Writing groups and the library: Building community and supporting scholarship

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Anna Craft

She / Her / Hers

Coordinator of Scholarly Communications

UNCG University Libraries

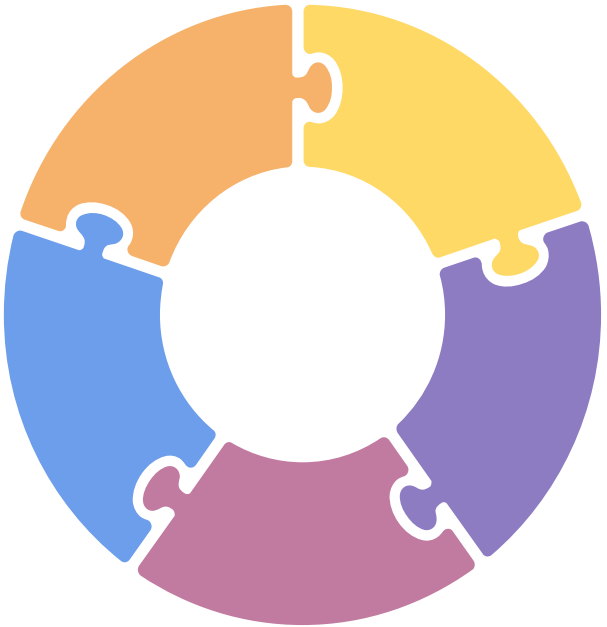
Rachel Olsen

She / Her / Hers

Social Sciences Librarian,
UNCG University Libraries

Welcome! Today we're going to talk about:

1. Writing and the library
2. Writing groups
3. Writing groups at UNCG:
    a. Library Writing Group
    b. Agraphia
4. Wrap-up / resources



But first, a mentimeter!

Go to www.menti.com

- Enter the code **8575 3939**

- Or - scan the QR code

- Or - Go to this direct link:

https://www.menti.com/aluzvqktiby3

Results link

why is writing so

- why is writing so **hard**
- why is writing so **important**
- why is writing so **hard for me**
- why is writing so **powerful**
- why is writing so **difficult**
- why is writing so **hard reddit**
- why is writing so **exhausting**
- why is writing so **hard with adhd**
- why is writing so **important for students**
- why is writing so **hard for students**

Google Search I'm Feeling Lucky

1

Writing & the library

Looking for a library job?

Many position descriptions include writing skills within job requirements and/or preferred qualifications

Library employers are looking for:

- “Evidence of effective oral, written and social communication skills”
- “Demonstrated ability to effectively express ideas, policies, and plans verbally and in writing”
- “Highly effective oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills”
- “Excellent interpersonal and verbal and written communication skills”
- “Exceptional written and verbal communication skills and attention to detail”

Successful candidates may be expected to:

- “Communicate and interact effectively, orally, and in writing, with internal and external stakeholders”
- “Design and write products describing the findings of specialized research projects”
- “Develop, write, and coordinate Library grant application submissions; monitor grant performance”
- “Research, analyze, and summarize data and prepare accurate and logical written reports”
- “Write and create web content that supports all aspects of the library’s web presence”

What are we writing in the library?

- Scholarship: articles, books, conference presentations, etc
- Personnel reviews
- Annual reports
- Research guides, LibGuides, etc
- Instruction materials
- Workflow/process documentation
- Marketing content
- Training materials
- Grant proposals
- And much more!!

What are library users writing?

- Classwork
- Research papers
- Theses and dissertations
- Resumes, cover letters, job applications
- Business proposals
- Creative writing
- Social media content
- Emails
- Grant applications, financial aid applications
- It could be literally anything

How can we support writers in the library?

Including those who work in the library, and those who don't

Libraries supporting writers

- Collecting, sharing (and sometimes creating!) materials and resources
- Having spaces available for writers to work
- Hosting and leading writing classes
- Hosting and leading writing groups
- Partnerships with writing centers
- And more!

writing group

- writing group**s**
- writing group**s near me**
- writing group**s online**
- writing group**s for beginners**
- writing group**s for beginners near me**
- writing group **names**
- writing group**s in my area**
- writing group **activities**
- writing group **prompts**
- writing group **ideas**

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2

Writing groups

What might writing groups do?

