President's Report

Lea McGee
University of Alabama

Greetings! If you are like me, you are really missing the perfect, balmy weather we experienced at the 2003 Conference. Just like you I’m caught up in the usual beginning of the semester crush, but I had to take a moment to savor the memories of Scottsdale. The over 950 attendees (and over 400 teachers) enjoyed sunshine, mild temperatures, and great conversation about significant research. Thanks to all the members who worked so hard to make well-prepared and thoughtful presentations on carefully crafted research projects. Even more thanks to the Area Chairs and reviewers who worked so hard to insure that we were able to hear high quality research reports. We received 427 proposals and accepted 352, for a 79% acceptance rate. The thousands of hours of thought, reading, research, and writing that these proposals represent is astounding. It is no wonder that each year I return home from NRC churning with new ideas and uncertainties but with the resolve that I can make a difference in the literary lives of children and teachers.

Completing Goals and Looking to the Future

The current NRC Board of Directors is moving forward on several fronts as well as attempting to complete work laid out by previous presidents and boards. We are continuing to upgrade the member services that we provide through our website, although we never seem to move as quickly as we would like. Last year we implemented a web-based submission process for ALL conference proposals which is currently being updated and extended (see Donald Leu’s report). We also launched a new NRC listserv that is housed at NRC headquarters. The address of the official NRC list-serve is NRCLIST@LISTSERV.NRCONLINE.ORG. Members may be confused by the two listservs that seem to be operating simultaneously. Barbara Guzzetti is continuing to run the old listserv, although no longer officially connected with NRC. NRC continues to publish on its website what have previously been called "White Papers." The Board voted to rename these publications Literacy Research Reviews (LRRs) to distinguish their purpose and content from the Policy Briefs. LRR's are longer papers (25 pages) with scholarly review of research aimed at opening new (or ignored) perspectives related to an important area of literacy practice or research. Patricia Alexander is currently completing the third LRR entitled "The Path to Competence: A Developmental Perspective on Reading." Again, this project should be completed and available on the website in late spring or early summer.

Most importantly, the Board is considering publishing the Journal of Literacy Research through Erlbaum Publishers rather than continuing to publish the journal ourselves. There was a lengthy discussion about the ramifications of this issue at both Board meetings at the 2003 conference. The Board is continuing to gather financial information and to consider ethical and scholarly implications before making a final decision.

Presidential Initiatives

During my two years as Vice-President and President-Elect I have watched Lee Gunderson and Deborah Dillon struggle with
making the innumerable day-to-day decisions of running an organization like NRC. It is a challenge balancing a full-time job with extensive demands and at the same time trying to carve out a small space to make innovations and build visions for the future of NRC. They both were faced with helping a new management company learn about the fundamental purposes and structures of our complex organization. I am reaping the benefit of their hard work and patience by having a more knowledgeable management team that is capable of handling all of our needs. Therefore, I have three goals for my year as President. First, I intend to strengthen the quality of research that is submitted and accepted for presentation at NRC by posting on the website proposals of exemplary quality that were submitted and accepted for the 2003 Program. The Student Outstanding Research Award Committee will similarly work with me to post exemplary student research proposals and award-winning papers to strengthen the quality of student submissions. These should be posted to the website in February. If members have additional ideas about how NRC can increase the quality of research presented at future conferences, please e-mail me at lmcgee@bamaed.ua.edu.

Second, I intend to enhance the work of NRC committees by communicating more frequently with the committee chairs and by providing each committee with annual charges. Currently, our awards committees are working smoothly as are many other committees. However, I want to make sure that members understand that committee meetings at the NRC conference are open to all members, and that the Board invites their attendance and participation. I am already working on the Website committee page including listing years of service. Again, each committee will have its own page to post current activities and accomplishments. Thanks to all the members who responded to my invitation to nominate themselves for an NRC committee. The response demonstrated that many NRC members want to be active participants in the organization. It is often through the initiatives of committees, that NRC moves forward in achieving its purpose of supporting literacy researchers in every aspect of their professional work.

Finally, I want to help headquarters write a Headquarters Procedures Manual that details their internal support functions. While NRC has a Policies and Procedures Handbook and the officers have kept lists and files of activities, letters, and other helpful information, NRC headquarters has never had an accurate and detailed handbook outlining its activities. With the help of Annette Hess and Megan Kelley I will make sure that at the end of my term we have a well-documented procedures manual.

As always I welcome the sage advice of NRC members on these initiatives, as well as concerns. I wish you a productive and peaceful 2004.

