

2009

Featuring Historical Textbooks to Build Knowledge of University History

Bette Rathe

University of Northern Colorado

Kay E. Lowell

University of Northern Colorado

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digscholarship.unco.edu/libfacpub>



Part of the [Reading and Language Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rathe, Bette and Lowell, Kay E., "Featuring Historical Textbooks to Build Knowledge of University History" (2009). *University Libraries Faculty Publications*. 3.
<http://digscholarship.unco.edu/libfacpub/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Libraries at Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Libraries Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC. For more information, please contact Jane.Monson@unco.edu.

Featuring Historical Textbooks to Build Knowledge of University History

By Bette Rathe & Kay Lowell, University of Northern Colorado

Abstract

Undergraduate students at a teacher education institution, the University of Northern Colorado, are the target audience for an exhibit of a reading series from the Libraries' Archival Services collections. The display highlights an important era in the university's history involving four faculty members: Paul McKee, M. Lucile Harrison, Annie McCowen, and Elizabeth Lehr. These professors developed an innovative approach to early reading instruction that was incorporated into their reading textbook series during a time of uniformity in reading textbooks. The rationale for the display was based on research about the *Reading for Meaning* series discussed in this article.

Introduction

On April 1, 1889, Governor Job Adams Cooper of Colorado signed into law Senate Bill 104, an act to establish, govern, and maintain a State Normal School to be located in Greeley, Colorado (Larson, 1988, p.19). Through all the years that have followed, the institution in Greeley, now known as the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), has had the "preparation of education personnel" as its primary mission (2008, ¶ 1). In fact, until 1957, the institution's name featured "teachers" or "education" through its several name changes, including State Teacher's College of Colorado and Colorado State College of Education at Greeley. From 1891 through 2001, one of the focal points of the institution was the K-12 school located on campus, variously known as the Training School or the Laboratory School. For decades, UNC faculty members have been at the forefront of educational theory and practice, which was often tested at the Training School. They developed teaching methods in several fields and authored K-12 textbook series in reading, literature, language arts, and science. Present and former buildings on both campuses, named for prominent educators, bear witness to their accomplishments. With the passage of years, however, the institutional history of education and teacher preparation have become less apparent. The change of name to University of Northern Colorado in 1970 and the broadening of the institution's academic offerings – both welcome events – ironically contributed to a loss of student "connectedness" with their own institutional strength and history. Few students today could describe why there is a dormitory named Harrison Hall, or why the home of the School of Education is called McKee Hall.



Lucile Harrison

Until very recently, a similar knowledge gap existed regarding one of UNC's most successful graduates, James A. Michener, for whom the main library at UNC is named. Michener, who is best-known as a Pulitzer Prize winner for his novel *Tales of the South Pacific*, spent a number of years at Colorado State College of Education. During his appointment as a social studies teacher at the Training School, he also earned his Master's degree. After experiences as a textbook editor and in the military, Michener went on to become one of the most prolific writers of the 20th century. He was also a respected public servant who was awarded the nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Before his death in 1997, Mr. Michener asked that the University of Northern Colorado become a central repository of his legacy. With the cooperation of a number of other institutions which house Michener collections, Archival Services amassed a wealth of materials – both professional and personal – about him.

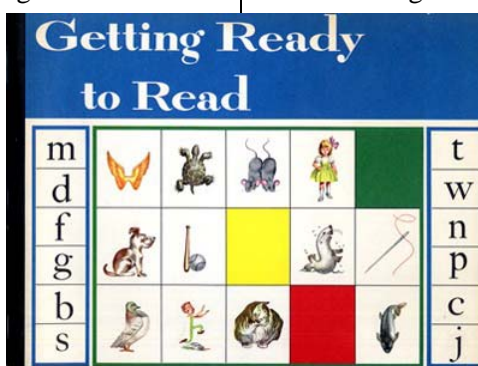
To celebrate what would have been Michener's 100th birthday in 2007, the UNC Libraries mounted a permanent exhibit on Michener's life and accomplishments. Alumni groups, Michener fans, and parents of students all visit and enjoy the exhibit regularly. This exhibit occupies the entire mezzanine level of the library and consists of some fourteen display cases containing print resources and several physical artifacts. Tour guides for prospective students encourage the tour group members to take a look through the display and "find that guy's false teeth," the most unusual artifact in the exhibit. In the process of looking for those teeth, they learn more about this author and his life. The answer to the question "Who is this Michener of Michener Library?" is now a part of the campus story told to incoming freshmen.

