DOING IT TOGETHER: THE PAINS AND GAINS OF COLLABORATING TO PRODUCE ONLINE RESOURCES

Kerry O'Regan

University of South Australia

kerry.oregan@unisa.edu.au

One of the recent changes within the University of South Australia has been the re-invention of teaching and learning support together with counselling services to form a unit called Learning Connection. Another major change has been an increasing emphasis on online provision of services and resources. These two changes have themselves brought subsequent changes in work practice for Learning Advisers within the University. The requirement to produce online resources has brought what we do very much into the public domain; no longer is our work something that takes place privately between individuals behind closed doors. Online workshops and downloadable resources are there for the world to see and are vigorously promoted by Learning Connection to the University community. The pressure to quickly produce a comprehensive suite of high quality online resources led the Learning Advisers' team to work collaboratively on their production. This has raised a number of professional issues in terms of principle and process including: articulating and resolving implicit and explicit views of teaching and learning;

developing effective ways of writing collaboratively and of respectfully engaging in extensive and rigorous peer reviews; and resolving the tensions associated with intellectual property and individual, group and corporate ownership of the materials produced. This paper draws on some of the literature relating to collaborative writing and peer review; relates the experiences of those involved in the process of collaborative production at the University of South Australia and suggests ways in which this process may involve minimal pain and maximal gain.

Background to the Study

In May 2000, the reconfigured student support and professional development services of the University of South Australia were launched to the University community under the badge of Learning Connection (George & Hicks 2000; Hicks & George 2001). The Learning Connection: Portfolio of Services (n.d.) documented the changes inherent in the reconfiguration and the implications for service provision. These changes included a move from 'a mainly equity based client group' to support for the 'universal student population', from primarily 'face to face delivery' to 'technology facilitated delivery', and from service provision from 'a free-standing entity within the University' to a model of 'student services delivered from a group whose activities are directed by the strategic directions of the Divisions/University'.

Thus a major focus of the work of Learning Connection staff was to be the provision of online resources for the general student population and this provision was heralded by the sounding of a loud public fanfare within the University. Our work was no longer something transacted between consenting individuals behind closed

doors; it was to be very much in the public domain, freely available online for all the world to see. There was an imperative, therefore, that the online resources representing this work be of a standard befitting universal public scrutiny. One strategy for meeting the quality demands entailed in the production of high quality resources was to adopt a model of rigorous and extensive peer review, involving a process of collaborative writing (and ownership). Although there was some variation to the model, the typical pattern was for a resource topic to be decided on, a document drafted by an individual, submitted to two or more peers for review, redrafted, submitted to a group peer review session by the whole professional team (of up to eight individuals, depending on the team), redrafted and published. In addition to this peer review process, Learning Connection management could (and did) intervene at any stage in the process, requiring minor or major revision of the material being developed.

This activity resulted in an intensive and extensive flurry of productivity, culminating in the development of, to date, 25 online Learning Guides, 12 generic workshops and 25 task- and course-specific workshops in the area of learning support alone, with corresponding development in the other professional areas associated with Learning Connection. The learning Guides (see http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/learnres/index.htm) are essentially online study skills leaflets, designed to be downloaded and printed off as required. They cover the traditional range of learning topics such as writing various generic forms including essays, reports, article reviews and journals, as well as other learning and assessment tasks and processes including notemaking from reading and working in teams.

The online workshops are designed to be more interactive in nature, replicating in a virtual way, what students experience in a face to face workshop, with the advantages of being accessible when and where the student chooses. The student is able to navigate their own path through the various pages and links provided, repeating or omitting sections as they choose. Some of these workshops are generic in nature (see http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/wkshpol/general.htm), covering topics similar to the Learning Guides. Even more innovative are the course-specific

workshops (see
http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/wkshpol/specific.htm) which
guide students through the processes involved in completing the specific tasks
required in particular courses.

So there has been an outcome of demonstrable quality and quantity of online
resources, which have received considerable acclaim from students as well as from
staff within and colleagues outside the University. But what has the experience been
like for the participants? Has it all been worth it? Where might we go from here?

A comprehensive program of evaluation is being developed to assess the online
resources from the perspectives of staff and student users. This study considers the
experience of those involved in the resource production, the Learning Connection
staff. Interestingly, within the wider context, a paradigm of self- and peer-review is
intrinsic to the national quality assurance process as outlined in the audit manual
currently in draft form (Woodhouse 2001). So, formal review of various aspects of
our work may well become an integral part of all our professional existences.

