On March 30 and 31, WTS Coordinator Jo Ann Vogt, fellow tutor Anna Connors, and I attended and presented at the East Central Writing Center Association Conference hosted by IUPUI. It was a delightful weekend!

The conference featured undergrad tutors, grad tutors, professors, and writing center directors giving presentations on various aspects of tutoring and running writing centers. Each year, the ECWCA gives the conference a different theme. This year’s was, appropriately enough, “It’s the End of the World As We Know It: Negotiating Change in the Writing Center Context.”

March 30

Early in the morning, I attended a session given by a student from Michigan on how to help young writers gain confidence in their own voice in order to avoid academic dishonesty. He noted that unintentional academic dishonesty happens when students are not confident that what they say has value, or when they aren’t taught how to create their own academic voice to distinguish their own thoughts and analysis from that of other authors.

Through giving this presentation, I was able to come to a much better understanding of what it means for us to have made such a major move.

The lunch and keynote speech was one of the best parts of the conference following this session was quite interesting — many people talked about Turnitin.com and other plagiarism-detecting software. I am concerned about this software because I believe it causes fear and a defensive attitude in students, resulting in a less friendly teacher-student relationship. It turns out that several other people in the room shared this qualm.

The big move is complete. The new “corner office” in the Herman B Wells Library’s Information Commons gives WTS increased visibility and openness, but with the new headquarters came new trends and challenges that tutors and staff are learning to live with.

Tutee Trends

The new location’s trends mimic those of the old Ballantine location. Tutors see more visitors in the fall than in the spring, but overall, the demand for WTS has increased.

WTS Coordinator Jo Ann Vogt says the increased demand includes a slight change in the usual clientele. Tutors are seeing more students bringing in papers hot off the printer — which means more tutees are requesting grammar checks and proofreading.

“We’re seeing more students coming in at the last possible moment,” Jo Ann said, most likely...
Speaking of conferences ...

*American Copy Editors Society offers tutor-esque advice to corporate editors*

BY KRISTINA VRAGOVIC

The weekend of April 12, I spent three days at the annual American Copy Editors Society conference. It was an incredible weekend, not only because it took place in downtown New Orleans, but also because it was chock-full of super-smart people I’ve looked up to my entire undergraduate career.

One of the sessions struck a chord with my inner tutor. Titled “Dealing with (Non)Writers,” the session covered some of the challenges of working with professionals who may not be professional writers—for example, in the corporate and non-profit sectors. The following are some of the parallel techniques I noticed:

1. **Build trust with the writer.**
   In a tutorial, this means being friendly and helpful. Students typically respond well to a tutor with whom they feel they can relate. In a corporate setting, it means getting colleagues to believe that your work is good for the company.
   As an editor, you can catch flak from colleagues who think you’re fixing something that ain’t broke (or that you’re swinging a battle axe at their pristine prose). Especially if you join a staff that has never worked with an editor, you should make it clear to your colleagues that you are willing to talk things over, not just red-pen their work.

2. **Say something nice first.**
   This piece of advice goes hand-in-hand with No. 1. Part of building trust with a writer is making sure not to bruise his or her ego, and part of building trust with a non-writer is to make sure not to scare them away from writing.
   The presenters suggested you say what you like about a non-writer’s work before starting in on what didn’t work. That instantly triggered my memories of peer tutor training—not to mention the first moments of every tutorial I’ve given.

3. **Start a conversation.**
   When brainstorming during a tutorial, you sometimes get a blank stare from a writer who doesn’t know where to begin. The presenters at the conference called this phenomenon “blank-page syndrome,” and the best solution is exactly what we’ve been trained to do as tutors—start a conversation.
   Ask questions about the assignment or project, they suggested. Prodding non-writers to consider audience and purpose is one of the best conversation starters as well as a great way to ensure that the project gets off on the right rhetorical foot.

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because we’re conveniently located in the library alongside students who are just finishing their papers. Jo Ann says students are still making the appointments ahead of time, but they’re making their appointments very close to their deadlines. “We’re seeing a lot of students cancel appointments and reschedule them later because they’re not finished with the assignment yet,” Jo Ann said.

