

EDITORIAL

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This issue of *Literacy and Numeracy Studies: An international journal in the education and training of adults* marks the 21st volume of the journal, previously published as *Open Letter: Australian Journal for Adult Literacy Research and Practice*. The first issue of *Open Letter* appeared in 1990 in the International Literacy Year under the editorship of Ian Reid at Curtin University in Western Australia. Seven years later, the editorship of the journal was transferred to a team of Rosie Wickert, Hermine Scheeres, Alison Lee and Mike Baynham at the University of Technology Sydney, and the the current journal name was adopted. Since then there have been some further changes to the editorial team – the very sad passing away of Alison last year, Mike’s departure to Leeds University, and then over time Jean Searle, Katherine Gordon, Stephen Black and Keiko Yasukawa joining the team.

While retaining *Literacy and Numeracy Studies* as the name, this year marks another major milestone for the journal. We are very pleased to announce that the journal will now be published by a trans-Tasman editorial team – whose names appear in the author list above – and welcome Diana Coben and Niki McCartney from the National Centre for Literacy and Numeracy for Adults in New Zealand to our team. They will add new perspectives and experiences to our work, and our respective local and combined international networks in adult literacy and numeracy can only help to strengthen the journal’s reach and profile. By the time the second issue for this volume is published, we will have an expanded editorial advisory board, welcoming back many of our long time members and welcoming some new members, including a larger number of members who can assist us in strengthening the journal’s profile in the adult numeracy arena. We look forward to the continued support of our current readership and support from new readers and authors.

Since the publication of the first issue of *Open Letter*, the articles in the journal have strongly, but certainly not exclusively, embraced the New Literacy Studies perspective, that is, a view of literacy and numeracy as social practice. In the current issue too, this view of literacy and numeracy features strongly in new and challenging ways.

The first article by Bob Boughton, Donna Ah Chee, Jack Beetson, Deborah Durnan and José Chala Leblanch, ‘An Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign Pilot Study in Australia using *Yes I Can*’ reports on a mass literacy

campaign in Wilcannia, an Aboriginal community in Australia. The campaign is modeled around the Cuban *Yo Si Puedo* literacy campaign that Boughton also facilitated in Timor Leste and wrote about in an earlier issue of this journal (Boughton 2010). In the current issue, Boughton and his co-authors write that the value of a mass campaign approach to literacy is viewed critically in some arenas of literacy research, including social practice theorists of literacy. The authors' account of the campaign in Wilcannia is interesting to think about in relation to New Literacy Studies because the approach to the community campaign is described in a way that resonates strongly with a social practices perspective, even though the literacy pedagogy itself is described in ways that might resonate with a more instrumental approach. Readers may be interested to read Boughton's online discussions with Alan Rogers and Brian Street on the topic of the similarities and differences between a Freirean literacy campaign, New Literacy Studies and literacy as a social practice perspective at the British Association for Literacy in Development website (www.balid.org.uk/online-discussions).

The second article by Jane Furness, 'Family Focused Adult Literacy Programs: Towards wellbeing in diverse communities' is more explicitly affirming of a social practices view of literacy and numeracy. It is based on her study of family literacy programs in New Zealand in which she sought to understand what adults brought to family literacy programs, and what benefits linked to individuals', families' and communities' wellbeing were afforded by these programs. Her article concludes with some common principles and practices that surfaced in her study of the different programs.

Aileen Ackland's article, 'A Play in the Space: The concept of "the social practice approach" in the Scottish adult literacies field' presents challenges to adult literacy and numeracy teacher educators. Her paper reports on her research that suggests that there is a disconnect between the New Literacy Studies perspective on literacy and numeracy that is enshrined in Scottish policy and how the social practices view of literacy and numeracy is interpreted by practitioners. Her contention is that the radical possibilities of New Literacy Studies has eluded many of the practitioners, and concludes that there is as much a need for teachers to adopt a critical pedagogical stance as there is a need for teacher educators to do so. The paper is sobering for those of us who are thinking 'if only our government would adopt a social practices view in their adult literacy and numeracy policy'; much work in teacher education is needed to capitalise on such a possibility.

The final article by a large team of academics and museum professionals Keiko Yasukawa, Jacquie Widin, Vic Smith, Karen Rivera, Michael Van Tiel, Peter Aubusson and Helen Whitty, 'Examining Museum

Visits as Literacy Events: The role of mediators', takes the theoretical resources of New Literacy Studies to the study of visitor experiences in a museum exhibition, a terrain not frequently trodden in this journal. Their article is based on a small study examining how literacies in museum exhibitions influence visitors' engagement. Their paper focuses on data about two groups of visitors from statistically 'non-traditional' visitor groups: culturally and linguistically diverse family groups, and adult literacy learners. They find 'literacy mediators' a useful concept in helping them see the ways museum experiences are not only individually produced, but often collectively produced, depending on the nature of the mediation. In their paper, they also show how the democratic goals of New Literacy Studies resonate with the New Museology movement in the museum studies arena.

Thus, in this issue, we see new connections and new challenges in theories that inform the field of adult literacy and numeracy. Later this year, we will also see the results of the OECD Programme of International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), the successor to the 2006 Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALLS). This will no doubt activate policy work in the surveyed countries, and we hope that the journal can play a role in promoting critical discussions and debates both about the meaning of the survey results, and what researchers can usefully do with the results.

Finally, we have two book reviews, one by Alison Reedy and the other by Janet Dyne. They review different but related books on Indigenous literacies based on books by Inge Kral and Jeremy Schwab, *Learning Spaces: Youth, literacy and new media in remote Indigenous Australia*, and a sole-authored book by Inge Kral, *Talk, Text and Technology: Literacy and social practice in a remote Indigenous community*. Reedy's and Dyne's reviews suggest that much literacy learning takes place in informal settings in the remote Indigenous communities that the authors studied, and it challenges both the dominant deficit views of Indigenous communities in regard to literacy and the increasingly narrow definitions of literacy on which these deficit views are based. The reviews – and the books that the reviews are based, if read together with the article by Boughton and his co-authors in this issue, provide us with some welcome optimism that is often denied in the mainstream discourses about Indigenous education.

The editorial team welcomes responses and debates about issues arising in this and future issues in the *Refractions* section of the journal.

References

- Boughton, B (2010) Back to the Future? Timor-Leste, Cuba and the return of the mass literacy campaign, *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, vol 18, no 2, pp 23-40.

