Computer Technology in Writing Centers: Ways to Increase Their Effectiveness in the Instruction of Freshman English and Intercurricular Studies

Christopher King
Western Kentucky University
COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY IN WRITING CENTERS:
WAYS TO INCREASE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS
IN THE INSTRUCTION OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH
AND INTERCURRICULAR STUDIES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Christopher Thomas King
August 1997
COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY IN WRITING CENTERS:
WAYS TO INCREASE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS
IN THE INSTRUCTION OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH
AND INTERCURRICULAR STUDIES

Date Recommended July 21, 1997

Director of Thesis

[Signatures]

Dean, Graduate Studies and Research Date

[Signature] 9/5/97
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER ONE
A Short History of the English Department’s Writing Center ......................... 5

CHAPTER TWO
Room 127 in Relation to Other Writing Centers:
A Bit of History, Some Perceptions, and Goals .............................................. 8

CHAPTER THREE
Pedagogy in the Writing Center ....................................................................... 18

CHAPTER FOUR
Layout and Organization of the Writing Center ........................................... 24

CHAPTER FIVE
Computer Applications in Room 127 for English Composition ............... 36

CHAPTER SIX
Current Trends of Writing Centers and
the Changing Role of Tutors ........................................................................ 52

CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................... 57

APPENDIX

WORKS CITED
Creating a space in Room 127 that is increasingly vital to English 100 is more complicated than just having students write on computers. To maximize our potentials in Room 127, we must deal with a variety of aspects -- the history of the Writing Center, its functions, perceptions of it, pedagogies related to it, and its space, and our goals, for example -- before we simply sit our freshman in front of computers and give them a writing prompt.

Chapter One will provide a brief history of what Room 127’s function has been. This review is necessary so that we can see the growth of our Writing Center to the point where it is presently. This history of our Writing Center and the way it defines itself can help us understand the current state of Room 127 and its function within the English Department. Knowing the history of our Writing Center can give us an understanding as to current perceptions of it and its usage.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss histories, perceptions, and goals of writing centers in general so that we can see where Room 127 stands in relation to them. Noting the progress made at other writing centers can serve as valuable guidelines for possible improvements in Room 127.
What follows in Chapter Three is an overview of writing pedagogies that are relevant to implementing computers and the Writing Center in the English curriculum. Social Constructivist theories and Networking theories are commonly encountered in writing classrooms that implement computers. They allow for a student-centered approach and enhance students’ ownership of text. Writing on a computer can aid a student in seeing writing as a process. The networking capabilities of computers give students more options for conferencing that can help students help themselves. Activity Theory and Complexity Theory are applications from the natural sciences that are beginning to find applications in writing.

In Chapter Four, I will explore the layout and actual space concerns of our Writing Center. Recently, WKU’s English Department has been granted some much needed space in order to expand our Writing Center. Currently, Room 127’s floor plan is inhibiting to certain types of activities which perhaps, in part, limits its usage by faculty. I will look at ways to redesign Room 127 to become more “user friendly” for a variety of teaching styles so that the technology is not a monolith but simply an aid to the professor. These suggestions should also be of benefit when we consider what to do with the new space we have been given. Other spatial concerns will touch upon ways to create an atmosphere that promotes writing, ways to make Room 127 a centripetal force, and ways to de-emphasize authority and ownership of a space.

Though we cannot explore every possible way to use computers in English 100, Chapter Five will cover some practical applications of computers in an English 100 class. One need not be a computer wizard in order to perform these tasks. Quite often, some of these exercises are a computerized version of aspects already implemented in English 100.

The concluding Chapter Six will be an overview of emerging trends in writing centers with an eye on what may be possible in our Writing Center within a few years. I will also touch on ways to better prepare our tutors for some of these
upcoming changes. Some of the speculation in this chapter is intended to promote dialogue concerning the technological changes happening right now that will have implications on our teaching methods and styles in the coming years.

Unfortunately, I cannot explore every aspect of technology related to the classroom, nor can I explore every teaching pedagogy related to writing centers. I try instead to focus on pedagogies and applications that are relevant to increasing the vitality of Room 127 to ENG 100. Because of rapidly expanding technologies and the rising computer capabilities among our students, I hope to show not only how we can make computers more vital to the instruction of such students but also the rationale behind such a belief and the trends that are inevitable. Therefore, I hope to present a relatively thorough examination of the possibilities we now have and an amalgamation of resources and ideas from which to promote further progress and dialogue in the tradition of Room 127.
INTRODUCTION

My interest in hoping to make Room 127 of Cherry Hall (the Writing Center) more vital as an aid to intercurricular study and to instruction in English 100 originated from my experiences with two computer labs over the last five years. For two years at Western Kentucky University (WKU) I have worked in the Writing Center assisting students in one-on-one tutorials regarding General Writing Skills Instruction (GWSI) which corrects problems with grammar, organization, and support in their papers. Also in this lab, I assisted students with basic problems regarding word processing. My function in the Writing Center has been geared toward the correction of writing, and my technological assistance has been mostly limited to basic word processing.

Between my two years at WKU, I worked for three years at Senri Senior High School in Osaka, Japan (Senri). At this school, we had what is referred to as a Language Laboratory (LL) in which a variety of English classes (e.g., Rapid Reading, Foreign Affairs, Current Events, and conversation classes) would meet everyday. Students could go to the LL on breaks or after school for further study. LLs are increasingly common at high schools in Japan. The LL is somewhat similar to Room 103 at Cherry Hall, except the LL at Senri was virtually unlimited technologically. For example, Senri’s LL had desks for forty-four students with two students sharing a desk. In between each student at a desk was a video monitor. Each student had a headset with a microphone to facilitate the practice of speaking English with different members of the class without disturbing those nearby. In front of the class was the teaching console which was equipped with an overhead, a VCR, a CD/laser disk player (LD), and computer hook-ups. We could send a variety of audio/visual material to each student’s desk. In front of the class was a retractable, large size movie screen to be used with a projector. Speakers were mounted in each of the top
corners of the room. We also had the ability to let students answer multiple choice questions by pressing numbers on the control panel of their desks. These results would be computed by our control monitor in the front of the class and printed out. Our computers had Internet, e-mail, and CD ROM capabilities. Occasionally in class, we would conduct a teleclass via a satellite hook-up with another high school, usually in a foreign country. Adjacent to the LL were three rooms which had several televisions hooked to satellite cable capable of picking up broadcasts from foreign countries. We also had a variety of VCR’s, CD players, LD players, and other digital editing machines to aid us in preparing materials for class. When friends would visit me at Senri, they would often remark, in amazement, that they did not realize I was working for NASA.

Despite this amazing array of technology at our fingertips, I was often frustrated by the impracticality of many of the exercises that we would conduct in the LL. My frustration was due in large part to the rigidity of the curriculum in most Japanese high schools (a topic which is far beyond the scope of this thesis). However, many lessons I was required to teach on the LL focused too much on technological wizardry and showmanship rather than on the concern of whether the students were actually learning what we were putting in front of them.

These concerns, plus my practical training in Cherry Hall’s Writing Center, have led to my interest in synthesizing the strengths of Room 127 and Senri’s LL. I believe that a writing center should use emergent technologies to become a vital place in the educational process while remaining grounded in practical applications. In this thesis, I propose such a writing center for WKU’s English Department.

Creating a space in Room 127 that is increasingly vital to English 100 is more complicated than just having students write on computers. To maximize our potentials in Room 127, we must deal with a variety of aspects -- the history of the Writing Center, its functions, perceptions of it, pedagogies related to it, and its space,
and our goals, for example -- before we simply sit our freshman in front of computers and give them a writing prompt.

Chapter One will provide a brief history of what Room 127’s function has been. This review is necessary so that we can see the growth of our Writing Center to the point where it is presently. This history of our Writing Center and the way it defines itself can help us understand the current state of Room 127 and its function within the English Department. Knowing the history of our Writing Center can give us an understanding as to current perceptions of it and its usage.

In Chapter Two, I will deal with histories, perceptions, and goals of writing centers in general so that we can see where Room 127 stands in relation to them. Noting the progress made at other writing centers can serve as valuable guidelines for possible improvements in Room 127.

What follows in Chapter Three is an overview of writing pedagogies that are relevant to implementing computers and the Writing Center in the English curriculum. Social Constructivist theories and Networking theories are commonly encountered in writing classrooms that implement computers. They allow for a student-centered approach and enhance students’ ownership of text. Writing on a computer can aid a student in seeing writing as a process. The networking capabilities of computers give students more options for conferencing that can help students help themselves. Activity Theory and Complexity Theory are applications from the natural sciences that are beginning to find applications in writing.

In Chapter Four, we will deal with the layout and actual space concerns of our Writing Center. Recently, WKU’s English Department has been granted some much needed space in order to expand our Writing Center. Currently, Room 127’s floor plan is inhibiting to certain types of activities which perhaps, in part, limits its usage by faculty. We will look at ways to redesign Room 127 to become more “user friendly” for a variety of teaching styles so that the technology is not a monolith but
simply an aid to the professor. These suggestions should also be of benefit when we consider what to do with the new space we have been given. Other spatial concerns will touch upon ways to create an atmosphere that promotes writing, ways to make Room 127 a centripetal force, and ways to de-emphasize authority and ownership of a space.

Though we cannot explore every possible way to use computers in English 100, Chapter Five will cover some practical applications of computers in an English 100 class. One need not be a computer wizard in order to perform these tasks. Quite often, some of these exercises are a computerized version of aspects already implemented in English 100.

The concluding Chapter Six will be an overview of emerging trends in writing centers with an eye on what may be possible in our Writing Center within a few years. This chapter will also touch on ways to better prepare our tutors for some of these upcoming changes. Some of the speculation in this chapter is intended to promote dialogue concerning the technological changes happening right now that will have implications on our teaching methods and styles in the coming years.

Unfortunately, I cannot explore every aspect of technology related to the classroom, nor can I explore every teaching pedagogy related to writing centers. I try instead to focus on pedagogies and applications that are relevant to increasing the vitality of Room 127 to ENG 100. Because of rapidly expanding technologies and the rising computer capabilities among our students, I hope to show not only how we can make computers more vital to the instruction of such students but also the rationale behind such a belief and the trends that are inevitable. Therefore, I hope to present a relatively thorough examination of the possibilities we now have and an amalgamation of resources and ideas from which to promote further progress and dialogue in the tradition of Room 127.
CHAPTER ONE

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT'S WRITING CENTER

In 1972, the English Department started the Writing Center at Western Kentucky University. In the beginning, the Writing Center was known as the Writing Lab. In the proposal for the inception of the Writing Lab, the founder, John Reiss, summed up its purpose:

The Writing Lab’s purpose will be to provide additional help in the form of individual help for those students in the Freshman English program who are unable for any number of reasons to successfully cope with English 101, in other words, students extremely deficient in writing skills. These students would be those who, although they apparently have never previously been reached in a regular English class, may yet be educable if they are provided with individual assistance. Though these students have been unable to learn such things as punctuation and sentence sense, in most cases the most effective teaching technique has never been used. Most teachers, whether primary, secondary or college teachers, simply do not have the time or energy to devote to remedial help of this nature. However, the effectiveness of this approach has been demonstrated by the Education Department, which is currently offering help to students who have reading problems. Their Reading Lab, which is basically a tutorial program, has been, according to their statistics, quite successful. The Writing Lab, then, will attempt to salvage, through individual assistance, those students who appear unsalvageable.

(Proposal 1)
(For further information about the English Department’s original proposal, please see Appendix One.) We can see from this stated purpose that the Writing Center viewed itself as a place where remedial students go for help with GWSI. The method of instruction in the Writing Center was to be one-on-one tutorials.

From these beginnings, the Writing Lab gradually began to grow. In John Reiss’s “Essay on the Writing Center,” we find that “by 1976 an additional function was added to the Lab. It became a training ground for teaching assistants (graduate students) who began working in the Center, learning about student needs firsthand and learning how to meet those needs” (Essay 2). Gradually the hours were increased. And in the 1980’s, another center was created. Eventually, in the Fall of 1986, the two centers merged to become the Writing Center. A variety of tests administered to freshmen regarding their writing ability also came under the auspices of the Writing Center.

In 1985, the Writing Center got its first computer. By the late 1980’s, the Writing Center had twenty computers. This innovation was beneficial because computers had basic skills programs on the hardware such as Blue Pen. But as the number of computers increased, problems addressed by the Writing Center staff began shifting toward word processing.

A recent statement titled “The Function of the Writing Center” from 1994 again spells out the purpose of the Writing Center:

The primary function of the Writing Center is to offer all Western students free, individualized help with composition and any other writing/English-class concern. In doing so the Writing Center actively supports the English Department in its mission to teach writing, which was explained as follows in the department’s version of the SACS document: “The goal of the English Department’s composition program is to teach students to write college-level prose that is literate, well organized, and serviceable for essay exams,
research papers, and general academic and career purposes.” Also, by virtue of its function, the Writing Center directly supports the goals of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. (Reiss 1)

(To see the full text of this, please see Appendix Two.) Here again, the Writing Center embraces some very necessary and worthwhile pursuits. During the twenty-five year period of establishment and growth, the Writing Center has succeeded very well in providing the services for its students and in meeting the goals implicit in its inception. The founders of the Writing Center certainly could not have foreseen the technological revolution and its progress. However, even after the inclusion of computers in the Writing Center and the emergence of interactive technologies, the Writing Center for the most part still defines itself in the same terms that it used in defining its purpose in 1972.

The advancing computer capabilities, emergent computer technologies, and increasing numbers of computer capable students of the last few years give the Writing Center boundless opportunities that certainly could not have been seen when it began. In making wider use of these opportunities, Room 127’s Writing Center can now become an increasingly vital component to instruction in the English curriculum rather than remaining predominately a space where we send remedial students to work on GWSI with graduate assistants. In order to best take advantage of these opportunities, we must become better acquainted with the history and growth of writing centers. Also, we should not only discuss our perceptions of Room 127 as it is but also our goals for what it can become.
CHAPTER TWO

ROOM 127 IN RELATION TO OTHER WRITING CENTERS: A BIT OF HISTORY, SOME PERCEPTIONS, AND GOALS

In our discussions of better understanding Room 127, it is helpful to see what has been happening at other writing centers, as we can take this knowledge and mold it to fit our needs and goals for Room 127. Therefore, this chapter offers an overview of research on writing centers in general and also on a few writing centers in specific.

