

Planning for Hypertexts in the Writing Center... Or Not

by Michael A. Pemberton

It will come as no surprise, perhaps, to say that writing centers have long been grounded in – some would say "bounded by" – the conventions of printed text. True, writing centers, like most of the rest of the world, have been influenced by advances in computer technology, most recently through the explosive growth of Online Writing Labs (OWLs) and computer-mediated conferencing with students, but fundamentally, most of the interactions between students and tutors still center on the handwritten or printed texts that are placed on a table between them or, perhaps, shared in a word-processed file. These texts are structured linearly and hierarchically, moving along a single path from beginning to end, following well-known and universally taught discourse forms that have emerged from a print-based rhetorical tradition.

But times may be changing. As we enter an era when electronic publishing and computer-mediated discourse are the norm, an era when new literary genres and new forms of communication emerge on, seemingly, a weekly basis, we must ask ourselves whether writing centers should continue to dwell exclusively in the linear, non-linked world of the printed page or whether they should plan to redefine themselves – and retrain themselves – to take residence in the emerging world of multimedia, hyper-linked, digital documents. To put it plainly, should we be preparing tutors to confer with students about hypertexts? This is not a simple question to answer, but it is

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a question that may soon demand explicit answers as our students explore and experiment with hypermedia in greater numbers in the years to come.

There are certainly compelling reasons to believe that writing centers should learn more about digital texts and prepare themselves to help students both navigate and create them, and more than a few writing center scholars have urged the professional community to start their planning now. In an article on preparing for future technologies in the writing center, Muriel Harris warns her readers that writing center tutors will soon be conferencing with

...a clientele of students who are composing texts [...] in multimedia presentations, on Websites, in distance-learning projects, and so on. Computers as a technology interwoven in communication is a given, as is electronic communication across the curriculum. Writing centers without the technology or staff to work with these students will find themselves no longer in sync with how writers write and with what writers need to know about writing processes as they are affected by technology. (194)

For John Trimbur, this move toward technological expertise in the writing center is inevitable and will eventually force writing centers to accommodate new rhetorical theories and practices to deal with new types of documents. "To my mind," he says, "the new digital literacies will increasingly be incorporated into writing centers not just as sources of information or delivery systems for tutoring but as productive arts in their own right, and writing center work will, if anything, become more rhetorical in paying attention to the practices and effects of design in written and visual communication" (30). As a result, writing centers may soon find themselves conferencing with students about hypertexts in progress, confronting not only unfamiliar textual landscapes but also challenging problems in document design.

Trimbur's imagined future may be approaching us more swiftly than we realize, now that the Internet and the World Wide Web have become such pervasive features of our culture and our students' academic lives. Students are not only browsing Web documents with more frequency, they are using Web sites as primary research sources in their papers and often creating such documents themselves. James Inman, in fact, asserts that "[i]n many writing classes, whether first-year composition or other courses like technical writing and business writing . . . teachers assign websites, and students look to writing centers for help, as that's where they've most often turned for peer help with writing" (II.8.3).¹

But even if writing centers "are well suited to guide the journey into the bumpy land of learning with technology" (Cummins 2006), we should ask ourselves at least three important questions as we consider what our specific role should be in this moment of transition, both at a global level (in relation to writing center theory and practice overall) and at a local level (in relation to our home institutions):

- Are writing centers generally *willing* to accommodate hypertexts?
- Do writing centers need to *accommodate* hypertexts?
- If a need exists, how should writing centers *prepare* to accommodate hypertexts?

How Have Writing Centers Viewed New Technologies?

A brief look at the ways writing centers have responded to new technologies in the past may help us answer the first of these questions and provide a useful context for answering the other two as well. Computers have been a part of writing center work for the better part of forty years now, sometimes as writing tools, sometimes as teaching devices, sometimes as resource centers, and sometimes as communications media; yet the relationship between writing centers and computer technology has been, overall, only a cordial one, with occasional fluctuations ranging from wild enthusiasm to brooding antagonism. While computers and computer software have often been praised by writing center scholars for the educational benefits they provide, they have also been seen as incipient threats – not merely to the personal, interactive pedagogies that writing centers embrace, but also to the writing center's very existence, particularly in tough budget times when administrators may view CAI programs and other technological artifacts as cheap, efficient alternatives to the labor-intensive, individualized teaching model at the heart of writing center practice.

