The International Writing Centers Association at 30: Community, Advocacy, and Professionalism

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The International Writing Centers Association at 30: Community, Advocacy, and Professionalism

Joyce Kinkead, Muriel Harris, Jeanne Simpson, Pamela Farrell Childers, Lady Falls Brown, and Jeanette Harris

Abstract

At the 2014 IWCA/NCPTW Conference, founders of the National Writing Centers Association (now International Writing Centers Association) came together to reflect on the organization’s beginnings, its strategies for institutionalization, and challenges that may still exist. A significant anniversary such as the 30th provides the opportunity for reflection. Additionally, a timeline of the organization’s history is included, which provides important information for historical research.

At the 2014 IWCA Conference, key founders of the organization came together to recall the origins of the association, to comment on challenges that persist, and to speculate on future actions. Joyce Kinkead, a charter member of the board and executive secretary for its first eight years, served as moderator and interviewer. The panel was planned by Kinkead; Muriel Harris, founder and long-time editor of Writing Lab Newsletter; Jeanne Simpson, third president; Pamela Farrell Childers, eighth president and author of The High School Writing Center; Jeanette Harris, second president; and Lady Falls Brown, creator of WCENTER, the listserv community for writing center professionals. This article takes the form of an interview and has been revised to take into account comments from audience members, solicited by the panelists.

Joyce: Historical approaches to studying writing have become popular in our profession, and we’re fortunate our group forms a living archive, writing center directors who were instrumental in the early days of the IWCA. While the 2014 conference includes sessions on the possibilities of gaming in tutoring sessions, when we first started the association, computers and the Internet were non-existent.

Thirty years is a long time. Several of the founders of the National Writing Centers Association have passed, and we acknowledge their contribution to the organization. While our goal is to share reflections of the early years of NWCA and discuss how the association changed the way educators throughout the world value writing studies and writing centers, we will also reflect on challenges and tensions that may persist.

The Founding of the NWCA

In May 1983, Mickey Harris hosted a Writing Centers Association at Purdue that was momentous. Rumor had it that at this meeting, discussions about a national organization would take place. But even before that 1983 meeting, Mickey and others were involved in important events that eventually led to the formation of the NWCA. Can you tell us about those?

Mickey: Indeed, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of IWCA this year, but it’s useful
to go back in time to see how we first came together as a group and formed a community. I say this because that effort was a communal one of some dedicated people, and the spirit in which we formed that community helped to define the goals, pedagogy, and theory that define us today: supportive, collaborative, sharing, student-centered, people-centered.

While tutorial centers have been around for a long time, as Neal Lerner’s scholarship has shown, those of us who were drawn to writing centers in the 1970’s stepped into a field that was instantly appealing, but still forming and expanding. No courses in writing center practice, no books or journals. For those like me who had completed PhDs on topics unrelated to tutoring, we found a new and exciting intellectual home in writing centers. Writing center directors were almost always the lone person on a campus, trying to learn about this fascinating new world we had entered. We had no e-mail, no Internet, no easy access to one another.

We were building our writing centers as we worked in them. The commonly used metaphor was that it was like playing a violin while constructing it. But because writing centers are all about support, encouragement, collaboration, and sharing, that started to happen as people gathered. A small group of us came together from Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania; for lack of any other alternative, we called ourselves the Writing Center Association. (That group is now the East Central regional writing centers association.) Our earliest meetings began in the late 1970’s, and we continued to meet yearly. Those early conferences of our group, outside the Conference on College Composition and Communication (4C’s), were incredibly important because we shared resources, ideas, solutions, pedagogy, materials, and theory. And we applauded each other’s successes. Michael Pemberton’s history of the Writing Lab Newsletter (WLN) recounts the early days of the publication, starting in April 1977, when I worked at our kitchen table, cutting and pasting to put together a publication that would help writing center directors. One of the best actions I took was to publish the names and addresses of readers of WLN as they joined in, in the hope that people could find neighbors down the road to talk to. (Side note: WLN has finally acknowledged that it has moved beyond those early days, and with the start of Vol. 40, in 2015, will be changing its name to WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship).