When visiting the National Writing Centers Association Home Page on the Internet (http://www2.colgate.edu/diw/NWCA.html), one will find an eight page listing of universities and colleges which have their writing centers "on the web." To review this home page, please see Appendix Three. These sites vary from a basic description of a writing center providing one-on-one tutorials to full-service On-line Writing Centers (OWLs) ranging in services such as providing cyber tutorials to 24-hour grammar hotlines. Of course, the eight page listing is not a complete listing of every university or college providing a writing center (for example, WKU's Writing Center is not listed). But such a home page and the links within it provide a fascinating introduction to the directions writing centers are taking in the age of the Information Superhighway.

The Beginning of Writing Centers

Freshman composition was instituted at Harvard University in 1885 because of a lack of writing skills in the entering freshman class (Conners 3). The faculty of Harvard was very contentious about using their resources to teach remedial skills to students who should already grasp them. Teaching remedial writing skills would limit the amount of time the professors could devote to furthering their scholarship
and the teaching of literature. This contention continues today in virtually every English department in the U.S.

Currently, “The United States is the only nation that requires of most students in higher education a course in what is known as “composition” (Russell 51). Carino has written about the effects of the literacy crises of the 1970s on the teaching of composition. This crisis arose when an increasing number of under-prepared students were allowed to enter college. Because this swell of under-prepared students who were entering college had to take freshman composition, writing centers were instituted at many universities throughout the U.S. As shown in Chapter One, WKU began its writing center in 1972, undoubtedly in the early stages of this crisis.

As writing centers were conceived during this period of a literacy crisis, it naturally follows that their raison d’être would be to quickly remedy the glaring deficiencies in grammar found among freshman. In fact, this was the main purpose in the inception of WKU’s Writing Center — to deal with “those students who appear unsalvageable.” Also as stated in Chapter One in the original purpose for WKU’s Writing Center, a reading lab was implemented by the Education Department to help students who, though they were enrolled in a university, simply could not read. Though Room 127 needs to address this problem of remedial students, it should not be the only area of focus for the future of Room 127.

The Growing Self-examination of Writing Centers

The self-examination of writing centers is a relatively new occurrence given universities’ long tradition of tutorial service. This self-examination on the part of writing centers is proven by the growing field of research focusing on them and the journals now devoted to discussing pedagogy in the writing center:

Since the inception of the Writing Center Newsletter in 1977 and The Writing Center Journal three years later, documenting writing center history is not
difficult. Articles in these journals enable writing center scholars to construct a reasonably detailed history back into the early 1970s, when open admissions initiatives precipitated the growth of writing centers. While this rich data certainly helps centers of today to locate themselves in relation to the past twenty years, little has been said about writing centers before that time. Though not nearly as numerous as today, centers (usually established under the name lab or clinic) did not exist before 1970, and references to them dot historical texts in composition. (Carino 103)

There are also numerous conferences devoted to teaching in writing centers, further allowing for the exchange of information. In addition to such journals, conferences, and scholarship, some universities now offer classes in strategies in utilizing writing centers. Valerie Balester teaches a graduate seminar on writing center theory at Texas A & M (7). Related to these aspects of growing self-examination on the part of writing centers is the growth of tutor training courses, and I refer to such works as James Boswell, Jr.'s at Harrisburg Area Community College (1), Virginia A. Chappell’s at Marquette University (1), and Erica Scott’s (3).

The growing self-examination of writing centers gives WKU’s English Department an ever increasing resource to use in considering its goals for the future of Room 127. The widespread use of computers for word processing and revisions gives the English Department a potentially vital component that it could more fully integrate into the curriculum. As stated before, there should be a goal-driven discussion about what we really want from Room 127 and what purpose we think it should serve in light of the emergent scholarship and technologies.

**Perceptions of Room 127—The Questionnaire**

In reviewing much of the literature on the formation of writing centers, many scholars write about the difficulties in gaining support for such a space. After such a
space is finally carved out, English Departments prevalently view writing centers "as poor cousins of English departments, stereotypical 'remedial fix-it shops' where an unenlightened staff administers current-traditional pedagogy to under prepared and poorly regarded students" (Carino 103). Many scholars also commonly voice their frustration of a perceived lack of respect of writing centers on the part of English departments.

Reading such an inflammatory statement provoked my curiosity as to how WKU's English Department perceived Room 127 and some of its functions. Accordingly, I prepared a questionnaire of twelve statements, leaving space at the end for comments and suggestions. I passed out eighty-two questionnaires (this number included full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and graduate assistants). Unfortunately, I received only eleven responses. Certainly this minimal response cannot gauge the sentiments of the English Department as a whole. However, within these responses, one can see the emergence of some interesting patterns upon which some conclusions may be based. Hopefully the questionnaire can begin a dialogue that will explore such in more detail.

The first eleven questions asked the respondents to gauge their opinion on a commonly used five-point scale (five equals "strongly agree," four equals "agree," three equals "neutral," two equals "disagree," and one equals "strongly disagree"). They were then given a statement for which to give their opinion. The earlier cited quote by Carino regarding the perceptions of writing centers was given on the questionnaire, and statements 1 and 3 were based upon it. (To see the complete questionnaire, please see Appendix Four.) The results for the first eleven responses are as follows: To the left, I have created columns under the corresponding numbers of five, four, three, two, and one. The numbers under these columns show the number of corresponding responses for that particular statement. To the right of these numbers will be the statement:
I agree with Peter Carino.

I think the staff of the Writing Center are well-prepared for their job.

I primarily see the Writing Center as a place where under-prepared or poorly regarded students go for help with writing.

I have a favorable image of the Writing Center.

I think the Writing Center is vital to instruction in ENG 055.

I think the Writing Center is vital to instruction in ENG 100.

I think the Writing Center is vital to instruction in ENG 300.

I think the English Department is using the Writing Center to its fullest potential.

I use the Writing Center as a base for research.

I mainly see the Writing Center as a center for correction.

I think the space allotted to the Writing Center is adequate.

Some of the respondents omitted answers to some statements, thus some of the totals may not equal eleven. Additionally, many of the respondents qualified their answer in the margin. For example, for statement number two, one respondent wrote in the margin, “Some are extremely well-prepared; some don’t know beans and even tell students to do things wrong.” Such statements indicate that there are definite opinions of a more qualitative nature than a quantitatively based questionnaire can reflect. As well however, such statements are encouraging in that they may eventually serve to deepen our understanding of Room 127 and what we seek from it. (To see the typed version of some of the respondents comments, please see Appendix Five.)
Reaching conclusions from a thirteen percent yield is risky. Statement Two’s results are probably inconclusive given the divisions among the answers because three agreed, offset by four who disagreed, and combined with four neutral views. Due to such similar divisions, Statements Three and Ten are also inconclusive. However, since the responses to other statements did seem to cluster rather closely on “agree” or “disagree,” some conclusions are possible.

In Statement 1, I was struck that seven of the eleven respondents were neutral (this was the largest “neutral” total to any of the statements) toward Peter Carino’s negative depiction of writing centers. Given the neutrality to such a remark, I conclude that most of the respondents possibly have little or no concept of what they seek in a writing center. This neutral view toward a writing center is undoubtedly bound to preserve the status quo, for if people have a neutral view of the Writing Center, they likely will have little impetus to change it. This neutrality may help explain why through the course of twenty-five years the purpose of Room 127’s Writing Center has remained basically unchanged.

Statement Four garnered the highest number of concentrated responses on one statement; eight respondents chose number four (i.e., agreed). It is comforting to see that most of the respondents had a favorable image of the Writing Center. The overall positive view of the Writing Center was offset by only one respondent who disagreed. It is interesting to note that eight of these respondents view the Writing Center favorably, in comparison to Statement Eight, where seven respondents disagree with the statement “I think the English Department is using the Writing Center to its full potential.”

This level of support could be construed to indicate that there is support in the English Department for the Writing Center and for what it does. If the overall response to Statement Four is considered in conjunction with the overall response to
Statement Eight, it is possible to speculate that these supporters would be advocates for positive improvements in the Writing Center.

The responses to Statements Five, Six, and Seven show us that the respondents definitely feel that Room 127 is vital to three core writing courses in the English curriculum, lending further support to the conclusion that Writing Center and its usage by the English Department is worthy of further consideration as a vital component to our curriculum. Although this questionnaire did not measure the ways that Room 127 is vital to these courses, it is hoped that further inspection of its vitality may foster an open dialogue on the Writing Center’s purposes and our goals for it. In again considering the responses to Statement Eight, we can conclude that the Writing Center can become more vital to these courses.

Statements Nine and Eleven garnered the highest number of disagreements. Statement Nine shows that most of the respondents do not use the Writing Center as a base for research. This response shows us one aspect that the Writing Center can improve on to become more vital to our instructors and their research in that sometimes more than one computer could be used simultaneously. The responses to Statement Eleven prove the obvious, that there is not enough space allotted to the Writing Center. As one respondent wrote in the margin, “Couldn’t we all use more space?”

Again, we do not have a high enough percentage of responses to speak in overarching terms about the English Department and its perception of Room 127’s Writing Center. But the clear patterns that emerged from the responses provide an encouraging foundation from which to proceed with further research.

Two Defining Experiences in the Writing Center

In my own experience of using computers in the classroom, I compare my experiences in each of my two years at WKU. I began my graduate studies at WKU
in the Fall of 1992. I had rarely used a word processor at that point, and many of my fellow Graduate Assistants were not much more computer literate than myself. When I introduced my students to the computers in Room 127, they were quite limited in their abilities. I was a bit surprised at their lack of knowledge about computers. I simply assumed that they would have had more experience with computers. In July of 1993, I went to Japan for three years.

Upon returning to WKU to complete my Master's degree in the Fall of 1996, I wanted to give my students the same tour of Room 127 in order to “get them acquainted” with computers. I was quite surprised at how computer capable my students were now: they needed little help, and some were “surfin’ the net” while others were eagerly checking their e-mail. I was bombarded with questions about programs and applications. This experience not only confirmed how relatively computer “illiterate” I was while confronting me with a bit of a “generation gap,” but it showed me the computer literacy that I will probably encounter in my students for as long as I teach.

KERA's emphasis on computerized instruction from the primary level on up is yielding to us an increasing number of students at WKU who are proficient with basic computer functions. In addition, some students are even more skilled at computer functions due to the increasing economic feasibility of owning a home computer. Thus, college professors should not hesitate about worrying whether or not their students have command over the basics of computers. Of course, there may be some apprehension from the professors themselves; very few college professors utilized computers in their studies in school; therefore, some professors may fail to see the necessity of computers in ENG 100. Nevertheless, much scholarly literature (though certainly not all) indicates that students like using computers for part of their composition assignments, and in some cases, the students can perform better if given computerized instruction as opposed to more traditional means of instruction.
Studies Which Support the Use of Computers with Composition Students

In a study at Miami-Dade Community College (student population -- 28,000), which during the mid-1980s was the #1 ranked community college in the U.S., Judy Downs and Paul Linnehan wanted to see if composition students taught with computers would perform better than students taught in a traditional manner. They found that “our study of regular freshman composition classes generally confirms Miami-Dade’s finding that computer-assisted students perform better, on average, than students who receive only teacher-delivered instruction” (12-13). They were concerned about how the students would react to computers as “tutors” or “instructors,” and they found that “....students especially liked the one-on-one interaction with the computer, the game-like quality of some of the exercises, and the opportunity to both tutorials and pretests” (3). Many other researchers find similarly positive student reaction toward computer-assisted teaching.

One can find more studies than necessary for a paper of this scope confirming such findings. Of course, one can also find studies which either contradict these findings or warn us of being too eager to “jump on the bandwagon” in the excitement of computers. Yet currently, quantitative data is being seen less frequently to either support the use of computers in the writing classroom or to not support such usage; such debates now center upon which theories to use.

Within the last few years, the majority of researchers publishing literature concerning writing centers and computers and composition write with a foregone conclusion that computer assisted learning is beneficial and an unquestionably growing reality. Disagreement now among such scholars has gone far beyond the “should we use computers for teaching writing or should we not use computers for teaching writing” argument based upon quantitative data. Scholars now are
predominately concerned with how (see Chapter Five) we should use them and upon what pedagogies (see Chapter Three) can we base our practices. Computers are generally coming to be seen as an aid in the composition class rather than as a substitute for the instructor. In "When Novelty Isn’t Enough: A Case Study of Students’ Reactions to Technology in the Classroom Environment," Pamela Hayward does give wise counsel about some of the problems with computers in the classroom:

Technological artifacts in the classroom may not only create physical barriers, but instill emotional tensions beyond what is considered normal for a classroom situation. . . . Computers do seem to have some positive or negative effect on young and old alike. For the student who is addicted to the computer, as will the student who is fearful of this tool, facing a classroom full of terminals three times a week could reasonably cause undue stress—especially since many students who shy away from computers specifically take courses that require no computer interface. What a surprise this person is in for when they find out that their non-computer class is taking place in the computer lab! (3)

The physical barriers that a computer lab or writing center can experience due to computer placement could be lessened with better arrangement of the floor plan. I will deal with this placement in more detail in Chapter Four. My experiences with my current students and their ease with computers make me skeptical of the tensions they may face with a computer. Certainly, there will always be some students who are anxious about working on computers, but given the increase of computers in homes and schools from the elementary level up, I do not think Hayward’s concerns are well-grounded.
CHAPTER THREE
PEDAGOGY IN THE WRITING CENTER

For any writing teacher, there are countless theories and applications regarding the “best” way to teach writing, and these pedagogies, as Jerome Bump writes, continue their flux:

The past decade has brought a minor revolution to writing instruction in the classroom setting. Theories of the social construction of knowledge have resulted in the widespread use of collaborative learning techniques, and computer technology has been in the forefront of this movement. Specifically, communications and text sharing through both local and wide area networks, has enhanced and promoted collaborative learning and writing. (qtd. Balester 1)

Computers are pushing the revolution in writing instruction, showing how vital the machine is to certain methodologies. Though nearly any pedagogy can make use of computers, Social Constructivism (i.e., that meaning is generated from an individual within a social system) and Networking Theories seem naturally suited to expand with the rise of computer technology.

