Purdue University Writing Lab Report

1997-1998

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Contents

Summary

Statistics

During the 1997-1998 academic year, the Purdue University Writing Lab's usage of its services in the Lab was as follows:

No. of requests	No. of users
13,325	7,008

Of the total number of users, 85.7% were undergraduates and 14.3% were graduate students. Of the total number of users, 26.5% were non-native speakers of English (ESL students).

Uses (Web, Gopher/FTP, e-mail) of the Lab's OWL (Online Writing Lab) has increased dramatically from 1.5 million to the following: 3, 657,731

OWL requests in 1997-98 came from over 100 countries, with users from Purdue, high schools, government offices, other educational institutions, the general public, non-profit agencies, and military users in the U.S. and abroad. Although over 100 other universities and colleges now have OWLs, Purdue University's OWL— with over 3 and 1/2 million uses this year and numerous national awards—is internationally recognized as the outstanding online writing resource on the Internet.

Services

As described more fully in the following report, this year's work included the following:

- ### *Serving students*
  - -Improving writing skills
  - -Increasing student confidence in their abilities
  - -Developing an ESL self-study center
  - -Providing Lab staff, both graduates and undergraduates, with opportunities to conduct research and to develop high-level technological skills

- ### *Incorporating use of technology in instruction*
  - -Offering 53 OWL workshops to 976 students on using OWL and the Internet
  - -Obtaining University grants to update and expand use of technology in the Lab

- ### *Assisting with faculty development*
  - -Expanding OWL's teacher resources on-line
  - -Working with faculty to develop and present 73 workshops on writing skills to 2,328 students, in classrooms around campus
  - -Providing 812 handouts on writing skills to 683 teachers seeking instructional materials

- ### *Maintaining national stature*
  - -Winning additional national awards for the OWL site
  - - Being cited in college textbooks on uses of technology and on Web development
  - - Increasing *Writing Lab Newsletter* subscription base, including European and Asian readers
  - -presenting papers at national conferences about Writing Lab work

- ### *Aiding outreach efforts*
  - -Providing 13 OWL workshops for regional schools and county library (211 participants)
  - -Responding to 297 off-campus phone calls with answers to questions about writing

- ### *Studying retention efforts*
  - -Studying previous Writing Lab usage data for correlation with student retention

Part One:
Staff, Services, and Users

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1. Staffing

The 1997-98 staff of the Writing Lab consisted of thirteen graduate teaching assistants and a director, plus two groups of undergraduate peer tutors (one group funded by the English Department to tutor English 100 students and the other group funded by other university sources to assist students with business writing and resumes.) In addition, two graduate students served as coordinators for OWL (Online Writing Lab). Clerical help was provided by a receptionist, a secretary, and work/study student assistance.

2. Services

A. Accomplishments for this year:

• *Serving students*

As indicated in Part Three, evaluations from students and teachers remain very high, indicating that tutoring helps students enhance their writing skills by providing needed one-to-one assistance. Students particularly commended Lab tutors for helping them think for themselves and for increasing their confidence in their skills. With additional space provided by the English Department and funding from the Graduate School, the Writing Lab also established a new ESL self-study center with CD-ROM materials on language, listening comprehension, pronunciation, and TOEFL exam preparation. Both the undergraduate and graduate staffs of tutors have also enhanced their own learning by their work in online tutoring and in developing instructional materials for the Web. Moreover, the publications and conference presentations they offered enhanced their professionalism.

• *Incorporating use of technology*

As detailed in the annual report written by the OWL Coordinators, OWL has offered online assistance to Purdue students and faculty and to users all over the world. Computers in the Writing Lab became an integral part of tutoring, helping students learn to use the resources of the Internet and to write on computers. For ESL students, the updating and acquisition of new materials will permit international students to have an on-campus resource for self-study in language skills. Extensive development of OWL materials permitted undergraduate and graduate staff to enhance their own Web skills and to learn how to write instructional materials.

