that a LD student finds it impossible to write without the presence of a consultant; and
- Have high expectations for the LD writer and ask that he or she apply the concepts discussed during the session.

I established the above goals to privilege writer agency and ownership in sessions and to promote meaningful dialogue between consultant and LD writer. Several approaches can help consultants implement these goals.

From the moment a LD student walks through the door of a university WC, consultants and staff should be aware of the type of relationship they are creating with him or her. First and foremost, consultants must understand what it means to help a student with a learning disability. William Dyer states that "in the best sense, it is aiding another person to cope more adequately with the conditions in his world" (55). This type of relationship is usually entered into in one of two ways. First (and probably the most common for NLD students) is when the writer makes an unsolicited request for assistance (Dyer 55-56). Second, and probably more common for LD students, is when a student is uncomfortable asking for help (Dyer 56). This can stem from a perceived lack of capability or feelings of inferiority (Dyer 56). An interesting predicament arises from these findings: how do WCs assist LD students who may want or need help, but are unable or unwilling to ask for it? The answer is actually simple: If a professor sees that a student is struggling with written compositions, then he or she should suggest or offer some assistance through the university's WC. Sometimes all it takes is an offer of counsel to make a LD student comfortable with accepting help and feedback.

However, consultants who wish to provide help would do well first to examine their own motives (Dyer 56). Many times "without being aware of it, a [consultant] could be led into giving help to a [student] to relieve his own anxiety, to keep the [student] dependent, to feel wanted and needed, to feel important, or to display his experience or wisdom" (Dyer 56). As the goal for LD students in WC sessions is to gain new information and ultimately be able to construct written pieces without guidance, it is critical that consultants avoid implementing questions and strategies that hinder a LD student's journey toward self-sufficiency.

Ultimately, a LD writer should see the WC consultant not only as a trusted confidant, but also as someone who will not always let him or her take the easy way out. As Dyer points out, "Sometimes [consultants] can be most helpful when they say, 'No, I won't do it. You'll have to do it for yourself'" (58). Where independence is concerned, a LD writer should "graduate" from the WC as someone who is "neither dependent [nor] counterdependent, but appropriately interdependent; that is, he is capable of accepting help when it is needed and moving ahead on his own when that is called for" (Dyer 58). In these ways, when consultants establish themselves from the start as friendly but firm engaged readers, they can help LD writers toward greater confidence and independence in their writing.

Leading Directed and Effective Conversation

As any WC employee or enthusiast knows, conversation is the backbone of WCs, and the same conversation never occurs twice. Even though consultants will never have the same conversation with any two LD students, it is certainly possible to provide a set of guidelines to lead consultant-client conversations.

Brainstorming and Prewriting

As previously mentioned, students who are LD often have trouble in the prewriting stage of the writing process. They may come to the WC and enter into a consultation with their thoughts or an idea, but with nothing written down or even fully realized yet. In this situation, consultants can ask the writer if he/she has an idea, and if so, can ask leading questions to get the writer talking about the topic. This think-aloud strategy for brainstorming and topic generation encourages students to explicate vague ideas, make decisions on the inclusion or exclusion of information, and ensure that they can organize the material effectively (Li and Hamel 39). A consultant can then ask that the student write a few bullet points based upon the conversation that just took place. If the writer has no topic or idea, a consultant can ask if the writer was given any assignment or guidelines. From here, a consultant can ask directed questions to help the LD student develop a topic, just as the same consultant would help a NLD student. Incorporating the LD student's own interests into the brainstorming and prewriting process helps to keep the writer focused and interested in both the topic and the consultation.

Expansion of Ideas

With a topic selected and brainstorming accomplished, the consultant-writer pair can now work on gathering additional information. A method that has proven successful in the past involves the consultant "modeling a self-instructional strategy to show students how to find important information from reading materials and put the information on note and quote cards…[and then] integrating them into a meaningful and cohesive piece of writing" (Li and Hamel 38). It is important for a consultant to always ask LD students about the significance of their decisions. For example, asking students why they chose a particular quote ("Why is it important? What does, or could, it add to the discourse?") prompts a writer to articulate the reasoning behind the decisions. Occasionally, an entire session with a LD writer might be devoted to locating quotes and resources. The writer can then take his or her note/quote cards and begin the writing process before returning to the WC again. The hope is that eventually the LD student will be able to complete this process completely free of direction, relying on the skills he or she has gained in the WC to generate, brainstorm, and expand on a topic.

