

# Chapter 10. Transitions and Challenges in Mid-Career: The Ohio State University and Columbus, 2004–2017

Moving in 2004 to Columbus, Ohio, *The Ohio State University*, and a Department of English (with joint appointment in History) as the inaugural Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies is a complicated tale of opportunities taken then mostly taken away, obstacles generally surmounted or avoided, and unprecedented accomplishments; new and old colleagues, students, and friends; and unexpected experiences. It is a story of great expectations but disappointing endings, followed by new beginnings after retirement.

Overall, in this chapter I disentangle the increasingly complicated contradictions of my life of intersectionality among the personal, the political, the academic, and place in its next-to-final phase. This chapter explores in multiple dimensions the final course of my professional life in pursuit of one form of interdisciplinarity and others. It continues directly and indirectly my life with literacy.

Chapter Ten also follows variations on the theme, and the factual realities, of another poorly managed public university failing to fulfill its promises to me, and to its students, faculty, staff, and taxpaying as well as supposedly benefiting public. This time it was not a new, suburban, branch campus, but one of the largest, flagship, urban, public universities in the United States, a land grant institution 150 years old. Disappointment by an institution of higher education is a recurring element of my life history, an experience central to the history of American higher education since at least the 1950s–1960s mass expansions, if not over more than 200 years. (See my essays under Universities and Ohio State University in the Appendix.)

There is insufficient research on higher education administration, including the internal connections and disconnections at all levels, from university-wide officials to the school or college and departmental levels. This is largely where the “action” for the faculty and students takes place. Understanding may begin with Paul H. Mattingly’s *American Academic Cultures* (2017), Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier’s *Austerity Blues* (2016), Christopher Newfield’s *The Great Mistake* (2016); and Steven Brint’s *Two Cheers for Higher Education* (2018), among a large but uneven literature. I am probing the topic of higher education administration, and proposing changes, in my forthcoming book *Reconstructing the “Uni-versity” From the Ashes of the “Mega- and Multi-versity.”*

This not-quite-final “chapter” is at once a story of Vicki’s and my joint and individual patterns of resettlement and professional and personal adaptations in middle age. McDonald happily transitioned to the cooler climate of Ohio until his death from heart failure in 2013. (He spent his final months with an implanted heart pacemaker. It was successfully removed and implanted into another

Students were sometimes prompted to participate by their professors and at other times by their own scholarly or more general interests. Substantial numbers came from English, education, history, the arts, health, and medicine, fewer from the social and natural sciences. That followed faculty and disciplinary interests and patterns of collaboration. A few undergraduates joined in, often prompted by attendance in my courses.

Across the many divisions, intellectual and personal exchange, communication, and mutual respect reigned. LiteracyStudies@OSU stimulated course enrollments and attracted doctoral students to active faculty participants including me. I supervised or co-supervised dissertations in English, history, education, and dance.

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Fourth, as my activities in the previous sections of this chapter indicate, I played an active role across campus. In addition to English and history, I was also a faculty associate in the Department of Comparative Studies and a not-quite-formal associate of the College of Education. I was an affiliated faculty member in the Diversity and Identity Studies Collective, Humanities Institute, International Poverty Solutions Collaborative, Mershon Center for International Security Studies, Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, and Project Narrative.

These activities represent how I put my academic politics into practice. At times, it was intellectually stimulating and rewarding. At other times, it was a drag or nuisance. But it led me to worthwhile acquaintanceships and friends, a number of which continue in my retirement.

The English Department, of course, was most demanding. By assignment or election, I was affiliated with rhetoric, composition, and literacy; American and English literature before 1900; popular culture; and narrative studies. Search committees I participated on included selective investment searches and numerous searches for assistant and associate professors. I also participated on tenure and promotion committees. On at least four occasions, I was nominated (but never chosen) for Graduate or Undergraduate Professor of the Year.

In the History Department I was linked to American and European history, curriculum constellations, and the modern America initiative. I served on the advisory committee for the Center for Historical Research (CHR); the Family, Kinship, and Household: New Perspectives initiative; and on the Popular Culture faculty. But at times, History had difficulty remembering my cross-appointment or physical location down the street.

Consistent with my now “advanced” intersectionality in active practice, I was closely involved with the Humanities Institute. In addition to serving on its Advisory Committee, I advised on the Building Public Space initiative, Working Group on Public Humanities, and the Neighborhood Institute. I had almost non-stop conversations with its longtime director Chris Zacher, next-door neighbor

animal.) This is also the tale of career completion. I narrate this segment of the journey toward a mixed legacy through a series of eight slices of life, 2004–2017, with more or less explicit lessons from each.

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First, moving to an English department and, even with a joint appointment, leaving the daily grounds and rounds of a history program or department and planning to operate from day one *across* the uncoordinated, disconnected university, I simultaneously left familiar ground and began anew at age 55. For Ohio State, my situation was unprecedented, for most universities, unusual. For myself, I attempted to operationalize dreams that dated back to educational reforms and intellectual aspirations proposed in the 1960s and 1970s.

In a truly cross-campus, interdisciplinary initiative, I sought to build ideas and new connections beyond traditional disciplines and the organizational structure and hierarchies in which they are embedded: departments and colleges or schools. Although insufficiently questioned or contextualized and too often presumed to be “natural,” divisions and hierarchies are themselves historical developments (see for example, my *Undisciplining Knowledge*, 2015a, “Interdisciplinarity is Not About the Humanities Aping the Sciences,” 2021d, and “History Lessons Can Help Disciplines to Survive,” 2021k; see also Jacobs, 2014; Frickel et al., 2016; and Millgram, 2015).