President-Elect's Report

Donald J. Leu
University of Connecticut

Next year’s conference will take place in San Antonio from December 1–4, 2004. Be certain to mark your calendars. I want to invite each of you to encourage your colleagues, especially those who may not have attended NRC in the past, to submit a research proposal to the upcoming conference. I promise an exceptional experience for us all. The call for proposals is available at our website: www.nrconline.org

This will be a conference that will challenge us to think in new ways about our own research and about what it means to become literate in tomorrow’s world. I am hoping that each of us can bring our best ideas to help us all move forward to new spaces and new places in literacy research. Here are important dates related to the conference:

Important Dates

- March 1, 2004 — Proposals for the 2004 conference program must be submitted electronically at nrconline.org by midnight EST.
- June 30, 2004 — Notification of all proposal review decisions will be sent out via email, but only to the person who submitted the proposal electronically. This person must notify all other individuals.
- Sept. 24, 2004 — Applications for the Student Research Award must be received by the Chair of this committee.

The Program Area Chairs and I have been hard at work preparing for the review of proposals. This year, with the fine assistance of TEI, we have developed an online review process. We have also refined the online proposal submission process. Thus, the entire review process for NRC proposals will now take place online. Hopefully, this will save us both money and time. I am hoping that the online submission and review environment that has been created will also prove useful as we eventually move the review of the NRC Yearbook and the Journal of Literacy Research to an online procedure.

Candidates for NRC's President Elect

Patricia Edwards
Michigan State University

Diane Schallert
University of Texas/Austin

Candidates for the Board

Nell Duke
Michigan State University

Collin Harrison
University of Nottingham

Linda Labbo
University of Georgia

Anne McGill-Franzen
University of Florida

Michael Pressley
Michigan State University

Patricia Schmidt
Lemoyne College

Look for candidates’ statements on the NRC website, nrconline.org in early March. Elections will take place in April.
One item to note in relation to the proposal review process: We have redefined Area 9 back to its original title: Children’s, Young Adult, and Adult Literature. This issue came up at our town meeting and it was an important suggestion. The labels we use to describe our work are important to all of us, but especially to those whose work we label. I wanted you to know that this is important to me, that I heard the concern, and that we have responded.

In this issue of the Newsletter, you will also notice a wonderfully talented set of individuals who have agreed to run for leadership positions in our organization. I want to publicly thank each one of them for agreeing to run. The future of our organization depends upon having talented individuals who are willing to place themselves in public positions like this. I greatly appreciate it and I know our entire membership does as well. This is one of the finest candidate pools that we have ever had. It guarantees that we will have exceptional leadership in our future.

Finally, I want to report on the final results from our Saturday Conference for Teachers and Educational Leaders in Phoenix. This year’s Saturday conference surpassed our expectations. Over 400 Arizona educators attended. Our special Saturday sessions were filled to capacity, bringing important new ideas to the schools, teachers, and students of Arizona. The Saturday conference is quickly becoming an important vehicle for NRC to provide an important service contribution to the state where our conference is held each year. I would like to thank each of our members who graciously contributed to this important work: Julie Coiro, Pat Cunningham, Nell Duke, Jill Castek, Laurie Henry, Thomas Bean, Helen Harper, Mary Love, Julia Lopez-Robertson, Ruby Sanny, Mileidis Gort, Dana Cummack, Taffy Raphael, Susan Florio-Ruane, Ted Grace, Doug Kaufman, and Beth Schmar. It was an exceptional day!

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As many of you are aware, the NRC website has undergone a “facelift.” For several years, the organization’s website was managed by our very talented colleague, John at Oakland University. As technology has advanced, it became apparent that our net presence, as a professional organization, required much more time than John could manage. Just over a year ago, John graciously stepped down as the Webmaster/E-editor for the NRC, so Rick Ferdig and I (David Lund) were appointed as co-E-editors. As we worked with Don Leu and Mike McKenna (and the technology committee) a list of goals were developed; among them, moving the NRC website to headquarters, setting up websites for individual committees of the NRC, and changing the look of the site to look more like the sites of other organizations of reading professionals and still maintain the unique flavor of the National Reading Conference.

Last fall Catherine Henke, our Webmaster at headquarters, worked very hard to craft a new look with updated architecture that would reflect the appropriate image for NRC. She also made sure the new layout would have strong functionality and flexibility. In December, Matthew Jossart, headquarters’ graphic artist, created a color poster of the new look, which was unveiled at the conference. From December until February, Executive Director Annette Hess worked very closely with the Technology Committee and the Executive Board to ensure we stayed on track and on time. Many volunteer leaders reviewed various test versions of this site and provided a wide range of critiques resulting in a well-rounded tool.

