



akademisk skrivesenter

Positioning the Writing Centre: Liminality, Identity and the Future Library

David A. Burke
VIRAK 2019



UiO : Universitetsbiblioteket

STATSBIBLIOTEKET I 100 ÅR





Liminality

- liminality (n)
 - relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process
 - occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold



The Writing Centre and the Future Library

Context:

- Akademisk skrivesenter as a part of UB
- Not a faculty unit
- Peer-mentoring model

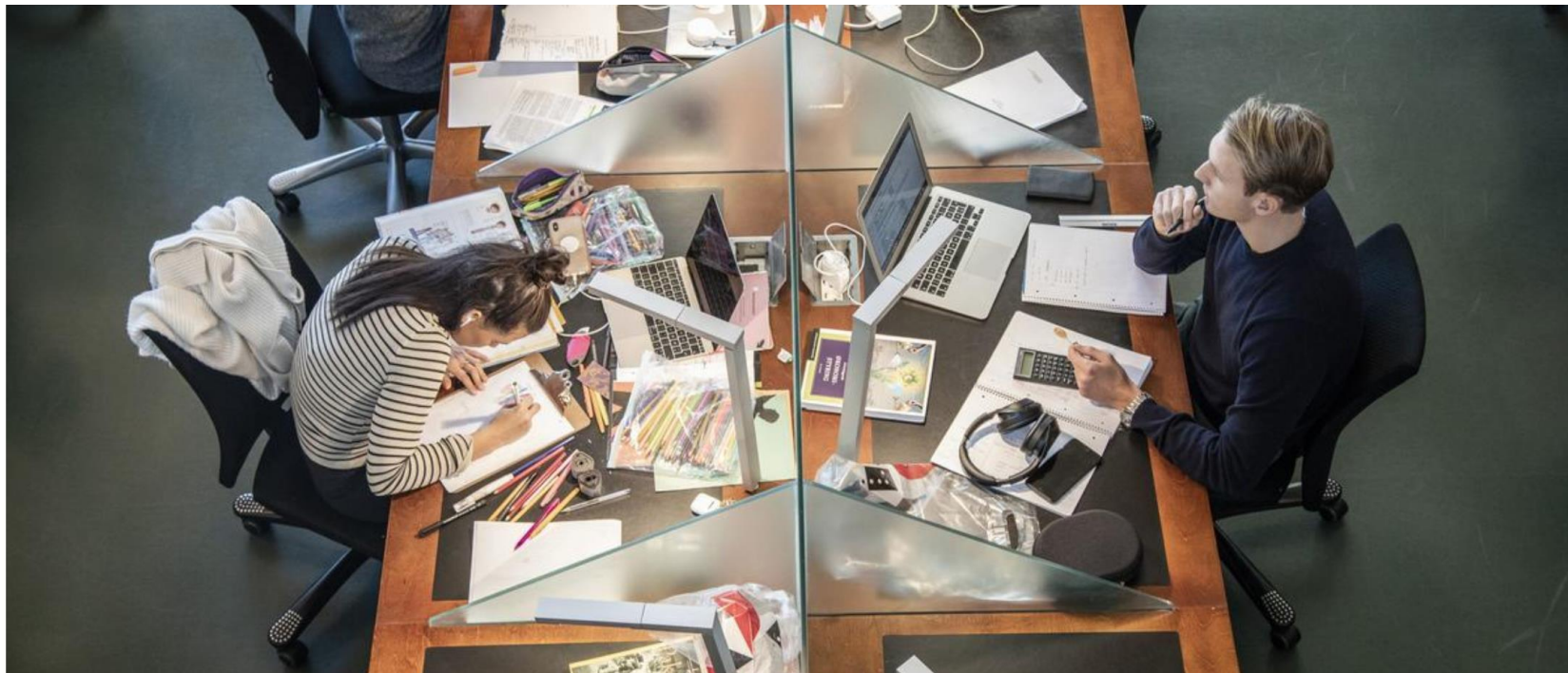
The Writing Centre and the Future Library

Conflict:

- the Writing center goes beyond the core practice of the library
- writing instruction should happen in the disciplines

The Writing Centre and the Library

“Det økte tempoet i digitalisering og innkjøpet av digitale ressurser kan gjøre at omfanget av tilgjengelig informasjon blir så overveldende at det kan by på nye typer problemer for demokratiet ...” (Anderson et al. 14).



NYE TALL: 47 prosent fullfører bachelorstudiene på normert tid.

ARKIVFOTO: GINA GRIEG RIISNÆS

Én av fem bachelorstudenter dropper ut

Halvparten av bachelorstudentene fullfører ikke på normert tid. Dette viser tall fra Statistisk Sentralbyrå (SSB).