Given the continuing success of the Michener exhibit, it seemed appropriate to raise the student community's awareness of other accomplished educators from UNC's past. To highlight these accomplishments, a permanent display on the *Reading for Meaning* textbook series, authored by faculty members Paul McKee, M. Lucile Harrison, Annie McCowen, and Elizabeth Lehr, was mounted near the main reference area of Michener Library. This paper will discuss the rationale and development of the textbook series and the display which highlights it, underscoring our belief that the use of permanent library exhibits or displays about key people from university history can provide students with an enhanced understanding of the university's past.

The *Reading for Meaning* Series

The *Reading for Meaning* textbook series was selected from among the other textbook series authored by UNC faculty in part because campus buildings had been named after the authors. Archival Services holdings in this series provided a large number of visually appealing resources for a display, and the availability of duplicate textbooks also allowed the best copies to be preserved in the archives. Additional materials, such as transcribed excerpts from Annie McCowen's personal diary, add depth and context to the display. Her observations give a glimpse into the experience of being a female educator in the mid-20th century, as well as illuminating the process of developing the reading textbook series.

Reading for Meaning was first published in stages between 1949 and 1955. It was revised three times, in 1957, 1962-3, and 1966. Each edition began with a reading readiness component, initially entitled *Getting Ready*, which changed to *Getting Ready to Read* for the last two editions. The three preprimers and four primary level readers were entitled *Tip, Tip and Mitten*, *Big Show*, *Jack and Janet*, *Up and Away*, *Come Along*, and *On We Go*. *Jack and Janet* was called *With Jack and Janet* for the 1949 edition only. The two third grade readers, *Looking Ahead* and *Climbing Higher*, were followed by the remaining single readers for grades four through six, *High Roads*, *Sky Lines*, and *Bright Peaks*. For each reader there were accompanying teacher's editions and practice books. More ancillary teaching resources were developed with each new edition including a big book, tests, filmstrips, games, card sets, flip charts, records, and realia.



Literature Review

While no articles deal specifically with library displays of historical textbooks, several articles and a master's paper speak to the potential of exhibits or displays in academic libraries. Ogunrombi (1997) identified five objectives for mounting exhibits which include creating awareness of library services and information sources, creating a positive attitude toward the library as an asset to the university, creating demand and use for displayed resources or services, enhancing the status of library personnel, and communicating to the community the institution's efforts and achievements. It is this latter application that best fits the current historical textbook display with the target being the ever changing community of undergraduates and their parents. Dutka, Hayes and Parnell (2002) provide reasons for having exhibits in academic libraries. Among the suggested uses for exhibits are as teaching tools, as a means of developing awareness of unique collections, and to honor a donor and his gift. The *Reading for Meaning* series is a part of a unique collection of historical textbooks and of course the Michener exhibit fits the latter category of honoring a significant donor. The Michener display is also a fine exemplar of a concept presented by Steven Escar Smith (2006), that "by building teaching collections we also can assemble collections of great breadth and depth" (p. 39). Educating the public about the life of James A. Michener required pulling together materials from such diverse fields as sports, history, geography, art collecting, and politics. Organizing this material in a meaningful fashion is an act of outreach, "the active and conscious delivery of learning opportunities" (Smith, S.E., 2006, p. 31). In an institution dedicated to the training of teachers, providing the public with an

active learning experience that both deals with its cultural heritage and is itself an exemplar of learning methodology is a perfect fit. Historical textbooks are important to teacher education institutions in general. The collection at UNC is made more significant given the inclusion of textbook series that have the status of faculty publications.

Emily Guthrie (2003) describes the development of an exhibit in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Coker Arboretum on the campus of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. This arboretum was named for a faculty member whose contributions to his field and to the campus are detailed in the exhibit. Guthrie states that the purpose of the exhibit was "to introduce a new

generation of students to Coker, to stir the memories of those who knew him or knew of him, and to reveal the story of his life” (p. 3). That introduction to students of the people behind the names on campus buildings or sites is central to the purpose of our historical textbook display.

Two articles contain differing approaches to analyzing historical textbooks that were helpful in developing the analysis of the *Reading for Meaning* textbook series presented in this article. Gert Schubring (1987) proposes a three dimensional approach in his study of a French mathematics textbook author. The first dimension is analyzing “changes within the various editions of one textbook,” followed by “finding corresponding changes in other textbooks” in the same subject area, and concluding with the third dimension of relating “the changes in the textbooks to changes in the context” (p. 45). Elements to look at for this last dimension of context include the textbook author and the relationship between author, editor, and higher authority. Other elements to consider are the relationship between textbook and teacher, the conveyance of method of teaching, the forms of the textbook, and the effect of the textbook. Terese Volk (2007) offers a five point design in her analysis of music teaching materials developed by Charles Congdon. In her analysis she looked at the sociohistorical context, the author in his specific social milieu, differences between the author’s textbooks and others of his time, the contribution of the author toward needs of music education materials of his time, and the impact of his work on music education. Neither article addresses the development of a display based on the results of their analysis. In this article, we will look at elements that were incorporated into the display of historical textbooks mounted at UNC including the sociohistorical context of reading textbooks, changes within various editions of *Reading for Meaning*, the *Reading for Meaning* authors, the relationship between these authors and their publisher Houghton Mifflin, unique elements of *Reading for Meaning*, comparison with reading textbooks of the time and the impact of *Reading for Meaning*.