• *Assisting with faculty development*

Writing Lab staff worked with faculty to develop and present 73 workshops to 2, 328 students on writing skills. Teachers had access to online teaching materials and requested 812 print copies of handouts for classroom use.

• *Maintaining national stature and assisting in recruitment*

OWL's numerous national awards and citations in college textbooks on uses of technology and Web development, as well as the worldwide use of its Web site contribute to Purdue's international stature. OWL is also contributing to recruitment efforts by being cited as the content provider on Infonautics' Web site, which gets over 12,000 requests/day, 30% of which come from high school students and 39% from undergraduates. The Writing Lab also hosted numerous off-campus visitors, including members of the Danish Ministry of Education who visited only one other institution, in addition to Purdue's Writing Lab. In addition, the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, published

through the Writing Lab, now has an international subscription base, including European and Asian readers. In addition, Writing Lab staff have presented papers at national conference, reporting on work in the Lab.

• Aiding outreach efforts

Heeding an institutional need to help Indiana residents appreciate Purdue's contributions to its community and state, 13 OWL workshops were offered in regional schools and the county library. In addition, the tutorial staff responded to 297 off-campus phone calls with answers to questions about writing.

• Studying retention efforts

Although there have been extensive delays in obtaining the Lab's previous usage data from PUCC, we hope to have that in hand soon to complete a study in conjunction with the School of Liberal Arts Dean's Office. The purpose of the study is to determine the Lab's contribution to student retention efforts and to the effectiveness of the integrated tutoring program in English 100 (a course for students not yet prepared for first year composition).

B. Instructional services offered include the following:

- tutorials
  (half-hour tutorial appointments with tutors)
- drop-in assistance
  (tutorials available on a first-come, first-served basis)
- required lab component for the English 100 program (Developmental Composition)
  (tutorials with every student, every week, in additional to having tutors integrated into classroom work)
- credit courses (English 390, English 502W)
  (training practicums for one group of graduate students and two groups of undergraduates preparing to be peer tutors)
- Traveling Tutor sessions
  (73 workshops held in classrooms by invitation of instructors)
- instructional handouts
  (938 requests by students and instructors for handouts on a variety of writing skills)
- ESL Self-Study Center
  (New computer-assisted CD-ROM programs for international students to improve listening and reading comprehension, plus pronunciation and speaking skills, and to prepare for the TOEFL test)
- Grammar Hotline
  (responded to 297 questions called in by students, staff, and faculty at Purdue, as well as calls from around the nation)
- computers for word processing and computer-assisted instruction
  (open lab facilities for word processing and Web research)
- writers' groups
  (a new service to initiate and assist writing groups in learning to work as a peer response group, used this year primarily by graduate students)
- faculty development
  (workshops and meetings with staffs to discuss the use of writing in various disciplines)
- faculty assistance with creating writing assignments and grading
  (assistance with integrating writing into courses and with using the Writing Lab)
- library of books, journals, and reference materials
  (library of reference books, plus handbooks to check out)
- OWL (Online Writing Lab), Internet writing assistance
  (a variety of online tutorial services for computer users requesting help with writing)
- *Writing Lab Newsletter*
  (edited by the Writing Lab Director and published by the Department of English, this newsletter is one of two nationally distributed and indexed publications on writing

center theory, pedagogy, and administration and is an affiliate publication of the National Council of Teachers of English)

3. Users

The populations served represent a wide variety of writers, teachers, and others, both on-campus, nationally, and internationally:
- students enrolled in English Department writing and literature courses (3,933 requests)
- students learning English as a second language (4,716 requests)
- graduate students (2,358 requests)
- students writing papers for hundreds of courses on campus (requests originated from 331 different courses)
- 571 students engaged in other writing projects such as résumés, professional school applications, dissertations, co-op reports, fellowship and scholarship applications, etc.
- 683 teachers using Writing Lab handouts in their courses
- teachers assigning writing in various departments across campus
- writing center administrators from other institutions studying the Writing Lab and the Lab's OWL as models in on-site visits, including a visit by members of the Danish Ministry of Education
- writers on the Internet using OWL handouts
- school districts, universities, and other institutions building collections via OWL of writing materials
- writers from all over the world sending questions about writing to OWL

