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Navigating Research Waters: The Research Mentor Program at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester

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Navigating Research Waters:

The Research Mentor Program at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester

ABSTRACT

This essay uses a journal format to describe the research mentor program at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester (UNHM). Librarians, Learning Center staff, and writing instructors at UNHM have collaborated to train class-linked tutors to present basic library instruction in the classroom and to provide one-on-one research assistance to students in freshman-level composition classes. This information literacy initiative has expanded our students' community of learning by providing them with point-of-need research assistance from knowledgeable peers.

KEYWORDS

Information literacy; Library instruction; Faculty-librarian collaboration; Peer tutors; Writing centers; Active learning; Developmental education

Since the fall semester of 2003, librarians, instructors, and Learning Center staff at the University of New Hampshire at Manchester, UNH's urban, commuter college, have collaborated to create a research mentor program to provide peer library assistance to nascent college researchers. The program makes use of the Learning Center's existing class-linked tutor model, in which writing tutors are assigned to specific composition and/or literature courses. These class-linked tutors participate in class sessions and provide one-on-one assistance to students as needed.

Building on this model, the research mentor program provides selected class-linked writing tutors with additional training in library research skills. The tutors are then able to assist students with all stages of the writing process, from idea generation through library research through writing and drafting. Research mentors work with students in both the classroom and in one-on-one tutorials. Their role in the classroom involves attending class regularly, actively assisting the instructor during group work sessions, and participating in the library instruction component of the course by presenting short research skills demonstrations. At times a mentor might sit quietly in the back of the room taking down notes and listening actively to the professor's instruction so (s)he will be prepared for any student question about assignments, teacher expectations, deadlines, and the like. At other times, the mentor will actively participate in small group work, roaming the classroom to provide direction and prompts to keep students on task. The group work done in class consists of anything from evaluating the credibility of an article to discussing plagiarism. During group work, mentors have the opportunity to provide direct assistance to the professor, who usually does not have enough class time to

interact with every group. By being constant presences in the classroom, the mentors are able to develop a comfort level with the students that translates into their one-on-one tutorials. In addition to assisting with group work in the classroom, research mentors also participate in the program's crossover component: the in-class library presentations. These presentations represent the collaborative effort of the Learning Center and the Library. In these Library presentations, research mentors take an active role in demonstrating, modeling, and initiating hands-on activities that provide students with valuable research skills.

The mentors' role in one-on-one tutorials is to assist the student with any concerns or problems related to classwork, writing, researching, brainstorming, etc. Each tutorial is guided by individual needs. Some students have trouble getting started with research and writing and need help brainstorming an idea or topic for their upcoming paper. Others have a clear idea of what they want to write about but don't know how to find credible outside sources. As writing tutors/research mentors, the UNH Manchester library skills peer tutors are able to help each student with a specific need.

The program began with three tutors who were linked to three composition courses (one Developmental English class and two Freshman English classes); it has since expanded to include more composition classes (including courses designed for ESOL students) and introductory literature classes. In the two years since the program's inception, fourteen writing tutors have been trained as research mentors and eight instructors have benefited from the participation of the mentors in their courses. On average, six to eight research

mentors per semester are actively linked to writing and/or literature courses, including Introduction to College Composition & Reading, Freshman English, English as a Second Language, Freshman English for ESL Students, and Introduction to Critical Analysis.

One of the most important objectives of the program is to provide writing students with point-of-need library service from a knowledgeable peer. Often, instructors, Learning Center staff, and librarians cannot or do not address the unique requirements of students during the shifting tides of the school semester and/or of their individual research processes. In their book Teaching Within the Rhythms of the Semester, Donna Killian Duffy and Janet Wright Jones discuss the importance of recognizing student attitudes and abilities at specific junctures in an academic unit. For example, educators must recognize that in the early stages of a term, students benefit from the conscious creation of an inclusive, respectful learning community. During the middle of the semester, they will need assistance overcoming a sense of feeling both overwhelmed and bored with the material at hand. Finally, at semester's end tired and stressed students look to instructors to wrap it all up. The same pattern could be said to apply to individual projects or papers, as initial enthusiasm turns to indifference with and/or fear of the research process. Boredom and fear morph into panic and a desire to get it over with as the deadline looms. Our program uses peers who are themselves immersed in the academic waves of the semester to help address student needs at key moments during the research process.

The ultimate goal of the project is for students to use library resources effectively, but both the librarian and the instructors aim towards that end from slightly different perspectives. Recognizing that students often exhibit “library anxiety,” the librarian

hopes that guided active learning in library research will help students more quickly become confident in their abilities. Over time, students will adopt and use the critical thinking skills necessary to develop as “information literates.” Recognizing the value of critical thinking skills, the instructors also want students to understand that research is a process which develops over time as they understand topic areas and determine their focus of study. Instructors hope that students will become intellectually curious, evaluating and expanding information sources, and understand that many people (librarian, tutor, and instructor) are appropriate resources in research. Finally, instructors want students to begin to find their place in the college community and become familiar with scholarly discourse.

During the program’s pilot semester in the fall of 2003, three experienced peer writing tutors (who were class-linked to a Developmental English class and to two Freshman Composition classes) were trained to provide students with research assistance as part of the tutoring process. This essay uses an “interactive journal” format to describe the program’s first semester and to explore the difficulties and the benefits of initiating such a program.

