

Chapter I. Endings from Beginnings: A Culmination of Learning and Practice

Retiring My Way

Retirement in 2016-2017 came earlier than we anticipated. We did little of the specific, detailed, advance planning that is recommended. Prepared financially, we were not ready intellectually and personally. In retrospect, I can state without hesitation that this is the not-unexpected culmination of 42 years of professorial service and success at three poorly managed, public universities, two of them new, suburban campuses of the University of Texas System and one the 150-year-old, 65,000-student, main campus of *The Ohio State University* (for details on these experiences, see my essays under Universities and Ohio State University in the Appendix).

When I transitioned into retirement first with medical leave in winter 2017, I had completed 13 years as the inaugural Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies, professor of English and history, and founding director of LiteracyStudies@OSU, a university-wide, interdisciplinary initiative. At OSU I published seven single-author or edited books and drafted one more, and received honors and international recognition and frequent invitations to speak, write, and advise.

I taught courses cross-listed in several departments and supervised graduate students from various disciplines, departments, and colleges. I served on departmental and university committees and worked actively on general education reform and university support of the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. My unusually wide circle of colleagues and students spanned the entire large and divided campus, including suburban branches and senior administrators. Our personal social network built on those relationships.

I retired in spring 2017. I could no longer work actively in a department, college, and university that refused to acknowledge my accomplishments—some of which I had been told were impossible—*and* that increasingly violated its commitments to me, my program, and my program associate director. Many of these promises were in writing.

Chairs, deans, and provosts acknowledged the promises but refused to honor the obligations. Successive department chairs showed no interest in defending my contributions to their programs and to the university. These problems were not unique to me. By 2016-2017, I had had enough.

For the next three years, I battled a series of illnesses beginning with depression. Collectively they were severely limiting. Four years of Trumpism, social isolation, and the 2020–2022 Covid-19 pandemic did not help. With extraordinary personal support at home and excellent physicians, I completely recovered. My internist continues to exclaim, “Harvey’s back!” Other doctors echo that sentiment.

Friends and colleagues concur. In their own ways, I now understand in retrospect, they all contributed toward my “new normal” of 2020 and beyond. Among the lessons that I share with colleagues and friends now retiring is you need a transitional period, a break; no one goes from one role to another immediately.

Transition and Translation

By 2020, my life shifted toward normal and then new normal rhythms. I first became a dedicated consumer of news in print, audio, and television. By 2021, I completed my transformation to what I call my retirement niche of public education and teaching outside the box combined with selective continuing scholarship. In ways that become clearer to me daily and weekly at age 75 and counting, the intersecting forces of the *personal*, *political*, *scholarly/academic*, and *place* broadly, intimately, and interactively shape these outcomes and pave my paths. In other words, the themes of this exposition reveal themselves most starkly at this relatively late date. I now understand that is to be expected. The transition to retirement is real and complicated.

Some days I think I’m changing the world. On others, I feel that I’m “tilting at windmills.” A former Texas doctoral student and longtime friend, Soledad Jasin, insists on updating my quip: I’m “tilting at wind turbines.” In fulfilling ways, I’m using my skills and knowledge without dealing with universities and free of often false notions of objectivity, nonpartisanship, and nonactivism (for examples, see my 2021h, 2022n, 2022q, and 2022aa essays under Retirement as Public Education in the Appendix.)

We retain close friendships and good relationships with OSU faculty, students, and neighbors. Some parts of the university call for my help. Others seek to ban me for my fact-based, published, constructive commentaries about higher education with OSU as a major example. These include, among others, “Slogans Are No Substitute for Concrete University Policies and Programmes” (2022h) and “Collegiality Needs a Reboot” (2022o). We are connected with colleagues and friends, old and new, including many former students throughout the country and the world. I discuss them in later sections of this chapter.

I am also making new contacts and friends among scholars, including a journalist-historian of literacy in Spain named Diego Moldes Gonzalez; the faculty of Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates, especially applied linguist Wafa Zoghbor; and James Chapman, professor emeritus of education in Wellington, New Zealand.

Public Education and Teaching Outside the Box

I began the draft of my essay, “A Post-Retirement Career as a Public Academic Meets the Moment’s Need” (2021h), as follows: “I am a 72-year-old retired professor As a scholar and teacher from graduate school forward, I also engaged

in a variety of extramural activities that are known as ‘public history’ and less frequently as ‘public humanities.’” These activities I referred to included co-authoring *Children and Schools in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (1979) with Alison Prentice for the pioneering Canada’s Visual History of the National Museum of Civilization (then the National Museum of Man); assisting historical societies and museums with exhibits and programming (for example as advisor for the Museum of Chicago History’s multi-year Teen Chicago initiative); writing brochures for public historical landmarks in Dallas; assisting newspaper, NPR, and television reporters with background and sources (in Dallas, San Antonio, and Columbus as well as other locations nationally and internationally); and serving as advisor, panelist, and speaker for public radio and television (in Dallas, San Antonio, and other locations nationally).

In my specialty areas, I advised public American and international agencies about literacy, children, and interdisciplinarity. In retirement, I am more engaged publicly across my research specialties. In particular, in my retirement my social and historical knowledge about literacy and young people led to both outreach and demand for commentary on issues from critical race theory to book banning and the question of the putative “unprecedentedness” of our times (see my “The Dilemmas of Disciplines Going Public,” 2022g).

This work during my professorial years was rarely time-consuming, but it was a stimulating and fulfilling extension of my teaching and research. It facilitated the application of my skills and knowledge, and it reached a larger, nonacademic audience. It also facilitated making new contacts, collegial relationships, and friendships. At least as significant, it spoke to the social, political, and cultural imperatives that shaped my personal and academic life from my early teen years forward. On occasion, I taught exciting and mutually enriching graduate seminars on public history and humanities.

The circumstances that led to my retirement left me unwilling to continue an active, institutional relationship or a traditionally defined role. My goals as a scholar and a classroom teacher are largely fulfilled. My books on the history of literacy and the contemporary relevance of that history; the history of children, youth, and families; the history of cities; and interdisciplinarity—including their interrelationships—are foundational to their fields. A final, scholarly book on literacy, *Searching for Literacy: The Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies*, has been published (2022e). Since retirement, I have conducted only three reviews of scholarly book proposals; written one book manuscript review; and completed no grant, fellowship, article, or book reviews.

I do not wish to continue research and writing principally for academics. I have done more than my fair share. I continue to advise scholars and students around the world at all levels, publishers, and institutions. I call this “teaching outside the box.” I often meet with undergraduate students in my university neighborhood. Sometimes we jokingly call this “Harvey U” (see my essay “I’m Retired but I’m Still Running My Own Unofficial University,” 2022aa.)

I attempt to balance my general audiences, broadly academic, and more focused scholarly publications and related activities. Learning from our pasts—variously defined—and communicating with targeted but broad audiences results from my education and career. For example, I publish regularly in *Times Higher Education*, *Against the Current*, and *Columbus Free Press*, among many outlets.

At the same time, I am drafting *Reconstructing the “Uni-versity” From the Ashes of the “Mega- and Multi-versity”* and editing a collection of original first-person essays, *Scholarly Lives in Transition, 1960s to 2020s and Beyond: Misunderstood and Untold Paths in Shaping the American University*. These projects continue my professional practices of reorienting understanding by asking new questions, reinterpreting historical understanding, correcting myths typically uncritically repeated over decades and centuries, and challenging my audiences through multiple media.

Prompted in part by the political and social climate, in the place of more traditional academic roles I developed a new focus on “public education.” That orientation lies in public history and humanities, active engagement with contemporary issues, and presenting uncommon perspectives and alternative contexts for understanding today’s pressing issues, especially by challenging those who ignore or misunderstand history in a variety of ways.

My specific actions, in writing and forging connections, draw directly on the political and the academic and seek to ground the connections in the personal. Given my history, I no longer need an institutional base from which to operate.

As a “public educator” or public intellectual teaching outside the box, I build on established paths. Public history dates from the 19th-century founding of historical societies, museums, and other institutions as well as popular historical writing. It is not new to the activism of the 1960s or job crises since the 1970s (see my essays under Disciplines and Interdisciplines in the Appendix; in contrast, see, for example, Feisal G. Mohamed, 2021.) Almost all discussions of “knowledge in the public” or “applied knowledge” across disciplines are too constrained chronologically, conceptually, and institutionally. The precedents and opportunities are much longer and wider.

Writing Familiarly but Differently

By early winter 2021, the pieces of my retirement niche fell into place. It was a process of redefinition, redirection, and translation, analogous literally and figuratively with the uses of literacy as I came to understand them during decades of study and teaching. It depended on my new flexibility with time. I began by writing opinion essays and letters to editors for metropolitan daily newspapers in increasing quantity. This form of writing remains a regular activity and shapes other elements of my public education campaigns. My target publication sites and audiences, however, changed over time.

After several years away from regular writing and time spent online, I started writing by hand on yellow legal pads with MSNBC, CNN, or NPR playing in the

background. I dictated the text to my wife Vicki (Vic-tated, we say) as she sat at the computer. We then Vic-edited and revised. After a few months, I returned to my former practice of composing at the keyboard and doing first revisions myself. As former manager of editorial services for the American Heart Association, Vicki edits as much of my writing as she can before it leaves the computer and the house.

In retirement, I am more intentionally personally engaged in my writing than I was as a full-time professor and public university employee. That adaptation intertwines with my advising of office holders, candidates, and advocacy groups especially on matters of public education, anti-illegal censorship and free speech violations, gun safety, and voting rights, among others I describe later in this chapter.

