

Inkshed

Volume 14, Number 6, September 1996

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Inkshed provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use. Subscribers are invited to submit informative pieces such as notices, reports, and reviews of articles, journals, books, textbooks, conferences, and workshops, as well as polemical discussions of events, issues, problems, and questions of concern to teachers in Canada interested in writing and reading theory and practice.

Inkshed is published five times during the academic year. The following is a schedule of submission deadlines and approximate publication dates:

15 September, for 1 October
 15 November, for 1 December
 1 February, for 15 February
 1 April, for 15 April
 Post-Conference: June-July

This newsletter is supported financially by the various Writing Programmes at York University-including the Faculty of Arts' Centre for Academic Writing, The Computer-Assisted Writing Centre, and Atkinson College's Essay Tutoring Centre.

If the results of the ballot are positive, the fee structure will change. Watch the December newsletter for the renewal form.

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What's New

1. Ballot (to change fees for CASLL membership)

You'll find a ballot on the last page of this newsletter. It asks you to vote on the three motions that were passed at the spring 1996 CASLL meeting. Please fill out the ballot and send to Margaret Procter-if it is easier, just email Margaret (procter@chass.utoronto.ca) indicating your vote on the three issues. Once the results of the ballot are "official," we'll include a renewal of fees form in the December issue.

Please note that CASLL fees will cover issues in the calendar year rather than the academic year; thus, when you return the form in the December issue, you will have paid your fees through to **December 1997**. The editors (tough-minded types) remove from the CASLL membership those people who haven't paid their fees-so pay to read, please! This change in the calendar year means a change in the volume numbering next year, so we will continue with volume 14, and call this issue 6.

2. How to Become a Member of the CASLL Listserv

If you join the the lively e-mail discussion list of Canadian members, you'll hear news of jobs and conferences, and lots of anguished and funny discussions of current political and pedagogical issues in our profession. To subscribe to CASLL-L send a one-line message to listserv@unb.ca. Leave the subject line of the header blank, and in the message just type `subcasll-l Joe Blow`-assuming your real name is Joe Blow.

3. Call for Canadian Professional Documents

Please help answer this call from Anthony Parž (in an e-mail posting to CASLL-L, 16 September 1996) for professional documents to be made available to our members. Remembering a post-CCCC conversation among Canadians, he said:

"People seemed particularly interested in the sort of text that gets produced for Chairs, Deans, Provosts, Presidents, Senates and other august and not-so-august bodies. You know, arguments against testing or for writing courses, reports on centre activities, proposals for various initiatives, and so on. Here at McGill, for example, we have two documents that have helped us stave off competency [tests]-one an extensive study by Pat Dias of writing done by students in a number of different disciplines. Would a collection of such texts be helpful? Do other people have texts they could donate?"

Inkshed's Web site (at <http://www.writer.yorku.ca>) would provide the ideal way to make these documents accessible. We already have links to some Inkshedders' online work-and soon will have a link to Henry Hubert's national survey, excerpted in this issue. If your document is already online, please let us know the URL so we can provide a link. If it isn't, give it to us as a computer file (preferably in ascii form) and we will try to find ways of turning it into a web file. Send this material to Mary-Louise Craven at email:mlc@yorku.ca) or the above address.

4. Kudos to Jim Bell and Call for Papers in *Journal of College Reading and Learning*

Congratulations to Jim Bell of the University of Northern British Columbia who has recently been appointed editor of the *Journal of College Reading and Learning*. He sends us this encouragement to provide him with copy:

"This refereed journal is published by the College Reading and Learning Association. It is a forum for current theory, research, practice, and policy related to post-secondary reading improvement and learning assistance. The journal invites submissions on reading, learning assistance, developmental education, and tutorial services. Articles should show the practical application of theory, research, or policy."

Send submissions or requests for information to: Jim Bell,
Learning Skills Centre, University of Northern BC,
3333 University Way, Prince George,
BC V2N 4Z9.