****This journal is designed to encourage the sharing of experiences and ideas among tutors, instructors, and librarians involved in the research mentor program at UNH Manchester. We hope that it will facilitate dialogue among all of the program’s participants.****

Carolyn White, Librarian and Research Mentor Supervisor**Entry Date: August 25, 2003 (Pre-semester preparation)**

Welcome, research mentors!

I'm very excited about our tutoring program and your participation in this information literacy project. Before you begin your new role, I'd like to talk to you about why we saw a need for peer research mentors and about my hopes for you and for this program.

Let me begin by describing an archetypal moment in the work life of a college librarian.

Yesterday afternoon at the Reference Desk I had an interaction with a young woman who approached me hesitantly. She said that I had visited her Freshman English class last week to "talk about the library." She had begun to do her research "on the computer" but "couldn't find anything" on her topic. She was clearly embarrassed as she admitted that she needed my help. When I asked her where she had looked for information thus far, she admitted, "Google."

This young woman is characteristic of first-year college students as they approach their first academic research paper, and her experience reveals the difficulty we librarians face in teaching our students about library skills and research methods. She had been exposed to the resources available at the UNH Manchester Library through my "bibliographic instruction" session the previous week, but clearly the BI had not been enough. Stelling (1996) warns that many students do not make the gains in these instructional sessions sufficient for them to use library resources effectively. Obviously,

this student didn't internalize what I had taught the class, and she "reverted" back to using the World Wide Web as her primary resource.

It's understandable that she should do so. We UNH Manchester librarians have come to realize through experience that our typical 50-minute BI sessions are not accomplishing the task of teaching students "about the library." We simply try to cover too much in "one go." We lecture about library rules and citation formats; we demonstrate reference sources, the online catalog, online databases, the WWW, etc., etc... The students sit there in the darkened room and listen without getting an opportunity to "get their hands dirty" by trying out the resources for themselves. Eyes glaze over; heads gradually come to rest upon desks. They obviously don't care about what we're saying, especially because they often won't even be using all this library stuff until later in the semester anyway. With so much seemingly irrelevant material being covered in so little time, it's no wonder that students get bored, overwhelmed, and frustrated and run back to the safety of Google!

We librarians have a different vision for what library instruction can be, one that involves breaking out of our old BI pattern and getting creative in the classroom, letting students ask questions and explore resources, work together and teach each other. This new instructional approach will ensure that each student gets an opportunity to learn at her own pace. We plan to present library instruction in several shorter bursts so that we don't overburden students, and we'll make the information relevant to students by linking it to an actual project they're working on *at the moment*, as noted by Bergen and MacAdam (1985). We're going to teach students how to think like researchers, how to

appraise and use what they find, and how to apply what they've learned to other research projects in other courses. We're talking about lifelong learning here! We're also talking about moving from the point A of "bibliographic instruction" to the point B of "information literacy"—that point, according to the American Library Association (1989, 1), when "a person [recognizes] when information is needed," and is able to "locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information." Information literacy takes a wider view of library instruction, one that focuses on critical thinking and student empowerment. The librarians at UNH Manchester have been brainstorming ways that we can work information literacy into our instruction classes.

And we've done our homework by finding out what others think. Bergen and MacAdam (1985) discovered that reference librarians at service desks are often unable to address fully each student's research requests, given the demands of other library patrons. Auer, Seamans and Pelletier (2003, 3) concur, saying that "there are time limitations that prevent librarians from providing intensive assistance when needed and librarians are usually unable to leave the desk to help students locate information." Jiao, Onwuegbuzie and Lichenstein (1996) contend the discomfort students sometimes feel when they enter the library can have cognitive and behavioral consequences.

That's why you're here, tutors. One idea we have to make library instruction dynamic is this research mentor program. You will be teaching some basic library skills in the classroom and then working one-on-one with students as they research their topics. You're peers, friendly faces, fellow students who have "been there" and "done that." You can be approached without embarrassment. Research indicates that college students tend to be shy about approaching reference librarians with research questions, and they

feel more comfortable asking other students (Auer, Seamans and Pelletier 2003), (Culshaw and Robertson 1995). You will get to know the students as individuals; you'll be familiar with the research assignments; you'll dedicate your full attention to each and every student you tutor; you'll help students through the tool-based "how" of research so that we librarians can concentrate on the critical "why." You can relate their experiences to your own, describing your own research trials, tribulations, and triumphs. You can show the anxious new student good places to look for information and let her see that sometimes the best resource is the friendly librarian at the desk. You are, in essence, our information literacy ambassadors. You'll be able to help students get over "library anxiety" and gain a sense of themselves as independent researchers.

I have high hopes for you, tutors. Together, in collaboration with your faculty member and with the Learning Center, we can create the research community these students need to succeed here at UNH Manchester. Let this journal be our forum as we work to make this program a success. Please be open and honest as you write your thoughts, ideas, and questions so that we can maintain an ongoing conversation about the program.

Regina McCarthy, Developmental English Instructor

Entry Date: August 26, 2003 (Pre-semester preparation)

Carolyn, I want to pull a couple of threads of your journal entry. I want you research mentors to know that the waters you navigate with your tutees will change as we all move through the "academic tides of the semester." Tranquil waters as the semester opens become choppy as the tutees encounter swells of frustration. We must all beware the tumultuous seas ahead!

The second thread I have to pull is the archetypal moment you present, Carolyn—the embarrassed student researcher reverting to Google. Your recent experience is illustrative not only of the difficulty the librarians face in teaching our students library skills and research models but also of a moment shared by the faculty.