To meet the growth in demand we experienced this fall, Jo Ann hired a few more graduate students, bringing our current numbers to 15 undergraduate tutors, 25 graduate tutors, and 13 peer tutors-in-training. However, WTS has no real intent of massively expanding the peer tutor program. “The ASCs, at the moment, seem adequately staffed,” Jo Ann said.

**Coping with Cohabitation**

When WTS closes each night, the tutoring area opens up to students working in the Information Commons (IC). Those students move tables and chairs and sometimes leave behind their trash. Consequently, the area requires some rearranging each morning. “It’s disconcerting to find that everything in the space has been moved around,” Jo Ann said.

The cohabitation with the IC staff has exposed WTS to some tension as a result of the shared space. WTS’ headquarters in Wells contains group workstations, complete with large computer monitors. WTS uses them for group tutorials, and they are meant for student group work after WTS closes. In the middle of the night, two monitors were moved. An assumption was wrongly made that WTS had moved the monitors, but it turned out students moved it after hours, and WTS was not to blame.

In addition, students from the information cluster next to the WTS office have complained that the pencil sharpener and stapler are too loud. They’ve since been moved further away, near the bookshelves.

But as tutors have settled in more comfortably, students in the IC have gotten used to our location as well. We’re seeing fewer students wandering through our barricades unawares.

Jo Ann said she does regret that
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conference. Muriel Harris, the keynote speaker, is the English professor who started the Purdue Writing Lab and the OWL—plus, she is the author of *Teaching One-to-One*, a staple of our tutor training. She spoke about how writing centers can embrace productive change and work to continually improve our outreach and tutoring.

Harris said that although we can’t always prevent change that we do not want, we shouldn’t eschew change altogether. Rather, we need to be proactive about bringing responsible and forward-thinking change into our writing centers.

The best session I attended was the first afternoon session, given by three kick-butt tutors from Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW). These three tutors spoke about how they use Universal Design for Learning in the writing center.

UDL is a way of structuring teaching environments and classrooms so that they include multiple means of representation for learners to acquire knowledge, multiple means of expression for students to demonstrate what they know, and multiple means of engaging students in the curriculum.

UDL is often used in classrooms that include special education students, because it can meet many education needs they have, but the UDL modifications also benefit mainstream students.

(For more information on UDL, visit [www.cast.org/udl](http://www.cast.org/udl).)

The tutors from IPFW pointed out that under the newest legislation within the Americans with Disabilities Act, we cannot directly assert that we think someone has a disability. However, we can use UDL techniques in tutoring so that we meet the needs of students with disabilities before they even have to ask for anything special.

This fits my philosophy as a tutor: Since I am with students for such a short time, I am not qualified to diagnose or even to speculate about disability. Rather, I can figure out what the student’s needs are with respect to a particular piece of writing or skill and then adjust my tutoring to meet those needs.

I want to tutor well so that students never feel like they need to reveal personal information or ask for anything special.

March 31

This morning, Anna, Jo Ann, and I met for a quick pow-wow to prepare for our presentation of WTS's recent move to Wells. The presentation itself went very well, and I had a lot of fun. Our presentation covered the physical aspects of the move, the changes tutors saw, the changes in the population we see, and the administrative aspects of the change.

While the audience wasn’t big (a whole five people showed up), the discussion following our session was still lively and productive. The eyes of everyone in the audience widened when we told them that the same-day-due-date tutorial had increased from negligible in Ballantine to 60 percent of our business in Wells.

Through giving this presentation, I was able to come to a much better understanding of what it means for us to have made such a major move. And, while I really do miss Ballantine, I am overall much more positive about our move as a result of this presentation and conference.

The ECWCA conference was a delight, and I came away even more excited about my work as a tutor.