Neal Lerner's work on the history of technology in writing centers from the 1930s to the 1970s documents the roots of this ambivalence, illustrating how new technologies, despite their potential benefits, have often been used to reshape writing center pedagogy, sometimes insidiously and frequently in ways that centers would later want to repudiate. In "Drill Pads, Teaching Machines, and Programmed Texts: Origins of Instructional Technology in Writing Centers," Lerner traces the earliest origins of a "technological model" for writing center work to social and cultural pressures that manifested in the 1930s, including the tripling of college enrollments as the children of immigrant families turned to higher education as a means of social advancement, and the concomitant cry for massive remediation as administrators had to cope with a sudden influx of students from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds with widely varying degrees of preparation (121-22). Lerner, citing Rose (1985), argues that the

"efficiency movement" in education, tremendously influential at this time, responded to this crisis by producing and promoting an assortment of programmed, quasi-individualized "drill and practice technologies" that could be applied to under-prepared nontraditional students *en masse* (123). Writing labs soon became the sites where such programmed instruction and remediation took place, and the focus of this remediation work was largely restricted to grammar, mechanics, and other easily-quantifiable matters of surface structure. Through the 1950s and 1960s, this model for writing center work found an easy confluence with Skinnerian behaviorism, current-traditionalism, and an instrumental view of computer technology to produce the "Comp-Lab" model for programmed learning, a pedagogy that was prevalent in writing centers by the 1970s. As in the drill and practice writing lab of the 1930s, the "Comp-Lab" model focused on lower-order deficiencies in student writing (marked primarily by observable errors in surface structure) and "remedied" them by carefully chosen computer programs that would – with drills, exercises, practice sets, and "rewards" for right answers – gradually modify the students' deviant linguistic behaviors. This approach to writing instruction soon became a source of irritation to writing center directors as its current-traditional focus on grammar and final products conflicted strongly with the writing process model embraced by scholars and practitioners in the burgeoning field of composition studies. Writing center directors found themselves increasingly at odds with the pedagogy they were expected to support, and computers – to some extent – became avatars of a stagnant tradition rather than icons of progress and change.

Peter Carino's "Computers in the Writing Center: A Cautionary History" takes up the story where Lerner leaves off, tracing the conflicts that arose between the uses of computer technology for writing instruction and an increasingly sophisticated writing center theory that developed from the 1970s through the 1990s.² During this time period, says Carino, discussions of technology in writing centers primarily addressed the utility of behaviorist CAI programs like those Lerner described in the Comp-Lab model, the effect of word processors on student writing processes, and the impact computer technologies would have on the day-to-day functions of writing centers. While a fair number of these pieces offered "success stories" that stressed the benefits of computers for writing instruction, equally often writers expressed concerns about how technology would affect the mission of the center and whether or not technology might eventually dominate the center and eliminate the need for tutors altogether. "This tension between technological endorsement and technological resistance," he says, "marks writing center discourse on computers since the early

1980s" (172), and though such conflict does not, in itself, embody a master narrative for understanding the complex ways in which technology and writing center theory/practice interpenetrate one another, it is nevertheless a salient perspective from which to view and interpret what has been, historically, an uneasy relationship.

Carino's article, like Lerner's, makes several important points about technology's effects on writing center pedagogy and the corresponding positions that writing center professionals have taken in relation to those effects. Foremost among these points, perhaps, is the fact that writing centers have always maintained a healthy critical skepticism about the impact technology has had or should have on what they do. Writing centers have always wanted to be responsive to technology and the changes technology brings to the student populations they serve, but they also question whether the seductions of technology will end up diluting their core values or giving them responsibilities that they're not prepared to accept. As recently as 1995, Muriel Harris and I warned that "the lack of personal contact [in online tutorials] may seem to dehumanize a setting that writing centers have traditionally viewed as personal and warm" (156), and Nancy Grimm in that same year wrote that concerns about such dehumanization were still an "unresolved issue" (324).