Figure 10.1. University District home in snow, 2019. Photo by Kay Bea Jones.

In some ways, my vision was founded in personal and professional history. Michael Katz's Hamilton/Canadian Social History Project was the most direct influence. I was also stimulated by the precedent-setting examples in social science history of Peter Laslett's and Tony (E. Anthony) Wrigley's Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (CamPops) at the University of Cambridge, England, and Chuck Tilly's Center for Research on Social Organization at the University of Michigan. The original model derived from the sixième section of the *École Pratique des Hautes Etudes* in Paris led by Fernand Braudel and Lucien Febvre in the 1950s and 1960s, inspired by Marc Bloch and Henri Lefebvre (see Bloch, 1963; Braudel, 1992; and Lefebvre, 1971).

On a personal cum professional level, I came to OSU attempting to achieve what I could only dream about at UTD and UTSA. These universities' immaturity, the fragility of the basic institutional structures, and the instability of the faculty together precluded the bases to establish a cross- or interdisciplinary, campus-wide program or set of programs. They also lacked funding and supportive leadership. The conditions of my hiring and the endowment of the Ohio Eminent Scholar chair provided, for a time at least, just that. In retrospect, my failures to innovate successfully at UTD and UTSA were all but preordained given the youth and immaturity of the universities and the character of their leadership. I understand how their rhetorical promotion and sloganeering—part of their origin myths—inadequately substituted for vision, planning, and direction.

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For years I blamed myself in part for not seeing through the smokescreens or finding pathways around them. That may be too harsh a judgment. My 13 years of active service at OSU underscore that point and the questions it raises. Although I never “escaped” from my foundational role in the New Literacy Studies and the serious historical study of literacy, I expanded my active research first to the history of growing up and then to urban and Dallas history. For decades, I asserted that I was “putting literacy behind me.” I failed, but successfully.

I completed *The Dallas Myth* (2008a) in my first years at OSU with research endowment support and then moved to a new mid-course: greater attention to writing about—but not actively conducting new research in primary sources on—literacy and the history of literacy. At the same time, I reintegrated numerous strains of my education, teaching, and writing about interdisciplinarity into work toward a social and cultural history of interdisciplinarity itself. This came to fruition in *Undisciplining Knowledge: Interdisciplinarity in the Twentieth Century* (2015a) on one hand and *Searching for Literacy: The Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies* (2022e, completed in 2015) on the other hand.

From 2004 until I was forced in 2017 to end the overwhelmingly successful, interdisciplinary initiative LiteracyStudies@OSU, I sought to practice what I had been taught and what I had long preached. In sum, this entailed a unique, university-wide role. I continued my earlier practice of teaching across disciplinary

and division boundaries (especially in history, humanities, and education with graduate students from across the arts and sciences), along with other, newer, and original forms of outreach and integration across almost the entire university. This is captured materially and symbolically by my newer scholarly research projects and books, *Undisciplining Knowledge* (2015a), *Searching for Literacy* (2022e), and several new and revised collections of essays.

When I was seeking a publisher for *The Dallas Myth* (2008a), a reviewer and a university press editor led me to the freelance developmental editor Grey Osterud. With a Ph.D. in American history and as a former tenured professor, Grey is an editor whose abilities are not paralleled by any other I've encountered. Not only did she successfully perform final revision and preparation for publication of that book, but she also worked with me on *Undisciplining Knowledge* (2015a) and *Searching for Literacy* (2022e). Grey became a firm and trusted advisor and friend.

Those books, my final academic works as a working professor, confirm how the personal history reported in this book represents the intersectionality I identified and traced over 75 years. This chapter and Chapter One on retirement mark a new beginning in remembering, reflecting, and writing—and exercising literacy and literacies, constituting a not-quite-final review. Despite my retirement, I remain engaged in all of these issues, often in new and different ways.

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Second, to both my surprise and unsurprise, my Ohio State experience confirms many lessons of my Texas years. I have demonstrated elsewhere, in papers published in 2015 and 2021 and continuing, that OSU is one of the nation's leading "Slogan U's" (for example, see Graff, 2015b, 2022f, 2022h, 2022i). I have not attempted to trace the beginnings, but I suspect that sloganeering has been part of *The Ohio State University*—as the land grant charter states—since its origins 150 years ago on land stolen from Indigenous people and under segregationist federal legislation. The five university presidents whom I have known have literally "led" by enunciating slogans without programs, budgets, or timetables. Few if any of their catchphrases bore resemblance to reality.

Slogans in use at OSU have ranged from "Buckeye Nation" (see Booker, 2018) to "One University" (see The Ohio State University Foundation, 2013) for perhaps the most dis-integrated, large public university in the nation. An "Innovation District" of one block with an "Interdisciplinary Research Facility" sits on the western edge of campus (Knox, 2021). The Office of Student Life touts the never-defined "Exceptional Student Experience," as if there were a single one. The "Scarlet & Gray Advantage" plan boasts of debt-free graduation without cutting costs (The Ohio State University, n.d), an arithmetic and logical impossibility.

The university is far too large and disconnected for its out-of-date, inadequate, and overflowing administrative structures, procedures, and communications. Regardless of slogans and research funding, OSU is best known for its

football teams. The head coach's salary is almost 10 times the university president's (Szilagy, 2023)—more than enough to employ at least 100 new full professors. At least one Buckeye team booster approved of that decision, in a letter to the *Columbus Dispatch's* sports page, because hiring more faculty only means adding more “liberals.”

