



Schreibwissenschaft



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Concepts, Community and Collaboration: A Foreword to a Special Issue of *JoSch*

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The theme of this special issue of *JoSch*, “Concepts, Community and Collaboration”, recognizes both the transdisciplinary and the transnational endeavors of many practitioners, academics, and researchers working in the fields of writing studies, writing center theory/practice, and writing research. People, ideas, books, and concepts within these fields are traveling back and forth across countries and continents and are influencing and shaping writing development practices around the world. This special issue features collaborations and single-authored articles exploring this exchange of writing concepts, theories, and practices across national, institutional, and disciplinary borders, focusing on their routes and impact.

As an editorial collective, we have welcomed the opportunity to engage with new editorial arrangements and practices that emerged from the unique institutional history of writing research traditions in Germany. For example, for this particular issue, the journal’s editors—not the guest editors—developed the theme of the issue. Guest co-editors then applied for the role through a call to the writing studies community or were invited to serve on the guest editing team. Aspects of the review process were also distinct: a full draft of articles was required by the submission date, and peer reviewers, including peer tutors, were recruited in advance instead of being determined by area of expertise. The review and revision processes followed *JoSch*’s normal policies and included two major stages, one for “higher-order concerns” and one for “lower-order concerns.” (In a nod to early writing center lore in the U.S, these terms are cited in English in *JoSch*’s original German editorial guidelines.)

As we edited this issue on collaboration and “travelling concepts” (Bal 2002), we were particularly attuned to how local institutional contexts and cultures shape the language and form of the various contributions. We were careful to edit texts only when the meaning was not clear to readers from other contexts. Our goal was to preserve our shared sense that these articles are enriched by the linguistic repertoires their authors brought to writing in English. We resisted the urge to Anglicize terms or privilege US-centric citations. For example, when Isensee and Töpfer used the term “student union,” a direct translation of the German term “StudierendenWerk,” to describe the institutional home of an influential writing center in Berlin, we opted not to replace it with a translation more reflective of a U.S.-based context. We thereby avoided using a term like “student affairs,” which evokes a discourse community and set of institutional practices and norms that differ significantly from the German case. From this experience, we see more clearly that “lower order

concerns”, as they have been revised in writing center scholarship during the past two decades (e. g., Blau, Hall and Sparks 2002), are not always so lower order after all.

Just as Isensee and Töpfer, in this issue, show how the failure to address local culture can account for gaps in writing support for Ph.D. students in Germany, we also learned through the review process that citation practices matter for the arguments writers make and the contexts they illuminate. During the peer review process, Isensee and Töpfer were encouraged to engage with U.S.-based scholarship on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), and Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC). When they incorporated this feedback in the revision, they wisely used it as an opportunity to sharpen their argument about the particularities of the German context by sketching out how a romanticized ethos of individualism is institutionalized in support structures for Ph.D. students. In short, the words authors choose and the sources they use to define and frame their ideas have distinct cultural contexts that are important to preserve and make visible to readers.

Our editorial processes—like the content of the pieces in this issue—are rooted, in part, in the disciplinary history of writing studies in a specific region. In Germany, the field emerged largely from within interdisciplinary writing centers and their rough equivalents (Scott 2017). German writing centers themselves have a transatlantic history: U.S.-based theory and practice were adapted and extended in the research and practices of the first generation of writing centers founded in Germany in 1994 and the earliest peer tutor writing centers established in 2002 (Bräuer 2002) and 2007 (Ruhmann 2014). Within this landscape, *JoSch* was launched in 2010 as the first peer-reviewed journal in German-speaking countries dedicated exclusively to writing center praxis. However, the regional identity of writing center theory has always been distinct (e. g., Bräuer 2012; Ruhmann and Kruse 2014; Huemer, Doleschal, Wiederkehr, Girsensohn, Dengerscherz, Brinkschulte and Mertlitsch 2021; Sennewald 2021). During the first several years of its existence, for example, *JoSch* published articles that overwhelmingly cited scholarship published in German (78%) (Scott and Bromley 2019). And the U.S.-based concepts that have gained currency are those that are particularly amenable to the German institutional context and have been adapted and changed in the process (e. g., Dreyfürst and Sennewald 2014; Scott 2022).

This mix of influences is still legible in *JoSch*'s editorial practices, even as they have evolved over the years. For example, *JoSch* emerged, in the words of early writing center theorist Gabriela Ruhmann, as a forum for “both established and student writing consultants [...] for the exchange, on equal footing, of information about concepts and insights” relevant to the field (2014: 47). *JoSch* has retained this mission, serving as a “platform for student writing consultants to actively participate in the scientific discourse” and promoting “intergenerational exchange between student writing consultants and the academic staff of the writing centers,” according to its official website (*JoSch*, n. d.). Peer tutors, who have gone on to set up and direct writing centers, have played a key role in discipline-building in the region, making *JoSch*'s mentorship model particularly noteworthy. *JoSch*

has since expanded its mission, in 2015 becoming the official journal of the German Society for Writing Didactics and Research, the largest organization of writing professionals in the region. Since 2020, the journal has carried a new name. No longer titled “*JoSch: Journal of Writing Consultations*” (*JoSch: Journal der Schreibberatung*), it now goes by “*JoSch: Journal of Writing Research*” (*JoSch: Journal der Schreibforschung*). This change is reflective of an interdisciplinary field that has grown from 7 writing centers in 2007 to roughly 70 in 2017 (Girgensohn 2017: 19). *JoSch* now publishes “the entire spectrum of topics in writing didactics and research,” focusing “primarily [...] on the German-speaking higher education area, but [...] nevertheless open to all (educational) institutions where writing and writing reflection take place.”

