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# *The Reading Teacher* 1948 to 1991: The editors retrospect

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*The editors of The Reading Teacher, and persons affiliated with those editors now deceased, reflect on the events, persons, and contents associated with the journal across its more than four decades.*

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*Editors' note: This feature presents a chronological, first-person history of The Reading Teacher through the eyes of its editors, beginning with the 16-page, mimeographed, hand-stapled Bulletin of the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction, edited by Ralph C. Staiger and first published in 1948 through the Reading Clinic at Temple University, to the current eight-issue, 700-plus-page professionally published journal. We thank all the past editors for their willingness to provide written remembrances of their experiences with the journal. We also thank Roy A. Kress for sharing information about Marjorie Seddon Johnson's editing of the journal, and Donald L. Cleland for commenting on J. Allen Figurel's editorship.*

**Ralph C. Staiger, Editor, ICIRI Bulletin, volume 1 (November 1948-April 1949 issues)**

I am not sure why I was asked to edit the ICIRI *Bulletin* back in the late 1940s. In our group of graduate students at the Reading Clinic of Temple University, I might have been the only one who had majored in English, had experience in journalism, and had served as the faculty advisor of a high school newspaper. It is also possible that, in a weak moment, I volunteered.

The *Bulletin* brought professional ideas to teachers, as well as news of the fledgling organization, the clumsily named International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction (ICIRI). Volume 1, number 1 of the *Bulletin* was dated November 15, 1948, but ICIRI began its activities in 1947. I realized years later that I had neglected to include a masthead in the first issue and so did not list myself as editor of this two-column, 16-page mimeographed newsletter, which in 1951 became known as *The Reading Teacher*.

Rereading the earliest copies of the *Bulletin* for this retrospective was, as Yogi Berra is reputed to have said, "Déjà vu all over again." It was good to recall my friends and fellow students, and to recall how they had contributed to what eventually became the Interna-

tional Reading Association. Some were teachers in the Philadelphia area schools, and some, like me, were teachers who came to Temple as fulltime graduate students hoping to solve the riddles of reading. We fulltimers (my monthly stipend was US\$40) spent all day in the Reading Clinic, helping to diagnose children's reading difficulties or working with small groups of children with severe reading disabilities in the Reading Clinic Laboratory School.

In the fall of 1947, this group of Temple University graduate students drafted a constitution, held several meetings, and collected dues of one dollar. The ICIRI Constitution, which appeared in volume 1, number 1 of the *Bulletin* (November 15, 1948), had been adopted on November 22, 1947, and while far-reaching, was not realistic. Our organization was dirt poor. Its income, reported in the first issue, was US\$244.35, mostly from dues, except for a collection of \$2.35 taken up at the October 11, 1947, ICIRI organizational meeting. I think that I contributed \$.25. Expenses of \$89.60 for membership cards, stationery, mimeographing, and postage left the treasury with a balance of \$154.75. There were 234 members, all of whom were listed in the first issue.

The Constitution called for an Executive Secretary, chartered local study groups, four meetings a year, and a Publications Board that "shall have the power to cause the publication of significant investigations and scientific experiments pertinent to reading instruction and the diagnosis and correction of reading disabilities. It shall publish reports of all proceedings of the Council meetings."

In his President's Report in the first issue, Eugene Shronk, who was principal of the Margate City, New Jersey, Elementary School, told how the officers had faced reality in light of the mean state of the treasury. Since there are few copies of volume 1, number 1 of the *Bulletin* available, these leaders are reported here. In addition to President Shronk, Ethel Maney was Vice-President and Mason Watson was Treasurer. "Delegates to the Executive Board" were Dorothy Green, Gertrude

Williams, Patrick Killgallon, and David Haimbach.

The details of the reorganization are not important here, but the authorization of the *Bulletin* was a major step, for it marked the beginning of a publication program. It should be noted that local councils were also authorized, and a system was set up to issue charters.

*Staiger: Rereading the earliest copies of the Bulletin for this retrospective was, as Yogi Berra is reputed to have said, "Déjà vu all over again."*



#### The Bulletin

of the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction. Published periodically by the Council to keep its members informed about the activities of the organization, important events in the field of reading, and to render service to its affiliated councils  
Room 1000, Carnell Hall  
Temple University, Phila. 22, Pa.

Editor - Ralph C. Staiger

Contributors to this Issue:

Millard Black  
Mary Serra  
Eugene Shronk  
Mason Watson  
Helen Woodside

Vol. 1, No. 3

March 1, 1949

"It has been suggested that any members who wish to picnic before or after the meeting on May 7 come prepared to visit Valley Green on the Wissahickon."

— April 1948 RT

The primary professional contribution in the first *Bulletin* was an article by Mary Elisabeth Coleman of the University of Pennsylvania entitled "Planning and Guiding the Simultaneous Activities of Several Reading Groups," a paper that she had delivered at the March 13, 1948, ICIRI meeting. The topic was an interesting one for teachers, and the 234 members listed in the issue must have appreciated it, for they quickly renewed at the behest of a reminder in the *Bulletin*.

A program committee, headed by Marjorie Seddon Johnson, drafted a general theme for two years and projected four meetings to June, 1949. The theme was "Reading Needs in the Curriculum Areas." Meetings were planned not only at Temple University but also at Girls High School in Philadelphia, during the American Association of School Administrators' (AASA) annual meeting and during Schoolmen's Week at the University of Pennsylvania. The final meeting, to be held at a private or parochial school (it turned out to be Chestnut Hill Academy), was to be a demonstration of the informal reading inventory followed by discussion groups for elementary and high school teachers. All but the last meeting were to provide articles for the *Bulletin*.

"It should be noted that all of the services rendered by members of the Council were voluntary expressions of their professional spirit. Such sacrifices represent a real sacrifice of time and effort by busy people." This statement was included in President Shronk's Report in the first *Bulletin* in which he thanked ICIRI workers by name, saying, "No social organization with altruistic purposes can function successfully as a one man show." They were Emmett Betts, Ruth Burg, David L. Cline, Jennie Collova, Rosemary M. Green, Regina Heavy, Marjorie S. Johnson, George L. Johnson, Ernestine A. LaBar, Anne Owens, Naomi B. Short, Elona Sochor, Ralph Staiger, Russell G. Stauffer, Helen Woodside, and Jack Yourman.

Emmett A. Betts was our major professor and a celebrity. He was a prolific writer and was in great demand at colleges and state teachers' meetings all over the U.S. Individual differentiation of instruction, he maintained, aided by use of the informal reading inventory, would help teachers avoid having all children in a class working at the same reader

level and would provide for more effective teaching.

His students became believers in this approach, and his influence on us and on the ICIRI was very great. His speeches enabled many teachers outside the Philadelphia area to become aware of the fledgling organization (for he almost always mentioned the ICIRI).

The second issue of the *Bulletin* (volume 1, number 2, January 15, 1949), only two pages printed back-to-back, reflected the pressure we were all under. Its primary function was to serve as an announcement of the organization's meeting at the Temple University Reading Conference, which would be attended by several hundred prospective members from many places in the United States and Canada. Professor Matthew Black, graduate chairman of English at the University of Pennsylvania, was to talk about "The Hardest Reading in the World."

