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Note from the Editors

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Note from the Editors

Michael Moore & John Warnock



The first two issues of *CLJ* present a wide range of methodological approaches. A review of our first issue reveals rhetorical, civic, and deliberative methods (Higgins, Long, Flower); contextual, institutional, and narrative analysis (Comstock); educational data collection and analysis (Schroder); analysis of local institutions' educational programs (Cline); and a textual analysis of institutional roles in civic dialogue (Coogan). One of the challenges of working in any area of literacy studies usually includes methodological quandaries; we think, in particular, that community literacy work brings those tensions into high relief because the work often assumes some measures of social action, action research, ethnography, shifting notions of "community," assumptions about the purposes of education, and the not-always-aligned needs of academics and community members.

Rather than issue a call for an unlikely methodological coherence across community members' work, academic disciplines, institutional needs, and legislative initiatives, we want to promote in these pages a lively discussion of productive methods that are—or can be—available to people who work in different contexts, often with different constraints and opportunities.

From a scholarly and research perspective, Elizabeth Moje has written about the multiple and layered challenges of community-based literacy research, and the researcher's role in a "complex, fragmented, and ever-changing world of 'the community'"

What does it mean to study community? When I follow a group of adolescents out of a content-area classroom and into their "community," where am I going? Am I entering a confined geographical space? A psychological space? A cultural space? Whose community is studied? By whom? And more important, why am I studying the community? (78)



Moje goes on to classify some of the metaphors that she encountered in her review of community literacy studies:

- Community as problem to be fixed
- Community as unknown to be described and interpreted
- Community as resource to be integrated
- Community as alternative to be repositioned.

She concludes that “we should clarify our metaphors, goals, and definitions as we study and write about communities...In my future work, I plan to limit my use of the word community to specific geographic spaces, and to examine how within those physical spaces, particular cultural and psychological spaces are constructed as circles of kinship, friendship, position, and power, and how these circles are developed and maintained through literacy and language” (106).

We think that Moje provides a powerful framing of ethical and thoughtful community-based methodological designs, and it is interesting to compare those with other research contexts. For example, she, too, mentions workplace literacies as an example of hybrid communities and the “need to negotiate multiple communities of practice and work” (81). In a federal–academic collaboration supported and facilitated by the National Institute for Literacy, a report on “Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction” (Kruidenier) situates its research on adult reading instruction “in community-based literacy centers, family literacy programs, prison literacy programs, workplace literacy programs, and two-year colleges” (9)—sites that will be familiar to students, teachers, and researchers who work in service learning and in community literacy contexts. The extended discussion of research methods (20–24) provides an opportunity to locate goals, purposes, and projects that an increasingly wide range of stakeholders in community literacy studies might have in common.

Amid our conversations on the methodologies of community literacy studies, we remain committed to publishing work by people whose day-to-day advocacy, projects, and work are driven by different exigencies—or whose daily, material needs are at considerable variance from academic researchers’. Upcoming issues of the CLJ will present work by prison educators, community health educators, literacy center staff, and adult education teachers.

The current issue of the journal reflects examples of community literacy work that engages and furthers those possibilities among and between researchers, practitioners, and community members:

- McKee’s and Blair’s “Older Adults and Community-based Technological Literacy Programs: Barriers and Benefits to Learning” represents these two scholars’ long-term work in developing technological literacy curricula, in this case combining their qualitative, interview-based research with the timely goal of providing sustainable access to—and community partnerships with—older adults.



- In “Community Literacy, Labor Market Intermediaries, and Community Communication Ecologies,” Michael Pennell examines the role of labor market intermediaries, their effect on shifting configurations of workplace literacy, the effects of globalization on workers and on dislocated workers, and how literacy educators are obligated to pay attention to these developments, even though they exist largely “out of the comfortable purview of our typical investigations and involvement.”
- Betsy Bowen’s “Putting Women at the Center: Sustaining a Woman-Centered Literacy Program” describes a program that “goes beyond the usual boundaries of basic literacy” to provide meaningful literacy education for women and, increasingly, an immigrant student population.
- From a writing center perspective, Julia Doggart, Melissa Tedrowe, and Kate Vieira collaboratively reflect on a community–university alliance and its material realities in “Minding the Gap: Realizing Our Ideal Community Writing Center.”
- In our first case study, Ellen Cushman and Jeffrey Grabill invite a group of graduate students to join them in reflecting on their experiences in a graduate-level course in community literacy: “A Reflection on Teaching and Learning in a Community Literacies Graduate Course.”
- Book & New Media Review Editor Brian Jackson has collected and edited a range of community, research, teaching, university-community alliance, and technology titles. Brian welcomes your reviews of titles collected at <http://www.communityliteracy.org/review.php>.

CLJ issue 2.1, on Appalachian Literacies, is being guest edited by Katie Vande Brake and Kim Holloway at King College, Bristol, Tennessee. They invite your case studies, articles, reflections, community collaborations, and other submissions. See page 127 for submission guidelines and details. Christopher Wilkey of Northern Kentucky University, will edit the special issue’s Book & New Media Review section.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the College of Sciences and Arts and the Department of Humanities at Michigan Technological University for their generous financial support of the journal.

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