This study describes an analysis of information provided on writing center and library collaboration projects at Association of Research Library (ARL) institutions. The study was conducted to determine the frequency of mutually linking organizations, the frequency of collocation, and visibility of collaboration projects on the Web.

By examining the 111 writing center and library websites, evidence of some type of collaboration was found in half of the sample. One-third of the institutions had mutually linking organizations and over one-third were either collocated, or the writing center used space in the library for additional tutoring services.

Headings:

Writing centers

Academic libraries

Association of Research Libraries

Collaboration

Information literacy
UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTERS AND LIBRARY COLLABORATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF WRITING CENTER AND LIBRARY WEBSITES AT ARL AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

by

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Approved by

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Introduction

University libraries and writing centers often share similar mission statements and user populations. Both organizations provide access to services and collections of materials that advance the academic and research goals of students and faculty within the university. Whereas academic departments primarily serve students and faculty in their discipline, libraries and writing centers serve a wide array of users with highly variable information needs. In some universities, there is a clearly defined collaboration between these two organizations, either due to space concerns or specific projects. At other universities, libraries and writing centers have an informal collaboration based upon mutual referrals.

Students come to universities with vastly different levels of academic preparation. While some may have written research papers in high school, it is likely that most are unprepared for the type of analytical writing expected in university courses, or the vast number of resources available to them via the library. Students need instruction and guidance through the process of research and writing. Through first year writing programs, many students are exposed to analytical writing and bibliographic instruction. This highly effective strategy of building in library instruction to the first year writing curriculum succeeds in 1) educating users early in their college careers about library services and resources and 2) provides training to students and faculty about information literacy.

One extension of librarian-faculty partnerships in writing programs is to form collaborations between the library and writing center. Most students do not see a clear
distinction between writing and research, particularly in an age of seamless Internet resources. A student is likely to be reading articles, checking statistics, writing a draft, and updating Facebook. When students need help with their work, in many universities, they can chat online with library staff and get help instantly, or find Web based study guides and tutorials designed for their subject. Overlap between reference services and tutoring is immense. Librarians and writing tutors both help students to articulate (in speaking and writing) their writing project, from topic to thesis to revision. In a tutoring session, it is common for a student to admit that she needs to do more research in order to fill in the gaps in the argument. Similarly, a student conducting research in the library may need to know about the style conventions of a certain discipline, or may need someone to ask guiding questions about the development of the paper. Neither of these scenarios is only about writing or only about research, but in fact, demonstrates an intersection of the two. By providing training for both library and writing center staff about the other organization, both sets of staff members strengthen their skill sets in helping students. Further, since students are likely to search for information via the Internet, providing information on the writing center and library websites about the other organization will allow students to easily find the resources they need.

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) is comprised of 123 member institutions; including 111 Doctorate-granting universities in the United States and Canada, several research public libraries, and government archives and libraries. These are universities classified by the Carnegie Foundation as universities that confer doctoral degrees in at least 20 areas, excluding professional practice degrees
such as MD’s (“Basic Classification Description,” 2007). As a general description, these universities are very large, enrolling between 10 and 50 thousand students; student development organizations support a number of programs to assist students’ social and academic success; and faculty and administration are heavily focused on publishing and grant writing. Within these large universities, libraries and writing centers often bridge the gap between student and professor. When students have questions about research and writing, library and writing center staff provide additional assistance in honing research topics, developing ideas for papers, and revising drafts. Depending on a number of factors, libraries and writing centers may be positioned very differently within an ARL university. For example, the primary funding for the writing center may be from the English department, whereas the library’s support may come from pan-university funds. The writing center and library may also differ based on whether librarians have faculty status, if the writing center is staffed by graduate students or undergraduates, or if the writing center is housed within the library. The staff at the writing center and library may receive detailed information about the other organization, or none at all. In other words, for writing centers and libraries within a single institution, how do these two organizations view the other’s role within the university’s mission? How do these organizations relate to each other?

The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of collaboration projects between university writing centers and libraries at ARL affiliated institutions. By examining the websites of writing centers within ARL affiliated institutions, this study seeks to understand how these organizations are presenting their relationship
with the university library to their communities of users. This study will identify the number of universities where there is a formal partnership between the writing center and library; among those schools, these data will be used to identify elements that constitute a formal collaboration.

The specific research questions for this study are: 1) How many writing centers and libraries demonstrate their collaborations by linking to each other on their websites? 2) Are writing centers and libraries, at the same institutions, linking to each other? 3) What characteristics are shared among institutions with mutual links?

