

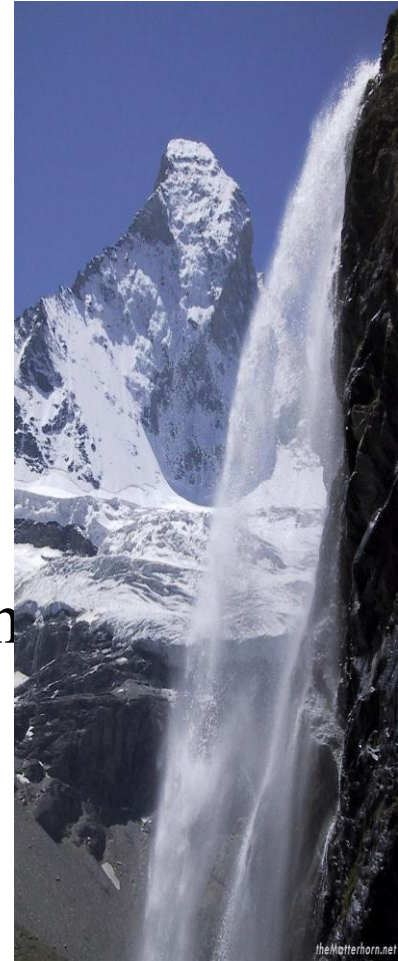
David R. Russell

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- Overview
 - What is WAC/WID
 - Some comforting and troubling news about academic writing
 - Some tips on thesis and article writing, with handy references

North American WAC/WID educational reform

- Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)
- Writing in the Disciplines (WID)
 - Began in 1970s
 - About 1/2 of 2,400 institutions of HE have some form of WAC/WID program or scheme
 - Inspired a program of research into academic writing in the disciplines
- <http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/>



