

Evidence-Based Recommendations for Library Writing Groups

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Writing groups in academic libraries and clinical health settings can support faculty in research and scholarship requirements. Faculty in these settings typically have scheduled, location-fixed obligations. Writing groups can provide focused time or other support for research, writing, and creative activities. These groups can foster collaboration within and beyond their units by presenting opportunities to find co-authors or draw on expertise and resources from specialists across their institution. Literature in librarianship and health sciences provides guidance for creating and operating writing groups. Two studies of best practice and research supports were synthesized to create an evaluation tool for group formation and assessment. This was then applied to published case studies in the two fields and to the authors' own writing group. That criteria was used to evaluate the group and identify areas of improvement, such as utilizing colleagues' expertise.

Introduction

Academic job positions, particularly faculty positions, often come with a requirement to write and publish. Support structures for this work may arise, formally and informally, across many kinds of academic institutions and fields, as documented in the literature about writing groups. The authors developed one such writing support group for members of the University Library System, based on an experience collaborating with an institution-wide writing support group for faculty at the University of Pittsburgh. The Writing and Creation Group (W&C) formed in summer 2020 as an ad hoc, faculty-driven, and informal initiative, but members immediately found it beneficial to their careers.

A small number of active W&C group members began looking at case studies of other library writing groups for inspiration and guidance on activities and structures. In addition to case studies, two articles offered further recommendations for writing group formation and activities (Ackerman et al., 2018; Campbell et al., 2011). These

recommendations formed the basis of an evaluation tool for writing groups, which was then applied to case studies of library-based groups. To increase the breadth of case studies for analysis, clinical health faculty writing groups were added, due to many cross-citations in the library group literature to studies of clinical health groups. Both librarians and clinical faculty are often expected to prioritize practice-based duties while also contributing to scholarship.

Finally, the group's structure was analyzed with the tool. The reflection will compare the authors' experience to their findings, and then identify areas to implement these findings and create a more supportive writing group. A supportive writing group may foster increased productivity; however, the focus of this paper is on the support structures for such groups rather than their specific outcomes in terms of completed projects.

Literature review

Writing groups are a tool used at many higher education institutions to help faculty develop their writing skills and provide a mechanism for feedback with the aim of increasing publication production (McGrail et al., 2006). Formal versions of these groups are related to mentoring programs and focus on providing feedback on the content of the writing (Houfek et al., 2010; Salas-Lopez et al., 2012), while informal versions of these groups often focus on community building and reducing feelings of isolation among participants.

These groups' formats can vary. Exner and Houk (2010) described two writing groups, each at the libraries of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and North Carolina A&T State University (NCA&T). The group at UNCG formed an informal writing support group called *Agraphia*, inspired by a book by Paul Silvia (2007), which focused on accountability with short meetings dedicated to the description and sharing of writing goals. The group at NCA&T formed what they deemed a "Pub and Grub" model: a two-hour lunchtime block that began with a discussion of writing topics and goals and then proceeded to a writing session for the remaining time. These two models were designed for the needs of library faculty in different situations, and Exner and Houk suggest that a combination of the two models would potentially be effective. This combination can be seen in another model, Writing Accountability Groups (WAGs), described by Skarupski and Foucher (2018). The WAG approach focuses on accountability and developing routine rather than direct feedback on content, and encourages participants to develop regular, sustainable writing habits. The groups using this approach also provide a social support mechanism, which may lead to developing faculty vitality in a high-stress environment (Pololi et al., 2015).

For this review, many commonalities were found between articles describing groups formed for faculty librarians and those formed for clinical faculty. Overall, these groups are well-suited to faculty with practice-based responsibilities (for example, clinical hours for nurses, and desk or reference shifts for librarians), but without a PhD or other formal education in the practice of publishing. These faculty also generally feel pressure to research and publish based on organizational expectations (Van Schyndel et al., 2019). Such similarities contributed to time-making, information-sharing, and confidence-building being a prime mechanism for these groups.

Writing groups in libraries

The creation of writing groups in libraries often stems from librarians encountering barriers to their research practices. Blakesley (2016) summarizes this situation in her editorial piece "The Constraints of Practice, or We Work in Libraries, That's Why We Can't Do Research." Blakesley writes: "None of us have time or are particularly rewarded for concentrating on research" (p. 635). Librarians can be considered practitioners as well as researchers. Often, the daily tasks of librarianship do not align with research pursuits, or librarians attempt to align them by researching solutions to problems they encounter (Ackerman et al., 2018; Campbell et al., 2011). The issue of time is documented across library literature as a barrier. In a survey of roughly 200 librarians, Ackerman (2018) found that 75% of respondents said they felt they lacked the time to pursue research. In a study centered on librarians in the United

Kingdom, 80% responded that they lacked the time to engage in research (Clapton, 2010). With writing groups, accountability and protected time can be introduced to librarian researchers.