- Create community around the shared experience of writing
- Share work and provide feedback
- Write together
- Read and discuss articles, books, or other pieces related to writing
- Set and track writing goals
- Discuss writing craft, techniques, tools, challenges, etc
- And more?

Writing groups can take different forms

- Accountability /goal-setting
- Critique / feedback
- Support
- Write-together

Some writing groups may incorporate components of more than one of these types

Accountability / goal-setting group

- Members set and share goals, discuss progress, and hold each other accountable in working to meet goals
- Goal-sharing could be online or in-person, and might be synchronous or asynchronous
- Goals might be set in a certain format (ex: SMART goals)

Critique / feedback group

- Members share work and give and receive feedback (could be online or in-person)
- These groups may be highly structured with guidelines about when and what members should submit, and how and what kind of feedback will be provided
- With these groups, it is especially important that members have a shared understanding of content and/or forms that are and are not acceptable for the group

Support group

- These groups create community around the experience of writing
- Members in these groups might meet to share writing-related tools and strategies and discuss challenges and other issues
- These could be in-person or virtual meetings

Write-together group

- Members meet in a shared space (online or in-person) and work on writing projects
- Projects could be shared or entirely separate
- This format is also sometimes referred to as an accountability group, in that members are holding each other accountable to show up and work on their writing during that time

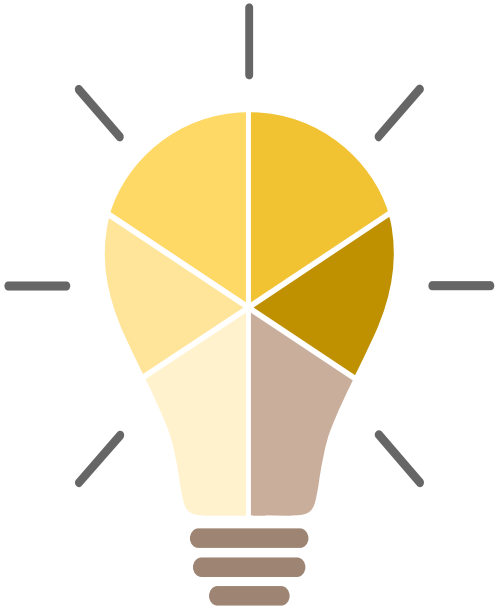
You don’t need to be an “expert” to facilitate a writing group, and it doesn’t have to be a long-term commitment

Groups can be set up to meet for a finite amount of time: “a semester,” “eight sessions,” “twelve weeks,” etc.

After a cohort or session ends, the group can break, then reassemble for another cycle. This can take some pressure off the facilitator to keep things going indefinitely, and off the participants who might not want a long-term obligation. This can also help manage group size, if that is a concern.

When setting up a new group…

- The group leader or facilitator could set some initial structure and guidelines in advance, then work with members to understand needs and expectations and to agree on parameters
- Not all groups will meet all needs, and that's ok!
- The UNC Chapel Hill Writing Center has online resources for writing groups, including a starter kit



And remember, not every group is going to be right for every writer

Individual needs, projects, interests, personalities, and availabilities can vary wildly.

One challenge with new groups can be developing and coming to consensus on shared guidelines and expectations.

what do writing groups

- what do writing groups **do**
- what **are** writing groups
- what do**es** writing **workshop look like**
- what do**es** writing **workshop mean**
- what do **writers** groups do
- what **are** writing **workshops**
- what **are** writing **classes called**
- **how** do writing **workshops work**
- what do **creative** writing **classes teach**
- **how** do writing groups **work**