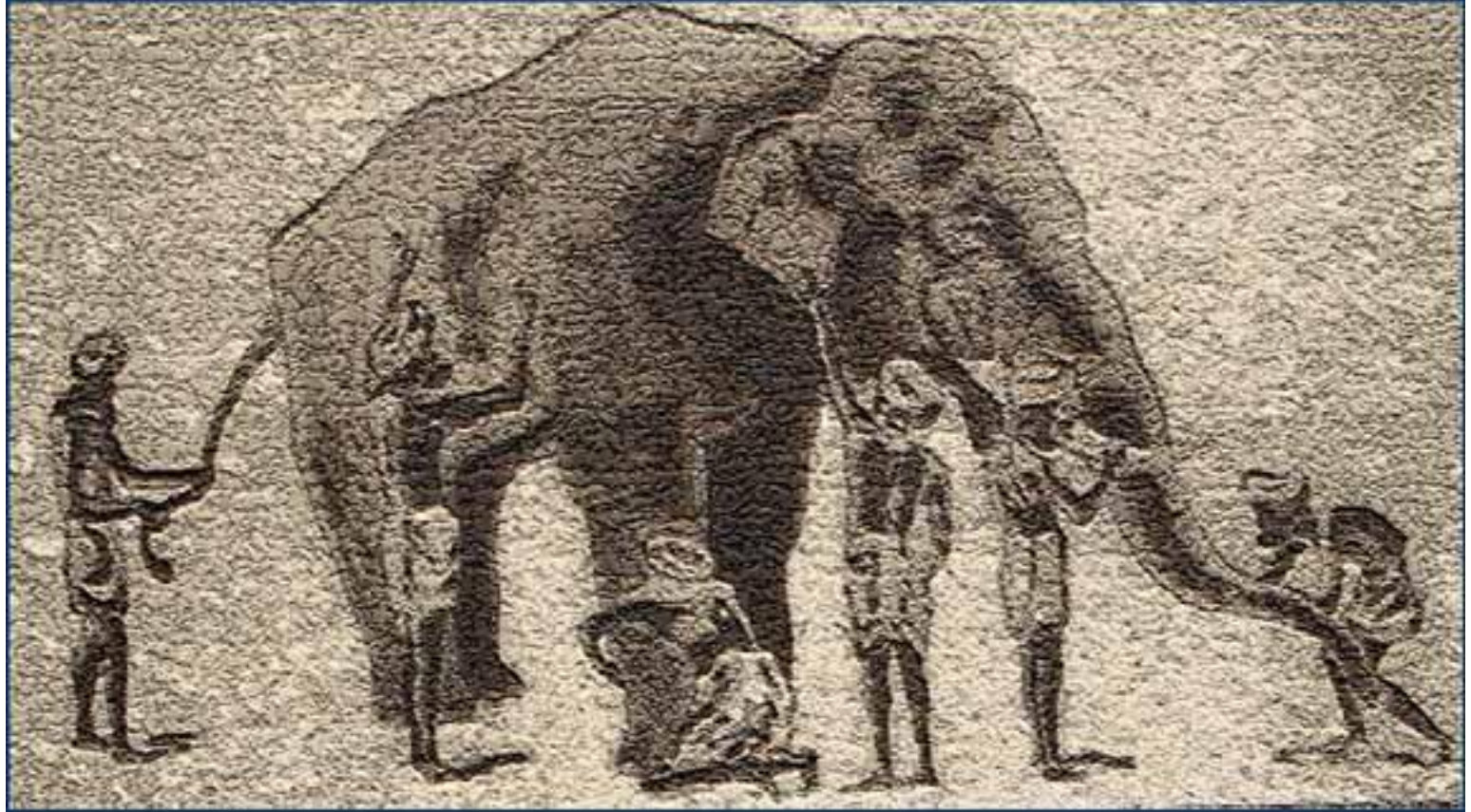
Some findings of research on HE writing

- A. is highly discipline-specific,
- B. can develop thinking
- C. is (usually unconscious) part of socialization in a discipline/profession
- D. develops gradually and unevenly throughout entire schooling experience, but most anyone can do it

A. Discourse and activity are specialized

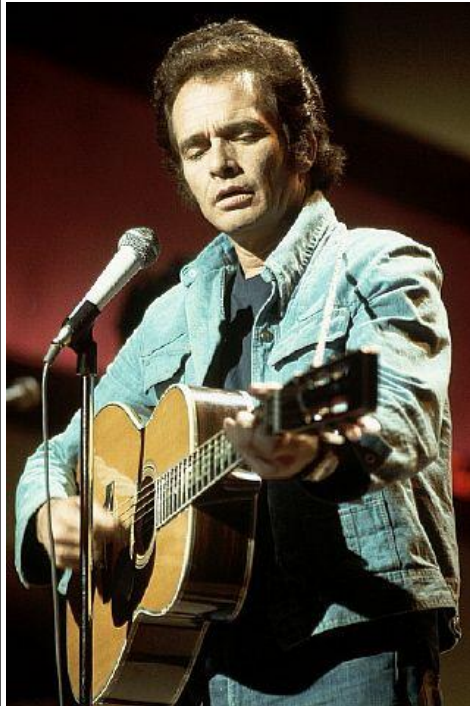
- Writing is different in different disciplines because the epistemology, argument structures, methods, and motives are different





‘Transfer’ of writing ‘know-how’ is not automatic

- If you write well in one domain . . .



B. Writing can develop thinking and vice versa

- Learning to write
- Writing to learn



Writing to learn

- Writing more than demonstrating learning (assessment / sorting)
- Writing also a way of learning . . .



- Creating active learning
- Sparking higher-order thinking
- Changing student / teacher roles

C. Writing 'disappears' with socialization in a discipline

- Teachers forget that they have had to learn specialized discourse
- Requires effort to bring attention to its potential for improving learning and teaching.
- Your supervisor may not have thought about writing much ...