Get more information about Universal Design for Learning, a way to structure teaching environments, at [www.cast.org/udl](http://www.cast.org/udl).
WTS’ changing demographic: by the numbers

COMPiled by Kelsey Adams

Overall, being in the Information Commons seems to increase our tutorials. However, it appears that both W131 students and freshmen are not as drawn to the new location as other groups.

As we continue in the library, we will have to look into how to address these groups’ needs, especially because they have always been our main source of clientele.

Class Standing

Freshman tutorials decreased by 27.6 percent, while senior tutorials increased by 38.9 percent and grad tutorials by 50.5 percent. Data suggests that tutorials in Wells are reaching an older clientele.

Client characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutorials</th>
<th>Overall tutorials increased by 9.1 percent.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female tutorials</td>
<td>went up 13.5 percent, while male tutorials only went up .7 percent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL tutorials</td>
<td>increased by 21.5 percent, and business tutorials increased by 12.9 percent.</td>
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tutors can’t personalize the Wells space. The Ballantine office was decorated with posters and photos of tutors that helped make the space friendlier.

The more public nature of the Wells location means that any forms of decoration or personalization face the risk of being defaced by students.

If she could add anything to the space, Jo Ann said, it would be walls and doors around the office and bull pen area. She added that the storage space WTS uses behind the University Information Technology Services help desk will soon be remodeled and repurposed, which leaves the office a cabinet short.

Despite the changes in environment, tutors have adjusted.

“I am profoundly proud that tutors have adapted to the space and continued to serve students the same way they used to at Ballantine,” Jo Ann said. “I am pleased and a little bit surprised that tutors have been able to maintain their spirits and haven’t thrown out our ‘friendly and helpful’ mantra.”
Joining the ranks of alumni

Graduating peer tutors share their plans and memories as they say goodbye

BY KRISTINA VRAGOVIC

As our final semester has waxed and waned, we senior tutors have experienced a strange and thrilling mix of excitement, apprehension and, yes, a bit of denial. We’ve all come to love our work and mission at WTS, and we are sorry to leave it behind. But at the same time, we must look ahead.

For some of us, tutoring provided the inspiration for a new and unexpected career path. For others, it provided a congenial atmosphere to get to know people and make a few bucks. Across the board, WTS has given us the skills, open-mindedness and patience to approach any career with enthusiasm and grace. We begin our new roles as peer tutor alumni by sharing our plans and memories.

The senior peer tutors enjoyed an end-of-semester lunch at Cafe Django with Jo Ann, Anita, and Writing Program Director Laura Plummer. From left to right: Emily McGowan, Kristina Vragovic, Liv Wafler and Alexandra Moxley.
Kelsey Adams  
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Next year, I will be taking some time off to determine whether I should return for an MFA in fiction or a Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition. I will be spending this time writing and working part-time as a dog walker/pet sitter (crazy, right?). If it appears that my writing is continuing to move in a positive direction, I will return for the MFA with the ultimate goal of becoming a creative writing professor. If, however, I decide that the depressing, rejection-filled world of fiction is not for me, I will pursue the doctorate so that I can continue to work with writing centers and freshman English departments, specializing in multilingual work.

This second choice is a direct result of my work at WTS, which has sparked my fascination with the different methods of teaching writing and my desire to be Jo Ann.

Stephanie Barton  
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This summer I will be continuing my internship at Indiana University Health Bloomington Hospital. I’ll work there as the marketing and community relations intern until August. I’ll be continuing my job search for marketing, communications, or public relations positions in not-for-profits, preferably in the medical field. I’m not sure if I’ll stay in Indiana. I’d like to get out and explore a little.

Working at WTS has taught me, obviously, about writing. However, it’s also been an exercise in patience and working well with others who may be incredibly stressed and frantic under their impending deadlines. I’ve gained valuable friendships with fellow tutors. I consider myself lucky to have found a job where I’m surrounded by so many caring, funny, friendly and helpful coworkers and bosses.