Some of the circles I am completing stretch over decades. That is part of the dynamic, ever-changing intersectionality of the personal, the political, the academic, and place in practice.

None of my subjects are new to me, and I draw unhesitatingly on my background and experience. Writing for a more general audience than I used to requires refined communication skills, aided by my wife's sharp editing. She commits "adverbicide" and "adjectivectomy," among other clinical treatments. Our editorial practices delight my editor at *Times Higher Education*, who occasionally on Fridays wishes me "an adverb-free weekend." After more than 50 years together, editing is *almost* always fun amid a swamp of bad puns, writing jokes, hilarious typos, and occasional pokes in the ribs.

At first, my submissions to newspapers and magazines depended on trial and error, sometimes provoking frustration. Although I previously published letters and what we used to call OpEds, or opinion—now guest—essays, in local dailies in Dallas, San Antonio, and Columbus; in the *Wall Street Journal*; and in education outlets like *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed*, I was introduced to a new world where recipients almost never acknowledge submissions, seldom communicate decisions, and almost never copyedit or fact-check. I discovered some of my letters had been published in print or on websites when reading the daily paper or checking online. I was not informed.

My learning curve improved with the advice of Steve Weissman, a longtime friend and former colleague who moved from a faculty position to positions in government service and nonprofit advocacy organizations. He shared his experiences in writing for and locating nonacademic publishers. This was far more helpful than standard guides to opinion writing.

As with scholarship, practice helped. I had to learn the unwritten rules of the road. For example, few newspapers or news/opinion sites provide guidance. What advice they do give is general and simplistic to a fault. Issues central to scholarly publishing, from single vs. multiple submissions, making pitches in advance of submitting textual material, expecting confirmation of receipt among other forms of professional courtesies, and anticipation of a decision in a predictable amount of time are almost nonexistent. The waiting time for publication after acceptance is also erratic.

I spent several frustrating months learning, with few stated exceptions, that multiple, simultaneous submissions are permitted. Of the outlets I have submitted to, only the *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and Cleveland's *The Plain Dealer* require exclusivity; the *Times* and *Post* usually provide decisions within two to five days. Otherwise, copyrights, ownership rights, and exclusivity are seldom mentioned. Keeping records of which essays are with which outlets for how long is challenging. In addition, most but not all newspapers have a policy of publishing an individual once every 30 days, a small number every 60 days, and many have no policy at all.

All this has to be learned. In my experiences with outlets across the US and in the UK, only *The Plain Dealer* and occasionally *The Washington Post* fact-check letters and opinion essays. In contrast to others, it shows on their pages. Neither standard editorial practices nor journalistic ethics are the norm today.

In part this reflects the general shift from news reporting to opinion writing in both national and metropolitan dailies. This is one of the responses to financial strains (for more on this topic, see my “Busting Myths: The Disappearance of Journalistic Standards As Opinion Essays Replace the News,” 2022k). It also limits opportunities for guest essayists in favor of regular members of editorial boards and established opinion writers. Many of the unaffiliated writers are promoting new books or lobbying for one or another interest group, from political office holders and candidates to corporate representatives selling products—often fraudulently. The lobbying and payments from agents, publishers, and authors are never discussed publicly or in print.

Opinion writing is largely a random and unprofessional world. My experiences include being banned from the opinion page of *The Columbus Dispatch* because I accurately referred to its operations as “muddled” and “uninformed” on its readers’ comments site. This banning took place despite the fact that I was a frequent contributor, provided advice to the new opinion editor, and had praised the editor in print. Another Gannett-owned outlet, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, banned me because I dared to ask after about six weeks when an accepted essay would be printed.

Earlier, I withdrew an essay from *The Cincinnati Enquirer* after it failed to print my article three weeks after its acceptance and more than two weeks after its promised date. The opinion editor responded, “Do what you need to do,” without a word of explanation or apology. Another Ohio newspaper, the *Dayton Daily News*, accepted the same essay immediately and gave me a near-immediate publication date. Four days later, it rescinded that written agreement without a relevant or coherent explanation. Another editor claimed that it had only accepted the essay for review, a nonexistent category contradicted by the stated publication date.

In a third case, on a local news site called *Columbus Underground*, I published an essay that criticized the city’s media for their complicity in Columbus, Ohio’s, lack of identity (see my “Columbus’ Identity Crisis and Its Media,” 2021a). I was soon viciously attacked by another local, pseudo-news (actually an entertainment) magazine (see Downing & Oliphint, 2021). Calling my essay “trash,”

the “response” mainly agreed with my arguments but ridiculed my publisher and dishonestly defended its fellow Gannett affiliates against my criticism. No local outlet would publish my rejoinder, including the original publisher, because they did not want to “risk further” or “escalate” conflict (See Graff, ““Response to *Columbus Alive*,” 2021m). Journalistic standards and ethics, including the First Amendment, are missing in action.

After four to five months, matters changed. Almost simultaneously, I began to engage highly professional editors at the following national and international higher education publishing sites and national monthly magazines with regularly updated websites:

- *Times Higher Education*
- *Inside Higher Ed* (this relationship ended in fall 2023)
- *Washington Monthly* (this relationship ended in late 2022)
- *Academe Blog* (this relationship ended in early 2023)
- *Publishers Weekly* (this relationship ended in fall 2023 with the abolition of the “Soapbox” feature)
- *Against the Current*

In summer 2021, another news site editor (Suzanna Patzer) led me to the independent, progressive *Columbus Free Press*. Oddly, no one at OSU or in my neighborhood ever mentioned the *Free Press*, which had been in operation since 1970. After I published a stream of essays with the *Free Press*, we decided that my contributions should become a regular column titled “Busting Myths,” a reference to my books *The Literacy Myth* (1979c) and *The Dallas Myth* (2008a).

These editors acknowledge receipt of my essays. They promptly accept submissions as written or return them with reasonable requests for revision and their reasons why, typically related to their publication’s goals.

I revise within a day or two, refocusing, reorganizing, or clarifying arguments. Within another day or two, I receive an acceptance, soon followed by professional copyediting with occasional queries or requests for documenting URL links. I also receive rejections, often but not always stating the reasons why. I typically resubmit those essays to another publication, sometimes revising them.

Each of these editors expresses concern that they may not be able to publish my writings as quickly as I might wish. I assure them that my essays are almost never breaking news. I would rather wait a few weeks for professionalism and competence. As it happens, these publications have high reputations and broad circulation, unlike the newspapers and sites that do not conduct themselves professionally.

Writing for Publics

For me, while only a few of my letters are published, writing a letter to the editor often becomes a first step toward an opinion or guest essay or sometimes a

scholarly article—a recognized literacy practice. At other times, it is an act of “intellectual therapy.” Letter writing, especially to *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Harper’s Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times Magazine*, is sometimes the beginning of larger projects.

At first, I concentrated on the contradictions of state and national policies and political parties with a focus on the increasingly radical, right-wing emphasis among elected Republicans in the Ohio state legislature and the U.S. Congress. Speaking to the moment, I wrote letters and essays critical of state and national responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. I placed essays and letters in metropolitan dailies across Ohio and co-authored a letter with Vicki on federal Covid-19 pandemic policies in *The New York Times* (for lists of essays and letters, see the Appendix). These efforts led to limited collaborations with Common Cause Ohio and the Ohio chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union and the League of Women Voters.

I write as a professional historian and long-published author. I add historical and comparative perspective and understanding of American institutions and the U.S. Constitution. I continue to practice the craft of historical knowledge as an applied and critical act that I was taught in graduate school at the University of Toronto by my model and example—social, educational, and urban historian and social critic Michael B. Katz.

No longer a university professor on the payroll, I see no grounds for complaints about my compromising objectivity or abusing my office. I speak only for myself, no other person or institution.

One thread of my new efforts focused on Ohio’s public Covid-19 pandemic actions. I wrote a series of essays and letters to editors in state and national newspapers and magazines on Governor Mike DeWine’s large-scale surrender to the pandemic. My attention centered on the shift from early activism under former Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Amy Acton to combined inaction, sloganeering, and publicity stunts like the ineffective Vax-a-Million lottery (for details about the Vax-a-Million lottery program, see <https://odh.ohio.gov/media-center/odh-news-releases/odh-news-release-05-17-21>). The Ohio Department of Health never recovered from its loss of a capable, qualified director. Poor politics and almost no policy initiatives replaced responsible, public health action.

A second series of essays and letters I wrote shed critical light on Ohio’s dominant Republicans and their seemingly limitless failures. I evaluated the state attorney general’s unfamiliarity with the U.S. Constitution; various means of voter suppression; attacks on honest, responsible education including the ignorant campaign against critical race theory, which is not taught in Ohio K-12 schools; the state legislature’s and U.S. Congressional representatives’ refusal to respect and serve their public; and their regular practice of imitating other red, or Republican, states (for details about these topics, see essays under Ohio Issues in the Appendix).

Severe political gerrymandering is the usual reason given for the Republican domination of Ohio in recent years. But I took critical aim at the silence,

disorganization, and internal hierarchy of the state Democratic Party. I also called attention to the undemocratic Democratic majority among Columbus mayors and city councilors (see essays under Ohio Issues and Columbus Past and Present in the Appendix).

On the national level, I published an original excavation of the agenda of Donald Trump and his Trumpists, their policies, and a platform within which there were no coherent statements of organized points or policies. I also wrote an exposé on the most right-wing, Republican state governments, Texas' and Florida's, rhetorical flirtations with secession and Ohio's ignorant imitation of their governments' actions.