Bernard Susser, in citing the work of J.M. Eldred, G.E. Hawisher, and Cynthia Selfe, finds that “the association of networked computers with social constructivist theory and pedagogy has become a truism in the computers and writing literature” (63). Such writing shows the advances in the history of the “whether to use computers to teach writing” debate. Rather than validating a computer’s usage in a writing class on quantitative studies, teachers can now use social constructivist theories and networking theories as explanations on which to base their reasons for using computers in a classroom. Susser finds that network theory “is welcome
because it grounds the practice of our computer writing classrooms firmly in current writing theory” (62).

In their collaborative work, Barker and Kemp have stressed the connection between social constructivist theory and networking in their “network theory.” They find that the “essential activity in writing instruction is the textual transactions between students” which can “encourage a sense of group knowledge” (15) thereby creating a community of writers. As a result, the network theory of Barker and Kemp supports “social constructivist models that privilege a communal process of knowledge making . . . implemented through the computer-based collaborative approach” (26).

At issue in the work of Barker and Kemp is their claim that they are “concerned with computers only as text-communicating or text-sharing devices” (17). Susser criticizes their restricted view of computer usage in writing as “a privileging of technology over pedagogy” (63). Susser in no way advocates the abandonment of networked systems; his concern with the pedagogy related to computers and writing is a practical concern that we all should heed -- “that computers and writing is about instruction and not about technology” (64).

It would be tempting in a computer class in Room 127 to “put on a show” with some of the neat “tricks” that computers can do (a la some of my work at Senri). And any teacher using computer technology must be careful not to become a slave to the machine. The computer need not be in constant use. Susser’s focus to keep the machine as a tool of the theory should evoke a sigh of relief from any teacher with apprehensions regarding computers in a writing class, for there are growing fields of writing pedagogy in which to ground the computer.

In addition to social constructivism and network theory, some theories from other fields are having effects in writing theory -- activity theory (from Vygotsky, the father of social constructivism, and other psychologists) and complexity theory (an
outgrowth from the "chaos theory" of the natural sciences). Though these theories are not dominant in writing classes, they are attracting scholarly attention because the theories are well-suited to allow for further growth with computer usage in writing classes.

David Russell, in his essay “Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction,” offers us this definition of activity theory:

Activity theory analyzes human behavior and consciousness in terms of 
activity systems: goal-directed, historically situated, cooperative human 
interactions, such as a child’s attempt to reach an out-of-reach toy, a job 
interview, a “date,” a social club, a classroom, a discipline, a profession, an 
institution, a political movement, and so on. The activity system is the basic 
unit of analysis for both cultures’ and individuals’ psychological and social 
processes. (53)

The importance on interaction as a way that determines meaning puts activity theory in the same category as the social constructivists.

The very act of writing is inseparable from Activity Theory because a writer is forever writing from his activity system. Therefore, using Activity Theory in a writing class is akin to having students write about their experiences in an in-depth way. Activity Theory should have no problem finding itself useful to writing instruction in Room 127 because in most writing classes, the inevitable mantra "Write about what you know" will be voiced.

Meaning for many of the writers will come from their interaction with their peers, which is a prime rationale behind the increasing use of peer group reviews in many composition and writing classes. For Peter Elbow’s teacherless class, “everyone tries to give each writer a sense of how his words are experienced. The goal is for the writer to come as close as possible to being able to see and experience his own words
Elbow’s core philosophy dovetails very nicely into activity theory.

Complexity theory, certainly at first, hardly seems like a theory at all. However, since its beginnings are in the natural sciences, the immensity of complexity theory is forgivable. Basically, complexity theory starts by acknowledging that some systems are so complex with so many interactions that they “cannot be reduced to simple formulations. . . . the agents within such systems interact in such a massively complex fashion that prediction and hence control is impossible” (Kemp 188). Kemp continues by helping us understand how such systems become organized: “What allows complex systems to self-organize is easy communication, massive interactivity, and ready response to feedback” (188). These keys to the self-organization of a complex system (i.e., easy communication, massive interactivity, and ready response to feedback) are qualities that any teacher who practices social constructivist principles wishes to have in a writing class.

We later find that such a system (e.g., a student) needs some degree of disequilibrium (e.g., an experience) in order to promote growth in the system by exciting its feedback mechanisms (e.g., thoughts and feelings). Doll states that “a far-from-equilibrium structure is one in the process of becoming” (4). Kemp places complexity theory in terms applicable to the classroom:

Complex systems reach equilibrium only when they die or atrophy; disequilibrium is a condition of life and growth. Traditional instruction seeks a facilitating control of the student, more for the purposes of mass processing than for anything that encourages the individual student to grow, and the process purposely excludes as many disequilibrating influences as possible. (189)

Nearly any writing classroom provides a wide variety of disequilibrating influences either through discussions, peer reviews, or the writing process because the students
are continually challenged to re-evaluate and define their thoughts and the world around them.

One example of how Kemp would ground this theory in a writing class in Room 127 would be through electronic written discussion rather than through the traditional essay. Of course, an essay can still work as a disequilibrating force. However, some students have mastered the five-paragraph theme to such an extent that it functions virtually as rote retrieval of information. Electronic written dialogues can introduce a new type of writing to the student, thereby becoming a disequilibrating force. Neither myself nor Kemp advocate the end of essay writing in composition classes. We would both argue that our new technologies give us options to promote growth based upon complexity theory.

Currently, there is not a clearly defined pedagogy for computers and writing that places sovereignty of the computer over either the writing being generated or over writing pedagogies currently in use. Of course, the fields of computer writing and writing center methodologies are still extremely young, so a computer-based pedagogy for writing that radically alters current writing pedagogies may arise in the coming years. However, presently the trend seems to be that most writing instructors who work with computers are "plugging the computer into" their current teaching methodology or some variation of the ones touched upon in this section. For example, an instructor may use computers for collaborative writing. In this case, the computer expedites the writing process, thereby aiding the instructor's teaching pedagogy to function more efficiently.

The pedagogies surveyed in this section seem to form the core of the methods being used by writing instructors using computers in order to maximize not only the learning experience for the students but also the use of the computer beyond word processing functions. However, as Valerie Balester writes in her essay "Transforming the Writing Center with Computers," "these advances have not yet been adopted by
writing centers, at least not on a large scale” (1). Balester continues her speculation on the future of writing centers by stating that “whether writing centers become mere support centers for computerized writing classes or word processing labs with a few bulletin boards and electronic mail hotlines for frills, will depend in large measure on writing center professionals, on how we define ourselves and our centers (1).” We have seen how the purposes of Room 127 are defined (e.g., to correct student writing, and to help ‘unsalvageable’ students). These emerging pedagogies help show us possible future directions for what we can do in Room 127.
CHAPTER FOUR
LAYOUT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE WRITING CENTER

Computers and the Change in Classroom Dynamics

Gail Holian and Connie Chismar explore how computers in the classroom will change the teaching dynamic and the role of the instructor. “In the traditional settings, instructors frequently dominate the dynamic of classroom interaction. In many contemporary writing classrooms, however, the role of teachers/professors is being modified to meet the new dynamics created by the introduction of computers” (3). Though computer-assisted learning can reduce an instructor’s in-class role, the instructor certainly does not relinquish that role (Spendal 13-16). I am not advocating a subordination to the machine. Instructors simply need to be sure they use the machine rather than the other way around.

Just because instructors change their classroom dynamic and reduce their roles by implementing computers in their courses does not mean they will be less effective than before. Nor does this role reduction mean that they will be perceived less favorably than before. Renate Rohde conducted a study to measure the effect of word processing on students’ grades and attitudes toward freshman composition. Grades remained consistent between computer-assisted composition classes and non-computer-assisted composition classes. Also in validating the strengths of using computers in the writing classroom, Rohde found many positives in student perceptions of teachers who teach with computers:

Students in the word processing sections generally had a more positive attitude about the course than students in the traditional sections. They felt they learned more and tended to rate the quality of the course as higher. Additionally, they felt that they had enjoyed the class more than they had anticipated, that the course increased their interest in the subject matter, and
that the course format had inspired their interest in learning. In only one area did the students in the word processing sections perceive their instructors more positively than the traditional sections. They perceived their instructors as better prepared for class meetings. This difference, however, may be due to the fact that the detail involved in teaching a word processing package may make the level of preparation necessary to teach the class more apparent than in the traditional sections. (9)

Such findings should assuage Hayward’s concerns about student anxiety. These findings should also be encouraging to instructors who are interested in using computers in their classes but are not sure of the effect on their dynamic and their students.

**Extending the Walls of Room 127**

In following Balester’s notion of turning the writing center into a physical extension of the classroom, Internet access and e-mail capabilities in Room 127 give us further opportunities to extend the classroom. With the advent of e-mail, interdisciplinary and intercurricular activities can be carried through at a much faster pace than even a few years ago. Some instructors have gone so far as to link different courses in order to better see the connections between disciplines. One encouraging example of this has been carried through by Patricia Dunn’s English 101 class and Bill Pfeiffer’s Chemistry 101 class at Syracuse University.

The English 101 class read essays from news magazines about the ozone controversy, then wrote about it. In Chemistry 101, the same group of students then studied the scientific aspects of the ozone layer (Dunn 3-4). The Writing Center in Cherry Hall gives us the same options, and some of our English teachers encourage the use of computers in classrooms. Others use e-mail in their English 100 classes
and others use computer linkups to varying degrees. However, as a whole, WKU’s English Department rarely uses the Writing Center for English 100 instruction.

Some examples of computer applications that can be used in English 100 will be expanded upon in Chapter Five. Students should also be encouraged to use Room 127 as a base from which to explore interdisciplinary and intercurricular studies. A proposed example of this could involve English 100 students and History 100 students e-mailing each other with journal entries about what they are doing in class.

The Writing Center could become a hub for other such types of studies: the Writing Center staff could work on an electronic bulletin board with listings of topics being covered in other classes. Students in other courses could then become a more immediate source for information. Work done through these mailings could count as journal activities in our Freshman composition classes.

Before we can adequately redirect our Writing Center in order to increase its vitality, we need to seriously consider several questions. What kind of pedagogies should we be encouraging our tutors to practice? How can we organize our Writing Center to meet the goals we have for it so it can reach its potential? In some ways, our Writing Center is still in its “childhood” when compared to what other writing centers are doing. Chapter Six will explore what the future of writing centers is, given the advent of theories that see the writing center as a centripetal force. On-line Writing Labs (OWLs) also show how the computer age is moving us away from the notion of one tutor and one student correcting mistakes.

The Writing Center Committee

The formation of a Writing Center Committee (WCC) will greatly aid in the implementation of the Writing Center in the English curriculum. The basic goal of the WCC will be to promote the expanded use of the Writing Center by the English Department so that Room 127 becomes a dynamic environment that keeps pace with
the dynamic changes in writing pedagogy. Of course there is no one way to teach writing; in fact, there are probably as many ways to teach writing as there are writing instructors. The WCC can poll those who teach English 100 to find out what some of their main pedagogical concerns are. The WCC can then promote such concerns through tutor training.

The Writing Center Committee should be comprised of a Writing Center director and several English teachers, as well as all tutors. If the Writing Center becomes a hub for intercurricular studies, a few faculty members from other disciplines may be on the committee. Certainly, one instructor from the Computer Science Department would be helpful to address technical concerns and technological advancements.

Becoming an active and vocal proponent of composition instruction should be a focus for the Writing Center Committee. In so doing, the WCC and/or the Writing Center can ‘push’ pedagogy rather than vice versa. The WCC can provide workshops and seminars for the English Department so that any teacher interested in using computers in the writing classroom can receive helpful training to do so. By performing these functions, the WCC can greatly help the English Department become more unified in its use of the Writing Center.

Other functions of the WCC will involve self-promotion through advertising, pamphlets, and a newsletter. Tutor training will also largely be a responsibility of the WCC. Formation of a class dealing with writing center methodologies or tutoring pedagogies will further serve to make the work of the Writing Center and its place within the English Department of higher quality.

Some Things to Consider in Establishing a Writing Center or Expanding Room 127

In the essay “Beginning the Computer Community: Establishing a Computer Writing Classroom,” Michael Sundermeir and Bob Whipple write about their experiences in setting-up a computer center in the English Department of Creighton
University. They remind us “that the process of creating a facility devoted to the creation of texts is very much like the creation of the text itself” (3). They have constructed their writing center as a place to create texts – a place to generate writing. In this way, the Writing Center in Cherry Hall can become a more active player in the generating of texts.

Susan Blalock at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks has significantly reworked her writing center to where it has become somewhat of a model for what I envision for Cherry Hall:

The tutors and I embellish, utilize, and defend the hard won space the center now occupies. We collaborate with the Art Department, which hangs advanced painting student pieces every semester. We advertise frequently–always conscious of the metaphors our banners, posters, and flyers convey. We keep accurate, computerized records to defend our existence and the need for such a large central space. In the fall, we train the English TAs in this room. We hold faculty round tables on composition theory and practice in this space. The Graduate Students not only staff the center, but they also hold their organizational meetings there. The faculty poetry group met there until the M.F.A. program became so large no one had time for extracurricular reading groups. I wrote initial guidelines for the writing-intensive courses in the Core Curriculum and helped organize and lead workshops for the faculty to teach them. In short, the UAF Writing Center and Computer Writing Lab is the recognizable locus for writing both English and across the curriculum... The effect of these eight years of effort has been to create a strong centripetal force. I wanted every student physically drawn to, but not required to come to, an attractive and comfortable space in which to encounter well-trained tutors in a collaborative dialogue. (2-3)
Such a writing center could certainly be a great benefit to the English Department of WKU and is certainly possible.

The Current Space of Room 127

What kind of environment do we want to instill in Room 127? Is this environment being established currently? Room 127 is quite stiff in its atmosphere. For the most part, its layout is geared toward cramming 20 computers in a small room to provide areas for word processing. The cubicles isolate the students from one another, making group work difficult. When the lab is full, it is difficult to walk between the rows without disrupting those who are working.