Part Two:
Statistical Use of the Writing Lab

1. Types of usage

	no. of requests	no. of users
Tutorial appointments	5535	2424
Handouts to students	126	662
Handouts to instructors	812	80
Microcomputers	2366	683
Self-instruction tapes	7	6
Writing/studying in the lab	482	228
Writing groups	183	109
English 100	1189	191
Traveling Tutor workshops	2328	2328
Grammar Hotline	297	297
totals:	13,325	7,008

OWL

World Wide Web (Purdue site)	3, 630,907
World Wide Web (mirrored sites)	7, 435
Gopher/FTP	16, 143
E-mail	3, 246
totals:	3,657,731

(A detailed statistical report of OWL usage is available at:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owls/stats/introduction.html)

2. Most frequent use of the Writing Lab by departments

Dept.	no. of requests
English	3,933
Communication	173
Ag Econ	82
History	81
CDFS	65
Pol Sci	47
EDCI	45
BCM	44
CE	44

3. Courses with 10 or more requests per semester

Course	no. of requests
Engl 101	1,213
Engl 100	1,210
Engl 102	931
Engl 103	197
Com 114	118
Engl 230	82
Engl 420	50
Engl 250	37
BCM 458	42

Hist 104	42
Ag Econ 396	40
CDFS 454	35
CE 292	32
Engl 421	26
CDFS 505	20
CSR 309	19
Ag Econ 331	27
Geos 112	21
EDCI 311	18
PHPR 312	17
Engl 390	16
Hist 103	15
EET 307	12
Engl 266	12
Engl 557	12
Hist 151	12
CE 270	11
CPT 145	11
Engl 238	11
PHAD 243	10
AgEcon 430	10

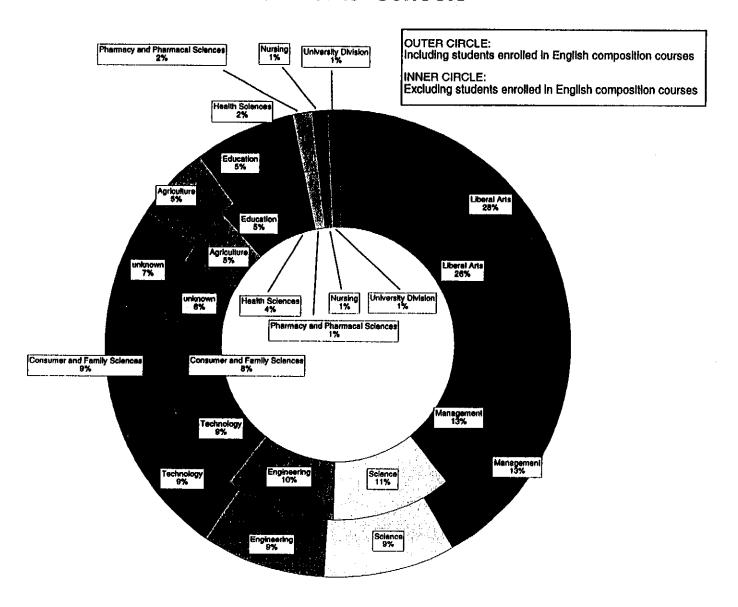## 3. Use of the Writing Lab by schools (see graphs on page 7)

a. Including students in first year composition courses:

Liberal Arts	28%		Education	5%
Mgmt	13%		Health Sci	2%
Engineering	9%		Pharm	2%
CFS	9%		Nursing	1%
Sci	9%		University Div.	1%
Tech	9%		Unknown	7%
Ag	5%			

b. Excluding students in first year composition courses:

