Session 3: New Initiatives and New Technologies
Moderator: Hannah Russell

**ISLANDS OF WORDS:
INTEGRATING WRITING CENTERS INTO LIBRARIES**

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Abstract:
At Texas A&M University at Galveston, the Writing Center is administered and operated by the Jack K. Williams Library. Coherent, cohesive and accessible writing for scientific disciplines is critical, not only for academic audiences but to make science better understood by the general public. Writing Centers at academic institutions are tasked with improving the quality of student writing across all disciplines using traditional writing theory and modern technology. The dilemma in these traditional versus modern partnerships is how to integrate library services and new technologies so they serve the institutional interests of high quality academic writing and how to assess the technology's effectiveness in learning outcomes. Using collaborative assessment methods including metrics from peer-to-peer counseling sessions, this paper will show the benefits of teaching information literacy workshops and implementing web-based management tutoring software, and will propose uses of new technologies to improve outreach to students and assist in measuring the effectiveness of the Writing Center at Texas A&M at Galveston.

Keywords: Writing centers, libraries, information literacy, peer-to-peer counseling assessment, academic institutions., Texas A&M University.

Introduction
The Texas A&M University System has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that emphasizes that Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime (Office of the Provost, 2014). The QEP focuses on student learning outcomes and student success. Unique among writing center/library collaborations, the Jack K. Williams Library at Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG) houses and administers the Writing Lab, which supports and furthers the goals of the QEP. Specifically the Writing Lab supports the QEP goals of:

- Deepened commitment through purposeful tasks.
- Extended and substantive interactions with faculty and peers.
- Frequent feedback to student performance.

The Writing Lab strives to develop students' writing competencies into professional level skill sets during their time at A&M University at Galveston. The primary goal of the Writing Lab is to meet the students at their points of need and elevate the importance of writing as an academic service for students across all disciplines. Services often integrate with other academic resources aimed at enhancing students' academic competencies in order to improve students' level of professionalism and preparedness for their chosen career paths. The Writing Lab works to also integrate information and technology literacy skills with traditional writing rhetoric and composition as well as an increased emphasis on the use of technology for learning and teaching. To these ends, the Writing Lab is integrating new technologies to provide asynchronous counseling in order to approach and assist more students. The ultimate goal is to show evidence of student's writing improvement from assessments.

Integration
The model employed by TAMUG is rare since few writing centers are administered by libraries. A cursory exploration of writing center administrative and service structures finds that of major universities there were no other library administrative schemes. A quarter of writing centers had outposts in libraries, offering limited services and hours. Barbour et al. (2002), Elmborg and Hook (2005) and Norgaard (2004) show that there is potential to diversify and enhance support for writing, investigation, research and presentation by integrating writing centers and libraries. Housing that support in the same space can provide students with "one-stop shopping," enhance synergistic relationships and improve communication with students, between counselors and with administrative staff. Meyer. Forbes, Bowers (2010) report on a successful model of developing a consultation model for research integrated with a Writing Center located in the library.

Other models have been successful, including networking opportunities between libraries and writing centers, assignment of library liaisons to writing centers, integration of writing/bibliographic class sessions and shared presentations to outside groups. These activities and initiatives have all enhanced the student learning experience. The unique structure of the Texas A&M University at Galveston Writing Lab takes those opportunities, economies of scale and integrations to a higher order. Benefits of this arrangement include:

- Integration of research into the discovery, pre-writing process.
- Integration of multiliteracies, including technology, into the writing process.
- Counselor training is focused and concentrated on a single group of peers.
- Distance education services are accessed and sourced from a single entity.
- Faculty have a single source for research and writing support for development of course content, research strategies, writing enhancement and presentation possibilities.

Technology
The use of technology has enhanced the services offered by the Writing Lab. The use of technology for peer tutoring is well documented and is continually changing Balester (1992). As recently as 2007 Wood, Mackiewicz, Van Norman and Cooke advocated for the use of technology for peer tutoring, including the use of tape recorders, audio picture albums and

portable card readers. Evans and Moore (2013) used a website to track and organize tutoring interactions within a large class. Moberg (2010) advocates for both the use of in-person and online peer tutoring practices.