In practice, case studies of writing groups report a mix of accountability, feedback, and mentoring. Some libraries have formal mentoring programs that focus on helping untenured librarians achieve tenure, but which also have a writing component as part of their mentoring programs. One such example is the Untenured Librarians Club (un-TLC) program at Oakland University (Keyse et al., 2003). This mentoring group was led by library administrators with the goal of helping librarians understand and achieve tenure through group support, questions and answers, and assistance with finding publication and presentation outlets. Un-TLC provided article draft feedback as well as financial support to present at conferences. While writing was not the sole focus, this example shows how writing support within a formal mentoring group can also assist faculty librarians in overcoming barriers.

Ackerman et al. (2018) note from their survey of librarians that “only 38% of survey respondents had access to a writing group and 36% had access to a research mentoring program” (pp. 557–558). Of those who participated in writing groups (based in their library or on their campus), 40% found the groups to be very helpful (n=19) and 48% somewhat helpful (n=23). Six participants (12%) said that they were not helpful.

Twenty articles addressed writing programs in libraries, including twelve case studies of extant writing groups in libraries (an article by Exner and Houk (2010) included two distinct case studies). Other articles include research-based surveys and interviews that focused on writing practices and habits broadly, which informed the case studies’ analysis. All articles are listed in Table 1, with the type of article indicated.

Table 1

Literature on case studies of writing groups in libraries

Citation	Type of Article
Miller, J. P., & Benefiel, C. R. (1998). Academic librarians and the pursuit of tenure: The support group as a strategy for success. <i>College & Research Libraries</i> , 59(3), 260–265. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.59.3.260	Case Study
Mitchell, W. B., & Reichel, M. (1999). Publish or perish: A dilemma for academic librarians? <i>College & Research Libraries</i> , 60(3), 232–243. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.60.3.232	Survey
Tysick, C., & Babb, N. (2006). Perspectives On...Writing Support for Junior Faculty Librarians: A Case Study. <i>The Journal of Academic Librarianship</i> , 32(1), 94–100. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2005.10.005	Case Study
Bottorff, T., Glaser, R., Todd, A., & Alderman, B. (2008). Branching out: Communication and collaboration among librarians at multi-campus institutions. <i>Journal of Library Administration</i> , 48(3), 329–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930820802289391	Survey
Clapton, J. (2010). Library and information science practitioners writing for publication: Motivations, barriers and supports. <i>Library and Information Research</i> , 34(106), 7–21. https://doi.org/10.29173/lirg217	Survey
Exner, N., & Houk, A. H. (2010). Comparing two library scholarly development programs. <i>Library Leadership and Management</i> , 24(4), 178–182. https://doi.org/10.5860/llm.v24i4.1854	Case Study
Campbell, K., Ellis, M., & Adebajo, L. (2011). Developing a writing group for librarians: The benefits of successful collaboration. <i>Library Management</i> , 33(1/2), 14–21. https://doi.org/10.1108/01435121211203284	Case Study

Cirasella, J., & Smale, M. (2011). Peers don't let peers perish: Encouraging research and scholarship among junior library faculty. <i>Collaborative Librarianship</i> , 3(2). https://doi.org/10.29087/2011.3.2.07	Case Study
Fallon, H. (2012). Using a blended group learning approach to increase librarians' motivation and skills to publish. <i>New Review of Academic Librarianship</i> , 18(1), 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2012.654673	Case Study
Stilling, G. E. S. (2012). Learning to “light out after it with a club”: The story of a faculty learning community for scholarly writing. <i>College & Research Libraries News</i> , 73(7), 390–398. https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.73.7.8791	Case Study
Sullivan, D., Leong, J., Yee, A., Giddens, D., & Phillips, R. (2013). Getting published: Group support for academic librarians. <i>Library Management</i> , 34(8/9), 690–704. https://doi.org/10.1108/LM-03-2013-0026	Case Study
Smigielski, E. M., Laning, M. A., & Daniels, C. M. (2014). Funding, time, and mentoring: A study of research and publication support practices of ARL member libraries. <i>Journal of Library Administration</i> , 54(4), 261–276. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2014.924309	Survey
Halpern, R., Eaker, C., Jackson, J., & Bouquin, D. (2015). #DitchTheSurvey: Expanding methodological diversity in LIS research. <i>In the Library with the Lead Pipe</i> . https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/ditchthesurvey-expanding-methodological-diversity-in-lis-research/	Content Analysis
Vilz, A. J., & Poremski, M. D. (2015). Perceptions of support systems for tenure-track librarians. <i>College & Undergraduate Libraries</i> , 22(2), 149–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2014.924845	Survey
Blakesley, E. (2016). The constraints of practice, or we work in libraries, that's why we can't do research. <i>The Journal of Academic Librarianship</i> , 42(6), 635. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2016.10.014	Editorial
Snyder Broussard, M. J. (2016). Reexamining the benefits of librarians' professional writing. <i>College & Undergraduate Libraries</i> , 23(4), 427–441. https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2015.1025324	Review
Walters, W. H. (2016). The faculty subculture, the librarian subculture, and librarians' scholarly productivity. <i>portal: Libraries and the Academy</i> , 16(4), 817–843. https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2016.0054	Analysis
Ackerman, E., Hunter, J., & Wilkinson, Z. T. (2018). The availability and effectiveness of research supports for early career academic librarians. <i>The Journal of Academic Librarianship</i> , 44(5), 553–568. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2018.06.001	Survey
Harker, K. R., O'Toole, E., & Sassen, C. (2018). Assessing an academic library professional development program. <i>portal: Libraries and the Academy</i> , 18(1), 199–223. https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2018.0010	Case Study
Kennedy, M. R., & Brancolini, K. R. (2018). Academic librarian research: An update to a survey of attitudes, involvement, and perceived capabilities. <i>College & Research Libraries</i> , 79(6), 822–851. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.79.6.822	Survey

