



PROJECT MUSE®

Wiring The Writing Center

Eric Hobson

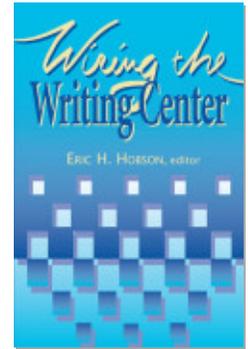
Published by Utah State University Press

Hobson, Eric.

Wiring The Writing Center.

Utah State University Press, 1998.

Project MUSE.muse.jhu.edu/book/9314.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9314>

WAC on the Web

Writing Center Outreach to Teachers of Writing Intensive Courses

Sara Kimball

INTRODUCTION

A SEARCH WITH THE ALTA VISTA ONLINE DATABASE FOR THE KEYWORDS *WAC* and *curriculum* reveals that many writing centers and writing programs now use the World Wide Web to communicate with faculty involved in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs. Larry Beason of Eastern Washington State University also provides a web page with a long list of links to other universities' WAC web pages (<http://ewu66649.ewu.edu/WAC.html>). These pages range from simple sites offering descriptions of programs and requirements to the impressive sites at Northern Illinois University and University of Kansas that offer faculty short essays on aspects of writing instruction, sample syllabuses, templates for assignments in various fields, information on grading and on using journals, and handouts for students, in addition to program information.

Publishing on the web has obvious practical advantages for a writing center involved in WAC outreach. It's an efficient way to store documents and disseminate them to a wide audience. Users can browse and download documents at their own convenience, and electronic documents take up less space than paper. But the web isn't simply a bulletin board or library: it was invented as a workplace technology, and it is widely used in work and recreation for interactive communication. Although mass media coverage of the web has tended to emphasize its more individual self-promotional, recreational, or spectacular aspects, the coverage in the mass media masks a quiet revolution that has taken place in the lives of many computer users for whom the web has become an increasingly common and convenient tool for gathering information for business and personal tasks and for online transactions¹. Few writing center WAC sites, however, fully exploit the potential of the web as a workplace technology and vehicle for interactive communication with a faculty audience. A presence on the World Wide Web also has obvious promotional advantages, and many commercial and academic websites—including writing center sites—serve at least in part to project a public image of the entity that sponsors them. Again, this is an aspect of the web that could be better recognized and more fully exploited by WAC sites.

In this chapter, I describe revising UT–Austin’s WAC website to make it more useful as a workplace site, giving the reasoning behind specific decisions about content and design. A website is like a writing project that is constantly in progress, and many of the decisions involved in designing or revising one are rhetorical: a site has goals and an audience, it is situated within a specific social context, and its designers should pay attention to ethos. The UT faculty site is intended as a resource that faculty across the university will visit, explore, and make use of often. To that end, it is designed to function as a publicly-accessible intranet. An intranet (modeled after *internet*) is a private network, not necessarily connected to the internet, that functions within an organization to provide services like those on the internet, such as web servers for the distribution of information within the organization. The site’s primary audience—faculty at a large state university without a centralized WAC program—is fairly sophisticated technologically, and it is large and diverse, both in fields of specialization and in acquaintance with composition pedagogy. The site also has secondary audiences, including high school teachers in the state of Texas and elsewhere, and members of the general public. One additional goal of the site is to provide models, both for UT faculty and for the site’s various secondary audiences, of progressive, professional teaching practice.

THE WEB AS A WORKPLACE TECHNOLOGY

UT faculty have some experience with a semi-public intranet, since the university’s home page and web pages linked to it function in this fashion. Campus users can, for example, now visit the Provost’s office’s home page to view and download guidelines for preparing promotion cases, use email to request official forms, or send a question to the Provost’s staff. UT’s Office of Human Resources maintains a website that provides a searchable database of job descriptions, employment applications that can be completed and submitted on the web, and downloadable templates for employee performance reviews. Prospective students can not only visit university websites to get information about departments, programs, and the admission process, they can now submit applications electronically. Enrolled students can view an electronic version of the university’s course catalog, and they now have web-based access to evaluations of faculty teaching the courses they might be interested in. Campus users can even apply for a parking permit online, navigating through a series of maps to make selections. Each of these services has its public and private sides. Much of the information on these sites is unrestricted, but financial transactions and confidential information are protected. The transmission of credit card numbers is protected through encryption, and services restricted to people affiliated with the university require an electronic id number.

