

Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy

October 2007



Newsletter

Introducing Our New Chairperson



Greetings and welcome everyone to a new school year.

On behalf of the Special Interest Group on Literacy (CSIG-L) I hope that you had a restful and fun summer. I was busy in Trinidad and Tobago consulting on their education system with a team of educators. I learned a great deal. Literacy is a worldwide concern and at particular issue is the progress of boys. Let's hope that our united force to build student achievement and success will greatly impact our boys this school year.

My hope is that as a group we will spread the word about CSIG-L and encourage others to join. If each member encourages one person to join us, this simple gesture could double our membership. The price is right and the company is great! I encourage members of CSIG-L to keep us informed of what you are doing so that we can support each other wherever possible. Those who were present for the panel on "Provincial Perspectives on Literacy" held at the last day of the IRA conference [in Toronto], found it stimulating and interesting to learn of all that is happening across the country in literacy. Let us continue to share our activities and literacy pursuits.

Although I am retired, I am still interested in literacy development and education and I continue to be an IRA member and receive the *Reading Teacher* and *Reading Today*. I noted in *Reading Today* that Alan Farstrup reminded us that the results of two important international assessments will be released in late 2007 and early 2008. These assessments are from the program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006 and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey (PIRLS) 2006. Alan concluded his column by stating that international comparisons offer us a unique opportunity to learn from each other. I remind you to check to see how Canada has done.

A new magazine devoted to publishing fiction, nonfiction, poetry, book reviews and artwork for children 6 - 12 is scheduled to debut January/February 2008.

HYPERLINK "<http://www.launchpadmag.com>"

I hope that all of you will have a successful year.

Dr. Lorna Bennett

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Your Executive

Chairperson	- Dr. Lorna Bennet	l5bennet@shaw.ca
Vice Chairperson	- Arlene Kinden	akinden@lssd.ca
Past Chairperson	- Mike Bowden	mbowden@mail.sd91.bc.ca
Treasurer	- Lynda M. Usher	
Membership	- Dorothy H. Morrow	morrow@porchlight.ca
Ass't Editor	- Diane Beettam	
Editor	- Dorothy H. Morrow	morrow@porchlight.ca



We thank you, Mike, for two years of insightful leadership. We also thank you for taking on the additional task of formatting the new brochure to help increase awareness of our CSIG-L. The brochure is essential since the time allotted to us for presenting a **CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE** at the annual IRA conference depends on the number of CSIG members who also belong to IRA.



We warmly welcome our new Chairperson, Lorna Bennet, a clinical psychologist and busy lady! Her fun loving nature combined with her sincere concern for literacy will guarantee two years of excellent leadership. We greet Lorna enthusiastically!

We also welcome Arlene Kinden as our vice chairperson. Arlene is president of the Reading Council of Greater Manitoba (21 years achieving Honour Council Status) and a Literacy Lead Teacher.

We proudly embrace such auspicious leadership!

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Shirley Choo Retires



Shirley Choo, a long time member, retired from teaching in North Vancouver in December 2006 after a teaching career that spanned 30 years. Since then she has been busily catching up with her social life and traveling with her husband. IRA has been, and continues to be, a big part of her professional and personal life. The association has supported her belief that teachers have to be learners first and keep up to date in their profession. She always felt that IRA has provided her with professional development through the journals, publications and conferences. As part of her commitment to her professional organization, the IRA, she has served

on many committees. One wonderful side effect has been that she made many dear friends from other provinces and countries. Her involvement has been threefold:

- * IRA Member for over 35 years; Chair of the 7th Transmountain Regional Conference in Vancouver; Served on the International Development Committee (which formed our CSIG); Member of the IRA Nominating Committee; Member of the By-laws Committee; Chair of the Poetry and Prose Committee; Member of the Outstanding Teacher Award Committee; Part of the team that formed the Canadian Network of IRA Councils; Member of the Membership and Organization Committee; Member of the World Congress Committee; Chair of the IRA Canadian Regional Conference; Member of the International Developments Committee; Member of the Program Committee for the 2007 Annual Conference in Toronto.

