

Theme: Embracing the Multi-Verse

In the most recent installation of Marvel's *Spider-Man* franchise, Peter Parker discovers that to fight his evil nemesis, he must (SPOILER ALERT!) work with two other Peter Parkers, each of whom exists in an alternate universe. His only way forward is to partner with the other versions of himself to work toward a common good (*Spider-Man: No Way Home* 2021). The movie earned critical and box office acclaim for its innovative way of addressing the potentially tiresome tropes of the superhero genre (Debruge). **Our goal with this year's IWCA conference is also to find innovative ways to address the restrictive (and potentially tiresome) genre conventions of an annual conference and to work together to embrace our multiple selves in order to reimagine the work we do.** At the risk of alienating non-superhero fans in the writing center community, we ask participants in the 2023 IWCA Conference to imagine themselves as spider-people: academic vigilantes trying to do good despite the chaos of racial discrimination, political uncertainty, neoliberalism, failing educational systems, declining enrollments, hostility toward higher education, limited funding and shrinking budgets, and the list goes on. While we may be able to inspire meaningful change in our local communities, we must also address the larger nemeses of our time by embracing the full scope of our multiple selves.

This year's conference theme is "Embracing the Multi-Verse," simultaneously conjuring images of superheroes fighting a Big Bad while, in its hyphenated form, highlighting both the multifaceted nature of our Centers and the "verse"—the language that grounds our work. The first part "multi" can refer to all the ways writing centers work with multiple individuals, communities, and disciplines. Our centers need to be multiliterate, multimodal, and multidisciplinary in order to support inclusive practices. For too long, our writing centers have been seemingly monolithic, monolingual, monocultural; we want this call to deconstruct our singularity and create space for a multiplicity of voices. As Heather Fitzgerald and Holly Salmon write in their welcome letter to attendees of the Canadian Writing Centre Association 2019 Conference, "The multiplicity in our Writing Centre work—in our spaces, our positions, the communities we serve, the technologies we work through and with, and, most importantly, in our possibilities—is perhaps the only constant across our various contexts" (1). **We hope that proposals for the conference will address the strategies that tutors and directors are using to embrace the challenge of engaging our multiplicities.** We hope researchers will take inspiration from authors such as Rachel Azima (2022), Holly Ryan and Stephanie Vie (2022), Brian Fallon and Lindsey Sabatino

Commented [EKJ1]: One of the goals of the conference and a point to attend to as you write your proposal.

Commented [EKJ2]: For the proposal, they want you to identify your challenges within writing centers, the challenges include the list they provided. This vocabulary can also be used in writing the draft of the proposal.

Commented [EKJ3]: Proposal could address change and how you've made change or progress and what additional change is needed.

Commented [EKJ4]: Think about the small scale changes I've made and large scale changes I'd like to make.

Commented [EKJ5]: Conference theme

Commented [EKJ6]: Breaking down the language and meaning of the theme with examples. Should think about how I can address those.

Commented [EKJ7]: A quote is being used...I should pay attention to this because it must be meaningful given the brief amount of space available to write this CFP.

Commented [EKJ8]: Another expectation for proposal submissions.

(2022, 2019), Zandra L. Jordan (2020), Muhammad Khurram Saleem (2018), Joyce Locke Carter (2016), Alison Hitt (2012), and Kathleen Vacek (2012).

The word “verse” is a reference to poetry and the ways writers arrange language to speak their messages to multiple audiences. If we think about writing center work through the lens of arrangement—of spaces, people, resources, and practices—then we must find ways to approach new arrangements with generosity and curiosity. If we riff on the word (in the poetic spirit), we arrive at versatility, a call for adaptability and flexibility in our centers. **We hope proposals will address the practices, privileges, and power dynamics of how writing center practitioners move through various “universes.”** How are writing centers contributing to a healthy multiverse of writing in our spaces? How are we influencing our institutional spaces to make them more inclusive of multiple ways of writing and knowing? Institutions are not as flexible as we might want them to be, but they are *more flexible* than many of us realize. Inspiration for these presentations might come from Kelin Hull and Corey Petit (2021), Danielle Pierce and ‘Aolani Robinson (2021), Sarah Blazer and Brian Fallon (2020), Sara Alvarez (2019), Eric Camarillo (2019), Laura Greenfield (2019), Virginia Zavala (2019), Neisha-Anne Green (2018), Anibal Quijano (2014), and Katherine Walsh (2005).

For many years, writing center practitioners have been talking about how and why we need to embrace multiliteracy praxis. At the MAWCA 2022 conference, keynote speakers Brian Fallon and Lindsay Sabatino reminded participants that “Over 20 years ago, in 2000, John Trimbur predicted that writing centers would move to become multiliteracy centers addressing the ‘multimodal activity in which oral, written, and visual communication intertwine’ (29), [yet] as a field, we have not fully embraced Trimbur and many other writing center scholars’ call for progression” (7-8). For this conference, **we hope to build on the possibilities that have been shared at other conferences by showcasing our multiplicities of practice, research, and pedagogy.** What relationships have you built, what training do you provide, what community engagement have you done? What technologies are you employing, and what modalities are you supporting, etc?