As editor of the *Bulletin*, I telephoned Dr. Black, trying to determine what he would speak about. His response was to name some of these titles: Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, Swinburne's *Hertha*, Gerard Manley Hopkins's poetry, Shakespeare's later tragedies, and the campaign speeches of Truman and Dewey.

In the next issue (volume 1, number 3, March 1, 1949) I reported "Dr. Black discussed the various factors which made reading difficult, and came to the conclusion that the early classics in our own language make the most difficult reading." I believe that I was quoting him directly when I wrote further: "The passing of time has distorted the connotations, and, more important, the denotations of many of the key words in the writings of Shakespeare, for instance. This has made it literally impossible for the most learned reader to understand what the author meant in many instances." Heady stuff for a mimeographed newsletter, but nevertheless genuine. Even Truman and Dewey speechwriters were singled out for contributing to confusion; in the years since then, political speeches have been singled out for obfuscation many times.

The next issue (volume 1, number 4, April 15, 1949) appeared only six weeks later and was also organization-oriented. The newly formed councils were asking for program help, and a Speakers' Bureau was set up. I do not remember that it was effective. In ad-

dition, a list was published of individuals who had volunteered at the Temple Reading Conference to help organize local councils. Geographically these organizers ranged from Tulsa, Oklahoma, to Alexandria, Virginia, to New Haven, Connecticut, and Toronto, Ontario.

Useful ideas for local council meetings were shared and networking was begun. For members in the Philadelphia area, five meetings were scheduled in conjunction with AASA and the National Conference on Research in English (NCRE). Donald Durrell was the speaker at the AASA meeting which the ICIRI cosponsored. I remember being much impressed by the NCRE breakfast, where I had my first opportunity to meet some of the leaders in the field. Later they became my colleagues and friends.

The big news in the volume 1, number 4 issue was that Nila Banton Smith had agreed to run for President of ICIRI, together with Edward Myers (Vice-President) and Millard Black (Secretary-Treasurer). Regina Heavy, Margaret Robinson, Charles Joyce, and Gertrude Williams, Executive Council nominees, rounded out the slate. Most of them would later become well known in IRA activities. The revised Constitution was adopted, and the Treasurer's Report indicated a balance of \$208.43. This concluded my term as founding-editor of the ICIRI *Bulletin*, the predecessor of *The Reading Teacher*. However, my involvement with the ICIRI and its successor, the International Reading Association, was only beginning.

—Ralph C. Staiger, January 1991

**Marjorie Seddon Johnson, Editor,  
ICIRI *Bulletin*, volume 2 (September  
1949-June 1950 issues)**

*Editors' note: Marjorie Seddon Johnson died in 1985. The following brief accounts of her work on volume 2 of the Bulletin have been selected to acknowledge her contribution.*

In May 1949, Marjorie S. Johnson was appointed chairperson of the Publications Committee and editor of the *Bulletin*. This event was of immense importance. Johnson had been one of the organization's founders and was to continue through the years to be one of its most loyal supporters, contributing time, money, talent, and hard work. This new Publications Committee was to become one of the most influential and powerful committees in ICIRI and later in the IRA.

—Bob W. Jerrolds, *Reading Reflections: The History of the International Reading Association*, pp. 6-7 (International Reading Association, 1977)

During the early years of the ICIRI, the assistance of graduate students, like myself, was solicited in the typing, mimeographing, and mailing of the *Bulletin*. Since the organization was operating under a very limited budget (memberships were US\$1 per year), the burden of basic costs entailed in the preparation and mailing of the *Bulletin* was assumed by the Reading Clinic of Temple University.

*Kress: Though her name never appeared on the masthead, Marjorie S. Johnson did the editing, and I helped with the layout.*



The issuance of volume 2 was somewhat of a nightmare. Though her name never appeared on the masthead, Marjorie S. Johnson did the editing, and I helped with the layout. The copies were run off at the Laboratory School at Temple University, and then came the addressing and mailing.

## Dues due

"Please don't leave me out. Here is my \$1.00. My full name and address are:..."

—January 1949 *RT*

"IRA membership with *The Reading Teacher* US\$38.00"

—November 1991 *RT*

In the summer of 1949, a momentous meeting, for me, was held in Teaneck, New Jersey, at the home of Nila Banton Smith, who had recently been elected ICIRI President. At that meeting I was "designated" to act as the first Executive Secretary of ICIRI. I say "designated" for I cannot remember any formal election process. I seem to recall that Dr. Betts just said, "Kress will do it!"

The editorship of the *Bulletin* passed to Nancy Larrick of *Young America Magazines* in the summer of 1950, so Marjorie as editor, and I as her assistant, ceased active involvement with the publication. Little did we know that 17 years later we would again team up to edit the journal, this time named *The Reading Teacher*.

—Roy A. Kress, May 1991

Certain articles in the *Bulletin* during those years are not credited to any person. Johnson as editor, and Roy Kress as executive secretary, wrote many of the early articles but did not sign them. In volume 2, an article, apparently written by one or both of them, included the first published elements of a later IRA publication on the informal reading inventory....

In less than eighteen months, 20 page issues of the *Bulletin* were being released four times a year, featuring major articles by Emmett A. Betts, Nila Banton Smith, and other leaders. At this point, Johnson requested that the editorship be turned over to someone who could give more time and direction to the publication.

—Bob W. Jerrolds, *Reading Reflections: The History of the International Reading Association*, p. 7 (International Reading Association, 1977)

**Nancy Larrick, Editor, ICIRI *Bulletin*, volume 4 (October 1950-May 1951 issues), and Editor, *The Reading Teacher*, volumes 5-7 (November 1951-April 1954 issues)**

In late 1949 I received a little leaflet telling of a new-born organization with a very impressive title: the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction. I recognized the names of several officers (Nila Banton Smith, President, and Roy Kress, Executive Secretary, for example), filled out the application form, and sent it in with my dues of US\$2.00.

Within a few weeks I received copies of the *Bulletin* of the ICIRI, and in a few months was invited to chair the Publications Committee and edit the *Bulletin*, succeeding Marjorie Seddon Johnson of Temple University and her

assistant Roy Kress. The first issue I edited was dated October 1950—mistakenly noted as volume 4, number 1. (In my rush I skipped volume 3 altogether and didn't discover the omission for several years.)

During my first year, we had no editorial advisory board as such, but the content of the magazine and suggestions for contributors were frequently discussed at Board meetings, and by individuals I could easily reach by telephone. With volume 5, my second year, we listed an editorial advisory board which included Albert J. Harris, Ralph Staiger, Nila B. Smith, Bernice Leary, and May Lazar, among others. Our meetings were piggy-backed on various reading conferences around the country where we would often bring in the reading VIPs for advice.

It was agreed that the *Bulletin* should be directed primarily to classroom teachers and provide three kinds of material: (a) information about current research and promising projects in the teaching of reading, (b) practical suggestions about classroom activities and reading materials for both teachers and children, and (c) information about the ICIRI and its local councils. We also agreed that there should be an editorial in each issue as a way of stirring debate and more critical thinking beyond the here-and-now of the daily classroom routine.