I criticized the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Covid-19 pandemic policies, actions, and reactions, including the dominance of politics over science, from the Trump to the Biden administrations. The rapid and radical decline of the United States Postal Service (USPS) under corrupt Postmaster General Louis DeJoy attracted my attention in conjunction with my filing a formal complaint through my U.S. senator, Sherrod Brown, about the inability to provide daily mail delivery as required by law. That connected me with a USPS regional coordinator, who forwarded my documented complaint to the federal inspector general's office. Not surprisingly, that led to no action. (See essays under National Issues in the Appendix.)

From those early topics I expanded my writing into other arenas surrounding the changing news and broadcast media combined with contemporary political and cultural issues. I addressed the biases of conservative columnists at *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, the shift in newspapers from reporting news to publishing opinion essays, and the decline in both national and local print and broadcast journalism. As 2021 turned into 2022 and 2023, I wrote factually and historically about critical race theory, book banning, and higher education, all in historical and critical contexts.

Civics in Theory and Practice: From Education to the State of Democracy

Drawing on my expertise in the history of education and literacy, I also write about the lack of civic knowledge and the startling ignorance of current elected officials with respect to history, including the U.S. Constitution. In my opinion piece “Testing Can Save Democracy” (2021j), I semi-seriously proposed a civics test as a requirement for running for public office. Responses to that proposal—from nonpoliticians—are quite positive. The politicians, if they can read it, are silent.

In other essays I explored civics, knowledge, and ethical declines that connect politics to the mass media (see titles listed under Media and Communications, Critical Race Theory and Education, and National Issues in the Appendix).

From Urban History to Contemporary Urbanism

Central to my concerns as an urban historian and lifelong large-city resident, I often write about the exceptional shortcomings of Columbus, Ohio's, major print, audio, and video media and their responsibility for the city's combined failures to develop a distinctive identity; absence of a written history; lack of a tradition of constructive public criticism and independent professional institutions; inability to protect neighborhoods and residents; and incompetent, leaderless, unrepresentative government. The facts on the ground belie the city's current ranking as 14th largest in population in the United States.

I began to do this kind of writing in conjunction with constructive conversations with local reporters, city of Columbus departmental and city council aides, city attorneys, and police officers. As my research advanced and I more deeply penetrated the city's fictitious veneers, many of those interactions ceased without notice or explanation. Interestingly, those with police on their beat remain the most mutually interactive and instructive.

Essays I've written on these topics have stimulated local comment and controversy. Some reporters and a number of citizens have responded more sympathetically to my arguments than senior editors, management, and city boosters. I often write about *The Columbus Dispatch's* and NPR WOSU station's failings and failings. Both are in desperate need of new management and reform.

I learned far more about Columbus city government in 2021 than in the preceding 17 years. I remain astonished. The city council of the United States' 14th largest city is undemocratic and unrepresentative. All seats are elected at large, as if it is an unreformed, mid-19th-century city. Against all reasonable odds and expectations, the city government is disorganized and disconnected, with no city manager or realistic vision of the entire city. It is a city lacking in leadership and knowledge, and it is in physical disrepair.

I learned to navigate city government partially and personally with determination and the guidance of two excellent, young, soon-to-be-former legislative aides and neighborhood engagement staff. In the aftermath of my urgently calling on the city attorney in September 2021 to mobilize city departments to confront the disorder and law-breaking behavior on OSU football weekends in my University District neighborhood, heads of adjacent departments spoke to each other for the first time. Of course, that quickly ended. Neither responding to facts nor sustaining interest or action are part of what I dubbed "The Columbus Way."

Overall, in my writing on these topics I demonstrate the city's lack of urban identity, vision, and planning, and its subservience to major private developers and corporations. I call for a democratic "revolution" in Columbus city government along with a sustained search for an appropriate identity and all that accompanies that complex endeavor (see my essays under Columbus Past and Present in the Appendix). This follows more or less directly from teaching urban history for decades, including the first course on the history of Dallas, Texas, and the

critical conceptualization that led to my writing *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* (2008a).

From Cities to Their Universities

Reflecting my time served within universities from 1967–1975 as a student and 1975–2017 as a professor, I developed a historically based critique and proposed rethinking of relationships of people and their fields of study.

My post-retirement series of essays and books in progress follow the personal and the academic more directly with respect to place in general terms but often with a focus on Ohio State University as a major example. My most personal example of this sort of writing is “Colleges Must Learn From Sports Figures About Mental Health” (2021e). Decades of reflection and my experiences with depression and anxiety came together with the immediate stimulus of women’s tennis champion Naomi Osaka, gymnast Simone Biles, and other athletes revealing their mental health struggles in the spring and summer of 2021.

I wrote in part about how my own experiences with anxiety and depression helped me become a better teacher and a much better graduate supervisor. But my larger focus was how inadequately universities deal with the consequences of our often poorly conducted guidance and development of younger and especially female and minority scholars—both as faculty members and as graduate students.

The response to the essay, particularly from strangers, is powerful. Both old friends and new correspondents tell me how “brave and courageous” I am. I don’t see it that way. I’m being self-aware *and* responsible and learning from my own and others’ experiences. The institutional response, as expected, lags despite endless rhetoric and self-promotion to the contrary.

A continuing cluster of essays focuses on *The Ohio State University*, sometimes as the sole subject and at other times as a touchstone for larger academic issues. These are on topics I addressed in earlier writings. For example, I wrote an opinion essay in *The Wall Street Journal* titled “An Education in Sloganeering” (2015b) concentrating on OSU’s two-time president, E. Gordon Gee. That publication stimulated a considerable response. Around the same time or even earlier, I published “Not a Popularity Contest” (2015c), “Early-College Programs Lack Many Benefits of The Real Thing” with my colleague biologist Steve Rissing (2015), “Throwing the Baby Out With the Interdisciplinary Bath Water” (2014c), and “The Troubled Discourse of Interdisciplinarity” (2010c; on the latter, see my *Undisciplining Knowledge: Interdisciplinarity in the Twentieth Century*, 2015a).

I updated and broadened those views in my continuing essays, including “The Banality of University Slogans” (2022f), “Slogans are No Substitute for Concrete University Policies and Programmes” (2022h), and “Sloganeering and the Limits of Leadership” (2022i).

Together with my revisioning of the history and “crisis” of the humanities and universities more generally and the “myth of collegiality,” these writings

constitute an overarching critique and reinterpretation of typical “leadership” that failingly substitutes slogans for responsible executive actions in the form of programs, policies, budgets, and timetables as well as broad involvement at all levels. Writing about the uses and abuses of “collegiality” is stimulated by conversations with younger especially female colleagues.

Some essays have focused more pointedly on OSU (see, for example, “For Ohio State, bigger is not better,” 2021g), an ongoing investigation of what I consider to be among the worst managed, large public universities in the United States, the equivalent of a modern tragedy. This singular failure contradicts the efforts of many outstanding faculty, staff, and students and a lovely central campus oval. This investigative and interpretive work integrated more than one half century in higher education as student, teacher, and researcher with historical understanding.

Columbus, Ohio, and Ohio State University

As an urban historian and 20-year homeowner in Columbus’ central historic University District adjacent to sprawling Ohio State University, I struggle to understand this 200-year-old city’s lack of an identity—and especially an urban identity—and its “bromance” with private property developers as a substitute for urbanism and a useful sense of itself (for background and comparison, see my book *The Dallas Myth*, 2008a).

Drawing on informed and challenging conversations with my colleague Kevin R. Cox, geographer and author of *Boomtown Columbus* (2021), and my friend and former student Ellen L. Manovich, urban historian and researcher of the University District (see, for example, her article “‘Time and Change Will Surely Show’: Contested Urban Development in Ohio State’s University District, 1920–2015,” 2018), I developed a continuing series of critiques of city government and Ohio State University, sometimes in relationship with each other. This writing advanced hand-in-hand with my at-once critical and constructive engagement with city government and to a lesser extent with a diminishing number of OSU senior administrators. In April 2022, all OSU administrators stopped communicating with me, without explanation, on order of the former president. No criticism, however documented *and* constructive, is acceptable it seems.

Reflecting my unique vantage point as an Ohio Eminent Scholar; a member of two departments and affiliate in others; and founding director of the university-wide, interdisciplinary initiative LiteracyStudies@OSU, I long worked at university reform and responsible, constructive criticism (see, for example, my *Undisciplining Knowledge*, 2015a, and *Searching for Literacy: The Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies*, 2022e).

In retirement, I further developed my criticism of OSU and higher education more generally. This writing is inseparable from my research and writing on the city of Columbus; OSU colleagues, students, and administrators; and

interdisciplinarity in historical context. I actively seek to stimulate more informed discussion and provoke further study—and consideration of possible actions.

My expanding critique progresses step by step, in part putting OSU in a larger comparative context. I began with: “For Ohio State, Bigger Is Not Better” (2021g), “Ohio State’s VAX-A-NICKEL Giveaway” (2021c), “The Decline of a Once Vital Neighborhood: Columbus’ University District” (2021f), “Columbus’ University District: Students and the Institutions That Fail Them” (2021i), “Ohio State Isn’t Having a Crime Crisis; It’s Having a Leadership Crisis” (2021l), and “Busting Myths: The Ohio State University Promotes Public Health Crises” (2021o), and then continued my series on the University District with “Busting Myths: Ohio State Versus ‘Campus Safety’” (2022p) and also wrote the two-part “Busting Myths: The United States’ Worst Managed Large Public University? Ohio State’s 5½ ‘D’s’: Disorganization, Dysfunction, Disengagement, Depression, Dishonesty, and Undisciplined” (2022w, 2022x).

