

# RaPAL

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

**This is a bumper, 'open' issue and includes articles that demonstrate how people use and engage with literacy in a wide variety of social domains such as the army, religion, educational research, literacy education, libraries and prisons to name just a few.**

**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 2007-2008

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### Editorial Information

The Editorial Group for 2007-2008 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner researchers: Yvon Appleby, Sue Bates, Amy Burgess, Maxine Burton, Ellayne Fowler, Tara Furlong, Barbara Hatley-Broad, Mary Hamilton, Kieran Harrington, Gaye Houghton, Fiona Macdonald, Colleen Molloy, Deirdre Parkinson, Sarah Rennie and Shelley Tracey. Overseas members of the Editorial Group include: Jean Searle, Rosie Wickert, Stephen Black, Australia; Mary Norton, Bonnie Srooke, 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.

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# Editorial

Welcome to the 2008 spring issue of RaPAL. This is a bumper, 'open' issue the content of which will appeal to all of our members in some way. It includes articles that demonstrate how people use and engage with literacy in a wide variety of social domains such as the army, religion, educational research, literacy education, libraries and prisons to name just a few. We know this diversity will generate wide interest and make this issue a compelling read.

Section one contains two articles and the first one is an amusing, personal account by Mike Brown of his experiences of doing research for the first time. Mike's descriptions of the 'bear pits' and 'labyrinths' he encountered on his research journey are honest and revealing. The second article is co-authored by Geoff Saul, the Area Curriculum Manager for ESOL at Leicester College, and Rob Pheasant, the Programme Development Manager for Skills for Life at QIA. Geoff and Rob tell us about the very positive outcomes achieved at Leicester College when they worked together embedding Skills for Life in a number of curriculum areas.

In Section two we have two articles written by Genevieve Clarke and Neelam Hussain respectively. Genevieve describes how in 2008, which is a National Year of Reading, the Reading Agency and the National Literacy Trust are working together to encourage learning providers and library staff to combine their efforts to promote reading for pleasure to existing learners and potential learners. In the second article Neelam describes how she incorporated her PGCE case study research, which was about one learner's language and literacy practices, into her actual literacy teaching. She used it with other learners as part of the education process and had very positive outcomes.

Section three is huge and contains five articles, all of which have been reviewed externally. In order, the five authors are Alex Kendall, Barbara Hately-Broad, Bob Hill, Jane Mace and Yvon Appleby. Alex explores the thoughts and reflections of young adults from the Black Country in the West Midlands about what it means to read and to be a reader. She suggests that new media textualities, in this case gaming, which are not valued in educational spaces, may offer young adults new ways of being as readers. In the next article Barbara gives a socio-

historical account of how literacy became regarded as increasingly important for army recruits throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as European armies became more modernised. Sometimes those in favour of increasing army literacy had to battle with senior officers who feared that encouraging education would also encourage soldiers to question their lot. Article three, by Bob Hill, looks at Skills for Life in relation to prison education. Bob uses headings from the Speaking and Listening section of the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum to act as a frame on which to build his critical commentary on policy. The fourth article by Jane Mace reflects on the writings of Mary Baker Eddy the founder of the Christian Science movement. Jane describes how her grandfather's dedicated membership of the Church has stimulated her own interest in how literacy is used in the cause of claiming religious certainty. Lastly, the fifth article, by Yvon Appleby, outlines research using a life history approach to reveal how someone on the margins of social and economic inclusion has difficulty in accessing the literacy and learning they need. Yvon argues that the bureaucratic literacy practices in 'official' texts created by our legal, educational and social services 'systems' can control people's everyday experiences and disempower them as learners.

Two Book Reviews make up the final part of this journal. One is by Sarah Rennie and the other is co-written by Sarah Chu, Fiona Campbell and Sally Enzer.

For my last words, I want to thank all the authors, external referees, reviewers of books and the members of production team who have helped to make this a diverse, interesting and informative issue. We all wish you, the reader, a stimulating and enjoyable time reading it.

*Gaye Houghton - Editor  
(with some early editorial assistance from  
Barbara Hately-Broad)*