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2021

THE
**Writing Center
Journal**

International Writing Centers Association
An NCTE Assembly

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History of *The Writing Center Journal*

The Writing Center Journal was launched in 1980 by Lil Brannon & Stephen North and remains the primary research journal in the field of writing centers. *WCJ* is an official journal of the International Writing Centers Association, an Assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English. Previous editors of the journal are listed below.

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1980–1984

Jeanette Harris & Joyce Kinkead
1985–1990

Diana George, Nancy Grimm, & Edward Lotto
1991–1994

Dave Healy
1994–1997

Albert C. DeCiccio & Joan Mullin
1997–2002

Neal Lerner & Elizabeth Boquet
2002–2008

Lauren Fitzgerald & Melissa Ianetta
2009–2013

Michele Eodice, Kerri Jordan, & Steve Price
2013–2017

Guidelines for Submission

The current editors invite article submissions of theoretical scholarship and original empirical research on topics of interest to the writing center community. We are also interested in book reviews and review essays; please query via e-mail before submitting reviews. *The Writing Center Journal* aims to reflect diverse contexts and encourages submissions related to a wide variety of institution types and writing centers. Article manuscripts should be submitted via the online portal at submissions.writingcenterjournal.org. Articles are typically between 6,000 and 10,000 words and should follow NCTE's Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language. Please visit writingcenterjournal.org for the *WCJ* style guide.

Subscriptions & Back Issues

- Subscribe to *The Writing Center Journal* on the IWCA membership page: <https://iwcamembers.org/>
- Library subscriptions can be updated or requested with the editors: writingcenterjournal@gmail.com. Library subscriptions are \$80.00.
- To request hardcopy back issues or PDF packets, contact the *WCJ* editors: writingcenterjournal@gmail.com.
- Information about the journal, the editors, and upcoming events can be found at <http://writingcenterjournal.org>.

WCJ Reviewers

All submissions are reviewed anonymously by at least two external readers; those listed below are members of the active reader pool for the 40th Anniversary Special Double issue. We thank them for their contributions to writing center scholarship.

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From the Editors of the 40th Anniversary Special Double Issue

Forty years since the journal's founding by Lil Brannon and Stephen North, this double issue marks the arrival of writing center studies officially at middle age, with both its professional achievements and its aches and pains. While the field has grown up, as witnessed by the growing number and strength of our scholarly journals and increasingly more diverse and international community of researchers and practitioners, even this mature field retains some concerns of its early days. In their introduction to the inaugural issue of *WCJ*, Brannon & North saw, first, “in writing center teaching the absolute frontier of our discipline [Composition],” a place in which students and process are centered, and second, the need for the journal to “serv[e] as an outward sign of a growing professional legitimacy” in a field that was often understood to be at the margins, just a step away from drill labs and grammar clinics (1980, p. 1). While we now recognize the “frontier” metaphor as problematic, the idea of “place”-based writing center work and spaces—and problems with who owns and occupies these spaces—continues. These somewhat conflicting sentiments, namely that writing centers are at the forefront of research in writing studies and yet are also in need of legitimacy in that same discipline, still haunt our scholarly conversations 40 years on, even as we search for the most nuanced metaphors and language to do justice to the complexities of writing center work. This anniversary issue signals simultaneously a reflection and a permanent significant shift.

As the field has matured, it has also experienced a recent growth spurt. Perhaps in a nod to this forty-year push towards legitimacy, our first impulse as editors in looking back on our tenure was to assess our work by measuring and counting what we have done over these years: the number of printed pages (1517), issues (7), articles (40), keynotes (4), book reviews (24), and published authors (138). Since we began our editorial term, the number of articles published has increased, even as the percentage of acceptance has held steady—hence there has been more high-quality scholarship in our field, with more authors accessing publication in a top-tier, widely read journal. Even though we wished to see more submissions from identities that have been historically overlooked, we are pleased to have been able to publish so many authors in so many long-form pieces, as well as scholarship grounded in a wide variety of topics, methods, geographies, institutions, and contexts. After four decades, the field has gained additional areas of wisdom and reflection derived from not just experience—positive and negative—but also from a clearer sense of purpose. While wisdom gained in this way cannot be so easily measured, it does still “count” and carries the potential for great impacts. The upshot is that the field has moved to a new place.

The pieces in this issue substantially advance a longstanding challenge to writing center studies as a traditionally white, heterosexual, native English-speaking, US-based field. This double issue’s fourteen articles, three book reviews, and eight paired reflections on award-winning texts, comprising contributions from 42 authors, demonstrate that the field is innovating broadly in two overlapping directions toward this end. First, we present to readers pieces exploring practitioner and institutional identities and intersectionalities, including race, sexual orientation, faith, and professional status. Second, the pieces in this anniversary issue showcase a wide range of scholarly and theoretical lenses, which themselves highlight the affordances of different methodological possibilities, as well as uncover overlooked types of institutions and labor. This issue’s articles reflect how the accumulation of forty years of research and practice has led to the field’s self-consciousness about the subjects we study and our scholarly methods, which allows us to ask ourselves in different ways what we are doing and how we can do it better.