In that spirit, take for example, undergraduate Hannah Telling’s work on gesture drawings, shared in her IWCA [2019 keynote](#). This was a groundbreaking moment for multimodality. For the first time, gestural and visual modes were given a spotlight, and Telling’s work helped us understand

Commented [EKJ9]: Maybe cite these scholars? Or at least causally review what they’ve written to get a sense of what reviewers are looking for as they evaluate proposal submissions.

Commented [EKJ10]: Part two of unpacking the word choice of the conference theme...a focus on language in WCs.

Commented [EKJ11]: More topics that can be written about for the proposal.

Commented [EKJ12]: Just a reminder that this is more language that can be borrowed/used when drafting the proposal.

Commented [EKJ13]: Successful proposals should also do this.

Commented [EKJ14]: If I’m unsure of how to frame my proposal submission or how to choose a topic, I can glance over the work of these scholars to get an idea. I could also cite them as well—probably a good writing move to make to increase my chances of acceptance.

Commented [EKJ15]: More goals of the conference and thus, other angles to take when writing the proposal.

Commented [EKJ16]: Guiding questions in case one needs help understanding what’s being mentioned.

Commented [EKJ17]: An example of a more unconventional, and artistic take on traditional conference formats/conventions in case one is trying to figure out how to be more creative to satisfy this year’s CFP.

all we might learn from examining our practices using these historically undervalued methodologies and modes. Importantly, Telling suggested implications for such key features of writing center work as **collaboration, participation, and reciprocity**. She told us, "By becoming aware of how my body speaks ideologies of participation, I have learned how to give writers the space they need to share their experiences, skills, and knowledge" (42). Telling used **gesture drawing methodology** to examine how bodies interact in writing center spaces and how embodiment impacts our sessions. **These are the kinds of presentations, workshops, roundtable discussions, and multi-modal work we want to highlight at the conference.** What other new methodologies does the multiverse have in store for us? How can we open ourselves to new ways of thinking, acting, and interacting in the contemporary writing center? Fallon and Sabatino (2022) argue that **writing centers "have a responsibility to chart a path that both leverages and challenges what students, tutors, and society bring to the Center"** (3). But what *do* our communities bring to the center? And how can we responsibly and effectively both leverage the strengths of our communities and create meaningful challenges to encourage continuous growth, for students, tutors, and administrators?

Commented [EKJ18]: Great words to use...also indicate values of the organization, or at least, conference organizers.

Commented [EKJ19]: Communication—related to the "verses" part of the CFP.

Commented [EKJ20]: Another quote—pay attention.

Commented [EKJ21]: Ok, so what methodology will I use? Hers is an artistic approach. Is my work? Can it be?

Commented [EKJ22]: The reviewers are looking for content that is innovative and/or fresh compared to typical conference content/formats.

Commented [EKJ23]: Again, quoted material—pay attention. This is clearly a call for reflective practice, so a proposal that does that in some way should fare well.

In light of this year's theme, **we want to actively solicit a range of academic work. Please think creatively about the kinds of presentations you propose**, and be open to proposing **a performance in the vein of Simpson and Virrueta's (2020) "Writing Center, The Musical," a video essay, a podcast, or another non-alphabetic mode**. While conferences always have poster sessions and powerpoint slides, **what other genres and modes might best represent contemporary writing center work?** In addition to traditional sessions and projects, **we encourage the community to submit original photos, artwork, video essays, and other projects for display in our Multimodal Gallery**. Also, we plan to have a dedicated room at the conference that will function as a **creativity center/makerspace with various art supplies and interactive tools**. Therefore, participants who propose maker space sessions will have a flexible space to engage participants.

Commented [EKJ24]: Again, they are clearly stating that they want proposals that are creative.

Commented [EKJ25]: Examples of creative kinds of content that would be welcome as a submission.

Commented [EKJ26]: Think outside the box for session type.

Commented [EKJ27]: These are examples of work that could be submitted to the more creative, multimodal session type.

Questions: What are your writing centers doing to engage the following qualities or concepts?

- Multiliteracy:

Commented [EKJ28]: What follows are guiding questions that are meant to help you figure out how to write your proposal. Not all questions are meant to be answered—in fact, you may only address 1 or 2 and that would be okay.

