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This study examines, from the perspective of writing center staff, the perceptions of current levels of collaboration between academic libraries and campus writing centers and the Triangle Research Libraries Network institutions. Paper surveys were distributed to the staff members at the Writing Center at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Writing Center at North Carolina Central University, Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services at North Carolina State University, and the Writing Studio at Duke University. The surveys were designed to elicit responses from the writing center employees about their perceptions of the current level of collaboration with academic libraries and recommendations for future collaboration.

Headings:

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN WRITING CENTERS AND
LIBRARIES AT THE TRLN INSTITUTIONS

by
Katherine Mary Jelen

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Phillip M. Edwards

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Introduction

Writing centers and academic libraries both have a shared goal of assisting students on college campuses. Writing centers and academic libraries, among other goals, both seek to help students who are writing research papers: libraries seek to assist with research and connect patrons with information while writing centers seek to help students with the actual writing of the paper. Though libraries and writing centers have many similar goals, each unit offers very specific services for students. Writing centers focus on helping with style, organization, and syntax; whereas libraries are more helpful in helping students find reliable sources and cite sources correctly. Libraries and writing centers also are both physical places where students can go, yet must increasingly help students by offering online access to helpful resources and web tutorials. Both libraries and writing centers also face similar challenges in advertising their resources, encouraging students to use their services, and promoting themselves as an important institution on campus. Libraries and writing centers have a great deal in common, so it is in the best interest of both places to collaborate with each other and work towards their shared goals of helping students.

Although these two campus entities have a great deal in common, there does not seem to be a consistent approach on college campuses for how these two units collaborate with one another. Many schools have used different methods of encouraging collaboration between writing centers and libraries, although at most schools they function entirely independent of each other. Considering the similar goals of writing

centers and libraries, it appears in the best interest of both entities and students that there is some level of collaboration.

This study looks specifically at the ways the writing centers and libraries at the four universities in the Triangle Research Libraries Network (“TRLN”) collaborate with one another. This study seeks to examine the perceptions that writing center employees have about current levels of cooperation with the library, and to show the ways that libraries and writing centers can collaborate. Paper surveys were distributed to employees of the four writing centers at the TRLN institutions in order to determine what level of collaboration there currently exists between TRLN libraries and the writing centers on their respective campuses.

The four universities in the Triangle Research Libraries Network were chosen because of their close proximity to each other and because the libraries in the area already seem to be interested in collaboration since they do operate in a consortium with each other. The Research Triangle is well-known for being an area with immense educational resources available in a fairly small geographic area. This study examines the four universities in the area, in order to study the ways that writing centers and libraries currently collaborate, and to offer suggestions on how they might strengthen cooperation and increase collaboration in the future. It will benefit the staff members at the writing centers and libraries to collaborate with one another, and that in return will help students who may need help with both research and composition when writing a research paper.

Triangle Research Libraries Network

The Triangle Research Libraries Network is a consortium of the libraries at the four universities located in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina. North Carolina

Central University and Duke University are both located in Durham, NC. North Carolina State University is in Raleigh, NC, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is located in Chapel Hill, NC. All of these schools are located within 25 miles of each other in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. The close proximity of the four universities led to cooperation between Duke and UNC since 1930s, with NC State joining in the 1950s, and NC Central joining TRLN in 1995 (“TRLN Bibliography”).

According to the TRLN website, the goals of the consortium are to “leverage resources” and:

- To extend the scope of information resources and services available to our users through libraries and campus networks.
 - To create new library and information services.
 - To make information accessible to users among member institutions in a convenient, timely, and equitable manner.
 - To develop and pursue strategic partnerships that enhance our ability to deliver information and services.
 - To provide a forum for discussion of cooperative library and information issues.
 - To seek external funding in support of these goals.
 - To maintain a leadership role among universities in the provision of collaborative research library services.
- (“[TRLN Fact Sheet](#)”)

TRLN has far reaching goals that seek to make the libraries in the TRLN a leading consortium with diverse resources. The last goal is about becoming leaders among other universities, but it also important for these libraries to become leaders on their own campuses. One way they could address that goal is by collaborating with other places on campus, such as writing centers.

In 2008, *Search TRLN* was launched, creating a single user interface for patrons to use that searches across the catalogs for all four institutions. When *Search TRLN* was created, there was “a combined collection of 16 million volumes” (“TRLN Launches”).