The TAMUG Writing Lab has begun initial use of technology in a synchronous tutoring system. The traditional model of peer tutoring has been face-to-face and the Writing Lab has followed that model from its inception. The Writing Lab now uses TutorTrac software to enhance that face-to-face experience with an eye to offering both synchronous and asynchronous services in the future. The Writing Lab is also moving into new territory as a multiliteracy center, integrating research assistance as well as teaching/learning technologies in to future services. Balester et al. not only suggest a move toward supporting a multimodal composition model but also to supporting new media (Balester 2012). This paper chronicles the early efforts of the Writing Lab, describes the adoption and implementation of the TutorTrac technology, and describes and analyzes the initial collection and development of metrics to determine success of the student and the Writing Lab. The paper also describes future strategies based on the analysis of those metrics.

Through the use of the TutorTrac online system the Writing Lab has:

- Increased the number of students being counseled.
- Improved performance feedback to Counselors and leadership.
- Enabled a richer evaluation system for faculty.
- Developed deeper metrics for Writing Lab efficiency and performance.

Development of the Writing Lab
The Writing Lab began in 2008 as a peer-educator program in the TAMUG English Department. The nascent program followed development similar to that outlined in Wilson and Arendale (2011) with the development of program goals, application of staffing resources to the Lab, support of other campus resources, obtaining facilities and offices and the recruitment and training of student counselors (p. 43-44). Using peer-to-peer counseling and continual integration of technology, the goal of the Writing Lab was and is to teach basic and advanced competency skills in writing and research rather than a set of discrete and individual grammar skills. Student Counselors "interact with students as writers, as opposed to viewing their tutees as grammar students or spelling students or formatting students" (Moberg, 2010, p. 3). As there is little or no remediation for those discrete writing skills built into the TAMUG curriculum, the Writing Lab has also taken on that role.

The Writing Lab began with five Counselors cohabitating space with faculty in the English Department. The counselors used traditional editing methods including physical copies of student's work and with virtually no technology in the beginning. In 2012, the Writing Lab experienced a couple of faculty leadership changes before physically relocating to the Jack K. Williams Library and coming under the direction of the Library Director. There are many examples of writing centers becoming successfully integrated with library operations (Rader, 2001; Cooke & Bledsoe, 2008; Merkley, 2013; Manhaffy, 2008). The integration of the Writing Lab with the Williams Library was seen as an opportunity to develop an operation that was more

fully incorporated into the lifelong learning goals of the University. In 2013 a Literacy Coordinator was hired to run the daily operations of the Writing Lab and to turn the operation into a multiliteracy center, offering research assistance services and introduction and training on new learning and teaching technologies.

Currently the Writing Lab consists of ten junior or senior students who have taken one or more writing intensive courses specific to our curriculum and who have shown mastery of advanced writing mechanics and rhetoric. Additional skill sets required include customer service, critical analysis, research and document design.

Data Collection
As with many Writing Center startups, the original process required students to schedule a writing counseling session in person and bring printed drafts of their typed documents to the Writing Lab so writing counselors could mark up their text manually, which introduced difficulties when deciphering handwriting and proofreading marks. Students' documents have been created digitally for more than a decade but were edited using analog methods. Data for decision-making were not available and would have been cumbersome to collect using a paper-based collection system.

A software-based scheduling and digital editing tool was needed to update this process. The process [AC6] of using physical copies of students' documents also reduced the Writing Lab's ability to measure the effect of the counseling sessions and whether the students showed improvement in their writing abilities. A content management system that students and faculty could access to review previous and current papers was required. Another issue concerned [AC7] the ability to organize data gathered from hand-written sign-in sheets and provide analysis of usage statistics. The lack of staff, time, and software support prevented the Writing Lab from reporting who was using the Writing Lab, when, and why to faculty or administration. Data from the pre-Tutortrac era included only basic data such as name, major, professor, class and the consultant's name. While somewhat helpful in keeping usage statisticsm, the system did not lend itself to any sort of diagnostics to support learning. Table 1 shows the most basic information that the old system would allow.

Table 1. Writing Lab Usage Aug 2012-May 2013				
	Total Visits	First Time	Follow Up	Individuals
Pre-TutorTrac				
Aug-Dec 2012	1034	366	302	366
Jan-May 2013	1309	452	401	452

Table 1. Writing Lab Usage Aug 2012-May 2013

Several alternatives were examined for a web-based appointment and data collection system, including Cleopatra, a home-grown system used by flagship institution Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. As TAMUG was already using TutorTrac for other tutoring services,

including class-specific tutoring and supplemental instruction, it was decided to pilot test the system over the summer of 2013.

