

# THE WRITING LAB

N E W S L E T T E R

Volume 35, Number 1

Promoting the exchange of voices and ideas in one-to-one teaching of writing

September, 2010

## — FROM THE EDITOR —

The start of a new academic year also ushers in a new volume of *The Writing Lab Newsletter*. And in this first issue two authors offer us fresh perspectives on long-held views. Jeanne Simpson moves away from the validity of “an” idea of a writing center to a position that invites a variety of perspectives from beyond the writing center walls. When we listen—really listen—to local stakeholders’ comments, creative local solutions can result that lead to different “ideas” of a writing center. Similarly, Ted Remington rethinks the need for “content” tutors and argues instead to acknowledge that we can effectively tutor students writing papers in unfamiliar fields.

When reviewing Beth Hewett’s book on online writing conferencing, Susan Mueller finds applications for writing center tutoring online but questions the intended audience for the book. Ted Roggenbuck reviews for us another book, about teaching communication to students in science and engineering. Again, in a book focused on teaching rather than tutoring, Roggenbuck finds relevance for writing centers. And our tutor’s voice in this issue is Kathryn Terzano’s, as she shares her strategies for successfully navigating the short, twenty-minute tutorial.

Behind the scenes we’ve had a superb group of reviewers working with authors of articles in the 2009-2010 issues. Our thanks to these reviewers, whose names are listed on the *WLN* website (see p. 11 for the URL), for their important professional service.

◆ Muriel Harris, editor

## INSIDE

*Whose Idea Of A Writing Center Is This, Anyway?*

◆ Jeanne Simpson ◆

Page 1

*But It Is Rocket Science! E-mail Tutoring Outside Your Comfort Zone*

◆ Ted Remington ◆

Page 5

*Book Review*  
*Beth Hewett. The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors*

◆ Susan Mueller ◆

Page 9

*Book Review*  
*Mya Poe, Neal Lerner, and Jennifer Craig. Learning to Communicate in Science and Engineering: Case Studies from MIT*

◆ Ted Roggenbuck ◆

Page 11

*Tutor's Column:*  
*“Short-time Tutorial Strategies”*

◆ Kathryn Terzano ◆

Page 14

*Calendar for Writing Center Associations*

Page 16

## WHOSE IDEA OF A WRITING CENTER IS THIS, ANYWAY?

◆ Jeanne Simpson  
Arizona State University  
Tempe, AZ

One professor imagines the writing center as an editing service. Another person perceives it as a place to “teach fishing.” Students perceive the writing center as sanctuary, as dust bin, as fix-it shop, as all kinds of things. Administrators may see it as part of retention programs or as an element of their CYA strategies. Sometimes the perceptions are pieced together from the semantics of the phrase “writing center.” Sometimes they represent analogous thinking, a belief that the writing center is like a carwash with detailing service.

Of course we writing center folks may roll our eyes at such ideas. But wait a minute. Some writing centers were and are in fact academic dustbins, editing services, and retention initiatives. Sometimes, we do teach grammar. Sometimes, we do help writers “detail” their resumes and personal statements. Faculty, when they were students, may have visited or been sent to labs and centers of one kind or another, so that they acquired concrete knowledge, outdated or not. Ideas about writing centers reflect specific experiences with them, good and bad, limited or significant. Our community’s definitions, like everyone’s, have been filtered through our own value systems, fears, lore, and aspirations.

We need to accept a simple principle: people’s perceptions come from their legitimate experi-

*continued on page 2*

The *Writing Lab Newsletter*, published from September to June by The RiCH Company, is a peer-reviewed publication of the International Writing Centers Association, an NCTE Assembly, and is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. ISSN 1040-3779. All Rights and Title reserved unless permission is granted by The RiCH Company. Material can not be reproduced in any form without express written permission. However, up to 50 copies of an article may be reproduced under fair use policy for educational, non-commercial use in classes or course packets. As always, proper acknowledgement of title, author, and original publication date in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* should be included.

**Editor:** Muriel Harris  
(harrism@purdue.edu)  
**Assoc. Editors:** Michael Mattison  
(mmattison@wittenberg.edu)  
Janet Auten  
(jauten@american.edu)

**Managed and Produced by**  
The RiCH Company, LLC  
Richard C. Hay, Founder and CEO  
260 E. Highland Ave. MH700  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
www.therichco.com  
1-888-348-6182

<[www.writinglabnewsletter.org](http://www.writinglabnewsletter.org)>  
[support@writinglabnewsletter.org](mailto:support@writinglabnewsletter.org)

**Subscriptions:** The newsletter has no billing procedures but can issue invoices through the Web site. Yearly payments of \$25 (U.S. \$30 in Canada) by credit card are accepted through the Web site or sent by check, made payable to the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, to The RiCH Company, Attn: *WLN*. Prepayment is requested for all subscriptions. For international *WLN* subscriptions, please contact [support@writinglabnewsletter.org](mailto:support@writinglabnewsletter.org). For IWCA membership and *WCJ* and *WLN* subscriptions, see <[writingcenters.org](http://writingcenters.org)>.

**Manuscripts:** Before sending in submissions, please consult the guidelines on the *WLN* website. Recommended length for articles is approximately 2500-3000 words, 1500 words for reviews and Tutors' Column essays, in MLA format. Please send as attached files in an e-mail to [submission@writinglabnewsletter.org](mailto:submission@writinglabnewsletter.org).

ences and reference points, even if they lead to conclusions we don't share. Just as we do in tutoring, we need to find out what people actually know, how they know it, and what they believe about their knowledge.

I like to ask people what they picture when they say "writing center." What is happening in their mental movie? It's useful to explore the origins of people's perceptions and ideas, making the discussion into a tutorial, a two-way learning process, rather than into a correction.

As in tutoring, we should be ready to change our own perceptions and be alert to what we might take away from the conversation. After all, though we do set policy and articulate the missions of the writing centers we run, we do not own them. Everyone in the institution where a writing center exists is potentially a stakeholder in the center, a resource for new ideas and fresh perspectives. There is no solitary, monolithic idea of writing centers in general or of any particular writing center.