Sociohistorical Context

According to Monaghan (1994), female authorship of elementary reading textbooks was the rule from the 1880s into the 1920s. Women were considered the experts because they were the ones who taught in the elementary schools and they were also the ones training future elementary school teachers. This changed with the advent of the scientific movement in

education in the early 1900s. By 1925, Israel and Monaghan (2007) state:

Men trained in experimental research techniques (i.e., Judd, Thorndike, Gates, Gray) had already published monographs on reading, found a publication outlet (NSSE yearbooks) where they could pool their knowledge, and had set out the parameters of a new field, reading education. (p.16)

Also in the 1920s, additional texts were added to reading series with the “emergence of reading readiness programs and of the *preprimer*” (Chall & Squire, 1991, p.122). With the growing number of texts and supplementary resources, Monaghan (1994) explains, textbook publishers after 1930 could no longer afford to publish multiple reading series reflecting different methods. When the textbook publishers were looking for authors for their single reading series, they looked to reading education experts. In Nila Banton Smith’s (1965) listing of ten reading textbooks published or revised between 1950 and 1965, all have male reading experts as the lead authors, including McKee for the *Reading for Meaning* series. According to Chall (1967), the two leading reading series of the time were William S. Gray’s series commonly known as “Dick and Jane” and David Russell’s *Ginn Basic Readers* featuring “Tom and Betty.” These two series accounted for “80 percent of the total reading-series sales” (p. 201). As space in the display did not allow for more than two or three examples from other textbook series of the time, a single page chart was produced. The chart lists eight reading experts with their publishers, the reading textbook series they authored, and the individual titles of the primary level texts.

Nila Banton Smith (1965) describes the time period between 1950 and 1965 as influenced by “expanding knowledge, technological revolution, and national concern” (p. 311) because of the perceived threat of a technologically superior Russia as displayed in the launch of Sputnik. Smith states that “for the first time in history, reading instruction in American schools underwent harsh and severe criticism” (p. 312). An example of this criticism was the publication of Rudolf Flesch’s *Why Johnny Can’t Read*. Flesch (1955) describes the content of existing reading textbooks as “horrible, stupid, emasculated, pointless, [and] tasteless” (p. 6). Flesch condemned the textbook author as a reading education expert serving as “one of the high priests of the word method” downplaying the need to teach “children anything about letters and

sounds” (p.12) which Flesch considered central to effective reading instruction.

In response to criticism such as this, a separate workbook, *Learning Letter Sounds*, was developed in 1957 by McKee and Harrison and revised in 1963 for use with beginning readers in first grade. This program, with accompanying card sets and filmstrips, could be used with the *Reading for Meaning* series or any other reading textbook series. McKee and Harrison (1957) promoted the idea that learning consonant sounds was more important to beginning readers than learning vowels, so the workbook focused on learning 18 consonants and four speech consonants. For each consonant there is a key picture with the letter superimposed over the picture to help the child make the association between the printed consonant letter and the sound it stands for. This progression from picture to text is represented in the display by three cards from the card set for the letter *b*. The first card shows a baseball bat and ball forming the letter. On the second card the lower case *b* is superimposed over the picture of the bat and ball. The final card is just the lower case letter *b*.

***Reading for Meaning* Authors**

Robert Larson (1988), in his history of the University of Northern Colorado, states that Dr. Paul G. McKee was regarded as “one of the most eminent scholars in his field” and assumed “an important leadership role at the school” (p. 161). McKee came to UNC in 1926 having earned his master’s degree and doctorate at the University of Iowa under the renowned content reading expert Dr. Ernest Horn. McKee served as a professor of elementary education. Larson mentions that McKee tended to stammer, but he would “immediately inform students he had such a problem, go on, and teach an excellent class” (p. 168). McKee also served as principal of the elementary level of the campus Training School from 1932-42. The Training School held itself to a high standard of continual instructional improvement, as described in the *Bulletin of the Colorado State Teachers College* (“Training School”, 1921):