D. Development is gradual

- Like learning to ride a bicycle?
(single generalizable skill)
- Like learning to play an instrument?
(gradually developing accomplishment)



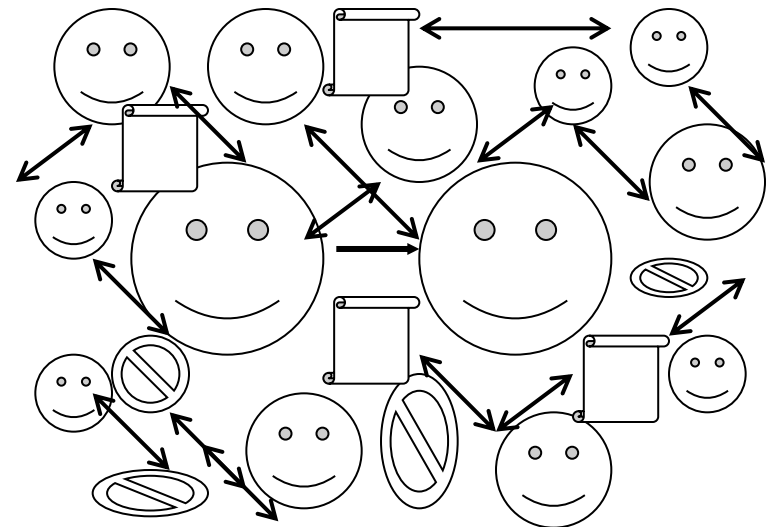
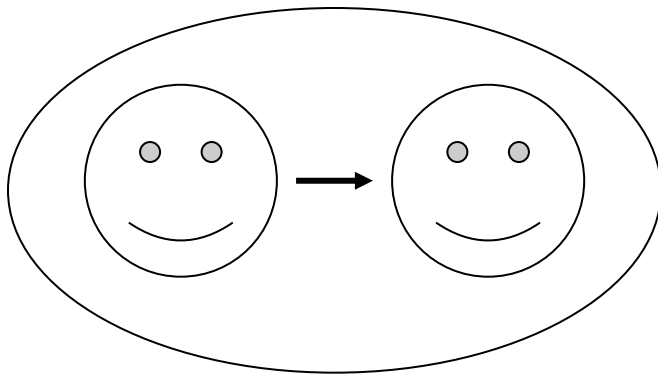
Writing is . . .

- Not simply in-born talent
- Not an inoculation!
 - Students develop unevenly, but with guidance almost all can improve writing/learning
 - Guidance can help



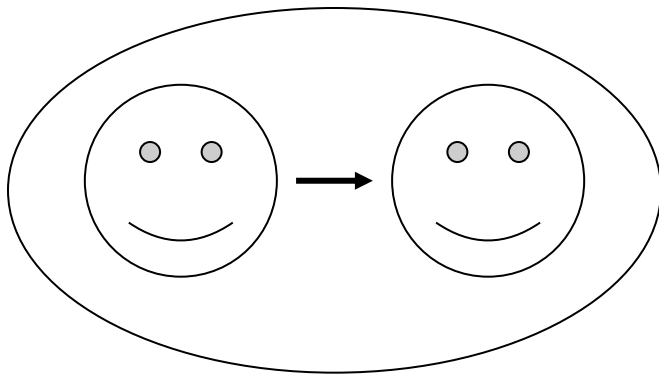
Research (writing) research

- Time to degree (US) 6.9 -12.1 yrs
- “Writing it up” inadequate
- Research as transmission or conversation?

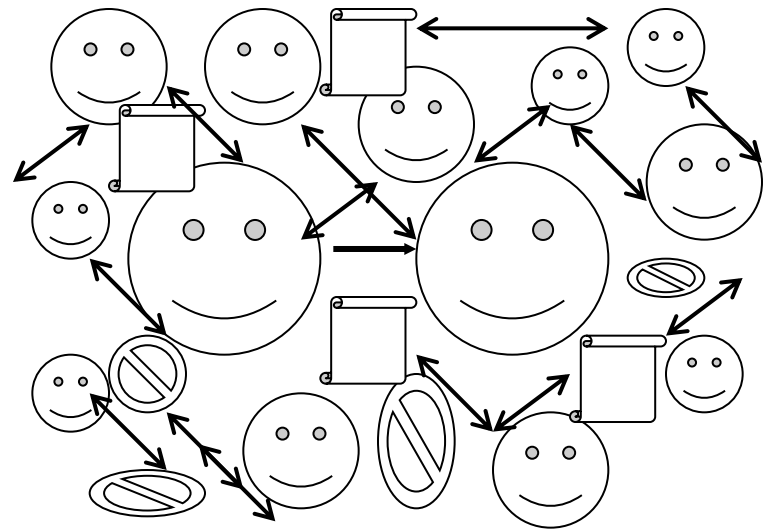


“Context” as Container? ... or Network?