Both the Ohio Eminent Scholar (OES) position and my hiring reflect this common thrust toward the entrepreneurial and promotional domains. For both better and worse, I took my position seriously and made my best—and my collaborators' and participants' best—efforts to achieve our goals.

As a historian and a literacy studies scholar, I was warmly welcomed by many but not all of my new colleagues. The English Department was and is deeply divided internally among literary critics, literary theorists, historical and contemporary literature scholars, creative writers, disability studies and gender studies scholars, Black and ethnic studies scholars, and rhetoric and composition—also known as writing studies—specialists. Such divisions are common; their number reflects the size of the university and department, the latter steadily declining over almost two decades. While I was a member of the department, there was no leadership or common direction, no moderation of divisions, conflicts, or competition.

Within the English Department, I was attached to the large, proud, and not particularly disciplinarily integrated concentration in rhetoric and composition. It was symbolically renamed “Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy” upon my hiring. Some of my courses were linked to literary history and criticism, and I worked with graduate students across divisions and time periods.

Some of my rhetoric and composition colleagues never accepted the “L” being added to their concentration, never accepted having a well-published historian join them, nor me, despite voting for my appointment.

Some of the faculty in literature and creative writing saw no reason that the new OES was either a historian or within the domain of RC and L. Some, not surprisingly, seemed intimidated by my productivity and scholarly reputation. That of course is not unique to OSU or its English department. Over the years, I had more close associates from literature than RCL but more students from RCL and outside English.

My courses were all cross-listed in the department of history and some in other departments. I supervised graduate students and sat on exam and thesis committees across the university but especially in English and history. I agreed, however, that I was obligated to serve on committees only in one department—English.

The Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities (later known as the Humanities Institute and now known as the Humanities Collaboratory) immediately reached out to me. The director Chris Zacher, who lived next door to our house and urged us to buy it, actively recruited me. The Institute long provided office space for LiteracyStudies@OSU's administrative assistant (later associate director) and graduate research assistants until it was forced to leave

its old house for smaller, shared offices in a classroom building. The College of Arts and Humanities never recognized the value of its cross-disciplinary institute. Chris, the institute, and LiteracyStudies@OSU collaborated closely for many years, organizationally, fiscally, programmatically, and intellectually. All new initiatives need a base from which to commence, ideally outside a single disciplinary department.

Because of the nature of the Ohio Eminent Scholar position and its endowment, LiteracyStudies@OSU's reach and outreach led to recurrent if not always sympathetic or supportive relationships with the offices of the dean of the College of Arts and Humanities and the Office of the Provost (or Academic Affairs).

It is not unfair to report that only one of my several successive deans, provosts, and presidents expressed any interest in the initiative. A professor in the department of theatre, he said that he learned from literacy studies and from me.

When I closed the program, the dean in office (a historian) along with the provost (an agriculturalist) and several vice provosts personally admitted that the university violated written agreements about the initiative's support and the use of its funds. They nonetheless refused to act in LiteracyStudies@OSU's or the university's own interests. This unjustifiable inaction led directly to the loss of my associate director of a dozen years' full-time position and benefits on which she and her husband depended. After I retired, the dean renamed the state-endowed Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies without approval at the university or state level.

This incident stands out among a series of promises made and promises broken. Failures at the department, college, and university level contributed directly to the end of LiteracyStudies@OSU and my earlier-than-anticipated retirement in 2017. Deans, provosts, associate provosts, and department chairs all made positive noises to my face but seldom acted affirmatively, consistently, or kept promises. This pattern took a toll that I finally could not sustain. I generalize, reluctantly, that this reflects much about contemporary universities.

My relationships also included faculty members in several divisions within the large College of Education. My courses on literacy were cross-listed, and I co-supervised master's degree and doctoral students in areas related to both literacy and history of education. Education graduate students were among the most active participants in the literacy studies graduate group (GradSem) that existed for most of the lifetime of the overall program. A majority were former teachers returning for higher degrees. Some were excellent, and we remain in contact.

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Third, LiteracyStudies@OSU at its prime exceeded my own and everyone else's expectations as a campus-wide, interdisciplinary set of interconnected programs and activities. Some faculty and administrators deemed my goals no more than impossible aspirations, or at least unlikely for disconnected Ohio State University. My first English Department chair once commented only half-jokingly, "Harvey,

is Ohio State big enough for you?” We achieved national and international recognition and attracted visitors and graduate students. Our doctoral students have done well professionally.

LiteracyStudies@OSU is best conceptualized as a set of interlinked working parts, many of which could stand on their own, but the sum of whose parts was much larger. The program’s former website and printed materials stated the following:

Literacy Studies formed in 2004 as an interdisciplinary working group of the Humanities Institute, under the direction of Harvey J. Graff, Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies and Professor of English and History. The intent was to foster a campus-wide conversation and collaborative investigation into the nature of literacy, bringing together historical, contextual, comparative, and critical perspectives and modes of understanding.

The group began its work by inviting distinguished scholars of literacy to share their insights and ideas. They also organized cross-disciplinary forums around central questions, such as the roles of literacy in science and health. The aim overall was to explore ideas about and approaches to literacy and literacy studies at The Ohio State University, where interests and strengths range widely. These initial efforts kindled new institutional and intellectual relationships between different disciplinary clusters and their faculty, staff, and students, from the arts, humanities, and sciences, to education, medicine, engineering, and law...

LiteracyStudies@OSU, now a University-wide initiative supported by the College of Arts and Sciences, the Humanities Institute, and the Department of English, is recognized nationally and internationally as a model of interdisciplinary program development.

