

## **J Session Abstracts**

### ***Plenary Session: Writing Research Reference Books***

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#### **Panel on Reference Works: *Handbook of Writing Research***

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The *Handbook of Writing Research*, edited with my colleagues Steve Graham and Jill Fitzgerald, covers recent research on writing development and learning with a primary focus on school-age children and adolescents. Although, given the breadth of current writing research, no one book can be comprehensive, the volume attempts to represent broadly major lines of research from a variety of theoretical perspectives. The introductory section on theoretical foundations includes a history of the field of writing research over the past 30 years and chapters on recent developments in sociocultural theory and cognitive modeling. The second section reviews research on development, including the emergence of literacy in early childhood, children's understanding of genre, cognitive processes involved in learning to write, motivational issues, and connections among oral language, reading, and writing. The third section focuses on instructional models and approaches from sociocultural and cognitive perspectives. The fourth section considers special issues relevant to cultural and linguistic diversity, gender, and learning disabilities. The final section focuses on advances in research methodology and assessment.

#### **Research on composition, 1984-2003**

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This talk will cover the edited volume sponsored by NCRLL that reviews composition research from 1984-2003. This book is designed as the third review in the series that also includes Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer's (1963) *Research in Written Composition*, a review of writing research covering the first writing studies in the early part of the century through 1962 and Hillocks's (1986) *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching*, a volume that reviewed writing research from 1963-1983. This volume continues the tradition established by these archival reviews but is distinct in several key ways. Most critically, it covers far broader territory. Braddock et al. and Hillocks were primarily concerned with school writing instruction. The field has expanded considerably since 1983, necessitating coverage of not only primary,

secondary, and post-secondary composition research, but also teacher research, family and community writing, writing in the workplace, studies in rhetoric, second language writing, and histories of composition. Because no individual has the breadth to write about such diverse fields of study, the book is edited, with each author serving as a topic specialist. Because the expertise is distributed, the project is less polemical than its predecessors. Braddock et al., for instance, provided a severe critique of research methods and insisted on a "scientific" approach for composition studies. Hillocks maintained this emphasis, and further argued for particular methods of teaching writing and against others. The new volume is less partial, serving instead to cover their fields without serving to advocate any particular method or paradigm. This talk will review some of the issues that have informed the development of this project for readers in the new millennium.

### **A different vision of writing studies**

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The Handbook of Research on Writing: History, Society, School, Individual, Text (Erlbaum, 2007) attempts to refigure our vision of the scope of writing studies by starting with writing as a recently emerged historical phenomena, filled with a history of small inventions that have diffused throughout society, changing the potentials of social organization and individual life in the process. It considers how various forms of social practice and organization have emerged facilitated by writing, and how these social changes have formed the context for schooling and writing education. Individuals develop as writers within society and history, passing through the institutions of schooling, learning ways to deploy the tools of written language and now new media.

The broad view of this volume is reflected in its organization. The first section places writing in a historical context, as a technology of inscribing the meanings of spoken language, developed independently in at least three locales in different historical moments and elaborating into a variety of writing systems, typographies, and handwritings. The second section then considers how writing has enabled and become a central element of social systems and practices: the economy, law, government, documentary bureaucracy, knowledge, journalism, literature, and professions, community, gender and cultural change. The third section surveys what we know about the history of schools and writing, the history of writing teaching and teachers, and current practices of teaching writing at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, along with current understanding of diversity and assessment at all levels. The fourth section considers how individuals develop their writing within the social and educational world, considering issues such as development, cognition, affect, identity, multilinguality, health, disabilities, and disorders. The last section explores more deeply what we know about the specific linguistic resources people deploy to carry out their purposes.