

History of Reading News

Vol. XXXIV No. 1

Fall 2010

A MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW PRESIDENT

RHODA LOCKLEAR

A special thank you to Immediate Past President Lou Ann Sears and congratulations to all new and continuing officers of the History of Reading Special Interest Group.

Brian Morgan – First Vice President
Nancy Stevens – Second Vice President
Judy M. Fiene – Secretary
Rickard Oldrieve – Member at Large
Mary-Kate Sableski – Member at Large
Dixie Massey – Treasurer
Joseph Zimmer – Newsletter Editor
Miriam Balmuth – Archivist

My favorite privilege as your current SIG president is the chance to be actively involved with an outstanding group of professionals. As one who enjoys personal stories I also delight in the chance to share my personal history. Thank you for the chance to indulge in sharing my personal message via our newsletter.

I became involved in the History of Reading SIG because of memories. I have always loved to read and my personal history has a lot to do with my passion. Our home had a bookcase filled with books from a grandfather who died before I was born. Grandfather Lamastus had been a teacher and administrator in Cromwell, Kentucky. Our shelves contained *The Compendium of Knowledge*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Anderson's Fairy Tales*, *The Animal Farm*, and so many more. Before television my days were spent with a book always within reach. In school I learned in first grade that *reading ahead* was a punishable sin and in second grade that the classroom treasure chest held a treasure of books.....imagine that!

My personal love affair with books continued to be personal until student teaching in the Fall of 1969. I remember only one part of that experience and that part was helping three "hopeless" second grade boys learn how to read. I tried my favorites of *Cowboy Sam* and *Curious George* to no avail. I turned in desperation to programmed readers that I did not view favorably, bingo, the boys read. High interest low vocabulary books and language experience continue to be my preference but the lesson learned was that *every reading success story is different*. Immediately following student teaching I enrolled for the Masters program in Reading at Western Kentucky University. Drs. Z. Carner, C. Englebright, B. Skinner and J.



Skinner demonstrated precision, perseverance, flare, creativity and the importance of unwavering support. I continued to Southern Illinois University-Carbondale where Drs. Dan Fishco and Margaret Hill added a continued mix of flare and logical guidance. These institutions also opened up the larger academic world by sponsoring local chapters of IRA, national conference attendance and visits from IRA leaders such as past presidents, Constance McCullough, Millard Black and Ken Goodman.

Personal reminiscences aside it is important in the midst of computer reading programs, government mandates, palm pilots, scripted programs, prevalence of ADHD diagnoses, and newly coined terms such as "Grand Conversation" to remember that people read independently because they want to read.

Independent reading, not compulsory reading, is our goal. The only reason to read is to comprehend. It would be beneficial to concentrate on why readers read before how they read. We must also recognize the why and how differ for each reader and that "Grand Conversation" is just another name for a spirited discussion on the topic of choice. I wish for all a year of many spirited discussions.

While we partake in these spirited discussions let us learn from and remember the people and the materials and circumstances of our reading past.

OPPORTUNITIES OF PROMISE FOR THE HISTORY OF READING SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

- Membership growth - our most recent figures show a total of 132 members
 - Thank you to Dixie Massey for her industry on such a necessary task.
- Conference program – our approved program presenters for 2012 are
 - Melissa French
 - Amber Simmons
 - Richard M. Oldrieve
 - Thank you to Brian Morgan for his diligence in making sure we have a strong presence at the next annual IRA conference.
- Biographies Web – one of our newest efforts introduced by Past President Lou Ann Sears and spear headed by Jennifer Monaghan. We are seeking submission of biographies of persons important to the history of reading and literacy to be published on the SIG website.
- Thesis/Dissertation award scheduled for 2011
- SIG Handbook – a much desired guide is being prepared by Judy Fiene.
- Book bios – We are seeking papers written about old readers.
- Listserv - Thanks to Brian Morgan we have an improved list serve making communication much more effective. See article at the end of this newsletter.
- Webpage – Joe Zimmer not only produces an outstanding newsletter but also creates our webpage updates. Joe would appreciate assistance from enthusiastic tech savvy members. The webpage does receive frequent hits.
- The History of Reading deserves to be returned to the list topic presentations under the annual IRA conference guidelines. Hope to see many of you at the annual IRA conference in Orlando, Florida, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,
Rhoda Locklear

A REVIEW OF: *CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A READER'S HISTORY FROM AESOP TO HARRY POTTER*, BY SETH LERER

VIRGINIA HALL

Lerer, S. (2009). *Children's literature: A reader's history from Aesop to Harry Potter*. University of Chicago Press. 400pp. \$19.00.

Lerer opens with an introduction to the importance of reflecting on and reviewing the history of children's literature. "Learning to read is a lifetime, and life-defining, experience" (p.1).

The author begins with chapters emphasizing the earliest forms of children's books, including Aesop's Fables, literature of medieval childhood, and the Puritan impact on children's literature. Lerer reviews the work of John Locke and his impact on children's literature as a defining figure of education theory and practice, as well as Darwin's influence within the world of children's books.

Throughout the book, Lerer focuses on influential books, such as *Robinson Crusoe*, and other canons in children's literature. The author reviews how the prize culture has impacted literary publishing and children's literature in America.

Lerer concludes with a chapter on the importance of illustrations in children's literature and how children's books reach out to all our senses. According to Lerer, "we need big eyes to read, big hands to turn the page, big ears to hear the call coming from where the wild things are" (p.331).

This text is more than just a chronicle; it is comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of a reader's history of children's literature. Lerer effectively connects the history of children's literature with the history of childhood and education. Included in this text is the history of teaching and children's literature as an academic discipline. The book aims to be a resource to those interested in an historical study of children's literature.

ADULT LITERACY AT HARVARD 35 YEARS AGO

TOM STICHT

There was a heady atmosphere for adult literacy education in the winter and spring of 1975. I arrived in January as a Visiting Associate Professor in the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) at the invitation of Jeanne Chall, Director of the Harvard Reading Laboratory.