It's interesting to look back 40 years to some of those editorials. On occasion we hit high and wide, obviously with great determination, and often with our eyes on the stars. In October 1950, Gerald A. Yoakam, then President of ICIRI, wrote with feeling about our mission to "enlist the cooperation of many peoples in all parts of the world in our effort to improve reading instruction...to the end that better international understanding may follow." A fledgling organization of little more than 200 members was extending its mission to include the whole world!

The determination to encourage critical thinking and open debate showed up in many articles too. In fact, the five issues of volume 5 were planned to stir discussion, which we hoped would carry over to local council programs. The first issue that year focused on "Grouping—How and Why" with a series of discussion questions for local programs. The next issue dealt with "The Experience Approach to the Teaching of Reading vs. the Ba-

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*"There is no magic formula for the teaching of reading. Teaching is far too complex to admit a pat formula."*  
—Nancy Larrick, "From the Editor's Desk," November 1951 *RT*

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sal Reader Approach" with Laura Zirbes of Ohio State supporting the experience approach and Gerald A. Yoakam the basal reader approach. I was sure that combination would bring fireworks, but instead, the two writers were largely in accord. Issue number 4 dealt with "Testing" with Arthur I. Gates and George Prescott in debate. These were lively issues and were well received.

Practical helps for classroom teachers were given in a number of articles from diverse communities and schools. There were also reviews of new children's books, new textbook series, new lists of recommended books for children and teachers, notes about provocative articles in current magazines, and a remarkable listing of new audiovisual materials.

Frequently we had an article composed of questions submitted by readers and answers from such eminent writers as Emmett A. Betts of Temple University and Leonard W. Joll of the Connecticut State Department of Education.

News of local councils came slowly but steadily, beginning with Toronto, Ontario, Canada, the first chartered council which began with 695 members in January 1951 and grew to 800 by May 1952. Perhaps this strong Canadian influence with its French-speaking members helped to revise the new constitution to avoid the "English-only" focus and open it up to "all people of all languages." From this distance in time, one can see how the foundations of the International Reading Association were being laid and the vision with which the early builders worked.

My first issue of the *Bulletin* (volume 4, number 1, October 1950), like its predecessors, was 16 pages mimeographed on standard 8½" by 11" paper and stapled by hand. The next issue (January 1951) had a cleaner, crisper look because it was printed by office multilith. This small improvement increased our determination to move to printing, "real printing," as quickly as possible.

All the while we were increasingly concerned with our rather cumbersome title. During the summer of 1951, the Board approved the simpler, more direct title, *The Reading*

*Teacher*, which was first used with the September 1951 issue (volume 5, number 1). Fortunately this was a cost-free change, for a treasurer's report of that time showed cash on hand of US\$3.32, with postage bills for mailing the last two issues still unpaid.

When Albert J. Harris became President of the ICIRI in April 1952, he joined me in asking the Board to authorize "real printing" even though we knew the cost would be \$300 to \$400 an issue. At that time the ICIRI trea-

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*Larrick: My four years on the magazine had been very demanding, at times exhausting, and always heartwarming.*

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sure balance was just \$80. The Board took the risk, and printing was approved.

President Harris knew of a highly recommended printer, Sol Klein of Paul-Art Press, and set a date when he, Mr. Klein, and I could meet. At that time I was an editor at Random House, then ensconced in the magnificent old Villard Mansion back of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. Since my tiny office was under the eaves, I proposed meeting in the lobby by the great marble stairway. Years later Sol Klein confessed that he was so impressed by that majestic stairway and the black and white marble floor that he never inquired about our financial rating. He agreed to print the magazine, and Dr. Harris and I signed the printing contract.

The first printed copy of *The Reading Teacher*, the September 1952 issue (volume 6,

# The Reading Teacher

The Journal of the International Council for the Improvement  
of Reading Instruction

Vol. 6, No. 1

September, 1952

## Contents of this issue

	Page
WE PROUDLY PRESENT THE "NEW" READING TEACHER by Albert J. Harris	3
MEETING THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN by Emmett A. Betts	4
HOW CAN I HELP EVERY CHILD WITH THIRTY OR MORE IN THE CLASSROOM? by Josephine B. Wolfe	13
HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS ALSO NEED INDIVIDUAL HELP IN READING by Ralph Staiger	17
MATERIALS AND EXPERIENCES IN READING TO MEET VARIED NEEDS by Paul Witt	21
WHAT RECENT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN READING by J. Allen Figurel	27
PARENT READINESS FOR TODAY'S READING METHODS by Nellie Morrison	34
WHAT OTHER MAGAZINES ARE SAYING ABOUT THE TEACHING OF READING by Muriel Potter	39
NEWS OF THE READING COUNCIL by*Donald L. Cleland	43

number 1), was an improvement, with 48 6" by 9" two-column pages. The table of contents was printed on the self-cover. At best it would have been classified as "neat but not gaudy." However, the May 1953 issue pleased everyone with a soft lemon cover imprinted with black. This issue announced that there would be four 64-page issues of *The Reading Teacher* in the year ahead.

By this time, our membership and readership were growing, but many a bill was put aside for several months before payment could be made. In a few instances, we were able to sell our mailing list for \$25, but that was of little help. What about opening our magazine to advertising? That started a real debate: We must be careful to screen the ads. There should be no shady stuff, no high-pressure business. Finally the Board autho-

rized advertising provided we had a strong committee to serve as watchdog. H. Alan Robinson was named Chairman of the Advertising Committee, and a carefully worded letter went out to prospective advertisers. The first ads to come in were from D.C. Heath, Ginn and Company, and Lyons and Carnahan. It seemed like the proverbial manna from heaven. We were in business!

By the winter of 1954, I found myself in a hopeless bind with a very demanding fulltime editorial job at Random House, work on *The Reading Teacher*, and the last frantic struggle to finish my dissertation by the 1955 deadline at New York University. In May 1954, I submitted my resignation as editor of *The Reading Teacher*, a particularly difficult wrench for me.

My four years on the magazine had been very demanding, at times exhausting, but always heartwarming. Every person I approached for help came through graciously and efficiently. On several occasions I appealed to the most distinguished writers and researchers in the field, asking for an article, often on short notice. Without exception everyone responded generously and promptly. Unknown classroom teachers in far-away communities sent in their questions and comments, and their letters of appreciation. In fact, many became close friends with whom I can now have a good laugh over our deep concerns of those early years—even our brushes with bankruptcy—friends with whom I share pride in the way our little mimeographed magazine has grown and blossomed in these 40 years.

—Nancy Larrick, January 1991

## J. Allen Figurel, Editor, *The Reading Teacher*, volumes 8-10 (October 1954-April 1957 issues)

*Editors' note: During the time of the late J. Allen Figurel's editorship, Donald L. Cleland served as Executive Secretary-Treasurer of ICIRI and Business Manager for The Reading Teacher. The following account of Figurel's tenure as editor was prepared by Cleland.*

By May 1954, *The Reading Teacher* was firmly established. Professional printing had been adopted, advertising was accepted, and

the magazine had been expanded to four 64-page issues per volume. When Nancy Larrick wished to be relieved of her duties as editor of *The Reading Teacher* and Publications Committee chair, the ICIRI turned to Allen Figurel.