5. Canadian Content in the March 1997 CCCC, Phoenix, Arizona

As usual, the Conference on College Composition and Communication in the US will be a good place to share views with other Canadians-besides how much warmer it is down there and where we should all go for dinner. Here are three official ways in which Canadians can meet and hear from each other at the 1997 conference:

a) The Canadian Caucus on Thursday, March 13 at 6:45, traditionally chaired by the editors of Inkshed: This session is useful for covering relevant "business" matters-including political updates, news of employment prospects, and general networking. If you have specific points you would like to bring up for discussion, please send the editors a brief (50-word) synopsis by February 1 so your intentions can be announced in the newsletter published just before the conference.

b) The roundtable presentation on "Canadian Contexts for Writing in the Disciplines: Past, Present, and Future," organized by Roger Graves, Friday March 14 at 4:30: Roger invites other panelists to participate. Send him an e-mail message at rgraves@condor.depaul.edu.

c) Other individual or group papers included in the regular schedule: Please let us know if you're giving a paper, and when it's scheduled: we'll give you free publicity in the December newsletter.

6. Job Opening in the English Department at Simon Fraser

A tenure-track Assistant Professorship in Writing & Rhetoric.

Starting 1 September 1997.

Qualifications include a Ph.D. and demonstrated strengths in teaching and research. The candidate will be involved in teaching in the English Department's Writing Centre, in its development and its research projects, as well as teaching in the English Department.

Application, CV, names of three referees, and a statement of reasons for applying for the position should be sent to:

Dr. K. Mezei, Chair,
Department of English, Simon Fraser University,
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6

by 15 December 1996.

In accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, this announcement is directed to Canadian citizens and permanent residents. Simon Fraser University is committed to the principle of equity in employment, and offers equal employment opportunities to qualified applicants. This position is subject to final budgetary approval.

7. *Inkshed* Archive

Thanks to Doug Vipond and Doug Brent, who answered our call for back issues of *Inkshed*. Now we have a complete set which is available to any member of our academic community; these past volumes will be passed on to the next set of editors. (Doug V. sent us a copy of a pre-issue of *Inkshed*, and Doug B. kindly xeroxed his set and sent it along.) If anyone would like to get access to the set, please email either Margaret or Mary-Louise.

8. And in this issue--

Rob Irish's review of Capossela's book and Henry Hubert's and Susan Bell's report on Writing Centres (the full text is available at <http://www.cariboo.bc.ca/ae/WRTNGCNTR/Survey.htm>-soon we'll have it available from the Writing Centre's HomePage). As well, check out the picture taken on the lawns of Geneva Park-this chair should be occupied by an Inkshedder come May 1997!

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CALL FOR PROPOSAL

(available online at <http://www.StThomasU.ca/hunt/ink14/cfp.htm>)

Inkshed Working Conference 14: Reading Technologies

May 1-4, 1997 - Geneva Park Conference Centre, Orillia, Ontario

What "Reading Technologies" means

At this conference we're going to focus on the ways technologies (old and new) shape the processes of reading and writing. We're particularly interested in examining electronic environments. In the title, we're using "reading" in at least two senses:

* In the strict sense of the kinds of reading technologies available ("reading" as an adjective). What kinds of technologies for exchanging texts (from marks on paper to telephone lines, from books to the Web) now exist, and how have they shaped reading and writing-and what new technologies are emerging, for instance, as a result of

computer networks? How do the technologies we use when we read texts (whether those texts be in a book, journal, magazine or newspaper, or on a computer screen, perhaps via the Internet) affect and shape our reading? How does the technology of reading shape the ways we write?

* In the sense of what we're doing when we're reading technologies themselves ("reading" as a verb). How do the technologies we use affect or determine who gets to read and write, whose voices get heard and attended to? What cultural assumptions are implicit in or enacted by the technologies we use to read and write? How do the technologies shape our sense of who our readers are, and what role we play as writers? How do they change the learning of reading and writing?