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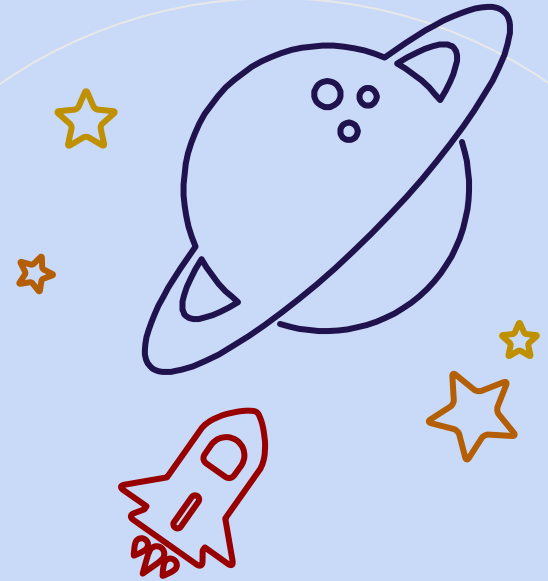
3

Writing groups at UNCG



Library Writing Group

What is the library writing group?

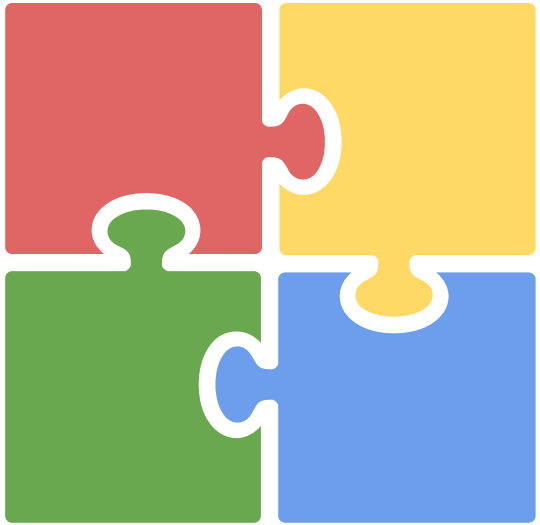
- Previous iterations existed prior to 2019, including a group of UNCG and NC A&T librarians who used to meet
- Re-launched in 2019
- The goal is to create a shared space in which attendees can set goals, share progress, and solicit feedback and advice from others in the group
- Writing projects vary widely!

Logistics

- Library-wide email each semester
- Two informal meetings each month
  - Checking in, article or chapter discussion
  - “Free-write session”
- Past readings have come from *The Chronicle,* Paul Silvia’s *How to Write a Lot,* books from ALA and ACRL Press, and more!

Library writing group: Challenges

- Scheduling, scheduling, scheduling
- Difficulty soliciting readings for the group to do together
- Keeping things informal while still trying to help folks stay accountable



Benefits for attendees:

- Members of the group are at many different stages of their careers and as writers
- Giving advice about specific publication venues, conferences, etc. is common and helpful
- Meetings are hybrid, which offers attendees options for attending based on comfort level

Agraphia

What is Agraphia?

- Writing accountability, goal-setting, and support group for UNCG faculty
- All disciplines welcome; writing projects and goals take many forms
- Weekly meeting to review progress on previous goals and set new ones (30 min or less, via Zoom)
- Attendance is always optional
- No shame for not meeting goals (except self-inflicted)

Agraphia, continued

- Founded circa 2004/2005 by UNCG Psychology Professor Cheryl Logan; led for many years by UNCG Psychology Professor Paul Silvia
- Agraphia met weekly at a coffee shop near UNCG's campus for years. When it became difficult to get space there, the group moved to Jackson Library (2019)
- In March of 2020, Agraphia moved online and has continued meeting virtually since then

How do faculty find out about Agraphia?

- Faculty Writing Community (Canvas Group)
- Word-of-mouth
- Discussion at campus events
- ???

Agraphia: logistics:

- At the start of Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters, we use a WhenIsGood poll to select the meeting time for that semester
- I have been scheduling and facilitating the meetings since 2019, but if I'm not there, any attendee can facilitate
- Meetings are held in Zoom (soon switching to Teams…)
- Goals are entered in a shared Google Doc (it dates back to 2020 and is now 98+ pages…)

Agraphia goals example:

9/26/2023

Anna:

- Met goal of starting slide deck, now need to finish draft of slide deck for NCLA presentation #1
- Complete draft of external review letter

[redacted]

- Working on [redacted] paper
- Preparing abstract for [redacted] meeting in the spring - get this submitted
- Check collaborator's summary statement