Case in point: because we've learned that talking heads are not especially riveting, at Arizona State University, we try to initiate direct conversation with students during our classroom visits to promote the center. "Has anyone here been to the Center?" we ask. Sometimes someone answers yes; sometimes no one does. When one says yes, we ask what the experience was like. Most of the time, the answer is encouraging. Sometimes, it isn't so great. When we hear bad news, we ask what we could do to make the student return. When it's good, we let the student sell the center as much as we can. And we ask, "What are the obstacles that you see to using the Center?" "What can we do to remove those obstacles?" Usually, they are just an unexamined response—"I don't have time." Then we talk about our hours and how long a tutorial is; and we compare its length to other activities, such as doing laundry.

When we ask how we can change to be more effective, we really want to know. In one class visit at ASU's West campus, coordinator Kim Toms asked students what might persuade them to come to the center. A student asked why we don't set up a buddy system, so that writers have someone from the writing center asking them about progress on their assignments, providing a little accountability. Good question—not something we had thought of in this writing center setting, though we do have peer accountability in other programs. Listening to this new perspective helped us to identify a new possibility for what the writing center can do. Our genuine interest in exploring the idea sent the student the clear signal that we were indeed listening.

We developed the ASU Writing Centers' graduate writers' studio program in response to many faculty comments that we needed to "do something" about graduate students' writing. We arranged to have conversations with some faculty volunteers about what they meant by "good writing." We invited them to select samples of writing they regarded as really good (not necessarily on the basis of its content alone) and then discuss why they thought so. As we read samples of scholarly writing from history, health sciences, religious studies, criminal justice, and others, we achieved a better, broader understanding of what the expectations are, rather than imposing our own perceptions drawn solely from our own disciplinary experiences. We learned that editorial correctness was not the faculty's highest value. They were interested in readability, in writers' voices, in audience awareness. They recognized the complexities of the writing task and talked about themselves as writers. They understood the role of peer response. As a result of these discussions, we created podcasts for the graduate students, as well as web links to the writing samples chosen for discussion by the faculty.

We developed the writers' studios as an alternative to one-to-one tutoring for graduate writers. A graduate program (for example, history) pays a graduate student a modest stipend to take

the training and then to facilitate a group of six to twelve grad students through five 90-minute sessions during a semester. Each group develops its own approach. Sometimes they review each other's whole papers, and sometimes they look at parts of drafts. The goal is to provide a framework for getting feedback, for developing accountability (getting work done to get reviewed), for growing a professional network, and for modeling collaborative efforts.

It is strictly a peer initiative. Faculty members are not invited to attend. Our assessments revealed that the low-risk environment is an essential piece, applying the rule that "what happens in the writers' studio stays in the writers' studio." We know that encouraging the group's sense of ownership is key to a successful studio.

The writing center's role is to provide the training for facilitators (they are not tutors—their role is to guide the discussion, schedule the meetings, and take attendance) and to conduct assessment. That piece includes visiting the studios to see what's happening. We have seen amazing things. The students help each other with ideas, with sources, with organizing, with editorial matters, with word choice, with focus, with building confidence. It isn't tutoring. It is providing a structure for conversations about writing between peers.

In the meantime, we got another lesson in the importance of listening to stakeholders. When we asked graduate programs to recruit students into the writers' studios, the response rate was thinner than we had hoped for. Some students perceived the recruitment contacts as implying that they were deficient writers. No surprise that they stayed away.

So, we changed the recruitment strategy. We contacted graduate students directly, through their e-mail distribution list, telling them about the writers' studios. Immediately, we were swamped with responses: "I need this! Where do I sign up? How can I get one started in my program?" We explained how to initiate a studio, and the number of active writers' studios increased significantly.

The core issue is one of perceptions. Graduate writers want to have some control over their learning experiences. They like to feel valued and respected. So do the graduate faculty. Both groups see that we have listened to their concerns, made an effort to understand what they value, and responded.

Within the writing centers, we also have learned that the perceptions of directors and coordinators do not necessarily coincide with those of tutors. In the first year of the re-established ASU writing centers, we provided tutor name tags with custom writing center lanyards and a wall rack for stowing them. I thought the name tags would help build esprit de corps and make it easier for writers to learn the tutors' names (and easier for me too). But the name tags sat unused in the rack.

I asked tutors to help me understand. They perceived the name tags as interfering with the peer-to-peer relationship between them and writers who came to the center. They did not want to be "different." They perceived the name tags as signifying superiority. The name tags went away. Whenever tutors suggest a change, need a policy or procedure clarified, we ask them to help us figure out how to proceed. This approach has done a far better job of building that desired esprit than the name tags.

*“Clinging to a fixed idea of a writing center, whatever each of us thinks that idea is, shuts off opportunities.”*

Sometimes, perceptual gaps are about resources as well as philosophical issues. An instructor attempted to support the writing center by assigning all the students in a class to schedule tutorials. Requiring tutorials may or may not be a good idea, but only a finite number of tutorial slots exist. Should one instructor independently assign 25 of them? I perceived the instructor as trying indirectly to control the writing center's schedule. So I called and gently explained the problem, requesting that the requirement be suspended. The scheduling challenges had never crossed her mind, and she understood the issue immediately. But in the discussion I learned that the instructor had the goal of persuading students that the writing center is for all writers, not just unsuccessful ones. That is one of my goals too.

The issue was more nuanced than either I or the instructor first imagined. We both learned from our conversation. She adjusted her requirement so that the writing center was not suddenly jammed for a week. I decided having a faculty ally was more important than any philosophical objection to requiring writing center visits. I now considered what other allies might emerge if the writing center stopped making an issue of required visits.

Perceptions matter. Clinging to a fixed idea of a writing center, whatever each of us thinks that idea is, shuts off opportunities. This inflexibility causes writing center folks to be unnecessarily defensive about our work and to be offensive to others when we tell them their ideas are wrong. We need to understand that we can only influence, not control, the way others see our missions, goals, and methods. We need to be open to having our own visions adjusted in surprising ways. The boundaries between what "should" happen in a writing center and what does happen and what might happen are porous to say the least. "We don't" is a dangerous phrase. Maybe we do. Maybe we could. ♦

## BUT IT IS ROCKET SCIENCE! E-MAIL TUTORING OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

◆ *Ted Remington*  
*University of Saint Francis*  
*Fort Wayne, IN*

Imagine opening up your e-mail tutoring inbox and seeing a student essay about particle physics. Or experimental psychology. Or the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar. You face an opponent—not the student, but your own ignorance of the subject matter. What's more, you are all too aware of that ignorance, and this may lead to a sense of powerlessness as a tutor. How on earth can you respond productively to a paper that is, as far as content goes, way over your head?

