

**Resituating Writing Center Practices using Performance Theory as a Framework**

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## **ABSTRACT**

At present there is a gap between technology promises versus actual practices within academic environments. This is further compounded by changing notions of literacy and expanding notions of “text” in 21<sup>st</sup> century culture. Writing centers need to address these issues and create online spaces that expand the face-to-face environment and incorporate changing notions of “texts” as multi-media events not linear text objects. This study is an interdisciplinary work bringing together areas of writing centers and performance theory in order to inform online writing center practices. It does so by looking at writing centers as performance and examining the role of technological performance in writing center practices and the expansion of online writing labs.

Jon McKenzie’s theory of performance is used as a theoretical framework. It breaks down performance into three main dimensions:

- Technological performance
- Cultural performance
- Organizational performance

An analysis of writing center practices using these performative dimensions shows how the attitudes and the development of online writing labs were influenced by the technological and organizational strands of performance and are still dominated by traditional linear text pedagogy. In order to change this direction, new strategies for working with online spaces must take place. The study discusses visual strategies and sound strategies that can be used to create new versions of online writing spaces that incorporate multi-dimensional objects of text, visual, and sound. It lays out a heuristic device that provides questions to guide this development and gives a variety of specific examples that can be used in online writing environments. Finally, it looks at a prototype project that lays

out a methodology for analyzing online writing spaces as well as a model of an online space that incorporates pedagogically sound performative dimensions. As writing centers and the world of academia move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is imperative to expand and improve pedagogies to keep up with what is happening in the wider, global culture that students are moving into. Not being afraid of technology – but embracing it and working with it to achieve improved efficacy of instruction – is a critical task for writing centers today in order to expand the scope and use of online writing center environments and to begin to address and work with expanding notions of text.

