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# LiteracyStudies@OSU as Theory and Practice

### Introduction

*Question:* What happens when you cross a 50-some-year old social historian who is a recognized authority on the history of literacy and who has long pursued interdisciplinary programs and their development, with a faculty position as Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies (and Professor of English and History), a huge Department of English, an Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities, and a mega-university in the middle of Ohio in the early twenty-first?

*Answer:* You get LiteracyStudies@OSU, a campus-wide interdisciplinary initiative and an experiment in university-wide interdisciplinarity. You get a series of remarkable transformations, challenging relationships, and complicated questions. And a potentially unique case study in the sociology of interdisciplinary knowledge and organization, with some general lessons to draw. All in a few years beginning in 2004.

When I decided to accept the position of the inaugural Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies at The Ohio State University in 2004, I had in mind an experiment—something very different for OSU and almost everywhere else; something very different for me: building and crafting a unique, university-wide, integrated interdisciplinary program.

The story of LiteracyStudies@OSU raises many issues and questions, and matters of both theory and practice. Among the key elements:

- The question of interdisciplinarity
- The question of literacy studies, and their relationships.<sup>1</sup> [note similarities]

- The complicated opportunities and contradictions of OSU
- The problem(s) related to LS@OSU as an experiment personally and professionally, institutionally, pedagogically

### **The Road to Ohio State**

I was not attracted initially to a position at Ohio State. The OSU English Department's interest came as a surprise. The notion of a position in literacy studies in a very large English Department in a huge university in the Ohio heartland did not appeal to me. Although I had long taught graduate courses in different departments and colleges on the history of literacy (and had only the year before taught a graduate seminar on the history of growing up in the English doctoral program at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and a graduate seminar on the history of literacy the previous year, in the doctoral program in Bilingual and Bicultural Studies), and presented lectures when invited, I was not planning new research on literacy. I had more or less left active primary source-based studies of literacy.<sup>2</sup> For some time, my focus had shifted to the history of children, adolescents, and youth—the history of growing up—and the history of cities and urban culture. As my experimental history of Dallas, Texas neared completion, I was considering beginning a new research project on the social history of interdisciplinarity.<sup>3</sup>

Based in part on a visit to OSU for a conference in 1978, I had reservations about the university as a home for my scholarly work. In addition, I could not imagine myself or Vicki Graff finding Columbus sufficiently urban to transplant ourselves into wintery central Ohio, leaving lovely, multicultural and gastronomic San Antonio.

As I prepared for what would be the first of six visits before I moved to Columbus in August, 2004, I explored the stack of items sent to me and the university's website. The size of OSU—about 55,000 students—was not an attraction. It ran counter to my educational values and presumptions about teaching and learning. The eighteen colleges seemed poorly connected, even those representing parts of the federated fragments of a traditional college of arts and sciences. The number, size, and reach of interdisciplinary programs were relatively small. I had my first inkling of a phenomenon called “silos”—apparently autonomous large disciplinary departments, nestled into seemingly separate colleges comprised of disciplinary departments.<sup>4</sup> Not only were the arts and sciences separated into different units, but so too were the biological, physical, and social sciences. This seemed to run contrary to the prerequisites for building

communication, cohesion, and integration, let alone the interdisciplinarity for which I searched.<sup>5</sup>

But as I continued to explore, I received two positive stimuli. One was the quality of the faculty in many departments, including a number of people who I knew. The second I found in the university's mission statements: After skimming through an unexceptional Academic Plan, I found an Affirmative Action plan that seemed to have both originality and force. Then I discovered that, unlike the situation in most states, OSU, Ohio's land grant institution, was the state's Research I and its Comprehensive university. That was interesting. And more than interesting was the seriousness with which OSU embraced its mission toward Outreach and Engagement. Rhetoric and reality could clash, of course. A substantial number of units were dedicated at least in part to bridging some of the gaps between research and teaching, and contributing to the welfare of the citizens of Ohio and elsewhere. There were dangers of course. They included parochialism, and reducing the focus solely to the state economy or narrowly defined corporate development. At the same time, there were real possibilities.

My initial sense of possibilities deepened with my recognition of widespread interest in my work. This was evident not only in English, the location of the state-funded Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies position and one obvious base for development, and my own discipline of history, but broadly across the humanities, education, and social sciences. Not surprisingly, there was broad interest in and concern about "literacy"—often ill- or undefined—in many units of the huge university including the professional schools. That interest sometimes included my scholarly work in the history of children and youth, and in urban history.

Across several visits, I probed the definition and expectations for the position itself and the possibilities for expansive development of what I called "literacy studies." I was aware of the need to "name" the field. While not a rare descriptor, "literacy studies" has not achieved even rhetorical hegemony. It is a peripatetic field, unstable and in flux. Across universities, when it or a synonymous descriptor is identified, literacy studies' location ranges from Education—sometimes a department, more often a program—to English. It is often but not always associated with composition, rhetoric, and/or writing programs whose own locations vary.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, it was important to differentiate those who studied literacy—comparatively, critically, historically—from those who taught reading and writing in any media. The power of *explicit*

identity/identification, location, and relationships, I recognized, was inseparable from naming.

I also probed the probable life of a historian in a department of English. No matter how many different ways I asked, the consistent answer was that the definition and scope of the position rested firstly with the incumbent—a rare opportunity and a great challenge. That openness was a major factor in my decision to relocate to an English department in Ohio. It has been mostly true, more or less. But that does not resolve all questions of identity, location, and relationships, which can get very difficult.

In subsequent visits, I learned about the breadth and depth—and conflicts—of interests in literacy and interdisciplinarity across OSU. Conflicts ranged from different definitions or lack of definitions of literacy to different approaches and politics of literacy and “ownership” issues. From the time I set foot in Columbus in January, 2004, I encountered a number of surprises, many of them the roots of possibilities for academic development including locations, relationships, spaces—and some warnings for the future—and others for life in the city.

Good fortune brought OSU’s exceptional Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities early to my attention. The Institute’s medievalist director, Chris Zacher, took on the task of showing me urban Columbus. This instructive tour began with Chris informing me that his daughter, then a doctoral student in Education at UC-Berkeley, was a big fan of my work.<sup>7</sup> The tour ended at his own house, close to the OSU campus, with him telling me that the house next door was for sale. It might even be big enough for my books. We laughed. Four months later we bought the house next door (7 blocks from my office) and eight months later. *LiteracyStudies@OSU* began as a working group of the Institute (with additional support from the College of Humanities and Department of English). In recognition of my belief that the humanities should hold a central place in the university and of the encouragement of interdisciplinary and collaborative work that the Institute fosters, it has remained our OSU home.

### **Before Ohio State: Searching for Interdisciplinarity**

My decision to seize the rare opportunity offered by the Ohio Eminent Scholar position was based on many professional and personal considerations, rooted in my intellectual biography and pedagogical goals, and shaped, refined, or redefined by my prior experiences as a student and as a professor. To simplify a long, complicated personal narrative, they

pivot around my coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s, belief in the relevance of critical new historical scholarship to the present and future, pursuit of interdisciplinarity, and connections among these elements. My introduction as an undergraduate history and sociology student at Northwestern University, followed by graduate training in the then “new social history,” one of the conceptually, methodologically, and topically “new histories” that stimulated strong responses positively and negatively in the period, led to a long-term commitment to interdisciplinary research, teaching, and writing.<sup>8</sup> Contemporary efforts to probe the past in new ways to better understand and confront the problems of the present left a lasting impression.<sup>9</sup>

As I have written elsewhere,

Within a global context, social upheavals at home stimulated interests in new histories and social science history. “The political conflict of the 1960s created new historiographic energies and directions,” Ross emphasizes. The civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, women’s and youth movements, and changes in higher education shattered the “American moment” and its faith in the virtues of consensus. The post-World War II democratization of higher education opened the historical profession to men and increasingly women, making it more representative of American society. From the New Left, the profession gained a wider range of radical views, that embraced liberal democratic, populist, Marxist, feminist, and contemporary radical traditions. “It produced a socio-cultural history that focused on the ‘inarticulate,’ the working class, racial minorities, and women, those who had been marginalized in American history and left out of its historiography.”

Personal experience and professional training and development reciprocally shaped and reshaped each other.<sup>10</sup>

Retrospectively, neither my research and teaching concentrations on literacy, children and youth, and cities is surprising, given the concerns of the times. Nor are my persistent efforts in research and teaching and also in program development to develop new interdisciplinary approaches to their study and teaching. Both a cause and consequence of my graduate studies, these currents not only influenced the subjects I examined, the methods and theories to which I turned, and the critiques to which I contributed. They also contributed to the programs I worked to develop and also the universities in which I spent many years, teaching courses under different disciplinary, departmental, degree, and interdisciplinary rubrics (including History, English, Education, Humanities, Social Sciences, Urban and Policy Studies, Bilingual and Bicultural Studies, Comparative Studies, among others). The paths I traveled from home to university and then to graduate studies and several professorships may seem incongruous or curious. But retrospectively, I see patterns

in the practice. The study, teaching, and promotion of interdisciplinary history unite them.

My interest in the history of literacy began in graduate school where I was trained in the new social and social-science influenced history and studied the history of education, urban history, and social history.<sup>11</sup> My focus on literacy also reflected the powerful criticisms of schools and hopes for reform of the era. Major voices included Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, Paul Goodman, Jonathan Kozol, and Herbert Kohl, among others.