LiteracyStudies@OSU initiatives are the result of shared interests and collaborative efforts. The goal is to enable conversation and cooperation across departments, across campus, and beyond. Participation is helping to increase awareness of the complexities of literacy in diverse media and cultural contexts. The dialogue also gives rise to new initiatives and activities, such as the new Literacy in Translation Series. (LiteracyStudies@OSU, n.d.)

Both my previous experiences at purportedly but in fact pseudo-interdisciplinary institutions and my historical knowledge of universities, disciplinarity, and interdisciplinarity taught me that I did not want to establish a department, center, or degrees that were segregated and that would compete or conflict with



others (for examples of my thinking about interdisciplinarity, see Graff, 2010c, 2012, 2015a, and 2021d). LiteracyStudies@OSU strived to be a set of intersecting points, and both overlapping and interconnecting spheres.

LiteracyStudies@OSU actively practiced my understanding of reading, writing, and arithmetic applied and adapted across, between, and among all fields of study. We persuaded faculty members, researchers, staff members, and students across the huge university that promulgating their own of the “many” or “endless literacies” was not the road to knowledge, understanding, or collaboration. This was an unparalleled test of my conclusions from decades of research and teaching.

The initiative was self-directed, with the advice and sometimes the consent of colleagues and administrators across the campus. From her first service as my graduate research assistant to administrative assistant and then associate director and lecturer, Susan Hanson deserves credit for her long-term contribution to our success. We sought and received financial and programmatic support from many departments and at the university-wide level.

One category of financial support underwrote LiteracyStudies@OSU. The endowment for the OES chair provided basic funding, although the college never allowed me to see its account balances. Funding included initiative programming grants from the College of Humanities, an award from the Humanities Institute to found and develop the literacy studies working group, and a Colleges of Arts and Sciences interdisciplinary curriculum enhancement award (declined in favor of alternative funding).

In 2006, our third year, we received a grant from the Graduate School to develop the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Literacy Studies, a graduate student elective minor. As our plans more fully emerged, the next year we received major funding for the initiative from the College of Humanities and additional funds from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, the College of Art, the College of Biological Sciences, the College of Dentistry, the Department of English, the Department of Entomology, and the University Libraries to support an annual lecture series.

The Literacy Studies working group quickly became a campus-wide initiative. We achieved this through a combination of both overlapping and quasi-independent working groups, public programs and visiting speakers’ series, a graduate minor, a university-wide graduate students’ interdisciplinary seminar, a student society, and long-standing history of the book and other working groups for faculty and graduate students.

In 2009 we organized the landmark, international, interdisciplinary graduate student conference “Expanding Literacy Studies” that featured keynote addresses by my longtime literacy studies colleague and friend Shirley Brice Heath and me on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first publication of *The Literacy Myth* (1979c). Graduate students from OSU and other universities participated in the program under Susan’s and my supervision.

Several hundred OSU students and representatives from across the United States and foreign countries participated, more than 300 in all. The printed program filled many pages. One of the respondents to my keynote was an advanced doctoral student from Iceland and Scotland. The conference was one of the highlights of LiteracyStudies@OSU's 13-year history. We celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a reunion in May 2024 at the same conference center.

Over those years, our visiting lecture series was extremely popular across the university and beyond. Working on our own model, LiteracyStudies@OSU and different departments shared costs and responsibilities. Noted visitors included scholars whose work contributed to the understanding of literacy from across the disciplines and the globe, including North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. They included colleagues and friends such as Deborah Brandt, Shirley Heath, Mike Rose, Johanna Drucker, M. J. Maynes, Bengt Sandin, Michael Wilson, Kolleen Guy, John Duffy, Patrick Berry, Andrew Hacker, William Labov, Jon Miller, Ira Shor, David Nord, Lesley Bartlett, Teresa McCarty, Christopher Hager, Elizabeth Moje, Joanne Rappaport, Lawrence Venuti, Suresh Canagarajah, Anne Dyson, Randall McLeod, Cynthia Brokaw, Anthony Pym, Claudia Angelelli, Kate Viera, Laura Mandell, Curt Dudley-Marling, and Frances Cody, among educationists, linguists, language specialists, scientists, medical experts, and many others from the Americas and Western Europe.

The roster remains impressive. Graduate students and faculty met with them in small groups, often over lunch. And the GradSem—the regular, self-directed, organized graduate student seminar—discussed the visitors' work either before or after their visits. Many of the speakers related directly to and were invited by the various working groups.

Working groups were in a diverse, almost dizzying array of subjects. Some were short-lived, while others lasted more than a decade. Their topics ranged from the history of the book (long led by Alan Farmer in English); history of reading; and history of reading, writing, and book arts; to Appalachian literacy; literacy in the arts; literacy in dance; literacy in science; literacy in health and medicine; literacy in translation; and others, most with multiple leaders and long-standing members.

Faculty from across the entire university met to discuss literacy in science and medicine, for example, and attend lectures by visitors. Collaboration with Moritz College of Law colleagues was also stimulating and rewarding.

Hundreds of OSU central- and regional-campus students and scores of faculty members participated over the years. To give a flavor, faculty and graduate student researchers came from English, history, comparative studies, classics, linguistics, East Asian and Near Eastern languages and literature, French and Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, dance, arts, music, architecture, anthropology, communication, geosciences, biology, chemistry, physics, education, law, engineering, medicine, nursing, dental medicine, veterinary medicine, the computer center, university communications, the Wexner Center for the Arts, the Center for Teaching, and University Libraries.

and personal friend until his death in 2019. (I continue to work with his widow, professor emeritus of architecture Kay Bea Jones, on OSU student and University District neighborhood issues. Son Sam completed his Ph.D. in political science at Yale.) I also served on the Civic Engagement committee of the College of Arts and Sciences.