THE WEB AS INSTITUTIONAL DISPLAY

The difference between the university services described above and a private intranet is that the university’s sites are semi-public. Although the information they provide is intended for campus users—or for prospective students and

their families—much of it is freely accessible to anyone with a web browser. These sites present an image of the university to the rest of the world and expose some of its workings to public view, an aspect of work-a-day use of the web that is perhaps not yet fully appreciated. While there are some obvious disadvantages to conducting one's business in public, there are potential advantages if the documents on the site reveal the institution as responsible, innovative, and professional.

Mostly, a website used for work purposes establishes its parent institution's ethos passively, allowing visitors to come to their own conclusions while browsing. It is possible, however, to take a proactive approach by displaying some information prominently or by drawing the public's attention to particular content. UT's home page, for example, has a section at its top entitled "Spotlight" for links to items of current interest. Shortly after a serious fire in one of the chemistry labs last spring, a link to an online version of the university's laboratory safety manual appeared in this section of the home page. It has remained there ever since, perhaps less a document that users routinely access than a visible sign that the university is committed to laboratory safety.

Like many public universities, UT is often viewed with skepticism by the state legislature and members of the general public. A publicly-accessible website that demonstrates a commitment to undergraduate instruction is one way of demonstrating accountability to these audiences. The UT writing center is supported by a student fee, a method of funding that provides an unusually generous budget but also demands high levels of accountability. An additional benefit of a WAC website is that it offers a concrete example of how the writing center is using its funding productively.

AUDIENCE AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

As an audience, UT faculty vary widely in their sophistication about writing pedagogy. Some have for years used writing both effectively and creatively in teaching in disciplines as different as Finance and Astronomy. For other faculty, however, the idea that writing can be viewed and taught as a process is still news. A great many people who fall somewhere in the middle appreciate information about matters like portfolio evaluation or desire advice about adapting their classes to include a writing component without sacrificing subject-matter teaching.

The diversity of faculty interests and expertise is in part a function of the university's size and in part a function of WAC's on campus history. With a total enrollment of about 48,000, including slightly over 35,500 undergraduates, and a faculty of approximately 2,000, UT is one of the largest universities in the country. It has fourteen colleges and professional schools, eleven of which offer undergraduate programs in humanities, arts, science, social sciences and various professional fields, including Architecture, Engineering, Pharmacy, Nursing, and Social Work. WAC courses are offered in each of these fields.

UT does not have a centralized WAC program, but students are required to take four writing-intensive courses, called Substantial Writing Component (SWC) courses, two at the lower-division level and two at the upper-division level. Historically, the SWC courses have had varying fortunes, and WAC outreach has to contend with a certain amount of distrust and cynicism. The SWC requirement, initiated in 1983, was intended as part of a university-wide program to include both general writing courses taught within the English Department and specialized, discipline-specific courses taught by faculty within other departments (Kinneavy 72-73). Key parts of the program, however—support for advising faculty about using writing to teach and a junior-level collegewide course offered by the English Department in four generic WAC areas—were never funded. Any initial enthusiasm for WAC had waned by the early 1990s. There was no particular incentive for faculty to teach SWC courses, and some departments offered few of them. Until recently, it was not uncommon for students to experience difficulty in fulfilling SWC requirements with courses relevant to their majors or interests. The rarity of SWC courses also created disincentives for faculty, since they ran the risk of having their SWC courses fill up rapidly with students not especially interested in the subject matter.