The temptation here is to fall back on the safety net that writing tutors can rely on: focusing on specific elements of style, word choice, and grammar that are constant in any academic writing—the one area where we feel confident of our mastery. And that can be helpful to students. But are we serving these authors to the best of our ability? Is feedback on these hyper-tactical issues all an e-mail tutor can provide? I think not. While receiving an essay that is out of our tutoring “comfort zone” is a challenge of our ability (and to our self-conception as a source of authority), this very lack of comfort, this apparent weakness, can be a strength.

In the course of attempting to respond productively to papers well beyond my ken (and often feeling I've failed miserably), I gradually developed some ideas about how to approach doing e-mail tutoring outside my areas of expertise. The techniques I outline below do not replace a deep familiarity with the subject matter, but they offer a way to use a lack of familiarity with a subject to respond practically to content issues and also to offer some types of insight that a master of the discipline might not give.

### 1. BE HONEST AND BRAVE

When receiving a paper from a student, I do not want to disappoint him by saying I don't have a clue what he's talking about. After all, I'm the tutor. I'm there to provide assistance and wisdom. Acknowledging ignorance is counterintuitive given my desire to meet student expectations, my (perceived) role as a source of information, and my own ego as an intellectual.

Despite these instincts, I've found it best to openly acknowledge my unfamiliarity with the subject matter. Many writing teachers know that it's easy to spot the telltale signs of students faking their way through an essay. This identification works both ways. A chemistry student is almost certainly going to detect my efforts to drop in random scraps of knowledge about inert gases or electron shells as either factually wrong or irrelevant—obvious details that don't help her in creating a paper that might be accepted at a conference. I'll build more credibility by writing something like the following:

Hi Trish! I'll be honest with you: I just got through high school chemistry by the skin of my teeth, so your research report on radioactive isotopes is probably a little over my head in terms of the specific topic, but as an interested reader, here are some things I'd suggest to make the writing itself stronger. Let's start with the thesis. The thesis is the cornerstone of any research writing, no matter what the subject is. You need to make a clear claim and explain why this claim is important (or should be) to your readers. As I read your essay, I wasn't quite sure I could pick out what the central claim of the essay was. That might be just my own lack of familiarity with your topic, but it could also be that you can make your claim clearer. My general feeling was that your main point was what you say at the end of the second paragraph. . . .



### Assistant Director of the Writing Center Drew University

This is a full-time, 9-month staff position in a developing and busy center. The ideal candidate will be a motivated self-starter who can also work collaboratively with a wide range of constituents. The assistant director will teach 4 credits each semester.

Requirements: MA in English or related field is required, Ph.D. preferred. At least two years of writing center experience and two years of teaching college-level writing are required. Administrative experience is preferred. Must be able to work independently and collaboratively and possess excellent communication skills.

Review of applications will begin August 16 and will continue until the position is filled. Please e-mail cover letter, resume and the names and contact information of three professional references to hr810-1@drew.edu.

To enrich education through diversity, Drew University is an AA/EOE

## TAKE NOTE

### MIDDLE EAST NORTH AFRICA WRITING CENTERS ALLIANCE

Call for Papers  
February 17-18, 2011  
American University of Sharjah  
Dubai, UAE  
“*Situating, Sustaining,  
and Serving*”  
Keynote Speaker: Ann Mott

MENAWCA and the 2011 Conference Chairs, Maria Elftheriou and Lynne Ronesi (AUS), invite a broad range of proposals for presentations that explore the themes of the conference. See the conference website for further information about the theme and conference proposal guidelines: <<http://menawca.org/13.html>>. Please send proposals as MS Word attachments to both reviewers at <[meleftheriou@aus.edu](mailto:meleftheriou@aus.edu)> and <[lronesi@aus.edu](mailto:lronesi@aus.edu)>.

Abstract submission deadline: Nov. 1, 2010.  
Notice of acceptance: Nov. 15, 2010.

Don't be shy about telling students what you offer. Acknowledging unfamiliarity with a subject or with the discursive practices of a particular discipline doesn't mean that I need to apologize for having the temerity to offer advice. I am, after all, an expert in writing, and this is ultimately what the student is asking for help with. An essay analyzing the symbolic motif of locked doors in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and a report on a laboratory experiment on laser refraction differ in many ways, but they are both designed to organize complex information in a way that communicates it clearly to an academic audience. There are many rules that apply to both texts that we as tutors are able to share with the authors, regardless of the differing levels of familiarity with the specific subjects.

### 2. ASK QUESTIONS

A bit of oft-repeated Zen wisdom is that in the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities, while in the expert's mind, there are few. While a bit esoteric, this saying has its roots in a practical reality of tutoring outside of one's disciplinary comfort zone. As a tutor who is less than an expert in the specific field, I am in a position to pose questions that may well open up the author's mind to new ways of explaining insights. As a teacher, I often learn most about a subject when attempting to explain it to an audience that is unfamiliar with it and asks questions that prompt me to think about it anew. As a tutor, I have a chance to be such an audience for authors.

It's here that we encounter a difference between online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring. Sitting across the table from a student, I can ask her a series of questions, get immediate responses, and follow up with new questions. It's also easy for me to point to a section of the text that is escaping me and ask the student to explain it to me in her own words—a technique that often helps students find clearer ways of expressing themselves in writing.

When interacting in an online environment, this sort of give and take is more difficult or at least more time consuming. What's often helpful is to formulate a few specific questions prompted by parts of the text that seem particularly important. To be effective, these questions should go beyond the elemental issues (e.g., “What's a quark, anyway?”), focusing queries that combine what you feel you understand from the paper with a request for clarification (e.g., “As I read the paper, it's clear that one thing you're assuming is that research into quarks is incredibly important to the field of physics. Why do you feel this way? As a reader, I'd be interested in your thoughts on that.”)

The larger issue here is that being less than an authority in the subject matter can actually help me to identify exactly those issues that might go “under the radar” of an expert, allowing me to remind the author that the main purpose of writing is not to impress a faculty member or journal review board with the number of citations included in the paper or the breezy use of technical jargon, but to clearly and effectively communicate ideas to an audience who seeks a better understanding of the subject.

### 3. REFRAME POINTS IN YOUR OWN WORDS

A technique that goes hand-in-hand with asking questions is reframing an idea in one's own words. As with asking questions, this is something that becomes a bit more formal in an online environment than when the tutoring is done “live.” When sitting with a student, I can stop and put an idea into my own words to test my understanding of it, get feedback from the writer, and use this exchange as a way of figuring out if a topic needs to be explained more clearly.