Students in wheelchairs have an especially difficult time maneuvering in Room 127. These students often have to rock back and forth, bumping tables and chairs out of their way, in order to get around -- undoubtedly attracting unwanted attention. If the only computers available are far from the entrance of Room 127, students in wheelchairs must disrupt many workers in order to get to a computer. A redesigned floor plan for Room 127 allowing accessibility to wheelchairs will be an aid to all who use the Writing Center.

Pamela Hayward has assessed classes that meet in computer labs, and many of her findings would apply to a similar scenario to such classes in Room 127. Though the room in which she observed classes is not identical to Room 127, her room is similar in that many of the computers are arranged in rows with the computer screens facing one another. Her students do not work at cubicles; they work close together at long tables that are topped with computers.

For teachers who prefer an interactive classroom, having class in Room 127 the way it is currently arranged seems fraught with obstacles and nearly impossible. The seating plan in Room 127 seems to not have had group work in mind when it was arranged. "Ill-planned seating can also contribute to problems with small-group work
in class. Physical encumbrances, such as fixed furniture, poor acoustics, and too much room space can inhibit the small group effectiveness that increases student morale, liking of the subject, and self-imposed discipline” (Niece 79). Niece continues with her observations of a class’ layout and its effects on student attitudes by saying that “when school structures and instructional ideals are in conflict, the resulting atmosphere can reinforce the school’s mundane and unexciting image and negatively effect teacher energy and student creativity” (79). Niece’s comments here are reminiscent of Renate Rohde’s earlier cited comments about students’ positive attitudes toward their computer-instructed classes. Surely, if students’ attitudes increase positively toward their subject of study, then their performance in that subject should increase as well.

One obvious problem to Hayward in her class observations (and probably to any visitor to Room 127 as well) was the barriers that the computer terminals tended to create between the students (5). These barriers were helpful for her in her case because she could observe the class without worrying about disrupting it. But she found that “the physical barriers that gave me anonymity also contribute to the isolation or grouping of students” (6).

In the classes she observed, one of the projects was to give speeches and presentations. As one should expect, Hayward found that “these terminals not only prevented interaction across tables, but turned out to be quite an obstacle during student speeches.” Room 127 would not be the ideal room in which to give presentations. Certainly, in order for the Writing Center to be maximized, we must start a dialogue concerning what sorts of class activities would be suitable in room 127 (or some re-designed writing center). If we find that Room 127 is not suitable for maximizing many of the procedures we would like to use the space for, then we should be willing to either change the layout of the space or find a more appropriate room as our Writing Center.
I would like to see Room 127 (or perhaps even a larger room such as Room 126) become a more active center for learning. We should have enough space to allow group work to be accomplished with relatively little difficulty considering the furniture. The space should allow for free movement of the instructor through the class. Students should not feel too isolated from one another, and the hardware in the room should be placed in a manner that can maximize their viewing of the room (e.g., the students should have no problem seeing the instructor if the instructor needs to lecture to the class or if the instructor needs the class’s attention for a few moments).

Re-direction of Space

For some clues as to the direction we can take in redesigning our writing center, I look to the work of Susan Blalock. She has designed her writing center to be a locus for a variety of groups and activities. Her changes in design certainly suggest a concerted effort to create an environment that a variety of people will seek out in order to be productive.

Looking at some of the other changes that Blalock has made in her writing center shows us possible directions we can take in ours. Though some of her changes may have little import or relevance to what we want in Room 127, we should consider them for their novelty and as a guide to the degrees we can go in prospective awareness and changes.

One of the best ways that our Writing Center can become a more vital centripetal force is by increasing the available space. WKU’s English Department then needs to clearly define what it wants to do in such a redesigned room so that the floor plan is not a hindrance. We could increase the space by moving to a larger room, which could make possible such earlier-mentioned functions that are utilized at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. Another option is to have several rooms that
comprise the Writing Center. One room could be for one on one tutorials, another for computer work, and another for group work, for example.

One such functional goal for the Writing Center should be the encouragement of group work or collaborative writing. In order to do so, our new writing center will need several tables which would allow for students to comfortably work in groups with computers. Currently in Room 127, collaborative writing is nearly impossible. An area for group work can help tutors who may need to give a mini-grammar workshop to several students with the same problem. This area could also be used by students whose instructors encourage peer reviews. By conducting the peer reviews in the Writing Center, perhaps several groups could have the help of a tutor should one be needed. The area would also help those instructors who would like to conduct a class or writing workshop in the writing center but find it implausible in Room 127.

A Proposed Design for a New Writing Center

Computers could be placed in concentric rows facing a blackboard or video console. (Please see Appendix Six.) This arrangement should remedy many of the problems Hayward encountered in her observations and others have had in maneuvering in Room 127. This proposed arrangement does present a teacher-centered design which contradicts social constructivist theory. The main reason for presenting a teacher-centered design is due to the problems presented by the hardware and the necessity of a centralized control easily accessed by an instructor. Other designs, such as a concentric seating plan with a control monitor in the middle or a ‘U’ shaped seating plan with the control monitor at one end of the room, allow for a more student-centered class, but the seating arrangements then contradict social constructivist theories of peer review and collaborative work because of the difficulty in grouping students. Perhaps this problem of arrangement
based upon social constructivist theory will not be remedied until more sophisticated hardware arrives on the educational market.

Having the computers facing a blackboard or video console would help an instructor develop some immediacy quite like that in a traditional classroom. The concentric circles should help all the students to see their instructor without struggle. They should also be able to see many of their classmates. The nature of the machine will always create a bit of a barrier until everyone has laptops, but staggering the placement of the computers and chairs should reduce the barrier problem.

At the back of the room, there should be some tables so that the instructor can allow for some workshopping of works in progress. The tables also give an instructor a place for individualized or group instruction. Other tables can allow for tutors to work with students from outside classes so that a class that is taught in the Writing Center does not monopolize so much time that students needing help are excluded. Also, at the back of the room could be some more computers, allowing out of class students to utilize the Writing Center while a class is ongoing. Altogether, this could give a very active atmosphere to the writing process--none of these processes being mutually exclusive.

Designing our new Writing Center gives us the opportunity to reach out to other areas of the campus--hopefully becoming more vital to the university community as well. Blalock’s idea of having the Art department display work offers a wonderful starting point for ideas concerning the design. International students could be invited to set up displays occasionally about their home countries. Perhaps even some of the international students could offer some informal language classes in the Writing Center.

It is doubtful that Cherry Hall’s Writing Center can become all of these things. But they should show some of the possibilities that are not being utilized to their fullest potential. In considering what to do about room 127, the English department
should work on a dialogue addressing its desires for the Writing Center and the department’s needs. Sundermeir and Whipple give us obvious but sound advice regarding how we can solve what to do with room 127:

We would suggest, therefore, that with applications software and pedagogical approaches, you are your own best consultant. . . . Because we feel a community can best solve many of its needs by looking inward. They are the community’s needs, and the community can best articulate those needs. (16) Articulating our needs regarding the kind of environments we want in order to foster the kind of writing we want could be the start of this discussion.

Authority of Space

Some of her changes were necessitated by Blalock’s awareness of herself and her Caucasian tutors as minorities tutoring a majority of Athabaskan, Yup’ik, and Inupiat Indian students. She began thinking about “how ownership of a physical space influences or determines authority, responsibility, and collaboration” (5). Working with these students gradually taught her several important lessons which helped her change the writing center to become more suitable to its requisite work:

The Athabaskan, Yup’ik, and Inupiat students. . . . gradually taught us to loosen the physical boundaries of the proper space for communication and to give up the authority of place endowed by our own furniture and authority-affirming paraphernalia, such as our reception desk, waiting-room looking chairs, and PCS with our programs on them. By moving to their space, we leveled--at least a little--and expanded the field of dialogue. (5)

Though the tutors in Room 127’s Writing Center need not be so overly concerned with the differing cultures of its students who seek tutorials, certainly some of these tenets by Blalock can apply for us in Bowling Green as well.
The most relevant idea from Blalock here for the Writing Center in Cherry Hall is how by changing the physical arrangement of their writing center, they were able to expand their field of dialogue because as the writing center changed to become more comfortable to the Indian students, more Indian students began to use the writing center. Therefore, as Room 127 becomes more comfortable and more inviting to WKU’s students, more of them will come to the Writing Center. Too many times in writing centers, especially those whose main function seems to be that of a center for correction, the basic function is to have one tutor go over one paper with one student. Of course, this method of instruction should never be disbanded. But this arrangement does emphasize the notion of authority which can intimidate some students. When the students feel intimidated, they will be limited in their interaction with their tutor. Such limited interaction may lessen the feedback that the student actually considers.

I do not think that we need to totally rid the Writing Center of any feeling of authority. We simply need to redesign our center so that we are sure that learning is maximized. One could also naturally assume that a more comfortable space will increase student interest in the space of the writing center, in turn making students come to it more often for help. Blalock also agrees that authority should not be rid from the writing center. Obviously to have any validity, there must be some form of authority. "If there were no prior 'authoritative' centripetal power--a core of confidence born out of some sense of authority--the centrifugal force would dissolve into chaos" (10). The lineage of experience among the Writing Center staff and of the English Department would undoubtedly negate the Writing Center from 'dissolving into chaos.'
CHAPTER FIVE

COMPUTER APPLICATIONS IN
ROOM 127 FOR ENGLISH COMPOSITION

For the freshman student, courses which would stress an intercurricular approach could be of great use because the class schedule of the average freshman is mainly comprised of courses from a variety of disciplines. For example, it would not be uncommon for a student who is taking English 100 to also be taking History 100, Psychology 100, Chemistry 100, and Sociology 100. Later, perhaps, in the student's junior year or thereafter, and the coursework becomes more isolated within a curriculum. For example, after a student chooses to be an English major, that student will mainly take English courses. At that point, an inter-curricular focus may be of greater use to the student given that most courses on that student's schedule will be within the discipline of English. In both cases, the Writing Center in Room 127 offers a great deal of potential for helping Freshman Composition students (or, higher level English students, later) make such connections.

In making the Writing Center more intercurricular and interdisciplinary, students should get a better idea of how writing can enhance their understanding both of the world and themselves. Too well known is the notion that students will care very little about writing if the writing they are assigned seems to have no basis -- no relevancy to their lives. In making their writing more intercurricular, they should see writing in a broader view rather than as something to do in order to receive a grade in an English class.

In this chapter, I want to explore several applications of computers to the English 100 classroom at Western Kentucky University ("WKU"). This chapter is certainly not an exhaustive exploration of options, but it should be a relatively in-depth
consideration of possible options that could work well in an English 100 classroom. For most of these ensuing applications, basic computer literacy should suffice; none of these applications require computer wizardry. I mention the notion of an intercurricular focus at the beginning of this section so it can be kept in mind as a possible outgrowth of many of these applications.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for anyone wishing to implement some of these suggestions will be the preparation beforehand—especially if the Writing Center is to become a hub between two or more classes at once (e.g. on-line chat rooms or video conferencing). For example, if an English 100 teacher and a history 100 teacher agree to collaborate on making their courses interdisciplinary, they will most certainly have to help each other in the creation of each other’s syllabi. The English class will probably have some elements of history in it, and the history class will utilize a variety of essay styles. However, the success, or failure, of this type of joint venture is completely dependent upon the cooperation of both teachers.

One way the Writing Center in Room 127 can help promote such collaboration between teachers is by having the same students meet there for both classes. For example, if their English 100 class meets at 10:30 a.m., perhaps the history 100 class will meet at 11:45 a.m. Therefore, the students for both classes will meet in the same room, only the teachers will change. Of course, for this plan to work well, the Office of the Registrar will need to allow for some special registration. Another option the Writing Center offers is perhaps this course can be team taught between the English and History professors (i.e., the English teacher assists in the teaching of the history class, and the history teacher assists in the teaching of the English class). The Writing Center supervisor could assist in the organization of scheduling to maximize these collaborative efforts. Also, I would like to add that the previous examples are merely suggestions. However, I encourage anyone to modify these suggestions to fit
their own needs. I focus on ENG 100 because this is the largest course WKU’s English Department offers.

The Pragmatic Benefits to Working on Computers in Room 127

The pragmatic benefits to having the students do their writing on a word processor are obvious. For instructors who require journal work from their students, having students compose their journals (and essays) on a computer disk allows the students to hand in neater work given that it will be typed rather than hand written. More importantly, students have more freedom to use the entire composing process. There is also the option that students can hand in the computer disk as their journal rather than a partially filled or bulky notebook, which seems to now be the norm. If students hand in a disk rather than the hard copy, any instructor has the option to print hard copies from the student disk. A computer program which allows for teachers to comment directly on the student disk without disrupting what the student has written is “Common Space.”

WKU’s English Department has recently been granted funding to purchase “Common Space.” This program allows for students to organize a column of text next to a column for comments, thus allowing for either teachers or classmates to write comments about the text in the space next to it rather than in the text. Supporters of “Common Space” feel that it creates a stronger sense of ownership while enhancing collaboration. “Common Space” may be seen by the writer as providing a less threatening approach to comment on the work, and the evaluators of the text are encouraged by the empty space beside it.

Support for Collaborative Writing

One striking and revolutionary way in which computers can become more vital to ENG 100 is through collaborative writing. Just as its name suggests, collaborative
writing is produced when two or more writers work together to produce a single piece of writing. Computers aid this process through e-mail or through written dialogues, or through joint composing at a single terminal. Collaborative writing has been common for years in a variety of fields, and as Russell tells us, "the movement toward collaboratively assessed writing is well under way in certain professions in the U.S., such as law and medicine" (72). Also quite well-known is the acceptance of collaborative writing in the natural sciences.

Collaborative writing builds on the pedagogies of the social constructivists in that "meaning" is created through the context of its social process. The Writing Center tutors can provide assistance for any concerns writers may have. Tenets of activity theory, complexity theory, and network theory can also be seen in collaborative writing. The increasing technological advances of computers make collaborative writing much easier to perform and much easier to work into an English curriculum. Though perhaps there are some radical theorists in the fringes of scholarship who vocally advocate replacing individual student essay writing solely with collaborative writing, most scholars see collaborative writing as another part of the process which gives greater meaning to a variety of writing while also serving to give students practice with a writing skill that will most likely be commonplace by the time they begin their professions.