Figurel had served on the Publications Committee with Larrick and was well known and respected in ICIRI. He had received his PhD in 1948 and had recently joined the faculty of the School of Elementary Education at the University of Pittsburgh. When Larrick asked Figurel to take over the editing of *The Reading Teacher*, he reluctantly agreed. In fact, it was only after some urging from colleagues at his university and within ICIRI that he accepted the position. Their confidence in Allen was richly deserved. They were not to be disappointed.

Allen Figurel was a man of integrity and intelligence. He was knowledgeable in many fields yet always quiet, unassuming, and soft spoken. He was also a man of many talents and interests. He once mentioned that he graduated from high school at 16 years of age. He had written and published a song also at a young age. On his office walls hung two paintings by famous artists. His home reflected his knowledge and love of good art as well as interior design and the decorative arts.

Soon after taking over the editorial responsibilities, Figurel decided he would need some help. Phillip B. Shaw became his associate editor.

In October 1954, for his first issue, Figurel introduced a heavier, tan cover with dark brown lettering, to make the magazine more durable. Teachers were very pleased with the magazine, making good use of it themselves as well as lending it to friends. They had reported that the old yellow covers were not strong enough to hold up well with continuous use.

One of the first changes he made in the magazine was to add the feature "What Research Says to the Reading Teacher." This was heartily approved by the ICIRI founders, who had written into their constitution their hope of publishing the "results of pertinent, significant investigations and experimentation" to improve reading instruction. Figurel asked Helen M. Robinson, well known for her expertise in judging the quality and relevance of reading research, to write the monthly research column.

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Figurel decided to continue the practice of developing the magazine through a thematic approach which had been first established in the September 1951 issue of *The Reading Teacher*. Figurel asked Gerald Yoakam, Professor of Education at the University of Pittsburgh and past president of ICIRI, to act as guest editor for the October 1954 issue, the theme of which was improving basal reading instruction.

Yoakam wrote the introduction and the first article, "Systematic Instruction in Basic

## A bumper crop

All the following notables in IRA history authored articles in volume 6 issues (September 1952-May 1953): Albert J. Harris, Emmett A. Betts, Ralph C. Staiger, Paul Witty, J. Allen Figurel, Muriel Potter, Donald L. Cleland, Gertrude Hildreth, Roy A. Kress, H. Alan Robinson, E. W. Dolch, Ruth Strang, Leo Fay, Leland B. Jacobs, Mary C. Austin, Helen M. Robinson, Gertrude H. Williams, William D. Sheldon. Whew! Now there's a Who's Who in Reading Education of the 1950s.

Reading Skills." Other articles in this issue included "Challenge versus Frustration in Basic Reading," by Emmett A. Betts; "Prevention of Reading Disabilities as a Basal Reading Problem," by A. Sterl Artley; "Vocabulary in Control—More or Less," by Donald D. Durrell; "Appraisal of Growth in Reading," by Miles A. Tinker; and "The Child and His Basic Reading Materials," by Gertrude Whipple.

Other themed issues initiated by Figurel included "Improving Reading in Content Areas," edited by A. Sterl Artley; "Developmental Reading in Schools and Colleges," edited by Paul Witty; "A First Essential: Phonics," edited by Emmett A. Betts; "Literature for Children and Youth," edited by Leland B. Jacobs; "Reading and the Emotions: Overview," edited by David H. Russell; and "Controversial Issues Relating to Reading," edited by William S. Gray.

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*In 1957 Nila B. Smith served as interim editor for two issues while a new RT editor was being sought.*

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A number of features of general interest were included regularly in *The Reading Teacher* during Figurel's tenure as editor. These include "What Other Magazines Are Saying About the Teaching of Reading," prepared by Muriel Potter Langman; "Children's Books and the Teaching of Reading," written by Nancy Larrick; "News of Local Councils," prepared by Josephine Tronsberg and Mary C. Austin; and "A Message from the President," written by the three ICIRI presidents and presidents-elect during Figurel's editorship: Margaret A. Robinson, William S. Gray, and Nancy Larrick.

Allen knew the cover of a magazine was important. Two issues after he changed *The*

*Reading Teacher* cover, he changed it again. Beginning with the February 1955 issue, the cover featured a chalkboard on which *The Reading Teacher* was written in white letters.

Allen Figurel resigned as editor of *The Reading Teacher* in 1957 at the end of volume 10 due to failing health. However, he did edit at least 10 individual IRA publications between 1957 and 1972 and later received a well-deserved IRA Citation of Merit award.

—Donald L. Cleland, June 1991

*Editors' note: It was during Allen Figurel's term as editor of The Reading Teacher that ICIRI merged with the National Association of Remedial Teachers (NART) to form the International Reading Association. William S. Gray, President of ICIRI, and Ruth Strang, President of NART, along with the support of their respective governing boards and memberships, facilitated the merger. On December 31, 1955, ICIRI and NART closed their books and ceased to exist. January 1, 1956, signified not only the beginning of a new year but also a new era for professional reading education, the birth of IRA. The February 1956 issue of The Reading Teacher was the first published by the International Reading Association, and the IRA emblem graced the masthead.*

*Though the official publication of the new IRA was The Reading Teacher, still edited by Figurel, NART was not without a tradition of publications. In January 1948, NART published a four-page, mimeographed newsletter called the News Bulletin. In 1949, Katherine Smithes assumed editorship of the News Bulletin which was renamed the NART News in 1950. NART News grew in size, circulation, and sophistication under its subsequent editors, Elizabeth A. Simpson and Phillip Shaw. It was incorporated into The Reading Teacher in 1956.*

**Nila Banton Smith, Editor, *The Reading Teacher*, volume 11 (October and December 1957 issues)**

*Editors' note: Through somewhat unusual circumstances, Nila Banton Smith, now deceased, served as interim editor for two issues of The Reading Teacher. In the "President's Report" of the October 1957 issue of The*

Reading Teacher, *Albert J. Harris* noted the following:

In April 1957, Dr. J. Allen Figurel notified us that his health would not allow him to continue as Editor of *The Reading Teacher*. Dr. Figurel served very ably as Editor for three years, and had the satisfaction of seeing the print order increase from 4,000 to 14,000 copies per issue, mainly because of the excellence of the magazine. Dr. Figurel had already been invited to continue as Editor, and we greatly regret his inability to do so. The Publications Committee, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Nila Banton Smith, has kindly consented to act as editor on a temporary basis while a careful search for a new editor is being conducted.

Thus, *Nila Banton Smith* was responsible for editing two issues of *The Reading Teacher*, though she was only listed on the masthead as Publications Chairman. The search for a new editor, though "careful" as Harris noted, was swift, for in Editor Smith's second and final issue, Harris announced that *Russell G. Stauffer* would assume the role of editor with the very next issue. *Bob Jerrolds* recounts the editor search process in *Reading Reflections* (p. 46) as follows:

Chairperson Smith, President Harris, and others on the Publications Committee and Board felt that *Russell G. Stauffer* was the best person for the editorship of *The Reading Teacher*. Stauffer was approached but protested that others could give more time than he. Smith's persistent belief that Stauffer was the right person finally overcame his reluctance. Smith says, "I called Russ to ask him to take the position and he refused. I wrote to him and he refused. We had lunch one day in New York and I asked him again. This time he accepted. To this day, that was my most significant lunch."