Search TRLN serves as a one stop place to search across all of the TRLN libraries, which is helpful considering that “71 percent of the titles were unique to a single TRLN institution, and only 2 percent of collections are duplicated on all four campuses” (“TRLN Launches”). The collection is huge, but the true benefit is the collaboration between the libraries. The *Search TRLN* interface makes it easy to see what items are available in the area, and it is easy to have those resources delivered to whichever campus the patron chooses. Getting a journal article or monograph from another institution is easier than ever, thus making the resources at all four campuses readily available to any library patrons at those units

Writing Centers

Writing Centers are in a different situation, one where it may not be in their best interest to cooperate with other writing centers. Writing centers primarily seek to help those who come to see them, and those primarily located on their respective campus. While writing centers need certain resources to function, it is nowhere near the cost of maintaining an academic library. Whereas, it is in the best interest of the academic library to seek out a consortium in order to help connect patrons to resources at other libraries and to financially seek out partnerships to minimize collection development costs, it is not necessary for writing centers to seek out these kinds of agreements. However, it can be beneficial for writing centers to offer their services to other places on campus and to direct students to library services and resources. The writing centers located on the campus of the TRLN institutions do not have any formal cooperation with the other writing centers in the area. Instead, they focus on their own campus and offering help to their students.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has The Writing Center which is housed in Suite 0127 of the Student and Academic Services Building. The location is a different part of campus from Davis Library and House Undergraduate Library. The Writing Center is located in a spacious, welcoming environment. There is a kiosk right by the door where someone greets students who walk in. There are work tables and computers. There are also offices for the writing staff to use during consultations. The Writing Center has four full-time staff members, and 16 graduate assistant tutors. The Writing Center at UNC is somewhat unique in who it offers services to because of the way it is funded. According to The Writing Center's website:

It is funded directly by the College (of Arts and Sciences), rather than by student fees. Its first priority is service to undergraduate students; its second priority is service to the College. The Writing Center's long-term goal is to serve the entire university and engage in community outreach. ("About the Writing Center")

The funding situation can lead to confusion about services offered by The Writing Center. The website says that all undergraduate students can receive 50 minute face to face consultations. Then graduate students and faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences can use Writing Center services. Then if the Writing Center staff has time they will assist graduate students in the professional schools. However, students in the professional schools cannot schedule appointments in advance, instead, "a student who wants to come in on Wednesday will need to look on Wednesday morning to find an opening" ("About the Writing Center"). It is understandable that the writing center must be accountable to the department that funds them, but it is still distressing that The Writing Center cannot guarantee assistance to students, instead admitting that, "Demand

for appointments has run high, and we have turned people away many hundreds of times each year” (“About the Writing Center”).

North Carolina Central University has a writing center located on the third floor of the Farrison-Newton Communications Building. The Writing Center is located in a medium sized room. There are computers and tables. There is a desk where the staff sits when not helping students, and greets people who enter the center. The center opened in September of 2002, and “is funded with a Title III federal grant, a funding program that assists HBCU and other minority colleges and universities” (Smith). The writing center has a staff of six, but does not appear to be understaffed. The website encourages anyone affiliated with North Carolina Central University to visit the writing center. They can schedule standing appointments, so that a student can come in the same time every week for the whole semester. They will also look at any work, not just those for class assignments. The website encourages students to come in to discuss, “business letters, applications for law school and medical school, and many other higher-level documents” (“FAQs”).

The Undergraduate Tutorial Center at North Carolina State University runs Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services for all undergraduates. The main location for the Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services is in Ricks Hall, a few blocks down from D.H. Hill Library. There are also drop-in locations at three other areas on campus: Avent Ferry Computer Lab, First Year College Commons, and Lee Hall Classroom. The mission of Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services is, “to support NC State undergraduate students who are working to improve their writing and speaking skills” (“Writing and Speaking”). It is unique in that students can come to the center for help

writing papers, but they can also receive help for upcoming presentations or interviews. The tutors are all students at the university, and they must take a semester long class called Introduction to College Tutoring their first semester working for the Undergraduate Tutorial Center. There are nine staff members: one full-time staff member, six undergraduates, and two graduate students. They are only able to help undergraduates since they are a part of the Undergraduate Tutorial Center. They have also recently started online consultations to help students who are distance education learners.