This year of 2010 is the 35th anniversary of my stay at HGSE and I have reflected back on that year not least because my second daughter was born that June at Boston Lying In Hospital. But as exceptional as that is, I was also fortunate to be there when adult literacy was on the agenda which had been established earlier in the May 1970 issue of the Harvard Educational Review. The special issue was on Illiteracy in America and the lead-off article was by Paulo Freire, who had been a Visiting Professor at Harvard's Center for Studies in Education. His article was titled "The Adult Literacy Process as Cultural Action for Freedom." Later that year his seminal work on *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published. While I did

not know Paulo when he was at Harvard, I later had the opportunity to work with him for one week a year for eight years in Paris at UNESCO House where we both served on the International Jury for Literacy Prizes.

The second article in the special issue of the Harvard Educational Review was by David Harman, who was at that time a doctoral student. Later he was an Assistant Professor of Education at Harvard. I knew David when I got to the HGSE in the winter of 1975. From time-to-time he and I would meet for coffee and a roll at The Blacksmith Café and bakery, which was said to be the home of Longfellow's famous "spreading chestnut tree."

David was very interested in promoting adult literacy education as a functional skill. In this regard, he did a considerable amount of consulting with the U. S. Department of Education (USDE) on adult literacy.

He worked there with Paul Delker, then the Director of Adult Education in the USDE. The major outcome of David's work with Paul was what became known as the Adult Performance Level (APL) project. The APL called for teaching adult basic skills within the functional contexts of adults' daily lives, such as in transportation, health, etc. The APL went on to perform the first national assessment of adult literacy and reported that some 20 percent of adults were functionally illiterate and another 30 percent or so were only marginally literate. These data helped spur the National Literacy Campaign of the 1980s.

The same year of 1975 saw a major report of the prestigious Committee on Reading of the National Academy of Education arrive with the title of *Toward a Literate Society*. The book was edited by John (Jack) Carroll and Jeanne Chall, and though it was concerned with the full range of literacy issues at all ages, the book contained two important chapters on adult literacy issues, bringing these issues into the consciousness of a wider range of scholars and educators. Just five years later, in 1979, Carman St. John Hunter of World Education and David Harman highlighted adult literacy issues and brought out a Report to the Ford Foundation in the form of a book entitled *Adult Illiteracy in the United States*. By then, David was back home in Israel at the Hebrew University. The program officer at the Ford Foundation was Gail Spangenberg, who later went on to form the Business Council for Effective Literacy (BCEL) in the 1980s and the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) in the 2000s. In the late 1990s, World Education and Harvard formed the National Center for Adult Learning and Literacy to advance adult literacy education in the United States.

During my stay at the HGSE Jeanne and I made it a practice to meet once a week if we could at a restaurant on Brattle Street on Harvard Square. I'm not certain but I think the restaurant was called something like "Cardello's" (?). It had a floor covered with sawdust to catch drippings from the large plates of food they served. Jeanne and I spent many hours there eating and talking about literacy. Jeanne was especially interested in a 1975 book I had edited called *Reading for Working: A Functional Literacy Anthology* which reported on the readability of technical manuals in military jobs, and the 1974 book I had published

with colleagues called *Auding and Reading: A Developmental Model*. She saw the relationship of oral to written language as particularly important in the development of literacy. Almost a decade later, in 1983, her book titled *Stages of Reading Development* was published and she included data from both books, including two figures from the Auding and Reading book to illustrate the relationships among oral and written language.

This year, there is again an interest in adult literacy for functional purposes in helping adult literacy students transition into post-secondary schools or job training and from there into jobs that can support a family.

I am offering workshops that illustrate a variety of programs that help adult English language and literacy get into good jobs. I am also working on an oracy project with an adult literacy network in Ontario, Canada to promote the development of oral language skills in parents and then the intergenerational transfer of such skills from parents to their children.

Last year I visited the Harvard Square area and noticed that Cardello's (?) is now gone, but the Blacksmith café where David and I used to meet is now integrated with the Cambridge Adult School. The Square changes, but the adult literacy work goes on.

Tom Sticht is an international consultant in adult education and can be reached at tsticht@znet.com.

EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED: EXPLORATIONS INTO HISTORICAL RESEARCH

VIRGINIA HALL

"The challenge of history is to recover the past and introduce it to the present."

- David Thelen (1989, p.1117)

Prior to beginning my doctoral program, I envisioned my dissertation study taking place within a classroom and involving interactions between teachers and students. As a previous elementary teacher and certified reading specialist, I assumed I would choose to research a component of reading instruction in the classroom. This was before I enrolled in a course entitled *The History of Reading Research and Instruction*. It was during this course that I was introduced to a type of research that I had never before considered: historical research.

As typical protocol for the first day of class, I reviewed the course syllabus with the required readings and assignments for the semester. Unlike previous courses, I felt a spark of excitement as I read through the requirements. It was as if I knew from the start that this course would be different from all my other courses. I actually couldn't wait to begin the readings and plan for the assignments. The projects from this course

proved to be just the beginning of my path into historical research.

Through course assignments and individual research projects, I had opportunities to take part in various historical research endeavors including visiting special collection libraries, exploring primary sources, interviewing individuals and analyzing historical texts. This type of research energized me and provided the incentive I needed when choosing a dissertation topic. I realized that in order to write a dissertation I was passionate about, it was going to have to include historical research. The purpose of this paper is to describe the historical research methods I have taken part in over the past year that have influenced my dissertation topic.

RATIONALE FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

HISTORICAL RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

Historical research is defined as a genre of research that reconstructs and interprets the past (Harris & Hodges, 1995). This type of research relies on an inductive approach. Scholars conducting historical research have an idea of what they want to research, but often their focus shifts based on the information that is uncovered. According to Rury (2006), "there is a popular misconception that historical research is simply a chronicle of the past" (p. 324). Historical research is a complex analysis between discovery and interpretation (Kaestle, 1992). Israel and Monaghan (2007) describe the demands of historical research as involving "the requirement to review historical literature, the necessity of looking for both qualitative and quantitative data, the need to search for primary sources, the obligation to assess them with care, and the consequent shaping of them into narrative form" (p. 415).