Thirteen ways of looking at a conference

You're probably aware that the Inkshed working conference has a history of stretching the limits of what a conference is, of rethinking tacit definitions and unspoken assumptions. Inkshed 14 will be no exception. We want to give you some sense of what we anticipate the conference will be like, so that you have some sense of the range of proposals that would fit (both thematically and in terms of presentation format).

At Inkshed 14 we want to *enact* some of the range of reading technologies we're talking about. We imagine a conference where whole-group activities (presentations, inkshedding, Talent Night, you name it) punctuate extended periods of, well . . . Sustained Silent Reading. Attendees will have a chance to read texts prepared by other conference participants, as well as texts written by people not in attendance. There will be substantial amounts of time to sit in comfortable chairs reading. If you attend, we expect you to bring your fuzzy slippers and your favorite coffee mug . . .

Additionally, texts will be available in a variety of formats: some texts will be available as the customary printed documents, some as computer diskettes accessible by a variety of programs, some will be available via the World Wide Web, some will appear as posters, and others will appear in ways we haven't thought of yet. You'll also have as many chances as we can arrange to sit in front of a computer screen reading or writing. In other words, at the Inkshed 14 conference you will have access to as many reading technologies as we can make available for trial, use, demonstration, and critique during and between conference sessions.

And, naturally, we expect that there'll be a good deal of inkshedding at this conference, both in whole-group sessions in response to presentations, and by people responding individually to texts that they've read during the conference. In fact, such individual reading and responding will form the basis of some of the whole-group presentations.

What we *don't* expect is the traditional technology by which texts are presented-the conventional 20 minutes of oral reading, or even full frontal paraphrasing. If you're comfortable with that format and would like to use it, we'd welcome your proposal-but we'd like to talk with you about alternative methods of presenting your text and having it attended to and discussed.

To get you started thinking about what you might propose, here are some possibilities for presentation technologies:

- * write a paper and circulate it at, or in advance of, the conference, and engage in a discussion of it at the conference.
- * set up a poster and create an "activity center" for study and research and conversation on the ideas you're concerned with.
- * create a "poster session" online-for instance, as a local URL on a portable PC; participants could play with it without the time constraints and problems of trying to get an Internet connection.
- * structure an exercise, where participants would do something within a certain time period, or continuing throughout the conference, and Inkshed about it.
- * set up a session whereby participants could experience a particular kind of technology for the exchange of texts-a MOO session, or an electronic discussion forum.

Delivering a paper

transporting people along highways disrupted by mega-construction (Ontario still goes in for some types of public works).

But we did find the combination in Geneva Park, a picturesque old YMCA resort on Lake Couchiching. (Stephen Leacock's summer home was nearby, and the area was the setting for his story "The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias.") Geneva Park rates are indeed reasonable, including accommodation in hotel-style rooms, all meals, and even a 24-hour free public coffee-pot and cookie jar. We sampled a lunch and appreciated the homemade soup with real bread, salads, and freshly-made cookies. Because the Y does not believe in profiting from the sale of liquor, the resort will sell us liquor at cost (surely Leacock would have approved as both a drinker and a humorist). What's more, the chef is an avid Internet participant and will help us arrange a hookup with the local service provider.

A possible bonus has developed since our visits, another sign of the new Ontario: five kilometres down the road, Casino Rama has opened for business. Now can gambling be worked into the topic of "reading technologies"? (The casino does mean though that the railroad runs to Orillia again which might make it easier for Toronto and area residents to get to the conference).

Margaret Procter



Picture yourself here in May 1997.....

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Review of *The Critical Writing Workshop 1993*.

Edited by Toni-Lee Capossela, Boynton/Cook, Heinemann,

Critical thinking is an overused term applied to everything from ESL courses to advertising. So, it is refreshing that in the opening chapter of *The Critical Writing Workshop*, Toni-Lee Capossela carefully situates a coherent definition. Her definition derives from John Dewey, whom she credits with originating the term, as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (3). Critical writing then, according to Capossela, is not "a subskills approach" but "holistic, . . . involves both affective and intellectual dimensions, is sensitive to context, and extends the writer's ability to delay closure, entertain contradiction, and deal with uncertainty" (7).