This paper will provide a comprehensive review of the literature on collaboration projects between academic libraries, faculty, and other campus organizations, as well as discuss the gaps in empirical research studying collaborations between libraries and writing centers. Next, this paper will discuss the data collected on 111 ARL affiliated university writing center websites and library websites. Lastly, this paper will discuss conclusions and potential avenues for further research on this topic.
Literature Review

Previous literature has documented that academic libraries commonly collaborate with faculty and with organizations. First, librarians collaborate with faculty to provide bibliographic and information literacy instruction for their classes, provide research assistance, make collection development decisions, and team-teach. Second, in the process of renovating library spaces into multi-purpose information commons, the library has teamed up with a wide variety of organizations to share physical space and serve students and faculty. Given the vast number of articles published in library and information science journals discussing library collaboration projects, it is surprising to find such a large gap in both the theoretical and empirical literature on the topic of library and writing center collaborations. Also, within the fields of rhetoric and composition and English, there is an absence of information about collaborations with the institutional library.

At the center of this study is the question, how can libraries collaborate successfully with other campus organizations in order to assist students in achieving greater academic performance? Although much of the literature focuses on collaboration projects either with faculty or through digital libraries, the concepts of collaboration can also be applied to the writing center as a space for information gathering and learning. In order to work around the dearth of empirical data and still gain an understanding of the topic at hand, the review of literature included cases studies, theory, and research dealing with collocated organizations, information literacy, and libraries partnering with other organizations.
Case Studies

Centers for learning: Writing centers and libraries in collaboration is one collection of case studies dedicated to collaboration projects between these organizations (Elmborg & Hook 2005). Furthermore, the chapters are co-authored by writing center directors and librarians, thus extending the collaboration to include reflection. However, absent from these chapters are studies with large-scale samples or national statistics on the collaborations between libraries and writing centers.

In looking at the case studies on collaborations between libraries and first-year writing courses, several patterns emerged. Librarians work with first year writing programs to teach bibliographic instruction and information literacy. McMillen, Miyagishima, & Maughan (2002) discuss the process of training that librarians underwent at Oregon State University to learn about serving first year students. Similarly, McGowan, Seton, & Cargill (1996) report on the partnership between faculty and librarians who developed an instruction program for international engineering students at the University of Adelaide, South Australia. In Peary (2004), the case study of a small college partnership between a librarian and writing professor demonstrates team-teaching and curriculum planning, in which research was half of the course content.

Another area in which librarians and faculty collaborate is through teaching strategies or assignments within the library instruction session. McMillen & Hill (2005) present a model for integrating research and library skills into the composition curriculum. One of the results from their own testing of the process indicated that students were regarding their sources more critically and using more peer-reviewed
journals than before. Additionally, Jackson, Hansen, & Fowler (2004) discuss a case study in which empirical research on assessment of students’ information literacy proficiency prompted the creation of partnerships between the library and academic advising, faculty, student affairs, first year experience, and others.

Purpose behind library collaborations

In addition to reviewing the empirical data, it is important to consider the driving force behind library collaborations over the past decade. Barbara Dewey (2005) examines the role of the “embedded librarian” by taking the idea to mean “the most comprehensive collaborations for librarians in higher education community” (p. 5-6). She advocates for librarians to be active in all facets of university life in order to act as leaders for creating an optimal future for the academy. In particular, she sees the potential for collaboration as particularly strong in aiding curriculum development, designing digital repositories, and electronic publishing. Similarly, Edward Owusu-Ansah (2003) discusses the role of librarians in information literacy and instruction as vital to the university. He views the library as an academic department unto itself, with a specific teaching agenda and asserts that it is the responsibility of the library to intervene in instructing students in best practices for research and information retrieval.

Library collaboration with writing faculty

The need for partnerships in teaching information literacy within the university is addressed in Ruth Ivey’s (2003) article “Information literacy: how do librarians and academics work in partnership to deliver effective learning programs?”
In a study examining partnerships between librarians and faculty, Ivey found that librarians need to market their services, and that academics need to seek out librarians to help them with their curriculum and research. It was also found that faculty preferred taking the role of initiating the collaboration, while librarians worked to support the needs of the faculty, thus demonstrating both faculty and librarians needed to take an active role in making the collaboration successful.