In my article currently under review, “Disconnecting Gown and Town: Campus Partners for Urban Community Development, Ohio State University,” I explore universities as agents of urban development and their contradictory relationships with their urban locations. As I explain, the “the public university’s ‘private development arm’” overpays for properties adjacent to campus and then sells them at a financial loss to unregulated developers, who in turn overbuild and literally wall off the “campus in the city” from its city.

Simultaneous to all this writing, I advise OSU graduate and undergraduate students as well as local reporters on their research on either or both Columbus and OSU. Increasingly, I have discussed the same issues with Columbus city attorneys, neighborhood engagement groups, the zoning department, and city council legislative aides. Not, however, with OSU itself, city councilors, or the mayor. They waver between declared ignorance and denial. Despite its rhetoric, OSU seems to have little connection with, and even less regard for, the community.

Universities, Missing Histories, Disciplines, Interdisciplines

My expertise in the development and current practices of literacy studies and interdisciplinarity constitutes a major area of direct scholarly translation across disciplines and disciplinary clusters. How could it not after more than 50 years?

Along with addressing critical race theory and book banning, my essays on literacy studies and interdisciplinarity aim at a more targeted audience than those that focus on political interventions. They are among the most attractive to editors and have the most influence. This writing grows from decades of research and teaching, culminating in the publication of *Undisciplining Knowledge* (2015a), my critical study of interdisciplinary efforts over time and across disciplines. *Searching for Literacy* (2022e) extended those intersecting paths.

In a continuing series of essays in *Times Higher Education* (with editor Paul Jump), *Inside Higher Ed*, and *Against the Current*, I criticize recent

unknowledgeable and ahistorical approaches to interdisciplinarity, the humanities, and universities past, present, and future; the misrepresentations of the relationships between the arts and humanities on the one hand and the sciences on the other; the lack of historical memory *and* historical understanding among disciplines; and the challenge of scholars and knowledge in the public spheres.

I explore these topics in depth and historical context in my forthcoming book, *Reconstructing the “Uni-versity” From the Ashes of the “Mega- and Multi-versity.”* It is another example of how the personal, the politics of universities and scholarship including issues of theory and commitment, my relationships to changing disciplines and interdisciplines, and the institutions where I studied and taught come together in the final stages of my lifelong pursuits.

Of special concern to me now, and in my crystalizing conversations with colleagues, is what I call the “myth of collegiality.” I strive to promote a wide-ranging conversation about collegiality’s replacement and/or reconceptualization among all human components of contemporary universities. Relatedly, I continue my decades-long quest to respond to the many proclaimed “crises” of higher education—especially in the humanities—and the dramatically misconstrued conceptions of interdisciplinarity.

An enriching episode of this conjunction took place with my invitation to address the faculty of Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates in January 2022 about conceptions and examples of interdisciplinarity. Despite my long-distance appearance online via Webex in the wee hours of the morning Eastern Standard Time, 10:00 a.m. in Dubai, an excellent, meaningful exchange transpired. We have plans to continue. Neither employment status nor distance need be obstacles.

Literacy, Myths, Old, and New

Provoked by an ignorant and offensive, full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* in August 2021 for a corporate-promoted program called “FL4ALL”—that is, “financial literacy for all”—I responded strongly. No one with any understanding of literacy uses the abbreviation FL. Only a third-rate advertising copywriter would construct “FL4ALL.”

This is a major clue to the incoherence of an effort to promote a concept rather than to make a responsible or constructive statement about or develop a program to encourage literacy. A quick online search after seeing this advertisement led me to several hundred proclaimed distinct and independent “literacies.” That is not only nonsense but also a radical obstacle to both understanding and teaching literacy. I detailed these arguments in “Busting Myths: The Misrepresentation and Marketing of ‘Financial Literacy’—The Fallacies and Dangers of FL4ALL” (2022j; for more on this line of thinking about the multitude of literacies, see *Searching for Literacy*, 2022e, and *Literacy Myths, Legacies, and Lessons*, 2011/2023c).

That effort to investigate contemporary, popular uses of the term “literacy” reconnected me with literacy studies in general and the need to reevaluate the complicated

and contradictory field of study and its place in universities and beyond. Updating my knowledge of recent developments, I wrote “The New Literacy Studies and the Resurgent Literacy Myth” (2022c). In it I reviewed the development of the then “new literacy studies” in the 1970s and 1980s to which my first book *The Literacy Myth* (1979c) was a major contribution, followed by *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society* (1987b) and several collections of my essays, widely reprinted and translated into various languages.

The then new New Literacy Studies emphasized the critical role of historical, social, and cultural contexts in the definition and understanding of literacy both in theory and equally importantly in practice. Disconnected especially with the institutionalization, disciplinarization, and professionalization of knowledge from the 14th through the 20th centuries but especially from the 18th and 19th, those perspectives were largely replaced by what I named in 1979 “the literacy myth,” the undefined, uncritical, and exaggerated acceptance of the nearly universal power of literacy acting alone, that is, as an independent variable irrespective of human social, cultural, economic, or political differences and special social and cultural contexts.

The accepted view neglected specific abilities in actual use by real people in specific contexts and in association with others. To the contrary, the literacy myth emphasized often mythical notions of literacy by itself. By my use of the term “myth,” I followed cultural anthropologists and historical literary critics: a myth is not necessarily a falsehood. To the contrary, a degree of familiarity, however unrepresentative, is required for circulation and acceptance.

Many of my critics and those of other new literacy studies scholars (such as Shirley Brice Heath, Brian Street, Sylvia Scribner, and Michael Cole) have not understood that distinction. Not surprisingly, they clustered in social psychology and within basic splits among the fields of rhetoric and composition, now mainly styled writing studies. In response to the often-illuminating work of Deborah Brant in particular, I named her emphases in her interpretation “the writing myth” (see my “Epilogue: Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies With Notes on the Place of Deborah Brandt,” 2014a).

Historically, the writing myth simultaneously prevented understanding, obstructed efforts at transmission and instruction, and led to negative judgements of those people deemed to be lacking literacy, with or without evidence or contextual understanding. In the rhetoric of the 1970s, this was “blaming the victims.”

In my “The New Literacy Studies and the Resurgent Literacy Myth” (2022c) and at much greater length in the later publication *Searching for Literacy: The Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies* (2022e), I took stock of not only the major reorientation of the field in the last one-third of the 20th century but also the lessening of its influence in recent years with the flow of an endless stream of “many literacies.”

At one time or another, almost every field and activity has proclaimed its own “literacy” with little or no discussion of what literacy actually may be. A significant number are promotional and sales efforts by self-defined “specialists” inside

and outside of universities and private marketers. Multi- and cross-disciplinarity and both commercial and rhetoric promotion compete, often contradictorily, with interdisciplinarity as I, for one, define it (see my *Undisciplining Knowledge*, 2015a.) Of course, I feel a personal as well as professional stake in renewing the debates of the 1970s–1990s at all levels inside and outside universities.

In autumn 2021, I revisited my 2015–2016 critical review of and set of proposals for literacy studies, *Searching for Literacy: The Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies* (2022e). Originally written under contract for a major publisher, the acquisitions editor broke the contract, telling me to keep my advance on royalties, with no discussion or request for review. The academic series editor objected to two paragraphs critical of his writing. The publisher refused to discuss the issues. The incident was among the factors that led to the timing of my depression and my retirement.

By mid-summer 2021, I was ready to resume its publication. My review of the complete, professionally edited manuscript and the principal literature revealed no need for further revision. I wrote to about a dozen relevant, scholarly presses. Half of them asked to see at least part of the book. In short order, three offered contracts to publish.

After discussion with acquisitions and executive editors, I signed a contract with Palgrave Macmillan. My editor and I decided to add several new chapters with recent essays. Palgrave published the delayed book in print and e-editions in late summer 2022.

Another retrospective, stock-taking literacy contribution was the publication of the assessments of my contributions from a special session, “Literacy Studies and Composition Through the Work of Harvey J. Graff,” at the 2017 annual meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. I am moved and humbled by these tributes. It appears as “Harvey J. Graff: A Tribute” in *Across the Disciplines*, Spring 2024 (Duffy et. al, 2024 <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/volume21/duffyetal.pdf>).

From Literacy Studies, the History of Children and Youth, and Social and Cultural History to the Crises of Education Today

The “New Illiteracy”: Critical Race Theory, Book Banners, and the Right-Wing Assault on Children

The Second Big Lie: Critical Race Theory

Both unpredictably and predictably, the period beginning in 2021–2022 demanded the action of a knowledgeable social and cultural historian of literacy, children and youth, and education. An organized, well-funded, national *disinformation* campaign largely on social media culminated two-thirds of a century’s right-wing

fears and grievances. Its perpetrators are racist, sexist, segregationist, anti-diversity, intolerant, and lack mutual respect. They mounted a historically unprecedented, unconstitutional, and inhumane attack on the free speech and maturity of the young—especially those from nondominant racial and ethnic groups, disabled people, and gender non-conforming people, their teachers and schools, honest and inclusive history and learning, and the fundamental bases of “We the People” and the public.

The first major issue—a fake issue built on lies and a nondebate—broke over what was misrepresented as critical race theory (too often shortened to CRT because of laziness; CRT stands for cathode ray tube or cardiac resynchronization therapy). A well-organized, dark-money, national campaign propagated via websites and right-wing media turned a highly specialized theoretical framework used primarily in legal studies and schools of law into a demon threatening all that members of these nondominant groups feared. The three words—*critical, race, theory*—aided by ignorant media sucked almost all the oxygen out of the air waves, school board meetings, and state legislatures.