According to Zimmer (2007), there are a variety of resources that historical scholars rely on when conducting research. These can include consulting university archives, collections of papers, attention to tributes, locating relatives, asking reference librarians, and purchasing original writings. Historians make sense of limited resources that have survived the test of time. This type of research involves not only identifying and locating primary sources, but also interpreting the information and how it relates to secondary sources. Rury (2006) concludes, "historical research is letting documents speak, but also knowing how to listen" (p. 330).

HISTORY OF LITERACY

Historical research in the reading field is an underrepresented area. Over the years, very little interest in historical inquiry has been displayed by scholars in reading (Monaghan & Hartman, 2000). There are, however, members of the reading research community that continuously attempt to emphasize the values of historical research in literacy. According to Moore, Monaghan, and Hartman (1997), "educators can improve their understandings of current situations when they have historical settings as conceptual background" (p. 91). These researchers argue that historical research offers important perspectives of the past that affect the present and will impact the future in the

literacy field. Among these perspectives, Moore identified the value of historical research in helping "develop a sense of community" (p. 92). Monaghan and Hartman added, by connecting the past and present we "gain a clearer picture of who we are by examining where we have been" (p. 110).

HISTORY OF READING PIONEERS

An important contribution of historical research is focusing on influential figures of the past. This is one area that has been valued in reading education as evidenced by publications honoring prominent historical researchers. By researching those who built the foundations of the reading field, literacy leaders can gain insight for future implications of reading education. According to Israel (2007), "there is a compelling need to document the historical achievements- and failures- of those involved in the reading field" (p. xxi). Learning from the past is one of the most obvious benefits of historical research. The early reading pioneers' contributions to the field have had a major impact on literacy practices today (Kaufman & Hartman, 2007). Israel and Monaghan (2007) recommend that as we continue to focus on improving reading instruction, "we would be wise to look backward for examples of past theories and practices and their consequences" (p. 415). Recognizing the role of literacy leaders of the past offers insight for education today and into the future.

INITIAL EXPERIENCES IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Special collection rooms are common settings for historical research. The University of Pittsburgh contains various libraries with valuable resources that span across different disciplines. During the spring of 2009, I had the opportunity to research at two of the special collection rooms located at the university. The Nietz Old Textbook Special Collections was the first location where I conducted historical research. This special collection is nationally recognized and houses 19th Century schoolbooks from the United States. The volumes in this collection include more than 16,000 titles. The Elizabeth Nesbitt Room is the other location where I conducted historical research. This special collections room houses several collections related to the history of children and their books. The volumes in this collection include more than 12,000 books and magazines dating from the 1600's through today. The collection includes such unique books as the American Library Association Award books, Chapbook Collection, Dime Novel Collection, and 19th Century Juvenile Magazines.

NIETZ OLD TEXTBOOK COLLECTION

My first experience with historical research came with an assignment from the History of Reading and Instruction course. The assignment was to conduct a content analysis of schoolbooks located in the Nietz Old Textbook Collection. I didn't know what to expect since I had never researched old textbooks or visited a special collections room. It resulted in a unique experience from beginning to end.

Since the collection contained rare books, there were rules we had to follow (as I now have more experience with special

collection rooms, I know this is typical of most rare book rooms). We had to place our belongings in a locker outside the library, as we were not permitted to bring any materials inside. The library provided pencils because pens weren't allowed to be used near the rare books. The schoolbooks we would be analyzing were already pulled from the shelves and placed on a cart. All of these procedures contributed to the distinctive feeling one gets when conducting such research.

The best experience with all of this was the open browsing of the schoolbooks from the 19th and 20th centuries. It was amazing to actually hold the incredibly aged books that young readers used hundreds of years ago. The pages were brittle and the covers were faded, but the content was exceptional. As my class reviewed the books, we shared unique features of the little treasures we were reading. There were so many interesting aspects of the historic schoolbooks that it was difficult to decide what type of analysis to focus on for the assignment. In the end, I chose to analyze the content of readers from 1865 and 1936 and compare them to readers from today.

This assignment proved to be a worthwhile experience. I developed a new respect for special collection rooms; something that I would continue to focus on with future projects. In addition, I learned how to systematically analyze content from various sources published in different eras. Lastly, the schoolbook analysis from the Nietz Collection provided me with the opportunity to present my findings at the International Research Society for Children's Literature Biennial Congress in Frankfurt, Germany and at the National Reading Conference in Albuquerque, NM. The acceptance to present at these conferences demonstrates that this type of analysis which incorporates the use of special collections is valued throughout the reading field.

ELIZABETH NESBITT ROOM SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

My desire to explore other special collection rooms grew from researching the Nietz Collection. Fortunately, a course in International and Global Education required a project that enabled me to conduct research at the Elizabeth Nesbitt Room. My focus for this research project was a cross-cultural content analysis of Caldecott Award books across different decades.

This library had a completely different feel from the Nietz Collection Room. As I entered, I was welcomed with refreshments and a friendly staff. Once I requested Caldecott Award books from the 1970s, the reference librarian inquired about my study. We spoke at great lengths about the changing world of children's literature. She proved to be a wealth of knowledge and had me thinking about children's literature in the United States from a new perspective. While I reviewed the picture books, she located various resources that could help inform my study.

Reviewing literature from the 1970s was an interesting analysis, but my conversations with the reference librarian added to my positive experience at the Elizabeth Nesbitt Room. Through these first two experiences at the University of Pittsburgh special

collection rooms, I felt like I was beginning to get a true understanding of what it meant to conduct historical research.

THIS ARTICLE CONTINUED ON P. 7

A REVIEW OF: SAVING SCHOOLS: FROM HORACE MANN TO VIRTUAL LEARNING

LOU ANN SEARS

Peterson, P. E. (2010). *Saving schools: From Horace Mann to virtual learning*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press. 263pp. \$25.95.