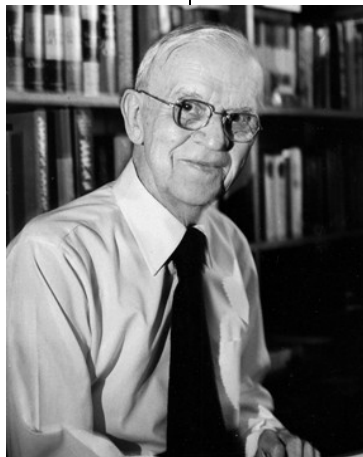
The fundamental purpose of a training school is not to serve as a research laboratory, but rather to serve as a laboratory in which the student verifies his educational theory and principles.... New methods that save time, new schemes for better

preparing the children for life, new curricula and courses of study are continually considered by this school and tried out, provided they are sound educationally. (p. 28)

This underlying philosophy is evident in the development of the *Reading for Meaning* series.

The three female authors included in the series served under McKee at the Training School. Annie M. McCowen arrived on campus in 1921 with a master’s degree from the Teachers College at Columbia University. She was appointed a professor of elementary education and a teacher in the fifth grade at the Training School. Albert Carter and Elizabeth Kendel (1930), in their history of UNC, described Annie McCowen as possessing “a charming manner and delightful Southern speech” that “proved most intriguing alike to her fifth grade pupils and to the school generally” (p. 204). Robert Larson (1988) also mentioned her southern drawl as contributing to “her success and easy rapport with students” along with her “delightful sense of humor” (p.163). She earned her doctorate from State University of Iowa in 1929, the first woman faculty member at UNC to earn a doctoral degree.

The other two faculty coauthors arrived on campus in 1926 with bachelor degrees. M. Lucile Harrison was appointed to the Training School faculty to provide supervision and teacher training work in grades one and two, later moving to kindergarten, while Elizabeth Lehr worked in grades three and four, later moving to fifth grade. Larson described Harrison as the “expert in the primary grades” whose teaching reached “creative levels” that the college president at that time promoted and Lehr as possessing a “command and feel for children’s literature” (p. 163). Harrison, McCowen, and Lehr not only collaborated in the writing of the textbooks, but also “testing them in classroom laboratories” (p. 431). The display contains individual photos of the authors selected from scanned images and printed on a high quality photo printer, thereby preserving the originals. The selection of the Harrison photo in which she is standing next to the Harrison Hall marker reinforces the connection of these authors to current buildings on campus.



Paul McKee

The Authors' Work with Houghton Mifflin

Harold T. Miller (2003), in his book about the publisher Houghton Mifflin, provides insight into the establishment and development of the relationship between his company and these Colorado faculty members. Harvard-educated William Spaulding was the head of the Educational Division of Houghton Mifflin when McKee submitted a proposed teacher education text that became two books, *Language in the Elementary School* and *Reading and Literature in the Elementary School*, which were published in 1934. M. Lucile Harrison also wrote a teacher education text, *Reading Readiness*, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1936. According to Miller's book, McKee wanted to develop an elementary reading series but was persuaded by Spaulding of Houghton Mifflin to develop a language arts series first. Annie McCowen was asked to join Harrison and McKee in writing the language arts series. While Spaulding had an established working relationship and respect for McKee and Harrison, he had to get to know McCowen, and McCowen had to get to know William Spaulding as well. In an entry from McCowen's (2002) diary, she writes:

It has been an interesting experience for me to get to know Bill better. He is more human than I thought. He's been a good sport here and has asked me to continue on the reader and has paid me his first compliment that my work was on first draft better than most authors. (February 11, 1940)

McKee, Harrison, and McCowen began work on their *Language for Meaning* textbook series in 1937, submitted the completed manuscripts to Houghton Mifflin in 1939, and saw it published in 1941. This set was revised in 1947 and 1956. The text became *English for Meaning* in 1959, with revisions in 1963 and 1967.

While working on the language arts series, Houghton Mifflin provided McKee training in reading textbook authorship by having him coauthor the reader *Highways and Byways* with Beryl Parker in 1938. In 1942, the UNC faculty authors signed the contract to develop a reading series. Miller (2003) of Houghton Mifflin describes the expectations of his company for their textbook authors. He contends that Houghton Mifflin had something that was "totally unique in textbook publishing, and that was author involvement.

Author involvement, from research through publication and into sales, by getting our authors out into the field," made the difference and "no other company ever was able to match us" (p. 93). Now knowing the high degree of author commitment, McCowen (2002) indicated in her diary that McKee negotiated 6% in royalties for the readers which was more than what they received for the language arts series.

