



NRC President's Report September, 2000

Taffy Raphael
Oakland University
Rochester, MI

Hi NRC Colleagues,

We've passed the half-way mark between the last and the upcoming annual meeting, and Peter Mosenthal has led a wonderful effort to build a very strong and interesting program to mark our half-century anniversary. Watch for information about the many special events he has planned in his conference report. Also, with the conference coming up, please notice the announcements from the award committee chairs—nominations are encouraged for these special recognitions.

The Spring Board Meeting

The Executive Board and the Board of Directors held their spring meeting in late April, in Indianapolis. A number of issues that came up have begun to be acted upon. For example, members chairing the various awards committees have been advertising widely using the NRC listserv and submissions have begun to arrive. Thanks to all of you who are taking the time to nominate potential candidates. Further, the Multicultural and Diversity Issues committee is creating an award that would support NRC conference participation by members or potential members from underrepresented groups, funded through already established money in the Multicultural and Diversity committee account.

Additional items addressed focused on ways to better serve members' needs. For example, JLR editors are exploring putting the full text of

articles over 2 years old on the website. John McEneaney, our eEditor, has restructured the NRC website and is updating information for easier access by members. Norm Stahl, our historian, is working hard to create a complete set of archival materials from past conferences. Peter Dewitz continues to work with headquarters to ensure that our treasury is sufficient and working for us and our future.

Michael Kamil, chair of the Technology Committee, submitted a proposal that the Technology Committee Chair, a nonvoting member of the NRC Board, be changed to voting member status. Discussion of this will continue throughout the December meeting, to be acted upon at the Saturday Board of Directors Meeting. Technology is assuming a far more integral role in the organization and, thus, the committee suggests that voting privileges make sense. Discussion has focused on what voting status means relative to the values of NRC (e.g., voting for this committee and not others) and budget implications. If members have any comments or suggestions, the Board would appreciate your input at the Town Meeting and/or Business Meeting prior to the Saturday Board meeting.

New Award Initiated

In an effort to recognize distinguished scholars who, though not part of the NRC community, over their careers have significantly influenced our theory-building and research, the Board of Directors approved a new award. Trika Smith-Burke has agreed to serve as the first chair of the award committee. The charge to the committee is four-fold:

(a) identify explicit criteria from the

ones discussed at the Board meeting and within the Executive Board meeting (e.g., established senior scholar, influencing a broad range of NRC researchers, not a member of NRC);

- (b) determine a name for the award that captures its spirit,
- (c) identify a pool of candidates that represent the spirit of the award; and
- (d) select the first award recipient for the December 2000 conference.

If you have suggestions for the committee, please forward them to Trika at <ms4@is2.nyu.edu>. We are very excited about the potential of this award for recognizing such scholars' influence and for broadening the visibility of our organization.

Search Committee Formed

As many of you may be aware, we are now halfway through our five year contract with NRC Headquarters, a team led by Judi Burnison who has worked with us for the past decade. Burnison Management Company (BMC) has seen us grow from an organization of about 400 members, an organization deeply in debt who often could not pay our bills between September and December, and an organization without many opportunities for members to serve, other than through the Board of Directors. Under BMC's management, we have become financially stable, have grown to over 1000 members, and have a committee structure in place that invites participation by several hundred of our members. We have a Field Council in which all states are represented, our own World Wide Web site and eEditor, new awards to

recognize our students and early career members, and an enlarged Board of Directors.

As an organization designed to support and promote literacy research, NRC must respond to the new demands placed on it by changes in technology, by changes in local and national policy, and by changes in the needs of the membership. To assure that NRC is meeting these needs, the Executive Committee has developed a two-part plan. First, Linda Gambrell is chairing a Needs Assessment effort to determine the kinds of support our Executive Board, Board of Directors, Field Council, Committee Chairs, and membership needs from our Headquarters staff. Linda will be presenting the results of her year-long effort at the board meetings at this year's meeting.