We value the reflection and deep thinking that result from this self-consciousness, and that we hope continue to evolve with middle age, where one can find a clearer recognition of values and integrity that themselves are more considered, more meaningful, and more likely, perhaps, to promote sustained change. Already, the field is expanding. New and exciting work is exploring diverse aspects of personal and institutional identities, manifestations of power, and structural inequities, within and across institutions, subdisciplines, classifications, affiliations, and staff hierarchies. While we are pleased to be able to share with readers this wide range of pieces addressing intersectional

questions, we recognize that there is still a long way to go. As has been noted by many before us (for example, Grimm [1999], Geller et al. [2007], Greenfield & Rowan [2011]) and many within *WCJ*'s pages during our editorial tenure (for example, Green [2018], Mitchell & Randolph [2019], Azima [2020]), including the pieces in this issue, the field continues to be overdue for a reckoning with racial injustice—with its history and its present, explicit, implicit, and systemic.

Many articles in this issue grapple with these problems. Two articles underscore Black experiences in the writing center, both historical and contemporary. Introducing the writing center world to under-studied primary sources dating to the 1930s, Sue Mendelsohn & Clarissa Walker uncover the contributions of Black writing center directors to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)—an important new contribution to writing center history. Talisha Haltiwanger Morrison explores the racial tension that Black women student-tutors currently experience in writing centers, and her work should change daily practices. Providing a new perspective on how to bring anti-racism work into more, and more varied, institutions, Amanda Fields examines the profound experience of creating an anti-racism statement at a rural writing center. To deepen the conversation about the role of sexual orientation as an identity in writing center praxis, Travis Webster uses in-depth interviews with LGBTQ writing center administrators to explore how their identities inform every aspect of their work and demand substantial invisible labor. Considering another previously understudied facet of identity, Andrea Efthymiou, Anna Sicari, & Liliana M. Naydan explore how faith infiltrates the daily shape of writing center work.

Just as questions of personal identity can shape writing center work, so too can professional status and institutional position. Dawn Fels, Clint Gardner, Maggie Herb, & Liliana M. Naydan, using in-depth interviews, explore the advantages and disadvantages of contingent positions on writing center workers at all levels. Taking a long view of the career of a writing center administrator, Steve Sherwood, also using in-depth interviews, considers the learning accrued by long-term writing center professionals. Both of these pieces give readers the chance to reflect on the legacies, both positive and negative, of forty years of professional writing center work.

An area needing methodological reevaluation concerns the field's significant attention to the "RAD" approach. Despite the consistent calls for this kind of research in writing center studies, the term RAD, coined by Richard Haswell (2005) in *Written Communication*, has almost exclusively—and as we argue, problematically—been used by writing center scholars. While it is certainly important to have studies that are replicable, aggregable, and data-driven, not all studies *should* employ this perspective, or all elements of it. As researchers and practitioners, the three of us well understand the gravitation towards

empirical research with its clearly defined starting and end points. A survey can be administered in one term, data analyzed in the next, and synthesized in written form over a summer, et voilà: qualitative or quantitative research sent off for peer review over the course of a single academic year. Speed is especially reinforced for those practitioners under explicit or implicit pressure to publish, as evidenced by the increasing importance of citation metrics in institutions' attempts to make countable evaluations of the impact of authors' work. Assessment may also seem smoother with easily quantifiable data. But not all things can be easily, or at all, quantified. It is through theory that we can come to see new concepts and ask new questions waiting to be uncovered by the right frame. While as editors we hoped for but saw very few theoretical submissions, the pieces in this issue show that methodologically robust work, even if it is not RAD, can be extremely considered, rigorous, and persuasive. We urge the field to continue to use a wide range of methodologies and to let the questions determine the method rather than vice versa.