At the university-wide level, my OES position made me a member of the President's and Provost's Advisory Council, composed of faculty holding university-wide, named chairs. We met regularly with the president, provost, and other senior administrators. I knew them all by first name and made my opinions and constructive criticisms known, for better and for worse.

My position also led to appointment to the Ohio State Teaching Enhancement Program (OSTEP) steering committee (and chair for one year)—the Committee to Select Distinguished University Lecturers. And, of course, I was a founding member of the University Council on Literacy Studies.

Less formally but no less importantly to me, I worked with colleagues across campus on the Working Group on the Future of the University and ad hoc working groups revising undergraduate education, reforming general education, and combatting admissions policies that severely harmed the arts and sciences. The collegial knowledge, commitment, activism, and continuing friendships of Randy Roth (History), Steve Rissing (Biology), Alan Farmer (English), Mike Bevis (Geosciences), Creighton Ogle (Mathematics), and others remain with me. Then President Gordon Gee, in his “second coming” at OSU, feigned support of our efforts and fed us lunch, but as was his practice, did nothing (on Gee, see Graff, 2015b, as well as regular news reports on his tenure as president of West Virginia University).

His successors in the presidency, Michael Drake and Kristina Johnson, showed no interest (see Graff, 2022f, 2022h, and 2022i). At OSU, university-wide general education requirements went from one unsupportable, unworkable, and divisive iteration to another, most recently and without acknowledgment attempting a poor copy of the University at Buffalo (formerly SUNY Buffalo) for reasons unknown.

While I was active, the number of mid- to upper-level, highly paid administrative positions grew almost monthly. They seldom had publicized job descriptions. Their rates of increase and ratio of salaries to the faculty's rose exponentially.

My university-wide position, collegial and friendship relations with faculty members across campus (including one engineer, one veterinary medicine specialist, and several in the medical school through my physicians and others), and involvement in reform efforts gave me a unique window, perspective, and involvement with OSU. My experience at other public universities helped to open that window farther. All this helps to shape my forthcoming book, *Reconstructing the “Uni-versity” from the Ashes of the “Mega- and Multi-versity.”*

What I see clearly now is an overly large, disconnected, and poorly managed university with many excellent faculty members, students, staff members, and

physical resources. The Faculty Senate lacks influence and effective leadership. The AAUP Chapter is ineffectual. On one hand, I worked with others on various reform proposals. On the other hand, adopting a practice I followed to a limited extent in Dallas and San Antonio, and expanded in retirement, I worked with higher education reporters in the daily *Columbus Dispatch* and with OSU student journalists on *The Lantern*, and I offered them perspectives, details, and public data that the university typically (and frequently illegally) denied them. It sometimes led to more acute and insightful articles.

I also wrote opinion essays, a practice that I later expanded. Evolutionary biologist Steve Rissing and I published “Early-College Programs Lack Many Benefits of the Real Thing” (2015). I published the widely discussed “An Education in Sloganeering” (2015b) and “Not a Popularity Contest” (2015c). These publications foreshadowed my retirement roles.

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Fifth, inseparable from LiteracyStudies@OSU, my most compelling experiences and memories of Ohio State are of my students, along with a large handful of close colleagues and friends, with many of whom Vicki and I remain in contact.

Over more than a dozen years at OSU, I taught undergraduate students introductory general education courses on literacy and upper-division courses on literacy, the history of literacy, the history of children and youth, and introductions to graduate research. My undergraduate courses attracted a sizable proportion of nonmajors.

I happily wrote recommendations for law and medical schools, with students achieving a high rate of acceptance. Those former students are now lawyers and physicians. Nick Sincere, Nina Passen, and Blake Taneff immediately come to mind. I only taught one football player; he had trouble keeping his eyes open. Three members of “The Best Damned Band in the Land” (TBDBITL), OSU’s marching band, fared better in wakefulness, interest, and achievement. I was able to reward them with recommendations of sights and eating places when they accompanied the football team to the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans. (I formally complained when the band director demanded their release from classes with no advance notice to me or to them.)

Two other undergraduate students merit special mention: Windy Hawkins and Ellen Manovich. Windy was my work-study research assistant in 2007–2009. As a young single mother, she never missed a deadline, sometimes delivering her work to me at home (a few minutes’ drive from the office) with her toddler in the car. She completed her second master’s degree in health care, and her two daughters do well in school.

Ellen was my finest undergraduate student in almost a half century of teaching. Early in her first semester, as a new student in the University Honors program, a Presidential Scholar, and a member of the nationally competitive rowing team, she scrutinized the History and English faculty rosters and picked me

out. She emailed: “I’m a new honors student. They say that I must learn to do research. Will you teach me?” My relationship with her and her entire family continues.

Ellen completed a groundbreaking honors thesis on the history of the University District that abuts the OSU campus. It won the Undergraduate Thesis of the Year award. She also nominated me for Advisor of the Year (with a nomination that brought tears to my eyes). I was awarded the honor. While I recovered from back surgery, she accepted the award on my behalf and brought it to my bedside. Every professor would be honored with such a deeply felt and articulately expressed tribute.

Ellen completed doctoral study in History at the University of Minnesota. She continued to excel, writing an original doctoral dissertation comparing three university districts in three different U.S. cities. I served as external member of her dissertation committee and participated remotely in the final defense.