McCowen and the other authors still had classes to teach along with conference presentations and speeches to prepare as their part in promoting the language arts series. The authors negotiated with campus administration for unpaid leaves and reduced teaching load as deadlines came near. Because of the workload of revising the language arts series at the same time as developing the reading series, McKee,

Harrison, and McCowen asked their colleague Elizabeth Lehr to join them on the development of the readers. Lehr had experience in textbook writing as a coauthor with another faculty member on the seventh grade literature text, *Appreciating Literature*, which was published in 1943 by Macmillan.



Annie Margaret McCowen

McCowen's diary (2002) provides insight into both the work that went into writing the textbooks and her relationship with Houghton Mifflin personnel. Houghton Mifflin provided two editors to work directly with the authors in Greeley. These editors were overseen by a senior editor

and Spaulding himself who made frequent trips by train to Greeley during the development of the readers. McCowen worked closely with the primary level editor on workbook lessons and with another editor on the intermediate level readers and workbooks. As time went by, her diary entries reflect a shift from her initial view of the editors as severe critics, as in the entry of October 2, 1944 in which she states, "Met with Eliz, Paul, Lucile & Mary [editor] to hear editor's criticisms of third preprimer. They threw away the whole thing! & messed up the second pre-primer." Later she viewed them as helpers who improved the quality of her work. For example, on April 14, 1951 she states, "Discouraging revision of Henry Huggins story from Arthur [editor] & I understand his reasons for making the changes he did."

When working on the primary reader workbooks, McCowen averaged two lessons a day. The workbook lessons for the intermediate level took more time. At one point McCowen set herself a goal of writing one

workbook lesson a day while on leave, but often could not maintain that pace. For the intermediate level readers, children's stories were read for possible inclusion in the reader. McCowen's diary reflects the time she spent trying to find stories, as in the entry from October 10, 1951, where she says, "Read children's stories most of day – good stories are hard to find." Possible stories were reviewed with the editor before a list of stories was submitted to Houghton Mifflin officials for approval. Once the decision was made about what stories to adapt for use in the intermediate readers, forms for copyright permissions had to be prepared and sent. Adaptations of stories had to be written using the agreed upon vocabulary for the given level. This entry dated February 6, 1951, reflects a more positive interaction with her editor, "Most helpful conference with George. Glad he likes my story adaptation. Worked it over so as to reduce the vocabulary burden even more." Manuscripts for the readers and workbooks were sent off to Houghton Mifflin and proofs for each item were returned to be reviewed and corrected.

In early summer of 1954, McCowen describes in her diary a gathering of Houghton Mifflin managers and consultants in Estes Park, Colorado for the formal presentation of the *Reading for Meaning* textbook series. McCowen wrote on June 1, 1954, that the "consultants' wholehearted acceptance & enthusiasm for the program was most flattering & inspiring to hear." Since much of the McCowen diary does not apply to the writing of the *Reading for Meaning* series, only selected quotations were used in the display. The quotations that were selected highlight the personal dimension of the textbook writing process. The source information for these quotations directs viewers to the diary housed in Archival Services.

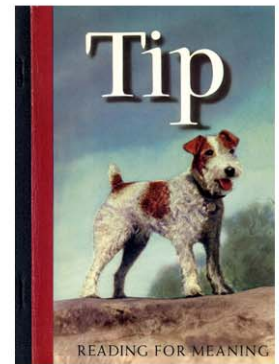
Changes within Editions of *Reading for Meaning*

The current library exhibit shows two copies of an open *Tip and Mitten* preprimer, one from 1949 and one from 1966 for comparison. These were chosen for display because of their visual appeal along with their size, which allows them to easily be displayed open. The immediately apparent changes between editions are in the illustrations. Houghton Mifflin was responsible for the design and illustrations in the readers. Nancy Sargent of their publisher Houghton Mifflin described "long sessions where we'd sit around forever and talk about where Jack and Janet were standing and where the trees were" (Miller, 2003, p.75). Different illustrators were used as the series went through revisions. Corinne Malvern was the original illustrator for the 1949 edition. On September

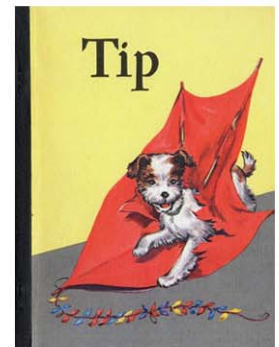
5, 1949, Annie McCowen notes in her diary (2002), "Over to Lucile's to see pictures for pre-primer—two very good on the whole. Kitten not well drawn." Four different illustrators were used throughout the subsequent editions, ending up with Lilian Obligado for the final edition. The content of the illustrations was updated from Tip pulling wash from the clothesline in the 1949 edition to Tip pulling a jump rope from Janet in the 1966 edition. The text contains minor changes reflecting the change in story context as revealed in the illustrations. Other changes between editions, as mentioned above, include the incorporation of tests, teacher's editions of practice books, and related ancillary teaching materials.