1979 was a milestone year in that Ralph Almasy organized our first ever special interest group (SIG) at the 4C’s in Kansas City. The timeline that appears in the appendix recounts the growing interest in writing centers by NCTE and CCCC and the first book and journal devoted to the subject.

By 1983, Nancy McCracken of Youngstown State University, who was an early participant in the area’s Writing Center Association, had successfully petitioned NCTE to establish an assembly of writing center adherents.

Joyce: At the 1983 meeting in Purdue, nominations were taken for charter members
of the board. I recall, as one of the few from west of the Mississippi, raising my hand and introducing myself. The result was that I was on the ballot that appeared in WLN in October. People who had paid their one-dollar membership dues could vote.

Jeanne, you were elected one of the charter members of the NWCA Board. Could you describe its initial meeting at the NCTE Convention in Denver in November 1983, and what was accomplished?

Jeanne: When we met as the inaugural NWCA Board in Denver, I knew only Nancy McCracken. All the rest were new to me. Remarkably, we got down to business very quickly, as if we had all worked together for decades. A draft of the constitution was passed around and we discussed the advantages of assembly status in NCTE, including having the time and space to conduct our meeting.

Nobody spoke of having a separate, stand-alone conference. Instead, the idea was to get guaranteed session slots at both NCTE and 4C’s. Previously, writing center sessions had been available only if they made the cut for the conference. And every session was jam-packed with people wanting to find other writing center folks and asking the basic questions: how do I do this? what’s first? Securing conference slots was a top priority.

All of us knew that we had reached a critical mass where a national organization had to come into being. After all, our workshop at that NCTE was SRO with 170 participants.

The major issue in developing the constitution was how to address the concerns of regionals and make the organization sound enough to survive. At the time, there was concern about an inherent competition between the national and regional organizations.

We worked on the constitution, voted on the draft we had edited, and discussed how to ensure continuity. For instance, we decided on officers for the next couple years. Jeanette Harris would follow Nancy. But who would follow Jeanette was unclear. Understandably, given the newness of everything, there was a long silence as we considered. Finally, Nancy looked at me and asked if I would succeed Jeanette. I said yes. Then, terms were for one year. It quickly became clear that terms needed to be longer to allow smoother transitions. Certainly, I barely had an idea of what I was doing when I passed the baton on to Jay Jacoby. (A list of NWCA presidents from its first decade appears at the end of this article.)

The president-elect organized a materials exchange. Now, of course, we can exchange ideas and materials electronically. But in the early 80’s, hard copy was the only option, so at each conference—our nationals, regionals, C’s and NCTE—somebody was to make sure there were tables for the materials. A lot of material was shipped to the conference in boxes. It was a huge pile to gather, move into the assigned space, and organize. And every sheet would disappear within hours. In 1984, C’s was in New York in the midst of a blizzard, and I had to find a hand truck to get the boxes to our tables. I owe any success in doing this job to Brad Hughes, of University of Wisconsin-Madison, who did a lot of the physical work.

Those of us on the Board at that time had to
commit to attending the meetings, held at C’s and NCTE. That meant a commitment of time and resources. Most of us could count on very little support from our institutions; for the Denver trip, for example, I received $150. All of us gave a lot to make NWCA happen. And yet, folks didn’t complain because we were so excited to have an organization. Those were the days before electronic meetings.

Joyce: The materials exchange table reminds me that one of my first tasks as Executive Secretary was to develop “Starter Kits” that we could send to people interested in writing centers. That involved not only developing materials but also branding the NWCA with a logo. I called on my public relations and production colleagues at Utah State University to help. (See illustration.) The brown NWCA folder sent on request included a position statement on writing centers; basic steps for starting a writing center, a reading list, names and addresses of experienced writing center directors willing to be contacted. Elizabeth Ackley’s “Secondary School Writing Centers: Some Nuts and Bolts Advice” drew on her experience at Indian Hill High School (Cincinnati, Ohio) and was included in queries from high schools.

Pam, you served as the 8th president of NWCA. A key philosophy of NWCA seemed to be inclusiveness. Could you address the addition of high school and two-year college representation to the board in 1984?