Written "conversations," whether via e-mail or real-time dialogues, are beginning to find a home in writing pedagogy. Kemp categorizes such writing as "dialogic writing."

Dialogic writing is largely a function of the digital revolution that occurred in the 1980s. The digitalizing of a text in a word processor can transform an understanding of what words are and do. . . . What I was watching on that monitor was not the loading of my ideas into the text the
way stevedores load a freighter, but an organic process of growth,

microbes spawning beneath the electron microscope. (182)

This experience with computer writing led Kemp to abandon his earlier held beliefs that writing’s function was for communication, “either communication with a reader or communication with the self” (184). Now he has joined a growing number of scholars who view writing as a process of growth that generates meaning. Because of easy deletions, effortless cut-and-paste procedures, and easy replication, the current interactive process for writing on a computer destroys fixed, authoritative notions of text.

Heim observes “that basic intellectual changes accompany widespread innovation in symbol manipulation” (97). For example, many writers point to the Renaissance as following the development of Guttenburg’s printing press, while also writing about the development of the personal computer. Lanham sees that “electronic text creates not only a new writing space but a new education space as well” (xii).

Part of the excitement that dialogic writing stirs among scholars is because “this process creates a mode of discourse that is not speech and not what we normally think of as writing” (Kemp 184). Faigley sees dialogic writing as “a hybrid form of discourse, something between oral and written, where the conventions of turn-taking and topical coherence are altered” (168). In this new area of discourse, Kemp sees a transition from focusing on the writer to focusing on the writing:

Electronic texts, and especially extended e-mail conversations, tend to diminish the authority of the writer in favor of the authority of the writing itself and thereby reduce the competition between conceptual freight and the medium of transmission. (183)

Concentrating more authority on the writing fits into social constructivist theories of teaching writing, thereby increasing the effectiveness of dialogic writing in ENG 100 in Room 127.
Implementing various forms of dialogic writing into ENG 100 will, in turn, help the Writing Center become more vital to ENG 100. Certainly, there are detractors to dialogic writing, and Kemp addresses the detractors' concerns:

Often those who espouse the container model (i.e., the notion that writing is a self-contained, formula given to students for them to "hold" their information) condemn written conversation and e-mail as sloppy, witless, and even corrupting. But here, the medium that always first appears in a "broken" condition is not fixed, nor is it intended to be fixed, and the utter disregard for the purposely cracked communication of those who promote and use written conversation comes across as an affront to traditional sensibilities. The attitude of the critics is that writing is not being managed as it is supposed to be, and in an educational situation such a thing is not so much negligence as malfeasance. (184-5)

Kemp's language in support here for dialogic writing is very similar to that of the complexity theorists who feel that for a system to grow, there must be some level of disequalibrium. A new type of writing in a new type of educational space would be such a disequilibrating force.

Many criticize e-mail journals for their sloppiness. Yet Kemp reminds us that "a computer-based written conversation can only be read as a written conversation" (185). He continues by reminding us that we cannot search for the development and structure of ideas as we would on an essay. Reading a written conversation the way we would read an essay is as erroneous as reading a poem as a news article, for example. Dialogic writing can help those students who are "too timid to speak in class (because they) are often emboldened by the different and more protected role an on-line conversation provides" (Lanham 79). With such concerns in mind, we can use dialogic writing in Room 127 to help more students understand the vitality of writing and improve their awareness of audience.
E-mail Journals

Chappell, in writing about her experiences of bringing e-mail journals into her class assignments, found that “the e-mail assignment turned out to be far more than a device for encouraging greater participation in discussion or more interesting student journals. Rather, it changed and intensified the course content by engaging the students in the knowledge-making at the heart of teaching composition” (7). Her conclusions reiterate social constructivist methodology and the work of Kemp and Lanham. Such findings offer encouragement as well in that such exercises in Room 127 will amount to far more than a “cool” exercise for the students. The dialogic writing of e-mail journals offers a wide variety of applications.

In using e-mail journals, Carbone is able to quickly establish a community of writers. Establishing this community begins on the first day of class, for as he says, “I want students to start by learning and writing immediately, and I want that learning and writing to be from and with each other, so that -- from day one -- a community of learners and writers evolves” (88). The work of Moran is very similar in this regard when he uses e-mail journals, and his applications could work very well in ENG 100 in Room 127.

For Moran, immediate feedback is vital. This feedback can come from either the teacher or a classmate. Moran will give his students a writing prompt which should take them about 20 minutes. They then send what they have written to another document that will show what everyone in the class has written. After this, Moran wants his students to read through what their classmates have written, choose one response and write about it. While they are working on the second part of the assignment, “I read and respond to the quick-writes as soon as I can--in this case, during class. I give these quick-writes a grade--check, check-plus, or check-minus--and I list the grade on our quick-write tally sheet” (43). Though
perhaps it is not advisable to 'grade' such rough writing, some sort of monitoring encourages the students to complete the task. Moran prints copies of all the quick-writes so that the students can re-read them later.

Chappell claims that she can remember what people have written via e-mail better than she can remember what they have said. As well, when reading a print-out of a dialogic text, she is "able to focus on the content of the discussion without worrying about who else is competing for the floor and without being distracted by my obligations to orchestrate the discussion" (3-4). Though dialogic writing should not be substituted totally for open discussions, dialogic writing is at least equally valuable at building community and meaning within the flow of ideas.

In “Writing from the Tips of Our Tongues: Writers, Tutors, and Talk,” Bishop stresses the importance of how we need to talk about issues and ideas in order to start to grasp them, and she finds it ironic that this process is often excluded in the teaching of writing. Dialogic writing helps Bishop bring this process of “talk” into the classroom:

In helping writing students set up networks and communities, our practice is at its most benevolently subversive. We help to explode the myth of solitary genesis simply by being there for writers as conveners, reflectors, responders, senior-learners, coaches, language-consultants, co-writers, and overall interested listeners. (22)

The “talk” then generated helps the students understand identities by working to understand themselves and others (Bishop 4).

Dialogic writing in Room 127 offers any instructor of ENG 100 a wide variety of options. One intriguing option is to base the dialogic writing in an intercurricular focus. Of course, this arrangement would take a fair amount of planning in order to get it working properly. But when given the trends in universities stressing writing
across the curriculum, such writing in Room 127 could further make the Writing Center a vital space in the process of writing.

**E-mail journals with an Inter-curricular Focus**

An example of conducting intercurricular e-mail journals could be through an English class and a history class of equivalent levels (of course, other classes could be used—even in the same discipline). The Writing Center supervisor or the Writing Center Committee could send questionnaires to a variety of departments that it feels would work in an interdisciplinary course with English 100. These questionnaires could survey professors in other departments who would be interested in working with an English professor who has already volunteered to team teach a class. The Writing Center Committee could take the lead in conducting workshops on inter-curricular teaching for teachers who are interested in pursuing such techniques, thus ensuring that the Writing Center would become a centripetal force not just for the English department, but for WKU as a whole.

Part of the grade for the classes is that their respective students have to establish an e-mail dialogue with a student from the other class. This dialogue should be treated as a professional relationship with a colleague. This professional attitude and the “distance” that the students have with their counterparts should reduce potential chattiness or casualness that can result in such exercises due to the familiarity the students have with one another. In turn, the practice in professionalism should give the participating students experience with skills and manners that will be of direct benefit in the professional working world after graduation.

The students in the English and History classes would produce dialogic writing that questions and explores their topics. This exercise puts the students in a role of facilitator or instructor, which should activate their learning process. Both sets of
students would be expected to give their comments and opinions about the material they are covering.

This exercise will help the students increase their computer literacy by learning a skill that they will probably use daily in their professions. They can also learn how to send documents and other writings via e-mail. While learning this very tangible skill, the students keep the work grounded in writing through the journal. Their e-mail counterparts also should question one another about what they write, furthering the awareness of audience for the English students. Hopefully as well, the English students can see how writing is alive and another form of dialogue with their audience rather than just a dialogue with the page.

A Community of Writers in Room 127

One benefit to having the students work on their e-mail journals in the Writing Center is that tutors can be on hand to help trouble-shoot any problems. The tutors can help with the written texts before they are sent to the e-mail counterparts, or the tutors can help with any minor computer problem that occurs. Perhaps the main benefit to a class working on their e-mail journals in the Writing Center is that the notion of a community of writers is reinforced. The Writing Center can act as a center for publishing student writing via a bulletin board, a computer home page, or by a hard copy anthology selected by the WCC.

Working in the Writing Center also reinforces the notion of the Writing Center as a centripetal force. In-class writing in the Writing Center makes the space more vital to the process of writing rather than as a center to go for correction or someplace to go for remedial help. By the Writing Center becoming more vital to the instruction in composition classes, students should become more aware of the writing process, and they should see the Writing Center and their writing community as parts of that
process. This way, the Writing Center will advance beyond being a “deadened” space where many students go after they are finished writing.

**Using E-mail Actively in Hook-ups Away from WKU**

E-mail opens many opportunities to make student learning more active with writing as a base. Currently, the University of Kentucky uses e-mail in its English classes for electronic collaborations with high school students and elementary school students as a way to promote the writing process for the KERA portfolios and other work. (Please see some more detailed explanations of this in Appendices Seven, Eight and Nine.)

A practical spin-off of this for English classes at WKU could be to have one’s English 100 class hooked-up to either an elementary school, middle school, or high school via e-mail. The English 100 students could then act as readers/tutors for high school students’ writing — especially for the pieces being considered for their writing portfolios, thus making the learning for the English 100 students more active and “hands-on” while also involving another aspect of the community. Such a hook-up should also be exciting for the class receiving the “instruction” while hopefully increasing their interest not only in college and the novelty of being taught by college students but also in the subject matter as well.

Susser, in citing the works of Dobler, Hadaway, Payne, and Peyton, finds that “cross-age peer tutoring via modem provides a more structured learning experience (than pen-pals). As university education majors communicate with or tutor elementary and secondary students, the former gain teaching experience, and the latter can learn from their older peers without concern for the teacher’s authority” (67). In addition to learning a great deal about the writing process, ENG 100 students at WKU would also be learning some valuable “life-skills” which could further serve
them in their professions. (For another example of e-mail tutorials, please see The Cyberspace Writing Center Consultation Project (Writing Works) in Appendix Ten.)

The Internet as a Research Tool for Freshman Composition

The Internet offers an incredible range of options which should be becoming apparent to nearly everyone by now. One of the most obvious ways we can use the Internet in ENG 100 is through its research capabilities. The benefits of allowing a class to conduct their research during class time in Room 127 are many: tutors are close at hand for troubleshooting problems; the instructor can better guide the student’s research; and the work of the students remains grounded within their writing community. The WCC can train the tutors in research strategies.

Bergland gives many examples of how he uses the Internet in freshman composition. Overall, he finds that “students can easily get distracted doing this type of research and both in- and out-of-class time can be wasted. But they often find the research process very enjoyable and spend more time looking for source material” (2). As with any exercise, some time will be wasted, but, like Bergland here, the positive aspects of using the Internet in class outweigh the negative aspects of it.

In showing examples of a student doing research on Generation X motifs in popular music, Bergland stresses the wide variety of sources a student can quickly view. The variety of sources can serve one well with an argumentative or persuasive paper by also introducing the student to on-line discussions of their topics. Bergland finds that “through reading discussion lists related to their topics, students can better understand both positions and their discourse community and thus potentially write better papers” (4). By actually joining in on the discussion, students “are able to utilize their rhetorical skills with a real, dynamic audience and receive candid replies from that audience, which is more interactive than the traditional introductory composition assignment” (4-5). If the discussions are conducted in Room 127,
students have the option of involving their classmates, which helps build a community of writers.

The Class Home Page

For the enterprising instructor, one possible use of the Internet could be a class home page. An interactive home page would be preferable because the students could encounter a wider variety of writing. This home page could act for the class as an electronic bulletin board for providing several useful functions for students and the instructor. The class home page need not be overly impressive in terms of graphics and links (although if an instructor chooses to make such a home page, it should certainly be encouraged). The immediate benefits of a class home page are more utilitarian than geared toward keeping a web-browser entertained. In fact, it would be quite doubtful that too many people outside of the immediate class would visit such a site, but any class home page could have its address posted in the Writing Center for others interested in such a base.

In the Writing Center, the Writing Center Committee could display a bulletin board to bring attention to home pages in other disciplines or to links to other classes. Of course, this is basically advertising, but such self-promotion serves not only the home pages but will promote the utilization of the Writing Center itself. In the Writing Center Bulletin, the Writing Center Committee can highlight these home pages and their links, further advertising the Writing Center while also promoting the cause of inter-curricular education.

An instructor could require that students visit the home page before coming to class as a way to gather any information about the class or assignments. Should class need to be canceled or any other changes need to be made in the class, the instructor could post these changes on the home page. Assignments could still be given and explained in detail--minimizing the time missed from a canceled class. Such a point
of notification can be extremely timesaving to students and the instructor. The home page could serve as a base of information exchange for the students in the class. Having a class home page should make the student’s experience with the Internet more tangible as opposed to the web surfing with information that is exterior to them.

The Electronic Bulletin Board in Room 127

In expanding on the notion of class home pages, the Writing Center could develop an electronic bulletin board. As mentioned at the start of this thesis, many writing centers are on-line (OWLs, which will be dealt with in Chapter Six), and their home pages serve many uses to the students who use them. The bulletin board could take the form of a home page or as a link within the main home page. The larger goal of the bulletin board would be to further the notion of “intercurricularity” (and / or “interdisciplinarity” if one so chooses).

Developing a bulletin board which serves this purpose would require some additional duties of the Writing Center staff. Either the tutors, additional support staff members, or the Writing Center Committee would work together to discover from various instructors in various disciplines what topics they are covering for the next few weeks. This information could then be posted on the electronic bulletin board. Students could then be encouraged to e-mail students from other disciplines in order to “discuss” inter-related aspects of their topics. For an English instructor who requires journal writing, perhaps a few journal assignments could require students to make use of such a service. A possible scenario may include students in a Romantic poetry class getting in touch with history students who are covering the early-to-mid-1800s in Europe. Certainly philosophy students reading Rousseau could add in as well. A well-coordinated effort by the Writing Center Committee could aid greatly in organizing this information.
Tele-classes

At Senri Senior High School, where I taught in Japan, we would frequently conduct video classes between two or more schools. Of course, Senri received a great deal of funding for these classes from the Japanese equivalent of AT & T; and I doubt that Cherry Hall's Writing Center will receive such funding. Nonetheless, the work I did in Japan can serve as a guide for other possibilities.