My relationship with the library is an ongoing collaboration. The multi-tiered research instruction models [UNH Manchester Library Director] Annie Donahue and I have developed are at point of need, are assignment-specific and are guided by information literacy competency standards. It is a result of my collaboration with Annie that I was excited to participate in the research mentor program.

As we prepare for our new collaboration, let me share with you the challenges we instructors face in teaching research. We speak another language. We must assist our students with the language of the scholarly community. This shared scholarly language gains them access and credibility. If the student doesn't possess the language to pose her research dilemma to teacher or librarian, to identify and then articulate the obstacles she has encountered in research, or to navigate the library, then she may evaporate, abandoning library, classroom, and her education. The possibility of evaporation is greater with any first-year student but particularly with my developmental students. For too long they have been on the academic sidelines feeling alienated from any academic community. They think they have missed the rite of passage, the secret handshake to gain entry to the scholarly community. They are terrified that if they ask too many questions—Can there ever be too many questions?—they will be revealed as academic frauds. Better to be safe and revert to the World Wide Web than to ask questions, take risks and be exposed. They fear discovery.

Tutors, you share their first language—the language of the student. You model for them in SSL, scholarship as a second language. You help situate them in the academic community. Finding their places in the scholarly community is one of my goals for my students and for our research mentor program.

Another challenge we instructors face is relaying to our students the notion of purposeful argument construction. Argument construction must be more than the forceful assertion of an opinion. Research should be the well-planned investigation of a question and the construction of an argument grounded in thoughtful consideration of scholarly journals and popular media sources. Writing with buckshot just will not do: spray the target with unrelated facts and quotes in the hopes of hitting the bull's-eye of the topic. For so many of our students research is the accumulation of facts without purpose. Tutors, you help by modeling the process of research. You model the cutting of a trail and following it. You model coping with the frustration of dead ends or tracking cold trails. Our first-year students misjudge the time demands of research, so you should bring to life the time demands by providing a realistic timeline from your personal experience. You show students how to cope with the frustration so they don't fall victim to the dreaded "change of topic."

You demonstrate that the dead end may in fact be a new discovery. You model higher order thinking such as critical evaluation (of sources), application (of research strategies modeled), and synthesis (of ideas and sources). Imbuing students with this sense of spirited inquiry is another of my goals for the research mentor program. Tutors, carry on a conversation as you talk through and think through your own research

questions. Show the novice researcher how to have an internal dialogue with herself. Demonstrate to students a reason for caring about the information delivered by Carolyn and the course instructors. You make information literacy meaningful and accessible in an immediate and assignment-specific way. You are the guides on the side, yet you show the way and empower the students so they can blaze the trail themselves later. Make our students autonomous after you have made the personal connections. Make them feel supported in their research tasks. Remember that in some cases you have to reverse an accumulation of negative writing and research experiences.

Finally, help them see the discipline crossover. The strategies you model, the vocabularies they acquire, and the literacy they gain will transfer to other courses. You aid them in seeing the transfer. You are upper-division students, so you can prove the skills are necessary. Kirsten and Dot, please share your thoughts as you reflect on training and prepare to model research.

Kirsten Rundquist, Writing Tutor/Research Mentor

Entry Date: August 28, 2003 (Day of initial, pre-semester research mentor training)

Well, I'm a little bit nervous. I thought this would be easy! As an English major, I've done my share of research and revising. Most of what Carolyn demonstrated to us, mostly to do with the online databases, I'm familiar with. After all, I am a procrastinator; a good deal of my research is done at the last minute on those very databases, though I don't use the more newsy ones. So it was nice to have Carolyn guide us through the Opposing Viewpoints site, for example, and to have Gail there, too, with input as to what she was expecting of her students and where the research is meant to be leading them.

The physical resources are a bit daunting. Carolyn took us through them, but there are just too many books and magazines to keep track of --especially since I don't use them. I'm familiar with the Interlibrary Loan service, though. I use that a lot. And I'm also very willing to ask the librarians for help if I need it. That's probably something that I can model without a problem! I'm glad that I'll be there for every mini BI; the reinforcement can only do me good, which, I suppose, is the idea behind this new approach anyway.

Dot Sherman, Writing Tutor/Research Mentor

Entry Date: September 23, 2003 (Mentor's reflection on preparing the in-class demonstration of prewriting techniques)

I've reached that time in the semester when I'm supposed to get in front of the class and teach them about invention strategies. The only experience I've had instructing was in my Tutor Development Class when each tutor was required to teach a small grammar lesson to the rest of the class. In that class, I knew the students well - they were my peers and fellow tutors. As a class-link tutor, I am expected to have a certain level of knowledge about writing. Talk about pressure. I'm just a student myself!

Anyway, I have to figure out some way to teach my Freshman English students about invention strategies, so I've started to think about what worked for me as a writer. I think I'll focus on two invention strategies: charting and ghostwriting. Charting has always worked for me. It helps me generate ideas and actually get something on paper. I just have to come up with a topic that captures their interest. The last thing I want to

happen is to be stuck up there, in front of a class filled with bored faces. That is my biggest fear!

The other strategy I will teach is ghostwriting. I think this will help the students when they feel bogged down with research. It will give them a chance to clear their desks and their heads by typing everything they know about their research topic without looking at source materials or their computer screen (the monitor will be turned off). This is a great way to avoid plagiarism and to find out where more research needs to be centered.

I plan on being honest with the students. I want them to know that not every strategy works for every student. We all have our favorites. My job is to give them choices that will help them when they are face to face with the blank page. Wish me luck!