As I recently waited my turn at a local hair salon, the customer just leaving looked down at the book I had with me. The title of the book was *Saving Schools: From Horace Mann to Virtual Learning*. I recognized the man as someone my hairdresser had previously pointed out as a retired teacher in the local school district [PA].

"Forget that," he said. "You can't save the schools."

Paul E. Peterson, the author of *Saving Schools*, disagrees.

This 263-page work containing three sections—"The Rise, The Decline," and "Signs of Resurrection"—shares "the problematic story of . . . cause-minded leaders, and how their efforts altered America's educational system (though not in ways they desired)" (p. 12). Pages one through seventy-eight introduce us to those he considers part of the rise of American education: Horace Mann; John Dewey; and Martin Luther King, Jr. Pages 79 to 180, "The Decline," include Albert Shanker and William Bennett. Part Three, "Signs of Resurrection," pages 183 to 263, highlight James Coleman and Julie Young.

While Mann and Dewey are familiar names to most of us in the field of education and King is a household name everywhere, perhaps Shanker, Bennett, Coleman, and Young are less well known. Shanker "decided that teachers . . . needed union protection" (p. 109). In the 1980s, William Bennett was "a high priest of the excellence movement" (p. 157). In the 1980s, Coleman showed that "sophomores in Catholic schools performed at higher levels than those in public school" (p. 193) and "students in private schools had learned more between their sophomore and senior year than their counterparts in public school" (p. 195). Coleman and Young are the two leaders designated as part of "the resurrection" (pp. 182-263). Young is the head of the Florida Virtual School (FLVS).

Although Peterson never mentions the Gulf oil spill, reading his book produced images of it in my mind. (Since I didn't get to the beach this summer, I find it necessary to go there if only in my head.) Southern beaches in summer are generally hot spots—no pun intended. People need a place to kick off their shoes, spend some time in the sunshine, and sift through sand to get to the

waves where possibilities are endless. No matter who you are or where you call home, you can find what you need on the beach—or at least you could until the oil spill.

In Part One, “The Rise,” Peterson speaks of three significant leaders who attempted to create in public education a place to find what you need—no matter who you are. Mann “ask[ed] the State Board of Education to approve books for libraries, create normal schools where future teachers could be educated, collect statistics. . . on the state’s educational conditions, and ask local districts to pay for school costs” (p. 29). Dewey’s philosophy called for “accept[ing] children as they are, because every child is different, arous[ing] the natural curiosity of the child, and us[ing] that to motivate learning, socializ[ing] the child into the community, [and] reform[ing] the social order” (p. 42). As Peterson notes, “For King, history was not a simple collision of social forces, God was not a mere Creator, progress (p. 57) was not inevitable, and pacifist acceptance of the status quo could not be tolerated” (p. 56).

Peterson reminds us that things don’t always go as planned. Mann, for example, “used government power to impose a compulsory, secular public school system on the immigrant population whose values they wished to shape.” It did not work (p. 16). Dewey’s philosophy never took hold (p. 16). King was not able to “produce better schools or equal educational outcomes” (p. 16).

In Part Two, “The Decline,” the oil spills. Unlike the BP oil disaster of the summer of 2010, the goo that now coats America’s public educational system can be attributed to five categories: vague definitions, changing definitions, too many dollars, loss of respect, and loss of power.

Part of the problem with American education is that certain words mean different things to different people. For example, “least restrictive environment” has no official definition (pp. 92-93). “Failing school” is a misleading term. As Peterson notes, “some schools [have been labeled as] failing when they were doing at least as well as other schools given a pass” (p. 175). This, of course, is a comment on No Child Left Behind. In NCLB, there are fifty different meanings of the word *proficiency* (p. 176). Classifying a teacher as *certified* does not guarantee that anyone learns more from him or her (p. 121).

What it means to be a student in American public education has also changed. Now we see more “ambiguous” grading, automatic promotion to the next grade, and a diploma for everyone who takes up chair space. This means that “teachers [are] freed from teaching anything specific” (p. 169). Peterson notes that the Clinton administration gave up on the effort to hold people accountable (pp. 173-4). Along came NCLB in which, Peterson notes, school accountability “distracted attention from the students” (p. 178). Students in special education who cause more misconduct than their peers (p. 94) are not held accountable for their actions (p. 95).

Part of the problem involves the spending of too much money. Now school districts need to hire more and more laborers (pp. 133, 134, 135, 150, 154). But why? School support staff [has

been] “doubling,” Peterson tells us: “People [are] needed to operate the buses, supervise children (p. 134) crossing busy intersections, prepare breakfast and lunch, type reports, handle communications, organize meetings, and perform the myriad other tasks . . .” (p. 135).

Loss of respect is another category. Despite Shanker’s efforts, unions did not help with “maintaining teacher salaries at the level needed to keep their jobs in the industry competitive with other jobs” (p. 130). As compared to other college graduates, “teachers today are not as well paid as they were in 1960” (pp. 131, 135, 136, 153).

Finally, public education has become an oil spill because of a loss of control. Over the decades, family and community have lost control of the school, and we have gone to “more centralized institutions under control of a professional class” (p. 16). When the law said to mainstream students with special needs, teachers lost power (p. 103). Having disabled students in the classroom does affect the rest of the class, but schools are not permitted to think of that (pp. 93, 96). *A Nation at Risk* showed that “educational skills of one generation will not surpass, will not equal, will not even approach, those of their parents” (p. 156). NCLB showed “how poorly schools were doing” (p. 166).

William Bennett, the focus of Chapter 8, “did more than anyone else to broadcast the boredom and complacency in America’s schools” (p. 158). Because of *A Nation at Risk*, Bennett was “hand[ed] the federal education reins” (p. 156).

Over the years, several attempts have been made to clean up the spill. Peterson notes in Part Three, “Signs of Resurrection,” that school vouchers were considered constitutional in 2002 after the *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* case (p. 206). Although they were not a tremendous success because of the opposition of teacher unions and the “indifferent” attitudes of the nation (p. 207), they did “change the conversation about schools” (p. 209).