Pam: Interestingly in 1982 and 1983, I was leading two-day workshops at NCTE and discussing WAC-based writing centers with the likes of Tim Donovan, Ben McClellan, Don McQuade, Art Young, and Cindy Selfe. Little did I know that NWCA was forming. By 1985, I started seeing something about sessions in the NCTE program and was disappointed that there were no secondary people involved. After all, NCTE is the national conference high school teachers attend.

Jay Jacoby, NWCA President, called to ask me to run for the Executive Board as the high school representative. I said, “Why should I get involved when you have no high school people as part of your workshops at NCTE?” He responded, “That’s why I want you to run. The current representative doesn’t come to NCTE.” So, starting in the fall of 1986, I became a member of the NWCA Executive Board.

If the founders of this organization had not created specific representation for high schools and two-year colleges, it would have been exclusively a four-year college or university organization. I think it took people like Joyce Kinkead, who was partnering with Pat Stoddart at Logan High School, and Bonnie Sunstein, who had also taught high school, to make sure we were included. So, in 1986, I started attending both NCTE andCCCC. After we moved to first and second vice president positions in 1987, I was elected to move up the line the following year. During that time, we added more high school people to the Executive Board and selected some key people from my survey of high school writing centers to lead our guaranteed workshop at NCTE each year. That tradition has continued with the support of many presidents who have learned a great deal about high school writing centers and helped me change the position to secondary school representative to include middle school as well.

Back in the early years, I had to remind my postsecondary colleagues to word documents to be inclusive for the rest of us. In 1985, a colleague and I presented a session at NCTE on bridging the gap between high school and college. Today, we have so many more secondary people involved, who have made their voices known, and many involved in high school-college partnerships. Unfortunately, we still have to remind our postsecondary colleagues to make sure that their surveys, by-laws, and other documents use inclusive language such as “institution”
rather than “undergrad and grad schools,” for instance.

The same is true for two-year colleges, starting with Ellen Mohr of Johnson County Community College (Kansas), who participated in so many of our workshops and had her book published by NWCA Press, and Clint Gardner, who later served as IWCA president. Let’s not forget that all of this would not have happened if the first group had not pursued a national organization with the support of NCTE. When people say, “Why should we have to go to NCTE as well as CCCC?” I remind them that the Mother Ship is why we became national, then international, and why we need to be inclusive for all academic levels. It has made us into a diverse and inclusive organization, and we can do better.

Joyce: Two themes that come through these comments are community and inclusiveness.

Jeanette, professionalization was high on your agenda for the novice organization. Can you offer examples of how that was accomplished?

Jeanette: Our group wanted to claim as much writing center territory as possible. This included The Writing Center Journal. When the founding editors—Lil Brannon and Steve North—called for applications for people to replace them, Joyce and I applied. We thought that attaching The Writing Center Journal officially would help NWCA gain legitimacy and standing in the profession. We also staffed the editorial board with NWCA members, and we used the end matter of the journal to archive NWCA business. That is still the “go to” place to find information on the history of awards, grants, and other matters.

All of us in NWCA felt that one of the real services the organization could undertake was to serve as an advocacy agent through awards. Such awards gave us a bully pulpit and allowed us to honor the wonderful work being done in writing centers. We emphasize here the importance of professionalization and status. We knew from talking with colleagues and from our own experiences, that these were real issues in the profession, and awards were important bragging points that honored those in the profession, brought recognition to them, and also put the organization in the spotlight.

Joyce: Mickey’s collecting of names and addresses for the WLN and my lists of NWCA members went a long way in helping us communicate as professionals, but the establishment of WCenter by Lady Falls Brown drew on technological solutions to cement community.

Lady: The idea for WCenter arose from my being on a listserv, MegaByte University (MBU) that Fred Kemp, a colleague at Texas Tech University, created in 1989. When Fred Kemp came to Tech, he brought with him Daedalus, a program for networked computer writing and established a beta test site using Apple computers. I became part of the group and soon convinced Fred to hook up an Apple computer in the writing center to the network. Later, he literally strung a wire from the writing center to the classroom(s). I began to read the MBU entries discussing composition theory and practice and the role computers could play. I found the discussions very helpful, and I began to think a similar list devoted to the discussion of theory and practice would be helpful for writing center people.