Even given the more static interaction of online tutoring, reframing is a technique that can still help. If I'm faced with an essay on the effects of radiation on DNA, much of the terminology will be above my head. Still, I should be able to pick up the gist of the main points. To test my understanding, I could use reflective writing, phrasing what I understand to be the central idea in my own words. Perhaps

at a specific spot in the essay that seems both pivotal and a bit unclear (at least to me), I might simply write, “The main idea of this section seems to be that radiation changes the physical structure of DNA, and your experiment examines one particular way (among many) that this process happens. Is this an accurate summary of what you want your readers to take away from this part of the paper?” I’d likely place this sort of question at the end of a paragraph, set off by brackets and in a different color, or use the comment feature available in most word processing programs, rather than insert it in the middle of a paragraph (which would have the typographical effect of “interrupting” the author). On the other hand, putting such tactical questions at the very end of the essay might lose the sense of connection between my question and the specific part of the essay that inspired it.

On a larger scale, I might include a lengthier comment at the end of the essay, addressing what I see as the main idea of the paper itself, summarizing the concepts as a layperson. For example, I might write something like the following:

The point of the essay seems to be that the interaction between radiation and DNA is more complex than has often been thought, and that this is important to understand because it might affect the way radiation is used in medical treatment and how we might treat those who have been accidentally exposed to radiation. Is that an accurate summary of what you want your audience to come away from the paper with?

This reflective reading does two things. First, it tells the author what I, as a stand-in for the audience, take away from the essay. Perhaps I don’t understand the details, but it will help the author to know if my understanding of the main idea of the sentence, paragraph, or paper corresponds with her conception of the main idea. Second, it suggests to the author that there are multiple ways of phrasing the main idea. In reframing an idea in my own words, I might (intentionally or not) give the author an idea for explaining the topic more clearly or succinctly. Think about the ways in which a question during a class discussion—even a seemingly simple one asking for clarification—can open up a line of thought about a topic that you wouldn’t have considered before.

#### 4. PLAY THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

When responding to a paper that seems over my head, I remind myself that while I don’t know everything there is to know about, say, the specifics of an experiment in molecular physics, neither does the implied audience of the student’s paper. True, a paper on molecular physics is likely to be written with an audience in mind that is versed in that general subject, but that doesn’t mean that the student doesn’t need to clearly explain the specifics of the experiment in detail. I might not be a member of this implied audience, but as an intelligent reader, I should get a feel for what’s being said. Specific jargon and facts aside, if the general thrust of a particular point is beyond me, it might be beyond the intended reader’s grasp as well. At the very least, it is likely not being expressed as clearly as it could be.

On a more tactical level, a clunky sentence is a clunky sentence is a clunky sentence. A mixed metaphor is just as mixed in a paper on neurobiology as it is in an essay about Walt Whitman. As a tutor, I’m playing the role of the audience and am in a reasonably good position to do so. No, I might not have a doctorate in the subject being discussed, but I am an intelligent, intellectually curious person with good reading skills and a sensitivity to the way ideas are expressed. This makes me a fairly able stand-in for the intended audience of any academic work. If I can’t make heads or tails of the essay, chances are good that it could use some revision. By telling a writer I’m having trouble following a section of a paper, I’m alerting him that this section needs extra attention. For example, I might write to a student who submitted an economics paper:

When you make your main claim in the introduction that your paper “reveals a relationship” between the Laffer Curve and the dynamics of hedge funds, I’m not quite sure if you’re saying that the Laffer Curve helps explain how hedge funds operate, or if you’re saying that examining hedge funds

## TAKE NOTE

### INTERNATIONAL WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION AND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PEER TUTORING IN WRITING

Nov. 4-6, 2010

Baltimore, MD

*“Safe Harbors or Open Seas?  
Navigating Currents in Writing Center  
Work”*

Keynotes: Ashley Jones; Andrea  
Lunsford

The Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association will host the International Writing Centers Association joined conference with the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (IWCA-NCPTW) in Baltimore, Inner Harbor, MD, November 4-6, 2010.

The conference will be held in the Sheraton Baltimore City Center Hotel, which is only a few blocks from the exciting Inner Harbor. Please visit the conference website at <<http://www.mawcaonline.org/iwca/index.html>> for information and registration information.

Questions can be directed to conference co-chairs Barb Lutz ([lutz@english.udel.edu](mailto:lutz@english.udel.edu)) and John Nordlof ([jnordlof@eastern.edu](mailto:jnordlof@eastern.edu)).

tells us something about the concept of the Laffer curve. You might consider phrasing your thesis more clearly and strongly to let your reader know exactly what you're setting out to prove. I don't need to know anything about economics to pick up on the fact that the thesis isn't as clear as it should be, or to explain to the author why it's not clear.

## 5. MODEL GOOD WRITING

The previous four strategies share a common denominator: they each allow me the opportunity to model clear, coherent writing about the topic. Again we return to the idea that there is an advantage to being a bit naïve in the ways of certain fields. All disciplines have their own jargon and discursive styles. Oddly enough, the humanities, and literary studies in particular, have been especially guilty of creating a whole specialized language that is often impenetrable to those beyond the discipline (and even to some of us within it). Any discipline needs its own shorthand and terminology, but, at the same time, academic discourse should exist for the dispersal of knowledge, not for the mystification of it.

What does this have to do with online tutoring? By engaging with the topic from a place outside of the discipline, you can model for a student another vocabulary, another voice, that might be used in discussing the topic. More generally, you are simply providing examples of clear, coherent sentences. Even if much of what you say is devoted to describing what a comma splice is and how to avoid it, you are modeling the skill of passing along information in an easy-to-understand manner.

Ultimately, as an e-mail tutor, I am participating in exactly the process that my student is practicing: communicating knowledge via the written word. Even if I'm unable to engage in the specifics of her knowledge on anything more than a superficial level, by modeling the skill of expressing what are often abstract and complex ideas in clear, easy-to-understand prose, I am at the very least offering an example to follow, which is often the most useful thing a teacher can do.

At a bare minimum, this modeling should include editing and proofreading comments to students. Even when pressed for time, I try to take a moment to read through what I've written to catch obvious grammar errors, typos, awkward phrasings, repetitive sentence structure . . . all those things we tell our students are so important in establishing their ethos as writers.