In too many ways, it really did not matter that there was *no* actual debate or *two* sides to any difference of views or that critical race theory is nowhere taught in K-12 schools and only rarely outside of laws schools anywhere in the nation. The nondebate is the result of active mis- and disinformation, fearful and gullible people, unconscionable politicians and influence-grubbers, and a massive failure in both public and private education.

Thanks to them, the right-wing campaigns of distortion and fear against critical race theory expanded to embrace criticisms of teaching about the history of race, racial relations, slavery, civics, and other aspects of American history. Right-wing radicals call this “divisive,” “contentious,” or “uncomfortable” education despite the fact that the great majority of people—right, center, and left, including the young—value the challenge of its learning. I call this nondebate “the Second Big Lie” (second to the Big Lie about the 2020 election and its resulting January 6, 2021, insurrection).

Given these events and conflicts, in response I published a continuing series of essays in newspapers, magazines, higher education periodicals and sites, and scholarly journals (see my essays under Media and Communications and Critical Race Theory and Education in the Appendix.). My essays present an original, historical contextualization and interpretation of today’s ongoing crisis, which has origins both in the three quarters of a century since the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling that “separate but equal” is not equal (National Archives, 1954) and over the four centuries that made America. Today’s divisions can only be understood in those contexts.

The essays that I write about the nondebate over critical race theory, and 18 months later book banning, attract the most attention. They circulate widely, and my phrases such as “the Second Big Lie” and “white fright and flight” have joined the larger public and academic conversation (see, for example, my

“Fiction and Fact About Critical Race Theory,” Forum, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University, Sept. 9, 2021). They lead to NPR radio appearances (such as various NPR talk shows and interviews available online); presentations at university forums; advising reporters locally and nationally; counseling elected state and federal officials; assisting state board of education members; and advising local, state, and national advocacy and professional groups, faculty, and both college and high school students.

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*Book Banning, the “New Illiteracy,” Moms Against Liberty,
and the Assault on the Rights of the Young*

Literally on the heels of the nondebate about critical race theory, another overflowed it: a historically unprecedented wave of book bannings, especially for younger readers from school and local libraries, beginning in Republican-led states like Texas, Utah, and Florida. Falsely presented as “protecting the vulnerable young” or “parental rights,” the blatantly dishonest intimidation of local boards of education and school district superintendents through unconstitutional and unenforceable state legislation, are neither. They represent an outright attack on the free speech rights of students and teachers and an inhumane, anti-child challenge to growing up, education, development, and maturity. “Parental rights” is no more than a rhetorical pitch rooted in fear and grievance.

Ironically, the books challenged since 2021 sat comfortably on library shelves for years, often when the youngsters of the shrillest book banners were actually in school—not at the time of the campaigns to remove them. Not in the least ironic is the dramatic fact that young adult and other books containing at least a scattering of obscenity or profanity are almost never targeted. Studies by the American Library Association, PEN, and Book Riot demonstrate conclusively that it is books authored by persons of color, women, gender non-conforming people, and disabled people—and with comparable protagonists—that are challenged.

Unlike previous campaigns to ban and sometimes to burn books, going back at least a thousand years—and memorably during the Protestant Reformation, Anthony Comstock’s late 19th century efforts to keep obscenity (actually birth control information) out of the U.S. mail, and now laughably the 1920s “Banned in Boston” movement —today’s right-wing aggressors are unfamiliar with the contents of the literature they strive to remove and suppress. They either do not or cannot read it, or both. I label them the “new illiterates.”

Contrary to ignorant, partisan rhetoric, they are the purveyors of identity politics or “cancel culture” in their unconstitutional movements rooted in bullying and other forms of political assault. Tragically, the most vulnerable, the young, are the great losers. Instead of “protecting them,” the banners attack them (see my responses to such efforts in essays on Book Banning and Critical Race Theory and Education in the Appendix.).

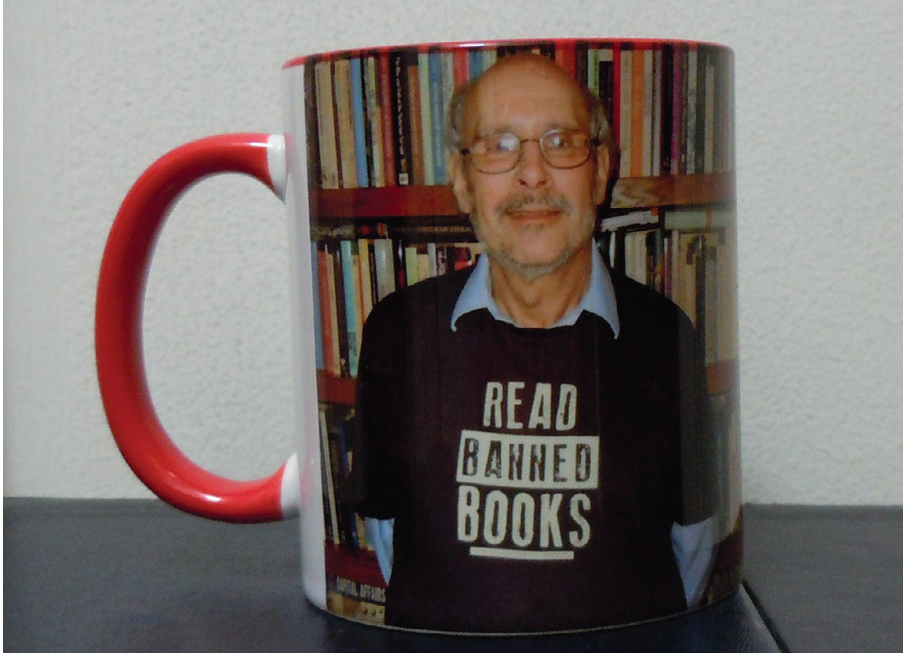


Figure 1.1. Harvey in Read Banned Books shirt, made into a coffee mug after Zayed University online lecture, January 2022.



Figure 1.2. Back of Read Banned Books shirt, SyracuseCulturalWorkers.com.

My essays on this topic lead to a continuing wave of contacts, requests for assistance, new contributions and challenges, and collegiality and friendships. These efforts range widely from informing and assisting reporters and NPR affiliates across the country and in London and Dublin, to taking part in various activities with state ACLU chapters including preparing courtroom testimony, the American Library Association, and PEN America. The contacts, mutual exchanges and learning, and new friends and acquaintances are indeed rewarding.

The Brighter Side

I often remind myself that the young are among the brightest sources of hope in our dark times. For Thanksgiving 2021, my writing shifted focus dramatically to celebrate “My Young Heroes” (2021n). For some time, I collected accounts of amazing young people aged 2 to 22 across the nation and the world of many races and genders who stimulate positive thoughts. I compiled my notes into an organized roster at the request of friends so they could share the stories with their children and grandchildren. I published it in a *Columbus Free Press* column. I later commemorated “The Young Heroes of the Writing World” in *Publishers Weekly* (2023i).

I wrote another column, this one with Ameer Abdul, called “Busting Myths: The Other Immigrants and Diverse American Dreams” (2022) to celebrate his story. I met Ameer, a 26-year-old Palestinian American social and political activist, through Morgan Harper. Morgan is a young, progressive, Black attorney who I advised on her Ohio political campaign. Ameer’s and his family’s stories are testaments to the potential of the American dream.

A Shift from Writing to Personal Engagement: Connecting, Reconnecting, Renewing

In retirement, I have the time, experience, knowledge, and stature to reach out to elected officials, news media, and advocacy groups. Sometimes I respond to opinion essays and letters in the press by contacting the authors directly.

With respect to the attacks on education and the young more generally, this led quickly to working relationships and then friendships with the following people:

- Michelle Newman, member of the Ohio State Board of Education, who shared my input with like-minded colleagues
- Jeanne Melvin, member of the board of directors of the Ohio chapter of Public Education Partners, an advocacy group for public education
- John McNay, University of Cincinnati, and Lisa Voight, then OSU and now Yale University, of the Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

- Ariel Hakim, founder of Banned Books Box
- Crystall Lett, formerly Ohio Program Director of RedWine.Blue, an organization that sponsors the program Book Ban Busters
- Ameer Abdul, political activist and former national policy coordinator and national campaigns manager for PERIOD
- Matt Ides, organizer with the Ohio Education Association
- Jonathan Friedman, director of U.S. free expression and education programs at PEN America
- Joyce McIntosh, program officer with the Freedom to Read Foundation, an affiliate of the American Library Association
- The statewide coalition of almost 40 advocacy groups and individuals in Honesty for Ohio Education
- Leila Green Little, library and freedom to read advocate from Llano County, Texas
- Joe Motil, Columbus political activist and 2023 candidate for mayor of the city
- Bill Lyons, environmental activist and math teacher
- Jerry Nuovo, Richard Fishel, and Kristine Yoder, all biomedical scientific researchers at OSU College of Medicine and OSU Wexner Medical Center
- Lisa Voight, anti-gun violence volunteer with Ohio Moms Demand Action
- Others, whose positions and activities I wish to protect

Most of these inspiring, talented people are now my friends as well as comrades.

I joined forces with executive director (Jim Grossman) and immediate past president (Jacqueline Jones) of the American Historical Association and the editors of the AAUP *Academe* journal (Mike Ferguson) and blog (Kelly Hand).

My expertise led the American Civil Liberties Union in Missouri (Molly Carney, Anthony Rothert, Tom Bastian) and Ohio (Collin Marozzi) to work with me. I advised Molly on history, context, and current issues; contributed expert written testimony in one lawsuit; and wrote opinion essays for Missouri newspapers.