The Writing Studio at Duke University is located on East Campus, in close proximity to Lilly Library which caters mainly to undergraduates. The Writing Studio is different than the other writing centers in the area because the Writing Studio also provides services located in the library. In the evenings, writing tutoring services are available in Lilly Library and on West Campus in Perkins Library. The center is named the Writing Studio because, “As a studio, this is a place for you as an artist/writer to work on your art” (“Writing Studio”). The Writing Studio has a staff of 23: three full-time employees and 20 tutors. All of the tutors are graduate students, although the Writing Studio does collaborate with a peer-tutoring project for undergraduates. The Writing Studio helps anyone affiliated with Duke University, but only undergraduates can make appointments in advance. Everyone else must wait until the day of to see if there are any appointments available.

Literature Review

The literature on this subject suggests that there are numerous ways in which libraries can collaborate with writing centers. There are differing models that have proven effective in strengthening cooperation between writing centers and libraries.

Academic libraries and campus writing centers often benefit from shared space or being located very close to each other. Writing centers can also benefit from a librarian visiting the writing center in order to assist the staff, or having hours in the library.

Linking Websites

One of the most simple collaborations is linking to the library's website from the writing centers website. In 2008, Jennifer H. Solomon performed a study examining the websites of the 111 libraries in the Association of Research Libraries and the writing centers at their campuses. She found that:

52 (47%) writing centers linked to the institutional library and 60 (54%) libraries linked to institutional writing centers. An additional 15 (13.5%) writing centers also made reference to the library on the website, but did not include direct links. Twenty-three (20%) writing centers were collocated with libraries, 3 (0.27%) provided joint workshops with the library, 35 (31.5%) provided links to specific library resources, and 12 (10.8%) provided descriptions or annotations for the resources they linked to on the library's website.
(Solomon 17)

The results of Solomon's study show that there is little consensus, even amongst ARL institutions about the ways libraries and writing centers collaborate. There was not even

a majority when it came to simple collaboration such as linking to the library's website from the writing center website.

Library Instruction

Katherine Furlong was head of the Mantor Library at the University of Maine at Farmington and Andrew Crawford was a teaching assistant in the library when they started a partnership with the writing center on campus. The library teaching assistant held workshops throughout the semester that were solely for the tutors employed by the nearby writing center. The tutors were paid for the time spent in the workshop, which increased the attendance. The purpose of the workshops was to show the tutors how to “maximize available resources in a minimal amount of time” (Furlong 24). Colloquially, the workshops were called “How to Bail Someone Out in an Hour” (24). The library staff was looking to start a similar partnership with the Placement Center in hopes of helping the staff there use library resources to assist students with job searches. The writing center staff appreciated the help offered by the library, and responded very positively to the workshops. The writing center staff discovered resources they previously did not know about, but were likely to use in the future when helping a student with a paper. It also helped to foster camaraderie between the writing center staff and library staff. It also gave the library graduate assistants who led the workshops valuable instruction experience.

Whether or not they collaborate with writing centers, academic libraries typically offer formal library instruction that is linked to courses in the curriculum. Many of the classes that come to the library for instruction are first year composition courses, and the classes taught are arranged to encourage students to use library resources to help them

write papers. A study at the University of Georgia studied the citations included in freshmen's papers if they had been to a library instruction session and how those sources compared to the references used by students who did not receive any library instruction. They found that students who were comfortable using library resources for first year composition assignments were likely to keep using the library throughout their undergraduate careers. The students who had received library instruction were more likely to find reliable resources, and seemed more likely to use the library for all of their assignments. This shows that collaboration between writing programs and libraries can have very beneficial results for students:

This collaboration between two units deeply involved with issues of student research and writing suggests that the faculty, as a whole, need to engage in a dialogue not only about how best to introduce research in first-year composition but also about how to extend and develop students' understanding of research across the undergraduate curriculum.
(Barratt 55)

The study at UGA shows the commonality of the goals of libraries and composition instructors, asking, "How can we help students to use more and better sources in their research papers in order to improve the quality of their written compositions? This question continues to plague both college composition instructors and the librarians who work with them" (Barratt 37). While this study did not look at the writing center, it did focus on the shared goals of libraries and everyone who assists students with college level writing.

Karen Bronshteyn and Rita Baladad point out that library instruction is intrinsically tied to composition instruction because library instruction cannot exist without basic understanding of composition and rhetoric. A discussion of library

resources about citations is not going to help students who have no idea how to work research into a paper and do not see the need to cite anything:

Ideally, students would enter a library workshop with basic composition skills; in reality, this is not always the case. ...However, as the skills that library workshops address overlap with those of English composition, it becomes necessary for librarians to either work in cooperation with composition instructors, or tailor their workshops to include some degree of composition instruction.
(Bronshteyn 534)

This article also points out the importance of librarians in the Writing Across the Curriculum movement: “Many colleges and universities are promoting informational literacy as an educational objective across the entire curriculum, not just for English composition” (535) and librarians are a huge part of that because “Writing is the most definitive way to communicate ideas, and librarians are information providers, information organizers, and information enthusiasts” (535).