Fred could program anything. On the other hand, I could turn on a computer. Fred took my concept of a writing center listserv and set it up. We announced its creation at the 1991 CCCC conference in Boston. We discussed what to call the list—Centaurs being one suggestion—and in time, the list became known as WCenter. I helped people on and off the list, reported crashes, and saw that it was functioning. I also encouraged people to be courteous to one another, to restrict their flames and observe netiquette.
Tension and Challenges in Early NWCA

**Joyce:** We are celebrating the formation of the NWCA, but we also remember that there were difficulties. Jeanne, one of the early documents produced by NWCA you authored, a “Statement on Professional Status of Writing Center Directors,” appeared in 1985. Why was that document one of the first “To Do” items for NWCA?

**Jeanne:** The problem of writing center directors receiving minimal support from their institutions is not new. In 1983, the salaries were low, chairpersons and deans had no idea what a writing center could do, and the job was often assigned to someone with little or no preparation. As Neal Lerner has pointed out, dissertations on writing centers were written as early as the 1950s, but, frankly, they were not in the public consciousness in the 70s and 80s. It seemed when I completed doctoral work in writing center theory and practice at Illinois State with Janice Neuleib that I was among the few with formal preparation in writing center administration. On the other hand, I got my job from having been a temporary instructor who taught nothing but freshman composition. That I knew anything about writing centers was handy but certainly not essential. Meanwhile, there was a sad story unfolding involving a writing center at the University of Cincinnati. The director/founder was going to lose her job, and the center had no idea what to do about it. We couldn’t help her. The issue was certainly on our minds.

At that meeting in Denver, there was a call to survey the membership and find out what they thought and to create a position statement. I volunteered to do the work, in part because I was already a member of a couple of regionals and would have an opportunity to interview and survey at their conferences. That was how I began. I talked to dozens of people, which at that time was certainly a representative sample, though it wouldn’t be now. The consensus was clear and is reflected in the statement.

At the IWCA/NCPTW conference in Hershey (2003), I asked a group attending a session if they thought the statement needed revision. They did not, but I think it does. It needs to be tightened, made more specific. We can argue now that professional preparation, degree programs in writing center pedagogy and administration exist. Job descriptions and hires need to include real preparation. The thirty-year-old statement needs to be strengthened and to reflect the maturation of writing center work.

**Joyce:** In the 30 years since the founding of the organization, there is a healthy record of research and scholarship on writing centers. Pam, your book on high school writing centers was published in 1989. And, we celebrate its 25th anniversary. Did you find that NWCA encouraged such work? And if so, why?

**Pam:** NWCA was an organization of new research, support, professional development and collaboration. NWCA encouraged my professional growth and personal life. I finished a second Master’s degree and later completed my doctorate as well as writing over a hundred articles, chapters, columns and books because of my involvement with NWCA. Joyce and Jeanette even published one of my first articles in *The Writing Center Journal* in 1987.

When I was starting our high school writing center in New Jersey in 1981, I could find little about any writing centers other than university ones in my research. I decided to find high school directors to ask lots of questions through a survey, and came upon the *Writing Lab Newsletter* at NCTE. I contacted Mickey to ask for her mailing list so that I could send out a survey to high school writing center people. I also used the New Jersey Council of Teachers of English mailing list, since I was membership chair of that organization. Mickey not only sent me the list
but also talked on the phone forever about NWCA. I was hooked.

I started putting together a proposal for the high school writing center book in 1986 with the guidance of Bob Parker at Rutgers and sage advice from Peter Stillman of Boynton/Cook that I should “send it to NCTE to reach more secondary people.” Ironically, my editor at NCTE was Michael Spooner, whom we all know now as the strong writing center advocate at Utah State University Press. By the time the book came out in 1989, I was vice president of NWCA, and this much larger group was so supportive of the book, even honoring it with the outstanding scholarship award. I think NWCA saw this book as an opportunity to involve more secondary people in the organization, too, because it included so many authors who were secondary school teachers and writing center directors. Also, I think NWCA saw that many of its postsecondary members could collaborate with high school teachers on publications.