The implication this history has for hypertexts, then, is that writing centers will – in principle – be willing to adjust to the demands that these new types of documents bring, but they will not do so uncritically, and they will likely remain wary. Though hypertexts, in and of themselves, may not represent the kind of depersonalizing influence (at least symbolically) that computers do, their metaphorical affiliation with a steadily encroaching technology – sometimes threatening, often unfamiliar – will probably exacerbate any hopes of easy accommodation.

What's Missing in Writing Center Discourse

Some evidence for the wariness writing center professionals feel about technology can be seen in the field's recent professional discourse about the impact of hypertexts – or rather, the near total lack of such discourse. Carino ends his historical review by noting that OWLs, LANs, MOOs and Webs have dominated the conversation in writing center discourse in recent years, but it's also worth noting that except for a smattering of writing center articles that have reflected on somewhat marginal technological issues³, the substance of that conversation has fallen into one of two distinct threads: discussions of online tutoring – conferencing between tutor and tutee at remote sites, mediated by computers – or the design, purpose, and function of OWLs. Rarely has there been a discussion (even in the archives of WCENTER) of the impact that the Web

is having on the very nature of what constitutes a "text" or the impact that the reconstituted shape of these texts might have on writing center training, conferences, or discourse.

Though writing centers hitched their wagons to the Internet train early on, their primary research interest in this area since the early 1990s has been the collaborative possibilities enabled by email, chatrooms, listservs, and the World Wide Web. In a 1995 special issue of *Computers and Composition*, edited by Joyce Kinkead and Christine Hult, fully a dozen articles appeared about computers and writing centers, most of them reflecting on the opportunities for computer-mediated tutoring made available via the Internet. The majority of these pieces concerned themselves with one of two possible topics: (1) the mechanics of creating systems for online tutoring (Harris and Pemberton, Nelson and Wambean, Healy) or (2) the textual features of the discourse produced by tutors and students in online environments (Coogan, Wood, Chappell, Johanek and Rickly). At a time when the Internet was first making its power as an instructional delivery system felt, such research was absolutely necessary. People in the field needed to know the possibilities, and they had to be aware of the risks. Did writing centers want to develop an online presence? How should they go about doing it? What happens in online tutoring? What are the gains? What are the losses? These were the clear, important questions that writing center professionals needed answers to, and researchers regularly reported the results of their online experiences in journal publications and conference presentations.

From 1995 to the present, the substance and focus of writing center research as it relates to technology has remained largely unchanged. "How-to-build-an OWL" articles have begun to disappear in recent years as online writing labs have become the norm rather than the exception, and the sheer comprehensiveness of James Inman and Clint Gardner's recent CD-ROM, *The OWL Construction and Maintenance Guide*, may close the door on such articles for quite some time. Still, a good deal of technology-related writing center scholarship continues to focus on the textual features of dialogue produced in online collaborative exchanges between tutors and students. Sara Kimball's "Cybertext/Cyberspeech: Writing Centers and Online Magic," for example, investigates the nature of cybertext in online tutorials and discusses ways in which online identities are either constructed or obscured (see also Bell and Hübler). Recent descriptive studies of synchronous OWL conferences, the dynamics of email tutoring, and CMC interactions with distance-learning students have also employed this methodological focus in their studies of tutorial discourse (see also Monroe; Coogan; Gardner; Anderson). By no means do I wish to devalue this research or the knowledge

it produces. These studies are often insightful and theoretically sophisticated, helping us to better understand the complex sociolinguistic structures inherent in the hybrid oral/textual environment of online conversation. My point here, however, is that they tend to investigate only one kind of technological "text" that writing centers are likely to generate or come in contact with.