- * Membership Chair of the Lower Mainland Council of IRA; Program Committee (organized conferences, meetings, Parent: Partners in Reading); Newsletter Editor; President (1990-1991)

- * Helped form the provincial council - 1994; served as Provincial Coordinator for three terms; served as MDM for 2 years; served as President for 2 years.

As a Canadian and a classroom teacher, Shirley feels honoured and privileged to have had such rewarding experiences with IRA. These have enriched her professionally and personally. She feels especially proud that she has chaired two very successful regionals and was instrumental in the formation of the CSIG-L, CNIRAC and the Provincial Council of IRA in BC.

Ed note: Shirley serves as an example of the many ways in which CSIG-L members can serve literacy through the auspices of IRA.

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In Memoriam

Mary Cronin, Ph. D

Mary Cronin was one of my best friends! She was the co-author, with me, of the PRINTS (Family Literacy) Program. She was a professor at the University of Regina, a strong supporter of the Early Learning Centre in Regina; a "friend" of the First Nations People, an initiator and co-author of Aboriginal PRINTS, a social activist, and a staunch Irish woman.

Mary died on March 12, 2006 after a five and a half year struggle with ovarian cancer, and left a gap that will never be filled. No one could match her boundless energy and enthusiasm. Mary always had many irons in the fire and was remarkable in that everything went smoothly and no one got burned.



Mary was an inspiration for all who knew her. She determined that she would be in control of her life, her health and illness, and she took all measures available to exert that control. To the very end, her mind was active in exerting that control. Mary not only saw the proverbial glass as being half-filled (rather than half-empty), but she also asked, "What can I do with the half-filled glass" because Mary saw purpose in life and for her there was a purpose for everything.

Mary came from Muckross, County Kerry, Ireland and by way of the University of Alberta, Edmonton (where I met her), and where she completed her Masters and Doctorate degrees, to the University of Regina.

A sure way to brighten one's day would be to get call from Mary, and a sure pick-me-up, if you were feeling down, would be to give Mary a call. Speaking with Mary was like experiencing a fresh breeze blowing from the Atlantic over the West Coast of Ireland. I really miss that fresh breeze and the renewed energy that speaking with Mary always gave me.

As part of her eulogy to Mary, Anne Luke said: "Mary's life was rich and deep. She was reluctant to let it go; she had so much to offer. And how do we easily unhook ourselves from this life with its joys and sorrows, its complexities and puzzlements, the multiple connections of the heart, the habits and patterns of our relationships, our appreciation of this earth we inhabit?" Mary's life was so rich, it was not easy to let it go; it was not easy for her family and friends to let her go. But she has left her imprint on all of us and her legacy of compassion, humour, love of life, and her commitment to social justice will live on.

Bill Fagan

Ed. note: Bill Fagan preceded Mary as CSIG-L Chair. He remembers the several years that Mary contributed as a valued member in the SIG. Mary was vice-chair in 1998-1999, and chairperson in 1999-2000. Those of us who had the privilege of working with Mary value her dedication to our group and the high standards that Mary set for literacy development.

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Tributes to Marie Clay



IRA President - Tim Shanahan

" Marie Clay was by far the most important champion of the idea that reading problems could be identified and addressed in young children...Clay's highly influential work on behalf of children has led to a more appropriately aggressive and thoughtful effort to ensure reading success from the beginning."

IRA Executive Director - Allan E. Farstrup

" Dame Marie was a true friend to all of us and a renowned leader of our profession. Her wise and calm counsel will be sorely missed. She will not be forgotten."

Former IRA President (1990 - 1991) - Dr. Carl Braun

" I admired Marie's scholarship, her incisiveness, her ability to bring wandering, desultory discussion back on course. I regard her as one of the true visionaries in the field of literacy, one who had a full appreciation of what it means to be literate. Marie's work will remain a treasured legacy around the world."

During her year as IRA president, Marie Clay visited with the executive members of the **Ontario Reading Association**. Her plea was for children around the world to be led into literacy through stories, words, letters, and sounds so that they are able to develop strategic inner control. Her philosophy was that the myriad of things which support readers to independence are learned through interactions with parents, teachers, and literacy encounters.

It was a distinct pleasure to be addressed by such a guru and we felt enriched by the precious time she spent with us.