Liberal Arts	26%		Ag	5%
Mgmt	13%		Education	5%
Sci	11%		Health Sci	4%
Engineering	10%		Pharm	1%
Tech	9%		Nursing	1%
CFS	8%		University Div.	1%
			(Unknown	6%)

Students' Schools

OUTER CIRCLE:
Including students enrolled in English composition courses

INNER CIRCLE:
Excluding students enrolled in English composition courses

Pharmacy and Pharmacal Sciences 2%
Nursing 1%
University Division 1%
Health Sciences 2%
Education 5%
Agriculture 5%
Education 5%
Liberal Arts 28%
Liberal Arts 26%
Agriculture 5%
unknown 7%
unknown 6%
Health Sciences 4%
Nursing 1%
University Division 1%
Pharmacy and Pharmacal Sciences 1%
Consumer and Family Sciences 9%
Consumer and Family Sciences 8%
Management 13%
Management 13%
Technology 9%
Technology 9%
Engineering 10%
Science 11%
Engineering 9%
Science 9%

Part Three:
Evaluations and Comments

<u>Evaluations</u>

Evaluations of individual tutorials (based on 3,871 responses):

a. Quality of instruction:

• very helpful	(3,666 students)	94.7%
• somewhat helpful	(196 students)	5.1%
• not helpful	(6 students)	0%
• no response	(3 students)	0%

b. Amount learned:

• learned a lot	(3,403 students)	87.9%
• learned a little	(451 students)	11.7%
• learned nothing	(12 students)	.3%
• no response	(7 students)	.2%

c. Likelihood that student would return to the Lab if further help is needed:

• very likely	(3,657 students)	94.5%
• somewhat likely	(187 students)	4.8%
• not likely	(14 students)	.4%
• no response	(13 students)	.3%

<u>Comments</u>

A. From instructors whose students used the Writing Lab

• OWL is a wonderful way to teach students in the computer classroom how to find information to answer their own questions on usage. (M. Reimer, English)

• You guys help my students in GS 119 in several ways. Keep up the good work. (K. Coleman, GS)

• Being able to call up Mickey Harris and get advice on writing assignments and evaluation and feedback on writing has been extraordinarily helpful. The Writing Lab has provided me the most useful support and advice for teaching that I've gotten at Purdue. (M. Tilton, Pol Sci)

• Those students who use you turn in better papers. (O.Wood, FN)

• The Writing Lab allows me to spend less time on the teaching of writing skills in 200-level English classes, thus freeing class time for discussion. I found the notes about student visits helpful. On the whole, students found the Writing Lab extremely helpful, and a number of students chose to use the lab before handing in the final paper (something I did not require of them. Those students that were motivated to correct their mistakes on the rewrites and who really tried to learn from the tutorials managed to raise their grades significantly. (One student went from a C+ to an A-, another from a C+ to a B+.) (D. Felluga, English)

• Students have really improved as a result of WL visits. I've watched some of my most troubled students get specific help, and have been pleased. Also, <u>they</u> have been quite pleased! (R. Groner, English)

• I love the Writing Lab! I only wish I'd realized what was available when I was still an undergrad. (L. Bemis, English)

• The Writing Lab is a resource for improving our students' résumés. Also, a sign that Purdue cares about writing skills. I appreciate the written feedback comments. The system is working very well. Thanks for all your help. (J. Uhl, Ag Econ)

- I had one student in particular who used your services a lot, and I think it helped her greatly. She's an intelligent, resourceful person who's willing to ask for help in English (her second language), and I'm so pleased you were there for her. Thanks! (L. Hall, English)

- It's been especially helpful for my international students (Engl 101I) who need more time than I have to give. It's very helpful when I get a specific response from a tutor, and usually I'm pleased with the students' progress after successive visits to the lab. (M. Kelly, English)

- You guys do a fantastic job! (G. Till, COM)