When matters of tutor training are addressed with respect to technology, they tend to highlight how tutors can be trained to use technology effectively when working as OWL consultants, rather than how to critique HTML documents and guide students toward successful revisions. Breuch, Kastman, and Racine, for example, only encourage tutors to be sensitive to the distinctive nature of text-only environments, and offer several useful suggestions for structuring online responses and adopting appropriate tutoring roles. Similarly, three current tutoring manuals, *Tutoring Writing* (McAndrew & Reigstad), *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One* (Rafoth), and the *Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring* (Gillespie and Lerner) include sections that address technology issues in writing centers, but they too focus on online tutoring alone – using email, OWLs, or synchronous chat systems to conference with students about their papers. Other sections in these texts contain advice for handling "difficult" discourse issues or conferencing sessions, but these chapters tend to focus on matters such as "what to do when a student has no draft" or "how to conference on unfamiliar subjects," rather than providing insights about how to help students whose drafts are constructed as hypermedia texts.

Do Writing Centers Need to Adjust Their Pedagogies?

If we believe that more and more writing classes will be taking Sean Williams' advice to "think out of the pro-verbal box" and allow students to write and create documents that incorporate more visual, multiliterate forms of communication, and if the Internet is spawning entirely new textual genres with their own sets of critical features, not all of which are common to print texts (Bauman), then the consequences for writing centers are clear: more students with different texts in unfamiliar genres will be making new demands on tutor expertise.

But what is the nature of these demands? What sorts of expertise will be necessary? What specific challenges do hypertexts entail, and must writing centers make significant changes in what they already do quite well – work with students, one-to-one, on papers that already span a wide range of discourse types across multiple disciplines?

Hypertexts can certainly present significant problems for writing centers, particularly with regard to the logistics of reading text itself. Hypertext documents complicate

traditional rhetorical forms and can therefore subvert normal "print-based" reading strategies. Familiar notions of organization, argument, and thesis-support structures do not often translate well into Web space; comfortable understandings of format and conventions may no longer apply, and new schemas may take their place (Costanzo 13). "People write arguments in hypertext differently than they do in a more traditional format," notes Locke Carter, "When faced with the task of constructing single-author, self-contained arguments in a hypertext environment [he says],...authors must overcome the expectation of order" (3).⁴ If what Carter says is true, then tutors would have to learn entirely new schemas for what hypertextual order entails, and at least in the short term, their ability to assess texts quickly and offer advice might be compromised. Imagine Michael Joyce coming into the writing center with a draft of his literary hypertext, *Afternoon*, a text whose opening page contains twenty possible links to other nodes or paths through the story. While many have lauded this work for breaking the shackles of conventional, linear narrative structure, a great many writing center tutors would probably find themselves disoriented and at a loss for how to give advice for revision. As Johndan Johnson-Eilola notes, a hypertext such as this "can give readers a rush of euphoria – or, for the same reasons, a rush of vertigo" (195). And though student writers may not bring hypertexts as complex or as challenging as Joyce's into the writing center, the ones they do bring in may well give tutors the same sense of vertigo, particularly if they are not trained to deal with them.

Preparing for Hypertext #1: Treat Hypertexts Like Any Other Texts

So how, then, should writing centers address hypertexts? How should they restructure their training schedules or reconfigure their theories to account for texts that elide linear patterns of organization in a digital environment? Interestingly enough, it's possible to build at least two lines of argument that maintain they shouldn't – that despite the likelihood that students will be writing hypertexts in growing numbers, there is no need for writing centers to change their pedagogies as a consequence.

The first line of argument would maintain that the problems hypertexts pose for tutors are essentially no different from the problems posed by any other texts, regardless of genre or discipline. Since there is no possibility that a tutor will be able to address all possible content or rhetorical features in a single writing center conference (or multiple conferences) anyway, then tutors should feel comfortable working with the aspects of writing they are already familiar with and not worry overmuch about those they aren't. Similar arguments have been made in writing center literature about questions of disciplinary expertise (Pemberton) and the relative benefits of

having generalist or specialist tutors (Kiedaisch and Dinitz). James Inman summarizes this perspective with regard to technology when he says,

Just as writing centers do not claim to be founts of all knowledge that is great and good about essays and other more traditional writing challenges, so we should not feel pressure to know everything about technology. Consultants' general knowledge about textuality and investment in asking questions, listening carefully, and other non-directive pedagogical approaches is all they need to help clients, I believe, no matter the nature of their visits to the writing center.