Writing groups for clinical health faculty

Several articles about writing groups in libraries cited literature about similar groups created for faculty with clinical duties in health sciences. These articles describe obstacles to writing and publishing for clinical faculty that

resemble those facing librarians, as did their formation and use of writing groups. Therefore, the examination of case studies includes clinical health groups to further understand the composition and benefits of writing groups.

Like the librarian group findings, Van Schyndel and colleagues (2019) noted in their literature review that "insufficient time and fragmented, sporadic effort on research and other projects was frequently reported by medical faculty members" (p. 487). In addition to scholarship, clinical faculty duties include "teaching, clinical supervision, course development and updating, university service responsibilities, and advising" (p. 487) as well as maintaining skills, or as Houfek et al. (2010) explain, "meeting licensure requirements for advanced practice or to generate income" (p. 41). Dhakal and Tornwall (2020) also cited insufficient scholarship skills, especially among faculty without PhDs. Regarding mentorship, Reader and colleagues (2015) observed that clinical faculty also "typically experience less mentoring regarding academic career development than do basic science and physician scientist faculty" (p. e44).

Writing groups were presented in the literature as solutions to these barriers. Shellenbarger and Gazza's (2020) survey of 12 nursing faculty members found that "feedback from other authors, such as faculty colleagues, mentors, journal editors, and peer reviewers fostered the informants' development as a scholarly writer," (p. 522) because of the accountability and collegiality associated with writing groups. Salas-Lopez and colleagues (2012) described how academic writing groups for clinical health practitioners inspired participants by sharing "innovations" and "what works" with each other. Van Schyndel et al. (2019) also found that writing groups often provide protected time for busy faculty.

As with the review of the literature documenting library groups, nine articles about writing groups were identified that included clinical health faculty with practice-based duties. Seven were case studies, one was a literature review, and one was interview-based research. These are listed in Table 2, with the type of article indicated.

Table 2
 Literature on case studies of writing groups in clinical health faculty

Citation	Type of Article
Houfek, J. F., Kaiser, K. L., Visovsky, C., Barry, T. L., Nelson, A. E., Kaiser, M. M., & Miller, C. L. (2010). Using a writing group to promote faculty scholarship. <i>Nurse Educator</i> , 35(1), 41–45. https://doi.org/10.1097/NNE.0b013e3181c42133	Case Study
Salas-Lopez, D., Deitrick, L., Mahady, E. T., Moser, K., Gertner, E. J., & Sabino, J. N. (2012). Getting published in an academic-community hospital: The success of writing groups. <i>Journal of General Internal Medicine</i> , 27(1), 113–116. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-011-1872-9	Case Study ¹
Brandon, C., Jamadar, D., Girish, G., Dong, Q., Morag, Y., & Mullan, P. (2015). Peer support of a faculty "writers' circle" increases confidence and productivity in generating scholarship. <i>Academic Radiology</i> , 22(4), 534–538. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acra.2014.12.006	Case Study
Reader, S., Fornari, A., Simon, S., & Townsend, J. (2015). Promoting faculty scholarship – An evaluation of a program for busy clinician-educators. <i>Canadian Medical Education Journal</i> , 6(1), e43–e60. https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.36666	Case Study
Fleming, L. W., Malinowski, S. S., Fleming, J. W., Brown, M. A., Davis, C. S., & Hogan, S. (2017). The impact of participation in a Research/Writing Group on scholarly pursuits by non-tenure track clinical faculty. <i>Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning</i> , 9(3), 486–490. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2016.12.004	Case Study