She taught history at Carleton College and published an article from her dissertation in the *Journal of Social History* (Manovich, 2018). Now on a career pause, she happily raises her young family. As an urban historian, she teaches children to “read the city.” Ellen is only one of my former students who delight Vicki and me with photographs of their growing children. Hers are among our “surrogate grandchildren.”

At the graduate level, I taught introductory courses in methods and theory including interdisciplinarity and electives on the history of literacy, literacy studies, and history of children and youth. These cross-listed seminars attracted students from a wide range of interests, disciplines, and specializations, making for rich interactions and research projects. As a result, my many thesis and especially dissertation students were a stimulating and diverse group who knew each other and worked collaboratively. Each semester concluded with potluck dinners at our home.

For graduate students in English, History, Education, and Dance, I was a seminar instructor, advisor and supervisor, Master’s Examination Committee chair and member, and Doctoral Dissertation director and/or Defense Committee member. I also led the university-wide Literacy Studies GradSem.

Many grad students were active in Literacy Studies, including the 2009 International Student Conference hosted by LiteracyStudies@OSU. In 2013, David Bwire (Education), Di Luo (History), and Nora McCook (English) formed an SSHA panel on comparative histories of literacy with me as chair and John Duffy from Notre Dame University as commentator. In earlier years I formed sessions with English and education students at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), including Kelly Bradbury, Shawn Casey, Michael Harker, Kate White, and Julia Voss.

Many of these students remain in regular communication with me. Almost all who desired tenure track positions secured them. Some have included “literacy myth” in their dissertation, article, or book titles; others have not. Among their

books so far are Michael Harker's *The Lure of Literacy* (2015), Kelly Susan Bradbury's *Reimagining Popular Notions of American Intellectualism* (2016), Victoria Clement's *Learning to Become Turkmen* (2018), and Di Luo's *Beyond Citizenship: Literacy and Personhood in Everyday China, 1900–1945* (2022). Their articles are too numerous to list, but they are in such subject areas as composition, digital media, history, art education, education, and dance, among others.

In addition to those I've mentioned, others who stand out, in multiple ways, are Michael Harwick, Cate Sacchi St. Pierre, Envera Dukaj, and Sarah Webb-Sunderhaus in English; William Sturkey, Sarah Kernan, Lisa Zevorich Susner, and Jessica Blissit in History; Caitlin Law Ryan, Ben Johnson, Jamie Teeple, and Suzu Strayer in Education; Rachael Riggs Leyva in Dance; and Vicki Daiello in Art. I am proud of them, their diversity, and achievements. Vicki and I have holiday cards and digital folders with photos of their children, and I have their publications on the shelves above my desk.

I also mention here the graduate students at other universities who benefited either directly or indirectly from LiteracyStudies@OSU and from my assistance. Two noted scholars among them come immediately to mind: John Duffy, a student of Deborah Brandt at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and now a professor at Notre Dame, author of *Writing from These Roots* (2007); and Patrick Berry, a student at the University of Illinois now on the faculty at Syracuse University, author of *Doing Time, Writing Lives* (2018).

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Sixth is my own scholarship. Despite—or in some important ways because of—LiteracyStudies@OSU and my other university activities, my writing and research proceeded well. A reduced teaching load helped. So did a research fund associated with the Ohio Eminent Scholar position that provided a research assistant and covered some expenses. This dedicated assistance, for the first time in my lengthy career, made a material difference.

For my research, I was awarded a special assignment for a course release in 2007 and in 2008–2010 a grant for Research and Creativity in the Arts and Humanities. I received a Faculty Professional Leave for the 2011–2012 academic year. Except for that year, throughout this period I continued as director of LiteracyStudies@OSU. My former colleague Brenda Brueggeman served as acting director during my leave year.

Completing *The Dallas Myth: The Making and Unmaking of an American City* (2008a) in 2005–2006, I used these funds and the time away from teaching to continue my decades-long project to re-envision our understanding of literacy and begin work toward a history of interdisciplinarity. This was another stock-taking, culmination, and set of propositions, rooted in history, for both scholars and multiple publics.

Beyond LiteracyStudies@OSU, I continued my scholarship and professional activities in literacy studies and the history of literacy. Literacy led to a

distinguished lecture at the Mary Lou Fulton Endowed Symposium series at Arizona State University in 2005. At the recommendation of my OSU Moritz College of Law colleague and friend Peter Shane, I served on the Advisory Board of the Communications and Society program of the Aspen Institute for the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy.

I consulted for *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing* and served on the advisory board of the Museum of Writing online collaborative project of the Institute of English Studies at the University of London and the Faculty of Information Studies and University Library of the University of California at Los Angeles. In addition, I was a member of the international Editorial Board of the Computers and Composition Digital Press (CCDP) and of the founding EditorialBoard for the journal *Literacy in Composition Studies*.

My books on literacy in the Ohio State years included the edited volumes: *Literacy and Historical Development* (2007b); *National Literacy Campaigns*, co-edited with Robert F. Arnove (1987/2008); and *Understanding Literacy in its Historical Contexts*, co-edited with Alison Mackinnon, Bengt Sandin, and Ian Winchester (2009). I also wrote *Literacy Myths, Legacies, and Lessons* (2011/2023c, foreword by Shirley Brice Heath) and my review and final scholarly reflections on the history of literacy studies itself, *Searching for Literacy: The Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies* (2022e).



Figure 10.2. Harvey conducting seminar at host's home, University of Arizona, Tucson, 2008.