The Study

A questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was sent to the 26 Learning Connection staff who
had been involved in the development of online resources, seeking responses to
questions relating to their experience of writing collaboratively. The staff comprised
learning advisers, counsellors, career advisers, international student advisers and
professional development staff. The various professional teams had worked to
various extents as teams and, in some cases across teams, in the collaborative
writing of the resources, using some variation on the model described earlier.
Because of the small numbers involved and the close working relationship between
the researcher and the participants, the questionnaire did not ask the respondents to
identify their professional area (or to identify themselves). Ten completed
questionnaires were returned and the various issues raised in the responses are
discussed in the remaining sections of the paper. These issues include the nature of
collaborative writing, the quality of the product and the efficiency and effectiveness of

the process, the voice and authorship of the resources produced, and the professional development aspects of collaborative writing.

Incidence and Nature of Collaboration in Academic and Professional Writing

It seems that there is no common definition of 'collaborative writing' (Couture & Rymer 1987), the term encompassing a huge range of endeavours (Borden 1992). For a start, there is the issue of what is meant by 'writing'. Lunsford and Ede (1990, p.14) define it as 'any of the activities that lead to a completed document', such activities including 'written and spoken brainstorming, outlining, note-taking, organizational planning, drafting, revising and editing'. Generally, 'collaboration' is taken as broadly meaning more than one person being involved in some way in some or all of these writing activities (Lunsford & Ede 1990; Couture & Rymer 1989; Harris 1992). Bruffee extends the term even further by asserting that, because of the essentially social nature of language, all writing (and indeed reading) is collaborative. He says (p.168) that 'in order to learn to write, we must learn to become our own representatives of an assenting community of peers with whom we speak and to whom we listen in our heads'. Although 'collaborative writing' *per se* was not defined in the study (by the researcher or requested of the participants) there was a tacit assumption that 'collaborative writing' would equate to what the participants had been doing, namely speaking with and listening to and working to produce documents together with their real life work community of peers.

Research into the process of collaborative writing is spread across a range of disciplines, each exploring their own aspects from their own perspectives to their own audiences (Porter 1990). Forman (1991) conducted a detailed survey of the literature on collaborative writing and discovered 'the pervasiveness of collaborative writing across industries and functional areas'(p.236). Her study found that the vast majority of professionals wrote collaboratively 'at least some of the time'. Despite the assumption that writers work in solitude (Bruffee 1983;) and the fact that this assumption informs both the theory and practice of the teaching of writing (Lunsford & Ede 1990), it appears that writing collaboratively is a common activity for many

professionals, academics and students and the literature on collaborative writing is largely concentrated in these three areas.

While collaborative writing occurs widely, there is little in the way of 'formal peer review processes in professional communities-of-practice' (Casey, Branwold & Cargille 1996, p.33). Considering the literature relating to peer review, there seems to be, in this area, even less that is directly relevant to this study than there is in the field of collaborative writing. Some of the literature deals with peer review of college teaching as it is used for tenure and promotion processes (Quinlan 1995; Mignon & Langsam 1999; Bernstein, Jonson & Smith 2000), as professional development with the purpose of improving teaching (Keig & Waggoner 1995) or as a basis for funding (Over 1994). There is also a wealth of literature dealing with issues of peer review of manuscripts submitted for publication (Fagan 1990; Silverman 1993; Fontaine 1995; Murray & Raths 1996) and with peer review as a teaching strategy used with college students reviewing each other's term papers (Vatalaro 1990; Haaga 1993; Murau 1993; Mendonca 1994).

In relation to models of collaborative writing, Lunsford and Ede (1990) reported having difficulty eliciting information relating to this 'primarily because we lack a vocabulary to discuss what people do when they write collaboratively' (p. 63). They did, however, identify seven different organisational patterns of collaborative writing, determined by what tasks were performed by what individuals or groupings of people, but they had no labels to attach to these various patterns. They did come up with two general modes of collaboration, hierarchical and dialogic. The hierarchical mode is 'rigidly structured' with 'highly specific goals' which are 'most often designated by someone outside of and hierarchically superior to the immediate collaborative group or by a senior member of the group'. The dialogic mode 'is loosely structured and roles enacted in it are fluid…The process of articulating goals is often as important as the goals themselves…Those participating in dialogic collaboration generally value the creative tension inherent in multivoiced and multivariant ventures' (p.133). Forman (1991) found that the most common model of interactive writing was a hierarchical one involving a supervisor and subordinate, often after a draft had been written by the subordinate.