My initial intention in selecting the University of Toronto for doctoral work was to concentrate in modern British history. Undergraduate research had led to an interest in the anti-socialist response to the first Labour Party government in 1924. I imagined fashioning a new approach rooted in social psychology and sociology.<sup>12</sup>

A variety of factors led to a major shift in focus. Partly pushed and partly pulled by intellectual and social currents, I turned to the exciting combination of the history of education and the new social history, dividing my program of study between the Department of History and Philosophy of Education where Michael B. Katz was leading foundational work in Canadian and American urban and social history, and the Department of History where historians of the U.S., Canada, and Europe all stimulated my interests and influenced my approach and understanding, together leading me to the “new” social and cultural histories, social science history, quantitative history, history of population and social structure, history of families and children, history of literacy and education, among the exciting threads of the moment. They also aligned my interests with issues of theory and method across the humanities and the social sciences.<sup>13</sup>

My first paper on literacy—exploring the usefulness of the Canadian census of 1861—was written in Katz’s course on urban social structure which required a quantitative project derived from his developing database. That paper led to an M.A. thesis, and in time a dissertation and first book set in a comparative, trans-Atlantic framework and an original effort to explore and expose what I called *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century*, the disjunction between the rhetoric of literacy’s importance in a modernizing world and the reality of its impact for individuals. Important matters of theory and practice, past and present, and their intersections came together in this study.<sup>14</sup>

The mid-1970s were a grim period for graduate students seeking tenure-track positions in North American universities. That I was seeking

a nontraditional, interdisciplinary job for a fledgling social, urban, and educational historian was both a help and a hindrance, the fate of my job applications and interviews confirmed. Interdisciplinarily, I applied for positions in history, education, sociology, social science, humanities. This was also a time at which U.S. citizens were no longer the object of desire as professors for Canadian universities, as they had been for more than a decade earlier. One clear option was blocked.

In these circumstances, the nondepartmental College of Arts and Humanities at the newly expanding University of Texas at Dallas, situated in Richardson, the first suburb north of the city of Dallas, was attractive. Although I was hired following an interview in a Toronto airport hotel, never having seen Dallas or Texas, its intellectual and pedagogical prospects appeared almost unlimited. At least, that's what sold me on the adventure.

UT-Dallas grew from an unrealized Graduate Center for Advanced Study in the Southwest.<sup>15</sup> This project of regional development owed much to the efforts of Dallas-area high tech interests like Texas Instruments. When SCAS became UTD in the late 1960s, it was predominantly a graduate university in the sciences with emphasis on geoscience, computer science and electrical engineering, space science, and biology. Charter documents with the State of Texas mandated expansion into an upper-division and graduate institution in 1975. I was one of about 120 new, largely junior faculty who came together with the explicit command that we make a university, with interdisciplinarity held out as an exemplar and undefined guiding light. This was an impressive, very talented group. We founded novel programs but our achievements were limited and contradictory.

In retrospect, it is clear that interdisciplinarity was more a rhetorical mantra than a plan. In practice, it signified the absence of disciplinary departments (except in the sciences where disciplines functioned like departments with budgets, faculty governance, etc., without their formal existence). Interdisciplinary also meant that undergraduates had to complete one or sometimes two courses (with at least one outside their major area) drawn from a rather ungainly roster of courses called Interdisciplinary Studies or IS courses. Often, proposing a course was simply a question of listing or naming two disciplines. There were few designated interdisciplinary programs.

At first, interest in interdisciplinarity influenced hiring, up to a point. The match between faculty expertise and student interest was uneven. For example, there were more musicologists and literary theorists than

there were undergraduates who knew what those words meant. Interdisciplinarity also influenced the organization of faculty (if not necessarily the organization of studies and programs). As a “new social historian” with training in the social sciences as well as the humanities, I was hired and budgeted in the School of Arts and Humanities but for the founding year, I was housed in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. One historian of science officed in the School of Natural Science and Mathematics. A political theorist resided with Arts and Humanities. Anthropologists, linguists, and musicologists were also housed by research interests or approaches. Some of us, at least, found these relationships to be stimulating. There was a risk, however, of lessened contact with colleagues in major areas. After one year, all faculty were ordered back to their primary units, a matter of administrative and budgetary order, those of us who inquired were told.<sup>16</sup> This diminution of even symbolic commitment to interdisciplinarity difference was a sign of directions to come.

Despite UTD’s avowed difference, most undergraduate concentrations or programs awarded degrees in disciplines like history or English, philosophy, economics, or political science. Undergraduates, who were primarily commuting students from the area, it was clear, were neither attracted to claims of interdisciplinarity nor often understood their differences or value.

There is reason to believe that both lack of departments (which over time troubled more faculty who saw it as a lack of something important that “real” universities had) and a rhetoric of inter- or perhaps non-disciplinarity were, on the one hand, part of economies of scale. On the other hand, they were useful for gaining approval of new programs at the state level and in appearing to reduce competition with other North Texas public universities.<sup>17</sup>

Interdisciplinarity also functioned as compensatory and as a narrative of sorts. It took the place of history and tradition in a new university, providing a thin narrative line in their place. It linked the institution to the present and future of higher education and the needs it would meet. In a new university that grew awkwardly from a graduate center in the sciences to an upper division and later a full university, interdisciplinarity also functioned to provide the appearance of covering more intellectual and pedagogical ground substantively. In theory, it took the place of more disciplines, disciplinary departments, and more faculty generally. In other words, there is an economics as well as a politics of interdisciplinarity. This was part of the construction of difference at UTD and



other institutions that proclaimed a significant stance on distinctiveness via interdisciplinarity.

The use and abuse of interdisciplinarity, or of the language of interdisciplinarity, had economic and political uses even when lacking in intellectual or educational ones. This was a huge lesson that I learned repeatedly but assimilated slowly. It would be some years before I was able to act directly on that learning. UTD's failings as well as its successes taught me a great deal.

At the level of graduate programs, matters seemed to differ. In the arts, humanities, and social sciences, there was what appeared to be one unifying Ph.D. program per college. Regardless of the disconnect with the tracks of the undergraduate majors, the School of Arts and Humanities offered M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Humanities (at some stages, a name change was proposed as Arts and Humanities but never enacted).<sup>18</sup> The School of Social and Behavioral Science's graduate program was Political Economy. The School of General Education offered a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, indistinguishable from a liberal studies degree.

The Humanities graduate program was built explicitly on three areas of possible concentration: historical studies (originally history of ideas), literary studies (originally comparative literature), and aesthetic studies. The changes in the areas' names suggest the program's direction. Paralleling the generalizing and simplifying shifts in basic definitions of each area and contrasting (conflicting?) with the programmatic rhetoric on the institutional walls, many students and faculty saw these areas as little more than *not* too novel, different, or unconventional paths to more traditional ends: to programs of studies that resembled history, literature, *or* aesthetics. For many faculty and students—separately and together—that was a useful appropriation of the interdisciplinary.

Its legitimacy—if that is a fair word—is harder to assess. Difference had its uses, including its appeal as a qualification for teaching positions in community colleges. But for many reasons, difference also had its limits, including conflicts among the faculty over definitions of interdisciplinarity, student preparation, and faculty breadth and intellectual preparation for crossing major boundaries, melding approaches from distinct areas of knowledge, and commitment to intellectual and professional change.

Requirements that students work in at least two of the three major areas—whether history and literature or literature and aesthetics—were compatible with orientations that were more narrow or circumscribed

than interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary are usually construed. Over time, interdisciplinarity and difference were increasingly distant objectives, other than for promotional value that included the self-promotion of some faculty, their areas, and *their* version of interdisciplinarity. Graduate student recruitment was a related goal. A series of new deans promised review, rededication, and restructuring but little of that took place or was successful. Each claimed to stabilize or redress the imbalances or excesses under their predecessors. With time, even the rhetoric of boundary crossing grew fainter.

Both underlying problems and limits to plans and action became clearer over time, some easier to resolve as a consequence but others no less difficult. Tales of battles past became a lesser part of the present. Faculty, of course, like to blame administrators (and *other* faculty) and administrators like to blame faculty (and *other* administrators) for program failures. Both are correct, up to a point. At UT-Dallas both were responsible for the limits and conflicts over interdisciplinary program development and commensurate support for research.

On the part of administrators—from college deans to VPAA and Provost—there was a lack of creativity, leadership, and material resources; an emphasis on similarity among programs; and an effort to control. Together, they probably constituted an insurmountable obstacle. But that does not absolve the faculty.

While often branded as acquiescent, faculty conflicted on multiple levels and in multiple ways over interdisciplinarity. There were problems of omission and those of commission, conception and execution. Some among the less helpful issues pertained to the boundaries of interdisciplinarity in the arts and humanities: *within* the humanities and/or *within* the arts; *across* the arts *and* the humanities, or *beyond* them, say, to the sciences and social sciences? The sense of a *bounded* interdisciplinary contradicts the spirit and practice of interdisciplinarity itself, however defined, unless, that is, it is defined by a fixed set of disciplines.

Failure to agree over definitions of interdisciplinarity is unavoidable given the long history of competing notions and ambiguous formulations from multi- to cross-, pluri-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary.<sup>19</sup> So too are squabbles over “how many disciplines does it take to be interdisciplinary” or “how hard it is” to be “truly interdisciplinary.”<sup>20</sup> Those questions might function best as first steps rather than final ones. Exaggerated claims for difference and distinctiveness became another sign of a programmatic failure to develop and mature.