Lynda Usher and Dorothy Morrow

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Council Awards

At the Awards Ceremony of the 2007 IRA Annual Convention on Sunday evening, Canadian Councils were recognized for their efforts and achievements. It was a great pleasure to have our Canadian past president of IRA, Carl Braun, serve as the Grand Marshal of the Convention.

The number after the council represents the number of years it has been an Honour Council.

ALBERTA

Alberta Provincial Council
Karen Vavra, President

BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia Literacy Council - 10
Shirley Choo, President
Student Membership Achievement

Lower Mainland Council -
Bonita Steffler, President
Membership Honour Roll

MANITOBA

Manitoba Reading Association
Samantha Amaral, President
Award of Excellence

Reading Council of Greater Winnipeg - 21
Arlene Kinden, President

ONTARIO

Ontario Reading Association
K. Lorraine Giroux, President
Membership Excellence Award
Student Membership Achievement

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

North of 60 Council
Lawrie McKeith, President
Membership Excellence Award

SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan Reading Council
Pamela Foy, President
Award of Excellence
Membership Excellence Award

KewetIn Nene Council - 9
Deborah Gibson Dingwall, President

South East Reading Council - 13
Mona West, President

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AWARDS continued

EXEMPLARY READING AWARD PROGRAM

Glenview Elementary School
Prince George, British Columbia

HORIZON AWARD

Group E - Provinces with Student Members Less than 50
Ontario Reading Association
Lorraine Giroux

PRESIDENT'S CUP

Group A - Province with Instructional Staff Over 100,000
Ontario Reading Association
Lorraine Giroux

Group E - Province with Instructional Staff Less than 10,000
North of 60 Council
Lawrie McKeith

NILA BANTON SMITH AWARD

Carol Hryniuk-Adamov

Carol is involved in direct teaching, assessment, consultation, and professional development.

Carol won this award for working tirelessly to provide leadership in translating theory and in current research into practice for developing content area literacy.



Carol is proud of her daughter, Katya, who as a young teacher found the IRA Conference stimulating, topical and totally instructive!

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Remembering LOMCIRA'S Roots: Back Through The Years



My first Introduction to the International Reading Association was in the mid 1970's when I decided to pursue a Master of Education degree at UBC in the field of Reading and Literacy Instruction. I was most fortunate that Dr. Harold Covell, who was head of the Reading Department at that time, was willing to be my program advisor. I planned to resign my teaching position with the Vancouver School Board and travel around the world on the professional circuit for a year and a half with my newly acquired husband. I met Dr. Covell for the first time in his office and enthusiastically outlined my plan for him. For over a year, he faithfully corresponded with me on a regular basis to help with the monitoring and adjusting of the original plan to collect research data for a comparative study of remedial programs in at least seven different countries. On my return to Vancouver, I completed my thesis and was called into Dr. Covell's office for a final consultation. "Now," he said. "If you plan to go back to the school system as a reading specialist, you must join the International Reading Association. I've also arranged for you to join myself and some other faculty members of the Reading Department on our trip to the 1977 IRA Annual Convention in Miami Beach, Florida. I want you to meet a few people."

In addition, I also discovered that this convention offered an overwhelming number of preconvention institutes, symposia, poster sessions, featured author sessions, and micro workshops covering a multitude of literacy topics of interest to all educators teaching preschool and early literacy, elementary and middle school, and adolescent and adult learners. There was also an Exhibit Hall where more than 1,000 exhibit booths spread out offering the latest in children's trade books, professional teaching resources, and other educational materials. The trip proved to be an exhilarating (and exhausting) experience that had a profound influence on the direction that my teaching career would take - literacy specialist, a classroom teacher, University Lecturer, and Learning Assistance Teacher.

It wasn't until I was involved in the planning of LOMCIRA's 35th Birthday Celebration that I realized that Dr. Covell had initiated and organized the first IRA council in Vancouver in 1956. Although he was too ill to attend the 35th Birthday, he wrote the following about the founding of the association:

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LOMCIRA continued

"IRA headquarters acceded to the request of a group of 13 Vancouver teachers to form a Vancouver council in 1956. The Vancouver council seemed to be inactive for a few years. In 1961, an inspired and dedicated group of Lower Mainland teachers under my guidance, used the charter of the original Vancouver council to reactivate the local council under the shortened name LOMCIRA. The new council proceeded to put on a very successful first major conference held in the Lower Mainland.

