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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

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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

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.

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* includes 1 pdf copy of each edition of the RaPAL Journal			
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Editorial

Alison Wedgbury and Naomi Horrocks

At the end of the 2010 RaPAL conference in London, delegates encouraged RaPAL to promote our distinctive values and vision during 2011 in a number of ways. These included developing our global identity, making an impact on policy, strengthening dialogue between practitioners and researchers and encouraging creative pedagogy that helps practitioners apply their principles while still 'getting learners through the tests'.

We then started to plan the 2011 conference with a strong commitment from colleagues in the eastern region to make it happen in an area where we all love to live and work. The six eastern region counties of England (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk) are famous for medieval towns, universities, science and technology parks, seaside attractions, holiday homes and distinctive dialects. But that's only part of the picture. People's lives are often affected by rural isolation, local crime, limited access to health services, low wages, variable and seasonal employment, migration, pockets of urban deprivation and the relatively high cost of housing. These raise challenges for literacies teaching and research.



We wanted to make the most of the venue, the University of East Anglia, with its strong local roots and its international perspectives. Together with other RaPAL colleagues we refined the main conference questions as:

How can we use literacies learning, teaching and research to

- strengthen and support local communities and partnerships?

- build regional, national and international connections?
- draw inspiration from our personal and shared histories?
- strengthen our values and vision as we look to the future?

Early in the planning process we were very fortunate to secure three significant keynote speakers: Professors Peter Trudgill, Alan Rogers and Mary Hamilton. They expanded our perspectives with their international expertise, empathy with RaPAL's principles, presentations and generous discussion time.

At the conference, delegates could choose from a comprehensive range of workshops led by practitioners in teaching and research:

- Judith Rose – Is there a 'special relationship' between adult literacy and the development of education for adults with learning disabilities?
- Hazel Israel – Texting to improve literacy.
- Helen Casey – Ways for practitioners to get funding to develop adult literacies projects.
- Julie Westrop – Norfolk Reading Cafés; approaches to family learning.
- Mary Jane Onnen – Integrating technology to strengthen reading instruction (USA).
- Helen Oughton – "220 Fatal Accidents": A literacies perspective on adult numeracy classrooms.
- Bob Read and Victoria Draper – Using documents from Norfolk Archives: issues of language and power in society across the centuries.
- Jane Mace – Literacy and discernment: Quaker ways of writing minutes.
- Amy Burgess – Practitioners' perspectives on Functional Skills: how do literacy educators interpret policy and translate it into practice?
- Jim Mullan and Shelley Tracey – Literacies and museums in Northern Ireland.
- Tara Furlong and Claire Collins – RaPAL on Facebook and social networking.
- Online networking for practitioners: Facebook, Second Life and others.
- Teacher-educators' special interest group.

Much of the material from the conference is available on the RaPAL website:

<http://www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk/rapal/conference/2011Conference/2011.htm>

What's in this journal

The first section represents the content of the keynote presentations. Professor Peter Trudgill's scholarly piece written in Norfolk dialect reflects the purpose of his presentation and at the conference he unsettled some of our preconceptions about 'Standard English'. Professor Alan Rogers introduced new challenges to how policy makers and practitioners view 'literacy' in different parts of the world. Professor Mary Hamilton, a founder member of RaPAL, showed us some of her new work on the way the identities of literacy learners have been represented in England in the last few decades. She focused on the changes from early concepts of entitlement to support through to current policies about individual citizens' obligations.

Next is a summary written by Sue Grief, who acted as the overall conference rapporteuse.

Her comments set the scene for articles which some of the workshop leaders have offered for this journal:

1. Bob Read and Victoria Draper develop an adult education resource based on documents in the Norfolk county archives. They raise issues of language and power and of multimodality.
2. Judith Rose reviews the changing relationship between 'literacy' and 'learning difficulties' in English policy and strategy.
3. Hazel Israel writes about texting as a literacy teaching and learning resource and illustrates it with cartoons.
4. Mary Jane Onnen explains her work in the USA using multimodal online resources to develop oral reading fluency.
5. Amy Burgess describes issues emerging from her research on how Functional Skills is being introduced in England.
6. Jane Mace outlines her research on Quaker meetings and the search to 'find the sound of something beyond words'.

Delegates were encouraged to evaluate the conference by writing on tablecloths. A compilation of their comments rounds off the focus on the 2011 conference.

The final section in the journal includes

- a review of a new NIACE publication, *Lifelong Learning and Social Justice*
- news about a collaboration between RaPAL and NIACE for the next 2012 Journal on workplace literacies
- new notes about the Research Excellence Framework which inform the guidelines for future contributions to the Journal.

Naomi Horrocks and Alison Wedgbury thank all those who contributed to the 2011 conference. As well as all the hard work there was fun too in lovely surroundings. The team quiz got everyone outside to explore the university grounds, one group had a memorable guided tour of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and the evening barbecue ended with Norfolk shortcake and carrot cake. The images in this Journal give a flavour of the whole enjoyable experience. Alison celebrated her 60th birthday at the conference and she would particularly like to thank everyone for the gift of flowers.