In “Communicating with writing instructors: A composition studies perspective and suggestions,” Borsage (2007) discusses various theories and pedagogies in composition literature with the goal for librarians to gain a better sense of the discipline and to improve the effectiveness of library instruction and collaboration with writing instructors. By taking the time to understand the perspective of composition instructors, librarians will be better prepared to approach faculty members and speak to them in a way that goes beyond library jargon. Rabinowitz (2000) addresses a similar issue, which is that librarians and faculty tend to read only the literature of their own fields. Thus, both groups miss the opportunity to experience their own discipline from the perspective of the others. In terms of writing and composition, librarians could gain a richer understanding of the writing process and the pedagogical foundations of the assignments they are teaching students to research. Meanwhile, faculty could gain a more nuanced understanding of information seeking behavior, and the role of research in the writing process. This article also contains a review of the literature on faculty and library collaborations, and suggests that in order to become more successful collaborators librarians (and faculty) need to read the literature of both fields.
Collaboration and collocation

One facet of library and writing center collaboration is collocation. As libraries renovate their spaces from those housing print materials and solitary desks into information commons with moveable furniture and computers, there are also possibilities for other organizations to move into the library building. On many campuses, writing centers are now housed within library buildings. Joan Lippincot (2005) discusses library renovation projects as a way to target collaborations with other organizations in order to offer seamless service to users. The difference is between organizations sharing space and forming collaborations, which include "shared goals by the parties, joint planning...and pooling of resources" (p. 148). As organizations come together in preparation for renovation, there are opportunities to provide innovative services for users, and to create a synergy of resources and staff. Whitchurch, Belliston, & Baer (2006) report on best practices through collaboration via the creation of a new information commons at Brigham Young University. In regard to the writing center specifically, its inclusion was based on the success of other universities in which the writing center was housed within the library. Furthermore, the writing center within the library is a "matter of convenience for students. It provides help with research papers when and where the students are writing their papers" (p. 267).

Teaching information literacy

Librarians use various methods for teaching information literacy according to the needs of faculty and students across the disciplines. Hogenboom (2005) discusses
the uses of government documents to help students learn how to evaluate the source of information in print and on the Web. The author shows that students need to be taught that it can not be assumed that sources are authoritative simply because they end in dot-gov. In another example, the author suggests that librarians can act as writing instructors by having students practice paraphrasing exercises during the library instruction session (Bronshteyn & Baladad 2006). This article goes beyond teaching paraphrasing as a way to avoid plagiarism and teaches it as an important element in information literacy, teaching students how to incorporate information effectively into one’s own research and writing. Similarly, Smith (2001) describes a process in which librarians and instructors can collaborate by teaching students to use research journals while they work. The research journal is a either a paper notebook or electronic file, in which the student records her/his search terms, citations, and paraphrased information while conducting research. The journal can also be used for reflection on the research process.

Meulemans (2002) addresses the use of librarians as partners in the accreditation of the university, in part based upon the assessment of student information literacy. And Fitts (2005) discusses the importance of critical thinking in the writing classroom and the role which librarians can take to collaborate with faculty to bridge the gap in students’ research skills.

Collaborations between campus organizations

An excellent example of a collaboration project between the library and another organization was found in “Making the bridge: Testing a library workshop for a summer bridge learning community” (Haras & McEvoy 2005). The article
discusses the experimental program of delivering an optional workshop to Summer Bridge leaders and tutors, and discusses tutor bias, at-risk students, and ways that the library needs to continue reaching out to at-risk students and other campus programs such as the writing center. In other words, the library is encouraged to become part of the learning community. The authors also provide a useful literature review on library outreach services to summer at-risk programs. Further, in Macauley (2007) the author illuminates possibilities for writing center collaborations with organizations and the possibility for joint space and programming. Although his university did not ultimately pursue the proposed project, the article contains important ideas for collaborative space use, including library and writing center projects.

Lampert, Dabbour, & Solis (2005) provide another example of working with campus institutions. They describe a library that does outreach with Greek organizations and students. The goal is to not only bring in students who may otherwise miss out on library instruction, but also to use the social life of fraternities and sororities in helping students model information seeking behaviors to each other. If some students find the library assistance helpful, they will tell their peers and more users will seek out library resources.

From the perspective of moving beyond the library space, Jackson & Hansen (2006) report on collaboration between school libraries and a university library to enhance information literacy in high school students. Academic librarians were reminded not to be bound by the confines of their own institution and were
encouraged to continue to collaborate with other organizations outside of the library building.