This phoenix rejuvenation of LOMCIRA can be attributed to two factors which still today characterize its functioning. First, a grass roots extension of the constituency of the council, and second, the infusion of fresh enthusiasm resulting from periodic successful reading conferences."

A few months later, it was with much sadness that I was informed that Dr. Covell had passed away and I asked his best friend, Dr. Tory Westermarck, professor emeritus, UBC, if he would write a brief tribute in his memory. It was only after I read Dr. Westermarck's remarks that I realized that Dr. Covell, in addition to founding LOMCIRA, was most influential in the development of the Language Education Department at UBC and also played a major role in the improvement of literacy in Canada. I discovered that many educators including principals, superintendents, and university professors had been inspired by him to carry on the work of improving literacy in classrooms.

by Donna McCormick

Canadian Leaders Honoured



Past President Dr. Carl Braun, the first IRA president from outside the United States, and former Board member Lori Rog, were honoured with the **Canadian Network of IRA Service Award** during the IRA annual conference in Toronto for "exemplary service at the local, special interest, provincial, territorial, national or international level of the International Reading Association.

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International Project Partnerships

The Information Text Awareness Project in Oceania, which publishes non fiction works for children living in island nations of the South Pacific is just one example of a project currently seeking sponsorship through the International Development Coordinating Committee (IDCC) of the International Reading Association.

Our CSIG member, Edmond Tell,
is quoted in Reading Today June/July 2007:

Edmond envisions the site being used as a means of encouraging councils to get involved at a level that they can commit to and sustain.

“We’d like them to shop the site.

Local councils, for example, may be able to donate money or books. State or provincial councils have greater resources and can often take on greater and longer commitment”.

“ Each side gains from the experience, and not only in a humanitarian way”

Ed Tell chaired this committee during the past year. He hopes that one day the biggest challenge will be to keep up with the number of partnerships... and to post the good news.

Projects include:

- * establishing reading associations across Nigeria
- * creating a community lending library in Indonesia
- * establishing an IRA council in Antiqua
- * sponsoring local participants in a "train the trainer" workshop for the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking project in the South Pacific

Our Canadian councils have won many awards. This is another means of fulfilling the requirements for Honour Council status.

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Margriet Ruurs

In her column in *Reading Today* (June/July 2007), Margriet leads us to several "Book Lovers' destinations.:

1. **Vancouver Kidsbooks** - Canada's largest bookstore entirely devoted to children's books.
3083 West Broadway and 3040 Edgemont Blvd. Tel: 800-893 5335 Email: general@kidsbooks.bc.ca
2. **Sylvia Beach Hotel** - 267 n.w. Cliff, Newport, Oregon to sleep in the room of your author choice.
Tel: 888-795 8422 for reservations.
3. **Powells Books** - a book lover's treat in Portland!
Tel: 800-291 9676 Web: www.powells.com
4. **Book Lovers** - local author readings.
5800 Madison Ave., Sacramento, CA 95841 Tel: 916-332 3133
5. **Tattered Cover Book Store** - Three comfortable locations in Denver, Colorado
1628 16th Street at Wynkoop (and two others) Tel: 303-4361070 Web: www.tatteredcover.com
6. **Little House on the Prairie historic site** - Independence, Kansas
Monday-Saturday 10-5, Sunday 1-5 donations Tel: 620 289-4238 Web: www.littlehouseontheprairie.com/default.asp
7. **Once Upon a Time** - Decorah, Iowa with the owner dressed in various literary costumes
602 W. Water St., Decorah, IA 52101
8. **The Book Look** - Stevens Point, Wisconsin
The Book Look, 2724 Post Road, Stevens Point, Wisconsin Email: manske@dwave.net
9. **Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art** - Amherst, Massachusetts
125 West Bay Road, Amherst, MA 01002 Tel: 413 658-1100 Web: www.picturebookart.org/ITome
10. **Alexander House Booklovers' Bed and Breakfast** - Princess Anne, Maryland.
30535 Linden Ave, Princess Anne, Maryland 21853 Web: www.bookloversbnb.com

WAKE UP, HENRY ROOSTER has been shortlisted for Ontario's Children's Choice Award: The 2007 Blue Spruce Award and B.C.'s Chocolate Lily Award. Way to go, Henry!