In the 1980s, charter schools came onto the scene. These “are privately managed organizations that receive government funding. . .” (p. 209). Charters have been more successful than vouchers (p. 211) and have appeared in various forms: “single-sex schools, schools for the performing arts, schools for science and technology, bilingual schools, schools for the disabled, schools for dropouts, and virtual schools where learning takes place online” (p. 215).

Clean-up effort number three—homeschooling—which is not a new concept in U. S. history (p. 222) has caught on more so than vouchers and charters. Homeschooling is now supported by the Home School Legal Defense Association (p. 223). Those who are homeschooled “who take state exams generally outperform those who attend public school. . .” (p. 226).

Peterson spends a great deal of time on the Florida Virtual School—the closest thing, in his estimation, the U. S. has to a real solution for its public education woes. He does make some excellent points. Online education could provide a way to teach certain subjects not readily available in the public school system. It can be a way for a drop-out to finish school, and it may be a

less burdensome way for some students with disabilities to get an education (p. 234). The Florida Virtual School has been successful because it is designed “to fit with—not fight with—district schools” and it has created its own budget and therefore does not take from the public schools (p. 240). The school motto is “students can learn ‘at any time, any place, any path, any pace’” (p. 243). FLVS gets students who are trying to graduate when they are supposed to, graduate faster, and “supplement a homeschool education” (p. 245). FLVS led by Julie Young has a high teacher retention rate (p. 248) and spends less money than local schools (p. 250).

Peterson’s strongest argument is that the ultimate clean-up effort will be technology which can reach those in secondary schools to whom not enough attention is paid (pp. 259-260).

A day at the beach often allows for reflection. I am glad that Peterson offers some hope—some way to collect the goo. But as I worry with the Gulf clean-up, is it even possible to rid ourselves of all of the sludge? If we believe the news, BP will stay in the Gulf area until it cannot find anything else to clean up. Peterson states that school reform in the secondary arena is “in most serious disarray” (p. 259). Who could argue that? He tells us that most of school reform is directed to elementary levels (p. 259). This is true. Technology, over time, will, he believes, “genuinely transform learning” (p. 263). He probably has a valid point.

As I shake out my imaginary towel and pack up my gear, I realize three things: The seven figures that he praises in the book are just—at the end of the day—seven figures albeit important ones. Where are the others who have made significant contributions to the rise or the downfall of U. S. education? Edward L. Thorndike, for example, can be held accountable for the U. S. obsession with testing students. Where, too, is the challenge issued to educators to be figures eight, nine, ten? And Peterson implies that a well run online school is *the* answer. Rarely can we point to any one remedy that will solve any problem—educational or no. Although Peterson did not suggest that we as educators should look for alternative means of clean up, I hope we will do just that.

HALL – CONTINUED FROM P. 5

RESEARCHING A READING PIONEER

The History of Reading and Instruction course also provided me with another assignment that increased my interest in historical research. We were asked to research a reading pioneer in order to build a deep understanding of the person’s life, times, and contributions to the field. Instead of writing a research paper, we were required to complete our research using the multigenre approach. Within this approach, we gathered information from numerous sources and then constructed artifacts that demonstrated a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the topic.

I chose to research the life and legacy of William S. Gray. After the completion of this assignment, I feel that I had a deeper

understanding of not only William S. Gray, but also what different sources of information can provide. Planning to present the information in a variety of genres also helped develop a distinct interpretation of the resource materials. Researching and preparing for this project was different from any other project I had completed in the past.

Through my research on William S. Gray, I realized I had to think about the resources from an unusual perspective. Instead of browsing the typical academic journals, I searched for newspaper articles, speeches, original writings, photographs, interviews and any other resources considered out-of-the-ordinary. I did review books and journal articles, but I think some of the most informative pieces were those that I came across unexpectedly. One strategy I incorporated during my research was to look closely at all reference lists and endnotes included in the articles about William Gray. Clearly, researchers attempt to find a variety of materials when studying a person. The reference lists lead me to certain resources that I possibly could have overlooked.

In addition to researching various sources, I also visited the William Scott Gray Special Collections Room at the University of Chicago. This proved to be the most valuable experience I had with this assignment, or any other previous research assignment. Having had a taste of special collection rooms at the University of Pittsburgh, I had an idea about what to expect when I visited, but it was still a completely different experience. As I entered the special collections room, it was inspiring to witness other researchers diligently working with rare materials. These researchers were taking pictures with digital cameras, handling materials with plastic gloves and using special lights to review original artifacts. I felt significant just being among these other researchers, eager to embark on my own special journey.

The security was intense, but that just shows how precious the collections were in this library. After showing appropriate identification and signing numerous documents, I was ready to begin my own historical inquiry. I felt exhilarated when I received the first box of Dr. Gray’s original documents dating back to the early 1900’s (researchers were only allowed one box at a time). The papers were so old they basically had a transparent look and a brittle feel. Having read about William Gray, it was remarkable to view and hold his own writings, notes and receipts. My favorite document from this collection was his writing on *The Characteristics of the Good Teacher*. I thought this was a wonderful resource, with his own notes in the margins and interesting ideas about physical, mental and emotional traits of a good teacher. This unique document was something I did not find reference to in any other resource. Therefore, it was one of the many documents I requested to be copied. As part of the procedures of this special collections room, the attendant made all the copies and sent them via mail. After reviewing as many boxes as possible, I was sad to leave such an exceptional reading room.

My expectations for this assignment were met and definitely surpassed. As a former teacher and current student, I recognized the importance of such a unique project and the value of

historical inquiry. I certainly felt connected to Dr. Gray in a more profound way since I had an inside look into his work at the University of Chicago. After visiting yet another special collections room, I knew this would not be the last for me. Above all else, this assignment confirmed my desire to complete historical research in the future.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH GUIDING MY DISSERTATION

These initial experiences with historical research resulted in my exploring different topics for my dissertation. My mind was racing with how to incorporate my own personal interests with this newfound type of research which I had come to value. Fortunately, I was given an additional research assignment that would be instrumental in laying the foundation for my dissertation.