Changing Locations

New Mexico State University Library decided to try two different approaches to increasing patron usage at the library and the writing center. A librarian was sent to hold office hours in the writing center three hours a week, and then staff from the writing center was sent to the library for seven hours a week. While the librarian in the writing center did not receive a lot of students seeking research help in the writing center, she did find that she often acted as a backup for writing center staff “eager to seek a second opinion when assisting a student” (Mahaffy 177). The librarian at the writing center did not have a lot of student appointments as the study originally hoped for, but the librarian found that in casual conversation with the writing center staff during downtime she found out the staff members’ areas of interest and their current research pursuits. She was able

to offer suggestions to aid them in their own personal research, and remained a good reference contact for writing center staff even after she moved back to the library full time. While looking at usage statistics, it did not seem to be a very successful program, but overall it was successful in getting the library staff to realize what was going on at the writing center and for the writing center staff to see what resources the library has to offer and to build contacts between the departments.

The writing center staff member who was sent to the library received more traffic due to the fact that she was in the library in the evenings when the writing center was closed. Students were likely to casually ask questions, not feeling intimidated by any appointment policies that the writing center might have. Students seemingly did not go to the library specifically to speak with the writing center employee, but seemed to just stop by to ask for help since they were already in the library. Both of these programs were helpful in creating “relationships built between the librarian and writing center staff” (177). The writing center staff members liked knowing that librarians were available for questions, and were more likely to seek help from a librarian when they were unsure about something. The library staff also liked knowing what goes on in the writing center, and the unique questions that students ask writing center employees.

While much of the literature on this subject discusses bringing writing center employees into libraries, there is a portion of the literature about satellite areas for librarians to staff in order to reach more students. In 2002 a reference outpost was set up in the student union at Rutgers University. The library had to partner with the Office of Student Affairs and the student union in order to be able to set up the reference outpost. It was open for thirty one days at the end of the spring semester. Over the course of the

experiment, 205 questions were asked at the reference outpost, with 82% being directional. While the number of actual reference questions asked was not exceptionally high, the program was helpful in other ways. The main benefit was that “At the outpost facility, the librarians were in a strategic position to have direct contact with students and communicate to them how libraries could help them achieve their academic goals. The facility provided a good opportunity for librarians to analyze and evaluate the behavior and expectations of students with regard to the services of the library” (Kuchi 317).

One of the most ambitious collaborations between libraries and writing centers took place at the University of Louisville in 2000. Hannelore B. Rader discusses in a conference paper and an article that library’s efforts to form partnerships to keep the library relevant and helpful in the twenty first century. The library staff ambitiously sought to form partnerships with individual departments, the hospital, student government, other libraries in the state, corporations in the area, etc. They also sought to partner with the writing lab on campus. In 2000, the writing lab actually moved into the library. This led to an increased cooperation between the library and writing center that increased the library usage. While the writing lab tutors were on hand to discuss writing style and structure in students’ papers, the librarians were very close by, ready to offer advice on how to research effectively to write a better paper. Students who needed help with a research paper could get help with both research and composition in the same place. Having a writing center physically located inside of a library is going to increase collaboration between writing centers and libraries, although it clearly is not possible for every campus. Not every library is going to have space to house a writing center. However, the University of Louisville writing lab and library can serve as a great model

for showing what the ultimate collaboration look likes. The program has been successful, with the writing center still located inside Eckstrom Library (“University of Louisville”).

Although it seems like collocation will lead to a lot of collaboration, there have been cases where it is not a good situation. Joan Lippincott notes in “New Library Facilities: Opportunities for Collaboration” that there have been instances where having the writing center located in the library has led to, “a laissez-faire relationship with the occupant but, in other cases, there may be tension over the other unit’s occupation of the library’s space. These kinds of relationships are not collaborations” (Lippincott 148). In “The Disappearing Writing Center Within the Disappearing Academy,” Christina Murphy and Joe Law stress that writing centers cannot afford to be complacent about relationships with other department on campus, but must seek to find partners: “Alliances, however, are chosen and designed by the parties involved who seek mutual benefits in exchange for shared talents and resources’ (Murphy 135).