Two years ago, however, the administration announced an innovation in computing faculty workload credits that awards more credits to SWC courses, allowing many faculty members to teach two classes per semester rather than three, if at least one counts as SWC. The result has been a predictable radical increase in the number of SWC courses offered. The site's potential audience, therefore, has undergone a rapid expansion. Many of the people teaching these courses, however, have little familiarity with modern composition pedagogy, and they have widely varying levels of commitment to using writing to teach their subject matter.

The UT writing center and the Division of Rhetoric and Composition of which it is a part are fairly new entities on campus, having started in the fall of 1993. Part of the writing center's mission is to advise faculty teaching SWC courses, and given the history of WAC on campus, it has been important to establish an atmosphere of trust and goodwill in our dealings with faculty. The writing center and Division have also worked hard to establish themselves as visible and respected entities on campus.

In part, the website is intended to complement and extend workshops about various aspects of teaching writing that the writing center provides. In these workshops, we try to speak to faculty as colleague to colleague, respecting their disciplinary knowledge and trying, through collegial conversation, to help them develop approaches to teaching writing. In practice, however, given the size of the university, the diversity of its faculty, and the history of WAC on campus, it can be difficult to establish connections across colleges, though barriers to communication are as much intellectual and social as physical or geographical. A website designed along the lines of a corporate intranet is one approach to overcoming geographical barriers to communication across a large campus and perhaps some of the social and intellectual ones as well.

DESIGN ISSUES

According to the *Yale C/AIM Web Style Guide* (<http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/interface/interface.html>), the differing goals of external and internal (intranet) websites and the differing needs of their users lead to different design principles. While external sites try to capture an audience, drawing visitors deeper into the site with entertaining information or presentations, an intranet should be designed for users who want to move into and through a site quickly in order to retrieve information. Since our site functions as an intranet, even though most of it is open to the public, it opts for ease of navigation and clarity of design rather than elaborate lures. Since it is an open workplace site, however, it also has to show a public face to visitors not connected with UT Austin.

Figure 1

Undergraduate Writing Center Faculty Pages

These pages are intended to help UT faculty members teaching Substantial Writing Component (SWC) courses and anyone else using writing to teach academic subject matter. They contain suggestions, strategies, and short pieces of writing by members of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition and by others, as well as links to online resources and information on how the UWC can assist faculty and students. We would like these pages to provide a wide variety of approaches to designing writing assignments, responding to drafts, evaluating final drafts, using computer technology to teach writing, and other issues in teaching writing-intensive courses that faculty can adapt to their own pedagogical goals and teaching styles. We therefore welcome contributions from faculty across the UT campus. Please feel free to adapt material here for your own purposes. We do, however, ask that you give appropriate credit in quoting signed material and that you retain information identifying the UWC or any writing center we are linked to if you download handouts and distribute them to students.

Sara E. Kimball
Director
Undergraduate Writing Center

<u>About UT Austin's SWC courses</u>	<u>Planning and teaching a SWC course</u>	<u>Working with students</u>	<u>UWC services for students and faculty</u>	<u>Communicate with the UWC</u>	<u>Online resources for teachers</u>
------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------

Return to:
[Undergraduate Writing Center](#)
[University of Texas at Austin](#)
Send comments or suggestions to: writing@uts.cc.utexas.edu
Last updated August, 1997

The first page that greets visitors to our faculty site is a “front door” or “cover page” (also called an index page) designed to give anyone who visits a clear sense of what the site is about. (See Figure 1 for a draft version of our site’s cover page.) The cover page is roughly analogous to the public foyer of a large corporate office building. It needs to provide enough information for visitors to orient themselves, and since the site is open to the public, it should clearly identify who we are. Our site’s cover page opens with a message signed by me as director explaining the site’s purpose, inviting colleagues to use and contribute to the site, and describing our policy on materials use. I would like colleagues to use samples in much the same way people in a department might share syllabuses and assignments, using what they find relevant and adapting material to their own needs, and part of the message is an invitation to do so. Since the site includes signed material and handouts that teachers might distribute to classes as well as links to other writing centers, however, we request that faculty retain identifying information on material they distribute to students unadapted².