We are proud that this new look is now live at www.nrconline.org. From the sensible navigation buttons to the updated conference page, you should find it very easy to navigate.
There are still elements of the site under development such as formal committee pages, updated committee contact information, and more research-oriented images. We hope you agree that this new site, along with the new logo that we adopted last fall, and combined with our plans for additional 2004 enhancements, undoubtedly strengthens the NRC image.

Kudos need to go to all involved with this project—for the work that has been done and for work that they will yet do, as the NRC becomes a net presence that is recognized by all who are concerned with literacy in all of its forms. Your comments and suggestions are welcome at llund@suu.edu.

Take time to look at the site. Take advantage of the services that are there. Tell your literacy colleagues about the site and how they might use it to enhance their own work in literacy.

Committee Reports

Committee Name Change: Ethnicity, Race, and Multilingualism Committee

Patricia Ruggiano Schmidt, Co-chair
Lemoyne College

Shelley Hong Xu, Co-chair
Texas Tech University

During the last two years, members of NRC Multicultural Issues Committee have been working to change the committee’s name. They believed that the name should reflect the committee’s mission.
NRC Yearbook

Submissions for the 53rd Yearbook were due February 2. We received about 70 manuscripts, which are now in the hands of the reviewers. Reviews are due on March 5, and we expect to make publication decisions by mid-April. This should keep us on schedule for an early November delivery date.

Although the quality of the manuscripts is high, the number is low relative to previous years. We encourage NRC presenters to consider submitting papers for the next yearbook, and we welcome suggestions that will help us make the Yearbook an even more attractive outlet for experienced and new scholars. Please send your suggestions to: nrcybk@teachnet.edb.utexas.edu or jo_worthy@teachnet.edb.utexas.edu

Journal of Literacy Research

The JLR team is pleased to report that journal production is on schedule. We thank the members of our Editorial Advisory Board, who have been diligent in providing fair, formative, and timely manuscript reviews. We are planning a new feature for Volume 36 of the journal that we are tentatively calling Viewpoints. We have invited exemplary NRC scholars (Oscar Causey Award winners) to write in-depth essays about their perceptions of the field or some aspect of literacy research, education, and policy. We feel it is important that distinguished voices in literacy have an opportunity to share their thoughtful insights into various issues that face our field. To date we have received very positive responses from our invitation to the Causey winners. We plan to feature two Viewpoint articles in each volume.

Publication Data

VOLUME 35 - ISSUE THREE – FALL 2003 (mailed 12/03)

Editorial: The Mysteries of the Peer Review Process

A National Survey of Spelling Instruction: Investigating Teachers’ Beliefs and Practice, Fresch

A “Radical” Approach to Reading Development in Chinese: The Role of Semantic Radicals and Phonetic Radicals, Ho, Ng, & Ng

“It’s a Program That Looks Great on Paper”: The Challenge of America Reads, Worthy, Prater, & Pennington

Knowledge, Interest, Recall and Navigation: A Look at Hypertext Processing, Lawless, Brown, Mills, & Mayall

Book Reviews

English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom, Mohr

Literacy Practices as Social Acts: Power, Status, and Cultural Norms in the Classroom, Mraz

VOLUME 35 - ISSUE FOUR – WINTER 2003 (at printer 1/04)

Editorial: Mentoring and Literacy Researchers

The Influence Of Accelerated Reader On The Affective Literacy Orientations Of Intermediate Level Children, Henk.

Developing And Validating The Classroom Literacy Environmental Profile (CLEP): A Tool For Examining The ‘Print Richness’ Of Early Childhood Elementary Classrooms, Wolfersberger and Reutzel

Second Grade Is Important: Literacy Instruction And Learning Of Young Children In A High-Poverty School, Barone.

Thinking Like a Historian: College Students’ Reading of Multiple Historical Documents, Hynd and Holschuh.

The Impact of a Structured Computer-Based Early Reading Program on Phonological Awareness in Kindergarten, Cassady and Smith.

Book Reviews

Manuscript Data

Total Manuscripts Received: 235 (This number includes revised manuscripts that are sent for another blind peer review.)

☐ Year One (2001) – 59 new manuscripts received and 4 revised manuscripts received into tracking system
☐ Year Two (2002) – 62 new manuscripts received and 24 revised manuscripts received into tracking system
☐ Year Three (2003) – 60 new manuscripts received and 20 revised manuscripts received into tracking system
☐ Year Four (2004 to date) – 6 new manuscripts received
☐ To date, fourteen (14) manuscripts have been sent to reviewers electronically.
☐ Two Hundred Seventeen (217) manuscripts have finished the review process and received an editorial decision.
☐ Eight (8) manuscripts are awaiting editorial decision.
☐ Ten (10) manuscripts are currently in peer review process.

The Editors of both the Yearbook and the Journal have been busy and it is clear that they continue to recommend for publication quality research reports.

