

# History of Reading News

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*Children's Periodicals of the United States*, edited by R. Gordon Kelly. (Part of the Historical Guides to the World's Periodicals and Newspapers Series) Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984. Pp. 591. \$49.95

Information about children's periodicals in America has been difficult to come by, but now Kelly has made a major contribution to the field of children's literature with this gem of a reference book—handsomely printed and sturdily bound.

In his preface Kelly describes the state of knowledge about American children's periodicals and the status of the research and writing that has been done in the area, mostly unpublished masters' theses and and doctoral dissertations, relatively few journal articles, a handful of children's magazine profiles included in Mott's *History of American Magazines*, and Kelly's *Mother Was a Lady: Self and Society in Selected American Children's Periodicals, 1865-1890*. Within the relatively neglected field of children's literature, children's periodicals provide a wealth of opportunities for study.

As Kelly points out, the most pressing need is for a comprehensive bibliography of American children's periodicals. (Kelly provides a start here with his list of 423 titles.) Also, certain basic questions need to be answered: who wrote for the periodicals and with what intent? Who read them? What was the geographical pattern of their distribution? Even though Kelly acknowledges that some good work has been done in analyzing the content of the best-known children's periodicals, particularly the ones featuring works of fiction, much remains to be done in terms of providing descriptive analyses of the rest of the periodicals, with the emphasis on understanding and interpreting the content rather than merely evaluating it.

Kelly also recognizes that we need to know more about the social meanings mediated by children's periodicals, the illustrations in periodicals, and "why children's magazines appear to have declined so much in quality in this century, cespite persistent efforts to recapture the lost glories of *St. Nicholas* in the 1880's."

Kelly's brief but excellent introduction traces the development of children's periodicals from the earliest one included, *The Children's Magazine*, 1789, to the most recent, *Cobblestone*, 1980.

The one hundred profiles of selected American children's periodicals written by fifty contributors, which make up the bulk of the work, are arranged alphabetically by periodical title. Appended to each lively essay sprinkled with direct quotations and examples from the periodical is a reference bibliography, index sources (if available), location sources, and publication history, including title changes, numbering changes, and changes in publisher and place of publication. Periodicals representing various ethnic and religious groups (*The Weewish Tree: A Magazine of Indian America*, *Ebony*,

*Cricket* the magazine for children.



*Jr!*, *The Young Judaeon*, and *Youth's Christian Companion*), as well as such school-related magazines as *Junior* and *Senior Scholastic*, are included, along with magazines devoted to any one of a number of topics or causes.

Literary magazines are of special interest because often an author's earliest works are first published in such popular early magazines as *St. Nicholas* or *Wide Awake*—or in more recent literary magazines such as *Cricket* or *Plays*.

In addition to the essays, this reference work includes a selected bibliography of 423 American children's periodicals, a chronological listing as well as a geographical listing of the 423 periodicals, and a thorough and accurate index.

A bibliography of references culled from the contributors' notes and specialized bibliographies including basic works on American children's periodicals would have been helpful. A similar work is needed for British children's periodicals. Perhaps Greenwood currently has someone working on such a reference. Let's hope so.

Oakland University

Jane M. Bingham

*How Research Has Changed American Schools: A History from 1840 to the Present*, by Robert W. Travers. Kalamazoo, MI.: Mythos Press, 1983. Pp. 611. Illustrations. \$25.00.

In the preface to his book, Travers writes that the text is an attempt to trace the "relationship between research, education, and social values" (p. vi). To pull together the multiple strands of information tracing the impact of research on schools is a monumental undertaking, and Travers is to be commended for the attempt. The effort is accomplished to a large extent by following the great-man theory of history. Considerable space is devoted to such eminent and influential

figures of the past as Henry Barnard, Horace Mann, Edward L. Thorndike, James Cattell, Charles H. Judd, G. Stanley Hall, and others of that ilk. The focus on these individuals is justified by Travers who notes that "in the field of the development of important ideas, great minds play a crucial role" (p. 47).

Because most of the readers of this review are interested in the field of reading, this review will emphasize that section of the volume which is devoted to research in reading. Regrettably, that's probably not the strongest segment of the book.

At one point, Travers decries the fact that there has been little, if any, important or worthwhile research in reading since the early years of this century. He writes, "A reader of Huey's book comes to realize that most of what is known today about the psychology of reading was known in 1908" (p. 345). Further, "virtually all the important facts related to eye movements and reading had been discovered before Dearborn perfected photographic methods of recording. The facts discovered later...were not particularly consequential" (p. 347). He also states that all promising lines of research noted in Huey's book were dropped and left unattended for 50 years. According to Travers, the years intervening between the appearance of Huey's publication and that of Gibson "were remarkably barren except for a few studies of letter and word recognition and a quite pedantic series of investigations on problems of type design" (p. 350).