The subsequent chapters focus on kinds of exercises to encourage critical thinking in writing. Each chapter offers a model for assignment design, assignment sequencing, or faculty development. In each case, the chapter begins with a theoretical framework that provides context for the application that follows. Several chapters set out the application explicitly (e.g. chapters by Jones, Zeiger, Jenseth); others allow the theoretical discussion to dominate (e.g. Capossela; Coon and Birken). With the exception of Joel Nydahl's chapter on computer-mediated writing instruction, I found all offered something useful. The differing perspectives complement each other providing a kaliedoscope of possibilities

for writing in the classroom. This is where I got stuck. Not because the book bogs down, but because the ideas call out to be tried. In fact, I implemented Libby Falk Jones's model for a pair of writing assignments in "dialectical thinking" in the Early English Drama course I taught this summer.

In her structure the student tests a hypothesis rather than argues for a thesis. The test is organized under a rigorous structure of argument, opposition to the argument, and refutation-much like a debate. The experiment was only partially successful. The design of the assignment is geared toward a first-year composition class not an upper-year literature class. By third year, many of my students have already developed analytical thinking skills that make a dialectical model seem simplistic. The best papers went beyond the model to critique the exercise, moving beyond a dialectical analysis to synthesis.

Having experimented with one of the strategies, I read the others with caution. I do think they can encourage our students to develop thinking skills. Most of them, however, are most appropriate for the composition class, a largely American phenomenon, and will require significant adaptation for use in other contexts. However, I can see that the dialectical reasoning assignment that I mentioned above, has potential for a piece of initial writing in my Technical Writing class. Any industrial situation that can be articulated as either/or (like landfill vs. incineration) needs to begin with an objective testing of a hypothesis. From this background work, the students can gain a clear direction for a report.

More than the exercises, what I will return to, and am returning to, are the excellent discussions of pedagogy, and educational psychology (in terms for the layperson) that underlie each of the assignments.

I think the book will appeal to two groups of readers: instructors looking for models to try to adapt to different classroom situations, and teachers--perhaps more so those of us without a strong background in adult educational psychology--looking to understand how writing assignments expose the developmental stages of their students and how to use writing assignments to encourage their students to develop deeper thinking skills. As a reader in both groups, I found it excellent and informative.

Robert Irish,
University of Toronto
(irish@ecf.utoronto.ca)

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University College of the Cariboo National Writing Centre Survey, 1995

1. Introduction

This survey of Canadian writing centres was originally a highly informal survey to assist the researchers in planning the development of the writing centre at the University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops. After the initial survey was sent out on the CASLL listserv, however, a number of respondents requested the survey results, so the survey questions were slightly revised and broadcast on three more listservs. In addition, direct mailings brought the number of institutions contacted to 107. By the end of November 1995, 33 institutions had submitted answers to the survey (see the list attached in Appendix A), including centres from Newfoundland to British Columbia, ranging in size from the University of Toronto to Keewatin College in Alberta. The following report reviews the countable data, offers general conclusions, and finishes with further plans for this project. For further information, appendices list the responding institutions, and set out the responses to questions 14 and 15, "What helped you most in establishing your writing centre?" and "What caused you the most grief in establishing your writing centre?" Responses to these last two questions cannot be quantified, but they have offered us as researchers a great deal of valuable insight.

The researchers thank many of you for responding to our survey. The responses have given us at the University of the Cariboo practical insight into how we might proceed to develop our own writing centre.

2. Summary Of Countable Data

With some reordering of the survey questions, the following summary attempts to give both a quantitative and qualitative picture of the combined responses.