That said, our editorial work on this issue has also identified missed opportunities for providing guidelines for reviewers offering feedback on work outside their cultural contexts. As is widely known, the field of writing studies across the globe has robust traditions of writing research published in languages other than English, but these tend to remain understudied in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries (e.g., Horner, Ne-Camp and Donahue 2011; Donahue and Horner 2022). Therefore, negotiating these editorial and authorial dynamics is a particularly fruitful conversation to have during the preparation of *JoSch*'s first issue published almost exclusively in English. It comes at a moment in the field's history where German-language research is growing and networked within and beyond Europe, and concepts from German-speaking countries are now influencing research and practice in writing studies communities outside the region and continent (Liebetanz, Voigt and Dreyfürst 2018). *JoSch*, over the years, has helped forge new concepts, communities, and collaborations in the writing research community—making this an apt theme of this particular issue.

We see several dimensions of our editorial work—a collaborative ethos, a commitment to linguistic innovation, and an openness to negotiating meaning across transnational and translanguing differences—reflected in the rich, diverse articles that this issue comprises. We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we did editing them.

Special Issue Contents

Bromley, writing from Claremont, California (USA), explores a phenomenon of great interest to practitioners and scholars of writing center work: the global expansion of writing centers. Bromley's article reports on a 2015–16 study to compile a comprehensive database of writing centers located outside of the US, the writing center's country of origin. Findings from the study indicate that writing centers across the globe have different institutional positions, and Bromley views this as a first step to learning more about how the US writing center concept has traveled and changed around the world.

Bart, Daunay, and Donahue, writing from France and the United States respectively, provide a comparative study of two sets of documents for evaluating the academic writing

of students and faculty at two different universities. These two sets contain a total of five “grids,” each of which serves a purpose at one of the universities: one grid from Dartmouth College serves to place students into writing courses, while the other evaluates how those placement decisions are textualized; the three grids from the University of Lille analyze how students, researchers, and teacher-researchers integrate sources into their academic writing. The comparison across these disparate purposes and categories illuminates how such grids construct, operate on, and evaluate texts. By encouraging the construction of textual categories (and thereby data) as meaningful entities and orienting interpretive attention to specific aspects of academic writing norms, grids shape decisions—for both students and academic writers alike—with respect to the assessment, evaluation, and description of their texts.

Ambinintsoa and **Pham**, writing from Japan and New Zealand, reflect on how they both benefited from collaborative research and writing as doctoral students in New Zealand, where the settings of their research were in Vietnam and Madagascar where English is used as a Foreign Language. The two authors come to view collaboration as a strategy for broadening their understanding of their own subfields but have also come to see collaboration as having implications for their approaches to teaching writing.

Harahap and **Hendrickson**, writing from the United States but embodying transnational identities, share the experience of building toward a “relational collaborative dynamic” crossing multiple areas of professional life: conference-going, organizational work in the discipline, editorial work, travel, and publication. Key to this dynamic—and to their mutual development as a collaborative team—is careful negotiation of identities emerging across difference, the constitution of reciprocal communication, and attention to affect “in the spatial, temporal, and sociocultural dimensions” of academic work.

Hughes, **Liebetanz**, and **Voigt**, writing from the United States and Germany, engaged in a *Schreibgespräch*, or writing conversation, on the topic of Writing Fellows programs. Listening in, readers learn how two writing centers in Germany benefited from the expertise and collegiality of Hughes, at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and how his model was adapted to the German context. Since then, newly-formed Writing Fellows programs have informed writing pedagogy and improved writing in the disciplines as a result of a newly formed collaborative relationship between writing specialists, subject specialists, and students.

Isensee and **Töpfer**, writing from Berlin, use their collaborative writing process to make the provocative argument that the German practice of centralizing writing support for Ph.D. students in writing centers has significant costs. The emphasis in German theory and practice on individualized writing support and processes inadvertently reinforces the German myth of academic research as the result of “solitude and freedom,” a regional blind spot their article highlights with nuance. In this way, they suggest, U.S.-imported models are not sensitive enough to local research cultures at German universities. In its place, they argue for shifting the writing culture at German research universities by insti-

tutionalizing more collaborative spaces and support for Ph.D. students within departments.

Kolgjini writes from an American university in Kosovo, a country where multilingual practices in everyday language regularly challenge the entrenchment of monoglossic ideology in state policies and educational institutions. Yet surprisingly, when Kolgjini studied his own students' writing, he discovered that translanguaging practices were nearly absent. Though such choices may be deliberate, they also suggest, he argues, the need for proactive pedagogical and institutional approaches that nurture translanguaging dispositions by making students aware of the strategies they might use to challenge norms and leverage their rich linguistic repertoires.

Payant and **Zuniga**, writing from Montreal, reflect on their own experiences of using collaborative writing and cooperative writing and how this has informed their thinking on the value of the two methods and their respective roles in co-authored writing projects. The authors conclude that collaborative and cooperative writing are not alternate strategies, as they are sometimes depicted, but are dynamically related, as demonstrated by their own collaborations.

Everke Buchanan, **Macdonald**, and **Schneider**, writing from Germany and Australia, draw on two metaphors, *Trampelpfade* (German) and *sheep lines* (Australian) that represent their 5-year cross-national collaboration. They describe the informal, creative information pathways writing scholars forge, often on the periphery of academic institutions, to sustain knowledge and instigate workplace change.

Read together, the articles offer a survey of travelling concepts in a transnational landscape. We invite you to join us in thinking deeply and collaboratively outside of your local contexts. We also hope these concepts will travel and find a home in your own methods of research and pedagogy, and you will share them widely with colleagues and students to keep this translanguaging conversation going.

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