DISCOVERING A DEDICATED SCHOLAR

One of the most interesting aspects of historical research is studying a person or topic that you know little about. In this way, you begin your research with a completely clean slate and can systematically expand your knowledge throughout the research process. This was the case for me when I was asked to write a chapter about children's literature advocate, Nancy Larrick. Regretfully, I knew very little, if anything about Dr. Larrick, who was one of the most influential figures in children's literature in the United States.

I began my research online, reading as many articles as I could find about Nancy Larrick. Within the first hour of my research, it was clear that Dr. Larrick was an important leader in the reading field. In both her professional and academic work, she had many great accomplishments in the reading community. From the beginning, I knew that researching Nancy Larrick would be a rewarding experience for me. Not only would I be able to continue to learn about historical research, but in doing so, I would be learning about someone who would become a role model for me, both personally and professionally.

One interesting connection I found while researching online was the number of obituaries and reflections written in honor of Nancy Larrick. As I read through the articles, there were so many authors paying tribute to Dr. Larrick, ranging from the New York Times to the International Reading Association to small universities across the United States. It was clear that she had an impact on numerous people and institutions within and outside the reading community.

After I exhausted all the resources online, I headed for the library where I could find the many volumes she published during her years as a student, teacher, editor and scholar. Her doctoral dissertation from 1958, *A Parents' Guide to Children's Reading*, sold over a million copies and was reissued and updated in five editions. She was also known for her award-winning poetry anthologies that involved asking children what kind of poems they would like to read in books (Larrick, 2000).

After focusing on online articles and publications, I knew I had to move onto locating primary resources. By this time, I became intrigued with Dr. Larrick and was eager to discover as much as I could about her. Much to my delight, I learned that there was a special collections room in honor of Nancy Larrick. I called the archivist to find out more about the artifacts contained in this special collection. It was made clear to me that visiting this room would be well worth the trip.

STEWART BELL JR. ARCHIVES ROOM

One autumn Saturday morning, I headed to the Stewart Bell Jr. Archives Room of the Handley Regional Library in Winchester, VA. As it turned out, the four hour drive from my home was worth every minute. I entered the quaint town of Winchester that contained various American heritage signs feeling like I had taken a step back in time. Then I drove up to what seemed like the town's main attraction; the Handley Regional Library. It was an absolutely beautiful structure with enormous stone columns and a dome in the center. This building was twice the size of the other buildings in the square and had a presence that simply illuminated its importance, with a three-story rotunda and an interior stained-glass dome.

Inside, the library was buzzing with both adults and children. Outside of university campuses, I have not seen a public library so busy and full of life. Before I went to the Archives Room, I investigated the rest of the library. To my surprise, the children's wing was named in honor of Nancy Larrick and her mother, Nancy Nulton Larrick. It was an inviting space with large windows and colorful attractions. The walls were adorned with artwork and photographs. As I took a closer look at the photographs, I noticed that many of the pictures featured Dr. Larrick. I was determined to learn more about her connection to this reading room when I visited the archives. If I could describe the epitome of what a children's library should look like, it would most definitely be the Nancy Larrick Children's Room in the Handley Library.

Two floors below the children's room was the Stewart Bell Jr. Archives Room. It had a similar feel to that of the Special Collections Room at the University of Chicago. I filled out the necessary paperwork, sat down at my assigned work table, and waited for the boxes to be delivered. Over the next six hours, I was immersed in Nancy Larrick's world. I felt this collection was truly a tribute to her life, work and accomplishments. The order of the materials in the boxes was organized in a way that told a story about Dr. Larrick.

The first few boxes contained what I believed to be every article ever written about Nancy Larrick. I had read a few of the articles from my online search, but there were so many additional articles pertaining to this accomplished leader. The next boxes contained professional documents, including resumes, speeches, and letters. For example, I read a letter written by Alvina T. Burrows, a professor from New York University, in response to Larrick's book, *A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading*. Burrows explained her enthusiasm for the book:

From the end papers to the middle and back again, chapter by chapter, this publication is a triumph. The style has gaiety where it is needed and solid content and dignity where they count most. The lists of materials in the latter part of the book should save hundreds of people time and frustration. As I scan the chapters I can't foretell which will be most useful, but I would give a high rating to every single one. (Burrows to Larrick, 1958)

This letter provided insight into the personal response Larrick received from her seminal guide for parents and teachers. It was also interesting to read her comments written in the margins of her speeches. These were not just final drafts, but also pieces that were works in progress. Larrick was known for giving heart-felt speeches and the artifacts in this box demonstrated the effort she put into each speech.

Other boxes contained photographs, artifacts from trips, and personal correspondences. There were numerous cards written from famous authors such as Mem Fox, Steven Kellogg and Katherine Paterson. Another box contained plans for what would become the fantastic children's library that I toured upstairs. Dr. Larrick had many suggestions for the architect, making sure it would be a suitable place for students to enjoy a good book.

One letter that stood out in this collection was written by Larrick to the Governor of Virginia in 1957. The purpose of this letter was to decline an invitation to be awarded as a Distinguished Virginian. Larrick wrote:

I am declining this invitation in protest over your policy of withdrawing invitations and canceling acceptances of those Distinguished Virginians whom you later discovered to be Black. To me this runs counter to every rule of common courtesy and violates the spirit of hospitality for which Virginia was once famous. Further, I deplore the implication that only a White Virginia may be classified as a Distinguished Virginian by the Governor of the Commonwealth. (Larrick to Stanley, 1957)

From my research on her groundbreaking study, "The All-White World of Children's Books," I knew that Larrick was a civil rights advocate, but this letter demonstrates how she responded to such issues on a personal level.