By 1995, NWCA Press published its first book that included a section on high school writing centers and one on two-year college writing centers. Over the years, I have been invited to write chapters in books edited by NWCA members and still call upon many of them to review or critique other projects for me. In fact, I am currently collaborating on a book with Jacob Blumner, a writing center director whom I met through NWCA and have presented with over the years.

Joyce: I’m so glad that you drew our attention to the NWCA Press that Byron Stay created. The Press grew out of discussions held at our first stand-alone conference of NWCA in 1994. And by the way, this current IWCA conference is the 20th anniversary of that first conference held in New Orleans. I was delighted to be invited to deliver the keynote address, which recounted a history of NWCA.

But, let’s get back to tensions. As Jeanne pointed out, when NWCA was founded, there seemed to be an undercurrent of concern from the regional associations, three of which formed prior to NWCA, that the national organization would control them. Jeanne as a member of those regionals, could you share your perspective on how that was dealt with and how our decision affected the IWCA of today.

Jeanne: The meeting of the East Central WCA where the vote occurred to move forward with establishing NWCA was noisy and rancorous. The issue was a fear that, upon establishment of a national organization, the regionals would be left high and dry, with no one attending their conferences. Or, worse, they would have to subsidize a national without receiving any useful return benefit. These were not unreasonable fears—we didn’t really know what would happen.

The solution we chose at the time was to provide seats on the board for each regional. In that way, the regionals would know what the board was doing and would have a say in its actions. What we did not anticipate is the number of regionals that eventually appeared. They serve a different and important function from the larger organization. There is no competition.

Meanwhile, the pressure to have other representation, such as for graduate students, meant more seats were created on the board. Those representatives are smart moves; however, the result has not been one we foresaw. The present unwieldy size of the board makes it more difficult to achieve a quorum at a conference, and the time available makes it difficult to cover the agendas and hear all the voices. On-line meetings may address those problems, but the members lose some of the immediacy, camaraderie, and negotiations of a physical, face-to-face meeting.

Also, the increase in regionals gives the illusion of geographical coverage and suggests that somehow writing centers in Ohio are different from writing centers in California, as
if IWCA resembled Congress. The problem, however, is that people in areas without regionals—Arizona, for example—can only run for at-large positions, whereas those where there are regionals have both regional and at-large positions available.

All these elements emphasize the differences among writing centers. The differences undoubtedly exist and should be considered. But the emphasis on differences can also present obstacles to consensus and action. When we organized the board as we did, our idea was to have a small enough group to be able to act efficiently but at the same time with consideration of multiple perspectives. And we expected commitment to attend the meetings, to get to know the writing center community face to face. Although I applaud the principles of inclusion that have been applied in configuring the board, might changing to fewer positions, all at-large, help, obligating as it would each member to be aware and informed about the whole writing center community?

Joyce: The discussion on regional writing center associations reminds me of how much time we invested in trying to map the country so that people would know in which regional they resided. That was a futile attempt, and in the end, didn’t matter as writing center professionals could identify with whichever regional was appropriate. And NWCA embraced international status in 1999.

Moving Forward

It’s clear from comments, that the NWCA/IWCA has played an important role in being an advocate, establishing a community, providing resources, and enhancing professionalism.

What suggestions might IWCA take into consideration for the future? Rethinking representation on the board might be helpful. From my own interest in undergraduate research, I’d be curious if undergraduate students might find a home at IWCA, not just at the National Conference of Peer Tutors in Writing (NCPTW). Building on an increased interest in RAD research, I might suggest that IWCA develop a CFP for research projects the organization would like to see undertaken.

Mickey, if you were to suggest a short list of items that IWCA could profitably turn its attention to, what would those be?

Mickey: I’d like to return to my earlier comments about our foundational principles, to support, collaborate, and to share as the basis for several items IWCA could turn its attention to.

My first suggestion has to do with resurrecting a project that Jeanne started at the University of Louisville: The Writing Center Research Project. It was a massive data bank of answers to surveys taken every few years of writing centers, and it gathered the kinds of information that people keep asking for on a regular basis on WCenter. Sadly, lack of funds and institutional support stopped, and those large-scale surveys ended.