Comparison with Other Reading Textbooks

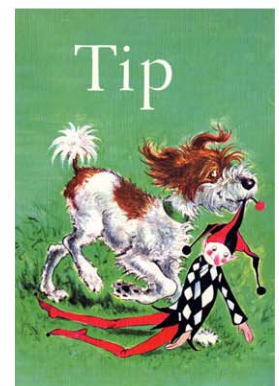
The content of *Reading for Meaning* resembled other reading series of the period. P. David Pearson (2000) describes the reading series as containing controlled vocabulary, repetition of sight words to be learned, and a first grade content of realistic stories about "Dick and Jane and all their assorted pairs of competing cousins – Tom and Susan, Alice and Jerry, Jack and Janet" (p. 163). Stone and Bartschi (1963) conducted a study of the five most commonly used basal reading series looking at the grade placement of words introduced in the first through third grade readers, generating a composite graded list of words. The total number of new words introduced in these controlled vocabulary readers ranged from a high of 1883 to a low of 1342 new words, with *Reading for Meaning* right in the middle at 1650 new words introduced in their first through third grade readers. Richard Waite (1968) examined seven first grade reading textbooks for multi-ethnic content and settings. The *Reading for Meaning* series displayed only white, Anglo-Saxon characters in 79% of the stories, with other ethnic groups represented in 13% of the stories (p. 65). The settings for the stories were



1957



1963



1966

65% suburban and 26% rural, with only 2% of the stories in urban settings (p. 64). As these stories of white children in suburban settings were typical of all reading series of the time, new reading series were developed in the mid 1960s specifically for urban, multi-ethnic school districts. Open readers from other textbook series in the display clearly show repetition of sight words, controlled vocabulary, and stories of white characters living in a suburban setting. A “Dick and Jane” reader was selected due to the name recognition of this series. A preprimer from the “Alice and Jerry” series is also on display, but can easily be replaced with a reader from another series listed on the reading expert chart.

Anthony Witham (1963) describes the available basal reading series and the teaching aids available with these series. *Reading for Meaning* was not unique in the teaching resources it provided with the readers. All series had teacher’s manuals. Most had workbooks, readiness picture sets, and card sets. Other resources provided with *Reading for Meaning’s* 1963 edition included diagnostic and achievement tests, a big book, and filmstrips. Elements that other series provided that were not offered with *Reading for Meaning* include enrichment readers, phonic charts, and recordings. The last teaching aid developed for the *Reading for Meaning* series was a set of eight games in 1967. One of those games, *Picture Words*, is in the display. Because of the limited space, only a representative sampling of other teaching aids is included in the display based on their visual appeal, including a teacher’s manual, an open workbook page, and a plastic baseball bat intended for sorting into the correct letter box. An open sales brochure shows other available reading readiness teaching resources in lieu of the actual items.

Unique Elements of *Reading for Meaning*

Grace Dondero (1951) evaluated six basal reading series and identified a unique feature in the *Reading for Meaning* series stating:

This series trains the child to demand and make meaning from what he reads. The outstanding feature of this series is the program of phonetic analysis which provides for a definite and systematically planned instruction in the independent identification of strange printed words. (p. 87)

In describing the 1963 edition of *Reading for Meaning*, Nila Banton Smith (1965) identified the chief characteristics of the series as an “emphasis on

meanings, with special attention given to the use of context clues; and the teaching of letter and sound associations during the early stages in reading, beginning in the reading readiness period” (p. 350). Jeanne Chall’s (1967) critical analysis of the reading series of this time also highlighted Houghton Mifflin’s *Reading for Meaning* as being different from the others by “teaching phonics earlier” (p.194).

Bliesmer and Yarborough (1965) studied the first grade beginning reading programs from ten different publishers. Of these ten programs, “five programs were based upon the belief that the child should be taught whole words and then, through various analytic techniques, recognition of letters and the sounds they represent” while the other “five approaches were based on the belief that the child should be taught certain letter-sound relationships or word elements before beginning to read and then be taught to *synthesize* word elements learned into whole words” (p. 500). *Reading for Meaning* was among the five programs using the latter synthetic approach and one of two basal reading programs, with the other three programs simply being workbooks. This study found the synthetic approach to “be significantly more productive in terms of specific reading achievement in grade one (as measured by the criterion test) than do analytic reading programs” (p. 504). The approach offered in the *Reading for Meaning* series has been validated by subsequent research as reported by Pamela Maslin (2007). She states that “research has shown that the most reliable method of teaching the alphabetic code is explicit, systematic phonics instruction with opportunities for applied practice” (p. 62). Her comparison of the current top selling reading programs showed that Houghton Mifflin’s first grade readers continue to begin the phonics instruction with learning initial consonants. The display highlights the early consonant learning tools with the inclusion of cards from the card sets, the plastic baseball bat, and the letter box. The accompanying text emphasizes the uniqueness of this early phonics instruction compared with other series of this time.