The content of the cover page is broken into six general categories that correspond to the site’s goals. Each category leads to a separate menu page. This design tries to strike a balance between providing a clear overview of what the site has to offer for regular users and for visitors who happen to wander in and providing a detailed map of the contents for users who want to find information quickly.³

The categories on the cover page are simple and direct. “About UT’s SWC courses” links to official information about SWC requirements and includes a brief history of WAC at UT. “Planning and teaching a SWC course” is the rubric for practical advice and sample assignments. “Working with students” presents information about how to hold individual writing conferences with students and about teaching writing to students with special needs (e.g., returning students, ESL students, speakers of non-standard dialects, and learning disabled students). It also includes a page discussing the challenges that all students face in learning to write college-level academic prose and trying to persuade faculty to understand (or remember) the struggles of college writers from the student’s point of view. “UWC services for faculty and students” provides information about how our writing center works with students, including a FAQ file with answers to questions that tend to come up in responses to surveys our writing center sends out to faculty. “Communicate with the UWC” links to a message form and a description of how to subscribe to our electronic discussion list for teachers of SWC courses. “Other subjects of interest to teachers” is a catch-all category that includes using computer technology in teaching, resources for communications scholars, online bibliographies, and links to other sites.

The cover page has a *mailto* form soliciting comments and suggestions about content, and it links back to our writing center site’s main index page. At present, the cover page simply has a set of links arranged in a table. Eventually, however, it will include a simple image map or navigation bar.

The menu page for “Planing and teaching a SWC course” (See Figure 1) breaks the process of incorporating writing into a syllabus into clear categories that replicate the process: “Current views on teaching writing and using writing to teach” (designed to provide an intellectual framework for the rest); “Incorporating writing assignments into your syllabus”; “Designing writing assignments”; “Responding to student drafts”; “Evaluating and grading student writing”; and “Managing the workload.” These divisions were planned with future expansion in mind; each category functions as a conceptual “bin” into which documents can be dropped as they are created. The categories are loose enough to be appropriate for diverse content, but they still provide a conceptual and organizational framework.

The organization of this site section serves pedagogical ends, functioning as a cognitive map to the process of incorporating writing into a course. The page presents the user with the idea that using writing to teach can be viewed as a process involving discrete but interrelated steps and that teaching writing involves ordering one’s priorities astutely. For example, the menu has separate headings for “Responding to drafts” and “Evaluating and grading,” in order to reinforce the idea that a thoughtful response to works in progress is more effective than a summary judgment on a final product. Headings also highlight matters of special concern to the audience. Although the information and advice under “Managing the workload” could belong conceptually under “Responding to drafts,” “Managing the workload” appears as a separate category because it addresses one of the audience’s biggest fears: that they will be buried under unmanageable loads of student papers if they introduce a writing component into their courses.

TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES

UT faculty are a relatively technologically sophisticated audience. As the result of an administrative initiative, most faculty have computers that allow them to access the web, and many work in buildings that have been wired for Ethernet access. Some also have computers at home and presumably access the internet through dial-up connections. Although the site’s primary audience uses sophisticated technology that allows access to sites with graphics, multimedia, frames and image maps, the most technologically sophisticated presentation is not, however, necessarily the most appropriate or the most useful for all of the people who might make use of the site. Like many corporate intranets, a WAC site has little intrinsic need for a graphics-rich presentation or for multimedia⁴. Relying heavily on images to organize such a site, for example, may put off some users who turn off image loading in the interests of obtaining textual information quickly.⁵

A technology-heavy site—even on a campus with state-of-the-art high-bandwidth technology—also excludes some potential off-campus visitors. In addition to its primary audience our site has other secondary audiences, one of which is high school teachers, whose access to the web may be limited. Our writing center does outreach to a few Texas high schools, and some of our material may be useful to

high school teachers in teaching their own classes. At the very least, the site could give teachers some sense of the kinds of writing their students will do in college. While there are initiatives to introduce computer technology into all Texas schools, the results so far are uneven. Some, for example, only have Lynx, a text-only web browser available with a UNIX shell account, and many schools only have slow, dial-up connectivity. By providing at least a version of the site that is accessible to low-bandwidth technology, its value to this wider audience can be increased.