Such statements totally ignore the remarkable body of work emanating from Chicago and Teachers College, among other places, much of it connected with visual perception and eye movements.

At times, there is an almost schizoid personality to the text. Whereas the lack of quality research after Huey's book is bemoaned, a bit later Travers writes that in the fifty-year period between 1880 and 1930, reading research produced "a wealth of significant findings" (p. 364).

Even more puzzling than the inconsistencies to be found are the statements which, although easily checked, apparently were not verified. For example, Travers is aware that William S. Gray studied at Teachers College, Columbia, and states that Gray "must surely have encountered the work of Edward L. Thorndike" (p. 352). A strange phrasing when Thorndike was Gray's advisor on his Master's degree. Also according to Travers, Gray is probably best remembered by his oral reading tests than by anything else. To anyone familiar with Gray's work, this would seem hard to defend. In reference to Gray's oral reading tests, Travers writes that they "involved both a silent reading section and an oral reading section" (p. 353). Gray did have some silent reading tests, but they were separate from his now more widely known oral reading tests.

Another belief attributed to Gray was that "rate of reading was the most crucial measure of reading competence..." (p. 354). It is true that in his silent reading tests, Gray had a score for rate of reading, but he also provided a quality-of-reading score. Even in his earliest writings, Gray stressed at all times the importance of understanding. Indeed his model of the reading process did not include rate at all.

Thus the book appears to have a number of misconceptions. Additionally, the intent of the title never seems to be attained;

i.e., a clear understanding of the impact of research on schools does not seem to be there. To a certain extent, the book is reminiscent of an old nursery rhyme: when it's good it's very very good, and when it's bad, it's horrid. While certainly not horrid, the volume does contain some flaws, errors, and inconsistencies, and these need to be revamped.

*The State University of New York*

*at Buffalo*

Sam Weintraub

#### NOTES ON OUR REVIEWERS

Jane M. Bingham is Professor of Children's Literature, Reading and Language Arts at Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. She is co-author of *Fifteen Centuries of Children's Literature: An Annotated Chronology of British and American Works in Historical Context* (Greenwood Press, 1980).

Sam Weintraub is a professor in the Faculty of Educational Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is the major author and editor of the *Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading* published annually by the International Reading Association.

#### BOOK REVIEW ADVISOR

Walter H. MacGinitie, Friday Harbor, Washington

#### *In Memoriam*

It is with sorrow that we report the deaths of two of our members.

Many of our readers will already know that John E. Martin died shortly before Thanksgiving, 1985. John taught in elementary schools in Putnam, Oklahoma, after the end of World War II, and was awarded his Ed.D. from the University of Oklahoma in 1956. In 1959 he joined the faculty of California State University, Fresno. From 1971-72, he served as the fifth president of the California Reading Association, which he had helped to found. In 1980, the California association named an award in his honor. A friend called John, who had worked on a history of the California council, "a magnificent role model."

Stephen Botein died this June, at the age of 44, while leading the second summer seminar for the American Antiquarian Society's History of the Book in American Culture. A professor of history at Michigan State University, Steve was the author of many books and articles. His most recent publication was "*Mr. Zenger's Malice and Falshood*": *Six Issues of the New York Weekly Journal, 1733-34* (1985). He had just completed a year as the visiting editor of publications for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, in Williamsburg, Virginia. As John B. Hench, of the American Antiquarian Society, wrote of Steve: "He was as giving a person intellectually as any scholar I have ever known."

## BROOKLYN COLLEGE HOSTS HISTORY OF READING SEMINAR

On February 13, 1986, the Humanities Institute of Brooklyn College of CUNY, in conjunction with the Brooklyn Reading Council, presented an all-day seminar on "Exploring our Heritage: Undertaking Research in the History of Reading." The keynote speaker was **Richard L. Venezky**, Unidel Professor of Education, University of Delaware. All but one of the speakers were members of the History of Reading SIG.

**William J. Gilmore**, Stockton State College, together with **E. Jennifer Monaghan**, Brooklyn College, talked on sources and methods for researching literacy in early America.

One session was devoted to oral history. **Stephan Brumberg**, Brooklyn College, presented the results of his interviews with Jewish immigrants who had gone to American schools early in the 20th century in his "Heading Back to the Books: Reconstructing a Social History of Reading." **Judith M. Walter**, New York City Technical College, discussed the pitfalls and triumphs of oral history, based on her interviews with retired administrators from Barnard College, in "Who's Interviewing Whom? Doing Oral History with Retired Professionals."