Kirsten Rundquist, Writing Tutor/Research Mentor

Entry Date: October 13, 2003 (Mentor's reflection on in-class demonstration of prewriting techniques)

I walked into the classroom feeling like a fraud. I'd actually had to do research to prepare for my presentation, which doesn't sound like a bad thing, but in this case it really was. I was going to talk to the class about prewriting techniques. That was a laugh! I never do any real prewriting, at least not using a conventional method. I don't sit down to write until I have a good idea of what I want to write about; either that, or the deadline is fast approaching, and I have no choice. So here I was talking to them about the cubing method of prewriting. I addressed the idea that not every method works for

every person, and that that was why there were so many different methods. I told them that I would never, if I had any choice in the matter, use an outline, so they would know that it was OK not to wholeheartedly embrace every method. I even told them a little about my experience with the cubing method, but neglected to tell them that I had only ever used it in an exercise on prewriting that we did in my tutor development class or that I had to scrounge through my St. Martin's book to find the name of the method and its particulars. As I stood up in front of the class, as the students tested out the cubing method for themselves, I half expected Gail, who knows tons more than I do about writing and teaching writing, to call me on it too. I persevered, though. I explained the way cubing works as a prewriting tool and told them where to find it in their books in case they like the method and wanted to use it again, gave them the time they needed to try it out and get a representational feel for it, and then we discussed their results. Again, I expected Gail to interject, but she must not have thought it necessary. As students volunteered what they had written about, concentrated on, where their thoughts had led them, I could see that what I was telling them and what they were hearing from their classroom peers was making the process infinitesimally easier for them. I realized that I was telling these beginning writers something that they needed to know. I understood that knowing about these prewriting methods, and where to find one that worked for them, would be very helpful to a lot of them. I even could admit to myself that prewriting produces better writing—even in me—but I knew that I would never change my writing method to include prewriting. I felt like a hypocrite standing in the front of the class, telling students to try, and perhaps adopt, a method that I would never use.

Gail Fensom, Freshman English Instructor**Entry Date: October 15, 2003 (Instructor's reflection on research mentor presentations)**

Wow! Kirsten and Dot did their first information session on invention strategies this week in my two Freshman English sections. I think we are on to something terrific with the research mentor project.

First off, I knew that both of you were a little nervous standing up in front of the class (in the “teacher zone”), even for fifteen minutes. I hope you weren’t intimidated because of me, though I can understand that not all faculty are as willing as I am to see tutors as resources. My willingness has developed for several reasons.

First, I’ve worked for several years building a collaborative relationship with both the Learning Center and the library staff. I’ve used class-linked tutors in my Freshman English classes regularly, and see them as an important resource for working with students on their writing process. As well, library research skills are folded into my classes like egg whites. The librarians and information literacy activities are an integral part of my course.

Overall, I believe that my students are part of this interactive learning community, a place where we all learn (not just students), and we all teach (not just teachers). When I told them that you were going to conduct part of the class, I was sending an important message. If they saw that I was willing to sit down and let you two take over, even for a few minutes, they might begin to understand that resources and opportunities for learning are not only found in those they call “professor.” This is such an important realization for new college students to make.

You see, I believe that all significant learning happens in a social context. What Barbara Rogoff (1990) calls “guided participation” assumes that, as social creatures, we learn from one another in the act of communication. Rather than representing the only source of information, the teacher, I believe, is part of a network of other resources. In our case, we’ve made a point of identifying those resources—tutors, instructor, librarians—and helping students understand that interaction with all of these people will help them learn.

Sitting in my student desk, I learned something. Watching how you two explained your individual techniques for discovering and classifying potential ideas for the research paper helped me see the activity from another perspective. The methods you used to explain, the vocabulary you used, were different from mine. It was almost as if I heard students (you) explain their process to me (instead of the other way around). As a result, I looked at brainstorming and graphing through a different lens—and I’ll remember that the next time I teach them.

As a teacher, I always try to self-reflect on my practice, and often it takes seeing how someone else approaches a learning task for me to discover the power—and shortcomings—of my own. Donald A. Schön (1987) would call me a “reflective practitioner,” one who examines her teaching as she teaches. This active reflection is what makes teaching so rewarding, so challenging. You never feel as though you are the “expert”; instead, like I did from you, you learn whenever someone else’s perspective shines a light on your own.

You may be surprised that a college professor defines herself as a learner, but this view is beginning to gain more credence in academia. Ernest Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*, in fact, questions whether research and publication, the traditional tasks of the college professoriate, truly define what we do as teachers. Instead, he feels that the kind of reflective teaching practice I was just talking about should be considered legitimate scholarship. I guess that means my integration of your work with the students is really part of my research.

I especially like the way you used your own writing experiences to explain your invention strategies. Because they define me as a college professor, my students tend to look for the "answer" in everything I say instead of realizing that the writing process is different for everyone. As you were explaining your own challenges with the process, I could see that they could see themselves in your experiences.

Because you linked these discovery activities to the work we've done so far with library research, you really helped students see the connection between classroom talk about the writing process and library talk about the research process. Remember that, while we see the "big picture" and understand how writing a research paper involves dozens of activities—from brainstorming to keyword searches to peer workshopping of drafts—inexperienced students tend to see coursework as discrete and unrelated "tasks" to be completed. You reminded them that, because you had done a general search in the academic library databases about cloning, you were able to come up with different trains of thought about the subject as you brainstormed. Because you had used reading strategies to comprehend the article on capital punishment, you were able to begin classifying your early thoughts on the subject in your graph.