CONTENT

An attractive site with a sophisticated presentation will not be very successful if nobody reads the material on it, downloads documents, or interacts with the writing center because the content is dull, thin or not very interesting to faculty. In designing a WAC site, it is important to distinguish between content of interest to composition professionals and content of interest to faculty. The site's audience is by and large more interested in the practical than the theoretical. Although there is a rich literature on the theory and practice of WAC, including studies of writing in particular fields, much of it is aimed at an audience of composition professionals. Faculty who are busy juggling the demands of teaching, scholarship, and service, however, are more interested in concrete advice, and our site focuses, therefore, on providing samples, models, and practical advice rather than academic references. Nevertheless, bibliographic information and pointers to online bibliographies about WAC, can lead colleagues to items of potential interest and make the point that the practical advice our writing center gives comes from a rich intellectual background, and we link to online bibliographies⁶. In this way, the site can serve as an interface to more complex discussions of literacy for those members of its audience who are interested.

Most WAC websites—our own included—offer information about their school's WAC program, such as requirements for designating a course writing-intensive, a description of the course approval process, copies of relevant forms, and perhaps a program history. Northern Illinois University's site, for example, has a page entitled "A Short History of WAC" describing both the origins of the WAC movement in the 1970s and the history of the program at Northern Illinois (<http://www.niu.edu/acad/english/wac/histwac.html>). Such information locates a program in a historical and intellectual context, and presents a public image of the program and its sponsoring institution to a wider audience. Historical information is also often useful in understanding present realities, and it might be of interest to some faculty for that reason. Faculty members who do not receive clear information from their departments find a review of general information about requirements helpful. Information about the program, however, has little lasting value for a local audience and probably does little to attract and hold this audience's attention.

The sample syllabuses and assignments the site provides represent diverse approaches and points of view. Although some fundamentals are important to

emphasize to those members of the audience that have little or no training in teaching writing—for example, the idea that focus on sentence-level concerns at the expense of invention and organization is misplaced effort—there are many ways to put the fundamentals into practice. Some approaches fit different personal tastes or training better than others; some are more appropriate to some fields than others. For example, our site includes information on formalized, visually-oriented methods of teaching invention because they work well for some teachers and some students, even though this approach is not congenial to all styles of writing and teaching.

Members of our writing center's staff have produced a number of paper handouts on aspects of teaching writing to distribute at faculty workshops, and these provide an obvious starting point for content. In some cases, we have adapted handouts designed for paper into formats more appropriate for the web, for example breaking them down into short, linked segments, and adding links to related documents. We have two types of paper materials for students and faculty: most are unsigned references on matters of general interest, and their voice tends to be anonymous and corporate, though not bland. Often they are written as a collaborate effort. Occasionally, however, someone on our staff has put considerable time and effort into writing a piece that is more complex than a simple handout and is written from a discernible personal point of view. For example, several years ago one of our graduate consultants wrote a set of guidelines for students that ran to several pages about how to read literature in order to write about it. It's appropriate to acknowledge the time and thought that goes into writing like this by publishing it with the author's name. We will continue this policy in publishing on our faculty website. We are also actively soliciting signed contributions from colleagues in our writing program and in other departments, both to emphasize a variety of points of view and to encourage faculty outside the writing program to realize that they are authorities on writing in their fields.

Links are also content. An obvious practical advantage to linking to other sites that offer information to WAC instructors is that we do not have to write all of our site's content. Our site links to such sites such as those at Northern Illinois and the University of Kansas that provide material about teaching writing. In some cases, however, for example when a site concentrates on material specific to its own program and institution, it makes more sense to link to a specific document on another site than it does to link to the site's index page. For instance, Ray Smith of Indiana University Bloomington's Campuswide Writing program has written a clear, useful essay describing minimal marking, (<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/cwp/quick-guide.html>). As a signed essay, it fits in well with our site's design, and some UT faculty who are concerned with mechanics and style in their students' writing may be interested in using this technique. Linking in this way does raise some issues of etiquette and clarity. It's necessary to get permission to link and to identify the document's source in annotation that goes with the link, and it helps if all of the other site's pages also offer clear identification.