Warner & Seamans (2005) report successful results of a library partnership with the campus teaching center. An added benefit of this program was that librarians demonstrated themselves as teaching peers to faculty.

By examining the literature on library collaborations, bibliographic instruction, faculty partnerships, collocation, and case studies, there is great evidence to support formal collaboration projects between libraries and writing centers. The absence of research and theory on this topic demonstrates the significance and timeliness of this study.
Methodology

In this study, analyses of writing center and library Web sites were conducted between February and March 2008 in order to ascertain information about the presence or absence of a partnership between the two organizations within each university. First, the list of all 123 ARL institutions was obtained from the ARL Web page\textsuperscript{1}. The twelve institutions that were not affiliated with universities were excluded from the study, which left a total of 111 institutions.

Second, the researcher viewed the Web pages of all writing centers located within ARL affiliated universities and coded each Web site as either yes = 1 or no = 2 according to whether there was information about the university’s library anywhere on the writing center Web site. Next, the researcher checked for the presence of the manifest categories “Link to Library,” “Collocated with Library,” “Provide joint workshops,” “Provide links to specific library resources,” and “Instruction for using library resources,” which were also coded as either yes = 1 or no = 2. In instances where the answer was not clearly yes or no for the manifest categories, such as “Collocated with Library”, a brief description of the relevant information was recorded.

Third, the researcher viewed the Web pages for the 111 university libraries and coded each Web site as either yes = 1 or no = 2 according to whether there was information about the university’s writing center anywhere on the library’s site.

Next, in order to compare universities by region, the researcher noted the state or province in which the university was located. Also, the researcher noted whether

\textsuperscript{1} ARL Member Libraries http://www.arl.org/arl/membership/members.shtml
the university was public or private, and coded the information as public = 1 or private = 2.

During the data collection, the researcher noticed an emerging pattern in which many libraries were linking to writing centers other than their own institutions. After the data was collected from writing center and library Web pages, the researcher went back and searched the library Web pages for links to external writing centers and coded the data as yes = 1 or no = 2.

When the data collection was completed and all data was coded, 5 tables were created to present the results. First, a table was generated to compare the characteristics of institutions in which both the writing centers and libraries linked to each other (Table 1). A second table was generated to show the characteristics of the writing centers that linked to the institutional library, but where the library did not link to the writing center (Table 2). A third table was created to show the characteristics of the libraries that linked to the institutional writing center, but where the writing center did not link to the library (Table 3). Fourth, a chart was created to show the numbers of libraries that linked to institutional and external writing centers. Finally, the researcher sorted the data by state/province to show a comparison of institutions by region (Table 5). The regions were divided geographically: Northeast was coded region = 1 (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Washington, D.C., and Ohio. Southeast was coded region = 2 (North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Oklahoma.) North-central was coded region = 3 (Indiana,
Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota.) Northwest was coded region = 4 (Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.) West was coded region = 5 (Texas, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, and Hawaii.) And Canada was coded region = 6 (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Ottawa.)
Results

This study sought to determine the visibility of collaborations between the writing center and library, by examining the websites of both organizations within ARL affiliated universities. Among the total sample (n = 111), 52 (47%) writing centers linked to the institutional library and 60 (54%) libraries linked to institutional writing centers. An additional 15 (13.5%) writing centers also made reference to the library on the website, but did not include direct links. Twenty-three (20%) writing centers were collocated with libraries, 3 (0.27%) provided joint workshops with the library, 35 (31.5%) provided links to specific library resources, and 12 (10.8%) provided descriptions or annotations for the resources they linked to on the library’s website. The universities were located in 38 U.S. states, including the District of Columbia, and 6 provinces of Canada; 78 (70%) of the universities were public and 33 (30%) were private institutions.

The results of the study are described in further detail in Tables 1-4. In Tables 1-3, the data was organized to show characteristics of these organizations: writing centers and libraries with mutual links (Table 1), only writing centers that link to libraries (Table 2), and only libraries that link to writing centers (Table 3). In Table 4, the data were sorted to show the number of libraries that link to institutional writing centers and external writing centers.