Two authors reported on the high interest of readers to stories in the primary level reading textbooks. Clare Broadhead (1952) states that children should be given stories “which are not too difficult and which appeal to their interests, their sense of humor and their level of understanding. An example of a story which meets these requirements for almost any child who can read at second-grade level or above is ‘The Story That Was Too Big’” (p. 337) from *Come Along* of the *Reading for Meaning* series. Stern and Gould (1965) document

the use of the *Reading for Meaning* preprimers and primers in one of their case studies. Upon giving the student *Tip* to read, he “read twenty-five pages in one session, refusing to stop” (p. 188). He read the next three readers in the series with the instructor and then read *With Jack and Janet* on his own during the summer. The open *Come Along* reader and *Tip and Mitten* preprimers provide viewers the opportunity to assess the interest level of the stories.

Impact of the *Reading for Meaning* Series

In 1971, a complete revision of the reading series under new authors was unveiled as the *Houghton Mifflin Readers*. One piece from the *Reading for Meaning* series that continued to be used in the new series was *Getting Ready to Read* by McKee and Harrison. This reading readiness piece was used in the 1974 revised version and through the 1976 and 1979 editions of the *Houghton Mifflin Reading* series bearing M. Lucile Harrison’s name with other authors. By the 1981 version, Robert Aukerman (1981) reports that the *Houghton Mifflin Reading Program* was the number one seller among the fifteen basal series published that year. According to Aukerman, one of the four reasons for this success is the series being “a direct descendant of that developed by McKee and Harrison back in the 1940s [which] is well-known and well-established” (p.173). Miller (2003) of Houghton Mifflin declared *Reading for Meaning*, which later became the *Houghton Mifflin Reading* series, “the biggest, most successful series we ever published” (p. 33). This quotation is used in the introduction to the *Reading for Meaning* display, in part to catch the viewer’s attention as well as to underscore the historical significance of this series produced by UNC faculty authors.

Display Evaluation

Guthrie (2003) lauded the concept of exhibit evaluation but “time constraints precluded the possibility of measuring the impact” of her exhibit on its visitors (p.19). Since our display is intended to be permanent, evaluation is not limited by time constraints but by devising a means of capturing reactions of tour group members. Currently, the only reactions to the display have been related by tour group leaders. One parent on a tour of the library became excited when she recognized the card set in the display as one she used to teach her children. An undergraduate student recognized the readers as the ones she had used to learn to read. A more formal evaluation process is, as Guthrie states, an “ideal way to determine necessary improvements” (p. 19); but for now, informal reactions to the display are the best method we have at our

disposal. Viewer feedback, the desire to rotate materials to maintain interest, and the need to monitor the condition of originals in the display case, will all inform periodic changes in the case’s contents.

Informal though these very positive reactions may be, however, they validate the decision to keep and use what might easily have been weeded from the collections as duplicates of an out-of-date textbook series. As S. E. Smith (2006) mentions, “teaching from our collections is important to their survival” (p. 35). Academic libraries tend to be geared toward the researcher. But, as Smith suggests, “if all we concern ourselves with is access for researchers, most people will never have the opportunity to see the unique, inspiring, and educational items in our libraries because most people are never going to be researchers” (p. 33). The historical textbook display highlights physical items of lasting historical and cultural value to our institution and our area. Because we have demonstrated that the physical textbooks themselves have meaning to patrons outside the University community, we have begun accumulating support for their continued maintenance and for the expansion of the historical textbook collection.

Conclusion

This reading series, written forty to fifty years ago, is still relevant to today’s students and the university community. All of these groups are limited in their access to our historic textbook collections by Archival Services hours and availability of its staff. Creating a display that is easily available to all has allowed us to share this heritage material much more broadly. “People know we have stuff, and they want to see it. It is in our interest to find a way to accomplish this. Indeed, it would be an abdication of our responsibility if we did not.” (Smith, S.E., 2006, p. 34). The display provides the connection between university faculty authors, whose names appear on campus buildings, with the textbook series they authored. It highlights the early phonics instruction incorporated in this series that was unique for its time. Based on the research done about this series, the display celebrates *Reading for Meaning* not only as a successful reading series, but also as the foundation for the many later iterations of Houghton Mifflin reading textbooks. With this and future projects featuring our historical textbooks, it should be possible to increase student and faculty awareness of a proud era in our institutional history and perhaps assist our education students in once again using UNC as “a laboratory in which the student verifies his educational theory and principles” (“Training School,” 1921, p. 28).