AWARDS

Early Career Achievement Award

Janet Bloodgood, Co-chair
Appalachian State University

Wendy C. Kasten, Co-chair
Kent State University

Congratulations to Dr. Nell Duke from Michigan State University, who is the recipient of the 2003 Early Career Achievement Award. Nell’s work focuses on early literacy development of children living in urban poverty. Her research endeavors reflect interest in three separate but interrelated areas: comprehension, genre studies, and equity in literacy education. She has devoted considerable thought to research design and methodology as well. In the five short years since
her doctorate, she has produced numerous publications—journal articles, books and chapters; and has received awards from both IRA and NCTE. She obtained approximately two million dollars in grants and participated in two large field studies. Future graduate students and classroom teachers benefit from her support and insights.

Members of the Early Career Achievement Award Committee encourage all NRC members to submit nominees for the 2004 award. The Early Career Achievement Award was first presented in 1999. It is designed to honor new members of the NRC community who have been actively involved in research, teaching, and service and have demonstrated outstanding commitment and accomplishment in the field of literacy. Nominees must have seven or fewer years in the field from the date of their doctoral degree (or equivalent). In addition, they must have been members of NRC for at least three years, but not necessarily consecutively. NRC members may nominate candidates by sending a recommendation letter, outlining the candidate’s contributions to the field of literacy research and the nominee’s participation in NRC. Friday, April 16, 2004 is the deadline for receipt of nominating letters.

Nominees are then requested to submit a current curriculum vita that includes affiliations, degrees, research honors and awards, publications, and editorial board service as well as a statement delineating their professional experiences and research agenda. An additional letter of support from the candidate’s current institution (e.g., department chair, research/teaching colleague) is also required. These materials must be received no later than Friday, May 7, 2004. Please send all materials to one of the Early Career Achievement Award Committee Co-Chairs:

Wendy Kasten Janet W. Bloodgood
Kent State University LRE Dept., Appalachian State University
402 White Hall P.O. Box 32085
Kent, OH 44242-0001 Boone, NC 28608-2085
wkasten@kent.edu bloodgoodjw@appstate.edu

The Early Career Achievement Award fills an important role as part of the National Reading Conference’s effort to recognize and promote excellence. The committee and NRC appreciate your efforts to identify deserving nominees.

Oscar S. Causey Award

Mark W. Conley, Chair
Michigan State University

Dr. Oscar S. Causey was the founder of the National Reading Conference and served for many years as Chair of the Executive Committee. The Oscar S. Causey Award is given each year for outstanding contributions to reading research. Dr. Robert Calfee received this prestigious award in 2003 at our annual conference. Congratulations go out to Dr. Calfee for this important recognition of his many significant contributions to our profession!

Mark Conley will chair the committee for the 2004 nomination and selection process.

We invite our membership to nominate worthy recipients for the 2004 Oscar S. Causey Award. All nominees will remain in the candidate pool for a total of three years. If you wish to nominate a candidate for the 2003 Oscar S. Causey Award, please send a letter of nomination and the candidate’s current vita, by September 15, 2003 to:

Mark W. Conley
Michigan State University
359 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
conleym@msu.edu
517-432-9603 (work phone) • 517-432-5092 (fax)

Edward B. Fry Book Award 2003

Janice Strop, Chair
Cardinal Stritch University

The Edward B. Fry Book Award was established in 1995 to recognize books written or edited by members of NRC that:

☐ Advance knowledge about literacy
☐ Display inquiry into literacy
☐ Show responsible intellectual risk taking

This year, the award was given to two books: Critical Discourse Analysis of Family Literacy Practices: Power In and Out of Print by Rebecca Rogers, of Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, and Literature in School Still Matters: Imagination, Interpretation, Insight by Dennis Sumara, of the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

The book by Rebecca Rogers focuses on discourse and power relations embedded in the case study of a family, specifically of the mother in that family, whose formal schooling ended after the eighth grade, and her 11-year-old daughter, who was identified as requiring special education services. For both mother and daughter, literacy is a construct defined by the institution of school.

The book by Dennis Sumara includes alternating chapters of exposition and literary performance. It is a work of scholarly art and artful scholarship that invites us to participate in the power of literature in simple and profound ways. The book has generous margins, a deliberate design decision and an invitation to write as we read, to create a commonplace book, a site for noting our ideas and, upon rereading, our evolving interpretation of what we read.

We offer sincere congratulations to Rebecca and Dennis, and extend an invitation for members to submit books for next year’s Fry Award. Members may also self-nominate their own books.

Letters of nomination and a copy of the nominated book must be sent to Janice Strop, new chair of the committee, on or before May 14.