### **Russell G. Stauffer, Editor, *The Reading Teacher*, volumes 11-20 (February 1958-May 1967 issues)**

I can look back on my 10 years as editor of *The Reading Teacher* as being challenging, rewarding, and enormously interesting for me. During this time, membership in IRA grew by leaps and bounds; subsequently, the number of copies printed each issue increased by the hundreds. Eventually, it became necessary to double the number of issues published each year.

During these years, *The Reading Teacher* achieved some very important "firsts." For ex-

ample, prior to 1960 the journal was published four times a year, each issue focusing upon a particular theme. In 1960 an additional issue which was not themed was introduced to provide space for the many unsolicited papers being submitted. By 1963 the number of issues published each year doubled to eight with at least two issues unthemed. Another "first" came in September 1961 when the journal's contents were listed in the *Education Digest*.

These years were challenging and rewarding in numerous ways. One was having the

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*Stauffer: I can look back on my 10 years as editor of The Reading Teacher as being challenging, rewarding, and enormously interesting for me.*

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opportunity to participate in the process of selecting the topics for the themed issues. Sometimes my suggestions concerned topics for which there had been expressed a special interest, or perhaps topics which I felt were relevant at the time. Sometimes these were topics which were just beginning to be discussed in reading circles or topics which were being hotly debated at the time, such as programmed reading, intensified phonics instruction, individualized reading, and the use of the Roman alphabet to name a few.

Another rewarding challenge was soliciting articles for the themed issues. I chose authors whose expertise I knew would present special insights to the particular theme, and whose varied viewpoints would be thought

"The outcry against the insidious "round-the-robin oral-reading" practice has been heard, and the practice has been largely eliminated."

—Russell G. Stauffer, February 1959 *RT*

provoking and useful to the readers, especially teachers.

A further challenge was the task of preparing the manuscripts for publication. Besides the editorial work involved—reading, editing, proofreading, etc.—layout dummies had to be prepared. There were no word processors or computers, and many hours were spent cutting and pasting. Even now I have a vivid picture of Zona McPhee, my invaluable editorial assistant, and myself sitting at a large table with the long page proof sheets before us, scissors in hand, setting up the “dummy” for the printer. Each issue was creatively different. Decisions had to be made as to sequence of articles, where to place runovers from articles, where to place the advertisements, etc. How often we thought we had everything arranged but to find we needed to rearrange pages to find space for concluding paragraphs of an article which we could not place where we had planned!

Perhaps most challenging and most rewarding was the opportunity to write the editorials. My intent was to present not only an introduction to or an overview of the contents of an issue, but to stimulate readers to raise questions about what they were reading, to evaluate, and to relate it to their everyday teaching experiences or studies. I will admit at times I did not hesitate to speak out about certain issues. Through my editorials I hoped readers would gain insights into the reading process that went beyond perceiving reading as a mere act of decoding, word memorization, and parroting of story facts. I hoped readers, instead, would regard reading as a thinking, self-directed process of inquiry, reasoning, evaluating, judging, and discovery. I wanted readers to realize how important the interaction of the child’s language, reading, writing, experiences, and each child’s individualization is to teaching. I hoped teachers and students of reading instruction would evaluate research studies and be able to apply their understanding to their everyday work. Most of all, I hoped teachers would not forget that de-

veloping a love of reading was paramount in their teaching.

Those years working on *The Reading Teacher* were very rewarding in that I had the opportunity to work with outstanding contributing editors and publication chairpeople such as Agatha Townsend, Dolores Durkin, George Spache, Mary Elisabeth Coleman, Harry Hahn, Mary Austin, Robert Karlin, and Nila Banton Smith, to name a few. Because of my position as editor I was able to become better acquainted with members of the IRA Board and the Executive Secretary, Ralph Staiger. I found the professional contacts stimulating and through these contacts made some wonderful friends. Most rewarding, however, was that I had more opportunities to meet and talk with college and graduate students, teachers, and administrators. I enjoyed the times spent with them discussing reading, their problems and their successes. Through these talks I became aware of ways *The Reading Teacher* could be more meaningful for them.

As I look back, it seems as if the years went by far too quickly. I can truly say I gained much professionally and personally. I worked at having *The Reading Teacher* serve as a spokesperson for the IRA by being “discerningly accurate, well rendered, and meet[ing] the needs and expectations of the reading teachers everywhere,” the criteria outlined by the IRA Board.

—Russell G. Stauffer, February 1991

**Roy A. Kress and Marjorie Seddon Johnson, Coeditors, *The Reading Teacher*, volumes 21-24 (October 1967-May 1971 issues)**

With the October 1967 issue of *The Reading Teacher*, Marjorie Seddon Johnson and I assumed the editorship following Russell G. Stauffer’s distinguished 10-year term. The journal had progressed from its original 16-page mimeographed format to a truly professional publication of 112 pages and consisted

“The theme of Children’s Book Week this month is ‘This is the age of the book’....The spirit is one of hope and determination, true belief that this *is* the age of the book and each individual around the world shall have the right to *live* in this age.”

—Marjorie Seddon Johnson & Roy A. Kress, November 1970 *RT*

## Never a moment's rest

"The new editors of *The Reading Teacher* [Kress & Johnson] found themselves with a grueling schedule. Each issue of the journal required three months' production time; thus, the editors had to work with three issues at once, each in a different stage: 1) manuscript selection and copyediting stage, 2) galley proofreading stage, and 3) page makeup stage. Many manuscripts were submitted for possible publication and the editors read them on planes, in faculty meetings, and at mealtimes."

—Bob W. Jerrolds, *Reading Reflections*, 1977, p. 153

of articles by professionals in the field, classroom teachers on the firing line, and special sections concerned with research, reviews of new texts and children's books, and current practical ideas for classroom use. We assumed this responsibility with trepidation and a great deal of humility.

These were the years following the *Harvard Report on Reading in the Elementary Schools* (1964), and *The First Grade Studies* (1967) had just been published. *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* (1967) appeared this same year. The challenge was frightening!

With a supply of manuscripts already on hand from the former editor, Marjorie and I spent long hours reading, evaluating, and discussing the merits of those that would seem most appropriate to use in response to the ideas generated by these latest publications as well as those that represented worthwhile techniques for use in the field. In addition, we immediately began soliciting authors to prepare manuscripts related to these current issues and to those themed issues planned for the future.

In preparation for this article, I reviewed all copies of *The Reading Teacher* Marjorie and I edited. I firmly believe that the quality and range of the articles contained therein did (and still do) credit to the International Reading Association. They represent as fine a mix of theoretical positions, classroom and clinical strategies, and field research as one can find during any other publishing period in *The Reading Teacher* or in any comparable journal in the field. Work with our contributing editors was productive and pleasant. In 1968 the ERIC/CRIER column was initiated and remained a regular feature in *The Reading Teacher* for over 20 years.

Such a critical review of the literature calls to mind the carnival slogan, "Around and around she goes, and where she stops nobody

knows!" The cyclical nature of our professional machinations are astounding. During my graduate program, I was thoroughly indoctrinated with the understanding that reading is a thinking process and an integral part of all of the language arts; that an experience approach to the teaching of reading which embodies all of the facets of language is mandatory for some children and often appropriate for all. Though the labels have changed, the concepts have not, and we continue to spin our theoretical and professional wheels in the mire of new verbiage and controversy in the search for a panacea that will solve all of our problems.