An example of what we would do would be to find a school willing to participate in a video tele-class. These schools would be in foreign countries—usually English-speaking countries such as the US or New Zealand. One unit focused on HIV / AIDS awareness, so the Senri students did the requisite research. Our participating school was in Honolulu. The two high schools exchanged their information and asked each other questions. The school in Honolulu arranged to have an expert on HIV and AIDS on hand to answer other questions. At the 1996 Asian-Pacific Economic Community (APEC) Conference, I co-moderated a tele-conference linking high school students together from Osaka, Honolulu, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Sydney. Though perhaps there will not be the need in an English 100 class to have such a hook-up of such magnitude, tele-conferencing can bring new dimensions to a computerized classroom. Using the Writing Center as such a base, students at WKU could tele-conference with students in the US or elsewhere regarding issues or stories pertinent to their classes.

Computers in the classroom can easily go beyond the basic word processing and spell check functions. The computers can become an invaluable aid in fostering creativity because they can broaden students' knowledge and experience. Not only can students have these capabilities mentioned already, they can have access to libraries and art museums via the Internet. Research for the students can be done in class, quite advantageous because the teacher can be there for guidance. It is difficult for an instructor to go to a library to monitor student in-class research, but if the
library is in the classroom, then the students can conduct research in a matter of
minutes with the teacher in the room and with the rest of the “writing community.”
Though we do not need to “pull out all the stops” with computers by putting on a
technological show for our students, by using computers in the classroom as a
teaching aid, we can certainly make the Writing Center’s role in the department more
vital rather than relegating it to be a place to print one’s paper and seek correction.
Speculating on the future of anything involving technological advancements is always risky in that soon the idea will either be obsolete or laughable. But in viewing current trends of Writing Centers, we can discern some directions of the near future. We can see in these trends ways to discern a possible future for the Writing Center in Cherry Hall. We need not do everything that is being done at other writing centers, but some of these trends should provide useful information in terms of comparing our Writing Center to others and what we can possibly do in ours.

**On-line Writing Labs (OWLs)**

One such trend with countless options and directions is the advancement of On-line Writing Labs (OWLs). These labs provide an ever increasing number of services for writers and tutors as well as links to other resources. One of the better known OWLs is at Purdue University (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/). (This home page can be found in Appendix Eleven.) To list all of the options this home page offers would be beyond the scope of this chapter. But we can look at some of the more unique features and the practical ones for those of us in Cherry Hall.

The OWL at Purdue University offers cyber tutorials. In this arrangement, the student lists what he is seeking from the tutor regarding method and assistance, thus placing some of the responsibility on the writer to think about his writing and how to deal with it. The lab then finds a tutor to match the needs or desires of the student. The tutorial then proceeds via e-mail.
Cyber tutorials can be an aid for a student who lives far from the main campus or main writing center. Also, a cyber tutorial can be just another optional check for the student: while receiving a one-on-one tutorial somewhere, that same paper could be sent to the cyber tutor as a good way to garner a “second-opinion.” The efficiency of the cyber tutorial when combined with traditional tutoring further serves the need of the student by giving the student more information about the writing process.

Most of the OWLs have links to other OWLs and other writing resources. Any concern one may have about writing will be addressed somewhere among the vast resources of this inter-connectedness. There are sections addressing children’s writing and technical writing, for example. Expanding the amount of resources open to a writer are advantageous in many ways. One often mentioned advantage to the information on the Internet is that such information is easily updated, thus insuring the accuracy of the received information.

Perhaps some of the more pragmatic benefits of OWLs for us in Cherry Hall are the many links and handouts provided. Students in our composition classes who are having grammar problems could be referred to these handouts. Keeping the problem contextualized in the author’s writing is preferable, but such handouts can be an aid. Of course, we provide handouts in the Writing Center, but encouraging them to visit an OWL gives them further practice with the Internet while introducing them to the vast world of writing. The handouts range from basic grammar work to handouts explaining the different types of essays and writing styles. An instructor can quickly browse these on his computer to see which are most relevant to his class should he choose to use any.

Room 127 as an Intercurricular Hub

Computers will continue to expand the curriculum because of the wide variety of resources now easily accessible to students. With Internet capabilities, there will
eventually be an equalization of resources. Though perhaps that goal is still years away, it is easy to see how someday virtually any student in a poor, rural community can have nearly the same amount of resources as a student at an Ivy League University.

The National Council of Teachers of English encourages writing across the curriculum (Suhor), and many writing centers are moving toward this direction of acting as an inter-curricular hub. With the NCTE's backing of intercurricular studies, increasing numbers of entering freshman will have had exposure to this kind of teaching and learning. Therefore, it would seem only natural to continue this in college so students can deepen their knowledge of how subjects are interrelated. As writing centers gear themselves in this direction, they become more important to the university as a whole. This increasing importance then should increase funding to writing centers because administrators will see writing centers as important campus-wide rather to an English Department or to one building.

**Multi-media Writing**

As hardware and software continue their advances, the very nature of writing may change as well. Multimedia writing could become a reality. Just as we can now edit videotapes, eventually, we will be able to edit CD ROMs. A writer eventually will be able to copy a variety of information (audio and visual as well as written) onto a disk. As all systems move toward digitization, one can easily see how in an essay on Monet, the student may download copies of Monet's works from the Louvre. Of course, this is just a high tech version of Xeroxing the paintings and including them in the paper. But with multimedia writing, all of this is presented on a computer disk then "played" as a CD ROM. The student will eventually have the options as well of including music samples as well as voice commentary from a variety of speakers. Sections from films and video archives could also be added to a student's CD ROM.
Eventually, some freshman composition projects may seem like very impressive presentations. Making such CD ROMs that can be edited offers unbelievable options to instructors in the classroom. Such CD ROM capabilities move us from word processing directly into information processing with vast inter-curricular implications, and Room 127 can help make all of this a reality.

The Training of Tutors

Undoubtedly, the role of the tutors in writing centers will continue to change as it has since the introduction of computers in writing centers during the mid to late 80s. Tutoring pedagogies is an emergent area of scholarship within the studies of Rhetoric and Composition which roughly parallels the emergence of writing center methodologies. But not only will our tutors need to continue to be well-educated about English and teaching pedagogies, they will also need to further their fluency not only with computers but with multimedia software as well.

Perhaps WKU’s English Department could begin a class that focuses on either writing center methodologies or tutoring pedagogies. Eventually, working in the Writing Center would be dependent upon completing requisite coursework. These courses could be offered at the 400G level; this way, undergraduates and graduates could take them. Though focused on tutorials, the information covered in these classes would have relevance to any student who goes on to teach English. Internships could be made available for working in the Writing Center, which may make competition to be a tutor more keen. A mentoring program pairing a tutor with a teacher could be a relatively thorough way to train a prospective tutor before that tutor begins working in the Writing Center.

In order to insure quality tutors in the Writing Center, perhaps the English Department can also require tutors to take a class on computer capabilities. Ideally, this class would be constructed with the computer science department for those
students who wish to increase their fluency with software in the classroom. Surely, the Education Department (among others) would be interested in beginning such a class at WKU.
CONCLUSION

We have explored the history of Cherry Hall’s Writing Center and have reviewed the progress that is being made at other writing centers nationwide. From this scrutiny, we can see that the Writing Center at Cherry Hall needs to become more vital to the instruction of students. Up until now, Cherry Hall’s Writing Center has served its function very well. It has provided tutors, corrected papers, helped writers, and helped with computer-assisted writing. However, with the current technologies that are available and with the computer literacy of today’s student, there are many opportunities for Cherry Hall’s Writing Center to become more important not just to the English Department but to the University as a whole.

Chapter Three touched on various pedagogies that could easily make use of many of the Writing Center’s options. Computers are changing writing pedagogy, but they do not control it. Keeping in mind that the computer is a tool to be used by a pedagogy will most likely determine one’s success with implementing computers in the classroom.

We explored the actual physical layout of an idealized writing center in Cherry Hall. Certainly we either need more room for our Writing Center or several rooms in which to operate the different functions of a full-service writing center. The way the Writing Center in Room 127 is currently arranged limits the usefulness of having a class there. And as we discussed, the advantages of using computers in the classroom add to the students’ notions of a community of writers and to the process of writing. Ideally, our arrangement in our Writing Center should give any instructor a wide variety of freedom in conducting a class.

The computer applications in Chapter Five should be relatively easy for nearly any teacher to use. Some of these applications are simply a computerized version of what the students are already doing (e.g., journal writing, brainstorming, and
composing). Other applications make use of the emergent technologies of e-mail and the Internet. These technologies give students many options of expanding their classroom beyond the walls of the room, thereby showing students the effects of writing beyond the usual teacher/student relationship.

Chapter Six examines some current trends in writing centers so that we can better prepare for our future. We know that we must become more fluent in computer technologies, and it is only natural that we use these technologies in the classroom in order for them to have any relevance in people’s lives after graduation. As increasing numbers of freshman enter college who are computer capable, our methods of instruction should change not only to attract such students to WKU but also to further assist them while they are here.

In conclusion, the founders and supporters of Cherry Hall’s Writing Center should be applauded for their efforts in starting the Writing Center and helping it grow to its current status. Due to the rapidly expanding technologies occurring in the computer realm, I cannot deal with every aspect of computers in the classroom. But because of these rapidly expanding technologies, and the rise in computer capabilities among our students, I hope to show not only how we can make computers more vital to the instruction of such students but also the rationale behind such a belief and the trends that are inevitable. From the research gathered here, there is the hope that the information in this thesis can serve as a spring board for others to take their own research farther in the shaping of Room 127’s Writing Center.
APPENDIX ONE
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT PROF S-L FOR EXPERIMENTAL WRITING LAB

Purpose:

The writing lab's purpose will be to provide additional help in the form of individual help for those students in the freshman English Program who are unable for any of a number of reasons to successfully cope with English 101, in other words, students extremely deficient in writing skills. These students would be those who, although they apparently have never previously been reached in a regular English class, may yet be educable if they are provided with individual assistance. Though these students have been unable to learn such things as punctuation and sentence sense, in most cases the most effective teaching technique has never been used. Most teachers, whether primary, secondary or college teachers, simply do not have the time or energy to devote to remedial help of this nature. However, the effectiveness of this approach has been demonstrated by the Education Department, which is currently offering help to the student who have reading problems. Their Reading Lab, which is basically a tutorial program, has been, according to their statistics, quite successful. The Writing Lab, then, will attempt to salvage through individual assistance, those students who appear unsalvageable.

Specific Procedure:

For the purposes of this experiment, five 101 classes will be isolated; from these classes will come the students who need extra help. These students are those who their instructors suspect will fail 101 because of obvious ineptitude with writing skills. These students will be identifiable after they have written an initial diagnostic test (in the first week of class) for their instructors. Then the students will be sent to the lab on a referral basis, that is, their instructor, after identifying deficient students, will require that they attend the Lab. The instructor will also send a report outlining the student's problems to the director of the Lab.

Each student attending the Lab will proceed as follows:

1. First interview with director: The director will discuss with the student the referral slip and will assign another diagnostic essay.

2. Second interview with director: The director will analyze the diagnostic essay with the student and will outline a specific program for the student to follow.

3. The student will begin his work in the program. Forms, other than those used in the regular class, of the Prentice Hall workbook will be the basic texts used by the student. Students will attend the Lab on a daily basis. With the help of the director and other members of the staff, each student will be taught, on an individual basis, to master the fundamentals of writing.

4. The student will be released from attendance at the Lab when the director judges that a degree of competence
has been achieved. The director will then inform the student's 101 instructor of the student's completion of the Lab.

5. The director of the Lab will conduct a follow-up study in an attempt to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Staff and Facilities:

One English teacher, who will be given a three-hour-course load reduction, will be appointed to direct the Lab. It will be his responsibility to see that the Lab is open and staffed at designated times (one hour per day in the middle of the afternoon). Additional assistance will be provided by the Director of Freshman English, interested faculty members, and one rank I graduate student. Capable English majors and minors might be recruited also; these students would benefit from the in-service experience.

The following facilities will be needed: a room with moveable seating, a supply of paper and ditto masters, a filing cabinet (a record and collection of each student's work would be retained), and a bookcase for dictionaries and other helpful texts.
APPENDIX TWO
THE FUNCTION OF THE WRITING CENTER

The primary function of the Writing Center is to offer all Western students free, individualized help with composition and any other writing/English-class concern. In doing so the Writing Center actively supports the English Department in its mission to teach writing, which was explained as follows in the department's version of the SACS document: "The goal of the English Department's composition program is to teach students to write college-level prose that is literate, well organized, and serviceable for essay exams, research papers, and general academic and career purposes." Also, by virtue of its function, the Writing Center directly supports the goals of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. Furthermore, the Writing Center supports the University's General Education goals elaborated as follows: "to foster in our students the development of: the capacity for critical thought, the ability to acquire and organize large amounts of knowledge, and proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking." The University requires for graduation that students take six courses with a "writing component," and the Writing Center, in effect, supports the writing component.

The Writing Center is equipped with 20 IBM compatible computers, which give students access to Word Perfect, Lotus 123, other useful programs, and Topcat and Internet. In addition, the Center has file drawers of grammatical, punctuation, and usage exercises. Finally, numerous grammar books, exercise workbooks, rhetoric books, readers, and other books may be used by students in the Center or checked out.

In some cases, instructors refer their students to the Center; some students are required to attend the Writing Center; and others drop in on a voluntary basis any time during scheduled hours. Students taking English 055 comprise a major part of the attendance in the Center. Usually the Teaching Assistants who staff the Center also teach 055, so they know which students need additional help in the Center. Two very basic, exercise-type computer programs, English Skills and Blue Pencil, are installed on each computer for use in the Center. Both programs may also be copied onto a student's disk.