*Context as
container*



*Context as
network*



Thesis as hard transition

Thesis

Supervisor

Committee

University final test

University
requirements

Diploma / license

Comprehensive view

Article

Editor

Reviewers

Professional contribution

Journal requirements

Post in field

Specific niche

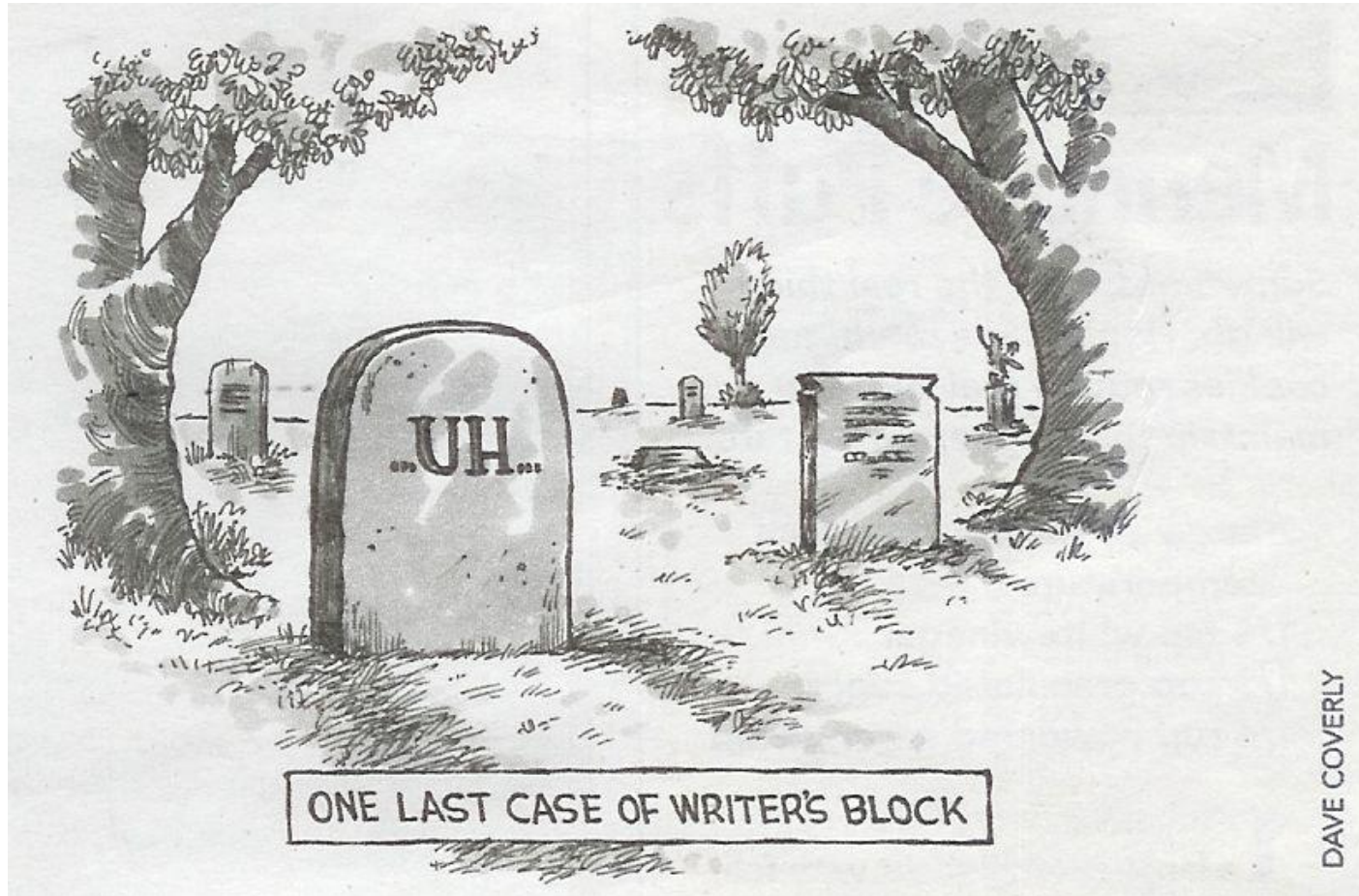
Useful books and websites

- Writing Your Dissertation [*thesis*] in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting Revising, and Finishing your Doctoral Thesis, by Joan Bolker