**Margaret M. Waters**, Brooklyn College, talked on "Responding to Nativism: Catholic School Readers Before the Civil War."

Venezky, speaking on "The Archaeology of Instructional History," closed the seminar by surveying potential research topics that ranged from the intriguing "Abraham Lincoln's traveling companion" to possible plagiarism by William Holmes McGuffey.

Some speakers have bibliographies available: write to Monaghan, at D.E.S., Brooklyn College of CUNY, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

### "Reading in America, 1840-1940."

The Strong Museum, Rochester, New York, is holding a program titled "Reading in America, 1840-1940," on Friday and Saturday, November 21-22, 1986. Sessions include a talk by **Michael Denning**, Columbia University, on "Reading Dime Novels: Working-Class Ways of Reading in Nineteenth-Century America." **Virginia** and **Nicholas Westbrook**, Minnesota Historical Society, will present "Read Some and Sewed": A Vermont Case-Study of Books in the Daily Round." **Linda Markson Kruger**, Columbia University, will comment on "The American Library, 1865-1920," and **Joseph J. Corn**, Stanford University, will discuss "Popular Mechanics, Mechanical Literacy, and American Culture, 1900-1950."

Other speakers are **M. Thomas Inge**, Randolph-Macon College, on "The Comic Book and American Culture"; **Marilyn L. Haas**, SUNY at Buffalo, on Harper's School District Library Books; and **Larry E. Sullivan**, Lehman College of CUNY, on the development of prison libraries.

The program will be accompanied by an exhibit titled "At Home with a Book." For further information, write to Donna Lederman, The Strong Museum, One Manhattan Square, Rochester, NY 14607, or call (716) 263-2700, ext. 202.

Early registration fees are \$45.00 (before October 31). Reserve rooms (\$50.00) at Rochester Plaza Hotel (716) 546-3450. Holiday Inn Genesee Plaza (716) 546-6400; or East Avenue Inn (716) 325-5010 by October 31.

## Books, Books, and Bargains

Margaret Spufford, in her *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (1981), throws new light on 17th-century literacy by examining the small cheap books that chapmen carried among their wares from village to village. Her book is now available in paperback from Cambridge University Press, 32 E. 57th St., New York, NY 10022, for \$12.95. Or call customer service at (800) 431-1580.

Miriam Balmuth's *The Roots of Phonics: A Historical Introduction* (1982) traces the history of English phonics through four strands: writing systems in general, the English writing system, spoken English, and English spelling patterns. It is being reissued in cloth by Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027 for \$14.95; (800) 638-3030. (Add a handling charge of \$1.50.)

The University of Chicago Press is reducing prices on many books until November 24, 1986. Wayne E. Fuller's *The Old Country School: The Story of Rural Education in the Middle West* (1982), formerly \$25.00, is on sale for \$14.00 (order #85). Fuller recounts the struggle of rural farmers from the mid-19th to the early 20th century to retain control of their country schools.

Robert C. Morris' portrayal of northern efforts to educate the freed slaves after the Civil War, *Reading, Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870* (1982), previously \$28.00, is now priced at \$15.00 (order #113). To obtain this and/or Fuller's book at these special prices, write to the University of Chicago Press, attention C.K., Marketing Dept., 5801 S. Ellis Ave., Chicago, IL 60637, or call Marc Archambault, Marketing, at (312) 962-7733.

The International Reading Association has reprinted Nila Banton Smith's *American Reading Instruction* (1965). This new edition includes, in addition to the 1965 text, a prologue by Leonard Courtney, F.S.C., and an epilogue by H. Alan Robinson. It is available (IRA Book No. 892) to IRA members for \$23.00, and to non-IRA members for \$34.50. Order from the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Rd., PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139; telephone (302) 731-1600.

**Editor's Note:** Balmuth's and Morris' books were reviewed in *History of Reading News*, Vol. VII, no. 1, winter 1983-84.

## HISTORY OF EDUCATION SOCIETY TO MEET IN CALIFORNIA

The History of Education Society (HES) will hold its annual meeting from Friday to Sunday, October 17-19, 1986, at the Center for Educational Research at Stanford University, California. One session, titled "Authors on Their Work: Childhood History" (October 17, at 3 p.m.), presents **Barbara Finkelstein**, University of Maryland, who will comment on her study, "Reading, Writing and the Acquisition of Identity in 19th-Century America."

For registration/reservation forms, write to John Hardin Best, HES Program Chair, College of Education, Division of Education Policy Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802, or call Best at (814) 865-1487.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I am writing a book about America's first best-selling novel, Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1794), and the ways in which it was published, marketed, and, most important, read throughout the 19th century. I am especially interested in hearing from anyone who knows of first-hand accounts (in published or private sources) of reading the novel, and in inscriptions or marginalia in copies of the book.