Although arguably less common, a dialogic approach can be highly successful. Rogers and Horton (1992) recommended a face-to-face mode in which 'coauthors are physically present in the same room and interact directly in every aspect of the writing process'. This, they say, allows 'the kind of "talk about talk" that Bruffee deems necessary' (p.122). Locker (1992) reported on a productive writing team who had collaborated with a very high level of collectivity, the implication being that being highly dialogic was somehow related to the highly successful outcomes.

Ewald and MacCallum (1990) found that groups usually settle on one model of collaboration and work with that. Whatever the pattern decided on, Lunsford and Ede (1990) maintain that having an agreed upon, established pattern was 'indispensable to success' and that 'collaborative efforts need to be carefully organised or orchestrated' (p.64).

The group under study here evolved its own unique process which was partly dialogic and partly hierarchical. While there was the usual kind of jostling that goes on when passionately committed people work closely together, the process could generally be described as 'dialogic'. There were, however, hierarchical elements involving imposition of the power associated with position, personality or prestige. Considerable tensions were inherent in this hybridity and in an initial lack of clarity with regard to the process to be followed. However, as the following responses indicate, there did seem to be some optimism that a satisfactory process had been reached, or at least was being evolved:

- *Individuals need a history of sharing their writing or it can be a difficult process. To this end, the processes and purposes need to be clearly articulated and people need to feel comfortable offering up their writing to others to read and making comments on others' writing. Some framework and agreed understanding of what the writing will look like at the end is essential.*
- *Collaborative writing is a good way to go, but it requires a more defined operating framework.*
- *I think that collaborative writing is useful if it is defined, the steps of the collaborative process are clear, and boundaries are put around it.*

- A lot of this [negative experience] was to do with the process and, once this changed, things improved significantly for me.

The quality of the product

One of the main motivations for working collaboratively was the imperative to produce high quality resources. Not all collaborative endeavours, however, result in superior products. Over a third of respondents to Lunsford and Ede's (1990) survey reported unproductive collaborations and Cross(1990) reports on a monumental collaborative failure. This was a project in which the coauthors took 77 days to compose a two-page letter, which was deemed unsatisfactory even in its final form. Borden (1992) sits on the fence and says 'Yes…and no' in answer to the question 'Do collaborations produce "more" or "better" knowledge than individual efforts?'. It all depends on what you mean by success.

For the participants in the current study, whatever the angst associated with the process, satisfaction with, and even pride in, the outcome was a major feature:

- *I have seen a resource move from a first shaky draft to a very professional product and this was very satisfying in the end*
- *It has allowed me to be co-author of an extensive package of resources of a very high standard and which have been acclaimed both within and outside the University*

- *My satisfaction came from seeing the final products, which I believe were (usually) superior to what might have been written by an individual writing in isolation.*

- *Over time I have learnt to write feeling less precious about content, knowing that the final product will be quite different and improved due to the collaboration.*

Time efficiency

As well as the issue of quality, there is also the matter of quantity of output, the need to produce a large number of resources in a relatively short time. There are two points of view in the literature as to whether writing as a group is more or less time efficient than writing as an individual. For some, the complex and cumbersome nature of collaborative writing was essentially less time-effective than individual writing ((DuFrene & Nelson 1990; Lunsford & Ede 1990) whereas, others claimed that sharing the task with others spread the workload and so led to time efficiencies (Singh-Gupta & Troutt-Ervin 1996; Lunsford & Ede 1990; Casey, Branwold & Cargille 1996).