Second, based on the outcomes of the Needs Assessment, a search committee will create a Call for Proposals open to individuals as well as organizations (e.g., management companies, professional organizations, universities) to apply to serve as NRC management. We are working closely with BMC as well, with the understanding that they will be encouraged to apply. As past-president when the search begins, I will serve as chair. Peter Mosenthal and Deborah Dillon will serve in their roles in the presidential sequence. Don Leu, representing the Board of Directors will serve; and Trika Smith-Burke will serve representing members-at-large. We welcome your ideas and feedback throughout this process.

The timeline of the search committee's effort will be laid out in the Call for Proposals, which will be made available during the winter, 2001. The idea is to provide sufficient time and feedback opportunities for any outcome: continuation with current Headquarters who will have time to respond to our needs assessment report or transition to a new Headquarters structure. We

acknowledge that this is a challenging task and we wish to remain open-minded about the outcome of this activity. We will continue to work closely and openly with Judi Burnison and BMC throughout this process.

See you all in Scottsdale!!

2000 Conference Program Preview

NRC 2000 Program Chairs
Peter B. Mosenthal, Syracuse University
Deborah Dillon, Purdue University

For physics as an enterprise within American culture there were two eras. One ended and the other began in the summer of the atomic bombs. Politicians, educators, newspaper editors, priests, and the scientists themselves began to understand the divide that had been crossed. James Glick, *Genius*, 1992.

One might argue that, just as nature abhors a vacuum, we humans dislike continua—you know, those cognitive expanses for framing experience and thought that stretch all the way from here to there with little more than a bluish-gray blur in the middle. At some point, we can't but help to divide that expanse into intervals which, at their simplest conceptual level, chop up Einstein's space/time continuum into discrete units of life passing before us. George Santayana perhaps described this best, noting that "There is no cure for birth or death except to try to enjoy the interval."

Then again, the interval of life is a pretty big chunk of time to contemplate. Rather than deal with it head on, what we humans do is to divide that chunk into a lot of different "before-and-after's." As the quote above suggests, James Glick saw life perched precariously on the balance beam between "before and after" the atomic bomb. Then again there was the "before-and-after" that Steven Wright described: "I was walking down the street wearing glasses when the prescription ran out."

These before-and-after time periods, while perhaps simplistic, are most important to both our individual and collectives lives. In short, they provide necessary reference points that allow us to chronicle the bluish-gray blur in terms of meaningful segments. Collectively, these before-and-after's are critical to the growth of communities, as they enable individuals to bring a common appreciation to a universally shared experience.

In putting together this year's NRC conference, we have been mindful that this is not just another "before-and-after" NRC in the year 2000. Rather, this year's conference represents an especially noteworthy reference point—it's NRC's 50th Anniversary! This semi-centennial event will be held in Scottsdale, Arizona, from November 29 (Wednesday) through December 2 (Saturday) in the Doubletree Paradise Valley Hotel.

Conference participants will find a new schedule of times. Paper sessions, symposia, and alternative sessions will be allotted a full hour-and-a half; joint session will be allotted three hours; and round tables, a full forty-five minutes.

Our two plenary speakers will include Susan Hynds from Syracuse University and Carl Grant from the University of Wisconsin. On Thursday morning, Becky Barr will deliver the Oscar Causey Address; on Thursday afternoon, Taffy Raphael will give the presidential address. On Saturday, Karen Wixson and Sheila Valencia will present the review-of-research address.

After each of the afternoon talks, there will be special receptions: Wednesday's will acknowledge our newcomers; Thursday's (i.e., the president's reception) will acknowledge participants past and present; and Friday's will be a champagne spectacular in honor our

plenary speakers. On Friday evening, the 50th Anniversary Celebration dinner will be held at the hotel from 7:30 to 11:00, honoring past NRC presidents (all participants are encouraged to support this event at the meager cost of \$40 for food and a memorable evening's entertainment). Our town meeting will be held on Thursday following the president's reception.