Methodological engagement with different research traditions and orientations and a strong interdisciplinary inclination are hallmarks of our field. Two articles in this issue reflect on the role that RAD research can play. Havva Ozer & Jing Zhang examine the inclusion of RAD research in *WCJ*, considering pieces published from 2007–2018, namely, before and after Dana Driscoll & Sherry Wynn Perdue's 2012 call for such work. Replicability, the "R" in the "RAD" approach, is the feature that Susanne Hall & Holly Ryan explore. They argue for more awareness and a more carefully documented methods sections that will allow future studies not only to build upon but also truly replicate existing work, in the positivistic sense of that word. Two other articles provide new lenses on long-standing research areas. Considering the post-satisfaction surveys administered by so many centers, Katie Levin, Sarah Selz, Meredith Steck, & Eric Wisz report on the perspectives of tutors and student focus groups to reflect on why and for whom these surveys are meaningful. Bethany Nannon takes a more theoretical view as she considers the importance of emotional labor for tutors and uncovers the lack of attention that this topic generally receives in tutor training manuals. Returning to an established method, two studies use linguistic analysis to better understand what happens in consultations, particularly when writer and consultant views cannot automatically be assumed to be the same. In a comparative study of sessions with native and non-Native English speakers that has important implications for tutor training, Jo Mackiewicz & Zachary Gasior find that non-native English speakers do not share opening goals and have fewer long exchanges with their tutors. Mike Haen focuses on a specific feature of sessions, how writers respond when tutors give praise, particularly when writers engage critically with their text rather than simply acknowledging or appreciating the tutor's

praise. Praise is an everyday occurrence in writing centers, and this piece invites reevaluation of this practice.

We close this issue with an article that uses a novel method for writing centers and one recently called for (Price, 2020): a meta-analysis. Jesus Jose Salazar presents a breakdown of how this method works and the results of his meta-analysis of 86 studies. Thanks to Salazar's study, the field can finally now say that writing center sessions are positively associated with a statistically significant and meaningful impact on student writing. We predict this valuable result will be indispensable to highlight in institutional reports on writing center effectiveness.

Within a mature field that should no longer constantly feel the need to prove itself, the pieces in this issue are ones we present as exemplars, taking on important, neglected questions, more accountability overall, and, ultimately, action. The pieces profiled above showcase the continued growth and plasticity of both the field and the journal.

We are honored to have been a part of the journal's rich history of publishing exceptional and often innovative scholarship, following in the footsteps of all *WCJ*'s previous editors who have shaped writing center studies. We are especially delighted to have published work that has received accolades propelling authors' achievements broadly—and even beyond the borders of the writing center community—such as the journal's first explicitly international issue, coedited with Katrin Girsensohn; Melody Denny's 2019 International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) Outstanding Article Award; and Robert E. Randolph, Jr. and Kendra L. Mitchell's 2018 keynote, which was adapted for publication for *WCJ*, and featured in the JSTOR Companion to the Schomburg Center's Black Liberation Reading List (JSTOR, 2021), where it was accessed nearly 900 times. We hope that featuring such work has helped the field and neighboring disciplines develop an increasingly complicated and nuanced picture of the writing center world across the United States and internationally.

We want to thank editors from other journals in the writing center field as well as in rhetoric and composition and English studies more broadly, many of whom provided helpful wisdom and experience as we were getting started and along the way, such as when moving to an online submission and review system. We want to especially thank our immediate predecessors Michele Eodice, Kerri Jordan, and Steve Price for their invaluable support as we stepped into this role. We are also grateful that Steve Price stayed with the journal under our tenure, originating the role of Book Reviews Editor. Special thanks to our past graduate student associate editors and the two editorial assistants. Our thanks also to the dozens of reviewers steeped in the field's practices and holding various identity positions who took time from busy schedules to provide thoughtful and considered reviews of new manuscripts with an eye to exceeding the journal's high expectations. We are also grateful to the hundreds

of authors who have submitted their work for consideration; without the exceptional work of authors and reviewers, the journal could not be where it is today. Having the opportunity to provide feedback to every manuscript we received, whether ultimately published or not—from scholars at all experience levels from a wide range of institutions around the world—has influenced how we think about writing center work. Likewise, we learned so much from the pieces shared with us as chairs of the IWCA works-in-progress sessions, as well as the countless conversations at conferences and panels. We also thank IWCA and our colleagues for their encouragement. Most important, we thank the hundreds of subscribers, without whom the work of this journal would simply not be possible. As the pieces in this anniversary issue by Sherwood and Mendelsohn & Walker show, all of us in writing center work are connected through a system of inheritance and vast interconnected networks.

Our warmest welcome to the incoming editorial team, Harry Denny, Romeo Garcia, and Anna Sicari, with Eric Camarillo as Book Reviews Editor. Readers will have seen their calls for special issues, which align with our collective deep investment in making the field and this journal more inclusive to more authors, reviewers, and readers from a wide range of institutions and geographic locations. We are excited for where this team takes *WCJ* as the journal begins its next forty years.

Finally, we would like to thank our families who put up with many long hours of calls and missed meals as the three of us worked together to think through the theoretical and practical ins and outs of managing a print journal and producing issues during the ongoing pandemic. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our vibrant scholarly community. We hope you've enjoyed reading.

What you hold in your hands, the special fortieth anniversary double issue of *The Writing Center Journal*, then, is not nostalgia for “old” ways in the field, but rather an embrace of the new ideas the authors in this issue have advanced on identities, methods, and history.

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