Both these perspectives were represented in the current study:

- o *It's a very time-consuming process*
- o *Everything takes longer and getting responses back can be like pulling teeth without anaesthetic*
- o *A collaborative production effort means that some of the job is shared and deadlines can often be met*
- o *The task (and corresponding workload) is made more manageable*

There was also the perspective that shared commitment prompted more time efficient practices in the individual:

- o *A commitment for the individual to do their bit, usually by some agreed deadline, so resources actually got produced.*

Perhaps the apparent contradictions in relation to time efficiency of the process have to do with a fundamental understanding of what collaborative writing actually is. Borden (1992) says that it is important to distinguish (as our broad definition does not) between division of labour and collaboration. The former, where tasks are identified and allocated to individuals, may be more time efficient, whereas a process

involving two or more people working together to formulate text may be substantially less so.

At least one of the respondents favoured the former approach:

- o *I find collaborative writing constructive if the actual task of writing is divided up in some way. I find it difficult to do the pen on paper stuff with someone else looking over my shoulder. But if I can go away and do my bit and then run my part of the writing by others in any form, no matter how rough, and get useful feedback, it works better.*

Group processes

A major factor determining the efficiency and effectiveness of a collaborating group is the way the group works together and this, in fact, was one of the most important aspects identified in the study. There is a considerable body of theory relating to group processes. For example, Tuckman's commonly accepted model of group stages, namely Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing (Moxon 1993), with sometimes the additional stage of Adjourning, describe stages worked through by groups. Typically groups have an initial tentative phase; one of competition, conflict and control issues; a more cooperative, collaborative phase; eventually arriving at a stable cohesive productive phase. Individual groups may progress slowly or rapidly through these phases; may become stuck in one of them or may proceed through them iteratively depending on the composition and dynamics involved.

Groups develop norms (Napier and Gershenfeld 1993) which implicitly or explicitly guide the behaviour of group members and these members perform identifiable roles in relation to the group function in order to carry out the task and maintenance functions required of the group (Barker et al. 1987).

The importance in this study of group factors corresponds to its significance in other research findings (Singh-Gupta & Troutt-Ervin 1996; Locker 1992; Lunsford & Ede 1990; Lay 1992). Porter (1990 p.18) found that 'group character is influenced by a variety of factors, including the experiences and backgrounds of the participants, the constraints provided by… the supervisor and organisation and by the group dynamic

itself' and also by ideology, 'sets of beliefs about what exists, how it exists, what is good and desirable (and what is not) and so on'.

Group norms seem to be of particular importance in the productive functioning of groups. This refers to such qualities as 'the degree of openness and mutual respect characteristic of group, members'(Lunsford & Ede 1990, p.65), the ability of the group to resolve disputes to 'soothe hurt feelings' and 'involve all group members' (Locker 1992, p.46)'and the level of trust existing within the group (DuFrene & Nelson 1990). Lunsford & Ede (1990) go so far as to say that the most important factor in collaborative writing is the ability of group members to work well together, their ability to write well being of secondary importance.

These findings were reflected in the current study, with comments such as:

- o *There has to be a good basis for collaboration or it won't work eg trust, respect for others' ideas*
- o *All participants need to know their contributions are equally valued and acknowledged*
- o *Able to feel that my efforts while not perfect, were acceptable; receiving positive feedback*
- o *The generous nature and good humour of my colleagues, who tend to be positive albeit highly critical and pedantic*

And when things did not work so well, factors identified included:

- o *A team member who is not prepared to bend*
- o *I didn't like the way certain people in the group claimed greater authority (ie they could override the decisions/work of others)*

- o *I think that many people used the term 'collaboration' as an excuse for saying whatever they wanted without due regard for the feelings of others.*

- o *When the excitement and passion of producing the goods overran respect and sensitivity for each other*

Issues relating to group norms and dynamics accounted for a large portion of the response data, indicating the importance for the participants of a healthy, well-functioning group in collaborative writing. There is a need for group norms to be agreed and followed and for individuals within the team to perform the various roles necessary for the task and maintenance functions of the group to be performed.

Single or multiple voice(s)

One of the issues to be negotiated through group process is that of 'voice'. Whose voice is represented in the final product and is it a single or multiple one? Some writers claim that collaborative writing has the advantage of enriching the product by incorporating a diversity of perspectives (DuFrene 1990; Singh-Gupta & Troutt-Ervin 1996). Others assert that this diversity may be difficult to reconcile, leading to a diminution of the product with 'consensus compromising excellence' (Borden 11992; Forman 1991), this being particularly difficult when 'several members of the group have distinct and well-developed individual styles' (Lunsford & Ede 1990 p.60).