Methodology

This study seeks to examine the ways in which libraries in the Triangle Research Libraries Network currently cooperate with writing centers at their respective institutions, paying particular attention to employees at writing centers and their opinions about library resources, services, and roles. For this study, collaboration means any communication between the writing centers and libraries such as, discussions or e mails between the library staff and writing centers, linking to each other from their respective websites, or actively referring students to one another.

The four directors of the writing centers being studied were contacted over e mail. They all agreed to distribute the survey amongst the employees who work in the writing center. The survey was given out to determine the current level of cooperation between campus writing centers and academic libraries, while also gauging whether or not the staff would like to see more cooperation. The survey was designed to see how often staff members refer a student to the library, how often they use library resources when assisting a student, and if they are in contact with anyone in the library, and if they would attend workshops for writing center staff taught by librarians.

Paper-based surveys were handed out to all of the staff members at The Writing Center at UNC-CH, The Writing Center at NCCU, Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services at NCSU, and The Writing Studio at Duke University. The directors of the writing centers received multiple copies of the survey and distributed them to their staff. Two directors handed out the surveys in monthly meetings.

In total, surveys were given out to 58 staff members at these institutions: nine full-time staff members, and 49 tutors. Six of the tutors were undergraduates, while the other 43 tutors were graduate students. Each employee was given an envelope with a cover letter inviting them to take the survey (Appendix A), a copy of the survey (Appendix B), an information sheet about the study, and a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the survey. In all, twenty-three surveys were returned. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, the results were gathered in aggregate with no record of demographics or location.

Results

The survey was designed to elicit responses from writing center employees about the ways they view their relationship to the library staff, their role within the university, and current level of collaboration with the library and other writing centers. The first question of the survey was intended to gauge whether or not staff members at writing centers collaborate with other writing centers the way that the TRLN libraries collaborate with each other. When asked “Do you communicate with staff of writing centers at other universities?” nine participants responded yes, and seven of them said they communicate with the staff at other writing centers “a few times a year.” One person answered “monthly,” and one person answered “weekly.” Fourteen people said they do not communicate with staff members at other writing centers.

Table 1: Communication with other writing centers			
Do you communicate with staff of writing centers at other universities?			
Yes		No	
9		14	
If yes, how often do you communicate with employees at other writing centers?			
Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times a year
0	1	1	7

The next question asked how often they directly interact with library staff as part of their job at the writing center. Ten out of twenty-three of the respondents said they do currently communicate with library staff, with six of those ten saying that they communicate with library staff “monthly,” one saying “weekly,” and three saying they communicate “a few times a year.”

Table 2: Communication with libraries			
Do you interact with library staff as part of your job in the writing center?			
Yes		No	
10		13	
If yes, how often do you communicate with employees at other writing centers?			
Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times a year
0	1	6	3

The next question sought to find out if the staff of the writing centers feels they play a similar role in helping patrons who are writing research papers. The question asked, “In terms of assisting students with research papers, how similar do you think the services offered by the writing center are to the services offered by the library?” Overwhelmingly, the writing staff felt that the services offered were different. One respondent was neutral on the issue. Twelve participants felt the services were “somewhat different” and eight participants felt they were “very different.” Only two respondents felt the services were at all similar, with both of them choosing “somewhat similar.” None of the survey participants chose “very similar.”

Table 3: Services offered				
In terms of assisting students with research papers, how similar do you think the services offered by the writing center are to the services offered by the library?				
Very Similar	Somewhat Similar	Neutral	Somewhat Different	Very Different
0	2	1	12	8

When asked outright if they “Would like to see more collaboration between libraries and writing centers” eighteen said yes, while five said no. The ones who answered yes were asked for their suggestions as to ways the two places could collaborate. Three responses directly mentioned help with managing citations, which definitely seems to be an important to both writing tutors and librarians. Although few respondents saw similarities between services offered by the writing center and library in an earlier question, for this question they did refer to some commonalities. One respondent talked about the, “inter-related processes” that go students through when writing a paper, and another mentioned “commonalities.” Another participant would like to see a clarification of the “division of labor,” implying that there are currently some overlapping areas.

