CWCA/ACCR 2022 Conference CFP

Reckoning with Space & Safety in the COVID Turn

Virtual Conference

May 25-28, 2022

"For me, the writing center is neither my safe space nor my home."

(Garcia, Unmaking Gringo-Centers, 2019, p. 48)

"From the social life of campus to its academic units, college pulses with odd currents of the eccentric, the esoteric, the conventional, and the innovative. In this climate, people negotiate (or refuse) place or belonging, by being embraced or excluded." (Denny, *Facing the Center*, p. 161)

Introduction

A societal "turn" is a time marked by a change of perspective—a change that is communal and irreversible. The global pandemic is such a turn. The COVID turn has fundamentally changed the way society thinks about space and safety and has challenged writing centres to build new, virtual communities and reimagine safe-feeling learning environments amidst the isolation and trauma caused by the pandemic. The pandemic has turned the writing centre into an invited guest—sometimes invited with hesitation— in students' homes. In this unfamiliar terrain, writing centres have been navigating a familiar tension between their commitment to providing safe spaces for students and their role as institutional actors.

Writing centre studies' literature is dominated by notions of writing centres as safe spaces that make students feel included and put them at ease despite the pressures of their academic work. Grutsch McKinney (2013) argues that writing centres are iconoclastic, "outsiders on the inside" (p. 36) of institutions who are well positioned to challenge institutional hegemony in the safe spaces they create for student writers. However, Grutsch McKinney also points out that writing centres typically exist in service to the institution, required to justify their budget lines on the basis of contributions to student success as measured by retention and GPA. In fact, administratively writing centres are typically not marginal at all, but rather are directly tied to central administrations. Ultimately, writing centres find themselves prioritizing standardized academic and institutional logics, epistemologies, and languages through a rhetoric of "help" and "support." For Garcia (2019), "[w]riting centers function within a tapestry of social structures, reproducing and generating systems of privilege," including—importantly—whiteness (p. 32). Garcia illuminates the extent to which "whiteness shapes the imagining of both centers and practices as 'safe' and 'inviting'" (p. 34).

The COVID turn invites writing centres to reckon with space and safety in the writing centre to address not only the isolation and traumas of the current moment, but also the continuing limitations of our iconoclastic aspirations and institutional allegiances. Attention to space and safety must reckon with the ways in which writing centres are (not) inclusive, equitable, diverse and anti-racist.

Proposal Prompts and Questions

To submit a proposal, please read the following.

We invite all proposals related to writing centre work, especially those with a focus on issues of space and safety at the writing centre affected by the COVID turn. Here are some prompts to motivate your thinking:

- How has the pandemic affected psychological space in the centre? How has it impacted the ways writing centres attend to the wellness of staff and students?

- How might questions about space and safety support efforts to create anti-racist and anti-ableist writing centres? What happens when writing centre programming and pedagogy is informed by the question of who feels a sense of ease and/or belonging in the writing centre (however virtual it might have become)?

- What promises for equitable, diverse, and inclusive space are afforded by a "subversive, even queer, writing center practice" that "recognize[s] the arbitrary nature of the dominant" (Denny, 2010, p. 110)?

- How can writing centres navigate tensions between serving student writers and the demands of course instructors? How do writing centres construct space within others' classrooms and territories on campus?

- How do ideas of space and safety, especially as they arise in our newly constructed virtual programs, inform and transform the development of training materials, centre policies, and resources?

- What are the roles of peer tutors in constructing space and safety at the writing centre?

- How can hiring practices contribute to the construction of iconoclastic space and safe space in the writing centre?

- What will the future of safety and space be within writing centres? How are you planning for the future of your centre?

Proposals may also extend to other topics and areas of study in the writing centre and writing studies fields.

Format of Presentations

Presentations will be virtual. We will accept proposals in the following formats in your research methods and theoretical frameworks.

Research Presentations

Report on a study, on an evidence-based pedagogical practice, or on research into the history, theory, philosophies, and praxes of writing centres. Presentations will be grouped into small panels of presenters. Presenters are also welcome to propose their own panel of grouped presentations. Research presentations are typically 15 minutes in length with additional time for Q&A.

Roundtable Discussions

These sessions are question-driven. Roundtable sessions are ideal for works-in-progress, pedagogical innovations, or taking up an issue of current debate in our field. Roundtable facilitators lead a 30-minute discussion that encourages active participation and contribution from attendees. Proposals should indicate the topic of your discussion, why it would be of interest to writing centre colleagues, and how you plan to engage and facilitate an active and dynamic discussion.

Interactive Workshops

Workshops are an opportunity to model an innovative practice, strategy or innovation with your colleagues through collaborative hands-on activities. Proposals should clearly describe the practice you intend to feature, the overall structure of the session, and how you will actively engage the audience. Workshops are typically 50 minutes in length.

Writing, Research and Pedagogy Fair Display

This *asynchronous* Writing, Research and Pedagogy Fair will offer opportunities to showcase writing centre practices that do not fit into traditional presentation formats. Have an exciting new program you are proud of? Clever new handouts or resources? A poster detailing a research project? A video walkthrough of your centre? Proposals should clearly describe what you intend to showcase, and the materials (text, audio, and/or video) you will produce to provide context and explanation for viewers. Conference attendees will be invited to comment, like, and share in response.

Your Suggestions

We are open to other kinds of presentations -- add these to your proposals.

We're looking forward to the following special events!

★ CWCA/ACCR BIPOC caucus

★ Peer-tutor roundtable

★ Regional affiliate roundtables

★ CWCA/ACCR virtual AGM

Presenter Resources

- [Accessibility best practices for conference presentations](#)
- [How-to support & resources for creating accessible digital documents & images](#)

Submission Information

Extended deadline for proposals: February 17, 2022

Proposal abstract:

— Maximum length: 75 words

Detailed proposal descriptions:

— Maximum length: 500 words

How to Submit

CWCA/ACCR uses the IWCA member platform to manage the submission and review process. This requires that you become an IWCA member, though payment is not necessary. Please disregard payment information on this page.

Follow these steps:

- go to www.iwcamembers.org
- click on "Join the IWCA" tab
- complete the information in the required fields

- click on "Continue to subscription options"
- once you've submitted your registration, you will see a welcome page
- disregard payment information on the welcome page (no payment is necessary)
- on the right side of the welcome page, you will see available proposals
- look for:
  - **2022 CWCA/ACCR Conference** (Proposals accepted until 11:59pm EST on February 17, 2022).
- click "Submit a Proposal"

Become a reviewer!

Contact the conference committee co-chair, Stevie Bell: stepbell@yorku.ca

References and Readings

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