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***Kress: Marjorie and I spent long hours reading, evaluating, and discussing the merits of those [manuscripts] that would seem most appropriate to use.***

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Instead of reinventing the wheel, we need to search for further ways of improving what we have already found works well. It is time to recognize fully once again that the well-trained teacher who loves children, who understands how to utilize the basic principles of learning in the classroom, and who recognizes that children are different and all do not learn the same way nor at the same pace *makes the difference!*

—Roy A. Kress, May 1991

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**Lloyd W. Kline, Editor, *The Reading Teacher*, volumes 25-28 (October 1971-May 1975 issues)**

When pressed as an undergraduate for a summary of my goals in life, I settled on one proposition: If by age 40 I were editing a periodical—whatever its size and circulation, a periodical that served some socially constructive purpose—I would consider myself a success. I would view my life as having been worth the living. I would figure that I had not only justified my existence but redeemed whatever hopes, dreams, expectations, sheer bets, or whatever others had invested in me—parents, teachers, preachers, the Almighty, etc.

On January 4, 1971, I entered tenure as an employee of the International Reading As-

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*Kline: I had joined the IRA staff fresh from the front-line exertions and exhortations of the 60s and their spasm of educational reform and innovation.*

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sociation, hired as its first fulltime staff editor of *The Reading Teacher* and *Journal of Reading*. By mid-September 1971, through staff talent and determination, lucky guesswork, and best wishes, those first salaried editions of *RT* and *JR* had gone to press over my name as editor!

I was a few days short of my 40th birthday. Could anyone ask for more?

Further rewards accrued anyhow.

I had joined the IRA staff fresh from the front-line exertions and exhortations of the 60s and their spasm of educational reform and innovation. Like all the others before and since, it was dedicated to establishing Utopia in all corners for all time and for all the peo-

ples of the earth. I welcomed the editorships as a chance to thrust salvation into the educational soul.

Opportunity to do so, however, tempered my intent. One does not easily turn on immortals who have been there before you—professionals who have written the texts, carried the fight, imbued the knowledge that you, as editor, have sworn to define, explore, and advance. I met the immortals and they advised—freely, passionately, and fervently in the tempered armor and mellowed anguish of their own impulses to reform and innovation. I cherished and exploited the insights and advice of Albert J. Harris and Russell Stauffer; the editorial experience and professional balance of Roy Kress and Marjorie Seddon Johnson; the pragmatic counsels of Hal Herber and the ever-gracious, ever-sagacious Margaret Early; the “great heart” of Constance McCullough, as Walter MacGinitie phrased it; and the unstinting support of MacGinitie himself. Nila Banton Smith allowed me to edit her remarks! Nancy Larrick trusted me enough to encourage a personal publishing venture (though it eventually failed, through no fault of hers).

They made heady days for a teacher turned editor at 40. I had read their books, studied their insights through years of graduate study and classroom teaching. Here they were—trusting me to illuminate a profession with their insights and recommendations and expertise.

But, aside from those immortals, I cherished my undying kindred spirits just as dearly:

George Schick, who shared in founding the *Journal of Reading* and never let us forget it, but who, like so many of the rest of us, simply loved seeing his name in the byline of a well-turned article.

Bob McCracken, who connived me into publishing a spurious but hilarious and (in my opinion) an urgently needed spoof of behavioral excess—a purported study that showed how much the ingestion of Alpha Bits® would increase the reading abilities of kids so nourished!

Laura Johnson, who labored long and modestly in Midwest U.S. classrooms, but who could interpret and communicate her experiences and professional savvy in a clarity that put PhDs to shame.

# Applying learning theory to the reading process

RAYMOND J. GARGIULO

For simplicity's sake, this article briefly describes three principles of learning and points toward their use in instruction. Raymond J. Gargiulo is Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is also a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, and an Educational Specialist for the Maryland Department of Education.

## Discrimination

The reading process is a broad one that depends on the principle of discrimination.

of discrimination. Discrimination is the ability to recognize similar, yet different, stimuli. This is the heart of the reading process: converting the printed word into a meaningful sound. For example, the words "reading" and "reading" are similar, yet different. The difference is caused by the lack of knowledge about the meaning of the words. The reading process is a broad one that depends on the principle of discrimination.

she is really saying, "I want you to discriminate by the shape and arrangement of the letters. The what word is represented. The higher levels of cognitive organization or programmatic reading are situations in which degrees of given the fact and later degrees of discrimination by the subject."

Eye fixation, apparently, has no effect on discrimination. Hunt (1957) points out that studies on eye fixations made by good and poor readers showed no significant differences between the two groups. The good and poor readers were seeing the same things per fixation, but the good readers could discriminate from the word in fewer orders a second. This might be due to the fact that the good readers had more experience with the words.

Hunt (1957) and Binstock (1969) in developing tests of the ability to discriminate between words in a particular task of his. As a child matures, Hunt found, he begins to discriminate between words that are more similar to him in a particular task of his. Binstock (1969) found that the ability to discriminate between words in a particular task of his. Binstock (1969) found that the ability to discriminate between words in a particular task of his.

Although, according to Binstock (1969), discrimination is classified as "lower level" of learning in comparison with other categories, the importance of discrimination should not be underestimated. Discrimination is basic to all learning, including reading. Failure to discriminate between words or letters or differences of shape or color prevents meaningful learning.

## Reinforcement

Skinner (1957) says that when a child can learn anything if it is reinforced. In reading, this means that a child can learn to read if the behavior is reinforced. This is the basic principle of reinforcement.

Reinforcement is looked to reading. The teacher who has an interest in reading to the child, rather than the child, is more likely to be successful. As a result, the child will learn to read. The teacher who has an interest in reading to the child, rather than the child, is more likely to be successful.

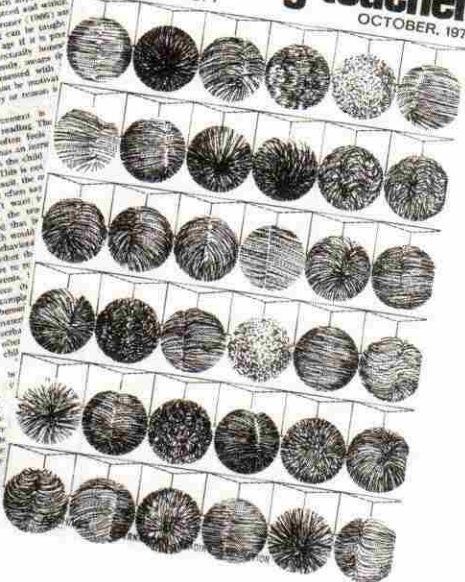
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# the reading teacher

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Allenberger (Allen Berger), so nicknamed by a full-blooded Native American who patiently sat through one of his urban New York presentations on teaching the Native American to read. I suspect that Allen to this day carries in his wallet that fragile copy of one of his poems published in the *New York Herald*, now defunct.

Dick Earle, who wowed the entire publications staff at IRA by listening to the typical round-robin of mumbled self-introductions, then immediately recalled every person's name in order—right down to their idiosyncratic pronunciations—and who also got his "head around" more problems more quickly than any other person I have ever met—except perhaps Bob Ruddell.

Jerry Johns, who carried silver goblets in his travel bag, thereby guaranteeing his guests preprandial wine in the classiest of service, even at the dullest of conferences.