When a LD student has successfully selected a topic, gathered relevant information, and begun the composition stage of the writing process, the direction of his or her WC consultations changes. While the traditional accepted hierarchy of higher-order and lower-order concerns may work perfectly well for some LD students, others face roadblocks that render this approach to sessions unproductive. LD students' "problems with the mechanical aspects frequently inhibit [their] success with the higher-order demands associated with planning and organization of the content" (Li and Hamel 34). Therefore, consultants may find that the first few times a LD student visits the WC, this hierarchy should be adapted; that is, mechanical issues might become a higher-order concern while organization might become a lower-order concern. If consultants can help LD students overcome their concerns about the mechanics of their work, then students can start to see the bigger picture. Later, if and when mechanics are no longer a major hindrance to the LD student's writing process, the original hierarchy of concerns can be reinstated. Questions asked during sessions with LD students should incorporate rhetoric and critical-thinking and should address a variety of concepts "related to the audience, purpose, background knowledge, and ways to group and organize ideas" (Li and Hamel 38). Some examples of directed, critical, and rhetorical questions might include:

- What you've got here looks great! Who exactly were you talking to when you wrote this sentence/paragraph?
- Okay, excellent work! I'm just a little confused. Can you tell me more about what you wanted to say here?
- This is some really useful information! But I think a reader might benefit from a little more elaboration. What else could you add here that might help someone learn even more about this topic/issue/idea?

These sample questions are just a few ways that consultants can begin a discussion with a LD writer who is in the composition stage of the writing process.

Revision

Consultants in university WCs must also be prepared to work with students during the final stage of the writing process: revision. If a LD student has been working with a consultant throughout the writing process, then the revision process should come fairly easy. Even if a LD student visits the WC for the first time to work on revisions, consultants can help to make the revision process less complicated and overwhelming by using the SCAN checklist for revision. SCAN is a four-letter acronym for this revision checklist:

S = does it make Sense?

C = is it Connected?

A = can I Add more?

N = do I Note errors? (qtd. in Li and Hamel 39)

When reading through a LD student's paper, consultants can use this checklist to ask questions about each idea, paragraph, and even the work as a whole, for both higher-order and lower-order concerns. The checklist is also easy to remember and something that, after a few sessions using it, LD students should be able to use on their own.

Noticeably, all the questions proposed previously in this section started with some positive reinforcement, because consultants should always be cognizant of the fact that LD students often have lower levels of self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy than NLD students (Elbaum and Vaughn 305). While it is important to remain positive as a consultant conducting WC sessions, regardless of whether a writer is LD or NLD, LD students can often use a little extra positive reinforcement. And Batya Elbaum and Sharon Vaughn state, "positive self-concept can make the difference between academic failure and survival" (322). Positive self-concept can also make the difference between real-world success or failure. It is for these simple reasons that encouraging feedback should be an integral part of every WC session that a consultant conducts with LD students.

Other Considerations and Conclusion

It is important that existing and forthcoming WCs develop and implement the strategies for working with LD students I have outlined here. Postsecondary LD students who visit university WCs can become not only independent, self-regulating writers, but also generally more self-sufficient students and individuals. However, in order to achieve this self-sufficient existence, LD students must be supported by writing centers in a consistent fashion —one that is supportive and positive, but also one that encourages students to learn to write, and thus succeed, on their own.

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Call for Papers

SDC Fall 2015

As the International Writing Center Association holds its biennial conference in Orlando this fall, *SDC* is looking for submissions that conjure innovative practices in centers, classrooms, or curriculum for Fall 2015. This CFP growns out of the conference as well as conversations among faculty at our institutions and writing center professionals everywhere. In particular, my colleague and friend Jennifer Whitaker and I were once asked to come up with general writing competencies, which we did. And they included exactly what you might expect: a clear main idea or thesis, well-structured supporting evidence, coherent paragraph construction, sustained engagement with ideas, as well as clarity and correctness.

Yet, when we started ruminating on the idea of competencies, we both agreed that a competent paper was different from an excellent paper. I don't mean the difference between a C and an A here. What we were talking about was the difference between getting the job of writing done well (meeting all the competencies) and writing something that has a life: something that could only be described as having "magical goodness." And as writing teachers in centers or classrooms, we all know it when we see it. Magical goodness made it to our list of competencies, and every teacher we presented them to agreed: there was something unmistakable and splendid about writing that had a pulse. So, we knew that teaching competencies wasn't enough: we wanted to think about how to teach "magical goodness." Is this even possible?

For the Fall 2015 issue of *SDC*, we invite submissions that engage with ideas of conjuring good writing and design. How do we get designers (writers, speakers, composers) to think about more than fulfilling criteria or competencies? Or is that enough? How do we think about teaching something intangible like "magical goodness"? How do we design curriculum, co-curriculum, workshops or training courses that promote boundless kinds of writing, designing, and thinking? Or should we? Maybe competency is all that we should ask for as practitioners? We invite manuscripts that engage these questions or others we hadn't thought of.

Please submit manuscripts by January 16, 2015 to http://multiliteracycenters.uncg.edu/ojs/index.php/discourse/ or ask for more information if you have questions by emailing SDC.editors@gmail.com.