These difficulties do not fully explain the levels of conflict, which can go well beyond professional interests and descend into personal rivalry, self-promotion, and insult. Beginning with “I’m more interdisciplinary than you are,” this carries into praise for one’s “own unique” abilities especially when compared to the intellectual limits, narrowness, and parochialism of others. Not surprisingly, this level of hyper praise and criticism often exacerbates divisions among the faculty in the form of those in favor of (their version of) interdisciplinarity versus those opposed. Both positions are open to caricature, whether it involves the visionaries versus the old guard, or the grounded and solid versus the cavalier or fantastic. The controversy may then lose sight of intellectual and programmatic matters and degenerate into rival gangs warring over turf constructed by programs and student bodies. Too often students become the unfortunate pawns in the games of their seniors. The excesses of the “pro’s” become grist for the mills of the “anti’s.” These tendencies reflect academia at its worse and can do irreparable damage to the mutual respect and collegial trust that interdisciplinary programs in particular require. They can give interdisciplinarity (much less often, disciplinarity) a bad name.<sup>21</sup> This is the stuff of professional narratives told best, I think, in the prose of academic novelists like Kingsly Amis, David Lodge, and Randall Jarrell.

For more than twenty years, from untenured assistant professor to tenured full professor, I labored in these groves of academe, trying to make interdisciplinary degree programs more successful especially at the graduate level, but also in the designated undergraduate courses. In part, this involved working toward greater truth in the advertising of the Humanities program and IS courses, and in part, designing possible additional programs in public history and public humanities. For many of those years, for better and for worse, I remained convinced that meeting my own goals as an interdisciplinary scholar meant working in a nontraditional, nondepartmental, avowedly if not fundamentally interdisciplinary institutional environment.

Any effort at reconciliation must be mixed. I took advantage of even limited interdisciplinarity in my teaching and research, in pioneering courses in *Growing Up in America Past and Present*, *Reading and Writing the City*, *Dallas: The Course*, and in required undergraduate and graduate interdisciplinary core courses, and books like *The Literacy Myth* and *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America*. Although I continued to write about literacy well into the 1980s, I taught related courses more often as a visiting professor in Canada than at home in Dallas. I also benefited

enormously from a re-education in the arts and humanities. Along the way, I became recognized across the humanities, social sciences, and education, that is, in a variety of disciplines and interdisciplines. As a result, I was honored as the president of the Social Science History Association in 1999-2000, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, and awarded a Doctor of Philosophy *honoris causa* by the University of Linköping, Sweden, in 2001.

I may have erred in some of my judgments about institutional environments. I will explore that later. But my experience at UT-Dallas, retrospectively, taught me a great deal. Particularly important was that the institutional and programmatic uses and abuses of interdisciplinarity unwittingly separated and segregated interdisciplinarity, however defined, instead of working to integrate it. In addition, the organization of colleges, disciplines, and major areas contributed to too great a separation of the arts and humanities, sciences, and social sciences from each other. No less importantly, interdisciplinarity too often meant nondisciplinary, undisciplinary, or a (pseudo)romantic predisciplinarity or even an anti-disciplinarity rather than a rigorously disciplined inter- or even multi-disciplinarity. What emerged as an informal sense of the history of the program was more destructive than constructive, another dimension of the experience that bears reflection.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the long years in Dallas, when it came time to relocate in pursuit of interdisciplinarity, it was to another Texas public institution, a few hundred miles down the road. In 1998, I accepted the position of Director of the Division of Behavioral and Cultural Sciences at the nondepartmental University of Texas at San Antonio, an institution in some ways very much like UT-Dallas and in other ways very different. Similarities included the rhetorical embrace and promotion of interdisciplinarity as well as recent founding as upper division universities. Differences grew from more humble origins and lesser pretensions in San Antonio and the absence of graduate programs in its first decades.

UTSA's lack of disciplinary departments, mixes of disciplines within divisions (within larger colleges), and supposed commitment to fuller interdisciplinary development, and the apparent quality of the faculty—and the city itself—were among the major reasons I accepted the position. The division director's position was more or less in between that of a dean and a department chair. My division, called BCS, included American studies, anthropology, history, and psychology. I was also attracted by the interest in my participation in new doctoral programs in

Bilingual and Bicultural Studies (literacy); English (literacy and children and youth), and Public Policy (urban studies).

I presumed—wrongly as it turned out—that from this position I could lead interdisciplinary program development and bring faculty together. It seemed that my own interdisciplinary experience and expertise, and scholarly stature were considered assets by both faculty and administration. But that proved to be truer in theory than in practice. I was also led to believe that relationships among these programs (which awarded degrees but lacked administrative independence) and their faculty were congenial. They were not. No more accurate was my impression that these programs had a real interest in working with each other and with other programs outside the Division. Should I have known better?

To make a story of six years short, when it became clear that the position in practice bore little resemblance to the one I thought I had accepted, I resigned after 15 months. I quickly learned that there was little to no trust among faculty in different disciplines. Competition was rife and inseparable from fears that one program might get some resource that others lacked. Never had I seen such extreme jealousies acted out professionally and personally. Or so little good will toward colleagues. It did not help that the new director—me—was a historian whereas my predecessor for many years had been a psychologist. It was expected, perhaps not surprisingly, that favors and advantages flowed to the director's disciplinary fellows. That was not my *modus operandi*, disappointing some historians. But to the non-historians, it really did not matter: a director from a different discipline was not a good thing.

In retrospect, I am struck more by how many of the signs that I initially read as supportive of interdisciplinary and nontraditional development proved to be just the opposite. This ranged from a relative lack of separating structures, need for cooperation based in part in limited resources, relative equality among programs (perceptions could vary more than realities), division-wide committee and governance structure, close physical proximity that promoted conversations among faculty and sometimes M.A. students, centralized services, relatively young and talented faculty. Much of which I had seen as potential advantages were, to others, not. That university leadership was unsettled during this period did not help.

Had I read into these signs what I was looking for? Or were the relationships between programs, faculty, organization and structures, and opportunities more complicated. No doubt. But I did not fabricate an emphasis (rhetorically, at least) on interdisciplinarity and development,

or interest in what I brought to the institution. Clearly, I wanted another opportunity to put into practice an interdisciplinarity more broadly based and successful than was the case at UT-Dallas.

Regardless, the faculty desired disciplinary autonomy, at almost any cost, not integration. Divisions were yokes of administrative imprisonment and collegial constraint. “Reorganization,” that academic catch-all of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, at UTSA meant disciplinary departments no matter how small or underresourced. It did not mean interdisciplinarity. “Real” universities had departments, after all; a maturing university must replace cross- or multi-disciplinary units with separate disciplinary departments, ideally with as many as possible also offering Ph.D. degrees, regardless of larger, national or international trends or employment prospects for graduates.

Within a few years of my leaving the administrative office, disciplinary departments—often small and without adequate resources—rapidly became the norm. They quested after disciplinary graduate and doctoral programs. To differing degrees, both Texas public universities shared a lack of leadership and lacked the self-confidence required to be different. The reorganization of programs and colleges reduced the possibilities. They also lacked both faculty and administrative support and resources. Not for the first time, I wondered about my objectives and courses of action....

### **OSU Calling: Between Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies**

When Ohio State contacted me in fall 2004, I was teaching in the new Department of History and in the graduate programs in English, Bilingual and Bicultural Studies, and Public Policy. Viewing what I saw as good for the department vis-à-vis the university, one senior colleague in history urged that I devote more time to committee work in the Department of History and less to interdisciplinary work beyond its boundaries.

Perhaps it was time for another, but a different change? That was not immediately clear when Ohio State’s Department of English invited me to consider their new position. Nor was a return to literacy. I was ready for a change but never anticipated Ohio, Columbus, OSU, or literacy studies. Children and youth or urban studies seemed more likely. In recent years, I had considered moving to education and communication programs. I also liked to quip, not completely facetiously, that I had learned much more about what *not* to do in terms of interdisciplinary program development than what to do. But I may have been wrong about

that, too. In retrospect, I now see that I had also learned a great deal from successful experiences working collaboratively, often connecting institutions, fields of expertise, approaches, audiences, and programming in what I call public history and public humanities. This included the Dallas Public Library, Dallas Historical Society, North Texas Phi Beta Kappa-Dallas Public Library lecture series on The City, City of Dallas historic landmarks, and related graduate and undergraduate courses. My return to the Midwest, perhaps, was foreshadowed by three years (2001-2004) of exciting work as principal advisor to the Chicago Historical Society's path-breaking Teen Chicago project. This work helped to shape the horizons—scale and scope—of my thinking about different kinds of programs for literacy studies at OSU.<sup>22</sup>

When I began seriously to consider moving to the Midwest, Ohio State University, and literacy studies, a sense of both difference and campus-wide experiment shaped my thinking, through a broad lens of interdisciplinarity. Moving to OSU in 2004 was a time for something new and different, including the sometime tensions and discomfits of being a social historian in an oversized English department in a huge university. I wanted to build a unique programs, test some theories about campus-wide and interdisciplinary program development, and answer questions that stemmed from my education, experience at other universities, and larger intellectual concerns, matters of theory and practice. Among them: can campus-wide interdisciplinarity be created and sustained? What are its limits, locations, connections, relationships? What would it look like? What were the relationships between the parts and the whole? Between professional schools and critical scholarship? My objectives did not include such common paths as launching a degree program or building a research center.

Much was attractive: clear interest in me (OSU had done its homework); freedom of my opportunity; welcoming constructive spirit; the quality of faculty colleagues; our friends and acquaintances at OSU; widespread interest in literacy; formal and informal support; a sense of a university in transition, a comprehensive *and* a research university; resources (within limits). My position gave me the gift of time (which I have overspent) to found and develop LiteracyStudies@OSU.