(II.8.3)

It seems reasonable to claim, by extension, that despite the inflections hypertext introduces into print-based conceptions of argument and order, there will be other aspects of textual production and reception that apply across forms. Alan Rea and Doug White point out, for example, that issues of audience and purpose remain as important in web texts as in print texts (429-30), and all tutors in the writing center, regardless of their background or level of technological expertise, are capable of directing conferences to focus on these issues. Further, tutors, like most anyone else who browses the Web, comprise a legitimate audience for hypertext documents that will appear on the Internet, and their input and responses can therefore be informative, whatever their level of technical or hypertextual knowledge.

Larry Beason's experiences teaching "future English teachers" how to critique Web pages provide some support for this position. When describing an assignment sequence that he gives to his writing students, Beason suggests that they get feedback on their hypertexts from a variety of readers, presumably including writing center tutors, because "the most common concern [he found in the drafts he reviewed] was that the page authors were indeed not taking into account the varied ways in which readers might approach a page" (33). From this perspective, then, a writing center tutor's unfamiliarity with hypertext structure and design should be no more of a concern than their lack of familiarity with economic theory or the principles of civil engineering. No one can be an expert in everything; what's important in a conference is that writers receive a thoughtful response from an authentic audience.

Preparing for Hypertext #2: Hypertexts Will Rarely Appear in Writing Centers

A second rationale for opting to ignore the complications of hypertext in tutorials is that writing centers may not, in fact, see much of it. Despite the glowing successes experienced by a relatively small number of enthusiastic computer-literate instructors

and the predictions of digital visionaries, it is possible that the majority of academics will continue to assign their students linear, print-centered papers and expect students to demonstrate mastery of those forms alone. The reasons for such persistent consistency can be many and varied, ranging from simple unfamiliarity with the medium to sophisticated theoretical stances on the nature of thinking processes and academic discourse.

To a great many academics, the linear, hierarchical nature of print texts is a virtue, not a weakness. David W. Chapman makes a case for this position in his *Computers and Composition* article, "A Luddite in Cyberland, Or How to Avoid Being Snared by the Web." Though his perspective seems astonishingly provincial at times, the point he makes here is cogent and is likely shared by a great many academics in both the humanities and the sciences:

. . . the nonlinearity of the reading experience, the widely acclaimed hypertext, undermines logical patterns of reading and thinking. The linearity of a written text is not a limitation, it is its glory. . . . No one needs to teach students to jump in random order from one "tickler" to the next. What students do need to learn is how to spend an hour or two in concentrated thought as they engage a work of complexity and depth. . . . [K]nowing how to produce a Web page is a useful skill, but there is no indication that it will improve a student's ability to write.
(249-51)

Though some might well argue with this conclusion, there is no arguing the fact that the dominant discourse paradigm in academia is linear and print-based and that instructors will continue to teach that form to students, often to the exclusion of all other forms. This is not entirely a matter of clinging to tradition or resisting the need to learn something new. The controlled, linear flow of ideas through focal attention is, according to Davida Charney, one of the great strengths of print texts (243), and Clifford Lynch, the Director of the Coalition for Networked Information, believes that "some kinds of discourse – scholarly and otherwise – [may] be more effective using existing genres rooted in printed works (perhaps presented digitally as well as on paper) rather than in the new genres." For these reasons alone, most instructors in most courses could choose to rely on print text assignments for the foreseeable future.

On a more subtle yet influential level, it is also possible that some academics perceive hypertext as a threat to the educational and disciplinary goals they value and will resist it for that reason. As Stuart Moulthrop and Nancy Kaplan, two of the strongest proponents of hypertext, have observed, this threat may not be wholly imaginary.