But they were so useful. All sorts of questions come up on WCenter, on a regular basis. People ask about release time for the director, the pay for tutors, the length of tutorials, the name or titles of the tutors, the database being used, salaries, percentage of students served. Too often, WCenter lapses into a Q&A instead of the important discussions we should be having, and only a handful of people respond before the conversation moves on to something else.

So my first suggestion for IWCA is to take on the work of periodic surveys, asking for responses to such questions, and then to post results on the IWCA website. Because conditions change so rapidly and new needs arise, I would hope that IWCA would conduct these surveys every few years if not more frequently.

Joyce: At IWCA 2014, Jill Gladstein of Swarthmore presented the results of a survey conducted, and this may be a good database
from which to draw. Obviously, an issue will be not to replicate surveys.

Mickey: My second suggestion for IWCA is also aimed at our professional concerns. Many of us worry about the recent job announcements that have been posted. We’ve all seen the job ads for writing center directors that ask for woefully little experience or training, with low pay and perhaps limited benefits. This might lead not only to hiring people who aren’t adequately prepared for the job but also to a general attitude among administrators that anyone can run a writing center, even though we know the complexities of the job and the respect which such a position should rightly have. I hasten to add that it’s not impossible for a person to learn on the job; certainly many of us did. And, many directors have come up through the ranks, drawn to writing work through their exposure as peer tutors.

Still, I would like to see IWCA draw up guidelines for minimum requirements for a writing center director that search committees could draw on. After all, how can a search committee with no writing center director around and perhaps not much understanding of the job draw up a list of appropriate requirements and preferences? And yes, the guidelines would have to include awareness of differences in local contexts and what is needed. But the guidelines for such a job should indicate that the job requires skills, knowledge, and experience. With hundreds of writing centers in existence, graduate courses in writing center administration, the journals, books, conferences, and the Summer Institutes to train and professionalize writing center workers, it’s simply not too much to ask that a skilled, knowledgeable person can assume this position. A revised IWCA position statement might be part of this initiative. (See the sample advertisement from)

Montana State University
MLA Job Ad, Fall 2012

The Department of English at Montana State University is pleased to announce a tenure-track position as Director of the MSU Writing Center at the assistant or associate professor level. The Writing Center seeks an experienced and visionary director to lead the program into its next phase of growth and development. The Center has recently received substantial support from the provost and is poised for greatly increased campus-wide impact. We are looking for a writing center specialist who can help the Department of English and the university leadership plan and implement an enhanced vision of service to students from all disciplines.

The Director will be appointed .5 FTE in the English Department and .5 FTE in the Writing Center. In the Writing Center, the Director will be responsible for the overall administration, including operations, staffing and budget. Particular areas of focus include 1) expanding the Center’s peer tutoring program through recruiting, training, and mentoring, 2) envisioning ways to integrate peer tutoring with undergraduate research, 3) performing campus and community outreach through presentations, workshops, and promotional activities, and 4) partnering with other units of the university to develop avenues for expanding the Writing Center’s impact at MSU.

Required qualifications: PhD with demonstrated specialization in Rhetoric and Composition; extensive experience working in an/or researching Writing Centers; demonstrated promise of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service.

Montana State University, which is exemplary. 1)

Joyce: There’s so much that we’ve not included here in our review of the founding of NWCA and its growth. The combined IWCA/NCPTW conference in 2014 drew over 1000 attendees. A sea of change has occurred in the larger composition and writing studies over the last three decades. We are proud to have been there at the beginning to help create what has become a vibrant and important organization.

1 The authors thank Michelle Miley, Director of the Montana State University, for sharing this job advertisement.
As audience member Scott Eller of Sonoma State University put it at the 2014 conference, “We began with shards and made a tapestry.”

References


Past Presidents of NWCA: The First Decade

Nancy McCracken (1983-84)
Jeanette Harris (1984-85)
Jeanne Simpson (1985-86)
Jay Jacoby (1986-87)
Irene Clark (1987-88)
Bonnie Sunstein (1988-89)
Julie Neff (1989-90)
Pamela B. Farrell (Childers) (1990-91)
Pat Dyer (1991-92)
Lady Falls Brown (1992-93)

N.B. The Writing Center Journal end matter includes important archival information about NWCA/IWCA.