Shifting information landscapes

... interdisciplinarity and academic cross-pollination move research practices “from a state of disciplinary uniqueness and singularity” into new spaces where “settings of academic research and [...] disciplinary boundaries are subject to reconfigurations” (Gullbekk 3).

... still writing

... the information literacy so much at the forefront of this conference almost never contributes to academia unless it can be communicated via the written word.

Shouldn't the
faculties teach
writing?

- They do
 - They need help
- (or)
- Students still need help

Shouldn't the faculties teach writing?

... while instructors often “have their own fairly well-defined views regarding what constitutes the elements of a good piece of student writing in the areas in which they teach [...] the epistemological and methodological issues that underlay them [are] often expressed through surface features and components of ‘writing’ in itself...” (Lea and Street 162).

Shouldn't the faculties teach writing?

... students are often faced with a situation where they must re-learn the performance of academic writing on a case-by-case basis, with very little guidance save the framing of the writing assignment itself (Burke), the feedback they may receive, and their final grades.

“...there's always something they can improve.”

Academic Literacies

- "... the ability to communicate competently in an academic discourse community" (Wingate 6).
- "... views the institutions in which academic practices take place as constituted in, and as sites of, discourse and power" (Lea and Street 159).

Positioning the Writing Centre

In short, we have intentionally positioned the Writing Centre in the liminal space between (student) writers and those in positions of authority, and identified the constant, active processes of “becoming” (Lillis 48) a member of a discourse community as our operative space.

liminality and student uncertainty

- ...may stem from “gaps between academic staff expectations and student interpretations” (Lea and Street 159), such as uncertainty about specific formal performance expectations (Burke).
- the privileged but often unexamined dominance of “essayist literacy” (Lillis 20-1, 38) in our writerly traditions, which “works against those least familiar with the conventions surrounding academic writing, limiting their participation” (Lillis 53).

Practices

- One-to-one consultation with a well-trained peer mentor

Practices

“Det å kunne henvende seg til en litt mer erfaren student er et gode som i mindre grad legitimeres gjennom formelle krav (alle vet at en student ikke er en vitenskapelig ansatt) og mer gjennom skrivepedagogikkens personlige og kommunikative dimensjoner” (Straume 114).

Practices

- **One-to-one consultation with a well-trained peer mentor**
 - ... validating processes of sharing and being heard and recognized
 - ... a non-hegemonic position, where writers come and discuss their work, not with instructors or those in positions of authority or dominance in the academic space, but with peers.

Practices

- **Collaboration with instructors and faculties**
 - the Writing Centre is able to work from a position of competence within writing pedagogy to complement the instructor's own position as a practitioner within a given field.

Supporting students and instructors *toward* each other

Increased familiarity with the dominant and preferred performances within specific fields allows us to offer more useful support to students in individual consulting sessions, and more contact with individual students allows us to provide instructors with better insights into what students are uncertain of within specific faculties and areas of study.



Acknowledging Writing as Social Practice

- Skrivenatt
- Shut Up and Write
- Skrivetelt

References

- Anderson, Astrid, et al., editors. *Det Åpne Bibliotek: Forskningsbibliotek i Endring*. Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2017.
- Burke, David A. "Times New Roman, 12pt.: Encoding and Decoding the 'Academic' in Academic Writing." Norwegian Forum for English Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway. Conference Presentation. for Academic Purposes, 6 June 2019, Oslo
- Gullbekk, Eystein. "Apt information literacy? A case of interdisciplinary scholarly communication." *Journal of Documentation*, vol.72, no. 4, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JDOC-08-2015-0101>.
- Hollum, Jantra Pernille. "Én av fem bachelorstudenter dropper ut." *Universitas*, 8 June 2018, <https://universitas.no/sak/65883/en-av-fem-bachelorstudenter-dropper-ut/>.
- Ivanič, Roz. *Writing and Identity: The Discoursal Construction of Identity in Academic Writing*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1998.
- Lea, Mary R. and Brian V. Street. "Student Writing in Higher Education: An Academic Literacies Approach." *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1998, pp. 157-172, *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/0375079812331380364.
- Lillis, Theresa M. *Student Writing: Access, Regulation, Desire*. Routledge, 2001.
- Minett, Amy Jo. "'Earth Aches by Midnight': Helping ESL Writers Clarify Their Intended Meaning." *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*, 2nd ed., edited by Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth, Heinemann, 2009, pp. 66-77.
- Straume, Ingerid S. "Skrivesenter i forskningsbibliotek: Om teorigrunnlag, identitet, og legitimering." *Det Åpne Bibliotek: Forskningsbibliotek i Endring*, edited by Astrid Anderson et al., Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2017, pp. 99-119.
- Wingate, Usula. *Academic Literacy and Student Diversity: The Case for Inclusive Practice*. Multilingual Matters, 2015.