The participants in this study experienced some of those tensions:

- o *More perspectives led to a richer result*
- o *Varied and diverse inputs of knowledge, skills, insights, experiences, creative insights*
- o *Consistency; shared understandings; fewer idiosyncratic differences between particular items making up a suite*
- o *When there were too many divergent voices saying what should be done and how*
- o *The individual can lose their voice*
- o *Very difficult to amalgamate many voices into one harmonious presentation. It might help if some of the voices were trained*

- *People have different writing styles and some negotiation of the style that suits the audience and purpose helps*

- *Products sometimes a bit dry; lacking variety in style/voice; a sameness about them*

So there may be an ongoing dilemma around how or whether to unify, or at least harmonise, those potentially discordant voices and what (if anything) gets lost in the process. Or maybe there is the possibility of realising Rogers and Horton's (1992, p.124) optimistic notion that groups writing together 'evolve a shared understanding' and ultimately develop a coherent 'group voice'.

Ownership

Associated with the issue of voice is that of ownership of the product and how credit (or indeed blame) can be ascribed or claimed (Lunsford & Ede 1990; Forman 1991; Trimbur & Braun 1992). Lunsford and Ede report how they were warned by colleagues that publishing collaboratively would jeopardise their chances of ever receiving favourable tenure decisions or promotions.

The issue of ownership was certainly a concern to some of the respondents:

- *Given we are academics, used to claiming 'ownership' of texts, there needs to be some recognition of the importance of the authorial position*

- *No intellectual ownership in terms of management*

On the other hand, there was some support for the notion of shared ownership, one respondent listing it as one of the strengths of collaborative writing.

As well as concern about ownership of the final product, there were also issues associated with when, how, and even if, ownership by the original author should be relinquished to the group and with the identity of the group ascribed authorship:

- *I felt that there was not enough respect for the author of the original draft*
- *More respect for the individual writing style of the original author(s)*

- When the agreement about…indicat[ing] which professional group had written the materials was inadvertently ignored, I felt very angry because that meant that none of us had any claim to the intellectual property in the document.

The issue of attribution of authorship is a difficult one. Acknowledgment of published writing is the everyday currency of academics and for that to be invisible or non-existent has significant consequences both for the academic's identity and status and for their promotion and further employment prospects. The practice arrived at within Learning Connection is group ownership of the generic resources, the production of which involve a high level of collaboration and extensive peer review. So far, there is still individual attribution of course-specific resources, these often being developed through collaboration of individual Learning Connection staff and Divisional academics.

Professional development

An important aspect of collaborative writing is the part it plays in the professional development of those involved. Casey et al. (1996 p.45) maintain that such activity provides a means by which those more experienced or more skilled can 'model expertise, provide coaching, and scaffold support for the novice in a subtle, professional way'. The collaborative process can help those writing together to 'stay fresh by discussing writing and seeing how other writers work' (Lunsford & Ede 1990, p.65).

According to Schon (1983), professionals engage in their practice more or less spontaneously, making decisions and choices by a process of tacit 'knowing-in-action', until they are somehow 'stimulated by surprise' and forced to reflect consciously on what they are doing. Until then, they function according to certain internalised rules and procedures 'that we cannot usually describe and of which we are often unaware' (p.53). In the case of collaborative writing, the 'surprise' can be the frameworks, ideas, challenges and questions that arise as part of the collaborative process. We may be forced to, in Schon's terms, reflect-in-action and reflect-on-action as we engage at a meta level with what, how and why we are writing or have written. This can lead to a 'reflective conversation' in which those

participating move progressively up a 'ladder of reflection' involving successive steps of acting (in this case some aspect of writing) and reflecting on that acting (Schon 1987). While Schon developed his model of reflective practice based on expert/novice interactions, the process may apply in situations of greater mutuality where the expert and novice roles are taken by whoever is appropriate at any given point in the process. This application of Schon's model is more in keeping with the principles of Action Learning, involving people who work together and which is based on the 'strong belief that we can learn [from each other] without experts, lecturers and specialists' (Weinstein 1999, p.34).