Administrative Location

Independent	18
Student Services	10
Arts/English	5

One of the most difficult to summarize, this category often affects the writing centre's image and, therefore, its acceptance within the institution. Being connected to a certain department or division often creates the perception that only students from one discipline or program may use the centre. As the data shows, more than half of the writing centres are independent of any department or division within the institution. Most of these report directly to a Senate, Provost, or Vice-President of Instruction or Academics. Some have an advisory board or committee, while others are part of separate departments formed to conduct a campus-wide writing program.

Funding

Base only	8
Dept./div. only	8
Operating funds only	7
Base + other	6
Fees only	3
No response	1

Funding is another category that presents extreme diversity. Approximately half of the respondents indicate that their funding is on a year-by-year, temporary basis and has to be "fought for" every year. Although 8 centres have base funding, half of these feel insecure about future funding. A few responses mention ongoing searches for permanent outside funding, such as grants and endowments. The amount of certainty regarding future funding seems to play a role in the morale of the centres' directors.

Location

Good	14
Bad	9
50/50	9
No response	1

Locations range from shared office space to detached houses. Good locations are neutral (not connected to any department or division), central on campus, highly visible, not shared, multi-roomed, spacious, well-lighted, and inviting. Location is often linked to usage, and any one of these aspects can affect the success of the centre.

Staff

Director/Coordinator:

full time	18
part time	15

In addition to their coordination of the writing centre, many of the directors/coordinators have teaching duties, either through the centre's programs or in other departments.

Number of tutors:

under five	8
five to fifteen	13
more than fifteen	5
not specified	7

The number of tutors in any one centre may depend on fluctuating budgets, the availability of a pay support program such as work-study, or the availability of appropriate tutors.

Source:

faculty only	11
undergrad + grad	10
combination	5
other	2
not specified	5

The types of tutors vary widely. Volunteers may be faculty, students, or community members. Undergrad students may work as peer tutors, or graduate students may tutor as part of their TA-ships or practica. Some centres are staffed by course release faculty from varying disciplines on a rotating basis. Remuneration ranges from \$5.00 to \$11.00 per hour for undergrads, to \$22.00 per hour, or the rate for TA/fellowships, for graduate students. Faculty are often appointed on a section release.

Support staff:

Nine respondents report having a full- or part-time secretary, receptionist, and/or administrative assistant.

Hours

more than 35	18
20 to 35	11
fewer than 20	4
Evenings/wkends	10

Most responses acknowledge the need for a consistent schedule that students can depend on. Hours are varied, but usually cover the 9:00 to 4:00 part of the day. Often, hours depend on budget adequacy and tutor availability. Centres with evening and weekend hours find this time well used.

Clientele

all	16
all students	14
limited	2
no response	1

A comment that appears more than once is "we welcome all who seek assistance." As the data indicates, most centres are ready to help all members of the institution's community. Several also offer their expertise to the community at large, including businesses and societies. It seems that the more independent the writing centre is, the more extensive its services are.

Usage

100%	18
less than 100%	11
(70-90%)	4
no response	4

While most centres find their available time used to capacity, some find that they cannot provide enough time during peak periods and have unused time during slow periods. Several responses indicate that study and trial is ongoing to try to find a solution to this problem.

Programs

one-to-one tutoring	33
workshops	11
special programs	19
credit courses	2

As the data shows, all of the centres offer one-to-one tutoring, with some expressing a strong belief in interpersonal communication. Two-thirds of the centres give workshops on the different aspects of writing and grammar, often one hour long and during the noon hour. More than half either offer special programs of greater length than the workshops (possibly short, non-credit courses) or are part of a large program, such as Writing Across the Curriculum.

Promotion

faculty memos/newsletters	22
posters	21
ads in campus newspapers	20
in-class presentations	19
orientation presentations	16
listing in coll./univ. publications	11
none	2

The responses show a wide variety of promotional activities, with "word of mouth" emerging as the most effective means of directing students to the centre. Second in strength is giving five-minute informational talks directly to classes at the beginning of each semester. The responses indicate that much effort is invested in promoting most centres. Being listed in institutional publications, such as the calendar, gives the centre important official recognition, showing institutional commitment to this support service.

