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From the Guest Editors

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From the Guest Editors

A large percentage of Michigan Reading Association members are interested in having information about integrating computers in reading instruction and learning about software materials consistent with the definition of reading as a constructive, interactive process ("A Survey of the Membership" **Michigan Reading Journal**, Fall 1988, p. 29). In response to this expression of interest, the Technology and Reading Committee assembled this special issue on using technology to support reading instruction and enhance reading in the content areas.

The challenge. To set the stage for the issue, Miller and Blackstock, two insightful Canadian colleagues, invite all educators to "leap into the so-called [technology] revolution now." We should wait no longer, they say. Whether you are reticent about using technology or have already stuck your "big toe into the fray," you will be excited by the rich ideas in their anecdotes about teachers using word processors, commercial software, and databases as tools within their classroom programs.

Technology for reading/writing connections. Young and Porter provide a rationale for using technology to help learners of all ages experience the connections between reading and writing. Each of those authors then elaborates with examples. Porter's article, about pre-schoolers exploring language with a variety of computer software and other equipment, shows that young children can and do use technology easily and profitably. Although she describes a pre-kindergarten classroom, primary

teachers will find ideas for youngsters who have not had the advantage of the early exposure that these four- and five-years olds are having. Young, an adult literacy facilitator with a reading and special education background, describes purposeful activities to help learners from nine to ninety use word processing to organize and summarize information, construct and punctuate coherent texts, and build vocabulary.

Interactive programs. Good commercial software programs consistent with an interactive view of reading are not widely available, particularly when you look in the "reading" or "language arts" sections of publishers' catalogs. But if you look in other directions, as Layton points out, you will find many exciting and motivating materials. His explanation of truly interactive programs, specifically text adventures and simulations, is followed by Hurst's portrayal of the use of an interactive text adventure with his fifth/sixth grade remedial reading students. A selected list of text adventures is provided to help teachers find interactive programs for their students.

Databases. Databases offer many possibilities for reading instruction and for fostering reading within the content areas. Irwin explains what databases are and why they are important tools for reading instruction, even with only one computer in the classroom. Subsequent articles describe how first graders used databases to record and evaluate books they had heard or read (Dempich and Kelley), how third graders developed personal information files as a stepping stone to creating a database on

inventors (Ricketts), how middle schoolers might use reference and thinking skills in developing a sophisticated database on inventions (Lippens and Ridella) and how a sixth grade class used databases to compile information about current events and interacted with a teacher-created adventure based on a social studies textbook chapter on Rome (Sak). A list of database software and commercially prepared databases is provided.

Integrating technology and keeping current. The final section of the journal encourages readers to keep abreast of rapidly developing technology. Ellenbogen indicates that changes are occurring rapidly in technology and points out some of the new directions that have implications for instruction. Crooks' describes how she is using telecommunications within her fifth grade classroom; what makes her project unique, however, is not the use of the technology per se but the fact that her students experienced an extensive, integrated unit of study that incorporated many areas of the curriculum in a natural and meaningful way. Dodd shares the joys and frustrations of several teachers in one elementary school as they move toward integrating multimedia within their classroom programs.

The position paper adopted by the Michigan Reading Association has been reprinted in the journal for reference. Finally, a selected bibliography has been compiled to suggest professional materials which can be consulted for further information.

Thank you. One of the most satisfying outcomes of this special issue has been the participation of Michigan and Canadian educators in sharing their ideas about using technology within their reading programs. The Technology and Reading Committee expresses appreciation to all of those who contributed materials and wishes them continued success in involving students with tools of the information age.

MRA Technology and Reading Committee

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Gail Ellenbogen
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Anne Porter
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Editor's Note...

*Special thanks to Martha Irwin and her committee for the hours spent gathering and reviewing articles for this issue of the **MR Journal**. We know it will be of specific interest to teachers interested in using technology to support reading instruction and enhance reading in the content areas.*

Myrna Webb