I'm wondering what students said about your "performances" when they met with you in conference.

Carolyn White, Librarian and Research Mentor Supervisor

Entry Date: October 22, 2003 (Librarian's reflection on mentor progress and shifting roles)

Research mentors: Congratulations on your excellent in-class demonstrations! As you can tell from Gail's comments, you really accomplished the goal of introducing students to the research process by speaking from your own academic experiences. I know you were anxious and that you underestimated your teaching skills, but you clearly made a positive impact in the writing classroom. As Gail points out in her last entry, we had several reasons for asking you to get up in front of the class to take on the role of teacher. Early on in a course, it's very important for students to develop a sense of academic community and to feel that they are up to the challenges the course material presents to them. That's why Duffy and Wright (1995) say that, in the early part of the term, it's essential for students to form relationships with peers in order to create a classroom dynamic conducive to learning. As peer instructors, you demonstrated that you "made it through" your own research projects and indicated that they'll be able to make it as well, and you'll help students "build the skills that will enable them to handle the demands of the course" (Duffy and Wright 1995, 13). You also let them know that you are part of the team of people available to them—a team that includes the instructor, librarian, and fellow students—as they navigate their way through the sometimes turbulent waters of this new academic environment.

I'd also like to thank you tutors for a very productive mid-semester training session last week. These regular open discussions are proving to be a great forum now that you've all gotten over the hurdle of your in-class presentations and are starting in earnest with the one-on-one tutorials. Meeting to talk about problems and experiences and to share ideas and solutions benefits everyone involved in this program. Like Gail, I find I'm *learning* from you all as much as I'm *teaching* you: your insights are helping me hone my own reference skills.

I particularly liked the hands-on, active-learning aspect of the training session: the format allows us to devise research strategies together and think about how to approach actual reference/tutoring situations. Dot, in your last tutorial you certainly found yourself facing what we in the library world call a "reference stumper"! Your student was looking for very specific information about sports arenas and access for individuals with disabilities. Together we were able to brainstorm some alternative keywords and perform Boolean searches on several of the library's periodical databases to get some diamond articles in the rough. Finding the information your student needed involved some hunting and took some time, but such patience and persistence is what research is all about. Please don't be nervous about letting your tutees see this. Remember what Regina wrote in a journal entry earlier in the semester: first-year students often don't realize how long the research process can take and get frustrated when they don't find the ideal sources instantaneously. These students assume that there's a "magic formula" that will produce "the perfect" articles in a flash. However, academic research involves trial and error: rarely does the first search yield the best results. It's important to demonstrate to students that even the "experts" have to experiment with various databases, keywords, and search

strings before getting useful resources. As Regina noted, one of your roles is to show your tutees that research is often time-consuming, frequently frustrating, but ultimately rewarding and even exhilarating.

I'm sure that you'll all encounter tutoring difficulties and victories in the weeks ahead. Between discussion sessions, please feel free to use this journal as a place to share issues and ideas as they arise. We can all check back here frequently to provide feedback and support.

Kirsten Rundquist, Writing Tutor/Research Mentor

Entry Date: November 3, 2003 (Mentor's reflection on a role conflict)

I do want to share an issue that has arisen. I met with Brad today, ostensibly to work on a draft of his research paper on violence and alcohol at sporting events. I'm not sure even now if he is for or against the presence of alcohol; it seems to me that his argument hinges on the fact of violent fans regardless of alcohol consumption at games. The whole thing turned me off sports in general! It seems that he has strong feelings on the subject (and as such, seems unable to express them coherently), and is very frustrated with a lack of evidence in support of his opinion. We put his draft aside in favor of finding research upon which to base it. I will admit, it was a very frustrating process. The articles that Brad had already seen were quickly dismissed as "useless." The new articles were difficult to assess. I had a difficult time focusing, since I had absolutely no interest in the subject, and I couldn't help glazing over partway through articles. Brad, already impatient at both the lack of forthcoming evidence and my lack in unearthing any, was too bitter to pay the articles he found any real attention. After using the rest of

his appointed time researching in tandem, side by side on two computers, passing information back and forth, Brad was willing to pass me off as useless as a research assistant, and I was more than willing to send him right on to the library to let a real librarian deal with him. I did urge him to visit the library, which he said he would, and that it was always possible that the librarians would think of other sources in which he could find more information. I'm not sure how he felt as he left our meeting; I'm sure I'm projecting my feelings on to him at this point. I'm torn between feeling useless, and feeling bitter that he should expect so much of me and of my skills. I'm only a peer, after all, not the expert!

Carolyn White, Librarian and Research Mentor Supervisor

Entry Date: November 4, 2003 (Librarian's response to research mentor's challenge)

Kirsten, it sounds like you experienced what Deborah F. Sheesley (2001) calls "reference burnout." It can be very difficult to have students rely heavily on your power to produce quality resources with the wave of a research wand. It's also disconcerting when a student's frustration with the difficulty of academic research translates into frustration with the reference provider. Don't take it to heart: it happens to librarians as well. Keep in mind also that this point of the semester is a bit of a slump period. Both students and the people who work with them are feeling overcome by the amount of work that needs to be done by the end of the term and yet also lack the energy and drive to rise to the challenge, what Duffy and Wright (1995, 162) call the "doldrums" of the semester. Also, Brad's at the point in his own research for this paper when he's feeling the

magnitude of his project: so much information to wade through, so much writing to get done... Some of Brad's frustration with you (and yours with him) could arise from this difficult point in both the term and his assignment. Remember what I said earlier in the semester: we show students that research is a time-consuming process. They don't always want to see that (especially with a deadline looming)! Don't forget what we said about the reference interview in our training. As Reidling (2000) says, your goal is to clearly ascertain the student's information need. When you talk with the student about the research project, it should be a dynamic conversation, a "creative, problem-solving process" (Ross 2003, 3). Use the reference interview to ascertain the student's information need via questioning strategies and guide him in the right direction. Try not to take on his research burden: encourage him to take ownership of the process.

