
Online Writing Centers: Outgrowing the OWL

David Bringhurst

Director, University Writing Center

Wright State University

A Quick Survey of Ohio's OWLs

- Youngstown State University
 - University of Toledo
 - Wright State University
 - Ohio University (MOO)
 - MUD, Object Oriented
 - Multiple User Dimension
 - Edison Community College
-

Noteworthy sites outside the state

- Purdue University
 - Great self-help resources
 - Asynchronous text submission
 - Colorado State University
 - Workshop atmosphere
-

What's behind the sites?

- Many were custom-built by school's Writing Center or IT department.
 - Others employ commercially available software or services as part of a hybrid solution or even as a total solution.
-

Software solutions

- Blackboard ([U. of Louisville](#))
 - ❑ Robust, enterprise-level suite
 - ❑ Real-time text chat
 - ❑ File sharing
 - ❑ Virtual white board
-

Software solutions, cont'd

- iLinc (National University, CA)
 - MeetingLinc
 - Audio/video conferencing
 - Interactive whiteboard
 - Synchronized web browsing
 - Tutor controls when student can talk
 - LearnLinc (also available)
 - More features than MeetingLinc
 - Designed for corporate training needs
-

Software solutions, cont'd

- Skype (Lansing Community College)
 - ❑ Free telephony
 - ❑ File transfer
 - ❑ Chat
 - ❑ Video conferencing
 - ❑ Stopped using because of Spyware concerns
 - ❑ Now use Angel
-

Commercial tutoring services

- The quick Google search
 - Smarthinking
 - ❑ Based in Washington, D.C.
 - ❑ Ohio Learning Network (OLN) contracts with them
 - ❑ What impact will this have on us?
-

Current state of the OWL

- Asynchronous text submission combined with self-help resources
 - Increasing use of text chat, whiteboard, some voice/video
-

What does the future hold?

- Moving away from drop-off lab to . . .
 - . . . Interactive tutoring
 - Using voice & video along with whiteboard technology to more closely achieve the type of face-to-face (f2f) sessions we have in our centers
-

Barriers to achieving f2f tutoring online

- Funding / Staffing
 - Limited availability of necessary technologies for students
 - Broadband access
 - Camera for the PC
 - Primary effect on students with financial need
 - . . . But the gap is closing
 - Technology becoming more affordable
 - More acceptance of technology as “how things get done”
-

Questions for Discussion

- Do you agree with this assessment?
 - What is the impact of commercial tutoring on our profession?
 - Can we each create f2f online writing centers?
 - Should we pursue the creation of a shared online writing center?
 - Is it feasible procedurally? Financially?
-