

Memorandum

TO: Dr. Muriel Harris, Director, Purdue University Writing Lab
Dr. Thomas Adler, Chair, Department of English
Dr. Margaret Rowe, Dean, School of Liberal Arts
Dr. Robert L. Ringel, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

CC: Liz Thelen, Technical Coordinator, Purdue University Online Writing Lab

FR: Jonathan Bush, Coordinator, Purdue University Online Writing Lab

RE: Report on Online Writing Lab (OWL) Usage and Activities for Fall Semester 1997

DT: 12 January 1998

This report documents the activities relating to the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) during the fall semester 1997. It describes OWL-related awards, activities, usage statistics, and goals for the Spring Semester 1998. The Purdue OWL remains widely recognized as one of the leading online writing labs in the United States. It has continued use from users at Purdue, universities and primary and secondary schools across the country and overseas as well as numerous other commercial and non-profit organizations.

This report will be augmented by another in May 1998 that details the activities of the Online Writing Lab for the entire 1997-1998 academic year.

OWL Awards and Recognition

During the Fall Semester, several articles have been written about the OWL and the services it provides to local and international communities.

Two community newspapers in Indiana wrote articles on the OWL during this semester:

- The *Lafayette Journal and Courier* featured a half-page article on the OWL in its Purdue Today section titled "Writing Lab better known abroad: Internet has spread help with English to 100 Nations" that detailed the services of the Purdue OWL and how it has helped Purdue students, alumni, instructors, and others. (November 5, 1997)
- The *Kokomo Tribune* wrote an article on the Purdue OWL titled "Purdue website setting a standard" that details the OWL and how it has become a premier resource for writing and English instruction. ((November 7, 1997)

Several media organizations at Purdue also recognized the OWL's academic contributions

- The Purdue news service sent out a press release on the OWL titled "On-line Writing Lab Spanning the Globe, Setting Standards." (September 29, 1997)
- Purdue's *Liberal Arts* magazine also recognized the OWL's contributions with a short article "OWL Gains Notice." (1997-1998, Volume 5)
- The *Purdue Exponent* wrote two articles about the OWL during the past reporting period. One article, titled "Writing Lab offers online writing help" was targeted to incoming students and placed in the "New Student" issue (June 16, 1997). The other, titled "Web site helps students with writing, formatting" was published during the Fall semester (September, 26, 1997).

- The Purdue University homepage (<http://www.purdue.edu>) cited the Online Writing Lab in their featured "Did You Know?" section "Purdue University Writing Lab tutors help students on campus and professional worldwide in person, by phone, and via the internet."

The OWL has also been the recipient of an online award.

- The *Awesome Library* online site (<http://www.neat-schoolhouse.org>) awarded the OWL with their "Star" award, a recognition given only to the top 52% of sites included in the library, which includes only the top 5% of sites in the field of K-12 education. In particular, the Purdue OWL was cited for being the "source of many other resources," "a very comprehensive source of information," "unusually well organized," and containing "essential information for the topic."

OWL Service and Outreach

During the Fall 1997 Semester the OWL Staff conducted numerous workshops and service activities on campus, at conventions, and over the internet.

Campus Outreach

Program/Class/Contact	# Attending	Date
School of Science Early Start Program (Hunter)	18	July 7
Adult Learners Orientation (Sullivan)	57	August 17
Boiler Gold Rush (Lefevor)	185	August 19
Health Sciences Freshman Scholars Program (Lipschutz)	16	September 23
English 101C (Fortner)	20	September 29
English 101C (Fortner)	20	September 29
English 515 (Porter)	12	October 9
English 309 (Vibbert)	16	October 16
English 305 (Womack)	20	November 10
CDFS 454 (Nelson)	37	November 12
Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (Shugars)	10	November 23
English 305 (Womack)	20	December 8

Estimated total served: 431

Off-Campus Outreach

Group	# Attending	Date
Nova Southeastern University (Online Presentation)	100 (estimated)	July 17
Edgelea Elementary School (faculty), Lafayette, IN	34	October 6
St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School (Faculty) Kentland, IN	12	October 12
National Council of Teachers of English	31	November 21-23

Estimated total served: 177

Online Writing Consulting

During the Fall Semester, several colleges approached the OWL for assistance in setting up and maintaining their own online writing labs and writing programs. Among these were representatives from Tyler Community College (Tyler, TX), Dallas Baptist University, Ball State University (Muncie, IN), and Cameron University (Lawton, OK).

Departmental Service

The OWL was used to serve several list-servs on behalf of various programs in the English department, including Creative Writing, various graduate classes, and the graduate program in rhetoric and compositions. It was also used to develop and serve webpages on behalf of the rhetoric and composition graduate program

Web-Centered Expansion

During the Fall Semester 1997, the OWL's web-based resources have been modified and expanded significantly. The following list includes all major additions and improvements.

- The front page (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>) has been significantly redesigned and modernized to (1) make it more appealing to users, (2) create an easier organizational and navigational structure for users, and (3) reduce loading time.
- Headings on all secondary pages (with the exception of handouts) have new banner headings that create an easier navigational structure for users and follows the format created and introduced on the front page, creating uniformity in design and structure of the site.
- 5 new handouts have been created and added to the site
- 23 other handouts have been significantly revised and updated.
- A series of "Purdue Resources for Writers" has been added.
- The "About Our Lab" section of the OWL has been significantly expanded, including lists of staff, teaching opportunities for graduate assistants, and campus resources for students seeking help from the Writing Lab.
- A "Web Publishing Help" site has been added to the "Writers Resources" section of the OWL.
- The "Resources for Teachers" section of the OWL has been significantly expanded and revised.

Usage Statistics of OWL Servers

The Tables below highlight the number of times the OWL's Web, gopher, FTP, and e-mail servers were accessed by users. Complete OWL usage statistics are available online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/stats>. The servers collectively sent out over

Summer 1997 (May-July)	Gopher and FTP	E-mail
401,515	942	410
Fall 1997 (August-December)	Gopher and FTP	E-mail
1,520,595	5343	1060

Mirror Site

The Purdue OWL has allowed the University of Toronto to "mirror" and maintain a copy of our site. During the Fall semester 1997, the U. of Toronto Mirror site received 4881 requests for documents.

Looking Ahead

Goals for Spring Semester 1998

- *Expand our professional writing resources*, which will be created through a partnership with the Writing Lab's Business Writing Consultant Program. Significant additions and modifications will be seen in resume and job search documentation, memo writing and business letter writing handouts, and listing of resources for other professional writing links and sites.
- *Expand our teacher resources*. A partnership has been created between the Online Writing Lab and the English Education program at Purdue. Undergraduate students will be creating literature and writing lesson plans for educators to be placed on the OWL.
- *Increase instructor use of the OWL at Purdue*. With the influx of computer technology in composition classrooms at Purdue University and the willingness, the OWL is striving to serve the needs of instructors in networked and web-based writing classes by offering seminars on teaching writing via a server and web-publishing issues.
- *Create interactive handouts from existing handouts*. We have undertaken the task of modifying some of our handouts to make them into a guided learning experience that more fully exploits the capabilities of the World Wide Web.