### **Constructing LiteracyStudies@OSU: Locations, Relationships, Integration**

Being a historian in OSU's unusually diverse and large Department of English created a sense of difference, even liminality, that was mainly

positive and constructive: Unlike my experience developing programs in other, avowedly non-traditional universities, both administrators and colleagues were very supportive (if not always very interested). Pursuit of difference was influenced strikingly by the simple fact—with complicated ramifications—that my professorship was separate from my home discipline. Although my cross-appointment in History was very important to me, the Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies resided and was budgeted (along with most of the institutional funding for literacy studies) in the Department of English. I did not immediately realize the value of this liminal situation. The composition, concerns, core issues, organization, and conversations differed from those in history more than I had imagined. Although I was certainly welcomed, I felt a dissonance, distance, difference, separation, almost alienation. Not always but often, the tensions were creative; stimulating; suggestive of strategies, objectives, discourse, comparisons, constructive and not.

Location outside my primary or home discipline was very useful. Here was one missing piece in my continuing path. Among the messages sent by my prospective new colleagues: “if you come, you will change us. But you might change as well.” How true. Individual as well as collective reciprocity and reflexivity, of oneself and others, was another piece. They were different with colleagues who did not share my disciplinary orientation or baggage. Both conflict and complementarity were different. The uses of location as well as integrative relationships were complicated but critical.<sup>23</sup>

Although I had no way to know this: I needed to be outside my primary discipline but still be part of or anchored in a stable and substantial disciplinary base. To some extent I needed disciplinary structures to move among, between, and against. One of interdisciplinarity’s canonical questions has been: Can you have interdisciplinarity without disciplines? My response: Probably not. But that does not signify a simple, additive, or serial relationship along the lines of “take two or more disciplines and mix” or “mastering” at least two more or disciplines in order *to be interdisciplinary*. Overwhelmingly, interdisciplinarity tends to be driven by topics, problems, and questions that stimulate a search for answers that cross the usual boundaries between disciplines (which are themselves often in flux). In my view, interdisciplinarity mandates crossing significant boundaries or making clear connections across disciplinary areas.<sup>24</sup>

Regardless of whether interdisciplinarity requires disciplines, the normative language of disciplines and much of the vernacular of inter-



disciplines may confuse the understanding of interdisciplinarity. The locations, boundaries, and relationships of interdisciplines differ. We must consider interdisciplinarity and interdisciplines differently from disciplinarity and disciplines, despite their varying connections. For me to develop literacy studies, I needed to leave my home discipline of history to construct interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary programs. I needed the freedom and the creative tension.<sup>25</sup> This was among the most valuable and powerful lessons I learned.

Contemplating working at OSU also led me to ponder what I call “the dialectics of size.” Size interacts complexly with liminality. At approximately 55,000 students and countless faculty and staff, OSU is simply *too* big. Largeness is obstructive. It gets in the way, raising endless complications of organization, communication, and authority. Divided into 18 colleges of widely differing size combined with poor communication, cultures of separation not integration dominate the landscape of OSU. Development of a program both campus-wide *and* interdisciplinary is supposed to be all but impossible.

Huge disciplinary departments that influence boundaries for both intellectual pursuits and personal connections fill OSU’s spaces. Known as “silos,” that expression represents their size as well as their separation. My home department of English has 100 tenure track faculty plus other instructors; History, my other home, has more than 70. Departmental silos combine with the many distinct colleges that organize academic life at OSU. The perception or sense of silos and separate disciplinary departments is so strong that there are few broadly based attempts to cross them.

The arts and sciences, including social sciences and humanities, are poorly connected to each other. Even less well linked with either or among themselves are the professional colleges (with the partial exception of the health sciences). For example, the arts and sciences constituted five separate colleges of the “arts and sciences” federation (re-federated as one college with three divisions in 2008-09 after a prior effort “to federate” had failed). Before 2008, there were 18 biology departments across 3 colleges (human, animal, medical, including the Colleges of Biomedical Science, Biological Sciences, and Veterinary Medicine). As of 2009, federation and refederation had not stimulated interdisciplinary development. Nor had President Gordon Gee’s rhetoric of “one university.”

The phenomenon and the folklore of silos become self-fulfilling prophecies. Possible interdisciplinary developments typically become minors or majors safely within departments and colleges. There are few

incentives to cross department or college lines. Unit budgets based on enrollments are a disincentive. Along with the usual competition and jealousies, enrollment battles spark “turf wars.” Of this LiteracyStudies was not immune. It was attacked by members of the College of Education in April 2005 after only nine months of activity. They asserted “we ‘own’ literacy.” To which the Department of English responded, to my dismay: “No you don’t. We do.” Several months later, the Office of Academic Affairs announced that literacy was a university-wide matter that no one owned, as LiteracyStudies wished. That, I strongly suspect, will not be the last chapter.

Other surprises were positive and stimulating. This included the striking interest in literacy studies by pediatric dentists, design faculty, health literacy across the health sciences, university outreach, and art education. But it also included the curious absence of social science faculty and students. Among the common consequences at OSU is that the parts seldom search for a whole. Regardless, there are important lessons here.

These circumstances follow from and contribute to a lack of communication, trust, transparency, and legibility in program development, on the one hand, and a lack of leadership, on the other hand. In the aggregate, they limit the cooperation and collaboration that might contribute to interdisciplinarity. It is hard to attract and even more difficult to retain interested students across departments and colleges without the complicity of their departments and programs and faculty advisors. This is one of the ways in which disciplinary departments retain their hegemony and, to my mind, constrain graduate education.

One unsurprising corollary is that the organization of knowledge—intellectual life, academic life—its bases in university and state history, and their expression in both ideology and everyday life—indirectly and directly, implicitly and explicitly, limit the possibilities for multi- and interdisciplinary discussion, planning, and development of teaching and research programs. Literacy Studies, I realized, needed to build its own space(s)—not only physical but also discursive and epistemological space.

There were more or less open spaces, I saw, among and between the silos. Building or occupying and maintaining spaces are enormously important, and not a little complicated. They impinge on matters of identity and identification, recognition, legibility, and logistics, as well as communication and funding.

For LiteracyStudies@OSU, a primary location has been the Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities’ Knight House, for both practical and symbolic reasons. Our office is there and most of our

programs. Attempting to meet the challenge of constructing a campus-wide initiative demands multiple locations on different levels of university structures and hierarchies, from departmental and college bases to the Arts and Sciences college(s), departments and colleges across campus and their connections (for example, in the medical center/health sciences) and the professional schools. Our status as an “initiative” rather than a college-based center or institute facilitates these variable and flexible relationships. Occupying different spaces is also a matter of building, retaining, and integrating audiences. (See Fig. 8.2.)

With respect to graduate students who occupy a central place in the LiteracyStudies initiative, we have worked hard with students from a range of disciplines and specializations to build their own spaces. The success is noteworthy: Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization (a minor); GradSem—graduate student monthly interdisciplinary seminar in literacy studies; GILSO—Graduate Interdisciplinary Literacy Studies Organization, registered university group; Expanding Literacy Studies conference; and time with visiting speakers. With respect to their opportunities taken together, integration may come in the form of connecting or “nesting” programs. In these and related ways, LiteracyStudies’ concentration on graduate students constitutes one experimental model for a transformation of academic, preprofessional education. (See Fig. 8.3.)

Sometimes relationships and locations mean a collaborative association or integration between LiteracyStudies and one college, or several, for example, in the medical and health areas where we sparked and sponsored a graduate course in health literacy that was cross-listed in most of the health science colleges and in the Arts and Sciences. In 2009-10, LiteracyStudies joined with the Moritz College of Law to organize a day-long symposium on the Report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, directed by OSU law professor Peter Shane. We also cosponsored Youth and Social Media: A Symposium with *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society*, the Justice for Children Project, and the Center for Interdisciplinary Law and Policy Studies in the law school.

Often the relationship and integration mean sharing the costs and promotion of a guest speaker. But it also includes informal talks and consultations on programs and curricula. It is our policy and practice to forge ongoing relationships including cosponsorships as broadly as possible. The variety of connections promotes our presence across campus. It also follows from our conviction that literacy is understood best when it is not separated from other subjects for which it holds importance

or relevance. It also helps our moderate resources to go farther. It also argues for constructing more and clearer connections and relationships among departments, disciplinary clusters, and colleges, and additional efforts to balance size and relationships.

At OSU, it is hard to escape the manifestations of size. But size can cut two or more ways, I learned. While it obstructs, size simultaneously creates possibilities. Among the thousands of professors and researchers, I found many of the most talented scholars I have known. I had excellent advisors and informal guides who led me to make excellent contacts and connections. Many people responded to my queries about participating in a literacy studies initiative by saying that in the ten or twenty or more years they had worked at OSU, I was the first person outside their department or even their research group to contact them. Most signified an interest in learning more. My title—Ohio Eminent Scholar—perhaps helped with the response rate but is insufficient to explain more than that. Not only did this response confirm a general interest in interdisciplinarity, and in literacy. But it underscored my growing appreciation of OSU's rich resources . . . , if one troubled to search them out. My position afforded me the opportunity to do that.