[redacted]

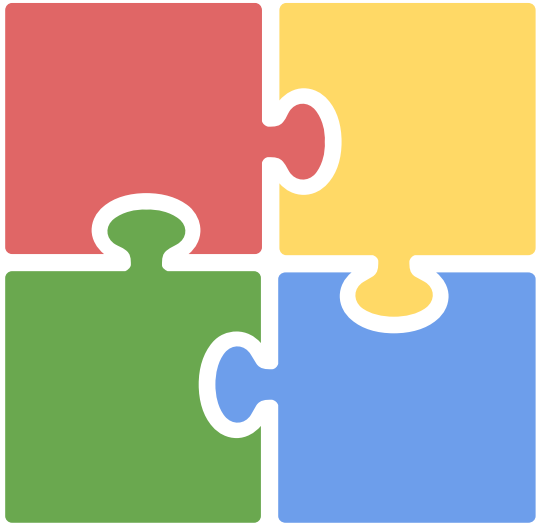
- Wretched [redacted] paper is hanging on - finish last paragraphs and send to collaborators

[redacted]

- Project with vice-chancellor - need to submit IRB

Agraphia: challenges

- The main difficulty for this group has been scheduling - it has never been possible to find a time that works for everyone who is interested in attending
- Finding a physical space for meetings also caused some challenges when we were meeting in person
- For new groups, recruiting could also be a challenge



Benefits for attendees:

- Writing project accountability and encouragement
- Sense of community
- Space to casually connect with other faculty members
- Opportunities to ask questions, learn about resources, reality-check about campus and professional experiences
- Occasionally there have been pizza get togethers

Benefits for me:

- Build connections with campus faculty that I might not otherwise meet
- Learn about the scholarship areas, challenges, and needs of current faculty
- Connect faculty members with services & resources offered by the Libraries
- The work of facilitating this group only involves ~15-30 min most weeks; a bit more at the start of each semester when polling and scheduling meetings

Google
how do i start a writing group
how to start a writing group
how to start a writers group
how to start a creative writing group
Google Search
I'm Feeling Lucky
Report inappropriate predictions

4

Resources & Info

Want to start a writing group?

- UNC Chapel Hill Writing Center:
  - Online resources for writing groups
  - Writing Group Starter Kit
- Saint Louis University: Writing Group Starter Kit
- Texas A&M University Writing Center: Start a Writing Group
- UCLA Graduate Writing Center: Running an Effective Writing Group

Want to find a writing group?

- Check with your library!
  - Ex: Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
- North Carolina Writers' Network
  - Events list
- Do you have a local bookstore? Check with them about writing groups/events
- You can also find groups online through Facebook, Meetup.com, and other venues

Looking for further writing resources?

- Open access textbooks / open educational resources:
  - *Bad Ideas About Writing*, edited by Cheryl E. Ball and Drew M. Lowe, West Virginia University, 2017.
  - *Style for Students Online*, Joe Schall, Pennsylvania State University, 2016.
  - *Writing Commons*, Joseph M. Moxley, University of South Florida,* (various editions, 2003-present) (*the author is faculty at USF, but the project is separate from USF)
- Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab)
- NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month): Resources

More resources: books

- Chavez, F. R. (2021). *The anti-racist writing workshop: how to decolonize the creative classroom*. Chicago, Haymarket Books.
- Dillard, A. (1990). *The writing life*. London, Picador.
- King, S. (2010). *On writing: a memoir of the craft*. New York, Scribner.
- Lamott, A. (1994). *Bird by bird: some instructions on writing and life*. New York, Pantheon Books.
- Silvia, P. J. (2018). *How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing*. American Psychological Association.
- Tate, C. (1984). *Black women writers at work*. New York, Continuum.

What writing-related resources do you recommend?

If you have ideas, please share them with this Padlet: https://go.uncg.edu/S2ML5M

Thanks!

- **Anna:** arcraft@uncg.edu
- **Rachel:** rcsander@uncg.edu
- **Slides:** https://go.uncg.edu/s22d5r

Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by SlidesCarnival
- Photographs by Unsplash