Evaluation

informal only	11
formal and informal	11
formal only	6
none	5

About half of the centres have a formal reporting procedure in place, some through a department, and some directly to upper administration. Most centres collect informal evaluative information from students and tutors, using a feedback form. Many responses speak of the need for a better system in this area.

3. Conclusions

Because this report is based on a more informal than formal survey, with only partial coverage of the potential institutions involved, the conclusions must also be informal. These conclusions are, therefore, presented as reflections arising from the research than as formal conclusions drawn from hard data.

1. Institutional support for writing centres is now limited. The response of only 33 institutions out of over 100 contacts in this survey may reflect the dearth of writing centres in Canada, or their low campus profile. Letters sent to Writing Centres care of main campus addresses may not have reached small writing centres at some institutions. The majority of the reporting centres noted a struggle for the continued financial support of their institutions. Comprehensive, base-funded programs like those at Laurentian, Winnipeg, and Fraser Valley seem exceptional. Judging by the increasing demand for writing centres in places like the University of Toronto, however, attitudes seem to be changing.

2. Support needs to be widespread. For writing centres to be effective, they must have the financial support of administrations as well as the practical support of faculty colleagues. In building a program, one of these areas of support may emerge first, but both must eventually buy into the importance of writing centre programs. In order to recommend students to the centres, faculty must understand the work of the centres and have confidence in them. The administration must believe in the value of the centres in order to fund them.

3. Writing centres are often misunderstood. Most of the respondents to this survey reported being misunderstood by content-area faculty. Students and teaching colleagues often saw the writing centre as narrowly remedial, service-oriented rather than teaching-focussed, or even unnecessary (poor writers don't belong in a university). Publicity for the centres must not only attract students but also educate faculty and administrators.

4. Research is needed for two purposes. Research is needed not only for the immediate benefit of writing centre clients, but also for the professional acceptance of writing centre staff. Institutional credibility for writing centre faculty follows from their strong professional service, research and publication records. At universities, writing centre positions should, therefore, be tenure track positions.

5. Strong individual initiative is needed to establish and build centres. The new University of Northern BC built a writing centre into its initial educational plans, but such planning is unique in Canada. We suspect that few institutional calendars include references to writing centres. In virtually all institutions, healthy writing centres have developed primarily from the initiative of committed individuals with strong persuasive skills.

4. Future Plans

For the future development of writing centres in Canada, the researchers of this project would like to expand these results to include a number of institutions that have not yet responded to our survey. We propose updating the survey questions and publishing them again in the coming year, on both the CATTW and CASLL e-mail lists. If you have questions you think would help the survey, please send a note to Susan Bell at sbell@cariboo.bc.ca or to Henry Hubert at hubert@cariboo.bc.ca.

APPENDIX A: Alphabetical Listing of Responding Institutions

1. Bishop's University 2. Calgary, University of 3. Camosun College 4. Capilano College 5. Carleton University 6. Concordia University 7. Douglas College 8. Fraser Valley, University College of the 9. Grande Prairie Regional College 10. Keewatin Community College 11. Laurentian University 12. Lethbridge Community College 13. Malaspina University College 14. McGill University 15. Memorial University of Newfoundland 16. Mount Royal College 17. Mount Saint Vincent University 18. New Brunswick, University of (Saint John) 19. Nipissing University 20. Northern British Columbia, University of 21. Northwest Community College (Smithers) 22. Northwest Community College (Terrace) 23. Queen's University 24. Red Deer College 25. Ryerson Polytechnic University 26. Saskatchewan, University of 27. St. Francis Xavier University 28. Toronto, University of (University College) 29. Waterloo, University of 30. Wilfrid Laurier University 31. Winnipeg, University of 32. York University (Atkinson College) 33. York University (Centre for Academic Writing)

Appendix B. Text Of Responses To Questions 14 And 15

14. What helped you most in establishing your writing centre?

In the 1970s, funding was plentiful. Being connected with a language entrance test keeps us going, but also is a problem in that it perpetuates the diagnose-remediate model.