Literacy has a powerful currency often rooted in an exaggerated sense of its independent impact, what I have called "the literacy myth."<sup>26</sup> (See chapters 3-4 in this book.) Literacy has certain peculiarities as well, not the least of which is the swamp of definitions and confusions. Currency also turns on a certain faddishness with respect to proliferating literacies, for example engineering or entomological literacy. Concerns over literacy, especially in a public university, cut in different ways. There can be great tensions, even contradictions, between the critical study of literacy and separate efforts to elevate mass literacy and specialized technical "literacies" to boost economic growth and general welfare. Critical studies confront threats of appropriation rooted in expectations aimed narrowly at improving literacy in Ohio. At the same time, they also risk being branded as negative if not dismissed out of hand. Not only was I aware of potential clashes between literacy educators (for lack of a better term) and literacy studies.<sup>27</sup> But any effort to escape them requires conveying some sense of the larger value of critical scholarly research into literacy to different branches of the university and the public.

There can be threats to critical independence and also risks in taking positions critical of literacy. Within the university, literacy studies

also needs to deal with the ceaseless proliferation of new literacies and “many literacies,” at times almost a caricature of every discipline claiming its own literacy. Indeed, not only does it seem that every discipline proclaims a literacy of its own but that literacy is in a crisis. Somehow that particular literacy will also save us!

This contradictory circumstance is simultaneously a help and a hindrance in building conversations and relationships with the sciences but even more with the professions.<sup>28</sup> An eye on OSU’s twin roles as a research university and a comprehensive university helps in dealing with such conflicts and contradictions. In countless ways, it provides suggestions, if not guidelines, for constructing LiteracyStudies@OSU. That approach also demands greater attention.

### LiteracyStudies@OSU in Theory and Practice<sup>29</sup>

When the Literacy Studies Working Group of the Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities began to meet in autumn 2004, I wrote its first preamble or charge:<sup>30</sup>

We live at a challenging time with respect to both literacy and literacy studies. On the one hand, many *different* literacies are proclaimed, from cyber to health and emotional literacy, mathematical to aesthetic literacy. The potential advance that this profusion might represent, however, is lost in the confusing clash of claims and counter-claims, and the persisting sense of doom due to fears of the decline of literacy skills and the consequent defeat of civilization as we have known it. A sense of crisis and despair contradictorily accompanies the assertion of many literacies. Talking clearly, knowledgeably, and critically about literacy is an inescapable need today. As we clarify our usage and our reflections about literacy(ies), we not only hold the potential to improve our communications and abilities to collaborate but we also have a rare opportunity to reinvigorate teaching and learning.

Drafting the proposal for the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Literacy Studies, I elaborated:

Literacy, it has long been said, underlies and is part and parcel of modern society and civilization. Although that simple generalization has long influenced thinking, policy-making, and school building, literacy is no longer seen to be so powerful in and of itself. Reading and writing, along with other literacies, are now most often seen as cultural practices whose forms, functions, and influences take their shape and play their influence as part of larger contexts: social, cultural, political, economic, historical, material and ideological. The complexities of literacy as used by people in their daily lives take on greater importance as approaches, theories, and research focus more closely on the uses, abuses, and meanings of distinct literacies. The major topics now opened to debate include the “great debates” over literacy (orality v. literacy, writing v. print, illiteracy v. literacy/development/civilization/culture/progress); individual and social foundations of literacy; literacy and cognition;

literacy, schools, and families; multiple literacies, literacy and social action, uses and meanings of literacy.

With that as our mission and agenda; here was our initial plan:

We are bringing together faculty, staff, and students who are seriously interested in the definition, conceptualization, and critique of literacy and literacies; developing comparative and historical perspectives on literacy; engaging in critiques and potential reconstructions of their own positions as well as others; beginning to re-conceptualize literacy within a collegial peer environment; who recognize the twenty-first-century imperative to integrate but also to go beyond the humanities, education, and social sciences to embrace the arts, sciences, engineering, technology, law, medicine, and more.

Two years later, under the heading: *Creating a Cross-Disciplinary Model for Collaboration: LiteracyStudies@Ohio State University*, I wrote:

Developing since 2004, Literacy Studies @ OSU has been working to foster a critical, cross-campus conversation and collaborative investigation into the nature of literacy. The mission has been to bring together historical, contextual, comparative, and critical perspectives and modes of understanding, from the social and natural sciences to the arts and humanities, education, medicine, and law. Our goal has been to stimulate new institutional and intellectual relationships between different disciplinary clusters and their constituents. Literacy Studies @ OSU has grown in scope and scale of programs and activities. Literacy Studies has become a real cross-campus presence and is recognized broadly, not only across the Ohio State main campus but also nationally and even internationally. LiteracyStudies@OSU is an experiment in university-wide interdisciplinary program development.

Among the lessons I learned over many years was the importance of naming in the construction and acceptance of new programs, institutions, activities, and the like: “name it and claim it.” I did not hesitate to promote an interdisciplinary field of “literacy studies,” first as the work of the “literacy studies working group” and, then, when a more established vehicle was needed “LiteracyStudies@OSU.”

The *Literacy Studies Working Group*, formed in 2004, following my appointment as the founding Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies and Professor of English and History. With a steering group of six faculty from three colleges, we began by meeting and organizing activities with the goal of fostering a campus-wide conversation, or set of conversations, about literacy. From the beginning our work was supported by the Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities, with programming funds from the College of Humanities and assistance from

the Department of English. The founding group included faculty from Architecture, Education, English, and History. It now encompasses many OSU colleges and departments. We have achieved this with relatively modest resources.

In 2004-2005, the Literacy Studies Working Group initiated a series of public programs, along with a variety of special events and activities. The group organized the interests of faculty, staff, and student participants into several kinds of activities. We sought to develop overlapping but distinct audiences, or “publics,” primarily across campus but also beyond its boundaries. I construe our efforts to spread literacy studies widely across campus as *horizontal*. Focus on distinct groups like graduate students or department chairs, college deans, or senior administrators can be considered *vertical*.

While Ohio State University has long been an intellectual leader in literacy studies, it quickly emerged as one of the most prominent universities at which a large number of scholars actively interrogate the nature of literacy from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. During the summer of 2005, LiteracyStudies was recognized as a university-wide initiative. In 2007, a University Council on Literacy Studies charged with promoting literacy studies and enhancing communication and coordination was appointed and looks forward to its work.

During 2005-2006, the group maintained interest and enhanced participation through focused public programs and discussion groups, including the History of the Book group, which began meeting in autumn of 2005. In addition, the Working Group launched a campus-wide monthly Graduate Student Interdisciplinary Seminar in Literacy Studies and proposed a Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Literacy Studies (graduate minor). With these new programs, the range of exciting new courses and related opportunities for learning, discussion, and various activities increased rapidly. (See Figs. 8.2, 8.3, and 8.4.)

Operating with continuing annual funding, the Literacy Studies Working Group and LiteracyStudies@OSU have grown enormously in scope and scale of programs and activities. Literacy Studies became a real cross-campus presence and is recognized broadly, not only across the huge Ohio State main campus but also nationally and even internationally.

Summarizing schematically, LiteracyStudies@OSU’s principal objectives are:

**Figure 8.1**  
**LiteracyStudies@OSU Principal Objectives**

- 
- Understanding literacy in its specific historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts
  - Comprehending the uses, abuses, complexity, and contradictions of literacy as a social practice
  - Exploring literacy's place in cognition and communication
  - Developing critical approaches to common assumptions about the importance, power, and centrality of literacy
  - Practicing the application of that critical perspective
  - Evaluation, critiquing, and redeveloping communication and understanding across different literacies
  - Exploring and evaluating both traditional—reading and writing—and multiple, “new” literacies
  - Distinguishing and evaluating the literacies of academic disciplines for their commonalities and differences
  - Studying *acquisition, uses, practice, and consequences* of literacy and literacies across age, gender, race, class, ethnicity, geography, media
- 

### **LiteracyStudies@OSU: General Themes**

A LiteracyStudies@OSU primer: *locations and relations; theory and practice; cross-campus, interdisciplinary program development; experiments; building spaces; making relationships; pursuing integration.*

*LiteracyStudies@OSU as research, teaching, service—INTEGRATED—*with implications for academic careers for faculty and students, and program development for graduate students. (See below *LiteracyStudies and the Transformation of Graduate Education* and Fig. 8.3 for activities including seminars and conferences.)

Among the keys to LiteracyStudies@OSU:

- *Interdisciplinarity/interdisciplinary program development/*
- *Locations physical & metaphysical, literal & metaphorical*

Institutional—OSU locations—multiple intersecting locations; also sites for integration. Some connections expected, some not: e.g., interest in arts, health sciences (including pediatric dentistry), law, Outreach, on one hand; lack of interest in social sciences; extent of territorial conflict with education, on the other hand

- *Relationships* in theory and practice; variable but aim to be complementary and constructive. Relationships aim at:



- *Integration* different levels and layers and their connections, epistemology and interpretation
- *Experimental. LS@OSU* explicitly as an experiment in university-wide interdisciplinarity
- *Building/Spaces*
- *Nodes/Intersections as in a web*

### Literacy Studies as Interdisciplinary Studies

- Historical
- Comparative
- Critical

*In other words: it matters that LS@OSU is headed by a social historian.*

Literacy Studies is *not* a research center dependent on external grants. Nor a center for the teaching of literacy or training in that teaching. Rather, a flexible structure with many rooms on a number of levels, horizontal and vertical, many of which have connecting doors and direct elevators/escalators, to promote and enhance relationships and the integration of the many dimensions of literacy studies across disciplines, colleges, and other centers of interest.