Lee Indrisano, who introduced me to the New England adage that one should "Speak not unless you are sure it will improve the silence."

I know I've left unnamed so many others who contributed invaluable to a very ambitious, very rewarding four years for me and, I trust, for many who believe in the pursuit of

literacy. Certain staff members alone, for instance, stand out like saints. So do advisors and suppliers. The sincerity and great hopes of countless would-be contributors are overwhelming to anyone who reads beyond the zip codes on their self-addressed, stamped envelopes.

I have long since forgiven whatever sources of frustration inhered in the opportunity to edit *The Reading Teacher*. After all, we all labored—all of us labor still—in the belief that something we might get into print will make a difference in the world—if not the world, in the classroom—if not the classroom, in just one small life.

What more could one ask?

—Lloyd W. Kline, May 1991

**Janet Ramage Binkley, Editor, *The Reading Teacher*, volumes 29-42 (October 1975-May 1989 issues)**

In the early 1970s, when Lloyd Kline was serving as the first editor of *RT* stationed at IRA headquarters, the Association experienced a period of strong growth. Lloyd then stepped up to become IRA's first Director of Publications, and I replaced him as Journals Editor.

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In 1975 the field of reading was both upbeat and still growing. Articles flowing in to *The Reading Teacher* showed a broad acceptance of teaching "the language arts," integrated language skills. There was much discussion of the varieties of language that students brought to school and how family and social dialects might affect children's response to formal instruction. Concern for affirmative action in the U.S. meant trying to give all children supportive schooling that helped them to value their home cultures. While IRA authors pointed out that both women and minority groups were underrepresented in common reading materials, where stereotypes prevailed, publishers were busy with revisions. Worldwide, new literacy programs were in action, and IRA leaders participated in cross-cultural programs and research studies.

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*Binkley: I tried to resist the occasional temptation to push the journal in directions I thought the field should go.*

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In sum, manuscripts coming in to *RT* were full of the energy of people living in a period where social struggles were real but it seemed possible teachers might actually achieve their goals.

Looking back, it's easy to see how many of today's concerns were already active. Yet some important shifts were still to come. Few authors then spoke of ways to draw parents into the literacy enterprise, and while there were volunteer adult programs in almost every country, their connection to children's literacy was scarcely emerging. The world was not yet aware of the extent of the literacy problem in

industrialized countries where the computer explosion was just getting underway.

From my point of view as editor, the sheer variety of important topics in reading education in the late 1970s fit clearly into the mandate of the Association itself—to serve as an open forum for the field. That became my primary and enduring goal throughout my 14 years with *RT*.

The Association's journals, springing to life as they did in mid-20th century, were really something new in style. If you look back at journals published in the late 19th century, you see how idiosyncratic they often were. Associations and the subject fields themselves were smaller. People with strong personalities served as editors and pushed their fields in the directions they saw best—journals showed the stamp of the individual editor.

For IRA a century later, the situation was different. From its beginning, I think, the Association showed the force of a conglomerate of leaders, and by 1975 it was clearly a broad-based association of many different sorts of educational professionals. Already in the 1970s, 40,000 members in over 70 countries subscribed to *RT*. The needs of these people could not be served by any one approach or restricted point of view.

*RT* had already become an open forum. My task was simple—keep it going, both by encouraging the breadth of what was covered by articles and by encouraging broad participation of the membership. As a primary means, I enlarged the editorial board year by year, incorporating a wide selection of professionals who might reflect the needs and interests of IRA's varied constituencies, balancing the board by their professional interest and experience, locality, age, gender, and cultural group, with a special effort to include school-based professionals. A portion of the editorial board was rotated each year to ensure both stability and fresh points of view and to give more members the chance to make their own contribution.

Given that articles for a modern journal are contributed spontaneously by people active in the field, and given a broad board of advisors to review submissions, maintaining an open forum becomes easy. I tried to resist the occasional temptation to push the journal in directions I thought the field should go. Our contributors, immersed in the schools

and universities and experiencing the ferment daily, eagerly sent us the things that were engrossing them and that they saw as new. The journal just needed to reflect what was happening—expansion of schema theory and then the concept of metacognition and learner self-monitoring, the importance of joining reading and writing, children's books as tools for developing all those language arts we'd been talking about, the possibilities of ongoing assessment in the classroom. This was all emerging in the daily lives of teachers and researchers, and *RT* served well, I thought, by reflecting it.

A journal seems to me to be the single most important benefit for members of any as-

sociation. Journals keep us in touch with colleagues elsewhere, expand our ideas, and reassure us that we're on a productive track. The kind of experienced professionals who typically read IRA journals already know much of what gets published, but working in our own enclaves, we need glimpses of what's going on elsewhere. It's a pleasure to see new things emerging, and sometimes the printed word helps reinforce a point we've been trying to make with our administrators. The greatest reward for me as editor of *RT* was the sense of being part of an active group of professionals who were helping others exchange information in an exciting, useful field.

—Janet R. Binkley, June 1991

Michael P. Ford  
Marilyn M. Ohlhausen

## Tips from reading clinicians for coping with disabled readers in regular classrooms

Some methods used in reading clinics with disabled readers are not applicable to regular classrooms, but these 9 tips can assist teachers to help a wide range of readers.

No matter what difficulties they make for school staffs, individual differences are real, inevitable, and intractable. This observation by Tyler and Brownell (1975) clearly identifies the daily reality: complex, clearly identifiable, and intractable differences in the classroom. It's no wonder, then, that they are viewed by clinical personnel who work on a one-on-one or small group basis with the reading-disabled children now placed in their classrooms. Many of the recommended techniques and methods are clearly not as available in the regular classroom as they might be in a clinic.

We must now consider that as staff members of a university summer reading clinic, we belong to that group of "clinical personnel"

mentioned above. Our clinic setting is quite different from the regular classroom in many ways. The program provides an opportunity for some 10 reading-disabled children to live on campus for 6 weeks. Their instructional program involves participating in a reading clinic every morning and then attending a 45-minute individual tutoring session with a reading clinician every afternoon.

After the summer program, we make recommendations to help the children as they return to their regular classrooms in the fall. Each report typically suggests techniques that were successful with the child during the summer program. Many of these recommendations are especially appropriate for the child's resource room or remedial reading teacher, whose programs are similar in scope and structure to the summer clinic.

It is not as easy to make recommendations for the regular classroom teacher on how to cope with the disabled reader, but in this article we'd like to share 9 recommendations from reading clinics which teachers have found helpful.

**Use a theme**  
(1) Focus on real, meaningful learning through the use of themes.

Themes provide opportunity to focus on real, meaningful learning without regard to reading ability and age differences. With a theme approach there is no end to the range of reading-writing activities that may be incorporated, even when reading ability and age differ drastically. It seems perfectly natural for one child to be an expert in a certain area while another may know more about a different topic.

The reading classroom in our clinic focuses on themes like the Olympics, the Statue of Liberty, and Mystery. In the Mystery theme, the students read and write their own mystery plays. After the teachers read about a Superintending detective series, the students interviewed author Beverly Lunsford. Mystery books are a popular. A visit to the police station for language expertise by focusing on a then appropriate an endless supply of stories for which all make a significant contribution.