Articles and book chapters in these years included the much-cited “Literacy Myths,” with John Duffy in the *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2008), “Bibliography of the History of Literacy in Western Europe and North America” (2007a), “Not Your Mother’s Literacy, But Perhaps Your Daughter’s” with Susan Hanson (2008), “Introduction to Historical Studies of Literacy” (2003), and “Literacy, Religion, Gender, and Social History: A Socio-Cultural History for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” with Alison Mackinnon, Bengt Sandin, and Ian Winchester (2003b).

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first publication of *The Literacy Myth* (1979c) stimulated renewed interest and widespread tributes. They began in 2009 with a plenary session at the Expanding Literacy Studies International Interdisciplinary Conference for Graduate Students at OSU with responses from graduate students from several countries.

They continued with a talk in 2010 at the Simon Fraser University Institute for the Humanities on “*The Literacy Myth* Now Thirty Years Old Revisited.” A radio interview and my keynote address to the Symposium on Critical Perspectives on Understanding Literacy in a Technological Age at the British Columbia Institute of Technology accompanied it. As always, but with a regularly spreading network and shifting emphases, the personal, political, academic, and place intersected and realigned.

My frequently cited and discussed “*The Literacy Myth* at Thirty” (2010a), “The Literacy Myth: Literacy, Education and Demography” (2010b), and “The Legacies of Literacy Studies” (2013) were part of the anniversary. Among my other contributions in these years were “Epilogue: Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies with Notes on the Place of Deborah Brandt” (2014a) and “Interview with H. J. Graff & B. Street” (Galvão et al., 2016).

In different venues, I reflected on and extended my interpretations of literacy past, present, and future. As opportunities presented, I sought and developed different scholarly *and* public audiences.

Scholars in Brazil, where one of my earlier books on literacy had been translated into Portuguese, continued their interest. I participated on the scientific committee of the 2010 I SIHELE (International Seminar on History of Teaching Reading and Writing) seminar, “The Constitution of the Field of History of Literacy in Brazil,” promoted by Grupo de Pesquisa História do ensino de língua e literatura no Brasil (GPELLB), and I also participated in the research group “History of Teaching Language and Literature in Brazil” for the Faculty of Philosophy and Sciences’ Post-Graduate Program in Education at Universidade Estadual Paulista-Campus Marília.

In 2013 I engaged with the Scientific Committee for ABALF’s (Brazilian Association of Literacy) conference “The Meanings of Literacy in Brazil: What We Know, What We Do and What We Want?” and the I SIHELE seminar “Methods and Teaching Materials in the History of the Initial Teaching of Reading and Writing in Brazil.”



In summer 2014 Vicki and I visited Brazil and had an exhilarating introduction to the country and its scholars, stimulated by my invitation to keynote the IV Colóquio Internacional Letramento e Cultura Escrita (4th International Conference of Literacy and Written Culture) at Minas Gerais, meet with faculty and graduate students there, and also conduct seminars in Rio de Janeiro. An award from the federal government of Brazil supported my visit. Ana Galvão, professor at the Federal University at Minas Gerais, was one of the coordinators for my visit and organizers of the conference. Her gracious hosting of Vicki and me contributed to our continuing scholarly collaboration and friendship.

Ana had visited LiteracyStudies@OSU while she and her husband Leo were visiting professors in Illinois. She was one of the interviewers and editors of a memorable and historically significant, joint session with my longtime colleague Brian Street and me about the origins of literacy studies and our respective roles in the development of the field (Galvão et al., 2016). I knew Brian from our appearances at international conferences and his visits to the College of Education at OSU.

Before the conference began, Vicki and I spent three days in historic Salvador da Bahia on the east coast and two days in Brasília, the modern capital city in central Brazil. The former is an incredible city heavily influenced by the vibrant culture of the descendants of Africans transported to the Portuguese colony as enslaved laborers. The highlight of our visit was a bus excursion a few miles north to Projeto Tamar, where conservation volunteers dig up sea turtle eggs and move them to a safer part of the beach. Vicki composed “Tartarugas,” a song describing the project’s work.

Brasília offered a stunning contrast with its city plan resembling an airplane; discrete districts devoted to governmental, commercial, residential, or recreational functions; and vast, treeless plazas of concrete punctuated with public art and architectural marvels, mostly designed by Oscar Niemeyer and constructed from 1956 to 1960 as part of President Juscelino Kubitschek’s “Fifty Years in Five” initiative.

Back to the State of Minas Gerais and the beautiful, historic city of Belo Horizonte, where the university hosting the conference was located. Vicki attended some sessions but also toured museums and photographed the sights around the central square. She joined the participants for many delicious lunches and dinners over several days. In addition to the inaugural lecture on graduate education programs, I conducted a session on the history of literacy.

After the conference, Ana Galvão, her husband Leo, and younger son Tomas led us to the historic gold mining town of Ouro Preto. By happy coincidence, we were all treated to dinner at the mountaintop home of one of her university colleagues in a town where cows roam freely in the streets and mailboxes are painted in delightful designs, including one we called the “Reading Cow”!

In Rio de Janeiro we stayed in a hotel overlooking Copacabana beach with its constant hum of activities and had time for touring. Several professors at the university graciously hosted us. We also shared a wonderful dinner with Michael Katz’s oldest daughter Rebecca and her husband John. I babysat her 40

years earlier. She had grown up to be a teacher and translator in Rio, engaged in social work.