Among the universities studied, 32 (29%) pairs of writing centers and libraries’ websites contained mutual links. The results of this research are shown in Table 1, below. Of these 32 writing centers, 14 (44%) were housed in the library
building, 9 (28%) held night hours in the library or used the library as a satellite location for tutoring, and 9 (28%) did not use the library building at all. One (0.8%) institution provided joint workshops between the writing center and library. Twenty-four of the 32 (75%) writing centers provided direct links to specific library resources, such as citation guides, reference assistance, and subject guides. Six of the 32 (19%) writing centers provided some explanation of the library resources they linked to on the library website. The universities included 18 (56%) public and 14 (44%) private institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linked Institutions</th>
<th>WC Located in LIB</th>
<th>Extra WC Hours in LIB</th>
<th>WC not housed in LIB</th>
<th>Provided joint workshops</th>
<th>Specific Resources</th>
<th>Explanation of Resources</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total #</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data were then examined to show the number of writing centers that linked to the institutional libraries, but where the libraries did not link back to the writing centers. The results of this part of the study are shown in Table 2. Among these organizations, 19 (17%) writing centers contained links to the institutional library. Five of the 19 (26.3%) were housed within library buildings, 9 (47.3%) provided night hours or satellite locations in the library, and 5 (26.3%) were not housed in the library. One (0.5%) writing center was listed as providing joint workshops with the library. Eleven (57%) writing centers provided links to specific library resources and 6 (31.5%) provided some explanation of the library resources. Sixteen (84.2%) of the writing centers were in public universities and 3 (15.8%) were in private universities.

Table 2. Writing Centers that Link to Institutional Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WC Linked to LIB</th>
<th>WC Located in LIB</th>
<th>Extra WC Hours in LIB</th>
<th>WC not housed in LIB</th>
<th>Provided joint workshops</th>
<th>Specific Resource Links</th>
<th>Explained Resource</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total # 19 5 9 5 1 11 6 16 3
Further, the data were examined to show the number of libraries that linked to the institutional writing center, but where the writing centers did not link back to the libraries. The results of this part of the study are shown in Table 3. Among these organizations, 27 (24.3%) libraries contained links to the institutional writing center. Four of the 27 (15%) libraries were collocated with writing centers, 10 (37%) housed writing centers which provided night hours or satellite locations in the library, and 13 (48%) shared no building space with the writing center. One (0.37%) library was listed as providing joint workshops with the writing center. Twenty-three (85.2%) of the libraries were in public universities and 4 (14.8%) were in private universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Libraries that Link to Institutional Writing Centers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIB Linked to WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in Table 4 compares the numbers of libraries that linked to institutional writing centers and external writing centers. During the initial study, the researcher noticed that libraries were linking to writing centers outside of their own institution, or in some cases to both institutional and external writing centers. Twenty (18%) libraries linked to external writing center(s) only, 17 (15.3%) libraries linked to both the institutional writing center and external writing center(s), 43 (38.7%) libraries linked to the institutional writing center, and 31 (30%) libraries did not link to any writing centers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linked to</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional WC</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External WC</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both WC</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Link to WC</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final stage of data analysis compared the occurrence of writing center and library collaboration projects by geographical region. In the Northeast region (Region 1), 17 institutions had mutual links between the writing center and library, 4
institutions in which the writing center linked to the library, and 13 libraries that
linked to the writing center. In the South (Region 2), 11 universities contained
mutually linked organizations, 3 with writing centers that linked to the library, and 2
libraries that linked to the writing center. The North-central region (Region 3)
contained 9 universities with mutually linked organizations, 5 with writing centers
that linked to the library, and 3 libraries that linked to the writing center. The
Northwest Region (Region 4) showed 2 universities with mutually linked
organizations. In the West (Region 5), there were 6 institutions with mutually linked
organizations, 3 with writing centers that linked to the library, and 7 with libraries
that linked to the writing center. Last, in Canada (Region 6) there were 7 institutions
with mutually linked organizations, 4 writing centers that linked to libraries and 2
libraries that linked to writing centers.

Table 5. Comparison by Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Mutual Links</th>
<th>WC Linked to LIB</th>
<th>LIB Linked to WC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northcentral</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

The data collected indicates several key findings about university writing center and library collaborations. By examining the writing center and library websites, the results showed that 52 (47%) writing centers linked to the institutional library and 60 (54%) libraries linked to institutional writing centers. Thirty-two (28.8%) universities contained writing centers and libraries with mutual links. For students (and other users) of writing centers at ARL affiliated institutions, it is likely that they would come into contact with information about the library while looking for further information about writing center services, or resources on writing and research. This also suggests that staff members (or other content writers for the websites) of writing centers at ARL affiliated institutions are likely to be knowledgeable about the library and library services that might be useful for students.