Table 4: Collaboration	
Would you like to see more collaboration between libraries and writing centers?	
Yes	No
18	5
If yes, in what ways could libraries and writing centers collaborate?	
Respondent 3	Libraries could keep us updated about new reference and writing

	development- related websites, literature, Refworks, etc.
Respondent 4	Citation style guides - we refer students to the library if they have questions about citation, but it would be great if we could have a handout describing what resources are available at the library to help students with citations.
Respondent 5	Resource exchange such as books and online search engines
Respondent 6	A list of our services could be exchanged with the studio and vice versa so that students are aware of what to expect in both areas.
Respondent 7	Citation materials! We constantly refer students to the librarians for this type of information. Also, collaboration on subject specific research and writing could be useful.
Respondent 8	Clarify division of labor offering joint workshops Collaboration on ESL issues.
Respondent 9	I think that collaboration would be useful in terms of assisting students in developing the supporting points for the arguments they seek to explicate in their papers. Some commonalities, especially for the papers written by younger undergraduates may emerge.
Respondent 10	I think they complement each other well now.
Respondent 11	I think the prewriting stages of composition are heavily influenced by what information students can access thru research. A workshop on the inter-related processes of research, idea-generation, thinking, and writing (all activities we conceptually separate, falsely would be helpful, and interesting).
Respondent 12	I'd like to know more about what libraries offer and do not offer in terms of services to students. Sometimes, I refer students to a librarian without knowing for sure whether it was appropriate
Respondent 13	At the writing center we see students from all disciplines. It is impossible for a tutor to know databases and research strategies for all disciplines. Personally, I would like a little library training myself (to know all of the resources I can refer students to), and perhaps if we had a library contact person that was familiar with the writing center would be helpful.
Respondent 14	Share results. Trade notes/communicate. The library could have a clearer structure for research assistance so the WC could direct students who don't really need help with "writing" to research assistance.
Respondent 16	Making students understand the importance of knowing what the library offers. Getting students to read books as sources as opposed to depending only on the internet.
Respondent 17	Writing tutors could have an easier way to refer students for reference librarian consultations. Reference librarians could also "pitch" their capabilities to tutors so we could be better advocates for you...to undergraduates.
Respondent 18	I'm not sure but I really like writing/ tutoring in the library.
Respondent 19	They could co-run workshops on finding/documenting sources
Respondent 20	Joint workshops, shared space, cross-training

Respondent 21	It's adequate now, in my opinion.
Respondent 23	Citation help for students - (already happens). Prewriting/research help for students.

The next set of questions was about referrals between the library and writing center. When asked if they ever assist students who were referred to the writing center from the library, only two people said yes, with nineteen others saying no. Four of the people who answered no also indicated that it was possible it had happened, but they could not say for sure because no student had ever mentioned being referred from the library. Although only two writing center employees had helped students referred from the library for certain, twenty-two out of twenty-three said they had referred a student to the library.

Table 5: Referrals	
Do you ever assist students who were referred to the writing center from the library?	
Yes	No
2	21
Do you ever refer a student to the library for help with research?	
Yes	No
22	1

The follow up question was looking to see what reasons tutors have for referring students to the library. They had a variety of different answers, but consistently the answers showed that they do think there are instances where a student needs research help that is out of the scope of the writing center. Most of the answers showed that writing center staff will refer a student to the library if it is obvious a student has not done

adequate research to support their argument or need more specialized information that a librarian could provide. Only four of the responses mentioned people in the library.

Most of the responses talked about referring students to the library to look for resources, not to talk to the librarians. Table 3 gives a complete list of the responses given.

Table 6: Library Referrals

What factors determine whether or not you refer a student to the library?	
Respondent 1	Whether or not I am able to assist them using the tools available to me. If their subject is very specific, I'll usually refer them to a library specialist whose expertise is in that field.
Respondent 3	Whether they need literature for papers and/or references info.
Respondent 4	When Librarians have more specialized knowledge - for example, when students need help doing a literature search, or when they need help with citation style.
Respondent 5	How much research student has done/needs to do.
Respondent 6	If I am unable to provide them with ample research links.
Respondent 7	What the students is working on and whether or not the library has more expertise with that subject matter then those of us at the writing center.
Respondent 8	Help with citations, style guides, using library databases.
Respondent 9	If, after reading a student's paper, I want to see more information for a supporting point for an argument. Also, I have them use the Library website quite often.
Respondent 10	If they have a question about sources of how to find information or how to cite. I often use the "chat" option during a session or refer students to the reference desk.
Respondent 11	The clearly need more concrete knowledge of their subject so their writing isn't limited to stating what is obvious and commonly observed about their topic.
Respondent 12	How long they have until final draft is complete (often it's not a long enough time frame for additional research). Whether they seem to have enough info for their assignment. Whether I think they can find what they need.
Respondent 13	Generally, I refer students to the library for all research concerns-at least I refer them to the website and on-some resources such as citation builders, and live-chat features.
Respondent 14	Whether they needed assistance the library could provide.
Respondent 15	What problems the student has with the paper; If they are mainly looking for sources, I'll refer them to the library after helping them get started.