Some of the students taking Psychology 201 are required by their instructors to have the four assigned papers read by a Writing Center staff person. The reading is not a proofreading service per se, but instead a situation where students are taught to look for, find,
and correct their errors, as well as improve clarity and organization in their writing.

Students who fail the writing sample portion of the Teacher Admissions test are referred to the Writing Center. After an intensive examination of their writing problems, these students usually practice writing essays until they gain enough proficiency to retake the test.

Basic instruction in computer use is also available at the Center, either on an individual basis or with an entire class. The fundamentals of computer use and word processing are two areas where Writing Center staff assist the student.

One of the focuses of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative was to suggest that teachers send their students to the Writing Center, particularly for help with research paper writing. The Center has copies of both the MLA style sheet and the APA style sheet.

Teachers occasionally use the Center for giving make-up tests, and handicapped students often use the Center's computers to complete writing assignments.

Teaching assistants learn first-hand through their work in the Writing Center how to interact with students, and they gain insights into the kinds of problems student writers encounter.

The Writing Center's function, then, is to support writing across the campus and the curriculum. The Center's efforts are directed towards specific populations but also towards any Western student who seeks help with writing.
WELCOME TO THE

This page is maintained by Bruce Pegg, director of The Colgate University Writing Center. If you'd like to contribute to any of these pages, or if you have any suggestions for links or items to include, please contact Bruce Pegg at bpegg@center.colgate.edu or write to

The Writing Center
212 Alumni Hall
Colgate University
Hamilton, NY 13346

(315) 824-7376
FAX: (315) 824-7045

Special thanks to Alan Brown of Colgate University's Information Technology for his help in designing this page, and to Lisa Schwartz, Colgate University Writing Center intern, for preparing the list of writing center handouts and revising the list of writing centers offering online tutoring.

http://www2.colgate.edu/diw/NWCA.html
Last revised: April 10, 1997.
Copyright 1996, 97 © Colgate University. All rights reserved.
I hope to make this the most comprehensive list of Writing Center gopher, web, and OWL sites. Though every effort has been made to check these links, the ever-changing nature of the Net makes it virtually impossible to verify them all on a constant basis; visitors to this page are encouraged to send any deletions, additions or suggestions to Bruce Pegg
bpegg@center.colgate.edu.

You can search this list alphabetically by school; if you're looking for resources offered by writing centers, such as handouts or electronic tutoring, you should go to the NWCA Resources for Writers page.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U
University of A - G
University of H - M
University of N - S
University of T - Z
V W X Y Z

A

- American University Writing Center
- Andrews University Writing Center
- Arizona State On-line Tutoring
- Armstrong State College Writing Center
- Ashland University Writing Center
- Augustana College Reading/Writing Center

B
• Bemidji State University Writing Resource Center
• Bethel College Writing Center
• Biola University Writing Center
• Boise State University Writing Center
• Bowling Green State University
• Brigham Young University's Writing Center
• Brigham Young University - Hawaii Campus Reading/Writing Center
• Bucknell University Writing Center

C

• California State University
  ○ Northridge Writing Center
  ○ Los Angeles Writing Center
  ○ San Marcos Writing Center
• California University of Pennsylvania Writing Center
• Carleton University Writing Tutorial Service
• Chesapeake College Writing Center
• City University of New York, Brooklyn College Writing Center
• City University of New York, John Jay College Writing Center
• Claremont Graduate School Writing Center
• Clarke College Writing Center
• Clarkson University Writing Center
• Colgate University Writing Center
• College of Charleston's Writing Lab
• College of Dupage Writing Center
• College of Wooster Online Writing Lab
• Colorado State University Tutoring Services
• Community College of Southern Nevada On-Line Writing Center
• Cooper Union Center for Writing and Speaking
• Cornell University Writing Workshop
• Creighton University Writing Center

D

• Dakota State University's OWL
• Daemen College Writing Space
• DeVry Institute of Technology Online Writing Support Center

E
• East Tennessee State University Writing Center
• Eastern Illinois University Writing Center
• Elon College Writing Center

F
• Ferris State University Writing Center

G
• Gallaudet University Writing Center
• George Mason University Writing Center
• Gettysburg College Writing Center
• Goldy-Beacon College's John R. Miller Memorial Academic Resource Center
• Grinnell College Writing Lab

H
• The Nesbitt-Johnston Writing Center at Hamilton College
• Harper College Writing Center
• Hawai'i's Online Learning Assistance (HOLA) — Grammar and Writing
• Hollins College Writing Center

I
• Illinois Institute of Technology
• Indiana University
  ○ Indiana University Bloomington Writing Tutorial Service
  ○ Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Writing Center
  ○ Indiana University of Pennsylvania Writing Center
  ○ Indiana University South Bend Writing Center
• Iowa State University's Writing Labs

J
• Johns Hopkins University Writing Center
K

- Kalamazoo College Writing Center
- Keene State College Math and Writing Center
- Kennesaw State University Writing Center
- Kenyon College Writing Center

L

- LaGrange College Writing Center
- Lake Superior State University Writing Lab
- Lawrence University Writing Lab
- Leeward Community College's Learning Resource Center
- Linfield College Writing Center
- Longwood College Writing Lab
- Lynchburg College Writing Center

M

- Malaspina University College Writing Across the Curriculum Web Site
- Marist College Academic Learning Center
- Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences Writing Center
- The McCallie School Writing Center
- Memorial University of Newfoundland's Writing Centre
- Metropolitan State College of Denver Writing Center
- Michigan State University Writing Center
- Michigan Tech Writing Center
- Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy Online Writing Lab
- Millersville University Writing Center
- Mott Community College Writing Center

N

- North Carolina State University Online Writing Lab
- Northern Arizona University Writing Center
- Northwestern University's Writing Place
- Nova Southeastern University's Academic Support Center
O

- Ohio State University
  - Writing Center
  - Lima Virtual Writing Center
  - Newark Online Writing Lab
- Oklahoma State University Writing Center
- Oregon State Writing Center

P

- Pacific Lutheran University Writing Center
- Pennsylvania State University Writing Center
- Pepperdine University, Seaver College Writing Center
- Pikes Peak Community College
- Polytechnic University Writing Center
- Portland State University Writing Center
- Prince George's Community College Accokeek Writing Center
- Princeton University Writing Center
- Purdue University's OWL

Q

R

- Rensselaer Writing Center
- Roane State Community College OWL
- Rutgers University Learning Resource Centers Writing Assistance

S

- St. Cloud State University's Write Place
- Salem State College Writing Center
- Salt Lake Community College Writing Center
- San Jose State University English Department Writing Center
- Scottsdale Community College Writing Center
- Skidmore College Writing Center
- Southern Central Connecticut State University Writing Center
- Southwest Texas State University Writing Center
• State University of New York
  ○ Albany Writing Center
  ○ Buffalo Thomas J. Edwards Learning Center
  ○ College at Cortland Academic Support and Achievement Program
  ○ College at Farmingdale Writing Center
  ○ College at Geneseo Writing Learning Center
  ○ College at Oneonta Learning Support Services
  ○ College at Potsdam Tutoring Center
• State University of West Georgia Writing Center
• Stetson University Writing Center
• Swarthmore College Writing Center
• Syracuse University Writing Consultant Homepage

T
• Taft Community College
• Temple University Writing Center
• Texas A & M Writing Center
• Texas Christian University Writing Center
• Texas Tech University Writing Center
• Texas Woman's University OWL
• Trinity College Writing Center
• Truman State University Writing Center

U
• United States Air Force Academy's Writing Center
• United States Naval Academy's Writing Center

UNIVERSITY OF A - G
• University of Arkansas at Little Rock University Writing Center Online
• University of Baltimore Academic Resource Center
• University of California
  ○ Berkeley Academic Enhancement Program
  ○ Davis Campus Writing Center
  ○ Irvine Learning and Academic Resource Center
  ○ Los Angeles Composition Lab
  ○ San Diego Writing Center
• University of Colorado at Colorado Springs Writing Center
• University of Delaware Writing Center
• University of Evansville Writing Center
• University of Florida's Networked Writing Environment
• University of Georgia Writing Center
UNIVERSITY OF H - M

- University of Hawaii Writing Workshop
- University of Idaho Writing Center
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Writers' Workshop
- University of Indianapolis Writing Lab
- University of Kentucky Writing Center
- University of Maine Writing Center Online
- University of Michigan OWL
- University of Michigan-Dearborn Online Writing Center
- University of Missouri's On-Line Writery

UNIVERSITY OF N - S

- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center
- University of Oregon's Writing Online Resource Directory (WORD)
- L'Université d'Ottawa Centre d'écriture
- University of Pennsylvania Writing Center
- University of Pittsburgh Writing Center
- University of Richmond Writing Center and WAC Program
- University of San Francisco Center
- University of South Carolina
  - Writing Center
  - Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering Writing Center Satellite
  - Aiken On-line Writing Room
- University of Southern California Writing Center
- University of Southern Colorado Writing Center

UNIVERSITY OF T - Z

- University of Texas at Austin Writing Center
- University of Toledo Writing Center
- University of Toronto Writing Centres
  - Health Sciences and Engineering Writing Centres
  - Innis College Writing Center
  - Scarborough College Writing Center
  - University College Writing Workshop
- University of Vermont Writing Center
- University of Washington Writing Centers
  - English Department
  - Geography Department
  - Political Science Department
  - Other University of Washington writing centers
  - University of Washington, Tacoma Writing Center
- University of Western Ontario Effective Writing Program Writing Centre
- University of Wisconsin
  - Madison Online Writing Center
Milwaukee Tutoring and Academic Resource Center
Stevens Point Mary K. Croft Tutoring-Learning Center
University of Wyoming Writing Center
Casper College Writing Center

Valparaiso University Writing Center
Virginia Tech's Online Writing Lab

Wake Forest Writing Center
Washburn University Writing Center
Webb School of Knoxville Middle and Secondary Online Writing Lab
Western Illinois University Writing Center
Western Washington University Writing Center
Wesleyan Polytechnic Institute Writing Center

X, Y, Z

Back to the National Writing Centers Association main page.

http://www2.colgate.edu/diw/NWCAOWLS.html
Revised: April 14, 1997.
Mail to: Bruce Pegg
Copyright 1996 © Colgate University. All rights reserved.
APPENDIX FOUR
TO: All Faculty and Staff of the English Department:
RE: Perceptions and Attitudes toward the Writing Center and its role in writing classes.

For my thesis, I am focusing on writing centers and their effectiveness as an aid to teaching freshman composition. As part of my research, I am sending this questionnaire to you. I know the timing of begging and pleading for your time could be better, but I would greatly appreciate it if you could fill out this form and place it in my mailbox by **Monday, June 2.** Of course, if turning them in later is more convenient for you considering the summer schedule, that will be fine. If any of you would like to speak to me further about this, please let me know. I will post the results on the mailroom door.

Thank you very much for your time and efforts,

Chris King

Please use the following scale for your responses: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree
Circle the response that comes closest to your opinion.

Peter Carino writes that English Departments prevalently view writing centers "as poor cousins of English departments, stereotypical "remedial fix-it shops, tended by an unenlightened staff....who work with under prepared or poorly regarded students."

1) 5 4 3 2 1 I agree with Peter Carino.
2) 5 4 3 2 1 I think the staff of the Writing Center are well-prepared for their job.
3) 5 4 3 2 1 I primarily see the Writing Center as a place where under-prepared or poorly regarded students go for help with writing.
4) 5 4 3 2 1 I have a favorable image of the Writing Center.
5) 5 4 3 2 1 I think the Writing Center is vital to instruction in ENG 055.
6) 5 4 3 2 1 I think the Writing Center is vital to instruction in ENG 100.
7) 5 4 3 2 1 I think the Writing Center is vital to instruction in ENG 300.
8) 5 4 3 2 1 I think the English Department is using the Writing Center to its fullest potential.
9) 5 4 3 2 1 I use the Writing Center as a base for research.

10) 5 4 3 2 1 I mainly see the Writing Center as a center for correction.

11) 5 4 3 2 1 I think the space allotted to the Writing Center is adequate.

12) Please check all that apply.

   I have my students use the Writing Center for........

   help with their papers.

   word processing.

   seeking basic grammar instruction from tutors.

   internet and infoseek facilities.

   independent work.

   other. --Please list it here.

Please add any other comments or suggestions you may have.
APPENDIX FIVE
Comments from the Questionnaire

The Writing Center and its staff can help students work to their fullest potential only if the students who visit are prepared for a tutoring session (not a “fix it” session) and if the staff members feel comfortable with their abilities as tutors. Teachers and students must take the responsibility to view the Writing Center as a place for extra help and guidance, not as a place where staff members write papers for students and edit like robots. The staff is there to guide learning and to offer one-on-one encouragement and supplemental writing skills.

In order for the Writing Center to gain respect from students, I believe only English majors and TAs should run it. This would prevent students from getting the wrong advice from tutors.

The center needs a work station -- a big table with chairs around it -- where editors can work with writers and where writers can edit with reference books. What little excuse of a work station was taken away for a little used computer and replaced with an old couch. Writing isn’t just about word processing and Net surfing; there is a need for editing and idea sharing -- and that requires a space of its own.

The full potential of the Writing Center should mean that the staff provides helpful hints for better student writing. However, the staff spends most of its time wrestling with students to get them to learn how to edit for themselves. The WC should not be a “fix-it shop,” but rather it should offer students tips for better writing and revising skills. Students must take the responsibility for themselves to proof their papers for typos and spelling mistakes so that tutors do not have to spend 30 minutes on a 3-page paper correcting such errors.

I feel we need three on staff at all times if at all possible. One can help with computer problems and watch printing access. The other two can look at students’ papers with them, and at times, one can take appointments and the other can take walk-ins. Often we only have one person who is supposed to do all these jobs -- usually at once.

1. Clean-cut guidelines of the purpose of the Writing Center should be developed so that professors and staff have a clear understanding of what our mission is and isn’t.
2. Staffers are well-versed in English skills but woefully untrained in the basics of computers. We are, after all, a computer hub as well, and would all benefit from some basic trouble shooting training (i.e., lost data, faulty disks, etc.).