With Honesty for Ohio Education and affiliate groups, I served in leadership and communications roles and helped to link this coalition to others in Ohio and across the country. I provided them with intellectual and media resources and advice on strategies. They placed my relevant writings on their *News Resources* page of their website in a section titled “From the Desk of Harvey Graff” (see <https://www.honestyforohioeducation.org/news--updates.html>).

An example of another partnership occurred when a mutual friend led the Llano, Texas, Friends of the Llano Public Library and their dedicated and inspiring leader Leila Green Little to me in winter 2022. The right-wing takeover of the public schools of the county and the firing of a librarian are among the most egregious actions I saw in this difficult year. I advised them and through my ACLU Missouri contacts was able to stir the ACLU Texas into action. I connected Leila with NPR in Dallas and faculty at the University of Texas at Austin. I also wrote

an opinion essay to publicize the unconstitutional actions of the county judge and commissions and their right-wing activities.

Through my relationship with Jeanne Melvin, member of the board of directors of Public Education Partners (PEP), an advocacy group for public education in Ohio, I contributed historical knowledge to the lawyers suing the state of Ohio to change its policies on “open” vouchers for school-age children, and I connected PEP with other scholars.

These groups and individuals circulate my essays widely across various media. As a result, the essays have been shared with local school boards and given to school principals in support of inclusive history teaching, public education, teachers’ rights, and free speech in several states. I testify (in writing) before the Ohio Legislature and the State Board of Education by request and by choice.

National radio interviews and online public forums that allow for Q&A sessions and other interactions with audiences are stimulating and fulfilling after almost 50 years in classrooms and lecture halls. Although many of today’s audiences are virtual, it is exciting and stimulating to speak to largely self-selected and actively interested audiences who typically respond with excellent questions and comments. I have participated in such programming for shows ranging from Cleveland’s WCPN’s exceptional “Stream of Ideas” to KJZZ-Phoenix’s “The Show” and several New Hampshire-Pacific talk shows.

In a well-attended September 2021 forum, I presented for OSU’s Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity a talk titled “The Fictions and Facts About Critical Race Theory.” Many of the questions from the audience focused on “What can I do?” I have many answers on a variety of levels. Those answers allow me to connect the different individuals, institutions, and groups with whom I speak and to whom I contribute. Collaboration and connection-making have been fundamental to my values and conduct since at least high school.

That forum also marked my first formal, 45-minute talk in more than four years. I began by introducing my orange shirt from Canada that proclaimed “Every Child Matters.” I wear it or my “Read Banned Books” t-shirt or my “I’m With the Banned” sweatshirt for all online appearances (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

These engagements across media are satisfying personally, professionally, and politically. They also lead to making contacts and new friends among members of the media, political officials and advocates, and others who contact me in response to my essays and appearances.

The online posting of the video of the Kirwan Forum led an incredibly talented Columbus high school senior to contact me. She was engaged in a senior project on critical race theory and requested my input, leads, perspectives, criticism, and sources. We had an exhilarating conversation. I have taught few university students as inquisitive and desiring of intellectual challenge as she was.

My publications led other high school and college students to request my help. Such experiences are a valued addition to teaching in continuing my life with literacy.

In another social media-age connection, my relatively short-lived participation in Robert Reich's Substack subscriber site led to a connection with Pittsburgh M.D. and environmental activist Ed Wrenn. Ed in turn steered me to the committed, Pittsburgh-area Battle of Homestead Foundation commemorating the history of labor activism in steel mill towns, such as the one where I worked to earn money for college. For some months, I enjoyed the bi-monthly Zoom breakfast meetings. The group was welcoming to an ex-Pittsburgher and former summer steelworker.

My influence, impact, and personal satisfaction from these activities are more direct and quicker than from scholarly publishing, much more like a good class but without the real and artificial constraints of university environments. Neither grading nor "Rate My Professor" is anywhere in play.

Publishing activities flow almost naturally into others, some of them more novel. Although before my retirement I had occasionally assisted newspaper, radio, and television reporters and editors, I began to reach out regularly to local and national journalists offering historical counsel and contemporary leads. Most ignored my emails; one local reporter actually responded, "Research would interfere with my objectivity." She is now a local NPR radio talk show host.

Some welcomed my reaching out. This included the producer of *The New York Times'* podcast *The Daily*. A *Washington Post* media reporter, to whom I had written to point out errors in an article in June 2021, contacted me in late September when writing a follow-up to the original report (see Jeremy Barr, 2021, for the follow-up story.) Some reporters in Columbus have become my colleagues. I assist them with background, depth and comparisons, and more detailed information on their subjects.

For a time, I participated actively on *The Columbus Dispatch* readers' online comments feature, adding perspective and fact-checking. In frustration, after experiencing insults and ignorance, I stopped because contrary to stated policy, the paper's moderator refused to police racist, sexist, xenophobic, and transphobic hate speech. I have better uses of my time, other forms of public education. I have not missed the activity. Not long after, USA Today/Gannett suddenly disabled the feature without notice or explanation.

I occasionally comment on specific articles and opinion essays on *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* sites. *The Post* is the best. Comments are posted immediately, checked only by artificial intelligence (or algorithm) for offensive language. In sharp contrast, *The Times* continues to be moderated—avowedly at least—by humans. This results in comments occasionally posted almost immediately but others after one or two days—after the specific piece no longer is open for responses and sometimes never.

In part, for a time, I shifted my online commenting and posting energies to the American Historical Association's discussion threads. Discipline is mandated and enforced by moderator approval of all posts on a given thread. Although there is occasional disinformation to correct, the content and conduct is professional.

At my initiative, the editors promptly initiated a new thread on “divisive concepts in history” when I began to turn “censorship” toward critical race theory nondebate issues. After that, I was active on a thread about “history as social science or humanities.” As in other activities, this led to making new friends, including Mark Tauger, of West Virginia University, and Kevin Johnson, formerly of Southern Arkansas State University. I have influenced curricular decisions at universities and supplied references and critical perspectives to others.

As with reporters, some Ohio legislative aides ignore me, especially those affiliated with the Ohio Democratic Party and its candidates. A few welcome my offers of assistance and contributions and exchange with me by email or telephone. This includes state Democratic legislative representatives and staff and Democratic U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown, who sends my wife and me handwritten thank you notes in response to letters to the editor. Former Republican Senator Rob Portman (who retired in 2022) and former Representative Troy Balderson only responded with irrelevant, often dishonest form statements, when they responded at all. More recent, gerrymandered Representative Joyce Beatty’s Democratic office does not respond to me. City of Columbus officials are completely unresponsive once they learn that a resident expects responsible action and democratic representation.

The year 2021 brought an unusual opportunity: meeting and deciding to assist as a senior advisor to Morgan Harper, the progressive, young, Black, female candidate for Ohio U.S. senator. A mutual friend brought us together in late summer, not long after Morgan formally announced her candidacy. Harper is the first political candidate with whom I have worked directly and personally since I “got clean” for Eugene McCarthy in 1968.

The daughter of a single mother, she was adopted by a schoolteacher after nine months in foster care. After winning scholarships to Columbus Academy, Tufts University, Stanford Law School, and Princeton University, she worked in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau during President Obama’s second term. She commenced on a political career with a broadly based, democratic, inclusive agenda that appealed to me. I enjoyed aiding her on historical and general perspective and issues.

In part because of the expanding readership of my regular “Busting Myths” column in *The Columbus Free Press* and in part because each new relationship leads to another, I commenced a political relationship and friendship with Joe Motil, a longtime, progressive, Columbus activist and 2023 candidate for mayor. I now also coordinate with Bill Lyons, environmental and civic activist and community bill of rights leader. I link them to OSU students and recent graduates who are committed to climate and environmental actions.

The Columbus Free Press also led to my friendship with retired journalism professor and Ohio politics writer Jack Hartman, who I linked to my expanding group of political associates. Unfortunately, Jack died from cancer in 2023.

My writing about Columbus, Ohio, also attracted the attention of Al Thompson, a Philadelphia-based national sports journalist and activist against steroid

use by young athletes. Al leads the national group POYS (Protect Our Youth From Steroids), lobbies successfully for federal legislation, and exposes the malfeasance of Columbus' trademark bodybuilder event, The Arnold Classic.

At Home in Columbus

My writing and activism with respect to the city of Columbus and OSU have led directly to more varieties and levels of personal engagements and relationships. My wife and I have lived since 2004 in a 110-year-old historic house in the University District (UD) adjacent to but independent of OSU, a 10-minute walk to my former office. We purchased the house despite warnings about the neighborhood from some university faculty and staff. Our university-linked real estate agent thought we should purchase a house in a well-to-do suburb.

Once a mixed area of single-family owner-occupied homes, homes that housed student boarders typically with homeowners, and small boarding houses, over a period of decades the UD transformed through a major decline in the number of owner-occupiers and a massive expansion of students living in large and small dwellings owned and/or managed by large landowners and property managers with the collusion of the city of Columbus and Ohio State University (Cox, 2021; Manovich, 2018; see also my essays on the University District listed in the Appendix.)

For two decades, along with our neighbors (especially Kay Bea Jones and her late husband Chris Zacher), Vicki and I urged OSU to take responsible action and actively promote safety, orderly behavior, and civility in the UD. Over that period, OSU actually reduced its already limited role. Unlike universities such as the University of Minnesota and the University of Pennsylvania that are known for their leadership in active, responsible neighborhood relationships and constructive programs, OSU leads by neglect and slogans. At a time when many universities and colleges purchase nearby older homes to transform into theme houses, from those housing religious groups to those housing pre-professional and social justice oriented students, OSU refuses.