"[T]he more we experiment with hypertext in literature courses," they say, "the deeper our conviction grows that this new medium is fundamentally at odds with the aims and purposes of conventional literary education" (236). If this is true, and if it holds true for disciplines other than literary studies, then a natural response among those who are most deeply invested in a more conventional educational program would simply be to resist the incursions of hypertext whenever possible, meaning fewer hypertexts assigned or allowed, and therefore fewer students with hypertexts visiting the writing center.

But even if most instructors will not encourage hypertext papers or teach Web design in their courses, others certainly will. Technical writing classes now incorporate Web documents and design as a matter of course, and a great many information technology, journalism, and graphic design classes view Web design and hypertext as integral parts of their curricula. This being the case, writing centers may feel it is their responsibility to prepare tutors to meet these students' rhetorical needs as well as the needs of students with more traditional assignments.

Preparing for Hypertext #3: Use Specialist Tutors

If writing centers want to be proactive, to prepare for the hypertexts that students bring in – be they in small numbers (if the above writers are right) or large numbers (if the above writers are wrong) – and if they want tutors to be knowledgeable about the conventions and organizational schemas that hypertexts employ, then one way to accomplish this is to hire tutors who already have demonstrable expertise with these sorts of texts. Writing centers with a strong WAC focus often employ an analogous approach by seeking out and hiring tutors from multiple disciplines, thereby ensuring that one or more tutors will be able to respond knowledgeably to students' questions about discourse-specific rhetorical forms as well as content.

The tricky part of this solution is purely practical, however, and may be especially troublesome for writing centers in smaller schools or those with limited resources for training. Finding students who know how to create a basic Web page is easy; finding students who know – and can articulate – what makes a particular set of hypertext documents effective or ineffective *as hypertexts* may be far more difficult. Finding students who have a practical understanding of hypertextual design as well as the writing and rhetorical skills necessary to be effective tutors for conventional print texts may be nigh-on impossible. David Chapman, the self-proclaimed Luddite mentioned earlier, claims that "[r]eal expertise in document design is possessed [only] by a small vanguard of technical writing instructors, and even they are just coming to grips with the

implication of Web documents" (251). If what he says is true, then any dreams of employing tutors with real expertise in hypertext may remain, as Hamlet intoned, merely "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Nevertheless, a rich, detailed, sophisticated knowledge of hypertext structure and Web design is probably not a necessity for productive conferencing. A reasonable working knowledge of the principles of hypertext should be more than sufficient for all but the most complex and sophisticated documents, and that degree of knowledge can usually be achieved through a series of manageable, but well-focused workshops.

Preparing for Hypertext #4: Provide Specialized Training for Tutors

Workshops and training sessions on hypertext nevertheless present some problems for writing centers, partly because they represent just one more item on a continuously-expanding agenda of specialized knowledges that writing center tutors should know or learn. Already confronted with the diverse needs of ESL students, learning-disabled students, second-dialect students, nontraditional students, students from a variety of disciplines, students in first-year composition courses, graduate students, and students in professional writing classes, writing center directors may decide it's in their best interest to defer workshops on the intricacies of hypertext until the need becomes critical – or at least more critical than many of the other critical needs the writing center has to respond to. Randall Beebe and Mary Boneville recognize the pressing need for tutors to develop advanced computer literacies, to become "quite skilled in manipulating network technologies, designing Web pages, and answering computer-application questions," but they also admit that "because most tutors are overworked with face-to-face tutorials, adding another dimension to their job description hardly seems fair; many writing centers are already understaffed without the resources to provide extensive training" (47). In the face of such pressures and a relative paucity of students visiting the writing center with hypertexts, workshops on nonlinear electronic documents may quickly give way to other topics in tutor training sessions.