MY LIBRARIAN IS A CAMEL keeps getting shortlisted and winning all sorts of recognition. It's exciting to see how schools are fundraising and sending books to mobile libraries around the world. I've also been able to match thousands of children around the world as bookmark buddies. Kids have been sending each other handmade bookmarks, from Pakistan to The Philippines, to South Africa, to Scotland and beyond. Exciting!

Please note that most of my books now have teaching guides. You can click on each title on my website:
(www.margrietruurs.com).

A window will pop up in which you can find a teaching guide and/or a colouring sheet.

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The IRA Conference 2007



The mood of this smaller than usual conference was extremely positive.

Seen here are your editor, Dorothy (seated),
(L- R) your new chairperson, Dr. Lorna Bennet,
your treasurer, Lynda M. Usher,
the co-chair of the registration committee for the IRA conference in Toronto, Tuyet Duong,
and newly retired IRA/CSIG active member, Shirley Choo

This picture was taken at the Canadian Reception where attendees came to share ideas,
to renew friendships with colleagues from all over the world, and
to renew membership in CSIG-L.

Our thanks to the faithful work and organizational skills of
Garth Brooks,
who annually plans this popular event wherever IRA Conferences take place.



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Project Love

In some parts of the world, educational materials such as books, paper, pencils, rulers and erasers are scarce and expensive. Supplies we use every day in Canada can be difficult to obtain by people who live in remote villages or impoverished areas of Africa, for example.

Project Love is a great opportunity for Canadians to act as global citizens by **sending much-needed educational materials to students and teachers in developing countries.** The program talks to young people about international development in terms they can understand. And it gives them a hands-on activity to help their global neighbours their own age.

It's also an opportunity for Canadian students and community groups to **learn about** the challenges faced by children and teachers in **other parts of the world.** Best of all, Project Love provides an **opportunity to act.**

Project Love was initiated on Valentine's Day in 1987 by CODE volunteers in London, Ontario. Project Love is the proud recipient of a Canada Post Corporation *Flight for Freedom Literacy Award* and the *Jennie Mitchell Celebrate Literacy Award* of the International and Ontario Reading Associations.



One of Project Love's activities is to provide awareness of the educational outreach programs at the annual event **Word On the Street** at Queen's Park in Toronto



CODE tent, displaying items made in the areas served around the world.

C. Garth Brooks, Program Manager Project Love

Jana Mc Dade, Media Relations Officer

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Apologies from the editor

After inputting articles for a couple of months, as they arrived at my desk, my computer **died.**

With its demise went all the data for the newsletter!

Your newsletter is later than usual as a result of what was, for me, a traumatic event.

I sincerely apologize for this eventuality.

Also, this year, some of our members have requested an **electronic version** of the newsletter. This may be in the interest of trees or to reduce the amount of paper that passes over their desks. We are attempting to accommodate this request.

Please, remember that your colleagues are interested in all the doings in which your Reading Council is involved and we are anxious to publish them in the newsletter.

For instance, at the IRA annual conference this year, the

Toronto Reading Council

raffled two baskets of books. One was won by a Canadian and the other by an American.

Dr. Shelley Stagg Peterson, president of the council, is to be commended for the effort.

I would also like to remind you that the

East York Reading Council

hosts

Reading for the Love of It

The date this year, for the 32nd annual Language Arts conference

is:

February 14 -15, 2008

at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto.

Registration on the website:

www.readingfortheloveofit.com

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MEMBERSHIP FORM

- * We welcome you to the CSIG-L
- * We value your membership
- * We invite you to share your activities and ideas in the newsletter
- * Membership in the CSIG extends from May to May
- * Time allotted to the CSIG for Presentation of "Canadian Perspectives" depends on our membership numbers

Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy

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Membership fee
Five Dollars Annually