All photographs are courtesy of UNC Archival Services.

References

- Aukerman, R. C. (1981). The Houghton Mifflin Reading Program, 1981. In *The basal reader approach to reading* (pp. 159-174). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bliesmer, E. P., & Yarborough, B. H. (1965). A comparison of ten different beginning reading programs in first grade. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 46, 500-504.
- Broadhead, C. A. (1952). The reading center: An in-service training program. *Elementary School Journal*, 52, 335-339.
- Carter, A. F., & Kendel, E. H. (1930). *Forty years of Colorado State Teachers College, formerly the State Normal School of Colorado, 1890-1930*. Greeley, CO: Tribune-Republican Publishing.
- Chall, J. S. (1967). *Learning to read: The great debate*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Chall, J. S., & Squire, J. R. (1991). The publishing industry and textbooks. In R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume II* (pp. 120-146). New York: Longman.
- Dondero, G. L. (1951). What's new in basal readers. *Grade Teacher*, 69, 85-87.
- Dutka, A., Hayes, S., & Parnell, J. (2002). The surprise part of a librarian's life: Exhibition design and preparation course. *College & Research Libraries News*, 63(1), 19-22.
- Flesch, R. (1955). *Why Johnny can't read – and what you can do about it*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Guthrie, E. (2003). *Uncovering Coker: Revealing the life of a botanist through a special collections exhibit* (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 2003). Retrieved from <http://ils.unc.edu/MSpapers/2879.pdf>
- Israel, S. E., & Monaghan, J. E. (Eds.). (2007). *Shaping the reading field*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Larson, R. W. (1988). *Shaping educational change: The first century of the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley*. Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press.
- Maslin, P. (2007). Comparison of readability and decodability levels across five first grade basal programs. *Reading Improvement*, 44(2), 59-75.
- McCowen, A. M. (2002). *Twenty years in the life of Annie Margaret McCowen, educator and author: Selections from her diaries, 1936-1955* (G. McCowen, Ed.). Unpublished manuscript.
- McKee, P., & Harrison, M.L. (1957). *Learning letter sounds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Miller, H. T. (2003). *Publishing: A leap from mind to mind*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum.
- Monaghan, E. J. (1994). Gender and textbooks: Women writers of elementary readers, 1880-1950. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 10(1), 28-47. Retrieved from Communication & Mass Media Complete database.
- Ogunrombi, S. A. (1997). Exhibitions in university libraries. *Library Review*, 46, 428-433. Retrieved from Emerald Journals database.
- Pearson, P. D. (2000). Reading in the twentieth century. In M. Early (Series Ed.) & T. L. Good (Vol. Ed.), *American education: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Ninety-ninth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*. (Pt. II, pp. 152-208). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schubring, G. (1987). On the methodology of analyzing historical textbooks: Lacroix as textbook author. *For the Learning of Mathematics*, 7(3), 41-51.
- Smith, N. B. (1965). *American reading instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Smith, S. E. (2006). From "treasure room" to "school room": Special collections and education. *RMB: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, 7(1), 31-39.
- Stern, C., & Gould, T. S. (1965). *Children discover reading: An introduction to Structural Reading*. New York: Random House.
- Stone, D. R., & Bartschi, V. (1963). A basic word list from basal readers. *Elementary English*, 40, 420-427.
- The Training School. (1921). *Bulletin of the Colorado State Teachers College*, 21(6), 28.
- University of Northern Colorado. (2008). *Mission statement*. Retrieved from <http://www.unco.edu/pres/mission.html>
- Volk, T. M. (2007). "Charts and other paraphernalia": Charles H. Congdon (1856-1928) and his music teaching materials. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 55(4), 302-12. Retrieved from Education Full Text database.
- Waite, R. R. (1968). Further attempts to integrate and urbanize first grade reading textbooks: A research study. *Journal of Negro Education*, 37(1), 62-69. Retrieved from JSTOR database.
- Witham, A. P. (1963). The index to reading material: Basal and co-basal reading series. *Elementary English*, 40, 194-201.

Bette Rathe, Education Librarian
University of Northern Colorado
James A. Michener Library
Campus Box 48
501 20th Street
Greeley, CO 80639-0091
970-351-1531
bette.rathe@unco.edu



Kay Lowell,
Archival Services Librarian
Professor, University Libraries
James A. Michener Library
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, CO 80639
970-351-2333

kay.lowell@unco.edu