INTERACTIVITY: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES

The simplest way to use a website for communication is to put a *mailto* tag on each of the site's pages that enables a visitor to send email to the site's author or sponsor. Our writing center site already uses *mailto* tags, and we do, in fact, receive several email messages a week from visitors to our writing center's web pages. These messages are not usually from faculty, however, suggesting that to encourage faculty to use the site for communication part of the site needs to be identified explicitly as a forum for communication.

At present, the communications forum is a separate page linked to the description of services for faculty with a *mailto* tag accompanied by a message inviting faculty to send us questions or suggestions, make arrangements for class visits from writing center staff, or schedule workshops or presentations. Eventually, however, the site will extend the individual consulting we do with faculty by providing a form that would allow instructors who wanted advice to paste in and send us syllabuses or assignments.⁷

Eventually too, we would like to use the interactive capabilities of the web to encourage communication among faculty, for example, by providing comment forms for dialog about particular documents, proposals or approaches to teaching. The online version of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has such a service, called "Colloquy," that invites visitors to its site to comment on articles it publishes. Many of these on-going commentaries attract a number of participants with widely diverging views on issues of common interest to academics, such as tenure, treatment of graduate students, and the role of technology in teaching. Some of the classes taught in UT Austin's Computer Writing and Research Lab use message forums constructed of message forms linked in a thread to continue class discussions online. (See Figure 2 for a discussion question posed by the instructor in one class.) Technology of this sort creates collaborative texts that can bring together diverse points of view and sources of knowledge in addressing a common concern and, in doing so, create sense of community. The collaborative potential of hypertext is perhaps better known to some in composition in its application to literary studies, but using collaborative hypertexts to address common concerns and solve problems may become increasingly important in progressive businesses and industries (Johnson-Eilola and Selber).⁸

Simply offering a message forum for the campus at large would probably not be very successful at UT Austin at present. To generate responses, a forum probably should address a particular group of users with clear common interests or a clear sense of community, and teachers of SWC classes don't form such a community on the UT campus. Eventually, our writing center would like to offer summer seminars for faculty, and a message forum might be a way of keeping participants in such a seminar, who would form a discrete community, in touch with each other and with the writing center during the school year.

Figure 2

bret

[19:17 9/10/95]

one thing that we didn't get a chance to talk about in class, but which might be worth thinking about is the relationship between swift's satirical portrait of children as livestock and the sadler commissions report on child labor problems. what kinds of connections might there be between the two documents? do you think it's possible that swift had some of the child labor problems in when he wrote "a modest proposal"? any thoughts?

Reply (if desired)

Your name:

Response

↑

↓

←

→

Interactive technology like message forums raises questions about public and private aspects of a website. A conversation about teaching or writing accessible to anyone over the World Wide Web puts institutional practice and attitudes about teaching in the public view. Practically speaking, there is no way to exclude visitors who are not members of the campus community from participating. Message forum discussions in classes in the Computers and Writing Research Lab do, for example, sometimes attract participants from outside. A public discussion of teaching might have advantages if, for example, it displayed to a wider public some of the common concerns of faculty or it allowed members of the community to communicate their

concerns to faculty. It also has some obvious disadvantages; it seems likely that some people would be unwilling to participate in a discussion open to the whole world, or that participants in such a discussion would feel inhibited about expressing opinions frankly. If the faculty website is intended as a workspace, then an analogy to real-life workspaces is appropriate: the cover page is a public foyer that greets visitors and provides clearly marked doors to work areas (the various informational pages) through which anyone may wander at will. A few areas, however, should function as “backstage areas” in the sense of Goffman (1950, 111-134)—places where regular site users can speak to other users and “reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude (113).” In the interests of preserving a sense of community, for example, a web-based discussion among participants in a seminar should probably be kept private by restricting it to users with an authorized password.