## CONCLUSION

In an ideal world, there would be plenty of tutors who are versed both in specific subjects across the curriculum and in writing pedagogy. As things stand, most writing centers could use many more tutors than they have just to cover the fairly familiar ground of first-year composition and English classes. And there's no doubt that something is sacrificed when a tutor is asked to respond to submissions that fall well beyond his discipline.

What I suggest, however, is that this sacrifice need not make us feel embarrassed, guilty, or apprehensive about dealing with such work. It's simply one of the challenges writing tutors are asked to face, but one that's certainly manageable. As more and more emphasis is placed on inter- and multi-disciplinarity in the academy, the proper attitude for writing tutors, e-mail and otherwise, is not to wring our hands in anxiety over how we will manage as we are asked to tutor beyond our official subject areas, but to take pride in the fact that our own skills are being increasingly valued by those across the disciplines. We can and do provide service for those who see us not in terms of our lack of knowledge in their own field of expertise, but as the source of insights we are singularly able to give them. ♦



## BOOK REVIEW

Beth Hewett. *The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann:Boynnton/Cook, 2010. ISBN: 0-86709-601-2. (\$29.38; 208 pp. paperback)

◆ Susan Mueller

St. Louis College of Pharmacy  
St. Louis, MO

In mid-June of 2010, a lengthy discussion on the effectiveness of online writing courses occurred on the WPA-L listserv. Lasting a week and dozens of postings, this discussion demonstrated the wide range of opinions and strong depth of feeling about online learning within the writing community. While OWLs (online writing labs) have been a presence for many years, online learning—and therefore online conferencing—in writing classes has not. Beth L. Hewett's *The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors* has joined this lively conversation at a critical moment. How does this book speak to the controversy? How does it speak to writing centers?

Hewett's book discusses online writing instruction (OWI) both at a conceptual level and in specific detail. Her dominant point is that OWI is its own medium. It is not just a pale substitute for face-to-face instruction, but rather a discipline and practice in its own right. As such, text is not only the object of the conference (i.e., what the student is working to improve); it is also the modality through which the tutor must tutor, the teacher must teach, and the student must learn. However, properly utilizing this modality requires the teacher/tutor to make far more conscious, deliberate choices in language than face-to-face conferences require. In Hewett's words, "The text becomes the instructional voice" (xviii). She selects three areas of critical importance to focus on: using OWI as a means to model writing (and revision) practice for students; providing specific opportunities for student learning/practice called "targeted mini-lessons"; and directing students through specific steps on how to improve subsequent drafts.

*The Online Writing Conference* gives concrete examples of online sessions throughout to illustrate Hewett's points. These examples are one of the highlights of the book, and they are instructive even if the reader is skeptical about the usefulness of OWI. These conference scripts and action plans deal with numerous aspects of writing conferences, and they anchor the discussions that follow. For beginners, these are invaluable. For more experienced users, they carry an element of déjà vu, but they can be interesting nonetheless. They provide fodder—both as examples and as discussion points—for training new writing tutors. These examples also highlight for us that our students are "digital natives," people who have been immersed in and shaped by an online environment for their entire lives. This means that for them the conventions of written discourse are chiefly online conventions (e.g., "R U there? LOL."), so OWI may seem natural to them in ways it doesn't to us. These "digital natives" are used to the short paragraphs and bulleted lists found on the Web, so chunking information to accommodate this sensibility makes sense. (Given that the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* gave a large nod to Web-like structure, this idea isn't unique to Hewett.)

However, this comfort is false because it blurs the distinction between the online conventions students are accustomed to and traditional written forms. If our students are "digital natives," then their native language is texting/chat. To the extent that OWI incorporates these elements, it will seem familiar and attractive to students. However, that is part of the problem, not part of the solution. These two forms of discourse do exist independently, and the dichotomy between them is real. One of the challenges of

# TAKE NOTE

## SOUTH CENTRAL WRITING CENTERS ASSOCIATION

Call for Proposals  
Feb. 17-19, 2011  
Houston, TX  
University of Houston-Clear Lake  
"Connect & Reflect"

Keynote: Lisa Ede  
Featured speakers: Sally Crisp, Barry  
Maid, James McDonald, and  
Kevin Davis

Conference features include a conference blog, tips on preparing conference proposals, tip on creating a poster presentation, brainstorming, proposal review, collaborators' corner, and Twitter function.

Conference Chair: Chloe Diepenbrock,  
Diepenbrock@uhcl.edu; <www.uhcl.edu/writingcenter>.

Proposal deadline: Oct. 1, 2010. Please use our online proposal form on the conference website: <<http://ualr.edu/scwca/2011%20Conf%20Website/callforpapers.html>>.

teaching students to write in the digital age is teaching them to navigate these parallel universes, a challenge which many students would like to ignore. By extension, one of the challenges of OWI is teaching formal writing conventions in an online environment where text/chat is the norm for students. That environment may make this harder, not easier.

The strongest part of the book is in the middle, where the discussion turns to establishing relationships with students. Hewett is articulate and persuasive when she talks about the etiquette of demonstrating care for students and care for ourselves. Apropos of students, she states, “Nothing can substitute for genuine caring in a writing conference, and to enable such caring, sometimes it is necessary to release other concerns.” And later on the same page, “When the instructor is open to it, students will become the primary focus, irrespective of the medium” (62). Indeed, these statements resonate about any writing conference in any environment, and Hewett’s ability to translate our experience in discrete and concrete ways is impressive. She emphasizes that the relationship remains paramount, and that it will facilitate student learning even as we focus on the written word: “Especially when teaching online, we need to remember that the writer learns through writing” (62). She gives us a “Conferencing Action Plan for caring for students” as one of the goal-oriented mini-lessons she describes in the introduction, with practical advice for OWI beginners as well as for seasoned veterans. Perhaps more touching is the section entitled “Letting Students Care for Us.” She states, “[S]ome of the same strategies that enable online instructors to demonstrate their caring for students—calling them by name, using details of their lives, accepting flawed writing—also enable students to find their instructors to be interesting, worthwhile human beings” (64). This is one of the rare opportunities that OWI as a caring environment provides to us: an unguarded moment to demonstrate our own process and our own vulnerability as writers. This is good stuff.