Von Isenburg, M., Lee, L. S., & Oermann, M. H. (2017). Writing together to get AHEAD: An interprofessional boot camp to support scholarly writing in the health professions. <i>Journal of the Medical Library Association</i> , 105(2). https://doi.org/10.5195/JMLA.2017.222	Case Study
Van Schyndel, J. L., Koontz, S., McPherson, S., Reese, C., Sarginson, D. R., Scoggins, L., Woods, R. A., & Wendler, M. C. (2019). Faculty support for a culture of scholarship of discovery: A literature review. <i>Journal of Professional Nursing</i> , 35(6), 480–490. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2019.05.001	Literature Review
Shellenbarger, T., & Gazza, E. A. (2020). The lived experience of nursing faculty developing as scholarly writers. <i>Journal of Professional Nursing</i> , 36(6), 520–525. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2020.04.016	Interview Research
Dhakai, K., & Tornwall, J. (2020). The Scholarship Circle: An introduction to writing for publication for nursing faculty. <i>Journal of the Medical Library Association</i> , 108(1). https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2020.685	Case Study

Framework for analysis

Recommendations

In addition to case studies, other articles set out recommendations for the structure, activities, and supports for writing groups. These recommendations were divided into case studies centered on librarians and clinical health faculty. The recommendations from the literature that informed the parameters set for the data will be discussed in this section.

An evaluation tool was developed to analyze case studies using two articles on writing group success and recommendations. Palmer and Matz (2006) identified seven traits of success as well as seven challenges to success (see Table 3). As an extension of these observations, Campbell et al. (2011) listed 11 recommendations for forming a collaborative writing group for academic librarians, including: identifying compatible members and appropriate venues for submitting projects, developing an appropriate writing style, meeting regularly, setting deadlines, and addressing organizational issues like funding and requirements for tenure and promotion. The clarity and relevance of these recommendations were identified as a strong basis for their evaluation tool. These recommendations and details are listed in Table 4.

Table 3

Palmer and Matz's (2006) traits of successful and unsuccessful writing groups

Successful Group Traits	Unsuccessful Group Traits
Introduction to Publication Expectation	Inadequate Personal Time Management
Supportive Department Heads	Overwhelming Committee Assignments
Flexible Scheduling	Underrepresentation of the importance of publishing
Supportive Peers	Poor definition of publishing requirements in tenure and promotion standards

Supportive Administrators	Absence of an effective road map
Supportive Working Environment	Role models are hard to find
Supportive Finances	“Nothing new under the sun”

Table 4

Campbell et al.’s (2011) recommendations and details for successful writing groups

Recommendation	Details
Identify compatible people	Collaboration should not feel forced Find colleagues with similar work habits or who work and write well together
Identify appropriate projects for conferences or papers	Consider the conference theme and audience in your submission, along with logistics of attending if accepted Apply feedback from rejection letters in article revisions
Identify potential venues for the submission	Helpful to identify potential venues early in the process You may need to revise an article for a journal’s specific audience
Develop a writing style that is appropriate for the publication	Follow the writing style guidelines for the journal or conference If different members write different sections, one person should check for cohesion throughout
Meet regularly	To ensure a project stays on schedule, weekly meetings are ideal For the writing group described, meeting outside of the library was important for their success
Use deadlines	Deadlines ensure that work is completed in a timely manner by helping the group stay on task
Use the tools you have	Use the technology that your institution offers One shared workspace allows group members to keep track of progress Citation management tools can also be helpful when working in a group
Have fun	Keep up group morale; celebrate successes of group and group members
Funding for collaboration	Travel funding will be decided by administration and may be limited. Be ready to determine who in the group gets to attend which conference
The price of success	Funding allotments may result in jealousy

	<p>A group attending a conference may also lead to scheduling stress as desk shifts, instruction, or other responsibilities require coverage</p> <p>Juggling academic work, committee assignments, and articles or presentations may be overwhelming</p>
Be aware of institutional/departmental culture	<p>Librarians can have different disciplinary backgrounds with differing approaches to collaboration</p> <p>Keep in mind how your institution views collaborative vs. individual works for promotion</p>

Formal institutional support

Discussions of “institutional support” for writing groups arose as a frequent theme in the case studies. These supports were initially characterized as “use the tools you have;” however, because of their frequency and importance, this theme was separated into its own category. Types of formal institutional support that surfaced in the case studies included appointing facilitators to the group who had specific training and responsibilities for professional development (Sullivan et al., 2013), obtaining a grant to hire coordinators and bring in guest speakers for a clinical faculty writing group (Reader et al., 2015), and formalizing the group as part of an academic association or society (Cirasella & Smale, 2011; Harker et al., 2018). Institutional support also appeared in the form of protected time and space for working on writing and professional development (Reader et al., 2015; Von Isenburg et al., 2017).