- Understanding Writing Blocks by by Keith Hjortshoj
- English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide by Swales and Feak
- Scribo <http://www.scribo.dk>
- Labwrite <http://labwrite.ncsu.edu/>
- How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper by Robert Day

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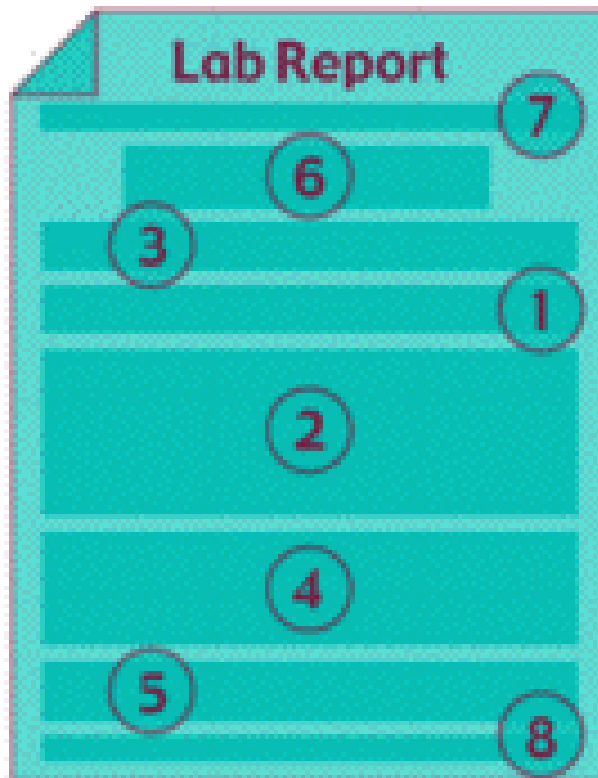
Understanding Writing Blocks Keith Hjortshoj