These moments do double duty for Hewett, who uses them to provide students with a living example of writing process. She perceives students’ need for models of writing process—and the scarcity of those models—as a critical stumbling block to their growth as writers. Students, she observes, expect writing to be both effortless and flawless on the first draft, and she is saddened by their belief that they are the only ones whose writing requires revision and deeper thought. Accordingly, Hewett describes a classroom experience where she wrote an essay in class. Starting from the students’ topic suggestions, she wrote and revised the paper as the students watched. Then she used their observations as a jumping-off point for the classroom discussion. Both the essay and her writing process were marvels to students—not for their measured prose, but for Hewett’s “tendencies to hesitate, return to previous sentences, and scratch out or add text” (65). She used this class project as a way to illustrate both the specific writing behaviors and the nature of the process itself, each draft requiring thoughtful analysis and reworking of the text. She strongly believes that OWI provides this same opportunity to instructors and students.

One significant downside to *The Online Writing Conference* is an apparent uncertainty about audience. The author tells us in the introduction that “[i]n addition to composition teachers/tutors, I hope that both English studies and writing across the curriculum based (WAC) educators will see themselves as potential online instructors who can apply this book to their online instruction” (xxii). She also explains, “This book provides a starting point for peer tutors, as well as novice teachers/tutors” (10). The problem is that while most of this book, with its practical details and clearly defined patterns, is indeed addressing those new to OWI and perhaps new to teaching writing, at times it seems to address a more sophisticated audience. These passages undercut her message and will lose many of her readers. For example, early in the book she includes a discussion of pedagogical theory. Although this discussion is brief, it is likely to trigger more questions than it answers, especially for people outside of composition. Complicating the situation is the fact that the audience she addresses is very broad, and these disparate groups come with separate agendas and different skills. Tutors and writing teachers are not the same audience, even if they are both brand new to the online field.

Whether *The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors* is groundbreaking or merely timely depends entirely on the reader and the reader’s needs. If you have been running an OWL for a decade or two, you might find this book to be interesting but nothing more. On the other hand, if you are embarking on online tutoring as a new mission, this book may provide an enormously useful introduction to OWI for you and your tutors. ♦

## BOOK REVIEW

Mya Poe, Neal Lerner, and Jennifer Craig. *Learning to Communicate in Science and Engineering: Case Studies from MIT*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2010. ISBN: 9780262162470 (\$35. 272 pp. paperback)

◆ Ted Roggenbuck  
Bloomsburg University  
Bloomsburg, PA

As an inexperienced writing center director new to my university, where the writing center is an important point of contact for faculty with any and all writing-related concerns, I am grateful for resources that help me fulfill my responsibilities and improve our center. I especially value information that might facilitate communication with faculty in the sciences and increase our center's contact with their students. For me, then, and for others seeking resources to better understand the challenges faculty in the sciences face in helping their students learn how to communicate as scientists, *Learning to Communicate in Science and Engineering* provides an important examination of writing in the sciences. Though writing center people are not the authors' intended primary audience, this text is a valuable resource for thinking about how to help writers in any field. It is also an engaging read, in large part due to the case studies it presents and the frank discussion of the mixed experiences of trying to help writers develop.

In six chapters, Poe, Lerner, and Craig present data from surveys, focus groups, interviews, and analyses of students' work from five communication-intensive (CI) classes in scientific disciplines at MIT that they feel represent "highly effective and efficient CI instruction methods—current 'best practices'" (15). They lay a clear theoretical foundation for their work in the introduction. Drawing in part upon socio-cognitive theories and North American genre theory, the authors identify "four key aspects" of helping students develop as communicators in science and engineering classes: "identity, authenticity, argumentation, and teamwork and collaboration" (18). Each chapter explores one of these four "key aspects." Chapter 1, "First Steps in Writing a Scientific Identity," and Chapter 2, "Taking On the Identity of a Professional Researcher," explore the significance of identity formation to students' communication projects; Chapter 3, "Carving Out a Research Niche," argues for the value of "authentic" writing situations; Chapter 4, "Learning to Argue with Data," examines how to help students grasp and manage persuasion, especially in its visual forms. Chapter 5, "Writing and Speaking Collaboratively," covers the pervasiveness and complexity of collaboration within most scientific fields. Chapter 6, "Conclusions," addresses the implications of this research project for faculty and program administrators. Finally, two appendices offer the methods and instruments used in the project.

One problem I experienced with the text was some envy for the resources MIT brings to helping students develop as writers. Nearly all of the classes described had both content and communication faculty. My initial reaction to the descriptions of some courses was: Well, of course, one should be able to help students with that much support. Overcoming that and moving to a more constructive mindset, I was able to consider how the important aspects of what was described might be modified to suit my campus. In their introduction the authors anticipate reactions like mine:

It is important to note that it is not our intent to create a divide between what is possible at a resource-rich institution such as MIT and other institutions not similarly fortunate. If anything, the questions we raise in these case studies and the limits of our instruction are applicable to many institutions struggling to create meaningful educational opportunities in engineering communication. (17)

## NEWS

WLN REVIEWERS:  
2009-2010

Reviewing submissions for *WLN* is an important professional service that deserves our gratitude and appreciation for the work involved. To each of the reviewers whose names are listed on the *WLN* website (<http://writinglabnewsletter.org/submission4.php>), we extend a very deeply felt thank you for your efforts and for maintaining high standards of scholarship in our field.

Muriel Harris, Editor  
Janet Auten, Associate Editor  
Michael Mattison, Associate Editor



**Colby College  
Assistant Professor of English/  
Writer's Center Director**

Tenure-track Assistant Professor position/Writer's Center Directorship for a composition specialist with a Ph.D. in Rhetoric/Composition or its equivalent. Responsibilities include administering the Writer's Center; teaching introductory and advanced writing courses; and taking a leadership role in campus initiatives to improve communication skills. Experience with ESL necessary; experience with Service Learning desirable. Ph.D. needs to be in hand by August 2011. For information on our Writer's Center program please visit: <[http://www.colby.edu/academics\\_cs/acaddept/writerscenter/index.cfm](http://www.colby.edu/academics_cs/acaddept/writerscenter/index.cfm)>.

To apply, please send a cover letter; CV; three letters of recommendation; statement of teaching philosophy, research interests and administrative experience; and a writing sample of no more than 25 pages to Professor Katherine Stubbs; Chair of the Rhetoric and Composition Search; 5280 Mayflower Hill; Colby College; Waterville, ME 04901.