Formal institutional support, whether financial or organizational, makes the labor of writing feel valued and can improve results for group participants (Smigielski et al., 2014; Sword, 2017). In particular, Ackerman et al. (2018) argued that to be successful in research and publishing, librarians need “supports that target three dimensions of the research experience: research design and methods; work practices and accountability; and emotional elements” (p. 553). They identified a list of institutional research supports available to librarians: accommodating research time in librarians' schedules, sabbaticals, research funding or grants, formal mentoring programs, writing and support groups, research training, and access to specialists for data or statistics. They then surveyed 213 academic librarians with three primary questions – what research supports these librarians had access to, which ones they used, and which were most helpful. Less than half of the respondents had access to most of the formal supports identified. Many respondents (78%) indicated that they had access to “informal mentoring,” a category that was discarded by the researchers, because the relationship and makeup of these informal mentoring programs were unclear with varying levels of support.

Ackerman et al. (2018) also tested which formal research supports had an impact on librarians' confidence levels. They found that two parameters were associated with slightly larger increases in confidence: being granted time off for research and using a statistical consultant. Protected time for research and writing is also a common feature for the clinical faculty groups. Von Isenberg et al. (2017) described having protected time for writing during “Shut Up and Write” sessions and access to vouchers for professional editorial review services as highly valued components of their Writing Together and Writing Boot Camp programs at Duke University. Similarly, Reader and colleagues (2015) considered protected writing time as a key component for the success of their clinical faculty writing group. However, Ackerman et al. (2018) note that taking advantage of any formal research support increased librarians' confidence levels.

With the importance of formal institutional support demonstrated in the literature, Ackerman et al.'s (2018) list of institutional research supports were added to the comparison of writing group case studies. The six relevant supports are accommodating research time in librarians' schedules, sabbaticals, research funding or grants, formal

mentoring programs, research training, and access to specialists for data or statistics. The seventh research support mentioned in their list, writing and support groups, was omitted due to the nature of the case studies.

Case Study Analysis: Comparison of the recommendations and institutional support for the two populations

Case studies of writing groups in librarianship and health practitioner fields were organized in a table to visualize themes based on Campbell et al.'s (2011) recommendations with an additional category to document when any of the formal research supports described by Ackerman et al. (2018) in the case studies. Their six research supports are broken out in Table 6 to track which were available across the two sections of the data.

The 19 articles marked as “Case Study” in Tables 1 and 2 are included in the data, including 12 case studies from libraries and seven from clinical settings. In the tabulation of recommendations, notations were made as follows:

- Yes: Case study clearly mentions recommendations or research supports.
- No: Case study states a recommendation or research support was not incorporated.
- Blank: Case study does not mention a recommendation or support. This did not mean the factor was not present, only that it was not mentioned in the article.
- Maybe: Case study included an aspect of a recommendation in a vague way. For instance, details were not present to show a recommendation was universally applied. To acknowledge the efforts of these writing groups, “Maybe” notations were grouped with “Yes” notations in the final tabulation.

Among the case studies involving librarians, programs varied in scope and structure. Campbell et al.'s (2011) recommendations as described apply most clearly to groups collaborating on single works of scholarship, whereas many of the groups in the literature provided support and feedback for others' individual manuscripts or projects. Highly structured groups adhered to schedules and methods. For instance, an interdisciplinary faculty learning community utilized a textbook and readings as discussion topics, leading up to manuscript reviews (Stilling, 2012). A schedule was also followed in a mentoring program of Irish academic librarians, with regular deadlines for incremental progress on a manuscript and peer feedback sessions at the midpoint and end of the program (Fallon, 2012).

Other groups brought in guest speakers with expertise in writing or publishing for lectures or workshops (Cirasella & Smale, 2011; Fallon, 2012; Harker et al., 2018; Miller & Benefiel, 1998; Sullivan et al., 2013). Within these groups, time was also spent in informal conversations about the writing process, sharing progress on current projects, and providing feedback (Cirasella & Smale, 2011; Miller & Benefiel, 1998; Sullivan et al., 2013). Case studies of less-structured groups— those centered on writing, offering feedback, or reporting progress— also noted the benefit of participants' conversations and collegiality (Exner & Houk, 2010; Tysick & Babb, 2006).

In the clinical practitioners' case studies, writing groups also engaged in varied activities and routines. Several included lectures, meetings, or activities focused on specific aspects of writing and publishing (Dhakal & Tornwall, 2020; Reader et al., 2015; Von Isenburg et al., 2017). Others were designed as an opportunity for sharing ideas, drafts, and feedback. The University of Mississippi Research/Writing Group met monthly for this purpose, while also setting progress deadlines for accountability (Fleming et al., 2017). University of Michigan radiology faculty in the Writers' Circle met informally with the sole objective to provide support and feedback on revisions (Brandon et al., 2015). Reader and colleagues (2015) noted that in addition to work on manuscripts, the process of conceptualizing, creating, and presenting academic posters was part of their federally-funded Scholars Program.