This kind of professional development has been an important aspect of the current study:

- o *I believe my writing skills are improving*

- o *Learned a lot from other team members*

- o *Developed better turn-taking strategies by watching others*
- o *Developed new skills*

- o *Ongoing learning from one another*

- o *Dialogues where we built on one another's ideas*

- o *Gave me an experience of working with another team; drew on my own experience (I felt I was contributing to and helping a colleague's work).*

The mutual professional development inherent in the collaborative writing process is being formalised by the counselling team in a project that uses Schon's models of reflective practice. This project is still in its early stages, but promises to be a creative and productive endeavour.

Overall assessment and where to from here

In response to the question 'Do you consider that, overall, the collaborative production of resources is a good way to go?', one respondent answered *Definitely,*

six said *Yes,* one *Yes, but…*and two gave somewhat more equivocal responses, *useful if…*and *It depends….* There were no outright negative responses to the question. Despite the many and varied pains along the way, the gains seem to have made the whole thing worthwhile. One respondent took the 'To what extent was this collaborative activity a positive, constructive experience for you?' question very literally, giving the answer *40%,* then adding earnestly, if not mathematically, *the positives outweighed the negative.*

Some of the elaborations on the overall responses include:

o *If the product is to be owned by the 'team', then I think the team needs to be involved in the process of development and review…I prefer to have feedback from others whose opinion I respect to ensure that I have not 'missed something' and to make sure that the message is clear and accessible to my target audience*

o *Ultimately the benefits of process and product outweigh the bad.*

o *It depends on the context and the desired outcomes. I don't think a written product is necessarily of better quality purely because it was collaboratively written. It's a good way to go in the hands of committed and experienced people, but not always the best way.*

Respondents had suggestions to offer in relation to how the process might work better for them:

o *To make the process more effective (and less traumatic at times), a mutually agreed process should be followed, perhaps with a smaller group, and ample recognition given to the initiators (original authors) of the first drafts.*

o *Quarantined time is respected and acknowledgment of effort, admin. support in the typing, formation etc., reasonable timelines.*

o *Groups of 4 rather than 8 – too hard to work with so many people at the same time – especially when new team players joined the group. Set up agreed norms to start with.*

- o *I think that collaboration needs to be focussed on specific steps of the writing process, i.e. at the beginning for brainstorming ideas and perhaps before it goes to the resources review group for editing. If there is need for materials to be developed collaboratively the number of people collaborating could be limited to 3.*

Commonly the recommendations included smaller working groups, clear and agreed norms and processes and appropriate allocation of resources especially time.

At around the same time as this study was being carried out, something else was happening in relation to the collaborative writing and review processes of Learning Connection. Management decided to set up a Resources Review Group comprising five members, one from each of the professional groups making up Learning Connection. Its task is to develop consistent guidelines and procedures for and generally oversee the ongoing production of print and online resources. It is envisaged that the membership of this group will be somewhat fluid to allow both input and skill development by those who are part of the group for some period of time. The group is still in its early stages, however it has developed terms of reference and a resource production procedure, which are attached as Appendix 2. The findings of the study will be sent to this group, and to Learning Connection management and staff with the anticipation that the ideas and suggestions it contains may inform future practice in relation to collaborative writing in Learning Connection.

This study has identified some of the bits involved in collaborative writing and addressed some of the issues of the immediate context. There still remains the bigger 'so what' question of what does it all mean? In order to start exploring this question it might be worth going back to Lunsford and Ede's (1990) nameless patterns with the insight of Borden's (1992) distinction between 'real' collaboration and division of labour. There are more possibilities than just hierarchical and dialogic.

There is what we might call a Jigsaw model, where individuals work on separate bits, then bring them together, moving the pieces around, trimming off their edges, making internal adjustments, getting them to fit. Then there is a kind of Pass the

Parcel, where the thing gets passed serially between two or more people, each doing something to it. A Critique model where the critic assesses the product at the final or some interim stage, the writer responding to the critique, the process being either one way or reciprocal. A Procrustean model where someone is responsible for (or takes on the responsibility of) modifying the work of others to make it 'right'. A Working Bee model where people engage together creatively, constructively, perhaps conflictually, to generate the product. And a Tower of Babel model where coauthors make their individual contributions without reference to each other and without the mechanism (or capacity) for hearing each others' contributions. And probably more.

There may be various combinations of these models at the various stages of the writing process. Interleaving these ways of collaborating are dynamics of power and control. Who decides how and what happens? Are the decisions imposed or consensual? Are they made on the basis of position, personality or prestige? What other dynamics shape the functioning of the group processes?