But if – in keeping with our general willingness to accommodate new rhetorical and digital forms – we do decide to devote at least part of our tutorial attentions to hypermedia, multimedia, and other "unconventional" electronic documents, where should we begin? What resources must we have on hand, and what training must we give our tutors – and ourselves – to meet our students' needs?

Fortunately, most tutors – as I mentioned earlier – will already have the expertise necessary to discuss hypertexts as informed, aware readers. They will know (or soon

be trained in) the conventions of print texts, audience, organization, and argument, and they will also likely be skilled users of the World Wide Web, familiar with the basic conventions of linking, clicking, and scrolling. While this might not enable them to teach students about the subtleties of page design or Web site navigation strategies, their responses as users and readers of a Web page can nevertheless provide valuable guidance to hypertext authors.

Writing center directors who wish to train their tutors further in the basics of Web page design have a wealth of accessible (read: not jargony) resources available online that can be shared as training material in workshops. Among the most useful of these are the *Web Style Guide, 2nd Edition* by Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton (<http://www.webstyleguide.com>), and Tammy Worcester's *Web Page Design – From Planning to Posting* (<http://www.essdack.org/webdesign/>). A great set of negative examples, guaranteed to make a dry training workshop hilarious and also raise important issues in Web site design, can be found at *Web Pages that Suck* (<http://www.webpagesthatsuck.com/>). The information provided on these sites and others, as well as a host of trade books aimed at computer novices (such as *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Web Page Design* by Paul McFedries), can teach tutors how to identify and address some simple design issues – and common mistakes – that arise in student Web pages with some frequency.

Tutoring, Training, and Tough Questions

Although it would be easy to pursue this trail of possible resources further, identifying an assortment of sites and texts that could be used to teach tutors HTML and JavaScript, or how to use Microsoft FrontPage or Netscape Composer, we should stop and think carefully about how far we are really willing to go down this path in our quest to create "better" writing tutors. Ultimately, we have to ask ourselves whether it is really the writing center's responsibility to be all things to all people. There will always be more to learn. There will always be new groups making demands on our time and our resources in ways we haven't yet planned for. And there will never be enough time or enough money or enough tutors to meet all those demands all of the time. If we diversify too widely and spread ourselves too thinly in an attempt to encompass too many different literacies, we may not be able to address any set of literate practices particularly well.

The decision about whether to train tutors in the rhetoric of hypertext, then, must necessarily be inflected by local needs and resources. As James Inman notes, some writing centers offer "specialized training for consultants and the acquisition of soft-

ware options like Macromedia Dreamweaver, Netscape Composer, and Microsoft FrontPage for website design" while others simply "choose not to support such website and desktop publishing assignments" (II.8.3). Each of these paths may be equally appropriate, depending on the institution, the student body, the writing center's mission, and contingencies involving time, money, and resources. The important thing for writing center directors and administrators to remember is that they should remain attuned to changes in their students' and institutions' needs and not let apprehensions about technology interfere with their efforts to learn and work with the new rhetorical forms that technology brings about.

NOTES

¹ Though I don't completely agree with Inman – I suspect that a great many students still see Web design and organization as a technical rather than a rhetorical issue and do not automatically think of the writing center as a primary resource – it would only take a relatively minor change in institutional culture or student culture to alter those circumstances dramatically.

² Carino also argues that the conflicts over the uses of technology which arose in writing centers paralleled conflicts that took place in the larger field of composition studies, as described by Gail Hawisher, Paul Le Blanc, Charles Moran, and Cindy Selfe in *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979-1994: A History*.

³ Including such topics as the need to work closely with software designers (Selfe); to ensure adequate access for students, tutors, and necessary services (Harris); and to understand the intellectual property and plagiarism issues raised by inappropriate borrowing and linking to other texts (Haynes-Burton).

⁴ These articles include is not to say that disorder is the rule, of course. Carter goes on to describe a series of organizational and arrangement strategies that writers can use to guide readers through their hypertexts. Some of these strategies draw on traditional rhetorical schemes: using an existing argumentative structure such as a Toulmin model, or "writing prose with an eye to fundamentals of textual coherence" (8).

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