### Literacy Studies as Interdisciplinary<sup>31</sup>

As constructed and practiced in LiteracyStudies@OSU, interdisciplinarity is problem- and question-driven, not discipline-driven. It crosses and draws on many disciplines and departments.

Literacy Studies is not a discipline (and certainly not additive of disciplines); perhaps not an “interdiscipline.”

Literacy Studies should not be a separate academic unit or have its own departments and degrees.

Literacy studies is a difficult, confusing, even contradictory subject that demands multiple and interdisciplinary approaches to its study and understanding from a number of standpoints.

Literacy needs to be included as an important aspect of all areas of inquiry in which “reading” and “writing”—across media and modes of understanding and communicating—play a part.

Some practitioners of literacy studies aspire to both disciplinary and interdisciplinary status.

Both potential benefits and serious risks, including confusion and conflicts, may follow from either confusion of disciplinary and inter-

disciplinary foundations or isolation within departments or colleges. LiteracyStudies's clash with the College of Education and Human Ecology represents certain dangers; the separation of interests in literacy in the health sciences from studies and conversations in the humanities and social sciences is another.

Discourses and traditions regarding different (presumed or asserted) literacies; with different claims attached to them underscore the need for interdisciplinarity.

Literacy studies demands an interdisciplinary approach. There are many possible.

One path led to LiteracyStudies@OSU, but with different streams within that path as shown here.

There are other paths at OSU and elsewhere. Some privilege reading, some writing, different media and modes, different disciplines, different targets of inquiry and questions.

Through the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization, conferences, interest groups, programs and other ways, we explore these issues and questions.

The seeds of literacy studies are found in several disciplines, especially anthropology, linguistics, psychology, and more recently in history. Lately, literacy studies are most often located in departments of English and departments or colleges of education. Academic and more general interests in literacy are far wider, the grounds for mutually beneficial relationships are broad.

The fields of Rhetoric, Composition, and English Studies more generally today reflect what we may call "the lure of literacy," the appropriation of literacy to convey a higher status and greater immediate—at least—importance to the field.

The 1970s and after: the challenge of critical studies or the "New Literacy Studies" and historical studies.

The recent period in which LiteracyStudies@OSU developed has seen a shift from disciplinary to multi-disciplinary to interdisciplinary studies of literacy as a complicated "problem."

Major "players" at OSU: English/RCL, Disability Studies, Education, Folklore, History, Linguistics, Biology, Science Education, Architecture, Anthropology, Art Education, Design, Digital Media, Libraries, Music, Law, Outreach, Health Sciences including Public Health, Dentistry, Nursing, Allied Medicine, Medicine, Pharmacy.

Important parallels exist between the development of literacy studies and interdisciplinary studies.

The core curriculum of LiteracyStudies examines the rise of multi- and interdisciplinary studies of literacy and the historical bases of literacy studies: anthropology, linguistics, psychology, education. Similarly, the place of modernization theory and individual and collective ideologies of development are explored. The powerful spectre of notions of “Great Divides” between the literate and others, differences, dichotomies, and domination.

The recent history can be construed as a passage from Great Divides to disciplinary divides.

### **LiteracyStudies Integrated Program Development (Figure 8.2)**

#### **LiteracyStudies@OSU and the Transformation of Graduate Education (Figures 8.3-8.4)**

The diversity of definitions, meanings, and approaches to literacy has stimulated a new awareness of the complexity of understanding and making meaning in diverse media and cultural contexts. Some commentators go so far as to deem this a “crisis.” By providing an opportunity for graduate students to work with scholars from across the disciplines, the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization (GIS) in Literacy Studies prepares our students to pursue literacy-related research that will bring understanding informed by multiple disciplines to bear on challenges in a variety of cultural settings. Pursuit of this GIS will complement, ground, and extend graduate students’ concentration in any discipline. It is integrative with other subjects under study and may also prove useful in career preparation and searching.

#### **Constructing LiteracyStudies@OSU:**

#### **Lessons Learned and Limits Reached—Conclusions in Progress; or, From “My Students Can’t Write” to Literacy Studies (changing discourse and understanding at OSU)**

OSU taught me that my seemingly reasonable strategy of retaining positions at non-traditional, self-proclaimed interdisciplinary (or non-disciplinary) universities was probably wrong. Of course, I did not know that. And in their own ways, these institutions prepared me to function much more effectively and efficiently when I moved to a world with more stable structures and fewer personnel and organizational problems. There are lessons here, and issues of theory, too.

**Figure 8.2**  
**Literacy Studies Program Development: Major Activities Continuing<sup>33</sup>**

- 
- Established 2004 in association with the Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities with additional funding from the College of Humanities
  - Model for university-wide interdisciplinary studies and program development
  - University Council on Literacy Studies (in development)
  - 2004, 2005, 2006 funding from College of Humanities, Humanities Institute, support from Department of English
  - 2007-2010 multi-year funding from College of Humanities, continuing funding from Humanities Institute, support from Department of English; Academic Program Coordinator: offices in Knight House
  - An Executive Advisory Board of faculty, administrators, and graduate students whose membership includes most OSU units with strong interests in literacy studies--from Anthropology, Architecture, Art Education, Biology, Chemistry, Design, Education, English (main and regional campuses), Folklore, health and medical sciences, History, College of Law, Libraries, Linguistics, Music, Mathematics and Science Education Policy, Outreach and Community Partnerships, as well as the Office of Academic Affairs, the Arts and Sciences Colleges, Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities, TELR, Teaching and Learning Center, and the Digital Union—has grown to 30 and encompasses most of OSU's colleges and many departments
  - Quarterly and now bi-quarterly newsletter with national and international distribution
  - Electronic listservs for faculty, staff, and graduate student literacy studies groups
  - Web Site: <http://literacystudies.osu.edu/>
  - Public programs 2 per quarter (2004-)—visiting scholars; OSU faculty, staff, students
  - Different participants, audiences, constituencies, with different connections, and efforts at integration
  - Annual major speaker (who also conducted required Workshops for graduate students in English, 2005- and informal sessions with graduate students), including Mike Rose, Shirley Brice Heath, Deborah Brandt, Ira Shor, Terri McCarty, and others
  - Ohio-based researchers series (from 2005)
  - Active co-sponsor of literacy-related events across campus, including East Asian Languages and Literatures, Disability Studies, Education, English: Rhetoric and Composition, Folklore, History, Humanities Institute, Law School, Medicine and Health Sciences, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Sexuality Studies, Women's Studies, campus-wide events
  - Campus-wide Graduate Students Interdisciplinary Seminar on Literacy Studies (The GradSem) monthly meetings, all year (2005-)
  - History of the Book Group, faculty and graduate students (originally in association with the Department of History) (2005-)
  - University wide curricular development—graduate, undergraduate, and interdisciplinary (2004-)

Figure 8.2 (cont.)

- University-wide announcement and promotion of literacy studies and closely related courses
- Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Literacy Studies, a graduate minor (approved by the Council on Academic Affairs, June 2007)
  - Redistributed a \$15,000 grant from the Graduate School to faculty in the Colleges of Dentistry (for the Health Science colleges) for a graduate seminar on Health Literacy, Biology/Entomology for Science Literacy, Art for Visual Literacy, and Architecture for Spatial Literacy, to support the development of new basic graduate literacy studies seminars
- Graduate course on Health Literacies, first taught in Spring 2009 with cross-listing in the Colleges of Nursing, Medicine, Allied Medicine, Pharmacy, and the Arts and Science Colleges
- Assisting in development and promotion of undergraduate literacy studies courses for OSU's regional campuses
- Advisory to various OSU university initiatives and programs—advise on interdisciplinary activities, programs, curricula, literacy issues, recruitment of faculty and graduate students: McHale Committee on Undergraduate General Education, Arts and Sciences Colleges, Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities, College of Engineering, College of Education, Department of Linguistics, School of Music, Weinland Park Child Study Center, Poverty Innovation Center, Moritz College of Law; College of Medicine: OSU Medical Center, Collaborative Translational and Clinical Studies (CCTS)
- Joint activities and conversations with Law and Medicine increasing
  - o Day-long public symposium. Informing Ohio Communities: The Report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, organized by LiteracyStudies@OSU with co-sponsorship of the Moritz College of Law, November 2009
  - o Youth and Social Media: a symposium cosponsored with *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society*, Justice for Children Project, Center for Interdisciplinary Law and Policy Studies, Moritz College of Law, February 2010
  - o College of Medicine: medical researchers and interdisciplinarity; Clinical and Translational Science and Medicine
- Advisor nationally and internationally on literacy studies programs and centers from Wyoming to Sweden; scholarly publications in literacy studies including journals and books
- Supportive relationships with outreach activities (from 2004)
  - Mindy Wright from the ASC Outreach programs, Marcy Raymond, principal of the MetroSchool, and Sandy Cornett, Health Sciences have sat on our Executive Board, and other connections
- “Coming Out”: sessions on LiteracyStudies@OSU at major professional meetings: Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2008, Society for the History of Children and Youth in 2009. Possible future venues include American Anthropological Association, American Educational Research Association, History of Education Society, Social Science History Association, etc.