At Wednesday evening's Vital Issues, participants will have the chance to meet the NRC Board. Thursday evening's Vital Issues will be dedicated to meeting new conference participants. Saturday evening's Vital Issues will be held in the Taffy's presidential suite.

While the special speakers and events will greatly enrich our collective experience at this 50th Anniversary Conference, the ultimate vitality of the program will come from the exceptional quality of proposals to be presented this year. Participants will find an ever-expanding interpretation of literacy—with views not only from the past and present but with an eye towards the future. In this regard, this year's conference theme, "Linking Literacies of Yesterday and Today with Literacies of Tomorrow," reflects that we have done much to expand the literacy continuum from a one-second inception to reading across the life span. Indeed, our research breadth has kept pace with the breadth of time that NRC has been existence. To commemorate the "before-and-after" of our ending and beginning semicentennial year, we look forward to seeing you at Scottsdale. Until then, best wishes for a most enjoyable fall.

Oscar S. Causey Award

Douglas K. Hartman, Chair
University of Pittsburgh

The *Oscar S. Causey Award* is given each year to honor an individual scholar for distinguished contributions to literacy research. The Causey Award Committee encourages you to nominate deserving candidates for this important recognition of their work.

To nominate a scholar for the award, submit: (a) one copy of the nominee's vita and (b) a nominating letter stating how and why the nominee's research has made a distinguished contribution to literacy scholarship.

As stated in the NRC guidelines, nominees must be members of NRC for at least 5 years, must have published substantial, significant, original research that has generated new knowledge, and must be recognized as a leader in the conduct and promotion of research.

The vita and nomination letter must be received by **October 2, 2000**. Mail or email (as attachments) the materials to:

Douglas K. Hartman, Chair
Oscar S. Causey Award Committee
4H01 WWPH
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
dkh@pitt.edu
(412) 648-7348

Nomination materials submitted to the Causey Award Committee will remain active in applicant pool for a period of 3 years.

Publications Committee

Susan B. Neuman, Chair
University of Michigan

The publications committee has been hard at work, searching for new editors for the NRC Yearbook and the Journal of Literacy Research. In both cases, new editors will have a hard act to follow. David Reinking, Cyndie Hynd, Donna Alvermann, and before that Penny Oldfather, the current editors of JLR, have done a spectacular job. The journal has a new look, the articles more varied than ever, and the journal readership is up. In the course of their 6 years as editors, they have brought energy and many new ideas to the journal. We hope to see the journal continue to evolve with the new editors, who will be announced after the board meeting at NRC.

We have also been lucky enough to have excellent editors for the NRC Yearbook. Tim Shanahan and Flora Rodriguez-Brown have done a wonderful job--the articles are now indexed in ERIC which will make it easier for colleagues to search the yearbook for particular topics, titles, and authors. You'll also notice that the Yearbook is now referred to as the NRC Yearbook, rather than a unique name for each year. Tim and Flora discovered that this would increase the likelihood that libraries continue to order the Yearbook each year. And like their colleagues in JLR, they updated, and redesigned the Yearbook to make it more readable and attractive for readers. We extend our sincerest thanks for a job well done, and know that the new editors for both publications will continue in this fine tradition.

Serve on an NRC Committee!

If you are interested in serving on any NRC committees, please contact Peter Mosenthal by **October 15, 2000**. Committee appointments will be announced by November 1, 2000.

Committees are: - Ethics - Policy and Legislative - Technology -Field Council -Publications - International
- Multicultural & Diversity Issues -Student Outstanding Research - Albert J. Kingston Award - Long Range Planning
- Early Career Achievement Award - Ed Fry Book Award - Oscar Causey Award - Critical Spaces

Contact: Peter B. Mosenthal, Syracuse University, 337 Huntington Hall, Syracuse, NY 13244
phone: 315-443-5449 email: pbmosent@syr.edu

Student Award Committee

Maribeth Schmitt, Chair
Purdue University

The NRC Student Award Committee is spending the fall reviewing the conference papers submitted by the 2000 Student Outstanding Research Award candidates. The papers from this cadre of new researchers represent a cross-section of topics and research methods and the field is very competitive. The winner will be announced at the conference in a General Session and will receive a \$500 honorarium.

