

# RAPAL

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

## OUT OF THE THORNBUSH

A poem that emerges from a thornbush  
comes out spitting blood,  
hoarse from calling for help  
and not being heard.

A poem that emerges from a thornbush  
lies gasping right beside it,  
still hooked into the past,  
half-dying, half about to be born.

Please notice.  
Don't look. This poem is naked  
and exposed, waiting  
for the pain to end, to begin, to go on.

Don't expect mellowness  
or connected images.  
Don't notice that it's tattered,  
ends unfinished.

*Shelley Tracey*

Journal

# The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

## Who we are

RaPAL (established 1985) is a national network of learners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacy and basic education. 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

### We ...

- **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.
- **support** the theories of language and learning, which emphasise the importance of social context in literacy acquisition.
- **encourage** collaborative and reflective research between all participants in literacy work and maintain that research and practice are inextricably linked.
- **believe** in democratic practices in adult literacy which can only be achieved if learning, teaching and research remain connected and stay responsive to changing social contexts and practices in society.
- **recognise** that learners are central to a learning democracy and their participation in the decision- making processes of practice and research is essential.
- **foster** collaborative participation between all educational sectors including FE, HE, AE, workplace education, community education and prison education.

## RaPAL Officers 2005-2006

Chair	Fiona Macdonald, Communities Scotland, Paisley
Secretary	Alex Kendall, University of Wolverhampton
Treasurer	Gaye Houghton, University of Birmingham
Journal Co-ordinator	Deirdre Parkinson, Glasgow
Production Editor	Amy Burgess, University of Lancaster
Membership Secretary	Kathryn James, University of Lancaster
Website Manager	Mary Hamilton, University of Lancaster
Publications Manager	David Barton, University of Lancaster

## Editorial Information

The Editorial Group for 2005-2006 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner researchers: Yvon Appleby, Greg Brooks, Amy Burgess, Maxine Burton, Jim Crowther, Azumah Dennis, Linda Eastwood, Ellayne Fowler, Alison Gorf, Barbara Hatley-Broad, Mary Hamilton, Gaye Houghton, Alex Kendall, Hugo Kerr, Fiona Macdonald, Jane Mace, Deirdre Parkinson, Sarah Rennie, Irene Schwab, Ralf St. Clair, Alison Tomlin, Karin Tusting, Carol Woods. **Overseas members** of the Editorial Group include: Jean Searle, Rosie Wickert, Stephen Black, Australia; Mary Norton, Bonnie Soroce, 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 info can be found at our website: <http://www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk/rapal/>**

The RaPAL Journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Group.

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Photographs are all from RaPAL Conference 2005, taken by Bonnie Soroke	



# Editorial

Welcome to the Autumn 2005 issue of the RaPAL Journal, which has its basis in RaPAL's Conference, 'Creativity in Adult Literacies Learning', held in July in Sheffield. Due to this issue's theme and the nature of the submissions, the journal's usual three-section structure is changed to two sections.

The first section is organized into three groupings of articles that: address the meaning and nature of creativity and creative adult literacy practice; continue discussion of creativity through descriptions of the RaPAL 2005 Conference workshops and ongoing research; and provide an in-depth look at the use of poetry in adult literacy education.

The second section has been designated to accommodate more sustained pieces of writing, which have refereed journal status. Both papers in Section 2 are based on workshops given at the 2005 conference and offer very different interpretations of the creativity theme.

The production of this issue has been the result of marvellous international and virtual co-operation, with co-editors based in England, Northern Ireland and Canada and contributions from further afield. Maxine Burton has many years' experience as an adult literacy tutor and is currently working at Sheffield University as Research Fellow on the NRDC study of adult learners' progress in reading. She can be contacted at [M.Burton@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:M.Burton@sheffield.ac.uk). Bonnie Soroke is working in Belfast on the LEIS project ([www.leis.ac.uk](http://www.leis.ac.uk)) until February 2006. She is based in Canada, where she works and plays as an arts & literacy consultant, and has developed zipper sculpturing workshops ([www.soroke.com](http://www.soroke.com)). She is associated with RiPAL-BC to support and encourage adult literacy research in practice ([www.nald.ca/ripal/](http://www.nald.ca/ripal/)).

Sheila Stewart is based at the Festival of Literacies, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the

University of Toronto. Her first book of poetry *A Hat to Stop a Train* (Wolsak and Wynn) was published in 2003. Sheila worked for many years in a community-based literacy program and has particular interest in learner writing and the place of story in literacy work. She can be contacted at [stewart@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:stewart@oise.utoronto.ca) and further information about the Festival of Literacies can be found at [www.literaciesoise.ca](http://www.literaciesoise.ca).

Practitioners and tutors are invited to find out what is happening at the convergence of practice and research in Canada. Some of you may know Canada's journal *Literacies: researching practice, practicing research*. A relatively young journal compared to *RaPAL*, *Literacies'* first issue came out in the spring of 2003. Canadian literacy workers, activists and advocates have looked at the work of *RaPAL* to see the possibilities when practice, research, and critical thinking converge. *Literacies*, like the Festival of Literacies and Research in Practice in Adult Literacy, are part of a movement which is developing a research practice dialogue in the Canadian context. *Literacies* has a wonderful on-line presence with pictures, articles, discussion forums. Have a look at [www.literacyjournal.ca](http://www.literacyjournal.ca)

Also have a look at the end of this issue (in the section: *Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?*) for an introduction to the writing workshops of Tannis Atkinson, editor of *Literacies*.

For my part, I am currently researching prisoner literacies in Scotland. This is the first time I have been involved as Journal Co-ordinator and I would welcome your comments on this issue of the Journal - its content and design - and suggestions for improvements and possible themes for future issues.

**Deirdre Parkinson**  
Journal Co-ordinator

## Copy Deadlines for the RAPAL Journal 2005-06

Please see below for details of themes, deadlines and editors for the 2005-2006 RaPAL Journals. Please send your articles, comments, suggestions etc to Deirdre Parkinson ([deirdre@dp-associates.org.uk](mailto:deirdre@dp-associates.org.uk)) by the deadline dates shown, although the earlier you can send your submission the better if you want to guarantee consideration for any particular issue.

Don't worry if your chosen piece does not seem to fit with the themes selected as there will be 'open' space within the themed editions for work-in-progress or commentary in general.

Please note: these dates are **final** deadlines.

Issue	Copy Deadline	General Theme	Editors
Spring	Fri 27 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2006	Numeracy	Alison Gorf; Linda Eastwood; Barbara Hatley-Broad
Summer	Fri 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2006	Appraisal of policy in England, Wales, Scotland & Ireland	Yvon Appleby; Sarah Rennie; Jim Crowther
Autumn	Fri 29 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2006	Conference 2006 edition: Transforming Literacies	Fiona Macdonald; Deirdre Parkinson