A group of University of Nebraska Medical Center faculty from the College of Nursing followed agreed-upon guidelines to read and review excerpts from participants' writing each week (Houfek et al., 2010). Throughout this initiative, “comentorship” – peers in similar situations exchanging support and advice – was prevalent. Peer support

was also a key part of the hospital-based writing group described by Salas-Lopez and colleagues (2012), in which academic and non-academic colleagues worked together on research and writing for co-authored manuscripts. Focused writing sessions were part of some of the accountability groups (Dhakal & Tornwall, 2020; Reader et al., 2015; Von Isenburg et al., 2017).

Table 5
Recommendations mentioned in case studies

Recommendations	Library (n=12)	Clinical (n=7)	Total (n=19)
Identify compatible members	75%	100%	84%
Identify appropriate projects	42%	100%	63%
Identify potential venues	42%	86%	58%
Develop writing style	17%	71%	37%
Meet regularly	83%	100%	89%
Use deadlines	50%	57%	53%
Use tools you have	50%	86%	63%
Have fun	67%	57%	63%
Funding	25%	0%	16%
Understand "the price for success"	17%	0%	16%
Accommodate varying culture	50%	14%	37%
Formal support	33%	57%	42%

Table 6
Formal research supports available

Supports	Library (n=12)	Clinical (n=7)	Total (n=19)
Accommodating research time in schedule	58%	57%	58%
Sabbaticals	8%	0%	5%
Research funding/grants	17%	43%	26%

Formal mentoring program	25%	29%	26%
Research training	42%	57%	47%
Access to data/stats specialists	0%	29%	11%

Discussion: Group structure recommendations

Both librarian and clinical faculty groups overwhelmingly followed the recommendation of identifying compatible members with 75% of the identified librarian groups and 100% of the clinical groups. The next most common recommendation was regular meetings with 83% of the librarian groups and 100% of the clinical groups meeting regularly.

The least adopted recommendation across all groups was understanding “the price of success.” Campbell et al. (2011) described this factor as the understanding that group collaboration could lead to authors being pulled away from service desks, potentially creating resentment among staff covering their shifts. Very few (n=2) of the studies mentioned this being a part of their writing group, and this absence could be attributed to institutional culture or choosing not to discuss this factor. Additionally, both mentions in case studies were from libraries, not medical settings.

The other recommendations were observed with differing frequencies. Among librarian writing groups, having fun was the next most frequent, followed by using deadlines, using available tools, and accommodating varying institutional culture. These recommendations reflect librarian needs identified in other literature. The idea of having fun contributes to groups’ emotional support to authors. The use of deadlines reinforces the need to protect research time for librarians who are balancing research with their job duties. The use of available tools seems to reflect librarians’ lack of confidence in their research skills, indicating that there is a need to use what is available to help increase those skills and, therefore, confidence.

For librarian groups, the appropriate writing style recommendation was not followed. This may be due to the structure of the Campbell et al. (2011) group: They were working on one or two of the same article or presentation whereas the other groups studied offered support to individual authors as well. When working individually, there is less need to develop a cohesive writing style across the group. Many of these studies mentioned giving feedback on writing submitted to the group, which may have included developing a writing style, but was not specifically described.

With clinical faculty groups following the recommendations over 50% of the time, there are far more similarities between the two population groups than differences. The barriers that exist for practitioner-researchers are still present and these recommendations aim to help counteract those barriers.

Formal research supports

As mentioned previously, taking advantage of *any* research support helps increase confidence and productivity in writing groups. The case studies were reviewed for any mention of access to research supports. Some studies did not explicitly mention supports, while some indicated availability of supports but not whether writing group participants took advantage of them. Any mention of availability was documented as having access to the support. In the analysis of the case studies, 66% of library groups (n=8) and 100% of clinical faculty groups (n=7) mentioned access to at least one of the supports noted by Ackerman et al.(2018).

Ackerman et al.(2018) identified that time off for research (or protected time) and access to specialists, such as data or statistics experts, were two factors that increased confidence. In the review, protected time was the most common support, mentioned for 58% (n=7) of library groups and 57% (n=4) of clinical health groups. No library case study mentioned access to specialists (outside of the group's facilitator), while only 28% (n=2) of the clinical health studies mentioned this access– and one of these had vouchers for editorial consulting provided by the university (Von Isenburg et al., 2017).