Let me stress an important aspect of library instruction and reference work. Librarians, like classroom instructors, constantly engage in reflective practice and seek to improve their skills as library instructors and reference providers. There's always more to learn, and the best way to learn is from other practitioners. You're all feeling anxious about getting everything "right" when tutoring students in library skills. Remember that as tutors you're not expected to have "all the right answers." Indeed, frequently there are no right answers: research is a journey, a process of discovery, and ultimately the student is responsible for her own progress. You're there as guides: your role is to ask questions, offer suggestions, point out appropriate resources, and set the student on her own research path. This doesn't mean, of course, that you won't on occasion get truly "stumped." When that happens, don't forget that bringing a student to a librarian for

assistance isn't an admission of failure: it's modeling an excellent research strategy and introducing students to another partner in the academic community.

Dot Sherman, Writing Tutor/Research Mentor

Entry Date: November 5, 2003 (Mentor's reflection on a research collaboration)

Today I had an interesting tutorial. Mary came to me a bundle of nerves - she didn't feel comfortable using the online databases to do her research. What made this tutorial interesting for me was that Mary is a very capable student. She is a returning student and therefore, non-traditional. She is in her 40s and has been in the work force for quite a while. Mary is already a critical thinker. She understands how to evaluate sources to determine which are credible and which aren't. Because of her life experience, Mary naturally challenges policies and ideas. You might wonder, at this point, why she needs a research mentor. Well, I'll tell you. Mary is technologically inexperienced. The thought of getting on a computer and looking through advanced academic databases literally frightened her. She didn't think she would be able to find anything; she didn't think she could navigate through the flood of information.

The first thing I did was to reassure her. "Believe me," I said, "I've been there." Since I am a returning student myself, I explained to Mary that if I can chart a course through these databases, anyone can! We sat down together, in front of side-by-side computers. I find it more effective if the tutee can actually touch the keys rather than just watching me. We talked out her topic - which was a good one - and came up with some keywords to begin our search. Mary generated the keywords and we both punched them in on our own keyboards. I explained, as we went along, what each screen was asking

her to do. I showed her how to click on subject headings to find more listings for her topic, etc. Once we were into our second database search, Mary turned to me and said, “That’s it?” YES! She was so busy finding her topic and getting excited about the results she was getting, she forgot to be nervous. I assured her that “That’s all there is to it.” When Mary left the library, she felt much more comfortable in navigating the online databases and her frustrations disappeared. It was really nice to see someone leave with a newfound confidence in herself as a researcher.

Carolyn White, Librarian and Research Mentor Supervisor

Entry date: November 7, 2003 (Librarian's response to research collaboration)

Dot, your last tutorial met several of the goals we had for the research mentor program. As you know, our students here at UNH Manchester vary in age, native culture and language, and readiness for college-level work. Many of our students arrive at the UNH Manchester Library unprepared for library research in an academic environment; as a result, they experience library anxiety and technophobia. When we developed this tutoring program, we hoped that the peer tutors would be able to ease students’ apprehension about libraries by serving as research models. By letting Mary know that you had once been in her place and conquered your own anxiety, you allowed her to see that she can conquer hers.

We also wanted our library peer tutors to recognize individual students’ needs at various points in the research process and address those needs accordingly. You were able to do this with Mary, and you used active learning strategies to achieve that goal.

I'm very pleased to hear that this tutorial met the goals of the program, of you as a tutor, and of the student as a researcher!

Regina McCarthy, Developmental English Instructor

Entry Date: December 18, 2003: Last Day of the Semester (Instructor's report of student feedback)

I, too, am delighted by your recent successes. While at the beginning of the semester you tutors may have felt inadequate at times or even instructional poseurs, the measures of success of this research mentor program and your effectiveness as tutors in the program are the student testimonials and the written research products. Gail, earlier in our journal you wondered what students said in conferences about the “in-class performances” of the research mentors. I am anxious for you and the tutors to read the students’ comments. Tutors, you fear you did not help. You expressed concern that you didn’t reach your tutees with your message or, worse, that you were research imposters. Your fears will be allayed and your concerns assuaged by your tutees’ voices:

“...helped me define my focus on where I wanted to go with my paper.” *(Notice the use of the writer’s vocabulary as well as the research accomplishment of finding a direction.)*

“I had no idea where to start. She grounded me, gave me a place to start, and helped me with questions...insightful criticism.” *(What personal growth to see criticism as insightful and not humiliating.)*

“...brainstormed with me where I wanted to take it (topic) and what I wanted to say with it.” (*Gail and I want our writing students to know what they want to say about their topics, to find their purposes.*)

“...helped me figure out sites on the Internet that were credible, authoritative, and all that. I walked away with skills and abilities on how to attack research, so I feel much more capable and confident of getting it done on my own and having it reflect what I know.” (*Do you hear the autonomous voice, the empowered and confident student writer/researcher? To me, the word attack connotes an active and aggressive research plan.*)