The committee is comprised of:

Patricia Alexander, Diane Allen, Camille Blachowicz, Amy Seely Flint, Elizabeth Moje, David O'Brien, Ray Reutzel, Emily Rodgers, Mary Roe, Lawrence Sipe, and Maribeth Schmitt.

The work of the committee is both valuable and important. Whereas most of the awards given at NRC are presented to those who have made considerable contributions to the field in a variety of ways, the Student Outstanding Research Award is presented to colleagues at the outset of their careers and may indeed impact their future paths of progress. Previous winners include:

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| 1985 | Peter Afflerbach |
| 1986 | Deborah Wells Rowe |
| 1987 | Maribeth Cassidy Schmitt |
| 1988 | Sally Hague |
| 1989 | Joyce Many |
| 1990 | Douglas Hartman and Joyce Holt Jennings |
| 1991 | Sarah J. McCarthy and J. Michael Parker |
| 1992 | Debra Meyer |
| 1993 | Janice Almasi |
| 1994 | Janet Bloodgood and Ann Watts Pailliotet |
| 1995 | Jane West |
| 1996 | Kathryn Davinroy |
| 1997 | Susan J. Dymock and Lawrence S. Sipe |
| 1998 | Josephine Peyton Young |
| 1999 | Patrick Manyak and Emily Rodgers |

Watch for changes at NRC's home on the Web!

John E. McEneaney, NRC eEditor
Oakland University

Since August of 1999, the NRC Web site has been running on a central campus server at Oakland University in Rochester, MI. Since then, however, Oakland's Department of Reading and Language Arts has set up a departmental server that will become the new home for **NRC Online**. Our new home will provide us better control over the site and introduces some important new opportunities for development.

One advantage of our new Web site is that it allows us to define a URL that is both briefer and easier to recall. As of October 1, if you aren't using a bookmark, simply enter "http://nrc.oakland.edu" in your location box. No "www" is needed, so all you need to remember is "nrc.oakland.edu".

If you're a dial-in Internet user (and most of us are at one time or another), you'll appreciate that the new NRC Online site has been re-designed to minimize download times. Even more important, the new site takes advantage of server technologies that make maintenance easier and significantly enhance our capacity to support interaction.

Check out the new NRC Membership Database to get a sense for what this new level of interactivity means for NRC. Beginning October 1, you will be able to post, update, and delete personal contact information in either a public access listing available to the entire NRC membership, or in a private listing that limits access to authorized NRC members and staff. Other database-driven pages currently in development will allow Committee Chairs to maintain online committee rosters and upload committee documents to NRC Online and a central NRC document database.

And you don't need to worry about whether this transition will complicate or interfere with your access to time-critical NRC 2000 conference materials. As in our last move, the old Web site will automatically redirect you to the new NRC Online site. You'll want to reset your NRC bookmark if you use one, but other than that, the transition will be invisible.

Technology Committee

Michael Kamil, Chair
Stanford University

At the May 2000 Board Meeting, the Technology Committee made a motion to have the chair of the Technology Committee be a voting member of the NRC Board. This motion was tabled with the intent to revisit the issue at the December Board Meeting.

The Technology Committee believes that Board representation is critical because of the commitment NRC has to understanding the uses of technology in literacy development and to employing technology in its own organizational structure. Some of the most obvious organizational initiatives include the development and maintenance of the NRC Web site, monitoring and maintaining the NRCEMAIL discussion list, and moving some publications to electronic formats. All of these initiatives have fiscal ramifications for NRC and the Technology Committee argues that they should be viewed in the context of a complete technology strategy for NRC. The most effective way to accomplish this is to have the Technology Committee be responsible for formulating global solutions and recommending action to the Board. The Committee should consequently be represented as a voting entity at Board meetings.

Your opinion on this matter is important. Please send comments to any member of the NRC Board or to the NRCEMAIL list.