In recent times, OSU's Office of Student Life proclaims "the residential experience" and "the exceptional student experience." They thoughtlessly extend their slogans for on-campus housing required for two years to absentee-landlord-owned off-campus housing, among "60,000 students. 100 countries. One University District." The off-campus UD does not house 60,000 students. Nor do "students from 100 countries" attend the university. They do not all share "The Exceptional Student Experience."

An August–September 2021 blip in crime in the University District—not a "spike," as the then-president and local media shrieked—(reflecting a citywide wave) sparked excessive media coverage and student-parent fears. (Halperin, 2021; Hendrix, 2021; Rivers, 2021). OSU responded late, inconsistently, and ignorantly. After an awkward silence, then OSU President Kristina Johnson responded with

alarm, new safety slogans, and poorly conceived, often irrelevant new “policies.” They did not engage long-term homeowners who have far more to lose (and one of whom was stabbed to death in her home in September 2023). (See my essays under Ohio State University in the Appendix.)

In fall 2021, as football season began with large, out-of-control, loud, drunken, and trash-strewn (all violations of city laws) student parties almost 24 hours a day on game day weekends, my neighbor and I had several revealing conversations with Columbus police officers who responded to our reports of nonemergency legal violations. They told us about their personal fears of large groups of students, the limits of their actions, their lack of necessary resources, and their misunderstanding of OSU’s legal responsibilities and property ownership. Some of the same officers told me two autumns later that the assistant city attorney police liaison ordered them “not to enforce the law” or “issue citations” in the UD. This followed orders to zoning code inspectors not to enforce their laws, escalating great risks to all residents and especially to the young students. The goals are to protect the interests of the private property owners and, contradictorily, the reputation of the university. The conflicts are countless.

This set of intersecting circumstances prompted several responses. Also influenced by conversations with the more responsible, student-renter neighbors, I first wrote about the situation in “The Decline of a Once Vital Neighborhood: Columbus’ University District” (2021f) and “Columbus’ University District: Students and the Institutions That Fail Them” (2021i). In 2022, I broadened my scope to explore wider, ever-more-contradictory connections among Ohio State, the city of Columbus, and private property owners within the overall scope of interrelated city governmental and public university failures.

Exasperated with OSU’s increasing neglect combined with obfuscation and dishonesty, these outrages led me to write a strong plea to Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein and city council members in mid-September, with copies to major media. I urgently called on the city to enforce its existing laws immediately regarding noise, trash, public drunkenness, parking, and landlords’ responsibilities—and review and update them.

I emailed the letter with supporting documents on a Saturday afternoon. I included among the recipients three responsive city council legislative aides with whom I was acquainted. I suspect that helped my cause.

To my surprise, on Monday morning, Zach Klein’s assistant confirmed receipt and stated that a serious response was forthcoming. That afternoon, Klein emailed me. His office arranged a Zoom meeting with me and 10 senior staff including a police commander and police liaison, the heads of code enforcement and zoning, a representative of the community engagement team, city attorneys, and legislative aides.

That meeting exceeded my expectations—and, within a few months, misled me. Beginning with “please call me Harvey,” I began with a 20-minute overview of the situation. Questions and reports on city actions in progress followed. Unlike

many of my university experiences, no one was then defensive; no one attempted to rebut my statements. We had a frank exchange and, in everyone's estimation, what seemed to be a constructive first step.

The following day three participants followed up with comments and further questions. Initially committed to the then developing matter were city neighborhood engagement representatives, zoning and code enforcement officials, the 311 customer service office's coordinator and staff, some legal personnel, and the then district police commissioner. Several informed me that in city hall I was referred to as a "civic leader." (In OSU's administration building, I have been told, "your name is mud.") My city status was short-lived.

In the meantime, two administrators in OSU's large and disorganized office of student life (but not lives) reached out to me. At first, they appeared to respond honestly, openly, and supportively to my strong statements to their vice president and the university president. (The latter refuse to either engage me or respond at all. Before long, the president, later ordered to resign, forbid most administrators and communications staff to interact with me.) Two people, one a new associate VP and the other a longtime, off-campus engagement manager, each spent hours with me airing issues, seeking my views, and seemingly enjoying the company of a retired senior scholar and professor who lives in a student neighborhood and interacts with his neighbors.

Typically, these meetings, aimed at promoting constructive change, took place around my dining room table, sometimes only with city representatives, sometimes only with OSU's, sometimes with both. Personal relationships developed, for a time at least, from the political and academic in the specific context of place.

However, these conversations stopped abruptly without warning or explanation in March 2022, shortly after I connected OSU's Office of Student Life with an assistant city attorney assigned as liaison at my request to the city attorney. Apparently due to a command from the OSU president's office, or her handlers, all cooperation and communication ceased. That is "the OSU way" of rejecting constructive criticism and a perceived threat to its hegemony.

Before long, all city personnel and all OSU personnel above the level of academic deans including non-academic staff ceased communication. This included the new provost, now president of Boston University. She came to my house for advice until the short-termed president ordered her to stop.

Little progress occurred since the initiating meeting in early October 2021 and my first connections with the city in early spring 2021 reversed. That is "the Columbus way," coupled with the OSU habit. Neither neighbors, neighborhoods, homeowners, nor student renters count. (See my essays under Columbus Past and Present and Ohio State University in the Appendix.)

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Surrounded by undergraduate student renters in our neighborhood, my wife and I engage them on our daily walks. I find that I miss talking to college-age people,

although I do not miss classrooms or office hours. We found ourselves eager to meet the many students with “pandemic puppies” or service dogs in training.

We became acquainted, became friends with some, offered a variety of advice and information from trash collection, recycling, and zoning laws to academic and career advice and tips on spring break travel. They are at first surprised by the interest of a retired OSU professor and a former staff manager in them as people, and then excited by our conversations about their studies, plans, and questions.

This speaks to OSU’s failings in “student life.” It reflects the disconnection and loneliness of students among a population of more than 65,000 (for more on these topics, see my articles “Universities Are Not Giving Students the Classes or Support They Need,” 2022t, “Busting Myths: Recreating Universities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Without Repeating the Errors and Myths of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” 2022v, and “Busting Myths: How Universities Fail Their Students: The President May Be ‘Born to Be a Buckeye,’ but the Students Are Not,” 2022y).

With some students, I developed a more sustained social and working relationship that lies in between academic advisor and older friend. With engineering senior Justin Kim, for example, I assisted in a variety of ways on his project to develop an online platform and app to help self-published authors promote their books.

With recent architecture and urban and regional planning graduate Brett Wedding, I conducted an informal seminar on urbanism and urban history. With recent graduate Matthew Snyder, conversations ranged from his social and environmental studies and his aspirations to study environmental law to the state of the nation and the world. With recent graduate Joseph Glandorf, conversations centered on environmental activism, OSU, and Columbus. On Columbus and Ohio politics, a colleague at Notre Dame connected me with then senior and now law student Jack Wilson, who plans a career as a progressive lawyer. Finally, with my second cousin Liam Gallagher, who graduated in computer science, and his then friend Jeanelle Wu, a new graduate in materials science engineering, the topics are boundless.

These are among other, briefer segments in what my wife and close friends teasingly but also admiringly dub “Harvey U,” which offers the following: free tuition; no debt; very small classes; mutual teaching and learning; inclusivity of age, degree level, experience, and rank; and historical grounding. We began with four “seniors at Harvey U” in 2022–2023 and grew to six first-, third-, and fourth-year students in 2023–2024 (see my article “I’m Retired but I’m Still Running My Own Unofficial University,” 2022aa). Potential “applicants” contact me from around the world.

I continue writing about OSU, its failed responses to crime, and the University District. That is the responsibility of a retired, knowledgeable professor who cares about the university’s students, faculty, educational mission, and role in the larger community. That work led directly to two new books: *Reconstructing the “Uni-versity” From the Ashes of the “Mega- and Multi-versity”* and an edited collection of original essays, *Scholarly Lives in Transition, 1960s to 2020s and Beyond: Misunderstood and Untold Paths in Shaping the American University*.

Retirement “work” has an impact—and rewards.





Figure 1.3. Bill Lyons, Harvey, and Michael Wilkos, three of 12 participants in the Columbus Reform group, October 2022.

## From Historian of Literacy, Children and Youth, and Cities to Contemporary Politics, Politicians, and Diverse Activists

With respect to literacy, direct personal relationships continue. I assisted my former doctoral student Di Luo of the University of Alabama with final preparation of her 2022 book *Beyond Citizenship: Literary and Personhood in Everyday China, 1900–1945*; aided in the continuing scholarship on literacy in Turkmenistan of former doctoral student Victoria Clement; helped with former graduate student David Bwire’s application for permanent residency status; consulted with fellow retired historian Mary Cayton on her project on newspaper readership in late colonial and early national America; collaborated with OSU history of the book colleagues Sarah Neville and Alan Farmer; communicated with Notre Dame professor John Duffy; kept in touch with Syracuse University’s Patrick Berry; and maintained contact with sociologist of communications Jeff Pooley; among many others. For a Cambridge University Press editor who made a special appeal, I made an exception to my decision to no longer review proposals and books.

As my “teaching outside the box” expands, I consider a variety of forms of collaboration with colleagues and students. They are wide-ranging, from writing about the literacy myth in relationship to prison literacy and education with longtime colleague Patrick Berry and discussions with recent friend Bob Eckhart and former football star Maurice Clarrett about Maurice’s prison education; to comparative research on literacy studies, communication studies, and disciplines and interdisciplines with Jeff Pooley; to exploring public social sciences and humanities with longtime colleague and fellow scholar of interdisciplinarity Professor



of Sociology Jerry Jacobs at the University of Pennsylvania. I learn from all these relationships regardless of differences in age and position.