My extensive background in writing centres and the willingness to work lots of overtime.

Support from key administrators-Deans and Vice-Principal-as well as an interested faculty whose demand for better student writing was expressed at the University Senate.

Faculty, Professional groups, and Administration being concerned that students cannot handle the kinds of discourse necessary for their curriculum, that students need better communication skills in general, and that some graduates are unable to write intelligibly.

A full-time tenure stream appointment charged with starting it up and the expertise of people who had worked in the Faculty of Arts Centre for Academic Writing.

Personal zeal and dedication.

Gradually developing strong ties with individual faculty members in a variety of disciplines.

Willingness to fund on the part of senior administrators; hard work by Chair of Graduate Committee in my department.

My own background in teaching reading and writing and in pedagogy.

I spent two years working individually with students and getting to know their concerns and needs before setting up the Centre. I found the books, newsletters and conference presentations of the National Writing Centers Association very useful as well. At the time it was established, I had a very supportive Director who respected my ability to create such a centre. This too was invaluable.

A Director (mid-level admin) who believed in the Centre.

Faculty in ABE and ESL who planned and started a pilot project.

Starting the Centre to be independent of any discipline so that it could get up and running quickly, and so that it could better serve all areas of the college.

My own experience in administration and in having written a handbook on writing; also having the Writing Centre at Bucknell University as a model.

Gaining faculty and board support, and visiting classes each semester .

I think, in retrospect, the best thing was that we weren't tied administratively to the English Department (pressure to be a Grammar Drill Centre, rather than a composition-based, student-centred approach).

Getting cooperation of the Deans and the English Department.

The support of Learning Skills staff was helpful in setting up the Centre.

Administration helped us financially, but the commitment, knowledge and personalities of our staff made our centre successful.

Clear need on the part of students, and funding from sympathetic administrators.

I wrote a feasibility study, which was accepted. The general perception that many of our students were not writing to professional standards was probably the greatest incentive for support.

Supportive Deans, dedicated faculty, and satisfied students (in a recent poll of student satisfaction with York's academic services, students ranked CAW first among nineteen entries).

Faculty support.

It was established with the support of the Dean of Arts and the (then) Assistant to the Dean of Arts. I did some research prior to this year, just as you are doing, to find out what is going on in learning centres across Canada. I discovered that there was enthusiasm for a project such as this with many faculty members.

Instructor awareness of student need for individual assistance with writing difficulties was the catalyst for establishing the Writing Centre.

What helped most in establishing a Writing Skills Program was the initiative of the Special Needs Office to make available some funds which were dedicated to support students with a disability who were experiencing difficulty with writing skills. Shortly after services were made available to students with a disability, its success was realized and its apparent value recognized by other constituents of the non-disabled student population. The Faculty of Arts and Science and then the Faculty of Education expressed an interest in extending services to their students who did not have a disability. The Writing Skills Program expanded its mandate when additional funding support flowed through from the two faculties.

Faculty support.

The Writing Tutorial Service was a "grass roots" movement that began as a result of student interaction. Its success was clear and convincing and coupled with the compelling evidence collected and distributed by its first (and continuing) coordinator, Aviva Freedman, was of great appeal across the Faculty.

Funding for starting the centres was part of a bigger package. It was won through a long process of seeking faculty and student support for a university-wide Writing Program that was initiated by Michael McIntyre when he was Dean of Arts and Science in the 80s. What helped most in the actual development of the centres was our commitment from the first to building a student-centred community.

15. What caused you the most grief in establishing your writing centre?

Fighting to remain in the academic sector-important.

Advertising the Centre's services, new location, and hours of operation: It was important to establish a permanent location and schedule so that students could access the services of the Centre.

Finding a location.

None of the three of us had any background whatsoever in composition theory, so we were really stumbling around in the dark that first year.