Criteria used to gage success of the pilot were:
- Ease of use of the basic technology.
- Integration into existing procedures during pilot.
- Robustness of the online system.
- Ease of reporting module for staff and faculty.

While usage was low over the summer, it was objectively decided that the amount and types of data that could be collected would be worth pursuing use of the system full-time. In the fall of 2013 Tutortrac was opened to the campus to use for scheduling and uploading of papers. The overall process for peer tutoring does not significantly differ from the established procedures, pre-Tutortrac. Automation of those processes has improved data collection enormously.

Table 2. Writing Lab Usage/ Reason Fall 2013

| TOTAL	Visits	Hours	Students	Male	Female	Fresh	Soph	Jun	4th year Senior	5th year Senior	Grad
Overall Usage	1439	735	487	322	165	114	89	86	179	5	12
Blank	23	10.6	21	14	7	2	9	5	4	0	1
Book Search	4	2	4	4	0	1	0	3	0	0	0
Citations	143	70	71	54	17	12	4	16	36	1	2
Database Search	16	3.2	13	5	8	3	2	5	3	0	0
Dissertation	15	7.64	10	10	0	1	1	2	4	0	2
Document Design	362	176	192	136	56	56	37	26	68	1	4
Grammar Edits	715	347	299	192	107	63	62	54	106	3	10
Publication	8	3.25	7	6	1	2	1	0	4	0	0
Research	112	86.38	73	44	29	12	12	19	28	0	2
Resume	28	18.48	24	19	5	2	1	3	16	0	1
Thesis	11	8.67	11	9	2	2	3	1	5	0	0
Walk-in	2	0.81	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0

Table 2. Writing Lab Usage/ Reason Fall 2013.
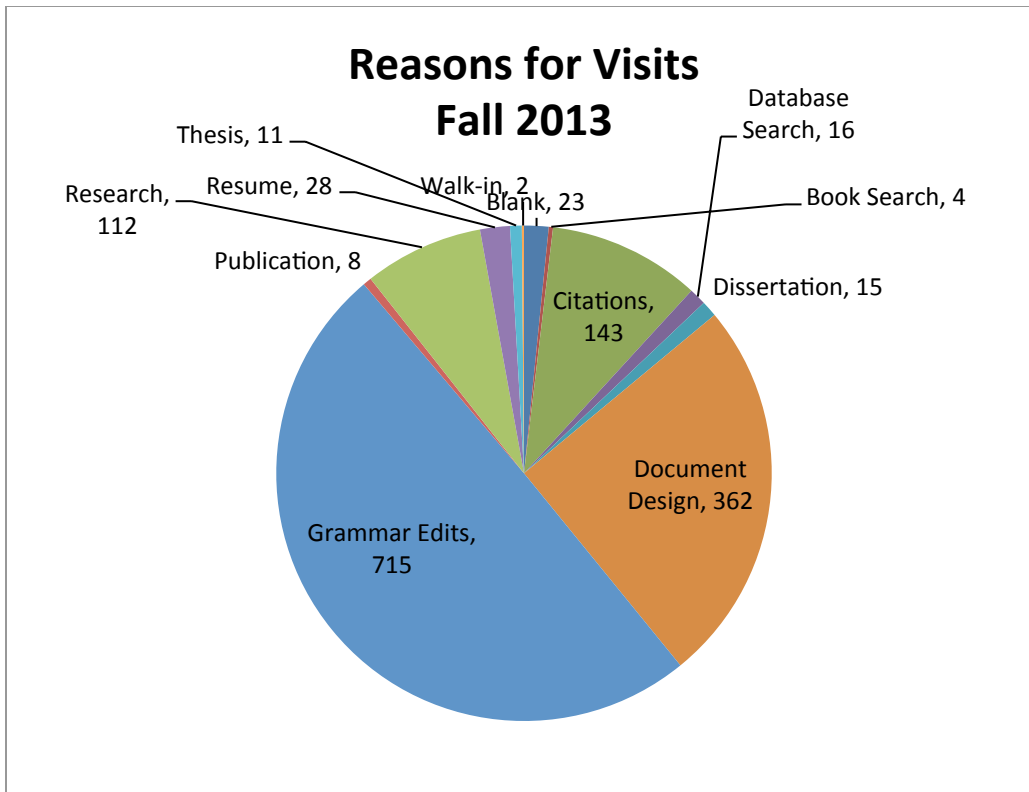
Figure 1. Reasons for visits to the Writing Center.

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