Emily McGowan  
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After I graduate this May with an English major (focus in creative writing) and a business minor, I will be spending one final, lovely summer in Bloomington with an editorial internship at Indiana University Press. In the fall, I plan on moving to Columbus, Ohio, which will be a new city for me. I’m looking for an editorial, marketing or communications position at a university, magazine or newspaper—so I am currently researching all of the opportunities available to me. Working with WTS for the last year has truly been one of my favorite ways to immerse myself in the life of this University. I’ve developed my communication and articulation of ideas, built invaluable tutoring skills, and even opened up to the prospect of teaching English or creative writing someday.
Alexandra Moxley
Chicago, IL
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I am hoping to teach English in France next year. This will not only allow me to improve my French skills, but will help me gain more cultural awareness and international experience. After that I hope to work for a life-sciences company for a few years. Eventually, I plan to pursue graduate school in the area of genetics or genetic counseling.

I am so grateful that I have had the opportunity to work at WTS for the past three years. I have met so many wonderful people and developed lifelong friendships. The working environment was always fun, upbeat and encouraging. I loved working with students and often learned a lot from their writing. Words cannot express the feeling you get when a student has an “aha” moment regarding the writing process. It was amazing to see the transformation among students, and exciting to know that I played a role in that transformation.

Laura Sibley
Cleveland, OH
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After graduating this May with degrees in journalism and economics, I’m moving to Cleveland, Ohio, where I will be working as a Marketing Analyst for American Greetings. I had several magazine and radio internships as an undergraduate, and I plan to continue to pursue a career in journalism by freelancing as I have time.

Writing has and always will be an important part of my life, and my employment with WTS for the past year has allowed me to further incorporate it into my daily life.

I will miss everyone at WTS and wish my colleagues all the best in the future!

Alexandra Moxley, ’12

Have you ever wished you could do more for Writing Tutorial Services even after leaving IU?

Writing Tutorial Services is an affinity group, just like a greek house or Little 500 team. As tutors, we come together with a common interest and shared pride in our school. (After all, we help our fellow students succeed!)

You can now directly support WTS with a contribution to the IU Foundation. Check out the link on the WTS homepage: www.indiana.edu/~wts

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.
Kristina Vragovic  
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Before I do anything else, I will spend a couple of weeks this May in Croatia visiting family and lounging on the beach. After that, though...

Armed with nothing but my English degree and my dignity (OK, plus some decent experience), I hope to find copyediting work in Chicago. I plan on applying at journals, websites, newspapers — anyone who will have me!

WTS has been such a life-changing experience. Tutoring turned me from a red-penning grouch into a writer’s advocate, and I will never forget that gift. The patience and open-mindedness I’ve learned here will (hopefully) never leave me. Best of luck to everyone in the class of 2012!

Liv Wafler  
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I will really miss learning about so many students’ different backgrounds and passions as I have had the opportunity to do at WTS for the past two years. I want to start a career in theater managing the literary department, reading and editing scripts, and engaging with new playwrights about their work. My experiences at WTS have prepared me well for these collaborative working relationships.

We the senior class of 2012 would like to thank everyone on the WTS staff for making the past few years so special. We have learned so much from each other and about ourselves, and we look forward to the next stage of our lives.

Photos courtesy of Kelsey Adams, Stephanie Barton, Emily McGowan, Alexandra Moxley, Laura Sibley, Kristina Vragovic and Liv Wafler.

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4. Pick your battles.

Sometimes, there is just not enough time in a tutorial to address every issue in a paper. You have to figure out the three highest-order problems, and then move on to lower-order issues if time allows.

Just as peer tutors must prioritize during a tutorial, so must corporate editors pick their battles in order to get materials through on deadline. Sometimes, it’s appropriate to accept that you’ve helped a writer as much as you can in the time allotted.

Are you a peer tutor alumnus and editor in a corporate or nonprofit setting? Share your experiences as an editor by e-mailing byourwts@indiana.edu.

Interact with WTS!

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Over the years, we’ve lost contact with many of our friends from WTS as jobs have changed and moves have been made. If you know of a former tutor who’s fallen out of touch, please forward this newsletter and have the alum email us at byourwts@indiana.edu.

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