**Figure 8.2 (cont.)**

Presentations on the theory and practice of establishing LiteracyStudies@OSU by Harvey Graff and doctoral students (who will be showcased along with the program, perhaps joined by other faculty, and critical reviews/responses by such noted scholars as Deborah Brandt, Mike Rose, Terri McCarty, John Duffy, and others

- Graduate Interdisciplinary Literacy Studies Organization (GILSO), an OSU registered student organization
- “Expanding Literacy Studies” International Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference on Literacy Studies, April 3-5 2009; an 18 month pedagogical experiment. Plenary sessions on the work of Shirley Brice Heath and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *The Literacy Myth* by Harvey J. Graff. OSU students from many disciplines and colleges, and students from 9 other major midwestern universities organized all aspects of the conference. More than 200 presentations; participants from 66 institutions and 6 countries. Approximately, 300 in attendance. (see website for more information)

On planning committees: graduate students from the universities of Illinois, Iowa, Kent State, Miami, Michigan, Michigan State, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Wisconsin, joined Ohio State students; approximately 45 students active in the process

Next graduate student conference is in planning.

- Working Group on Book Arts, the History of the Book, and the History of Reading and Writing, cosponsored with the Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities and the University Library, 2007
  - The Ohio State University Distinguished Lecture on Literacy Studies—visiting scholars, by invitation—at least one per year—the goal is to make this lecture *the* place for both well-established and younger scholars to present seminal work in progress or newly published major studies. This brings additional recognition to LiteracyStudies@OSU and OSU more generally. Beginning in 2007-08 with the support of funds from the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences, matched by the College of Dentistry, the College of Art, the College of Biological Sciences, the University Libraries, and the Department of Entomology
  - 2008 John Duffy, University of Notre Dame
  - 2009 Lesley Bartlett, Teachers College
  - 2010 Wendy Griswold, Northwestern University
  - Advise and develop programs for Sigma Tau Delta, English student honorary society
  - Possible other future activities may include
    - o public policy/literacy in public
    - o research seminar for faculty and advanced students
    - o one-day topical symposia combining visiting scholars, OSU faculty, and students
    - o faculty “fellows” in literacy studies in cooperation with ICRPH
    - o a triennial conference (with publication)
    - o collaboration with Literacy Studies and Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy graduate programs at other universities, especially but not solely in the Midwest. This might include student and/or faculty exchanges, graduate student conferences, and the like. Informal, preliminary conversations have begun with the University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin, Miami University, and University of Michigan
-

Figure 8.3

## LiteracyStudies@OSU and the Transformation of Graduate Education

- 
- Multiple layers of learning.
  - Importance of location, relationships, integration: cross-campus, cross-colleges and departments
  - Intellectual and professional development mutually informing and reinforcing each other
  - Emphasis:
    - o learning the field and its leaders
    - o interdisciplinary
    - o collaboration & cooperation including interdisciplinary peer groups and joint faculty-student efforts
    - o theory and practice
    - o active participation/involvement
    - o connecting one's participation, learning, research with peers while advancing one's self
    - o integration
    - o responsibility
  - Core courses on Literacy Studies
    - o historical, comparative, critical
    - o conceptual frames including theory and practice
  - Special areas of involvement including peer groups: locations, relationships, integration
    - o Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization (see Fig. 8.4)
    - o GradSem—graduate students monthly interdisciplinary seminar in literacy studies
    - o GILSO—Graduate Interdisciplinary Literacy Studies Organization, registered university group
    - o Expanding Literacy Studies conference *as professional training*
    - o LiteracyStudies public programs and visiting speakers
    - o History of the Book group
    - o Visitors/speakers—formal and informal meetings, and preparation in GradSem
    - o LiteracyStudies sessions at conferences—Conference on College Composition and Communication 2008, Society for the History of Children and Youth 2009, others planned
    - o Support for research and teaching
    - o Literacy Studies student service awards
-

**Figure 8.4**  
**Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Literacy Studies**

LiteracyStudies@OSU draws from and seeks to contribute to research in the humanities, education, social sciences, and arts most directly, but also the biological sciences and professional areas, such as medicine, dentistry, accounting, and law.

### **REQUIREMENTS**

The GIS in Literacy Studies requires 21–23 hours of coursework. At least 14 hours must come from outside the student's home graduate program. Ohio State's strengths in literacy studies range widely. Students should work with their faculty advisors and the Advising Coordinators to determine how best to incorporate Literacy Studies into their program of study.

#### **I. CORE COURSES 13 - 15 hours**

The specialization includes 3 core courses. The first two core courses cover the foundations of literacy studies, the central questions, theories, approaches, methods, and history. The third core course provides an interdisciplinary perspective on particular forms of literacy and literacies and prepares students for their concentration.

##### **A. FIRST CORE COURSE 5 hours**

English 750 Introduction to Graduate Studies in Literacy

##### **B. SECOND CORE COURSE 5 hours**

English 884 Literacy Studies: Past and Present; cross-listed as History 775 History of Literacy

##### **C. THIRD CORE COURSE 3 - 5 hours. Choose from:**

Arts&Sci 709 Health Literacy 5 hours; cross-listed as AMP 710, MED COL 710, Nursing 710, and PHARMACY 709

EDU T&L 901 Changing Perspectives 3

EDU T&L 930 Literacy Research and Issues of Diversity 3

ENGLISH 789 Graduate Studies in Digital Media 5

ENGLISH 883 Studies in Literacy, topics vary 5

Additional hours in this category may count as electives

#### **II. ELECTIVE COURSES 8 - 10 hours**

There are four clusters of electives. The areas in which students might concentrate their elective courses include

- Reading, Writing, and Language Studies
- Social, Cultural, and Historical studies
- Science, Technology, Health, and Medicine
- Visual, Spatial Arts and Performance Studies

The GIS in Literacy Studies is open to all graduate and professional students at Ohio State. Students do not need to apply for enrollment.

Students may establish a focus for their elective coursework from the list and select courses for electives from those associated with that focus. A second option is to develop a focus for the elective coursework in consultation with their faculty advisor that extends their main course of study or anticipates career goals.



## Building literacy studies program in early 21st century: foundations

- mutual suspension of disbelief
- serendipity and luck
- timeliness and currency: “the historical moment”
- interests to build on
- interests in many literacies, both multiple literacies and disciplines claiming literacies of their own
- the special position of Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies
- Graff’s need to answer basic questions about the prospects and possibilities for cross-campus interdisciplinary studies programs
- an overall sense of plan or vision—an “interdisciplinary dream”
- agency *and* legitimacy/authority, from will to various kinds of support
- resources, beginning with well-placed advice/advisers
- moderate material resources
- support and encouragement of administrators and peers
- interest and energy of students
- form approaches that are: comparative, historical, and critical
- in meeting potential participants across disciplines: avoid correction, negativism, derogation in responses to others—especially regarding definitions of literacy and their uses/abuses
- build on more or less “common denominators” (even if fictitious) respecting interests, definitions, condition of literacy, etc.
- build locations, relationships, integration
- strategy of interdisciplinary development with more emphasis on breadth than depth (at least at first). As a choice or strategy, “loose integration”—building in locations, building on relationships
- strategy of many activities and affiliations on many levels horizontal and vertical, and relationships both within and between/across layers and levels: integration in part through points and styles of contacts and interactions.

*By horizontal*, I mean developments, activities, programs organized among relative peers and/or by common topics, themes, questions, for example, people interested in visual perspectives, and the like, across departments, colleges, campus.

*By vertical*, I refer to developments, activities, programs more of a hierarchical organization: graduate and on occasion undergraduate students, graduate chairs, department chairs, college deans, senior administrators, off-campus

- build a variety of paths to interdisciplinary literacy studies
- construct interdisciplinary locations

In addition, presence and personal power of Ohio Eminent Scholar (OES) and program founder/director. In classical social theory, Weber’s charisma and the challenge of the routinization of charisma. Related danger: over-identification with leader; identification with Department of English or College of Humanities.

*From literacy studies working group 2004 to LiteracyStudies@OSU 2007-: Basic tasks and beyond*

- assemble building blocks, individual and institutional
- networking<sup>32</sup>
- develop interdisciplinarity piece by piece, locating and linking, and lumping related elements, for example, visual, spatial, performance literacy
- take risks intellectually and institutionally
- power of naming/claiming including Literacy Studies Working Group and LiteracyStudies@OSU
- establish locations and identity, create a base (special location at Institute for Collaborate Research and Public Humanities [Humanities Institute]), decision to locate literacy studies at historic core of university—liberal arts and sciences
- create developing spaces and linking spaces
- importance of in-between, intermediate spaces
- build relationships and integration
- interdisciplinarity, including the OES position, mandates both creative energies and generative conflicts
- locate, identify, solicit, bring together faculty, staff, students—across many lines including disciplines, also kinds and levels of literacy(ies): bring together in order to change and create larger more integrated developments
- develop continuing support that also crosses departmental, college, and other lines
- engage in a process of differentiating and integrating—as intellectual, curricular, theoretical processes to develop and maintain distinct but overlapping audiences and active participants
- bring different audiences together (and keeping them)
- balance size and relationships
- the power of the free lunch at OSU: to bring people together

Limits: From Rhet-Comp to RCL, and from Literacy Studies Working Group to LiteracyStudies@OSU, from English to College of Humanities to The Ohio State University

- limits: attracting faculty and students but keeping them, getting programs and units, not just individuals, to buy in
- to get students, advisers must be open—we can draw students and faculty out, but how to keep them? [funding formula questions]
- at OSU, roles of graduate studies chairs, advisers; communications; funding
- disciplines/departments dominate and influence graduate students activities in both general and specific ways
- manage conflicts (as with College of Education, School of Communication)

- OSU's poor communications
- competition, turf and territoriality struggles with other programs, units
- bring different audiences together and keeping them
- the need for more and clearer connections, relationships among departments, disciplinary clusters, colleges
- balance size and relationships
- from participation at various levels of intellectual engagement relating to literacy studies to pursuit of individual or collective research in a collaborative setting
- the boundaries of an initiative?