One major difference between the two groups is access to research funding. Nearly half of the case studies of clinical faculty mentioned research funding for group members, including department-based funding or grants from external sources that supported the research work. When such support was mentioned for librarians, it was usually in the form of a travel grant for a conference. There may be different funding cultures between the two groups, with clinical health faculty having more access to research funding than librarians.

Case Study: Reflection and lessons from COVID-19 in the University Library System

The authors' W&C group was formed by their library system's Faculty Affairs Committee in September 2020. It was inspired by the university's Faculty Writing Group, a writing accountability group (WAG) facilitated by the Writing Institute and open to all faculty members. In pre-COVID times, this summer writing event was held each year at a different location near the main campus. The faculty librarians faced barriers to participation in the group due to their 12-month work schedules and requirements to be physically present at service points. The summer writing event was also less accessible for regional campus librarians due to location.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the university-wide summer writing group met online using Zoom virtual meeting software. Participating librarians found the WAG to be beneficial to their writing. Two of these librarians were also on the library's Faculty Affairs Committee. After discussion with the committee and with the WAG leaders, Faculty Affairs decided to create the W&C group specifically for librarians and library staff.

From the start, the W&C group operated solely in a virtual environment on Microsoft Teams, distinguishing it from past, primarily in-person university writing groups. Writing Institute colleagues were consulted to help structure the group and present a kick-off meeting. W&C members could participate in conversations whenever convenient in asynchronous channels within the Team. Biweekly lunchtime Teams meetings also provided an opportunity to discuss projects, share questions and resources, and generally build camaraderie.

As of this writing, the W&C consists of 39 members, who are mostly faculty librarians at different locations. Some participate regularly and use the check-in channel; others occasionally post resources, calls for papers, or comments on others' works. The authors of this paper were the original members of the group who consistently checked in to create accountability around their writing. Since the September 2020 kickoff, the authors all have succeeded in authoring papers and/or presentations. After using the evaluation tool (see Appendix A) to evaluate the W&C group, the authors plan to conduct a survey of all participants in the future to identify helpful aspects of the group and solicit ideas and feedback. This ad hoc writing group has been successful, due in part to following the recommendations from Campbell et al.(2011) – even if unintentionally at first.

Identify compatible people – While the recommendation for identifying compatible people may be a way of codifying what makes collaboration run smoothly, this concept doesn't work for a writing group meant to serve as a resource to all colleagues. Working on similar projects or at similar career stages may foster connections and make a group easier to administer; however, this setup can also create limitations. From a DEI perspective, this suggestion can be exclusionary by limiting participation to those with similar perspectives or experiences. The W&C group is not a

single group of collaborators; rather, it is intended to be a community of practice open to all, regardless of experience, background, or interests.

Identify appropriate projects for conferences or papers – A “Brainstorming” channel and group meetings support sharing ideas, topics, and/or themes for writing or presentations, along with collaboration opportunities.

Identify potential venues for submission – A Teams channel houses calls for papers and proposals for conferences, journals, and books. The library workers that make up the W&C group have different areas of expertise and interest, which provides a wide range of venues for consideration.

Develop a writing style that is appropriate for the publication – For this article specifically, the authors developed an iterative review structure to unify the separately-written sections for cohesion and clarity. In the broader group, feedback from other members helps authors identify tone and style for various kinds of publications.

Meet regularly – Asynchronous Teams channels provide a regularly available outlet for members to share ideas and questions when schedules allow. Some members create co-working time using an open Teams meeting to work together on separate projects and offer encouragement. A scheduled synchronous lunchtime meeting is another opportunity for discussion and support.

Use deadlines – At each biweekly meeting, participants share what they want to accomplish by the next meeting. These are typically tracked using the Tasks feature of Teams.

Use the tools you have – As the licensed communication tool for the university environment, Teams was chosen as the preferred method of meeting and collaboratively writing. Teams is also integrated into commonly used Microsoft applications like Outlook and Word. The Teams group has multiple channels. The most-used channel is “Check In,” a place for accountability and visibility in writing time.

Have fun - W&C lunchtime meetings are a mix of fun, sharing, and writing. Members have mentioned that participating has increased their confidence and motivation. The group provides a place for library workers from the distant campuses to learn about each other’s projects, which was not always easy or possible before the pandemic.

Funding for collaboration – While most library employees have access to funding for travel and presentations, there is no funding for W&C specifically.

Understanding “the price of success” - Scheduling time for writing and/or working on presentations will continue to be an issue for all W&C members. Writing time during the day is not guaranteed and being away from the office creates scheduling, staffing, and workload concerns.

Be aware of institutional/departmental culture – W&C was created in part to help faculty librarians navigate their expectations for promotion, such as scholarship, formal presentations, and service. The W&C group provides a venue to share opportunities for this work and collaborate with colleagues. The group’s asynchronous nature also ensures that participation does not infringe upon the daily schedules and needs of different departments.