Although the results showed a slightly higher percentage of libraries linking to writing centers (54%) than writing centers linking to libraries (47%), often the link to the writing center was very difficult to find. Library users who were browsing the website would be unlikely to happen upon a link to the writing center, or resources related to writing. If providing information about writing resources is a priority for libraries, it would be worthwhile to pursue a redesign of the library’s homepage to include information on the writing center, or to provide a link from the homepage to another section of the library’s website that clearly indicates that it provides information about writing. For the half of the libraries that did not link to their own
writing centers, or any writing centers, why not? In order to assist students and faculty in achieving their research goals, it is imperative that the library and writing center work together through the creation and implementation of joint workshops, writing and research guides, citation tutorials, and mutual referrals. Many libraries are already using social networking software such as blogs, wikis, or Facebook and Myspace applications to reach their users. Libraries and writing centers could also use these virtual spaces for innovative collaborations, while also extending their outreach services to users.

Additionally, a total of 23 writing centers were housed in the library and an additional 27 writing centers used space in the library for night-time appointments or satellite tutoring locations. Users at these institutions are likely to gain some sense of the connection between the writing center and the library. However, in 4 instances of writing centers housed in the library, there were no links to the library homepage or any library resources. While the absence of links to the library on the writing center’s website does not definitively rule out any collaboration with the library, it does appear that these organizations do not provide any joint services or programs. Also, if a student was to use the writing center website to learn about additional resources, without links to the library, the student may not consider seeking help there. One limitation of writing centers’ websites could be due to a lack of resources for developing the website or maintaining the content. If the writing center does not posses staff with advanced web design skills or the funds to hire and external developer, it could explain the lack of links to other resources. However, with users’ increasing reliance on websites to learn about organizations or access their services,
writing centers would benefit from redesigning their sites with a clear sense of their users’ needs. Writing centers’ websites should go beyond basic information about hours and locations and include links to the library and other resources so that students can access authoritative, reliable information to improve their writing.

Furthermore, among the library websites 43 (38.7%) linked to institutional writing centers, 17 (15.3%) also linked to both the institutional writing center and external writing centers. An additional 20 (18%) libraries linked only to external writing centers. This could demonstrate an interest among libraries to be connected to the writing center and to provide links to writing center resources. For the libraries that only linked to the external organizations, it raises the question of why these libraries did not direct users to their institution’s writing center. It is possible that those writing centers do not provide many online resources and the library preferred to use links for users who were already looking for online information. It is also possible that this is an indication of a weak or non-existent collaboration between the libraries and writing centers at these institutions. Perhaps the library staff or content developer was not aware of the writing center’s presence on that campus, or if the writing center produced online resources. Another possible explanation is that the library staff was more familiar with the online resources produced by certain writing centers. Although libraries linked to over 25 external writing centers, there were only a few with frequent links. The University of Wisconsin-Madison received 27 links from external libraries, Purdue University received 8 links, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill received 5 links, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute received 3 links.
The results of the study indicated that the Northeast contained a higher number of universities with mutual linking and libraries that linked to writing centers. However, this region also contained the greatest number of universities. Also, as there were 78 public universities and 33 private, an institution’s public or private status was not an indicator of whether there were collaborations between the writing center and library.

One limitation of this study was the type of institution studied. Selection of ARL affiliated institutions was one method of sampling research universities, but there are other universities that might have provided useful information on collaboration practices that were eliminated simply by not being a member of this group. Another limitation of this study was the size of the institutions that were studied. For instance, this study did not examine any liberal arts colleges or community colleges. Although evidence was gathered about doctoral-granting institutions, there is no way to predict the collaborations in other types of higher education. Another limitation was in only using websites, since there was no way to know what kinds of print handouts or fliers these organizations may have. For example, in the library, there may be bookmarks or other promotional materials about the writing center that do not appear online.

In order to build on the results of this paper, future research on collaborations between writing centers and libraries would benefit from in-depth qualitative research. In order to delve beyond what is available by viewing a website, a study might interview students about their information seeking behavior or their experiences in services at the writing center, library or both. Another study might
interview writing center directors about their experiences working the library on various collaboration projects, or interviewing librarians who worked on the planning and design of the information commons. In addition, this field could benefit from additional quantitative studies tracking collaborations between writing centers and libraries over time. Empirical research in this area could provide further support for the enhancement and expansion of collaboration projects.
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