I believe that the Writing Center acts as a separate entity from the English Department rather than as a part of it. Many instructors do not seem to understand the purpose of the writing lab, and therefore, they do not relay this information to their students. Too many students believe that the purpose is to help them get an “A” rather than to improve their writing.
APPENDIX SEVEN
be- : Bryan Station High School Literary Magazine students, Winburn Middle School seventh graders, University of Kentucky English 509: Teaching Composition juniors and seniors, and the Carnegie Center for Literacy

tween

assign- : The UK students taught Bryan Station students how to critique 7th grade portfolio pieces (personal narratives). The 7th graders wrote their pieces and sent them via mail to the Bryan Station students. After being critiqued, the pieces were returned to the 7th graders. After another revision, the 7th graders went to the Carnegie Center to e-mail their writings to the Bryan Station students.

Gail Cummins  gscumm1@pop.uky.edu
APPENDIX EIGHT
Southern Elementary School 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders, and University of Kentucky English 509: Teaching Composition juniors and seniors

UK students were assigned e-mail pen pals from Southern, to teach elementary students how to use e-mail and promote the process of writing for the KERA portfolio and other work.

Gail Cummins gscumm1@pop.uky.edu
APPENDIX NINE
be-: Jessamine High School juniors, and

tween University of Kentucky English 509: Teaching Composition juniors and seniors

assign-: The high school juniors wrote papers about THE SCARLET LETTER and e-mailed them via attachment to college juniors. The college students gave revision advice to the high school students, so the papers could be revised and placed in the KERA Portfolio.

Gail Cummins  gscumml@pop.uky.edu
Roane State Community College and
The University of Arkansas at Little Rock present:

The Cyberspace Writing Center
Consultation Project
(Writing Works)

The Cyberspace Writing Center Consultation Project, established in April 1994, is a joint venture between The University of Arkansas, Little Rock and the Oak Ridge branch of Roane State Community College, Harriman, Tennessee.

Composition, literature, and technical writing students at Roane State e-mail their class essays to graduate students in rhetoric and writing at Arkansas. The graduate students make suggestions and comments and e-mail the paper back. The two students then meet at a WritingWorks location, virtual reality writing centers created and programmed for their use, to discuss the essay one-on-one. There they discuss the paper in more detail, and, if they like, paste the revision directly into their conversation.

The project benefits both groups. The community college students are exposed to university-level writing expectations, as well as to access to the Internet and the opportunity to learn new skills, and they benefit from a writing consultation from someone other than their instructor. The graduate students benefit from exposure to typical community college students in a different location, and receive additional practice in teaching. Both groups strengthen narrative writing and communication skills. The project itself combines the strengths of the community college with those of the university, improving relations between the two.

Further articles about the project are available, written by co-creators Jennifer Jordan-Henley and Barry M. Maid, both through Purdue University's Writing Lab Newsletter (linked below) and through the article Tutoring in Cyberspace: Student Impact and College/University Collaboration found in Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing (Volume 12, Number 2, 1995).

For those interested in establishing such a project, check out the following documents. You are welcome to use them with attribution.

- MOOving Along the Information Superhighway: Writing Centers in Cyberspace, (published in Purdue University's Writing Lab Newsletter in January 1995 and reprinted with permission).
- Rationale for the Project
- Sample E-mail Instructions
- Syllaweb: Cyberspace Composition I
- Sample MUD Instructions
Related Links:

If you're interested in computers and writing, the following links may be of interest to you.

- **The Roane State Community College Online Writing Lab**
  
The RSCC OWL has a number of online documents and links to other OWLs across the nation. These OWLs offer hundreds of helpful handouts.

- **The Alliance for Computers and Writing**
  
The Alliance for Computers and Writing had its origins in the concept that more and more people are beginning to use technology in their writing classrooms and therefore require an immediate and continuing source of practical information, principally information shared by more experienced colleagues.
  
The Alliance seeks to coordinate the ideas and efforts of the following for the following: individual teachers and researchers, academic institutions, and business entities (publishers, software vendors, etc.)

- **Daedalus Group, Inc.**
- **MOOcentral**

MOOcentral serves as a clearinghouse for educational uses of MOOs, MUDs, MUSHes, and other text-based virtual realities. It includes links to most major MOO resources on the Web, direct telnet access to all MOOs listed, and links to documents supporting the use of MOOing and MUDing for teaching across disciplines.

- **National Writing Centers Association**
- **Netoric Project**
- **Voice of the Shuttle: Technology of Writing Page**
- **Writing for the World**
- **Yahoo—Education**

For further information about the Cyberspace Writing Center Consultation Project, contact the directors, Jennifer Jordan-Henley, jordan jj@al.rsccc.cc.tn.us or Barry M. Maid, bmmaid@ualr.edu
To: Roane State Community College OWL

Comments about these pages should be directed to:
Jennifer Jordan-Henley

Page born: May 30, 1995
Last Revised: April 16, 1997

©1994 Jennifer Jordan-Henley and Barry M. Maid

Great Horned Owl drawn by Jennifer Jordan-Henley
APPENDIX ELEVEN
At Purdue, students come to the Writing Lab to talk with tutors about planning and writing their papers. On-line, the Writing Lab offers other services as well, including some of our materials on writing and useful links to other sources of information.

- Our Resources for Writing include our own handouts on topics related to writing as well as links to other relevant sites.

- You can use our collection of search tools and indexes to Search the 'Net.

- Find out more about Purdue by looking at Purdue Resources.

- A recent addition to our OWL is an Annotated Bibliography of scholarship on online writing labs.

- Learn more about Purdue University Writing Lab (and the people who make it happen) by reading About Our Lab.

- To see what's going on at the Purdue Writing Lab, take a peek at our live picture.

- If you want to know what makes this OWL tick, read About Our OWL.

- To contact someone at the Writing Lab, write to owl@cc.purdue.edu.

To contact the current OWL coordinator, write to Stuart Blythe at blythes@cc.purdue.edu.

Last updated: 8/17/96, srb
Search Tools & Directories on the Net

The Internet is a vast network that links you to constantly expanding sources of information. Though there's no single card catalog or index to guide you to what's available, you can use search tools and consult indexes and directories of related information to find what you're seeking.

Search Tools

Use these tools to search by word, name, or topic. Since each search tool will most likely yield different results, try a couple of them out.

Yahoo offers a good site for beginners.

Opentext Web Index offers a relatively sophisticated search tool that can help you target your search. Be sure to try their power search.

Other valuable sites to consult include:

- AltaVista
- Lycos
- Web Crawler
- World Wide Web Worm
- ArchiePlex

For a page which brings together many different search engines and other information retrieval devices like encyclopedias, Bible searches and Shakespeare listings, see Ted Slater's Search Engine Collection.

Selected Directories and Indexes for Research

Many sites on the Internet offer helpful links to related sets of information. For information related directly to writing, check out our list of writing-related resources.

If you're not in a particular hurry and want to browse through related collections of sites, try Yahoo's extensive collection of links as well as our own collection of places to start your Internet-based research.

For information regarding other helpful research directories, check out some of the following sites:

- General Indexes & Reference Resources
- Library Catalogs
- Science and Technology Resources
- Government Information
- Information for Educators

General Indexes & Reference Resources

Some good general indexes to Internet-related materials include
• **The WWW Virtual Library**, (maintained by The World Wide Web Consortium and CERN)

• **My Virtual Reference Desk**, which is intended to be a 'one-stop' site for all things Internet. Includes a comprehensive listing of sites on news, weather, sports, general reference, subject guide (Arts and Culture through Women's Issues), and search engines.

• **EINet Galaxy page**

• **Internet Wiretap Reference Document Collection**

• **A List of Various Subject Matter Guides** from the Internet Resource Discovery Project at the University of Michigan

• **The University of California at Irvine Virtual Reference Desk**

• **The Newspaper Reference Desk**, courtesy of the Planet Earth Home Page, offers links to on-line newspapers and journals.

• The **Creating a Celebration of Women Writers** page includes lists of online women writers.

Back to the list of indexes.

**Library catalogs**

• **Purdue THOR**

• **The Library of Congress**

Back to the list of indexes.

**Science & Technology Resources**

For **science and technology resources**, you might begin with **The Internet Connections for Engineers Service** at **Cornell Engineering Library** and **Tecbase** at Sandia National Laboratory. Also check out our other starting points for science, engineering & technology.

Back to the list of indexes.

**Government Information**

For **government information**, the **Library of Congress** is your gateway to all government documents and information on the Internet (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches). For example, you can check information in the Library of Congress catalog, bills before Congress, government agencies, and your Congressional representatives' most recent speeches. Go straight to
the White House page, to Thomas for the full text of any bill introduced in Congress since 1992, and to Fedworld for a comprehensive guide to government data bases. You may want to try StateSearch for information on U.S. state governments or The White House Briefing Room for current economic and social statistics. Also check out additional government resources on our research starting points page.

Back to the list of indexes.

Information for Educators

For educational resources try EdWeb (set up by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting) and Carrie Bodensteiner's impressive list of Sites for Educators. Teachers of writing might be interested in seeing an annotated collection of links for writing instructors put together by a group English Education students at Purdue.

Back to the list of indexes.

Please, if you know of any Web or Gopher search sites that you'd like to have us add to this page, send an email message to owl@cc.purdue.edu.

Ready to return to the OWL home page?

Last updated: 1/24/97 SRB
Writing-Related Resources

We've tried to collect a variety of resources (both our own handouts and links to other writing-related sites) to help you meet a variety of writing demands. Please let us know if you find other relevant resources!

Our Own Handouts on Writing Skills

We have over 100 documents available for you and offer three different ways to look for handouts:

- Our index of handouts lets you search all our documents by category.
- If you're unfamiliar with those general categories, you can read summaries of each.

On-line Resources for Writers

In addition to the annotated lists below, check out our extensive collection of Writing Labs on the Internet and our pointers to search tools and directories.

Our pointers to resources include

- Indexes for Writers
- Online Reference Resources
- Guides to Style and Editing
- Business and Technical Writing
- Children and Writing
- Professional Organizations
- ESL-Related Sites
- Listserv Groups

Indexes for Writers

In addition to the resources listed at Search Tools and Directories, you might want to check out the following sites, which are related more directly to writing.

- Writer's Resources on the Web lists resources for all kinds of writing endeavors, including fiction, journalism, business and technology. Another source for all kinds of writing activities is John Hewitt's Writing Resource Center.

Back to the top.
Online Reference Resources

Carnegie-Mellon offers a variety of On-line Reference Works for the worldwide Internet community. Online Handbooks include:

- **Paradigm Online Writing Assistant** uses frames to create an impressive hypertextual writing guide and handbook.
- **The University of Victoria's Writer's Guide** offers a hypertextual set of information relating to writing. This site could be of special interest to writers in first-year composition.
- **The DeVry Online Writing Support Center** offers a variety of links to writing-related resources. Teachers of writing might find this site especially useful.

If you need MLA citation sources for electronic documents, check out these two pages:

- Janice Walker's [MLA Electronic Citation page](#)
- The International Federation of Library Associations' [Citation Guide for Electronic Documents](#)

Guides to Style and Editing

- Look up a word in the [Hypertext Webster Index](#)
- William Strunk's original version of the [Elements of Style](#) (later made famous by E. B. White) is available courtesy of the Bartleby project.
- If you're interested in copy editing, check out Mindy McAdams's [syllabus](#) for a course she taught in copy editing. It includes useful information on the field as well as pointers to further reading. For more links on copy editing, take a look at the links maintained by the [Copy Editor](#) newsletter.
- For fun, test your knowledge of [Editorial Esoterica](#), brought to you by Andrea Sutcliffe and Editorial Eye.
- Plagued by a grammar question for which you can't find an answer? Try one of the grammar hotlines listed in the [Grammar Hotline Directory](#). Services are listed by state and include phone and e-mail information.

Business & Technical Writing

- The [Editorial Eye](#) Internet site offers samples of their advice for writers, editors, and other communications specialists. Be sure to check out their index! They have some good short essays and reviews.
- [Internet Resources for Technical Communicators](#) provides helpful lists of newsgroups, journals, and listservs related to technical communication.
- NASA publishes a valuable handbook entitled *Grammar, Punctuation, and Capitalization—A...*
Handbook for Technical Writers and Editors by Mary McCaskill. Two chapters are online.

Punctuation and Capitalization

- Robert Ryan's Guide to Environmental Writing uses frames to offer a hypertextual guide with tips on grammar and mechanics as well as guides to common acronyms and abbreviations.
- For many useful links to telecommunications resources, check out Stephen Schiller's page.
- Those interested in technical writing might want to visit the Society for Technical Communication and a student-run site for SCT at Clarkson University.
- The Institute of Electric and Electrical Engineers has a helpful page which includes a link to the IEEE Professional Communication Society.

Back to the top.

Children and Writing

- If you're interested in publishing texts for children, check out The Children's Writing Resource Center.
- Also check out Inkspot.
- AND Michelle Childress' Language Arts and Literature Page.
- Parents who want to help their children improve their writing skills might want to look at the U.S. Department of Education's brochure, Help Your Child Learn to Write Well.

Back to the top.

Professional Organizations

- Two groups related to computers and writing are the Alliance for Computers & Writing (ACW) and the Assembly on Computers in English. The latter group is part of the National Council of Teachers of English.
- The National Writing Centers Association has a site devoted to serving the needs of Writing Center directors and tutors. Also, The South Central Writing Centers Association, a regional branch of NWCA, is online.
- Those interested in technical writing might want to visit the Society for Technical Communication and a student-run site for STC at Clarkson University.
- The National Writers' Union (The Trade Union for Freelance Writers) has information on their campaigns and projects, political issues, union documents & addresses, jobs, etc.
- The Institute of Electric and Electrical Engineers has a helpful page which includes a link to the IEEE Professional Communication Society.

Back to the top.

ESL-Related Sites

- Our ESL links have recently been expanded and converted into its own series of pages, including...
specialized links for teachers and students.

Listserv Groups

Here are the archives of recent postings by electronic discussion groups:

- Alliance for Computers and Writing
- MegaByte University (MBU)
- Writing Center

Please, if you know of any Web or Gopher sites that you'd like to add to this page, Drop us an email message to owl@cc.purdue.edu.

Ready to return to the OWL home? click here

Last updated: 4/23/97: srb


Downs, Judy R. and Linnehan, Paul J. Computers As Writing Tutors. ERIC ED 364 888.