- The Writing Lab is one of the most underutilized resources on campus and one of the most worthwhile. Thanks! (L. Petrin, DOS)

- Your services were excellent. (J. Wolfe, English)

- The lab people seem very concerned about helping students. This is great. (J. Reed, English)

- The lab is an oasis of personal attention for my students. (M. Haas, English)

- Some of my students have shown concern over the crowdedness of the lab, that they often had to wait or couldn't get appointments. This, however, can only be alleviated by hiring more tutors and I realize that the budget doesn't allow for that. I think you're doing a marvelous job with the available resources. My thanks to Lynn and the great tutors in the Lab!! My students have told me time and again how great an experience visiting the Lab has been for them and how much help they received. The fact that so many of my students have returned to the Lab numerous times attests to this. Keep up the super work! (J. Hentsch Fisher, English)

- This is a great resource. (S. King, E&AS)

- Having a place to send students with personal needs is abundantly helpful. I can't get to everyone's individual needs. Very convenient and accessible with pleasant staff. (C. Balboa, English)

- Tutorials gave my students the one-to-one help they need. OWL gives them a place to go when I'm not available. (M. Cocchiarale, English)

- Thanks for your support. The system of placing a small "report" on students' visits to the lab in my mailbox is great. (M. M. Browne, English)

- You are providing much needed services, Glad you are here. One of the most creative places on campus. (J. Willis, GS)

- Kudos. The tutors were great! The helpful office staff and guides opened my students' eyes to the world of writing beyond the 101 classroom. (G. Gize, English)

- The Writing Lab offers individualized attention to my students and helps them improve specific writing skills. (J. Gilligan, English)

- If only we had more funding to keep the lab open a little longer. The tutorials, handouts, and classroom workshops are the three resources that I used this semester. All three were a great compliment to what was taking place in the classroom. Thank you for all your dedication and hard work. I really enjoy having all of the resources you offer. (A. Redmon, English)

- For students who really wanted the help, the Writing Lab provided the added support that made significant improvement possible. (A. Heinze, English)

- You've helped my students organize their papers better. Also you have helped them cite sources better. (D. Bolduc, IDIS)

- You are of substantial help to many students, tutors are dedicated and caring. Written expression is key to retention and graduation. Thank you! (J. Willis, DOS—Horizons)

- I've always found the lab willing to assist and provide good service. Just keep up the good work. Thank you. (F. Branson Jr., EDCI)

- Your work does make a positive difference. (R. Vandeveer, OLS)

B. From students who met with tutors in the Writing Lab

- This Lab is very helpful to my need to improve my English.
- I think this is a great program.
- I'm a returning student. It's nice to know there are professionals here willing to help.
- They not only look at your paper, they help you learn from your mistakes.
- We went through my whole paper, and allowed me to discover things on my own.
- He helped me take my paper to the next level.
- First, he pointed out my mistakes, and then had me find some myself.
- I have come here for my third time and I have gotten A's on my first two papers.
- I learned to find my own solutions.
- They make me want to do better.
- This is a wonderful resource and TA's are very eager to assist.
- Very helpful in making me think about writing.
- Made me think about the problems I had and why I was making them. Very helpful.
- Very helpful! Not threatening—helped me develop my ideas. Thanks!
- The atmosphere was friendly, and my tutor was extremely helpful. Great resource!
- A real confidence boost. It helped reduce the frustration.
- Very friendly and patient!
- I feel that I have learned a lot. This is my second time here, and each time I feel that my skills are enhanced.
- I got more help than I expected.
- I feel my paper is much stronger and more cohesive after having met with Cory Anne.
- This place rocks!
- It helps to get my ideas flowing.
- Informative, and all of the people seem very, very friendly and helpful.
- I like to be here. Incredibly helpful. People are very nice and helpful here.
- She made me feel it was OK to not know.
- It was nice to talk one-on-one with someone about my ideas and getting feedback. Also I learned a little more about starting a draft.
- Intelligent help, very accommodating.
- I learned to not assume audience has the same views as me.
- As always, I get excellent assistance at this lab.
- I'll come back because the tutors show themselves happy to help anytime.
- I was apprehensive about coming to the lab, but my first time was a great experience.
- She helped me think of more aspects to draw into my paper.
- It's much better to review my thoughts with someone.
- The tutors are extremely helpful. I learn more about my writing when it is read out loud.
- It was helpful—not what I expected—more trying to help me than my paper.
- I liked the fact that she gave me stuff on how to help me with the problems I have.
- I learned how to catch wording mistakes.
- I had a great time, very helpful and learned a lot! Thank you.
- I will come back to the Writing Lab because they don't just check your paper, they show you how to do it. Keep up the good work.
- The tutor was patient and did not talk down to me.
- It's hard to get an appointment.
- I have better papers and good grades when I come here.
- This is my second time at the Writing Lab and both have been very helpful.
- It's a great opportunity to learn and perfect writing skills
- It was all in my brain. She just pulled it out.
- She helped me correct my own errors.
- Everyone seemed very willing to help and friendly, though it was busy.