**Whole language**  
(2) Maximize the students by using whole language skills.

Students programs often use skills. Using disabled readers to maximize them from a variety of sources. But whole language is the key to every classroom. Every child has a unique way of learning.

comprehending and composing text about literature in the following weeks. In a regular classroom, similar brainstorming and semantic map techniques could be used to actively involve disabled readers in content area learning. This would help to make text that is normally inaccessible to them readily available for a variety of content-related activities.

**SSR and journal writing**  
(3) Implement whole room activities that build on individualization. Whole room activities that build on individualization are the key to the success of the program.

A Journal of the International Reading Association

# The Reading Teacher

VOLUME 41, No. 1, OCTOBER 1988



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**James F. Baumann, Beverly E. Cox,  
Deborah R. Dillon, Carol J. Hopkins,  
Jack W. Humphrey, David G.  
O'Brien, Editors, *The Reading  
Teacher*, volumes 43-present  
(October 1989-date)**

In June 1987, we saw the announcement in *Reading Today* for applications to edit *The Reading Teacher*. We knew the IRA Board of Directors had made the decision at their spring meeting to seek *RT* editors outside the Headquarters staff, but the notion of responding to it wasn't on our minds—at least not more than subliminally. We thought editing *RT* would be a great job for *someone*, though we didn't consider ourselves to be candidates at that time.

But the notion of possibly applying haunted us. Something stuck. And all it took was a little encouragement. Some of our colleagues encouraged us to apply, telling us that we had a handle on the practical aspects of reading education.

Our first reaction was, are you kidding? Editing *RT* would be great fun but a killer of a job. How could we muster the time and energy required to produce eight issues per year totaling over 700 pages? We added the total pages over a four-year appointment—2,800+ pages! That would be like editing the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, we thought (well, at least three *Handbooks of Reading Research*). It would be a fulltime job. All we'd do is edit the journal. What about our own research and writing? What about promotion and tenure? What about a little golf or gardening now and again? We'd miss the kids growing up. We'd have to be crazy to seek the *RT* editorship, we reasoned.

But somehow the idea grew on us, and it seemed to fit better with time; maybe it wasn't such a crazy idea after all. So, we spent the summer and early fall of 1987 preparing a proposal. The call required applicants to prepare a comprehensive statement of editorial philosophy; state editorial goals and how the journal would be cutting-edge; propose procedures for selecting a review board; outline the logistics of the editorial operation; enclose vitae; and solicit letters of reference.

In late fall we learned we made the first cut, so there was a round two phase to the application: review a manuscript, edit another

one, adjudicate a manuscript with mixed reviews, propose a budget. And then we were finalists with an interview at Headquarters in January 1988. This was more work than applying to graduate school or preparing a major grant proposal.

In February 1988, we learned that we were appointed—the Search Committee's recommendation was endorsed by the Board. Good news—elation! And then the realization struck us: Now we'd have to actually do the job. Did IRA know what it was doing by appointing a group of enthusiastic rookie editors? Would we go down in IRA history as the group that screwed up *The Reading Teacher*? ("Remember that group at Purdue in the late 1980s that turned a beautiful, successful journal into a rag? Poor souls, it ruined their careers.") As Roy Kress noted a few pages back, when he and Marjorie Seddon Johnson were appointed *RT* editors in 1967, "We assumed this responsibility with trepidation." We also were trepid. We were shaking in our boots.

But fear is a powerful motivator, so we got to work. Now, three years later, with two and one-half volumes of *RT* under our belts, we join our predecessors in celebrating this anniversary.

What are our reflections? What first comes to mind is work, probably because we're reflecting on something we're immersed in right now. Ah yes, work: setting up and maintaining a review board of 150 professionals and half a dozen department editors; arranging for three reviews each for 500 or so manuscripts a year; weekly, marathon editorial meetings for conducting business and adjudicating papers (*every* manuscript we review gets presented at a meeting and discussed by the editorial team); writing letters to authors, prospective authors, readers, IRA Headquarters staff and Board members, publishers, and colleagues; editing manuscripts at the office, at home, on the plane, everywhere; correcting galleys; reading pages; fighting deadlines, making them, and having others stare us in the face. We didn't mislead ourselves; it is another fulltime job, 12 months straight without vacations.

But it's a labor of love. Just when we think we're truly going crazy, we get smacked with a heavy dose of satisfaction: Another issue comes off press, and we stand back and savor it. We have the joy of informing a previously

unpublished classroom teacher that her paper has been accepted. We read a reviewer's comments and marvel at the time, care, insight, and sensitivity that was expended in the process of writing them. We get a handshake from a satisfied reader at an IRA meeting. We have the pleasure of informing a child artist that his drawing has been selected to appear on an *RT* cover. We feel good after dealing with a controversial issue in a balanced, responsible way. We work with an author through multiple revisions and share in her satisfaction when the piece finally comes together and expresses her thoughts economically and clearly. Yes, the work is arduous and never-ending, but the satisfaction is more than commensurate.

Regarding our editorial role, we take our primary direction from the simple statement found in the frontmatter of every issue of *RT*: "The journal...is intended as a forum to reflect current theory, research, and practice." Thus, we are responsible for publishing materials on current topics and issues.

However, we believe that *The Reading Teacher* is more than a mirror reflecting the field. The call for proposals that we responded to in 1987 listed four responsibilities of *RT* editors, the first of which was to "exercise leadership." We interpreted this then and now to mean that it is also our role to explore newly-emerging topics, to seek out authors, to project what may be over the horizon. Thus, we believe that journal editors must not only gaze *into* the looking glass but also try to peer *through* it—to try to see where a field is headed.

That's why we read other periodicals, attend conferences, talk with teachers, conduct workshops for aspiring writers, and engage in our personal research and writing projects. We consider these activities part of our responsibility to stay in touch with our field and those who participate in it. This enables us to identify, motivate, and encourage prospective authors to put their ideas in written form and send us those manuscripts for review.

As a result of this focus, we'd like to think that the multiple voices in our profession are being heard in *RT*, for example through illustrators of children's books, child artists, and teacher photographers displaying their images of literacy on the journal covers; through teachers sharing their thoughts, beliefs, and ideas in multiple formats; through teacher ed-

ucators addressing theoretical and practical aspects of reading instruction and acquisition; and through authors of multiple opinions communicating to the readership the hearts and souls of children engaged in literacy tasks.

These are weighty responsibilities—reflecting and projecting. We try to perform them in a trustworthy manner with all the objectivity, balance, sensitivity, and seriousness

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*Baumann et al.: We believe that journal editors must not only gaze into the looking glass but also try to peer through it—to try to see where a field is headed.*

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Left to right: David G. O'Brien, Deborah R. Dillon, Carol J. Hopkins, James F. Baumann, Jack W. Humphrey

we can muster. That is our goal and the criterion by which we hope to be evaluated. When our last issue comes off press in May 1993, our successors will already be wrestling with these issues, developing their own style, feeling the weight of the journal's tradition, and contributing to its legacy. So, simultaneously we recall and reflect on *The Reading Teacher's* past, remain absorbed by its presence, and eagerly look toward its future.

—James F. Baumann, Deborah R. Dillon,  
Carol J. Hopkins, Jack W. Humphrey,  
David G. O'Brien, July 1991

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