Respondent 16	Extent of research needed. If student seems dependent on online materials.
Respondent 17	Student appears to need more sources or is venturing into unfamiliar territory
Respondent 18	If the student needs extensive help with research, training to use the databases, help with sources, etc.
Respondent 19	To explore a particular database.
Respondent 20	If they need help with research, citation, data management, conducting searches, etc. or need to find an answer for a specific content question.
Respondent 21	If s/he needs help on researching a particular topic that requires expertise beyond my abilities.
Respondent 22	Most times, I refer a student to the library if they do not understand the material they are writing about or they do not have enough information to effectively complete the assignment.

The penultimate question was about instruction sessions offered by the library. The survey asked, “How likely would you be to attend a one hour training session about library services?” Six of the twenty-three participants said they would be unlikely to attend a training session offered by the library, but twelve were likely to attend.

Table 7: Instruction Sessions				
How likely would you be to attend a one hour training session about library services?				
Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely
4	8	5	4	2

The last question was answered by twenty respondents. The question was “What do you think would be helpful for the library staff to know about the writing center?” This question was to see if writing center staff thinks the library is aware of their resources and think the library staff knows about the writing center. Overall, there was not anything major that the writing center staff felt the library did not know about. However, the writing center employees just wanted the library to know what their basic

purpose is, and the process they go through when helping students. The complete answers given for this question are listed in Table 8. Their answers ranged from just wanting the library employees to realize the mission of the writing center and services offered. One respondent wanted the library staff to know that s/he refers students to the library chat service.

Table 8: Perceptions	
What do you think would be helpful for the library staff to know about the writing center?	
Respondent 1	We can help students brainstorm paper topics, but we usually refer them to librarians for finding literature for papers.
Respondent 3	We can help students brainstorm paper topics, but we usually refer them to librarians for finding literature for papers.
Respondent 6	That we are able to help them organize their research throughout their work, as well as aid with formatting.
Respondent 7	What services we generally do and do not provide and how/if we refer students to library staff.
Respondent 8	Range of services offered.
Respondent 9	Nothing comes to mind.
Respondent 10	What the different services are that each place offers in terms of how to help students.
Respondent 11	The writing center helps with all stages of writing, including brainstorming, idea-generation and outlining. These stages are very closely woven with the research process. While some students may think they are having a research problem, they may really be having trouble formulating a strong thesis and collection of search terms, (and vice versa).
Respondent 12	Most often, we deal with students at the end of the research/writing process (although we'd like it to be otherwise). Typically, they only have time to make revisions to the writing by the time we see them.
Respondent 13	Not every writing tutor is aware of all library resources and some have limited experience researching in specific areas in today's current library system.
Respondent 14	Contact Info. Mission.
Respondent 15	I'm not sure what they need to know about writing centers, I think it is more important that writing tutors know about services at the library.
Respondent 16	Writing center consultant would appreciate being able to call on librarians (from the center) to assist with student research.
Respondent 17	Tutors have fairly high turnover and could use periodic "refresher" training about library staff capabilities (and applications).

Respondent 18	All my interactions with library staff have been perfect.
Respondent 19	That we often encounter students working on research papers who are fairly new to researching at the college level.
Respondent 20	That they're welcome to call and propose collaborations, talk about student concerns, etc.
Respondent 21	That tutors can help with basic research skills, esp. databases.
Respondent 22	Our most pressing issues when it comes to research availability and understanding. I most often refer students to the library for research related issues.
Respondent 23	How much I refer students to the IM-a-librarian service.

Conclusion

Current Perceptions: Libraries and Writing Centers

Overall, the writing center surveys showed that staff members are receptive to further collaboration with their campus libraries, but they also believe they do serve a necessary and separate service on campus. The employees viewed themselves as an entity completely independent of the library that may occasionally have services overlap with the library. Although both writing centers and libraries serve unique purposes, they do seem to have similar goals when it comes to providing service to students. There are ways to collaborate that honor both the differences and similarities between the two campus entities.