The last few boxes contained Dr. Larrick's numerous diplomas and many of her awards, including a silver plate from the National Book Development Council in Singapore. This collection also contained the speeches that were given on her behalf before receiving many of her prestigious awards. For example, Walter MacGinitie wrote Larrick's introduction when she was awarded with the International Reading Association's Citation of Merit:

In recognition of her many outstanding contributions to reading, the International Reading Association honors its second President, Nancy Larrick: first editor of the *Reading Teacher*; guide to perplexed parents; promoter

of children's literature and poetry; author, editor, and lecturer; whose glowing spirit has inspired countless teachers.

(MacGinitie, 1977)

The final box I looked through contained letters and emails in memory of Nancy Larrick. Included in this box were also different programs and speeches from her funeral on November 22, 2004. It was truly moving to read the thoughts of others who were touched by the life of Nancy Larrick.

After spending a majority of the day in the special collections room, I befriended the archivist working in the library. She had wonderful information to share with me about Dr. Larrick, including the names and phone numbers of her former colleagues and students. She also gave me the address of Dr. Larrick's former home, so I could visit it on my way out. I complimented the library and the sources contained in the boxes. She told me that Nancy Larrick started it herself because she believed in preserving the past. From that point on, I took so much pride in researching a woman whose priorities and efforts were so grounded.

Driving away from the library, I felt like I was leaving a very special place, one that I hope to visit again in the future. I took the directions given to me by the archivist and went to Dr. Larrick's home. It seemed just like a perfect place for Nancy to live; and it was walking distance to the library! I also contacted a former student of Dr. Larrick and a former colleague. Both of the women were happy to share their memories with me. Many times throughout our communications, they told me how pleased they were that I was researching their friend and colleague, whom they strongly admired. All I could think about was how to pay tribute to the magnitude of Nancy Larrick's service to the profession in a way that reaches out to others in the field who knew little about this dynamic woman.

I felt that I had found a treasure chest of information about Nancy Larrick. Making discoveries about people from the past really makes you feel as if you know the person. I was eager to return home and begin working on my tribute to a woman for whom I had gained the upmost respect. Unfortunately, soon after my visit to Handley Library, I learned that the book project had been cancelled. The time I had invested in researching Nancy Larrick and my admiration for her led to my decision of not letting my work go to waste. I was determined to find another outlet to highlight the legacy of this passionate scholar.

FUTURE PLANS WITH HISTORICAL RESEARCH

All of my experiences with historical research led me to decide on the topic for my dissertation. Building on the legacy of Dr. Nancy Larrick, I plan to emulate her landmark study from the 1960s. Combining my love of children's literature and my interest in international education, I aim to conduct a study that incorporates the historical research I completed on Nancy Larrick. What I learned about her as a teacher, researcher and leader will be embedded throughout the work of my dissertation. Throughout the year, I had numerous opportunities to explore historical research methods. Each project had its own unique

element that varied my experiences as an historical researcher. I examined schoolbooks from the 1800s, analyzed picture books from the 1970s, conferred with reference librarians, read original documents from the early 1900s, obtained copies of original speeches, spoke with former students and colleagues, viewed original correspondences, held diplomas and awards, and traveled many miles to uncover the past. From time to time, I felt more like I was solving a mystery than conducting research. Putting together pieces of the past was both challenging and stimulating. Locating the resources was only the beginning; the biggest hurdle was interpreting all the information and making it relevant in my writing.

Conducting historical research reminds me of an anecdote Nancy Larrick referred to in many of her speeches. Larrick often quoted Madeleine L'Engle:

As part of a commencement speech given at Smith College, Madeleine L'Engle said, "Don't be like the two caterpillars who were crawling along on the ground when a butterfly flew over them. And one caterpillar said to the other, 'You'll never catch me going up on one of those.'" Then L'Engle added, "But I'll ride a butterfly any day. And I hope you will too." (Larrick, 1990, n.p.)

Historical research embodies the spirit of 'riding a butterfly.' It is very much an exciting form of research that is far from simple, but most rewarding. In the future, I hope to promote this method of research and encourage others to join me in uncovering unexpected discoveries from the past.

REFERENCES

- Burrows, A. T., to N. Larrick. (1958, September 25). In Nancy Larrick Crosby # 47, Stewart Bell Jr., Archives Room, Handley Regional Library, Winchester, VA.
- Harris, T.L., & Hodges, R.E. (1995). *The literacy dictionary: The vocabulary of reading and writing*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association
- Israel, S. E. (2007). Preface. In S.E. Israel & A. J. Monaghan (Eds.), *Shaping the reading field: The impact of early reading pioneers, scientific research, and progressive ideas* (pp. xix-xxviii). Newark DE: International Reading Association.
- Israel, S. E., & Monaghan, E. J. (2007). The uses of history. In S.E. Israel & A. J. Monaghan (Eds.), *Shaping the reading field: The impact of early reading pioneers, scientific research, and progressive ideas*. (pp. 415-420). Newark DE: International Reading Association.
- Kaestle, C.F. (1992). Standards of evidence in historical research. How do we know when we know? *History of Education Quarterly*, 32, 361-366.
- Kaufman, D., & Hartman, D. K. (2007). Reflections on the early reading pioneers and their biographers. In S.E. Israel & A. J. Monaghan (Eds.), *Shaping the reading field: The impact of early reading pioneers, scientific research, and progressive ideas*. (pp. 396-413). Newark DE: International Reading Association.
- Larrick, N. to T. B. Stanley. (1957, April 22). In Nancy Larrick Crosby # 47, Stewart Bell Jr., Archives Room, Handley Regional Library, Winchester, VA.
- Larrick, N. (1965). The all-white world of children's books. In O. Osa (Ed.), *The all white world of children's books and African American children's literature* (pp.1-12). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.
- Larrick, N. (1969). *A parent's guide to children's reading* (3rd ed.). New York: Doubleday. (Original work published 1958).
- Larrick, N. (1990). Speech given at Lehigh University. In Nancy Larrick Crosby # 47, Stewart Bell Jr., Archives Room, Handley Regional Library, Winchester, VA.
- Larrick, N. (2000). Nancy Larrick. In C.C. Rochman (Ed.), *Eighth book of junior authors and illustrator* (pp. 287-292). New York: H.W. Wilson Company.
- Monaghan, E. J., & Hartman, D. K. (2000). Undertaking historical research in literacy. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research, Vol. III* (pp. 109-121). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Moore, D. W., Monaghan, E. J., & Hartman, D. K. (1997). Conversations: Values of literacy history. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 32(1), 90-102.
- Rury, J. L. (2006). Historical Research in Education. In J.L. Green, G. Camilli, & P.B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*. (pp. 323-332). American Education Research Association.
- Thelen, D. (1989). Memory and American History. *The Journal of American History*, 75(4), 1117-1129.
- Zimmer, J. E. (2007). Hints on gathering biographical data. In S.E. Israel & A. J. Monaghan (Eds.), *Shaping the reading field: The impact of early reading pioneers, scientific research, and progressive ideas*. (pp. 417-420). Newark DE: International Reading Association.