“In research you feel swamped with information. The tutor helped me with direction and to learn to pinpoint stuff. She taught me how to dig.” (*Powerlessness is supplanted by skill acquisition. This student has the tools to dig. She is an active research participant and not a passive recipient surrendering to information overload.*)

“She asked us questions—not told us—about backing up what we say, about supports, about facts. Now I’m asking myself those questions. (*Ah, the internal dialogue, the critical thinker, the autonomous researcher. The spirit of curious inquiry!*)

“By taking us to the library she helped us with the right information, the right source at the right time. She made it okay to ask questions of the librarians.” (*Carolyn, this student faced her library anxiety; no longer is she fearful, shy or inert when it comes to approaching the librarian.*)

“The tutor and instructor were tight. They would always communicate. It was more efficient because one knew where the other left off in our weekly meetings. Tutors are right there in class and know what the teacher expects.” (*Students can relate to tutors*

and don't feel as dumb when they ask tutors questions. You meet them where they stand. Students respect your membership in their learning community of the classroom.)

“Tutors know their stuff and know what we are going through because they have recent experience. They can touch base personally with us and not back off in an academic way. The tutors work with everybody on an individual level. They distinguish everyone’s individual needs and work with you on it. ”

“They treated me like a friend, a friend better in research, and talked to us like equals.” *(They are situated in the academic community.)*

Carolyn White, Librarian and Research Mentor Supervisor

Entry Date: December 19, 2003 (Librarian's reflection on the research mentor program)

Dot, Kirsten, I hope that the student comments above prove to you that you did indeed accomplish your goals as research mentors. Rough as the waters may have felt at times, your tutees’ testimonials should leave you in no doubt that you helped these nascent researchers sail more smoothly toward academic success!

Thanks to all of the partners in this project for a very positive pilot semester. Now that the term is at an end, let’s discuss the lessons we’ve learned and reflect on ways that we can make the research mentor program even stronger in the future. One thing we’ve discovered is the need for very close communication among participants; as a result, all stakeholders will be involved with setting our goals for the future and with planning and implementing the next incarnation of the program. Together we can ensure

that the library instruction sessions and research tutorials are effective by closely tying them to course content and writing assignments. As we move forward, you'll see more people directly involved in the training and oversight of the research mentors: Learning Center staff, librarians, and instructors will all attend tutor training sessions and together evaluate the tutors' progress. Tutors, you'll be asked to meet regularly with not only the librarian but with your class-link instructor as well. You'll also be expected to attend all classes so that you are very familiar with the faculty member's expectations.

Tutors, you all indicated that you felt that the initial, pre-semester training session—which focused on library resources such as the online catalog and electronic databases--was essentially a review for you and that the active discussion sessions later in the term were more practical and useful. As a result of your feedback, we're going to make some changes in the library skills training, focusing more on actual reference questions and tutoring scenarios rather than on library tools. In addition, instructors have discovered that research assignments are most constructive when students are asked to reflect formally on their experiences as scholars, so faculty involved in the program will be encouraged to have students keep research logs or journals.

I look forward to watching our program grow and working with all of you to make it a success next semester!

Kirsten Rundquist, Writing Tutor/Research Mentor

Entry Date: December 22, 2003 (Research mentor reflection on the program and on her personal gain)

I've enjoyed being a library mentor. For me, it's been almost like a dress rehearsal for being a real librarian! I love the exposure to new and different research sources, and I even find it interesting that there are so many different topics of interest, even if I don't necessarily share the same interests. As time progressed, I became more comfortable with not knowing all of the answers, not being the expert. It's comforting to meet with Carolyn and the other library mentors, sharing experiences and problems. As I became more comfortable with my role, I feel that the students with whom I work have become more accepting of it too, though I may be projecting again! Usually, I do have more research experience than my tutees, and so I can help them as much as I'm able. Sometimes that's enough; sometimes they need more. If that's the case, that's what the librarians are there for! Sometimes, the tutee and I are working on more of an equal plane, and we can just work comfortably together, with my efforts merely enhancing theirs, speeding up the research process. Either way is beneficial, and I've done what I can to help.

I've noticed too that my research skills have been enhanced. I have more familiar resources to turn to, and feel even more comfortable with the process.

Dot Sherman, Writing Tutor/Research Mentor

Entry Date: December 22, 2003 (Research mentor reflection on the program and on her personal gain)

The line between being a writing tutor and a research mentor is blurred. Going into this semester, I expected to have a clear idea of which “hat” I would be wearing during each and every tutorial. I was prepared to change hats as the need dictated, but I had no idea that I would be wearing two hats at once.

I have to admit, the first time my roles merged I was thrown off-kilter. For a moment, my confidence waned. If I was a research mentor, I was supposed to be working on library research and such. If I was a writing tutor, I was supposed to be addressing issues like tone, voice, organization, etc. But you know what? No writing assignment and, therefore, no tutorial is alike. What makes so much sense to me now seemed foreign at the start of the semester. Research and writing go hand in hand. You can’t help a tutee with his writing if he hasn’t begun his research and you can’t help a tutee with his research if he hasn’t given any thought to the direction of his thesis. It was a eureka moment for me! The connection I was making in my tutorials was the same connection the students must make in order to understand the writing process, as a whole. Namely, one part leads to another; one part supports another.

