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RaPAL

Open 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 is also available from EBSCO Information Services.

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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Julie Meredith & Linda Pearce

Julie is a Study Coach and Specialist Learning Support Assistant for deaf and hard of hearing students at Wakefield College.

Linda is a Parent Support Coordinator at Plymouth Parent Partnership, an Independent Evaluator and a member of the RaPAL Editorial Group.

Welcome to this Open Edition of the Journal. We are delighted to have a range of contributions from learners, researchers and practitioners from different contexts. We are grateful to all those who have worked with us over the last few months and would particularly like to acknowledge the time and talent of illustrator Eleanor Shakespeare. Eleanor provided an illustration for an article and then kindly agreed to design the cover image.

Section 1

The opening article takes us to Senegal where **Elisabeth Gerger** investigates the mental calculation practices used in cooking and commerce by two different women. She invites us to draw parallels with the way maths is used in everyday life in the UK.

From everyday numeracy practices, we move to everyday literacy with a piece by **Amanda Easto**: *Joining a Library and Reading for Pleasure*. Amanda outlines three lessons that integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening. Her article is followed by contributions from **Marsha Allen** and **Terry Welham**, two students from her class. Marsha and Terry introduce themselves and then share their creative writing inspired by the shared reading of a short story.¹

Caroline Lewis then takes us from an Adult Education context back to secondary school. As more of us start to welcome younger students into Further Education (FE), her account of working as a Teaching Assistant with the 14+ age group is sure to be relevant. What are your expectations and/or preconceptions of teenagers?

"What you think of me, I will think of me. What I think of me, I will be."² Through poetry, **Colin Thomson** challenges us to think about the language we use that 'labels'. He echoes a point Caroline makes about taking the time to get to know people as individuals.

Someone who feels he is treated as an individual, and that his existing skills are recognised, is FE student **Luke Bartle**. In an open letter addressed to the Principal, he expresses his gratitude.

Section 2

The opening article in this section takes us inside a women's prison in England. "Power, status, values and attitudes towards writing and writers are all closely interconnected with each other, and with the questions of who writes about what and for whom, why this matters and why it is like this."³ **Heather Shakespeare** examines the value of teaching creative writing and considers what it has to offer that Functional Skills does not.

Dyslexia specialist **Karen Tobias-Green** stays with the topic of writing and considers the challenges that it holds for art and design students. She explores ways of engendering the level of confidence and excitement in written work that the students have for their practical, visual work.

From the ongoing challenges of teaching and learning, **Margot Walsh** addresses the mental and emotional upheaval of organisational change. Whether termed a restructure or rationalisation, experience of this process is increasingly common, but the impact is usually seen only in the outcome. Margot asks: "Does Emotion have a Role in Organisational Change?"

In the current instability and uncertainty, **Geraldine Murphy** argues for further research into digital literacy from the perspective of FE staff. She shares her findings from a small-scale survey of in-service trainee teachers. Before reading, you might like to consider your answers to two questions: What is literacy? What is digital literacy?

Reviews

This section opens with **Sue Grief's** review of *Grammar for Sentence Combining*:

1. Henry by Elizabeth Brassington: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/19609/Henry-is-our-best-short-story.html>
 2. National Deaf Children's Society, in Coates, T. (2012). *Meanwhile I Keep Dancing*. Leicester: Action Deafness Books.
 3. Clark, R. & Ivanič, R. (1997:36) *The Politics of Writing*. London: Routledge.

Underpinning Knowledge for Adult Literacy Practitioners by Maxine Burton. Sue thinks this is of interest to both teachers and teacher educators. Readers who “missed out on grammar teaching or who feel the need to brush up” will find this is a good place to start. Practitioners who choose to give sentence combining a go, would be most welcome to share with Journal readers how a session on sentence combining works in practice.

Our second review continues with the subject of writing. **Doreen Chappell** reviews *Literacy and the Practice of Writing in the 19th Century: A Strange Blossoming of Spirit* by Ursula Howard. Via autobiographies and other personal accounts, Howard (2012:1) explores “why and how working-class people learned and practised writing and what their writing meant to them”. Doreen sees the relevance for practitioners and enthuses that “the ways in which people acquired their skills are an inspiration and reinforce innovative ideas”. Once the stresses of the summer term are over, you might wish to add this to your holiday reading list.

To close this Open Edition, **Yvonne Spare** shares her thoughts on *Adult Literacy and Development: Stories from the Field* by Alan Rogers and Brian Street. The authors analyse the differences between formal and informal learning, consider success stories from various communities, and identify reasons that education programmes fail. They then consider the implications for both policy and practice. Yvonne enjoyed the “stories from the field”, particularly those with illustrations making the context more vivid. She believes this work gives us all food for thought.

Please note that the views expressed by individual contributors to the Journal do not necessarily reflect those of RaPAL.



The illustrations on the cover and with *Beyond Functionality: Writing a Better Future* are by Eleanor Shakespeare.



Eleanor is an illustrator who graduated this year with First Class Honours from The University of the West of England, Bristol. For commissions or feedback, please contact her at **hello@eleanorshakespeare.com** or visit her website **eleanorshakespeare.com**