The differences between the writing centers in the Research Triangle demonstrate that like libraries, no two writing centers are ever going to be the same. Even within the four writing centers being studied, there is a great amount of difference in which students the writing center is able to help, how long sessions are with students, where the writing center is located, and what sort of help is offered by the writing center. There are also differences in the number of staff members, and whether or not those staff members are full-time employees, graduate assistants, or undergraduate student workers. Some of the employees have to take a special class to work as a tutor.

Every writing center must find a level of collaboration that works for their specific writing center and the library. There are a lot of different options for writing centers and libraries to collaborate, and writing center directors and librarians should be in communication with each other in order to decide what level of collaboration is the right one for their institution. Throughout the survey responses it seems that writing center employees are receptive to cooperation with the library. They definitely recognize the importance of library resources, and point students in the direction of the library when a student needs help researching. They may not direct students to librarians, but they are still advocating for students to use library resources, be it citation builders like Refworks or Endnote, books, or databases.

Role of Libraries

This survey looked at writing centers and the way writing center employees perceive collaboration with libraries, and it is helpful for librarians to know how their services are perceived by other people on campus. For the most part, the writing center employees would like for librarians to be aware of what they do and the services they offer.

There are different ways that libraries and writing centers can collaborate. While collocation is not always possible, there are simpler ways for libraries and writing centers to support each other. The most simple aspect would be for writing centers to link to the library's website from their website, and vice versa. There could easily be a link on the library's website directing students to the writing center's website with a list of services offered. Linking to each unit's website would be an easy way for the writing center and library to be supportive of each other, while giving students the information they need.

Instruction sessions in libraries are held to introduce students to library resources. Classes come to the library for instruction sessions that also function as library orientation. While librarians are discussing library resources, it would also be helpful to mention other campus resources such as the writing center. One of the survey respondents mentioned that they would like to have a handout that discusses library resources that they could give to students. It would also be helpful for the writing center to have a handout listing their services and the ways they can assist students. These handouts could be left at the reference desk or handed out at instruction sessions. This would also foster an understanding between the library and writing center about what each place has to offer, and they could become advocates for each other. If librarians are aware of everything the writing center employees do to assist students, they would be more likely to refer students to the writing center.

Since librarians are used to conducting instruction classes for classes, it would be helpful if librarians could design a class aimed at assisting staff members at the writing centers. Twelve out of the twenty-three respondents said they would be interested in attending an hour long library workshop, but perhaps more employees would attend shorter instruction sessions. If a librarian could attend the writing centers' monthly meetings, the librarian could design a concise and helpful presentation about a specific library resource such as Refworks, a database, or document delivery. It would not have to be anything that takes extra time for the writing center staff or repeats information they already know. Perhaps short instruction sessions could be conducted periodically, just to foster cooperation between the two places and also to give brief classes about library resources.

It is important for both entities to know about the other and find a level of collaboration that works for both places. There are levels of cooperation and each library and writing center should find ways to cooperate with each other that work for each place. It is important that libraries and writing centers collaborate because it fosters a welcoming environment on campus. It is helpful for students to know what resources are available to them, and if there is a level of collaboration between writing centers and libraries it benefits everyone.

The TRLN institutions are in a unique situation because of their geographic proximity to each other. The libraries at the TRLN institutions can work closely together to build a large unparalleled collection. There are benefits for each library working within a consortium. Collaborating with a writing center may not provide as many tangible benefits for the libraries. In a strong consortium libraries can build strong collections, while using their collective influence to advocate for projects and funding. Working with a writing center may lead to less concrete results. The benefits may simply be increasing the amount of communication between writing center employees and librarians, or increasing the amount of referrals between the two units. However, it is still important for both places to try to collaborate with each other. The writing center employees often brought up the writing process and the fact that there is not always a definitive line between researching and writing, but it is more of a fluid process. It is important for librarians and writing center staff members to work together to assist students at all stages of the writing process.

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Appendix A: Cover Letter Sent With Survey

1521 East Franklin Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
kmjelen@email.unc.edu

March 12, 2009

Dear Respondent,

I am a graduate student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am conducting a survey on academic libraries and writing centers as part of the research for my master's paper. I have enclosed a survey that asks some questions about your opinions on the writing center and academic libraries. I would appreciate if you could answer the survey questions and return it in the stamped self-addressed envelope.

The survey should take you about 10 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this questionnaire and return it. Your participation is completely voluntary.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about being in this study, you may contact me at (919) 259-6891. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this study you may contact the Office of Human Research Ethics at (919) 966-3113.

Sincerely,

Katherine Mary Jelen
SILS Master's Student
kmjelen@email.unc.edu
(919) 259-6891