Information or photocopies of any material will be gratefully received and, of course, acknowledged and returned.

Sincerely,

Cathy N. Davidson  
Department of English  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824

## Outstanding Dissertation Award

The Society for the Study of Curriculum History is once again sponsoring a competition for its "Outstanding Dissertation Award," honoring doctoral dissertations that contribute to a knowledge of curriculum history. All those who completed their dissertations between 1984 and 1987 are eligible. Applicants should submit four copies of an 8-10 page abstract. Name, address, and position, as well as the doctoral institution and advisor, should appear only on a separate cover. All submissions will be forwarded for a blind review.

Applications should be sent to Craig Kridel, The Society for the Study of Curriculum History, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208; tel. no.: (803) 777-6301. The deadline for abstracts is **January 15, 1987**. The prize will be awarded at the SSCH's annual meeting, to be held in conjunction with the American Educational Research Association, April 19-20, 1987, in Washington, DC.

## SIG Elects New Officers, 1986-87

SIG members mailed in their ballots to elect a new slate of officers for the ensuing year, May 1, 1986 to April 30, 1987. The following candidates were elected:

*President:* David W. Moore, 159B Education Center, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA 50614.

*1st Vice-President:* Richard L. Venezky, Department of Educational Studies, Willard Hall Education Building, Room 211, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716.

*2nd Vice-President:* Margaret M. Waters, Elementary Education, Brooklyn College of CUNY, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

*Secretary:* A. Garr Cranney, Department of Secondary Education, Box 42, McKay Building, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602.

*Treasurer:* Janet A. Miller, UPO Box 99, Campus Station, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, KY 41076.

## SIG MEMBERSHIP LIST NOW AVAILABLE

A membership list of History of Reading SIG members is now available from the SIG treasurer. Ask Janet Miller for a copy (address is listed above), and enclose a self-addressed legal size envelope.

## SIG Holds 1986 Meeting

Many people braved the wet and cold of Philadelphia in April to attend the tenth annual meeting of the History of Reading Special Interest Group on April 16, 1986. The meeting was held at the 31st annual convention of the International Reading Association. **David W. Moore**, University of Northern Iowa, was the meeting's organizer and chair.

**Karen Hanus**, also of the University of Northern Iowa, commented on "The Contribution of a History of Reading." She suggested that history clarified generalizations, expanded perspectives, provided emotional security, and debunked myths.

**A. Garr Cranney**, Brigham Young University, then reported on the results of a questionnaire he and **Janet Miller**, of Northern Kentucky University, had sent to 335 U.S. and Canadian graduate programs in reading. The 195 responses (a 58% return) revealed that only 5% (9 of the respondents) had specific courses in the history of reading, although 72% indicated that they taught history as a part of other courses. Few respondents were able to name sources other than Nila Banton Smith's *American Reading Instruction*.

**David Dunning**, University of Illinois, examined "Standardized Reading Tests: Their Roots and Early Development." He viewed the widespread acceptance of such tests, introduced around the time of World War I, as a response to an increasing demand among different sectors of society for greater efficiency and accountability in the schools.

**Earl F. Hanson**, Northern Illinois University, then presented slides of the work of the Brothers Grimm, who regarded folk lore as "buried gold in danger of being forever lost," and whose original aim was to provide documentary material for a history of German literature. **Nancy Mavrogenes**, Chicago Public Schools, showed slides of Randolph Caldecott's illustrations of children's books. Characteristic of Caldecott's work was the humor and action he conveyed in 12 pages illustrating the 30 words of *The Cat and the Fiddle*.

A SIG business meeting followed. A motion to thank the retiring president, **Richard E. Hodges**, for his past two years of service to the SIG, was passed by acclamation.

## History of Reading SIG Membership Information

The History of Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association was founded in 1975. The purpose of the group, as stated in its constitution, is "to encourage historical research in the field of reading and literacy; to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information about the history of reading and reading instruction; and to promote the development of a body of historical knowledge about reading and literacy."

Membership is restricted to members of the International Reading Association. Non-IRA members may receive the newsletter, but may not stand for office or vote. Dues are currently \$7.50 a year for both IRA members and non-IRA members, payable to the History of Reading-SIG. All dues should be sent to the SIG Treasurer, Janet Miller, UPO Box 99, NKU Campus Station, Highland Heights, KY 41076.

News items should be sent to E. Jennifer Monaghan, editor, *History of Reading News*, Department of Educational Services, Brooklyn College of CUNY, Brooklyn, NY 11210.