

About the Digital Writing Programme

A long and interesting history paves the way for the exciting Digital Writing Programme, which is taking a fresh approach to integrating writing with technology in the Faculty of Arts at York University. In the 1980s and 1990s, individual courses affiliated themselves with the Computer Assisted Writing Centre, giving students enrolled in these courses access to computing workshops, computer lab time, and a printer. The Foundations Computer Assistance Programme (FCAP) operated for three years from 2003-2006 and was a pilot project that offered exclusive computer lab access to students enrolled in Foundations courses, as well as computer lab staff who facilitated computer workshops in the Calumet lab and helped students with their computing-related questions. Unfortunately, the Faculty of Arts was not able to fund this project beyond the pilot period and the current coordinator, John Spencer, had to invent a creative solution that preserved the principles of helping students learn about integrating their writing with technology. With no dedicated lab space, his solution was to make this programme mobile.

2006-2007 marked the inaugural year of the Digital Writing Programme, which serves all Faculty of Arts courses. Currently the programme houses three workshops titled “Integrating Word with the Writing Process,” “Effective Web Searching Strategies,” and “Evaluating Web Sources for Academic Purposes.” At this point, the Word workshop can come to any classroom or lecture hall, so it is no longer necessary to book computer lab time to help students learn about how Word can facilitate a transition from thinking about the writing process as a linear activity to thinking about writing as a recursive process. The programme is in the process of making the web search and web evaluation workshops mobile for the upcoming academic year (2007-2008). An especially exciting aspect of this programme is that the workshops are facilitated by upper year undergraduate students, reinforcing the value of students learning from each other. Drop in hours are available as well, so that interested students can learn more about the relationship between technology and writing or can pop by to ask questions that arise as they put their new knowledge to the test in writing their essays.

The Digital Writing Programme is able to come to a small tutorial group, or a large lecture to facilitate a 45 minute workshop (or, at your request, two workshops can be offered in one extended session). Courses have the opportunity to affiliate themselves with the DWP, and course directors can consult with the DWP about how to best integrate course goals with the services available from the DWP. For a more expanded discussion of the workshops, faculty and student resources, and the mission of the Digital Writing Programme, please consult their website at: <http://www.arts.yorku.ca/dwp/> or email John Spencer at jspencer@yorku.ca or dwp@yorku.ca.