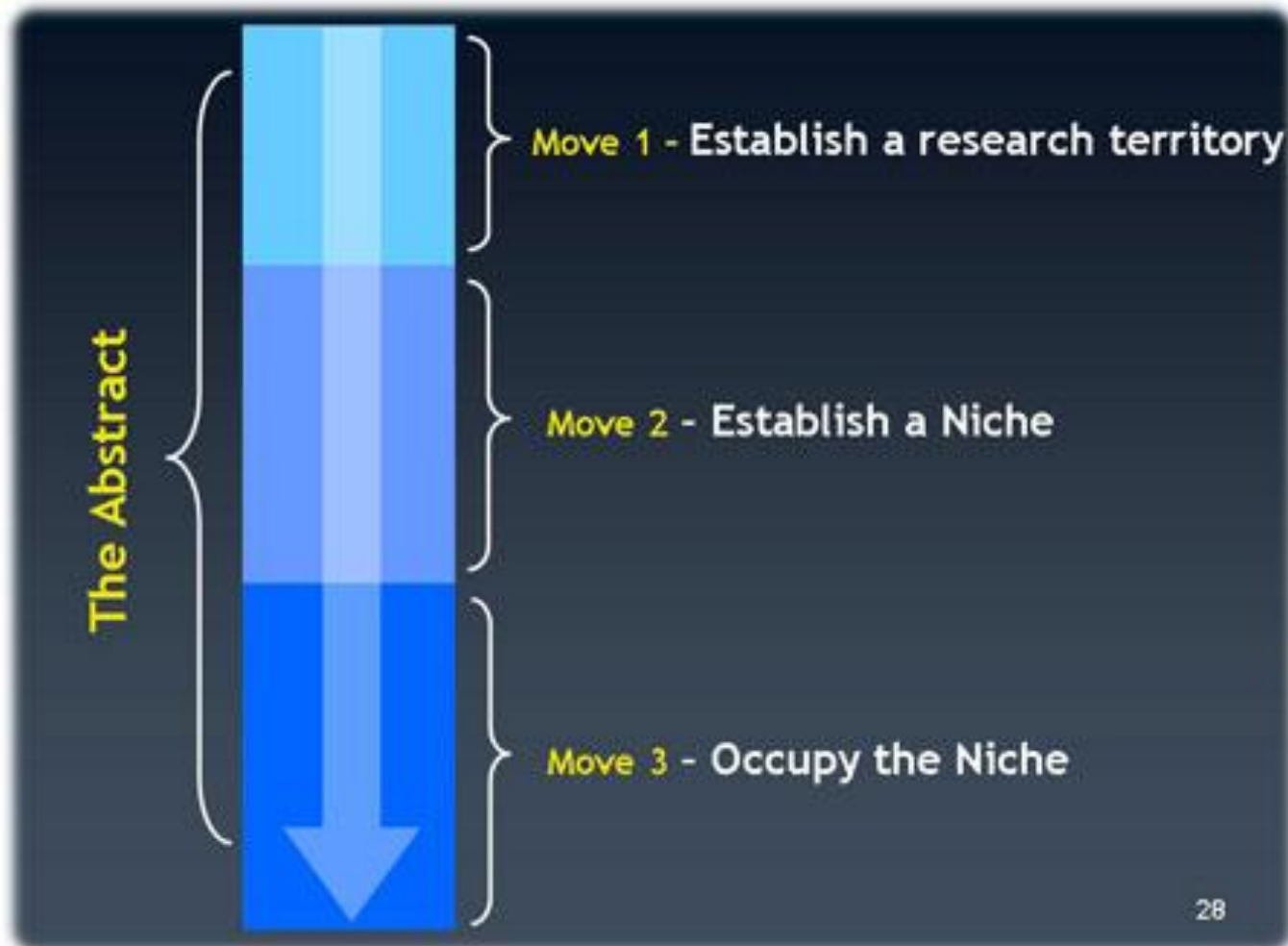
Scribo www.scribo.dk

Labwrite labwrite.ncsu.edu/

- Process



English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide by Swales and Feak



CARS: Create a Research Space (Swales)

- **Move 1: Establishing a research territory**
 - step 1: claiming centrality, and/or
 - step 2: placing your research within the field, and/or
 - step 3: reviewing items of previous research
- **Move 2: Establishing a niche**
 - step 1a: Counter-claiming, or
 - step 1b: Indicating a gap in current research, or
 - step 1c: Question raising, or
 - step 1d: Continuing a tradition
- **Move 3: Occupying the niche**
 - step 1a: Outlining purposes, or
 - step 1b: Announcing present research
 - step 2: Announcing principal findings
 - step 3: Indicating research article structure

How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper by Robert Day

- Top reasons for rejection
 - Haven't read/cited the previous articles on the topic in the journal
 - Haven't formulated the problem(atic)/research question adequately
 - No “news” for readers