Review of applications will begin on Nov. 15 and continue until the position is filled. Preliminary interviewing will take place at MLA in January. Colby is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer. For more information about the College, please visit the Colby Web site: <[www.colby.edu](http://www.colby.edu)>.

In fact, a strength of the text is the use the authors make of the disparity between the resources on campuses like MIT and other campuses. The case studies and the authors' presentation of both the successful and the not-so-successful outcomes in each of the courses make the text both a valuable piece of scholarship and a highly readable and compelling one.

I benefitted from reading the authors' application of the work of composition and communication theorists to writing in the sciences in their introduction. Particularly helpful is the gloss on identity formation and the discussion of how much developing writers' identities as students can inhibit their development as communicators of scientific ideas. Having had several discussions with frustrated faculty about how students' fixed focus on grades sometimes overwhelms their grasp of writing as an act of communication, I'm grateful for a fresh theoretical perspective to explore. The introduction will also support writing center training and discussions of the value of posing questions in our tutoring sessions that make writers explain the decisions they have made in constructing their texts. In answering such questions for tutors rather than faculty, writers take on the role of emerging scientists explaining science and scientific communication to novices.

The book also offers enticing assignments and activities to share with faculty and with writing center staff, including several forms of peer and faculty feedback deemed effective in helping writers develop. One of the important takeaways is that for students, "learning to communicate like a professional requires faculty, mentors, and teaching assistants to respond to student writing in ways that enact professional expectations" (110). One fascinating activity described in chapter 4 comes from a quantitative psychology class in which faculty include the filmmaking concept of storyboarding. The purpose of storyboarding is to help students understand the lab report and data involved as a narrative intended to move or persuade rather than a mere accumulation of facts (118). In the writing center, it is interesting to consider how storyboarding either an ideal session or a recently-experienced session might reinforce for tutors the idea that what happens for the writer in a session probably matters more than what happens to the writer's text.

One particularly compelling aspect of this text for me is the frank acknowledgement of how variable and complex it can be to attempt to effectively design for or measure students' development as writers. In his forward, James Paradis, Head of the Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies at MIT, praises the text's "honesty about the messiness of the undertaking [of the communication-intensive classes studied], with all its conflicts, misunderstandings, lack of closure, and variability" (viii). I agree. A typical example of this honesty comes from the final chapter in which the authors discuss possible implications of their research:

Thus, an implication for pedagogy is that assignments have to be flexible enough to accommodate students at their various stages of development and that our assessment of the success or failure of those assignments is not necessarily based on whether students receive a high mark on the final product. For example, the success of a particular assignment might be that it exposed students to the real work of a biological engineer, and they discovered that they did not like it and switched to a more suitable major. (191-92)

They draw a parallel between assignments that help students rethink their career paths and failed scientific experiments that help shape future experiments; both can be essential to the learning process.

On my campus, this text's most direct application would be as a text to be discussed at a forum in our university's Teaching and Learning Enhancement Center, where interested faculty meet to share research and classroom strategies. I will also recommend it to faculty who come to the writing center or seek

me out because they are insecure about or dissatisfied with their own efforts to help their students. This text offers them best practices, activities, and assignments to adapt for their students and has compelling case studies for them to consider; it also creates a clear and compelling depiction of the limitations and challenges of this endeavor, which might help faculty in their self-assessments so that they can make adjustments to those aspects of their pedagogy they can control, but also so that they might examine difficult or frustrating assignments and more readily recognize the positive results they may have achieved.

Because the authors' primary readers are not writing center people, applications within the writing center are less direct but no less important. One way I will use the text will be as a model of multi-method research. What I am most immediately excited about, though, is being able to draw from the authors' discussions of identity formation to improve both our training and our efforts to promote the writing center to faculty in the sciences. Though our undergraduate tutors cannot become experts in the disciplinary conventions of every community on campus, our situation as outsiders asking writers to explain their choices and rhetorical situations can help writers' formation of discursive identities. Our goal becomes to get them to communicate with us more as emerging scientists explaining and representing the field, and less as students just trying to get an A. Actually our goal does not change—we want writers to be active participants in sessions, discussing their choices and the constraints of their rhetorical situations; however, this text offers language and theoretical perspectives for explaining to faculty and tutors how our centers' goals for writers can be effective for students working to become communicators of scientific ideas. ♦

---

### SEEN ON WCENTER:

When my now-college-aged daughter was learning to read and saw the sign “Academic Enhancement Center” outside the door to my Tutoring and Writing Center, she said: “Mama! You work in the academic enchantment center!”

I still think of our center as a place of academic enchantment.

♦ *Diane E. Gruenberg*  
*The College of New Jersey*  
*Ewing, NJ*

---

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: WRITING CENTERS AND DISABILITY

Abstracts (approximately 500 words) for potential contributions for a new edited collection tentatively titled *Whatever it Takes: Challenges Faced by Writing Programs in Open Admission Institutions*. This collection will investigate the issues faced by writing centers at open admission institutions, especially community colleges.

Contributions will ultimately fall into three general categories:

- Research on tutoring writers at open admission institutions,
- Research and narratives of experience of working with underprepared students, students with disabilities, and/or English Language Learners.
- First-person accounts, both narrative and theoretical, of the experience of tutoring underprepared students, students with disabilities, and/or English Language Learners.

We invite both writing center and scholars in other areas such as Developmental Studies to participate, and we welcome informal inquiries. Abstracts should be sent to Mary Beth Moore at [mbmoore@allegany.edu](mailto:mbmoore@allegany.edu). Please include full contact information with your abstract. Deadline is November 30, 2010.

# TUTOR'S COLUMN

## SHORT-TIME TUTORIAL STRATEGIES

◆ *Kathryn Terzano*  
*The Ohio State University*  
*Columbus, OH*

Our satellite tutoring center occupies a single room with two tables, eight chairs, and a nice view of the medical campus. It's where I spent three evenings a week each quarter last year, conducting twenty-minute tutorials for walk-in clients. Throughout each quarter and each year, some of these short-time tutorial clients become regulars, knowing they can count on our tutors' reliable presence Monday-Thursday; others come once with a last-minute paper, cover letter, or personal statement, and that's all the help they seek. These tutorials differ from our regular appointments in several ways. During our daytime hours, tutorials last fifty minutes, are by appointment only, and take place either online or face-to-face at our main center in the heart of campus. We offer short-time tutorials in the evening because it gives us a way to accommodate the greatest number of clients during only a couple of hours, whereas during the day, time permits us to offer longer tutorials. The challenge of adjusting between fifty-minute and twenty-minute tutorials took some work for me, but I found that short-time tutorials can be just as effective as longer tutorials if some guidelines and strategies are kept in mind.