- He didn't tell me the answer, made me figure it out myself.
- You people in the Writing Lab do a wonderful job.
- He made me answer my own questions with his guidance.
- He helped me think, but also made me think.
- He created a very friendly and comfortable atmosphere, which I believe is very important to accomplish something.
- The help here is the difference between a "C" and an "A."
- He was very helpful and prompted me to think of new ways to expand my thoughts. He didn't just give me the answers—he helped me form my own ideas.
- He helped me come up with my own ideas instead of just telling me what he thought.
- The Writing Lab is an awesome service. Thanks for having it!
- She asked me questions, and she wanted me to think of some ideas. I think that is the good way for me to learn.
- This was my first visit to the Writing Lab, and it was definitely a good experience. Very helpful!!
- I've been here before and it helps tremendously.
- This lab has always been very helpful.
- I had a very positive experience.
- Thank you to have the Writing Lab.
- It helps me to write my papers with more confidence.
- She was very knowledgeable and encouraging. I felt like we worked together instead of her telling me what to do.
- She helped me think clearly and in an analytical fashion.
- I figured out how to make my paper much more effective.
- She focused on what I was concerned about.
- I love this lab!
- The lab is the best help on campus.
- I came in with no clue on what to write on and left with a subject and a format.
- The Lab TA had an interesting way of helping. Made me read it aloud so that I found most of the mistakes.
- I learned where most of my mistakes were and why I had to do certain things when it comes to grammar and punctuation.
- This was the first time I used the lab, and it was extremely helpful. I wish I had used it my previous three years.
- They don't make you feel inferior.
- It is very reassuring to have a place like this to come to for help! Thank you.
- The Writing Lab helps me see the full (big) picture.
- I have been here many times and each time I come I learn more.
- He really helped me think my ideas through and make them coherent.
- Thanks for offering this free service.
- She speaks my language and makes sure I understand.
- Because of Holly I aced my first college paper.
- Got me motivated!
- She asked my objectives, instead of telling how I should do something.
- More helpful than to go to an instructor.
- This lab is a wonderful resource. Wish I had discovered it earlier.
- It helps me understand what the reader gets from my paper/also able to analyze organization.
- It takes a lot of pressure off of me to know there is help.
- I learned to explain myself in more detail.
- The tutor was helpful. I feel more comfortable with my paper now.
- It really helps me to write more confidently now.
- It got me an A on my last paper!
- This clarified my thoughts and organization.
- I'll come back because the staff in the Writing Lab are friendly and helpful.
- This is a great resource for students!
- I came here because it was required by my English teacher. I got a lot more than I expected.
- Patient tutors. For having a learning disability having a patient tutor that would re-explain ideas was very helpful to me.
- Personal help is better than anything out of a book.