And finally, having identified the possibilities of what might happen and how, there are questions around which models and processes suit which kinds of tasks, for which kinds of people, in which kinds of contexts. It seems that collaborative writing is here to stay for us as professionals, as academics or as students. What is needed is a conceptual framework and theory of collaborative writing that can be translated into effective and satisfying practice.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

1 What do you see as the strengths of developing online resources collaboratively?

2. What do you see as the weaknesses of developing online resources collaboratively?

3. To what extent was this collaborative activity a positive, constructive experience for you?

What factors contributed to that?

4. To what extent was this collaborative activity a negative, destructive experience for you?

What factors contributed to that?

5. What alternative procedures, if any, would you favour over collaborative writing? Why?

6. Do you consider that, overall, the collaborative production of resources is a good way to go?

Please elaborate:

7. What would help make the process better from your perspective?

Appendix 2

Learning Connection Resources Review Group

Terms of Reference

Group members have drafted the following terms of reference, which have been approved by the management team. The Resources Review Group aims to:

- Ensure quality, consistency and inclusivity in the content and form of Learning Connection resources
- Provide feedback to the professional teams on the range of resources being produced

- Through the review process, provide professional development in the production of resources

- Ensure the resources meet the diverse needs of students and staff by including the perspectives of different professional groups
- Expedite resource development

Review Process

A recommended process for the development and review of resources has also been generated and this will go to professional teams for discussion and feedback. It is understood that the process may need modification as it is translated into practice. The following full process is recommended for new resources; that is, teaching and learning guides or online workshops on completely new topics (as the Recording of Achievements documents were) or a suite of resources in a new form (such as the ISAS Information sheets). Parts of this process may be bypassed when the resources are adaptations of already existing resources (see below for modified process).

Stage One – consultation in professional team

1. Idea for resource generated from:

    • Service contract

    • Requests from Divisions, Units or other groups within the University

    • Individuals/groups within Learning Connection

    • Student request

    • Management

2. Proposal agreed to and prioritised by professional team.

3. Reviewer/s (possibly including Divisional or other staff) nominated by the professional team.*

4. Proposal circulated by professional team to other managers, liaison personnel and chair of the Resources Review Group to identify opportunities for collaboration and avoid unnecessary duplication.

5. Framework of form and content developed in consultation with professional group and relevant stakeholders.

[* For example, it is necessary for a resource requested by Divisional academic staff to be reviewed by at least one of the lecturers. The question then is when that review should occur. There is an argument for taking drafts to all reviewers early, but an equally strong argument for waiting until the document is a certain standard before submitting it to 'external' review. Professional team managers may need to decide according to the particular situation]

Stage Two – Authoring

6. Author produces first draft in accordance with resource development guidelines

7. First draft to nominated Learning Connection reviewers for comment and return

8. Second draft to manager and professional group for peer review and return

Stage Three – Final stages of review

9. Third (and subsequent) draft/s to Resources Review Group for comment

10. Authors will be invited to attend a meeting and receive feedback in person. Alternatively, they can meet with one member of the group, who will relay feedback from the whole group. Authors can also elect to receive written feedback only, or written feedback in addition to feedback in person.

11. Last draft from step 9 to any stakeholder/s external to Learning Connection

12. Final draft sent to manager, cc to liaison person (if relevant) and author, recommending publication

Modified Process

This process may be modified when an existing resource is being updated or adapted. If this is the case, and only minor modifications are being made (eg changes of dates, assignment numbers etc or update of a resource published annually) then the final draft can bypass the Review Group and go straight to the professional team manager. This will often apply to course specific online workshops that mirror other course specific workshops already developed. However, if there have been major changes to the content, wording and/or structure, the manager may still refer the resource to the Review Group for response.

References

Barker, L., Wahlers, K., Watson, K. & Kibler, R 1987, *Groups in Process: An Introduction to Small Group Communication*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs:

Bernstein, D., Jonson, J. & Smith, K 2000, 'An examination of the implementation of peer review of teaching', *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, vol. 83, pp. 73-86.

Borden, C. 1992, 'Collaboration, for better or worse', *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 133-143.Retrieved June 22, 2001from MasterFILE Elite.