The future?

### Notes

1. On the relationships and certain similarities between literacy studies and interdisciplinary studies. see Harvey J. Graff, "Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies: Reflections on History and Theory," in *The Scope of Interdisciplinarity*. ed. Raphael Foshay, forthcoming, 2010-11, and "The Literacy Myth at 30," *Journal of Social History*, 43 (Spring, 2010), included in this book as chapters 7 and 4, respectively..

For LiteracyStudies@OSU more generally, see <http://literacystudies.osu.edu/>.

I want to acknowledge my major debts in the successful construction of LiteracyStudies@OSU. Very special thanks to Susan Hanson, who served from 1<sup>st</sup> Graduate Administrative and Research Assistant to Academic Program Coordinator and Assistant Program Director. Her contribution essential, Susan has been there all along.

In addition, special appreciation to colleagues Ed Adelson, Steve Acker, Marcia Farr, Susan Fisher, Kay Bea Jones, Susan Metros, Beverly Moss, Steve Pentak, Randy Smith, Chris Zacher; and also Nan Johnson, Valerie Lee, and John Roberts. Thanks, too, to graduate assistants: Kelly Bradbury, Shawn Casey, Lindsay Dicuirci, Michael Harker, Karin Hooks, Kate White.

For further perspectives on my research, see the essays in Graff, *The Labyrinths of Literacy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, Composition, Literacy, and Culture Series, 1995); "The Shock of the "New" Histories": Social Science Histories and Historical Literacies," Presidential Address, Social Science History Association, 2000, *Social Science History*, 25, 4 (Winter 2001), 483-533; *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

2. My work on literacy and the history of literacy had been concentrated in the 1970s mid-1980s: *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth-Century City* (New York and London: Academic Press, Studies in Social Discontinuity Series, 1979), *Children and Schools in Nineteenth-Century Canada/L'école canadienne et l'enfant au dix-neuvième siècle*, with Alison Prentice (Ottawa: National Museum of Civilization, Canada's Visual History Series, 1979; rev. CD-Rom ed., 1994), *Literacy and Social Development in the West*, editor and contributor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 1981), *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Society and*

- Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987; paper, 1991), *The Labyrinths of Literacy: Reflections on Literacy Past and Present* (Sussex: Falmer Press, 1987), *National Literacy Campaigns: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, co-editor with Robert F. Arnove (New York: Plenum Publications, 1987), *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integration and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century*, new ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), *The Labyrinths of Literacy* rev. and exp. ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, Composition, Literacy, and Culture Series, 1995).
3. *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). The study of interdisciplinarity is tentatively entitled *Undisciplining Knowledge: Pursuing the Dream of Interdisciplinarity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A Social History*.
  4. In this usage, “silo” is apparently a Midwestern term also used at University of Alberta, Canada, and elsewhere.
  5. The Arts and Sciences Colleges are undergoing reorganization again, beginning in 2008.
  6. On the field and its development, see below. In English departments, literacy is sometimes tagged on to Rhetoric and Composition, making for RCL programs (or Composition and Rhetoric). See Graff, “Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies: Reflections on History and Theory,” in *The Scope of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Raphael Foshay, forthcoming, 2010, included as chapter 7 in this book.
  7. Jessica Zacher now teaches at California State University, Long Beach.
  8. See Graff, “The Shock of the “New” Histories”: Social Science Histories and Historical Literacies,” Presidential Address, Social Science History Association, 2000, *Social Science History*, 25, 4 (Winter 2001), 483-533 (reprinted in *Looking Backward and Looking Forward: Perspectives in Social Science History*, ed. Harvey J. Graff, Leslie Page Moch, and Philip McMichael (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 13-56), and the literature cited there. See also William H. Sewell, Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), and Graff, *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). For other historians, see James M. Banner, Jr. and John R. Gillis, eds. *Becoming Historians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
  9. See also Michael B. Katz, *Reconstructing American Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 1987)) and *Improving Poor People: The Welfare State, the “Underclass,” and Urban Schools as History*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).
  10. Graff, “The Shock of the “New” Histories,” 494.
  11. See “The Shock of the “New” Histories.”” On Katz’s Canadian Social History Project, see Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 1975) and with Michael J. Doucet and Mark J. Stern. *The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 1982). For a sense of the moment and its politics, see Graff, “Towards 2000: Progress and Poverty in the History of Education,” *Historical Studies in Education*, 3 (1991), 191-210. For literacy, see the two editions of Graff, *The Labyrinths of Literacy* and the new introduction to the 1995 edition, cited above.
  12. Taking my Ph.D. in 1975, the odds that I would find a tenure track position in British history were not good.
  13. They included, in addition to Katz, Edward Shorter, Natalie Zemon Davis, Jill Ker Conway, Maurice Careless, and Ian Winchester.

14. See Graff, *The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth-Century City* (New York and London: Academic Press, Studies in Social Discontinuity Series, 1979) and *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integration and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century*, new ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), "Towards 2000: Progress and Poverty in the History of Education," *Historical Studies in Education*, 3 (1991), 191-210, *The Labyrinths of Literacy*, "The Shock of the "New" Histories," "Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies: Reflections on History and Theory," in *The Scope of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Raphael Foshay, forthcoming, 2010-11, and "The Literacy Myth at 30," *Journal of Social History*, 43 (Spring, 2010).
15. In general, see discussion in *The Dallas Myth* and references there.
16. There is some limited evidence that initial distance from hiring and reviewing units may have worked against retention of some of these faculty.
17. Part of the graduate program in Humanities was shared jointly with the humanities faculty at UT-Arlington, but this was seldom mentioned or discussed.
18. The politics of combining both rubrics into one program and degree name were endless. On some levels they mocked the interdisciplinary pretensions. I recall that some of the arts faculty felt estranged by the Humanities nomenclature and sense of hierarchy. In the arts and creative writing areas, the divides among history, theory, and practice were never resolved, and sometimes not much acknowledged. Some of the constraints followed from the circumstances in which the program was founded jointly with two campuses, UTD and UT-Arlington.
19. I am at work on a social history of interdisciplinarity tentatively entitled, *Undisciplining Knowledge: Pursuing the Dream of Interdisciplinarity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A Social History*. See also Graff, "Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies: Reflections on History and Theory," in *The Scope of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Raphael Foshay, forthcoming, 2010-11, chapter 7 in this book.
20. Stanley Fish, "Being Interdisciplinary Is So Very Hard to Do," *Profession* 89 (MLA), 1989, 15-22.
21. See, for example, Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990) and *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity, and Interdisciplinarity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996). Compare with Neil J. Smelser, "Interdisciplinarity in Theory and Practice," in *The Dialogical Turn: New Roles for Sociology in the Postdisciplinary Age*, ed. Charles Camic and Hans Joas (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 43-64, Dean R. Gerstein, R. Duncan Luce, Neil J. Smelser, and Sonja Sperlich, eds., *The Behavioral and Social Sciences: Achievements and Opportunities*. Committee on Basic Research in the Behavioral and Social Sciences/Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. National Research Council, 1988. There is a large but not always illuminating literature between the "pro's" and the "anti's."
22. See "Teen Chicago," special issue *Chicago History*, 33, 2 (2004). The Chicago Historical Society was renamed the Museum of Chicago History.
23. I do not mean to exaggerate my difference from many English faculty or the degree of similarity among historians.
24. See Graff, "Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies," *Undisciplining Knowledge*, in progress.
25. See Graff, "Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies," syllabus for ENG 750 Introduction to Graduate Study in Literacy. See also Andrew Abbott, *Chaos of Disciplines* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).
26. See Graff and John Duffy, "Literacy Myths," *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 2 Literacy, ed. Brian V. Street and Nancy Hornberger (Berlin and

- New York: Springer, 2007), 41-52, Graff, “*The Literacy Myth at 30*,” *Journal of Social History*, 43 (Spring, 2010). They appear as chapters 3 and 4 in this book.
27. Not the least of the confusion and complications is over the difference between literacy and literacy studies, and teaching reading and writing versus critical study of literacy.
  28. When an administrator in the College of Engineering came to see me for help in planning a concentration in “engineering literacy” for non-majors. in part to increase enrollments, he was not pleased with my questioning the existence of a unique engineering literacy or my effort to suggest that what he had in mind might be better developed as part of other programs rather than as a separate area.
  29. Widely recognized for its scholarship and contributions to the field, OSU Department of English’s Rhetoric and Composition faculty has embraced Literacy Studies, revising its program to include Literacy as a third component of inquiry and changing its name to RCL, Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy. This shift is important symbolically and substantively. It carries significant potential for interdisciplinary learning and teaching and for inquiry into the fields of composition and rhetoric more generally. The relationships are complicated and it may be most accurate to see Literacy as sometimes part of RCL but often as (semi-)autonomous.
  30. The original group included Mollie Blackburn (Education/Teaching and Learning), Marcia Farr (Education/Teaching and Learning), Kay Bea Jones (Architecture), Beverly Moss (English/RCL), Amy Shuman (English/Folklore), and myself.
  31. See Graff, “Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies.”
  32. Constructing literacy studies across campus: Within the first year, my department chair Valerie Lee was asked by people outside the department if she’d met me; Dean of the College of Humanities John Roberts was told by others including chairs and deans that they are thinking about literacy differently than they had before my initiative.
  33. For specific events, see LiteracyStudies website: <http://literacystudies.osu.edu/>.