A. GARR CRANNEY OUTSTANDING THESIS/ DISSERTATION AWARD

Guidelines for 2011 Award Year

The *History of Reading Special Interest Group* sponsors a triennial award for the outstanding masters thesis/dissertation on the history of literacy. A prize of \$100 will be awarded to the masters or doctoral student's work that represents the best scholarship on the history of literacy, broadly defined to include the history of authorship, books, instruction, audiences, publishing, spelling, libraries, reading, and writing.

The winning thesis or dissertation is announced at the annual meeting of the History of Reading SIG, which coincides with the International Reading Association's annual meeting in early May of each year. Winners of the award receive a special plaque as well as a three-year membership in the SIG.

Recipients of the award are invited to present a paper based on their thesis/dissertation as part of the next annual meeting of the SIG. The deadline for submitting applications for the 2011 award is January 15, 2011; theses/dissertations must have been completed and approved between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2010.

GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING

1. Submit three copies of the 'Title Page Form.' A downloadable copy of this form can be found on the SIG's website: <http://www.historyliteracy.org>.

2. Submit three copies of an abstract. The abstract should be typewritten according to the official style required at the sponsoring university. Photocopies are acceptable.

3. Submit three copies of a monograph based on the thesis/dissertation research. The monograph should be no less than five typewritten pages and no more than ten pages. It should be double-spaced and written in English. Font size should be no smaller than 12 point. The monograph should be written with no identifying data as to the author or the university affiliation. Include a reference list, which will not be counted as part of the 5-10 page body of the monograph. (NOTE: Applicants should be prepared to submit one copy of the thesis/dissertation itself, if requested.)

4. Submit a signed letter from the faculty sponsor on official letterhead of the university, attesting to the degree and date of its award.

5. Only masters or specialist degree theses/doctoral dissertations which have been completed and approved between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2010 will be considered for the 2011 award. More than one thesis/dissertation may be submitted from a single university.

6. The applicant's degree can be in any discipline; however the thesis/dissertation must clearly be an historical research project related to literacy.

7. All entries will be judged by a jury of three literacy historians who are members of the History of Reading SIG Thesis/Dissertation Award Committee. The decision of the judges will be final.

8. The envelope containing 3 copies of the Title Page Form, 3 copies of the Abstract, 3 copies of the Monograph, and the Faculty Sponsor Letter must be postmarked no later than January 15, 2011, and sent to:

Joseph E. Zimmer
Associate Professor
School of Education
P.O. Box 76 St. Bonaventure University
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778
Ph: 716-375-2388
FAX: 716-375-2360

9. Additional information and copies of these forms can be found at the SIG's website: <http://www.historyliteracy.org>

10. Application materials that do not adhere strictly to the above guidelines will be eliminated from the competition. Final determination of adherence to the guidelines will be made by the chairperson of the Award Committee.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The thesis/dissertation will be judged on the following criteria:

1. Significance of study to the field of literacy history.
2. Clear identification and relevance of the question researched to the history of literacy.
3. Appropriate methodology used in relation to the topic investigated (archival research, oral history, etc.).
4. Utilization of appropriate or sufficient primary sources.
5. Appropriate and effective use of secondary sources.
6. Conclusions appropriate given the design and results of the research.

SIG STARTS GOOGLE GROUP

The SIG found out this past spring that the listservs that used to be managed by the International Reading Association were discontinued.

Under the leadership of Brian Morgan, the History of Reading SIG has formed a new listserv discussion group at Google Groups. In order to join a Google group, you will need to register (for free) at <http://groups.google.com>. If you would like to participate as a member in the History of Reading SIG Google Group, please send Joe Zimmer an email at jezimmer@sbu.edu and he will send you an invitation to the group which will allow you to register as a member.

Non-members of the group can send historical questions by email to history-of-reading-sig@googlegroups.com. These questions or comments will be received by members of the group.

If you have never belonged to a listserv, it provides a nice forum for the exchange of ideas and resources and we are looking to build out membership in the coming months.

History of Reading News is published twice a year by the History of Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association. News items should be sent to Joseph E. Zimmer, Editor, P.O. Box 76, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778 (jezimmer@sbu.edu). Dues are \$10.00 a year payable to the History of Reading SIG. Send dues to Dixie Massey, 20330 190th Avenue East, Orting WA 98360 (ddmassey@comcast.net).

HISTORY OF READING SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

A. GARR CRANNEY

OUTSTANDING THESIS/DISSERTATION AWARD

2011 Award Year

TITLE PAGE FORM

[*Note to the applicant: Use this form.*] Form also available at <http://www.historyliteracy.com>

(1) Name of Applicant:

Address of Applicant in full:

Contact Information: Work _____ Home _____

 Fax _____ Email _____

(2) Title of Dissertation:

(3) Name of Institution

Granting Degree: _____

Complete Address of
Institution:

(4) Name of Examining Committee

Chairperson: _____

Full Address: _____

Contact Information: Phone _____ Email _____

Names of Other Members
Of Examining Committee

(5) Date (month, day, year) on which oral examination was held:

DATE (month, day, year) on which university conferred degree: _____