The start of the tutorial sets the tone for the remaining twenty (or fifty) minutes. Although it's tempting to rush to begin in short-time tutorials, I found that it's important not to sacrifice pleasantries for the sake of time. I made a point to say hello, introduce myself, ask how the client was doing, and then ask what he/she wanted to work on. When I tried skipping straight from hello to "What would you like to work on tonight?" I found that the client, more often than not, seemed to feel flustered and hurried. Plus, where our regular clients are concerned, it helped to greet them by name and ask about their progress since the last session.

Next, I paid attention to what the client wanted to work on. During fifty-minute sessions, I might have time to read the first three or four pages of a paper and then reevaluate what we might discuss. For our short-time tutorials, I had to be clear about what we could and could not cover. Many students bring dissertations to the satellite center and work on them for twenty minutes each evening. We can accommodate them so long as they realize that the sessions are, in fact, only twenty minutes long and there's no way to get through an entire chapter in one sitting. On more than one occasion, I had to correct a well-intentioned student who thought we could read through his or her entire dissertation in just a couple of nights. As another example, if a seven-page paper is brought in, the tutor needs to negotiate whether the client wants to concentrate on the thesis, the introduction and conclusion, or the organization, as likely not all of these can be addressed in twenty minutes. While I might have had my own opinion about what seemed to be the most prominent issue, I learned that I needed to listen closely to what was most concerning to the client.

If the piece of writing was a class assignment, a personal statement, an article submission, or something else where a deadline would be relevant, I would ask the client when the due date was. An idiosyncrasy about our evening walk-in tutorials is that we tend to get a lot of last-minute assignments. Many times, the due date is the next day or, if we are lucky, the day after that. Knowing the due date helps guide the tutor so that, for instance, a first-year student isn't advised to start from scratch on his nine-page paper that's due tomorrow.

After a while, I started to get a feel for when fifteen minutes had passed, and I had the wall clock and my wrist watch to confirm my intuition. At this point, I would tell the client that we had “a few” minutes left, and ask if there were any last questions or points that he wanted to discuss. Most of the time, there was a last urgent question that would take up the remaining time. While I tried to give this reminder during our fifty-minute tutorials as well, I found that this reminder—more than anything else—helped ease the shock of the short-time tutorial being as short as it is. This was also a way of giving clients a feeling of control over the tutorial and confidence that I wasn’t going to cut them off without giving them an opportunity to voice any last concerns.

Sometimes, it becomes apparent to the tutor that with just another five or ten minutes past the allotted twenty minutes, some real progress could be made. If another client is waiting, the first client unfortunately has to be told that the tutorial does, in fact, need to end. However, I want to stress how vital it is to remind the client about the times and ways in which he can return for another tutorial. During less busy times, such as during the first few weeks of fall quarter, not all tutorial slots will be filled and there may not be another client waiting. Tutors need to use their discretion in cases like these. Does the client need just another few minutes, or does he really need a second tutorial? If he only needs another five or ten minutes, it is probably beneficial to extend the appointment. However, the tutor needs to tell the client that it is only possible because no one is waiting; otherwise, the client may come to expect to always be able to lengthen appointments.

Almost as important as setting the tone of the tutorial at the start is giving encouragement at the end of the tutorial. Depending on the client and the piece of writing, encouragement might take the form of wishing the client good luck or summarizing what was worked on and reiterating what still needs to be done. The tutor can confirm that the client has an idea about where to go from there, that she doesn’t feel lost. In many cases, the client would need an additional tutorial. If her deadline would allow, I would remind the client that she could return the next evening or schedule a fifty-minute appointment during our regular hours. I also brought along our flyers from the main campus with our contact information to pass out to clients.

One challenge of potentially having six back-to-back twenty-minute tutorials is finding the necessary energy and enthusiasm for each client. During busier times of the quarter, such as mid-terms and finals, a tutor won’t have any down time during her two evening hours at the satellite center. As soon as one tutorial is finished, the next client sits down for his twenty-minute session. Finding a way to recharge, to give each client the best tutoring possible, is up to each tutor. I’m also reminded of something a coworker said, “The client should be working at least as hard as you are.” Of course, it’s hard work to tutor. But, if I’m working harder than the client is, then am I helping him or am I doing his work for him?

With a positive attitude, good time management skills, and a realistic idea of what can be accomplished in twenty minutes, short-time tutorials can be successful and can possibly reach clients who are otherwise unable to make it to the longer daytime tutorials. The convenience that short-time, evening tutorials offers to clients is invaluable; likewise, there is a certain appeal of fast-paced, dynamic tutorials for tutors. I’m grateful for the time I spent tutoring clients during our evening hours, and I hope that other tutors can use these strategies to strengthen their own short-time tutorials.





Muriel Harris, editor  
The RiCH Company, LLC  
260 E. Highland Ave. MH700  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
Address Service Requested

---

## CALENDAR FOR WRITING CENTER ASSOCIATIONS

---

**Nov. 3-6, 2010.** International Writing Centers Association/  
National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, in  
Baltimore, MD

**Contact:** Barb Lutz and John Nordlof. E-mail:  
IWCAconference2010@english.udel.edu; conference  
website: <<http://www.mawcaonline.org/iwca>>.

**Feb. 17-18, 2011:** Middle East North Africa Writing Centers  
Alliance, in Dubai, UAE

**Contact:** Maria Elftheriou (meleftheriou@aus.edu) and Lynne  
Ronesi (lronesi@aus.edu); conference website: <<http://menawca.org/13.html>>.

**Feb. 17-19, 2011:** Southeastern Writing Centers Association, in  
Tuscaloosa, AL

**Contact:** Luke Niiler: E-mail: [lpniiler ua.edu](mailto:lpniiler.ua.edu); phone: 205-348-9460.

**Feb. 17-19, 2011:** South Central Writing Centers Association,  
in Houston, TX

**Contact:** Chloe Diepenbrock: E-mail: [Diepenbrock@uhcl.edu](mailto:Diepenbrock@uhcl.edu); confer-  
ence website: <[http://ualr.edu/scwca/2011%20Conf%20Website/  
callforpapers.html](http://ualr.edu/scwca/2011%20Conf%20Website/callforpapers.html)>.