Useful books and websites

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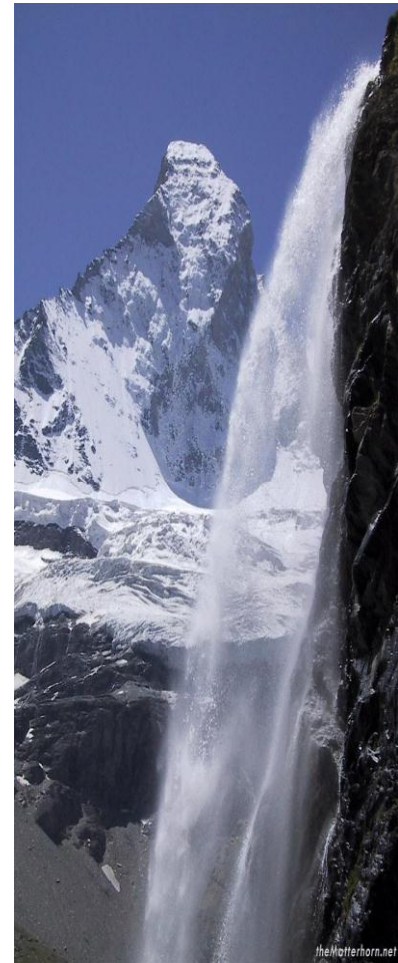


Options for developing awareness and cooperation

1. General courses (that teach for transfer)
2. Tutoring support (coordinated with disciplines--discipline-specific “writing centers”)
3. Workshops/Consulting for teachers
4. Writing-emphasis / linked courses
5. Departmental planning and coordination to improve writing/learning

1) General writing courses:

- Advantages: Low cost & easy to create
- Disadvantages:
 - Ineffective (poor transfer)
 - Responsibility is not shared
 - Writing is not a pedagogical focus outside of the writing course
 - Can lead to cascading blame



1a) General writing courses that teach for 'transfer'

- Learn how writing is used in the departments
- Coordinate instruction with staff in the disciplines (the fewer the better)
- Advantages: Cost less; provides some coordination
- Problems:
 - No person can know how all disciplines write
 - Can also lead to cascading blame
- Ex: U of Copenhagen, Scribo CD

2) Tutoring support coordinated with disciplines

- Tutoring / writing centers (academic support units) consult with departments to learn how to tutor students from those departments.
- Advantage: Provides some coordination.
- Disadvantages:
 - Inefficient.
 - Cooperation is ‘one way’ only (depts. can ignore writing).
 - Tutor knowledge very limited.
- Ex: Coventry U; *

3) Workshops/consulting for individual teachers

- Dominant US WAC model
- Advantages: Costs less; Raises awareness of writing among teaching staff
- Disadvantages:
 - No systematic plan for improving students' writing / learning
 - Little support for individual teachers within a department (disciplinary culture)

4) Writing-emphasis or ‘linked’ courses

- One or two courses in a department are designated as emphasizing writing
- Departmental teaching staff work with a writing consultant to develop a plan for explicitly improving writing in these courses
- Taught by departmental staff or writing expert
- Advantage:
 - Students get systematic attention to writing / learning at strategic points as part of departmental curriculum
- Disadvantage: Other teachers in the department can ignore writing (cascading blame).

5) Departmental planning with “writing consultants”

- A department discusses how to improve students learning/writing, in consultation with a writing consultant
- The department develops and implements a plan over time
- May use a combination of models above
- Advantage--provides long term discussion and systematic growth
- Disadvantage--difficult to get department ‘buy-in’ (agreement)

Three US traditions

- First-year ‘general writing courses—since 1870
 - Required of all students (~age 19)
 - Goal to improve writing “generally”
 - Little connection to disciplines
- Writing centers—since 1910s
 - Individual and small group tutoring
 - Sometimes coordinate with the disciplines
- WAC / WID reform movement—since 1970
 - Programs (varied) in 1/3 of HE institutions
 - Goal: improve writing (& learning) in the disciplines

The challenge for academic writing development

- Make writing visible
 - Intellectually interesting for academics
- Move toward integration
 - Find best use of expertise in writing development

- Separate to integrated
- Discipline level

3) Pedagogical focus in all departments

- General writing courses can provide an introduction to academic writing
- But they cannot prepare students for all academic writing
- Cooperation is necessary
 - But cooperation in secondary and HE is difficult! (in the US at least)