Just as my tutoring was incomplete without the added training I received for research mentoring, the student’s writing is incomplete without each component of the process. OK, I get it now. But how can I help these students make the transition and move up the developmental ladder? I can help them by giving them the tools to make the connection themselves. I can meet them where they need the help. I can be versatile and adapt my tutoring style to the needs of the tutee. If I can guide each tutee through the

research process (with the help of the librarians and the instructors) so that he leaves with a real understanding and a confidence in his own abilities, then I can help him uncover his own eureka moment. The research mentor program enabled me to do just that because it supports an active learning process that is centered around the students and supported by the entire academic community. It was great to be a part of it!

Regina McCarthy, Developmental English Instructor

Entry Date: December 23, 2003: Last Day of the Semester (Instructor's final comments on the program)

The success of this program is measured by the outcomes we saw and the objectives that were met. Learning has moveable walls. The walls of the library expand and the footprint of the library changes shape. Information literacy teaching and learning occur in an academic support center, in the writing classroom, over a source in the reference section of the library, under the “Important Announcements” bulletin board in the college hallway, and, in the case of one my students, while his research mentor cooked spaghetti and helped him by telephone brainstorm intellectually curious questions for his research project.: truly guided library instruction at point of need.

Information literacy exchanges take place between teacher and student. Not only do walls move but so too do the roles. Who is the teacher and who is the student? The peer tutor, a student herself, becomes the teacher to the novice researcher in our research mentor program, sitting side by side at the terminals in the Learning Center, talking the tutee through the search process in a peer conference appointment, and assisting in source

evaluation. Look again, in the writing classroom, in modeling her own mapping for her upper-level, discipline-specific research assignment, tutor becomes student and gets feedback from the research tutees. Active, engaged, critically thinking students call out, “Had you thought about...? Isn’t that too broad a question? What if you...?”, while the tutor scribes on the board a map of questions and arrows pointing her in her research direction. In the classroom, but without the writing teacher teaching, learning takes place and the idea of research as a process is electric. Look again in the Learning Center and witness the Learning Center Director conferencing with one of the research mentors. The mentor, the budding academic, morphs into the reflective practitioner mulling the Eureka moments from his guided instruction and reflecting on how to make them happen again with his tutees. The teacher, with tutor, reflects on what she believed was a strikingly original lesson on MLA citation and quote integration and is told by the mentor, “Well, the operation was successful, but the patient died. They didn’t know what you were talking about.” Mutual respect and collaboration: We are all teachers and we are all learners, reports Gail. We have set sail together.

The final journal entries indicate that the tutors, instructors, and librarians who were involved with the research mentor program’s pilot semester view the project as a success as well as a work-in-progress. The writing tutors were enthusiastic about becoming research mentors. In a questionnaire administered at the end of the program’s pilot semester, mentor Dot Sherman indicated that being a research mentor “took tutoring to a new level” by allowing her to weave library skills into writing tutorials; mentor Kirsten Rundquist concurred, commenting that that such an integration is “a natural extension of

tutoring writing: it just makes sense.” Librarian Carolyn White welcomed the mentors’ insights into the relationship between good writing and good research as indications that the mentors had internalized some basic tenets of the information literacy movement. She also appreciated the mentors’ abilities to forge personal research relationships with students and to allow students to learn research skills from a peer in a comfortable setting, thereby alleviating library anxiety. However, both librarian and mentors also realized that the training aspect of the program could be improved; as a result, in future semesters mentors have been trained via active learning strategies and practice tutoring sessions.

Instructors have also been pleased with the presence of mentors in the classroom. In addition to Professors Gail Fensom and Regina McCarthy, whose comments in the journal entries indicate their conclusion that students benefited from working with the mentors, instructors involved with the program since its pilot semester have also expressed pleasure with the program. Dr. Susan Walsh, who worked with mentor Dot Sherman in a Freshman Composition class during the spring semester of 2005, found that Dot was especially successful in regular one-on-one conferences with students outside of class, where she was able to assess students’ individual needs and strategize through conversation the best ways to address them. Of especial importance was the conference that took place at the beginning of, and several times throughout, each major writing project. At these “research conferences,” Dot was not only able to give students invaluable insight into how to discover topics and foci, but how to begin and maintain the necessary research. Because she had partnered with students from the start on these

projects, Dot successfully guided them as they developed their thinking and moved through the drafting process. This guided discovery approach succeeded in giving students consistent and ongoing support through the writing process. They soon came to believe in the possibility that they could succeed at college-level research.

By partnering with Dot throughout the semester, Dr. Walsh's students no longer "defaulted" to mindless Google searches, but considered carefully the questions they needed to answer and tested the best research strategies to answer them. Students who felt overwhelmed or disinclined to engage in the difficult work that is research, had ready and frequent access to a model whose presence verified that they, too, were able to control their own learning. All students came away with a better understanding of thesis, organization, analysis, development and detail by their work with their research mentor.

UNH Manchester librarians, instructors, and Learning Center staff continue to work together to enhance the college's research mentor program, and research mentors continue to provide both in-class library instruction and point-of-need assistance to UNHM students. The program has expanded to include more tutors (fourteen trained since the start of the program) and more courses, including ESOL and upper-division literature classes. One sign of the program's success in helping library-shy students become confident researchers is the fact that one instructor's first-year developmental English student who participated in the pilot semester as a tutee is now a research mentor herself. In addition, a research mentor who graduated from UNH Manchester is now in library school preparing to join the profession. Our close collaboration provides

our students with a learning community dedicated to helping them reach the farther shore of academic success.

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