

ISSN 1747-5600

Volume No. 73

Autumn 2010

# RaPAL

Conference Edition



# Journal

# The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

## Who we are

RaPAL is an independent national network of learners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacies and numeracy. Our support is generated by membership subscription only, and we are therefore completely independent in our views. RaPAL is the only national organisation focusing on the role of literacies in adult life.

## What we do

- Campaign for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives
- Critique current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- Emphasise the importance of social context in literacy
- Encourage collaborative and reflective research
- Believe in democratic practices in adult literacy
- Create networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- Publish a journal three times a year

## RaPAL Officers 2010/2011

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## Editorial Information

The Editorial Group for 2010-11 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner-researchers: Yvon Appleby, Amy Burgess, Maxine Burton, Anne Chester, Julie Collins, Azumah Dennis, Bex Ferriday, Sarah Freeman, Kieran Harrington, Gaye Houghton, Nora Hughes, Vera Hutchinson, Julie Meredith, Linda Pearce, Sarah Rennie, Irene Schwab, Naomi Sorge, Sandi Stratford and Shelley Tracey. Overseas members of the Editorial Group include: Jean Searle, Rosie Wickert, Stephen Black, Australia; Mary Norton, Bonnie Soroke, Sheila Stewart, Canada; Janet Isserlis, Elsa Auerbach, Steve Reder, USA; and Cathy Kell, New Zealand.

Members are involved in the compilation of the journal as reviewers/referees and editors.

We are a friendly group - open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. This Journal is written by and for all learners, tutors and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacy and numeracy work and to encourage debate.

**Why not join in?**

**Further information can be found at our website: [www.rapal.org.uk](http://www.rapal.org.uk)**

The RaPAL Journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group. The RaPAL Journal has been printed by Image Printing Co., Lumsdale, Matlock, Derbyshire. Matlock, Derbyshire.

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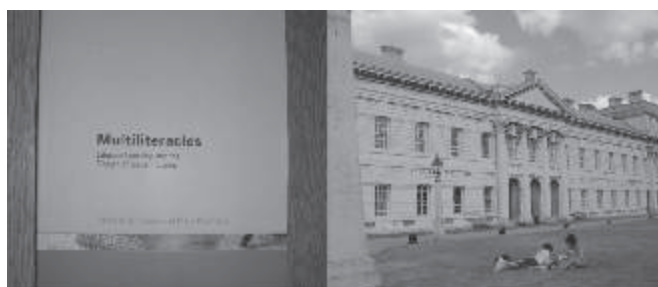
# Editorial

## Azumah Dennis and Nora Hughes

*Azumah is a Senior Lecturer in Post-Compulsory Education and Training at the University of Hull. Nora is a former literacy teacher and teacher educator based in London. She is a member of the RaPAL management group and joint coordinator of the RaPAL journal.*

Welcome to the RaPAL journal. This edition is in two sections: Section 1, *Multiliteracies*, is a celebration of and reflection on, the RaPAL conference held in London in July 2010; Section 2, *Lifelong learning: principles and practice*, encompasses articles and reviews which, though varied in their subject matter and approach, all grapple with the theory, practice and politics of adult learning.

### Section 1: Multiliteracies



We open this section with ***Changing literacies, changing worlds***, in which **Azumah Dennis** describes how the keynote speaker and workshop presenters addressed the questions which the conference set out to explore:

*How do different languages and literacies interrelate in a diverse and changing society?*

*What is the power of different literacies to change lives and worlds?*

*How do new technologies and new literacies offer opportunities for critical engagement and learning?*

This is followed by four articles based on conference workshops, in which the authors develop and reflect on the ideas they introduced in their groups and the discussions that took place.

**Shelley Tracey** suggests 'creating and responding to textpoems' as an example of an 'inclusive literacy practice', which draws on the everyday practice of texting to enhance learners' uses of language and literacy.

**Julie Collins** reminds us of the importance of storytelling, including the power of stories to re/create what it means to be a literacy learner, using powerful multimedia tools.

**Anthea Rose** explores the challenges some parents face in supporting their children's learning in a technologically-driven school environment. Rejecting the labelling of these parents as 'hard to reach', she argues for the kind of support that would allow them to engage with schools on a more equal basis.

**Amy Burgess and Karin Tustin** offer a firsthand account of a small scale research project that questions the importance of institutionalised literacy learning and teaching. They explore how adults learn new writing

practices in their everyday lives and, in focusing on the role of text in people's lives, signpost a view of all artefacts associated with meaning-making - from images and words to musical scores - as part of what we mean by literacy.

### ***We finish Section 1 of the journal with participants' reflections on the conference:***

In *Rich ideas for literacy learning and teacher education* **Nora Hughes** picks out the main themes emerging from written evaluations by workshop participants.

In *Multimemories* **Julie Meredith** concludes with a funny, thought-provoking account of the RaPAL conference as experienced by a 'first-timer'.

### ***Section 2: Lifelong learning: principles and practice***

This part of the journal opens with *A quacking good literacy lesson!* in which **Frankie High** describes an unusual learning experience and its impact on a group of learners.

**Catriona Carson** and **Philomena McKenzie** analyse the strengths and potential barriers in delivering health education programmes that require highly specialised language and literacy skills, in an article that will interest health professionals as well as adult educators.

**Tracy Part**, while exploring issues in numeracy, offers interesting parallels with literacy. Context, culture and process matter when managing numbers and the value that learners place on their everyday practices has an enormous influence over how they feel when presented with challenges in class.

We are delighted to have as our final article *Learners Got Talent: North of Scotland conference organised by learners for learners, March 2010* in which **Moira Hamilton, Althea Forbes** and **Mary Rhind** discuss the successes and challenges of this learner run event in the context of a national strategy of learner involvement at every level.

### ***We finish Section 2 of the journal with three reviews:***

For anyone interested in the principles and practice of Literacy or ESOL education, **Sally Haywood** reviews *Teaching Adult Literacy* and **Lesley Poulaud** reviews *Teaching Adult ESOL*, published by Open University Press. Both texts have the potential to become (if they aren't already) 'required reading' for trainee teachers and teacher educators.

**Gaye Houghton** finds *Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning* a 'highly readable' and 'important' report, which 'lays out a strategic framework for lifelong learning' and argues for more investment to bring about 'greater equality... economic and social wellbeing and ... social justice'.