NWCA/IWCA Timeline

Regional WCA History in italics

1973: CCCC established a committee to investigate Learning Skills Centers.

1977: At a CCCC that featured Muriel “Mickey” Harris, Joyce Steward, Janice Neuleib, and Mary Croft, people interested in writing centers wrote their names and addresses on an impromptu sign-up sheet so that Harris could organize a newsletter to “continue the conversation.” The first issue of Writing Lab Newsletter appeared in April.

1977: Carol Feiser Laque and Phyllis Sherwood, A Laboratory Approach to Writing published

1978: College English survey uncovers several hundred colleges/universities with writing centers/labs. (Steward and Croft)

1979: Special Interest Group (SIG) for writing center directors formed at CCCC.

1979: Writing center directors from the east central part of the USA met in a spring conference; the Writing Center Association (later, East Central) was the result.


1981: A resolution on the status of writing lab professionals was passed at CCCC (updated in 1987 by Jay Jacoby at CCCC).


1981-82: Nancy McCracken (Youngstown State U) petitions NCTE for Assembly status for a national Writing Centers Association.

1981: Southeast Writing Centers Association formed.

1982: Midwest Writing Centers Association formed.

1982: NWCA granted NCTE Assembly status.

1983: Nominations submitted for NWCA charter board members at the fifth annual Writing Centers Association meeting hosted at Purdue (May).

1983: Membership solicited in September; dues set at $1; elections conducted in October; formal constitution written and edited at the first board meeting at NCTE in Denver in November. First NWCA Workshop at NCTE with capacity crowd of 170.
1983: Two-year college representative added to NWCA Board.

1983: Texas Writing Centers Association, and the Rocky Mountain Writing Centers Association formed.

1983: Outstanding Service to Writing Centers Award created with inaugural honoree Muriel Harris; the award continues under Harris’ name.

1984: High school representative added to NWCA Board.

1984: The Writing Center Journal editorship moves to Jeanette Harris and Joyce Kinkead, who established an annual checklist of Writing Center Scholarship (Jay Jacoby) and reconfirmed the editorial board with NWCA members.

1984: New England Writing Centers Association and Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Associations formed.

1985: Inaugural research awards to Stephen North for “The Idea of a Writing Center”; Donald M. McAndrew and Thomas J. Reigstad for Training Tutors for Writing Conferences.


1985: Pacific Writing Centers Association formed.

1986: CCCC Writing Centers SIG moves to oversight by NWCA (Jeanne Simpson, president).

1986: Inaugural Graduate Student Research Award to Evelyn J. Posey.


1989: South Central Writing Centers Association founded.


1991: WCenter established by Lady Falls Brown of Texas Tech University.

1993: Writing Centers in Context: Twelve Case Studies, edited by Joyce Kinkead and Jeanette Harris published by NCTE.


1995: NWCA Press established by Byron Stay (Mount St. Mary University).

1998: European Writing Centers Association founded.

1999: National Writing Centers Association (NWCA) renamed International Writing Centers Association (IWCA).

1999: IWCA awarded its first research grant to professionals in writing centers to Irene Lurkis Clark.

2003: Southern California Writing Centers Association founded.

2003: IWCA and NCPTW hosted its first joint conference at Hershey, PA.


2006: Writing Centers Week (February) celebrated.

2007: Middle East-North Africa Writing Centers Alliance founded.
2008: Graduate Research Award renamed in honor of Ben Rafoth

2009: IWCA Collaborative@CCCC, an independent pre-conference workshop devoted to writing center issues, established.

2013: IWCA initiated Mentor Matching Program

2013: IWCA Celebrates 30th Anniversary

2014: IWCA Celebrates 20th Anniversary of First NWCA Conference

When referencing this timeline, please use the following:

This timeline was developed by Joyce Kinkead with Pamela Farrell Childers, Muriel Harris, and Jeanne Simpson for the IWCA 2014 conference session “Moving Forward by Looking Back: Celebrating 30 Years of the IWCA,” 30 October 2014, Orlando, Florida.

Sources:
http://writingcenters.org/


Available at the Writing Center Journal online archive: