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Norman A. Stahl
Northern Illinois University

Cynthia R. Hynd
University of Georgia

William G. Brozo
Eastern Michigan University

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The Development and Validation of a Comprehensive List of Primary Sources in College Reading Instruction

**Norman A Stahl
Cynthia R. Hynd
William G. Brozo**

It may be argued that a field only comes of age when its professional membership is able to gain insight into the present and begin to predict the future through the organized studying and the collective valuing of the field's past. As we enter the 1990's, it is time for the field of college reading and learning assistance to achieve a broader perspective that more fully incorporates the field's rich and varied past. To achieve this end, collectively we should endeavor to understand our professional roots through chronicling, interpreting, and evaluating the fundamental ideas, the pedagogical achievements, and the research contributions of our colleagues, both past and present.

Along these lines, Stahl, Hynd, and Henk (1986) suggested that we could learn much about our past by evaluating the textbooks utilized in college reading programs across the years. However, until now no authoritative compilation of instructional materials has been available to

assist college reading and learning specialists with their research investigations.

It is the purpose of this paper to describe the development and possible uses of an in-depth reference tool for college reading and learning assistance professionals. The tool, a reference list, targets the work of three types of scholars: 1) researchers who are oriented primarily to the present as well as those whose concerns are equally with the historical roots of the profession, 2) curriculum design specialists who want to understand the legacy of tradition in college reading, and 3) graduate students who undertake research for theses or dissertations.

Description of the list

The list is comprised of 593 bibliographic entries covering the years 1896 to 1987. The dates which form the historical parameters for the reference list, while not based on specific identifiable eras, fit rather neatly through 1958 into the eras proposed by Leedy (1958) and into the more recent time frames mentioned elsewhere in this report. The list does not include those religious or moralistic treatises pertaining to reading or studying that were issued before 1896 (Aquinas, translated 1947; Porter, 1870; Todd, 1835; Watts, 1721, 1741). The earliest date on this list is that of the first text published after Abell's now classic college reading investigation of 1894. The list terminates with 1987; there have been a number of content analyses immediately preceding this date.

Most of the texts included in this list were written primarily for use in college reading programs or in reading/study skills units of learning assistance centers. However, we did include trade books that have often served

in dual roles for both the academic and the popular press markets.

The list was further defined by limiting the subject matter of texts selected for inclusion. We used the text categories identified in previous content analysis research (Stahl, Simpson, and Brozo, 1988). Texts or workbooks that fell clearly into either the college study-skills category or the college reading-skills category were automatically placed on the list. Texts pertaining to speed reading that were equally concerned with comprehension instruction and study methods were also included. The same criteria were adhered to for those texts generally classified as college survival texts. Vocabulary development texts were omitted. (See Stahl, Brozo, and Simpson, 1987, for an extensive listing of current vocabulary books). In addition, we eliminated most texts that might be categorized as teacher education methods texts. However, since the differentiation between a methods text and a student-oriented college reading text was blurred during the early years of the century, several texts with this dual purpose are included on the list. Furthermore, we learned that across the years a sizable number of texts were published originally in the Commonwealth countries. Rather than overlooking these texts, we included a representative sample of these materials for their value in comparative reading studies. These selected texts and workbooks are listed separately in a latter section of the report entitled "International Texts." Clearly, this section of the list is not comprehensive but rather serves as a sample of available texts.

Development of the list

Two mutually supportive activities were used to develop the reference list of college reading texts. The first step was the identification of potential entries. Initially, we

consulted a number of secondary sources focusing on instructional materials issued for college reading programs over the past 85 years. We examined the content of selected texts and workbooks across specific historical periods: the prewar era (Laycock and Russell, 1941), the first G. I. Bill era (Ironside, 1963; Miller, 1957), the community college boom years (Bahe, 1970; Browning, 1976; Utsey, 1968), and the contemporary period (Brozo and Johns, 1986; Heinrichs and LaBrance, 1986; Radencich and Schumm, 1984; Stahl, Brozo, and Simpson, 1987). In addition to analyzing content, each of these reports contains reference lists of texts issued during the respective eras. In all, we identified 335 probable sources via the review of these studies. The titles that met the selection criteria for this project were placed on a preliminary reference list.

The next set of secondary sources leading to the identification of instructional texts consisted of historical sources on college reading instruction. In this task we perused historical chronicles of the overall field (Leedy, 1958) and historical analyses of instructional methods (Stahl, 1983). Thus we identified specific instructional texts thought to be of importance by the historians and the chroniclers of the field. We also carefully reviewed historically important texts that provide the field with an understanding of the various trends in pedagogical thought, research, and instructional design over the years. Here we are referring to both methods texts (Ahrendt, 1975; Leedy, 1964; Maxwell, 1979; Triggs, 1943) and instructional texts containing reference lists at either the chapter level or text level (Bird, 1931; Kornhauser, 1924; Robinson, 1946). Finally, we compared secondary sources by earlier authors (Bliesmer, 1957; Narang, 1973). Such comparisons provided additional sources to be included in our list. At this stage the list was comprised of 452 entries.

Internal verification was the next step in preparing the reference list. Here we needed to evaluate each entry to guarantee that the text was germane to content covered in postsecondary reading programs. First, whenever possible, we reviewed texts that were in our personal libraries, the libraries of our respective institutions, or available from interlibrary loan.

Next we asked a panel of experts to check the list for accuracy, to provide additional sources that might have been overlooked, and to validate the inclusion of texts that we were unable to obtain and review through the previously mentioned methods. The panel was representative of the profession, as we selected members from various sections of the nation and various stages in their professional careers (ranging from initial entry to retirement).

Once we felt that we had formulated a highly comprehensive list (although we do not presume that it is exhaustive), we continued the validation procedures at the level of each of the 470 entries. We were now concerned with an entry's depth – the number of editions a text might have gone through during its publication history.

To validate the accuracy of each entry, we looked up each text or workbook in the references that provides bibliographic information on publications held by the Library of Congress. For texts issued before 1956, we searched the *National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints*, which contains copies of actual author cards found in library card catalogues. These entries provided standard bibliographic data, such as author, publication date, complete title, edition number, city of publication, and publisher. For texts issued since 1956, we searched various editions of *Library of Congress Catalog Books: Subjects*, spanning the years

from 1950 to 1987. For this validation procedure, we searched both the "Reading" category and the "Methods of Study" category, along with the numerous subcategories within each main category. Finally, we searched *Books in Print: Subjects* and the *Cumulative Books Index (Books in English)* to verify listings of more current texts.

As necessary, we searched *The National Union Catalog Author List*, which contains listings of texts by authors' names. Here again we were able to verify bibliographic data. The verification activities, while time consuming, were required as we utilized secondary sources along with primary sources in the development of the list.

While this overall process was one of verification, we did find more than 100 titles that appeared to be likely additions to the list. These sources were subjected to the procedures previously described in this paper, and those texts found to be germane to the list were then added.

Uses of the list

We believe that the list will be a valuable tool for individuals undertaking any of a number of research endeavors or curriculum projects. With the help of this comprehensive secondary source, researchers can locate hundreds of primary sources. Here are several potential uses of the list.

First, researchers developing historical analyses of particular eras of college reading instruction or conducting content analyses can use the list (see Table 1) to determine the texts that were in print during the era of interest. The ability to identify such texts is of great import, for as Leedy (1958) points out in his seminal historical treatise of the field, "The tenor of an age is usually indicated by the books which that age produces. They objectify the thinking and

voice the interests of the time" (p. 237). Such an axiom is true for society as a whole and is equally valid for the literature of an academic specialty.

Furthermore, by using information drawn from the list, a researcher might observe trends in publication suggesting delimitations for historical eras or confirming the existence of eras postulated previously from the study of program descriptions, national and regional surveys, applied research, and even basic research with college students (e.g. eye movement studies). Hence, as an example, let us examine representative texts from a historical era. Table 1 presents a chronological listing of 18 texts issued throughout the decade of the 1920's. Leedy (1958) describes this historical era as a period of "how to study" classes in which instruction in silent reading skills tended to serve an ancillary function. A perusal of the reference list and then the identified texts would tend to support Leedy's historical analysis of that decade. The vast majority of the texts stressed study methods. On the other hand, there is evidence that the profession's newly developed interest in silent reading skills (rate and comprehension) was starting to find a place in texts issued for the college reading market (Cole, Pressey, and Ferguson, 1928).

The list's breadth permits the writer not only to identify texts of broad national impact issued by the large publishing houses but also to locate the often overlooked texts issued in lesser numbers by small presses and academic presses.

Second, the list will help researchers to conduct both theoretically-driven and research-driven cross-generational content analyses. Through such research, one can determine whether there has been an interaction between basic research, applied research, and instructional methodology.