In terms of available research supports, the W&C group focuses on two: accommodating time in the schedule and research training. The visibility of check-ins and co-working sessions help members prioritize time for writing and creation in their own workdays. Seeing a colleague check in can inspire others to do the same, sometimes resulting in a flurry of activity in that channel. Co-working sessions encourage members to schedule quiet work time. In terms of research training, the W&C Team has become a place to post information about workshops and courses offered by the institution or other organizations. This is an area that the group would like to continue to grow in the future.

Based on the literature review of case studies of other groups, an evaluation tool was constructed for analysis of the W&C group (Table 7). A blank version is available in Appendix A.

Table 7

Evaluation for the Writing and Creation Group for University Library System

Group Information:	
Location and name of group:	University Library System
Discipline (e.g. Library or Clinical Health):	Library

Factors / Recommendations:	
Identify compatible members:	N/A - open to all
Identify appropriate projects:	Yes
Identify potential venues:	Yes
Develop an appropriate writing style:	Yes - feedback given on drafts of documents
Meet regularly:	Yes - biweekly check-ins, Teams channels for asynchronous conversation
Use deadlines:	Yes
Use the tools you have:	Yes
Have fun:	Yes
Funding for collaboration:	No
Understand "the price for success":	Yes
Accommodate Varying Institutional & Department Culture:	Yes
Formalized (e.g. Institutional Support):	No

Formal Research Supports Available:	
Accommodating Research Time in Schedule:	Maybe
Sabbaticals:	No
Research Funding / Grants:	No
Formal Mentoring Program:	No
Research Training:	Maybe - kickoff hosted by Writing Institute staff with tips for developing a writing and research routine, workshops and other opportunities shared in "Resources" channel
Access to data/stats specialists:	No

This reflection indicates the nascent W&C group has room to grow after a good start, and the recommendations from the literature provide valuable guidance. For instance, the group's library system has in-house experts who present to faculty and students on data, statistics, and research training. Inviting these experts to give presentations geared toward colleagues' research needs would enrich the W&C group's culture and knowledge base.

Finally, the establishment of this group during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the utility of virtual options. Teams channels allowed for more participation across all campuses and accommodated varied schedules. Members could upload draft documents or other materials for colleagues' comments, and collecting feedback was easier with comments tracking and archived conversations. These interactions also provided camaraderie and support in an uncertain time when library workers may have felt unmoored due to the rapidly changing environment.

The authors plan to continue this online group, because colleagues can participate regardless of location. However, the "meet regularly" recommendation should be adjusted to account for institutional culture and increasingly flexible work schedules. A combination of synchronous and asynchronous connection options can maximize the potential of a writing group.

Conclusion

The time constraints librarians and clinical health faculty face due to competing job demands have created a need for writing groups to support dedicated time for writing and scholarship. These groups allow participants to learn and make progress on their projects while fostering a sense of camaraderie. The W&C group is just one example of these kinds of groups.

This article identified a framework of elements from several sources that support a successful writing program, but this framework may need revisions in the future. For instance, the W&C group incorporated virtual collaboration into the framework alongside regularly scheduled meetings. Even though online or asynchronous participation was not a major part of the literature, this was a key adjustment because of the pandemic's impact on work locations and routines.

Using the evaluation tool (see Appendix A), the authors identified potential areas of improvement. They plan to facilitate more access to colleagues' research expertise in the future, revisit the recommendations, and present or write about the group's progress. A collaboration with a clinical health faculty writing group is another potential avenue for continued research.

The elements outlined in this review address the need for dedicated writing time and resources that one person alone may have difficulty acquiring. Hopefully, the evaluation tool will reduce guesswork for future groups' formation, and provide guidance to institutions, administrators and colleagues exploring ways to support faculty scholarship.

Notes

¹ This group included writers who worked at a hospital in non-academic positions, but had many similar characteristics to the clinical health faculty groups.

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Appendix A: Writing Group Evaluation Tool

Source Information:	
Location and name of group:	
Discipline (e.g. Library or Clinical Health):	

Factors / Recommendations:	
Identify compatible members:	
Identify appropriate projects:	
Identify potential venues:	
Develop an appropriate writing style:	
Meet regularly and/or asynchronously:	
Use deadlines:	
Use the tools you have:	
Have fun:	
Funding for collaboration:	
Understand "the price for success":	
Accommodate Varying Institutional & Department Culture:	
Formalized (e.g. Institutional Support):	

Formal Research Supports Available:	
Accommodating Research Time in Schedule:	
Sabbaticals:	
Research Funding / Grants:	
Formal Mentoring Program:	
Research Training:	
Access to data/stats specialists:	