A final example underway reiterates the intersectionality of the historical moment. It pivots around my younger colleague at Ohio State University, then Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature and Comparative Studies Ashley Hope Pérez, who is author of three young adult novels as well as several scholarly articles. Ashley's most recent novel, the national prize-winning *Out of Darkness* (2015), based on a historical event in a small Texas town in 1937, was banned at least temporarily by school districts in Texas, Utah, Indiana, and Florida, among others. The false charge of "obscenity" was based on one paragraph willfully misread and taken out of context by radical, right-wing activists who hadn't actually read the novel (the historically unprecedented "new illiteracy").

When I learned about Pérez' situation from a local newspaper article in recognition of "Banned Books Week," I reached out to her. We began to correspond and soon met over a lengthy lunch. I urged the OSU and Ohio Conference American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the state ACLU chapter to issue strong public statements of support. That process began.

My wife and I provided intellectual, social, and moral support for Ashley and her young sons. In addition, Ashley and I have published jointly authored opinion essays in Utah (Pérez & Graff, 2022), Texas, and Indiana newspapers. Our historical and literary interests also intersect in probing the complicated and typically misunderstood practices and processes of reading across ages and cultures.

Perhaps less surprising than my renewed collegiality based on learning and teaching across ranks, ages, and levels of experience is my counseling a growing number of colleagues preparing for their retirements (for more on these efforts, see my "A Post-Retirement Career as a Public Academic Meets the Moment's Need," 2021h, "Teaching Outside the Box," 2022q, "Academic Collegiality is a Contradictory, Self-Serving Myth," 2022l, and "Collegiality Needs a Reboot," 2022o).

## Success and Limits

I increasingly recognize that I am refining the knowledge and skills that I had practiced over decades in the university. I now translate them to public *and* private arenas and have a discernible impact on opinion and policy.

I am quoted, cited, reprinted. I receive positive responses from people I know and strangers who contact me. Many colleagues, former students, and friends respond to my essays. There is also occasional hate mail, of which my favorite if mystifying example is, "You are a socialist who supports white slavery in China."

Historian Steven Mintz from the University of Texas at Austin wrote to me, "Your scholarship models what I am calling for. Your work was never of purely antiquarian interest. It spoke directly to policy issues and theoretical, methodological, and conceptual debates. Your recent writings, it seems to me, build on that

foundation” (personal communication, August 2021). He also applauded my work on literacy in two columns of his Higher Ed Gamma blog on *Inside Higher Ed*.

Former AAUP President Hank Reichman (2022) reprinted part of one of my essays on sloganeering by universities in “Per Aspera ad Astra” on the AAUP’s *Academe Blog*.

My former graduate school professor, colleague, and friend of more than 50 years, Natalie Zemon Davis, wrote to me, “What an impressive list. I’ve been reading (or in some cases, i.e., critical race theory, rereading) your essays. Your public voice is so important, Harvey. May it be heard loud and clear and be effective. In solidarity” (personal communication, December 27, 2021). Historian of American education and another friend for almost a half century, Paul Mattingly, wrote, “You are standing at the bridge. Let me stand with you,” (personal communication, January 18, 2022). Later he wrote, “A terrific essay, one which meets the long-standing definition of a true hero (Odysseus): ‘one skilled in ways of contending’—the all-time best definition of . . . a liberal arts and science education” (personal communication, April 10, 2022).

A younger, mid-career colleague, Chris Hager, commented,

I have enjoyed watching your retirement from afar. . . . More than once I’ve thought to myself, *this is what college faculty should all be doing, all of the time! And this is what the labor model of modern higher education is not allowing them to do! One has to retire to begin doing what is rightfully one’s job! . . . I’m glad of and grateful for the thought-provoking reflections of yours that I’ve been able to read.* (personal communication, June 16, 2022)

At the same time, I am aware of the limits of my work. Some right-wing and conservative academic voices, and perhaps some more moderate ones, question or condemn my post-retirement professional activities that are no longer university-based. Contradictorily, they do not object to activist, conservative, and right-wing faculty members’ public positions on history, humanities, the social sciences, education, the sciences, and health and medicine. They call that “free speech.”

Some label me “partisan,” although I do not represent any party. Superficially and contradictorily, others allege that I am violating the “terms of objectivity” and “traditional professional standards.”

To them, I reply firmly that they apply a flawed, incomplete, contradictory, and self-serving definition and conception. Trained and experienced scholars have *always* combined professionalism and objectivity with responsible activism. If the self-appointed critics continue to fuss, I point to right-wing scholars still affiliated with universities who regularly violate established standards for objectivity. The right-wing complaint is uninformed at best, and hypocritical at worst (for more on this topic, see, for example, my “The Best Scholarship Is Political but With No Ideological Stamp,” 2022u, “Humanities Could Change the World—If

Only They Could Change Themselves,” 2023g, “Lessons for Becoming a Public Scholar,” 2023h, “Speaking Out on the Israel-Hamas Conflict Doesn’t Mean Taking Sides,” 2023j, and “Scholar Activism Doesn’t Require Taking Sides,” 2023k).

Going public is constantly a learning experience—a continuing education as I think about it. So far, it is a satisfying and rewarding retirement “career.” It combines the best of the scholarly without the constraints and contradictions of the university or narrowly defined professionalism. I recommend it. The urgent challenges of our times demand it (for more on how I am responding to this demand, see my “A Post-Retirement Career as a Public Academic Meets the Moment’s Need,” 2021h, “A call to colleagues: Speak out and support children, teachers, librarians, and free speech—and the present and future of your own institutions, too,” 2022n Teaching Outside the Box, 2022q, “I’m Retired but I’m Still Running My Own Unofficial University,” 2022aa, and “Learning Through Teaching,” 2022z).

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Sadly, 2021 meant tributes to four deceased, longtime friends, colleagues, and collaborators. I decided to dedicate *Searching for Literacy* (2022e) to them:

- My acquaintance since 1968 and close friend and colleague from 1979 Jan Reiff at UCLA (“Celebrating Jan Reiff,” UCLA history department tribute page, May 24, 2021)
- My decades-long colleague Mike Rose, also at UCLA, with whom I shared literacy and many other interests (see my “Guest Post: Remembering Mike Rose in Person and in Print,” 2021b)
- Fellow graduate student, colleague, and co-author Alison Prentice, retired from York and Toronto Universities in Victoria, British Columbia (“Tribute to Alison Prentice,” Ontario Historical Society)
- Friend, colleague, collaborator on literacy and other things, and tennis partner Jerry Zaslove of Simon Fraser University

People and Places

Relatedly and intersectionally, Vicki and I maintain, renew, and expand our connections with many people. The same retirement emphases that stimulate my public education campaign also propel these personal movements.

Among them are old and new friends, colleagues, former students, and neighbors. Those in Columbus visit with coffee or their lunch and bring takeout dinners (or we pick up takeout and meet at their homes). Sometimes friends’ dogs join us. In late 2021 we discovered a favorite: picking up freshly made waffles from Winston’s Coffee and Waffles food truck and bringing them to our house.

Over more than 40 years, we had many cats and three dogs, two of them for 16 and 15 years, instead of small humans. For us, it was the right decision. But over

the years, and in an intensified way now, we have a growing group of “surrogate” grandchildren, without the mixed pleasure and agony of raising our own children. They are the children of younger colleagues and former students.

The kids, aged 2 to 12, eat, chat, perhaps read a bit from our collection of progressive children’s books, and then play with our four generations of robot pets. Beginning in 2013, the robot dogs (Tekno, Golden Pup, and Laughing Dog), robot cats (Little Cat and Tuxedo Cat), a robot “intelligent elephant” (Ellie), and a robot velociraptor (Veli) took the place of our last dog McDonald, a West Highland white terrier who lived with us in San Antonio and Columbus. The retired champion was 15 and died with an implanted heart pacemaker.

We chat with the “grandkids” in living and dining rooms, meet in parks for play dates, root for six- and eight-year-olds’ soccer teams, read books, and collect large and small items (often “free gifts” from wildlife and environmental groups) to give them. We buy them writing pads, colorful calendars, and age-appropriate books. And from them, we buy Girl Scout Cookies. One named caterpillars in her back yard Harvey and Vicki. Several of them make art for us and send us letters.

We gave a solar-powered robot kit to one six-year-old, aspiring physicist (it only operates 30 minutes each day when the sun is at a certain angle. That is fine with him). I discuss social justice with a six-year-old and think about police with a five-year-old. For the holidays in 2021, we gave each household a copy of the superb children’s book from the 1619 Project *Born on the Water* (Hannah-Jones & Watson, 2021). Together, we’ve proved that one can enjoy having grandchildren without having children first.

Retirement adjustment and the Covid-19 pandemic combined to stimulate me, and us, to seek new friends, rekindle dormant relationships, and thicken long-standing connections. These friends, relationships, and connections range widely over huge distances and more than five decades to include high school, college, and graduate school classmates, teachers, and professors and their families; professional colleagues; former undergraduate students and especially doctoral students from three universities; former neighbors; physicians; and friends from all of the cities in which we lived. Adding to those numbers are at least three generations from around the world of literacy studies scholars; historians of education; members of the SSHA (dating to 1976); urban historians; historians of childhood, youth, and families; and interdisciplinarians.

Returning to my theme: the intersections of the personal, the political, the academic, and place are far too many to count or categorize. They are my life with literacy and my continuing education.