Bruffee, K 1983, 'Writing and reading as collaborative or social acts', in *The Writer's Mind: Writing as a Mode of Thinking*, eds J. Hays, P. Roth, J. Ramsey, & R. Foulke, NCTE, Urbaba.

Casey, C., Branwold, D. & Cargille, E. 1996, 'A model for peer review in instructional design', *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 32-51.

Couture, B. & Rymer, J. 1989, 'Interactive writing on the job: Definitions and implications of "collaboration"', in M. Kogan *Writing in the Business Profession,* NCTE, Urbana.

Cross, G. 1990,. 'A Bakhtinian exploration of factors affecting the collaborative writing of an executive letter of an annual report', *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 173-203.

Ewald, H & MacCallum, V. 1990, 'Promoting collaborative tension within collaborative writing groups' *Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 23-26.

Fontaine, S. 1995, 'With writers' eyes: Perceptions and change in manuscript review procedures' *Rhetoric Review*. Vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 259-264.

Forman, J. 1991, 'Collaborative business writing: A Burkean perspective for future research', *Journal of Business Communication*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 233-257.

George, R. & Hicks, M. 2000, 'Changing context, changing practice: Managing change in student support services', ASET/HERDSA joint international conference, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, 2-5 July.

Haaga, D. 1993, 'Peer review of term papers in graduate psychology courses', *Teaching of Psychology*, vol. 20, no.1, pp. 28-32.

Harris,M. 1992, 'Collaboration is not collaboration is not collaboration: Writing center tutorials vs. peer-response groups', *College composition and Communication*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 369-383.

Hicks M. & George, R. 2001, 'Making connections: the changing identity of learning support at the University of South Australia' conference paper to be presented at the Language and Academic Skills conference, Wollongong, 29-30 November.

Hunter, S. 1995, 'The case for reviewing as collaboration and response', *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 13, no.2, pp.265-272.

Keig, L. & Waggoner, M. 1995, 'Peer review of teaching: Improving college instruction through formative assessment', *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 51-83.

Lay, M. 1992, 'The androgynous collaborator: The impact of gender studies on collaboration', in *New Visions of Collaborative Writing,* ed J. Forman, Boynton/Cook, Portsmouth.

Learning Connection: Portfolio of Services (n.d.) Retrieved September 4, 2001, from the World Wide Web: http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/staff.htm

Locker, K. 1992, 'What makes a collaborative writing team successful', in *New Visions of Collaborative Writing,* ed J. Forman, Boynton/Cook, Portsmouth.

Lunsford, A & Ede, L. 1990, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale & Edwardsville.

Mendonca, C 1994, 'Peer review negotiations: Revision activities in ESL writing instruction', *TESOL Quarterly,* vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 745-769.

Mignon, C. & Langsam, D. 1999, 'Peer review and post-tenure review', *Innovative and Higher Education*, vol. 24, no.1, pp. 49-59.

Moxon, P. 1993, *Building a better team: A handbook for managers and facilitators*, Gower, Alsershot.

Murau, A. 1993, 'Shared writing: Students' perceptions and attitudes of peer review', *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 71-79.

Napier, R. & Gershenfeld, M. 1993, *Groups: Theory and Experience*, 5th edn, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Over, R. 1994, 'Use of peer review by the Australian research Council', *Australian Universities Review*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 31-35.

Porter, J. 1990, 'Ideology and collaboration in the classroom and in the corporation', *Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 18-22.

Quinlan, K. 1995, 'Faculty perspectives on peer review', *Thought and Action*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 5-22.

Riley, J. 1984, 'An explanation of drafting behaviours in the production of distance education materials', *British Journal of Educational Technology*, vol. 15, no.3, pp. 226-238.

Rogers, P. & Horton, M. 1992, 'Exploring the value of face-to-face collaboration', in *New Visions of Collaborative Writing,* ed J. Forman, Boynton/Cook, Portsmouth.

Schon, D. 1983, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Basic Books, New York.

Schon, D. 1987, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Vatalaro, P. 1990, 'Putting students in charge of peer review', *Journal of Teaching Writing*, vol.9, no. 1, pp. 21-29.

Weinstein, K. 1999, *Action Learning: A Practical Guide*, Gower, Aldershot.

Woodhouse, D. 2001, *Australian Universities Quality Agency: Audit Manual: July 2001 Draft Edition (Version O).*