- What has your writing center done to prioritize dialectical, linguistic, and/or multiliterate inclusion? What roles do staff training and faculty outreach play in these efforts?
- How can the writing center serve as a center for multi- and trans-lingual research, communication, and praxis? How do we support students, faculty, and community members who participate in multilingual discourses? How do the values of HBCU, HSI, Tribal Colleges or other minority-serving institutions intersect with these efforts?
- How do you encourage and support marginalized and/or non-traditional literacies in your writing center space and in your institution more broadly?
- How have government oversight and local politics impacted your writing center's mission and efforts toward multiliteracy?
- **Multimodality:**
 - Who is your writing center "superhero"? Create an analog or digital image of a writing center scholar reimagined as a superhero. What is their superhero name and identity? How do their theoretical or scholarly perspectives translate to "superpowers"? (Cosplay is encouraged but not required!)
 - What resources or support has your writing center acquired to make the jump into the hyperspace of multimodality? How has your writing center advocated for additional resources to support students who are using contemporary technologies including but not limited to augmented reality, virtual reality, games, podcasting, video creation, etc.?
 - What role does writing and writing support play in STEM-focused maker spaces (Summers 2021)? How have you worked to support students doing multimodal academic work in STEM fields?
 - How does your writing center collaborate with Mass Communications and Multimedia departments at your institution? What training have you provided to administrators and/or tutors to support student designers in communications fields?
 - How are secondary school writing centers preparing students to engage productively with contemporary technologies?
 - How do assistive technologies or other accessibility technologies impact writing center sessions? How has your center effectively created inclusive practices regarding dis/ability?
- **Multidisciplinarity:**
 - In what ways do administrators and tutors collaborate with faculty and students across disciplines in your writing center? How do you take care to engage the strengths of multidisciplinary perspectives?

- How are secondary school writing centers grappling with multidisciplinary?
- What interdisciplinary collaborations have been most successful at your institution? What accounts for the success of these initiatives?
- What (multidisciplinary) grants have you acquired and how has that changed your work? How did you foster the connections required for these kinds of collaborations?
- Versatility:
 - How do writing centers reach out to different constituencies? What models exist to support these collaborations? What challenges do you face in making or maintaining these partnerships?
 - How has versatility and/or adaptability impacted Writing Across Curriculum/Writing In Disciplines (WAC/WID) work in your community?
 - How have you adapted or changed writing center praxis to work in community writing centers? What needed to change?
 - How did you cultivate relationships across disciplines and/or affinity groups to create a culture of writing on your campus/at your school/in your community?
 - What are the affordances of a faculty designated position versus a staff designated position in a writing center? How do you negotiate those different discourse communities? How do you communicate across those seeming divides?
- Multiversalism:
 - How have you tried to arrange a space in your writing center that represents the perspectives and supports the identities of the communities you serve? What would a rendering of your ideal writing center space look like?
 - How has the intersection of the writing center with the library, accessibility and disability support, academic advising, and other student support units created new opportunities for writing center work?
 - How does your writing center support faculty via collaborations with specific departments or centers for teaching and learning? What kinds of programs or events seem to connect with faculty on your campus?
 - How does this conference theme speak to other conferences/community events in your region? How have you revised/rethought/reimagined your previous work in the various changing contexts (Black Lives Matter, Covid-19, inflation/recession, war in Ukraine, Brexit, etc.) of the last three-five years?
 - What strategies are you using to disrupt singular ways of knowing by employing writing fellows in WAC/WID courses? What partnerships

have emerged when you brought together faculty and students from various disciplines to work with writing?

- How do national and international borders impact writing center work? What work is being done *across* and *to cross* borders? What are the post-colonial and decolonial implications of these relationships?
- How have you encouraged tutors, administrators, and/or collaborative partners to engage their multiplicities? What unique roles are available in writing center work for people with intersecting perspectives, identities, and areas of expertise?
- How has your writing center either led the way for DEIB initiatives at your school or how has it been impacted by these goals? What DEIB initiatives have you and/or your staff created? What have you learned from creating a diversity or social justice statement for your center?

Session Types

- Performance: a creative performance employing visual, aural, and/or gestural modes that comments on or provides an example of how writing center work reflects and/or engages in multiplicities.
- Individual Presentation: an individual scholarly presentation that the conference planners will combine with 2 other individual presentations in a session focused on a common theme.
- Panel: 2-3 thematically linked sessions proposed all together as a panel
- Roundtable: a conversation about a topic aligned with the conference theme and focusing questions that feature participants with different approaches or perspectives.
- Multimodal Gallery Submission: posters, comics, photos, video essays, podcasts, etc., that will be displayed at the conference and shared on the conference app.
- Special Interest Group (SIG): a focused conversation about a specific topic or affinity group related to writing center work.
- Work-in-Progress: a piece that is preliminary that you'd like feedback on from other writing center scholars
- Half-day Workshop (3-5 hours): offered on the Wednesday before the conference which could include makerspace/creative/active sessions. *Participants will pay extra to be part of these sessions.*

Categories: You'll be asked to mark at least one of the following categories if your proposal is accepted.

- Administration

- Assessment
- Collaboration(s)
- DEI/Social Justice
- ESOL/Multilingual tutoring/Translingual tutoring
- Methods
- Theory
- Tutor Education/Training
- Tutoring Graduate Students
- Tutoring Undergraduate Students
- WAC/WID
- Writing Fellows/Embedded tutoring