Table 1
College Reading-Study Skills Texts
Issued In the 1920's

<u>Date</u>	<u>Author. Title. City. Press</u>
1922	Sanford, F. <i>How to study--illustrated through physics</i> . New York: Macmillan.
1922	Thomas, F.W. <i>Training for effective study</i> . Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
1922	Wiley, J.A. <i>Practice exercises in supervised study and assimilative reading: A guide for directing the formation of efficient study habits</i> . Cedar Falls IA: Author.
1923	May, M.A. <i>How to study in college</i> . Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press.
1924	Dow, E.W. <i>Principles of a note-system for historical studies</i> . New York: Century.
1924	Kornhauser, A.W. <i>How to study: Suggestions for high-school and college students</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1924	Lyman, R.L. <i>The mind at work in studying, thinking and reading: A source book and discussion manual</i> . Chicago: Scott, Foresman.
1925	Edwards, A.S. <i>The fundamental principles of learning and study</i> . Baltimore: Warwick & York.
1925	Hagboldt, P.H. <i>How to study modern languages in college</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1926	Book, W.F. <i>Learning how to study and work effectively: A contribution to the psychology of personal efficiency</i> . Boston: Ginn & Co.
1926	Crawford, C.C. <i>The methods of study</i> . Moscow ID: Author.
1926	Doermann, H.J. <i>The orientation of college freshmen</i> . Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co.
1927	Book, W.F. <i>How to succeed in college</i> . Baltimore: Warwick & York.
1928	Cole, L., Pressey, S.L., & Ferguson, J.M. <i>A manual of reading exercises for freshmen</i> . Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press.
1928	Crawford, C.C. <i>The technique of study: A textbook for use with upper secondary and lower division college students</i> . Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
1928	Wiley, J.A. <i>Practice exercises in silent reading and study</i> . Cedar Falls IA: Author.
1928	Yoakam, G.A. <i>Reading and study</i> . New York: Macmillan.

In other words, are research findings eventually translated into instructional methods found within texts, or are the texts slaves to tradition? We surmise from our previous analyses of the content of college reading-learning instruction books (Brozo and Johns, 1986; Stahl, Brozo, and Simpson, 1987; Stahl, Simpson, and Brozo, 1988) that there exists a unique interaction of the holding power of tradition with the desire to include research-driven instructional methods and student strategies (although often with a lag time of five to ten years) as authors develop the content of texts and workbooks.

Still, there is a continuing need for other researchers to analyze the content of the texts on the list in light of the summaries of reading research issued during corresponding years within various historical eras of reading pedagogy (Smith, 1965) or college reading (Leedy, 1958). The list also permits the researcher to examine both the breadth of publications for an era and across several periods. In addition, it gives writers an opportunity to focus in-depth on the content of specific texts through several editions or on the multiple texts written by one author. For instance, if one were to use the reference list to review the works of Francis Robinson (1941, 1946, 1961, 1962, 1970), it becomes clear that the SQ3R technique did not initially emerge in his 1941 text as is often referenced. Rather, it first came to print in 1946 and specific recommendations for its use evolved over the remainder of Robinson's career.

Third, the list can be used as an aid for the in-depth review of literature that should accompany research reports (particularly technical reports that have yet to be boiled down to research articles) and the literature review section of a thesis or dissertation. Such literature reviews are generally creditable in their discussion of the research bases of

"hidden treasures" was omitted or that a particular edition of an included text was not listed. Nevertheless, the list, as it now stands, is the most extensive reference of its nature yet compiled. It should prove to be a useful secondary source for researchers and practitioners alike.

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Norman A. Stahl is a faculty member at Northern Illinois University, in DeKalb, Illinois; Cynthia Hynd is a faculty member in the Division of Developmental Studies at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia; William G. Brozo is a faculty member in the Department of Teacher Education at Eastern Michigan State University, in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Requests for further information about the research described in this article should be accompanied by a SASE and sent to Dr. Norman A. Stahl, Graham Hall, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois 60115.

THEMED ISSUE ON READING RECOVERY: CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

In the spring of 1991 *Reading Horizons* will offer a special issue on the theme of Reading Recovery. Contributions in the form of case studies, commentaries, and articles about all aspects of the Reading Recovery program are welcomed. All manuscripts will be evaluated anonymously, following *Reading Horizons* standard review procedures. (See Call for Manuscripts on page 58 in this issue.) Prospective contributors may, but are not required to, send a letter of inquiry describing their proposed article to Dr. Jeanne M. Jacobson, Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Reading Center and Clinic, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply.

The co-editor for the themed issue will be Dr. Jim Burns of Western Michigan University. Manuscripts submitted for this issue should be postmarked no later than December 15, 1990.