CONCLUSION

UT–Austin provides an example of one particular institutional context for WAC and a writing center WAC website. Some decisions about site design and content appropriate for UT may not be applicable to other institutions and programs. Faculty teaching WAC courses at UT do not, for example, form a discrete community. A WAC website on a smaller campus with a more coherent WAC program, however, such as one in which faculty shared the common experience of attending an orientation seminar, could help to sustain and strengthen an already existing community. A website could also, for example, serve as central information source and communication forum for faculty from several departments teaching a common WAC course. Unlike some writing centers, the UT writing center neither evaluates nor approves proposals for WAC courses, but a center with this responsibility could provide online versions of official forms and enable faculty to send completed applications to the center. It could also use the web’s interactive capabilities to advise faculty writing course proposals and applications, making the process of designing WAC courses a collaboration between faculty and the writing center.

Some decisions made in designing the UT website may be more generally applicable. The intranet model seems feasible on a technologically sophisticated campus in which many faculty are accustomed to using the web for professional purposes. The increased use of the World Wide Web for commercial transactions, research, and recreation by computer users in and out of academia, however, suggests that this is a model with which potential audiences at a wide variety of institutions will be increasingly familiar. Given our funding and the history of the UT WAC program, we find it important to pay attention to our writing center’s ethos both within the university and in communicating with the general public. Our web pages, both for faculty and for students, help establish a desired ethos. Given the current political climate for higher education and the tenuous position in which many writing centers find themselves in trying to obtain funding and institutional support, however, our concern with ethos is hardly unique. If a presence

on the web can contribute to establishing a positive ethos for writing centers and their parent institutions, then we should all pay attention to ethos in planning for the future.

NOTES

1. The surveys of World Wide Web users conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology Graphics, Visualization, & Usability (GVU) Center since 1994, for example, document use of the web for general business purposes and ways in which users find and make use of the information they obtain through browsing and searching.
2. See Gaskin (1997, 241-275) for a discussion of intellectual property issues and copyrights for a corporate audience. The acceptable use policy for materials on our site assumes that conventions established among colleagues for sharing paper materials still hold: syllabuses and assignments are not normally accompanied by information citing sources of inspiration, and faculty are welcome to download and adapt such material to their own purposes, while sources for signed works should be cited or preserved.
3. The *Yale C/AIM Web Style Guide* (http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/interface/basic_interface2.html) points out that intranet users tend to prefer menus with a minimum of five to seven links and experienced users in particular tend to prefer a few menus with a dense selection of choices over many layers of simplified menus.
4. See the intranet design guidelines presented by the *Yale C/AIM Web Style Guide* (http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/interface/basic_interface2.html). Graphics and multimedia can, however, be central to the goals of some work-related sites. For example, a site maintained by a hospital or medical school might present slides or video to illustrate a discussion of disease diagnosis.
5. Close to 14% of the respondents to the 1997 GVU survey report turning off image loading at least some of the time (http://www.gvu.gatech.edu/user_surveys/survey-1997-04/bulleted/use_bullets.html). A site that relies wholly on images for navigation or doesn't offer a no-frames alternative also excludes blind users and others who use alternative software (UT Team Web).
6. The Campuswide Writing Program at Indiana University at Bloomington, for example, provides an extensive bibliography of articles available in its library (<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/cwp/cwphome.htm>).
7. The barriers to offering a web-based consultation service are organizational rather than technical. We cannot offer this service until it is clear that the staff members involved will have adequate time and support.
8. Webchat programs that enable real-time communication could also be used to make a website interactive. Although our writing center is exploring the use of such software for online consultations with students, real-time conferencing seems less likely to work with a faculty audience for whom one of the advantages of a website is the ability to access it and communicate with the writing center at their convenience.