The facilities have always been inadequate; to get it right, you have to design a space around the intended activity.

Lack of funding.

Too many people wanted to run the show, and I had to make it clear that I would make the final decisions.

Getting placed on the college organizational structure and budgeting system as a permanent service so that we no longer have to depend entirely on discretionary and one-time-only kinds of funding.

The other major battle has been to get any computers.

Funding problems; ignorance and contempt among some parts of the community about the Centre's goals and methods.

Weak administrative support.

In spite of growth in student demand for our programmes, we have far less than our share of resources within the department.

Because our philosophy in working with students differs so much from that of the counselling service, we feel that we do not really fit well within the department (Student Services: Counselling and Development) and are probably not in the 'right' place within the university to carry out our functions effectively.

Our physical space is also grossly inadequate: cramped office cubicles with unhealthy air-quality conditions.

Beating the perception of being 'remedial fix-it shops' where 'bad writers' go.

The Writing Centre is 12 years old and we got our own space only 4 years ago.

A year ago the Dean killed our funding, but I fought to get the referendum for the levy and we won, so now we are safe.

A decision four years ago to fire one college writing-lab director and replace her with Grammatik (!) But this disaster galvanized many faculty members to protest, and drew together the tutors from disparate writing centres to define clearly and forcefully what we did and show why it was valuable.

The continuing inefficiency of centralized decision-making about funding. Our new programs especially suffer from inadequate planning time for program design and hiring.

Faculty members who think that all students should be without any need of writing advice on arrival at university, or who just do not like us personally.

Part-time writing or ESL instructors who saw the Writing Proficiency Programme as a rival or threat to their position. As it turned out, we actually send students to these other courses, but we are still not looked upon kindly by many of these individuals.

Nothing that was serious.

I don't think there were any particular obstacles: a few professors, as I had been warned, thought that students who could not write should just be failed, but most are convinced that we not only help, we empower students.

Flexible hours.

The perception that what we do is 'service' rather than 'teaching' probably caused the most frustration.

Staffing-because the position is not full-time, constantly seeking replacements.

The only real obstacle encountered while trying to establish the centre was a lack of sufficient funds. At the moment, the funds are still not lavish, but the centre is likely to expand over time.

Conflict with various instructors regarding the purpose and policies of the Centre, as well as recruiting volunteers, are the two most difficult obstacles to overcome.

The greatest source of grief initially arose out of lack of funds and subsequently the shortage of ongoing funding to support the Program. This continues to be the greatest area of difficulty as each year, budgets and programs are reviewed and permanent dedicated funding support has not yet been established.

Issues re: helping students with work in progress.

Probably the biggest hurdle at the beginning was ignorance about the nature of writing-the notion that by the time students reach university 'they should know how to write.' The grass-roots beginning of the WTS and the research that emerged in the field at the same time did a lot to educate the faculty who had this attitude (although there are vestiges of this attitude remaining today).

What has proved to be a persistent issue of some vexedness is educating students and faculty about what peer tutors can and cannot be expected to contribute.

It hasn't been a big deal. We are most concerned about finding ways to direct those who need it most to take advantage of its services.

Susan Bell and Henry Hubert
University College of the Cariboo

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TO ALL CASLL MEMBERS:

At the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning, the members present approved these three proposals for changes to the CASLL constitution.

(The minutes and an account of the discussion at that meeting were printed in Inkshed 14:5, the July 1996 issue.)

As a member of CASLL, you now have the right to show final approval or disapproval of these proposals by voting on these proposals. Votes will be tallied by December 8.

If you are a member, you may obtain a ballot from:

Mary Louise Craven
mlc@yorku.ca)

or

Margaret Procter (University of Toronto
procter@chass.utoronto.ca)

Please return ballots before 30 November 1996 by one of these means:

By email to procter@chass.utoronto.ca

By regular mail to:

Margaret Procter,
University College, University of Toronto,
15 King's College Circle,
Toronto ON M5S 3H7.

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