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In 2015 I served on the scientific committee for I CONBALf (Brazilian Congress on Literacy)—Associação Brasileira de Alfabetização (Brazilian Association of Literacy). I was invited to consult and participate in seminars on interdisciplinarity in São Paulo.

On invitation, I also presented keynote addresses about literacy and its history to these events:

- Western States Rhetoric and Literacy Conference, “Big Rhetorics, Big Literacies: The Discourses of Power,” at Arizona State University in 2004
- Conference on “From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition,” at Ohio State University in 2004
- National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research Conference, “Literacies Across Time, Space, and Place: New Directions in Literacy Research for Political Action,” with Deborah Brandt at Ohio State University in 2005
- Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) annual meeting, “Writing Realities, Changing Realities,” in New Orleans, LA, in 2008
- The Symposium on Critical Perspectives on Understanding Literacy in a Technological Age at the British Columbia Institute of Technology in 2010
- The Conference on College Composition and Communication annual meeting, “Writing Gateways,” in St. Louis, MO, in 2012

An especially enjoyable invited lecture on literacy took place at the Graduate School of Education and Information Science, University of California at Los Angeles, in 2013. Invited by my longtime colleague and friend Johanna Drucker, her endowed chair’s funds paid for my visit. I modified my lecture format and asked UCLA to circulate discussion questions for the audience in advance. I introduced each question with details and perspectives in the place of a traditional presentation.

The night before my lecture, Vicki shared with Johanna and me by email a photo of the newly arrived, mechanical dog Tekno—our first of four generations of robot pets. (They took the place of McDonald, our last canine family member.) Knowing me well, certain that I would not be embarrassed and would take the moment in stride, Johanna used Tekno’s image in her introduction. He and I brought the house down. It paved the way to a wonderful discussion.

A memorable dinner with my UCLA friends Johanna, Jan Reiff, and Mike Rose followed. Jan and Mike, tragically, are no longer with us. Both passed away in 2021. They are among the dear colleagues and friends to whom *Searching for Literacy*, 2022e, is dedicated.



*Figure 10.3. Tekno, first robot pet, previewing his virtual appearance at Harvey's UCLA lecture, 2014.*

With respect to the history of children and youth, my writings included “Coming of Age in Chicago” with Joy L. Bivens (2004), “Teaching the History of Growing Up” (2008b), and “The Critical Historiography of Childhood” (2009b).

I participated in the invitational Conference on Rethinking Child Development at the University of California, Berkeley’s Center for Child and Youth Policy and Department of History in 2005. This was one of a series of small conferences to bring together historians and social scientists on the subject of childhood. I also served on the executive committee for the Society for the History of Children and Youth and participated in the society’s meetings in 2005, 2007 (in Sweden), 2009, and 2011. In 2009 I spoke at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Seminar on Child Studies at the Department of Child Studies, Linköping University, Sweden.

Vicki joined me on some of these combined, business-pleasure trips. After the 2007 meeting in Sweden, for example, she and I took a train from Norrköping to Stockholm, an overnight ferry to Helsinki, and a hydrofoil catamaran to Tallinn, capital of Estonia. For this part of the trip—which included a guided walking tour of the old town and its fortified walls—longtime friends Jim Block from DePaul University in Chicago and his wife Ruth joined us. Vicki and I continued by bus to St. Petersburg, Russia, for three remarkable days, followed by three days in Helsinki.

On urban history and the history of Dallas, I participated in the 2006 annual meeting of the Urban History Association in Tempe, Arizona. Michael Katz delivered his presidential address, and we dined together.

*The Dallas Myth* (2008a), with its distant origins in the 1970s, was published in 2008. Attracting local, state, and national attention, it was discussed at a session at the SSHA in 2008. In recognition of the book's publication, I presented the Gartner Honors Lecture at Southern Methodist University in 2010 and in 2011 was invited to speak and confer by the Master of City and Regional Planning graduate program and the Student Planning Association at the University of Texas at Arlington, where I also spoke to the OneBook Program. It was their book of the year. National Public Radio's Radiolab program also interviewed me in 2010 on the origins of cities.

In 2010, Ohio State honored me with the Distinguished Undergraduate Research Mentor Award. In 2011, I was nominated for the Grawemeyer Award in Education from the University of Louisville, and in 2013, I was awarded the first and only award for "unmatched record of attendance at the annual conference of the SSHA, 1976–2013 *and counting*."

In 2015–2016 I received a grant from the Center for Real Estate, Fisher College of Business at Ohio State to support a graduate research assistant. Chloe Tull and I began an investigation of Campus Partners, OSU's property development arm. Just as the project became revealing—the quasi-independent, quasi-university, quasi-nonprofit, quasi-active, aid-to-private-developers agency was overpaying for university-vicinity properties and selling them to developers at a substantial loss—I had to end it. In typical OSU fashion, Campus Partners refused to allow access to public data. In addition, it had no annual reports. My report, "Disconnecting Gown and Town: Campus Partners for Urban Community Development, Ohio State University," will be published soon.

At the intersection of my studies, teaching, research, and writing since my undergraduate years at Northwestern and especially my graduate school years in Toronto, I focused more directly and formally on interdisciplinarity itself. Its programmatic culmination lay in LiteracyStudies@OSU and the Ohio Eminent Scholar post.

I was an invited speaker at the Scope of Interdisciplinarity Conference at Athabasca University in Edmonton Alberta, Canada in 2008. I previewed some of the book's arguments in letters to the editor "The Troubled Discourse of Interdisciplinarity" (2010c) and "Throwing the Baby Out with the Interdisciplinary Bath Water" (2014c) and a book chapter, "Literacy Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies" (2012).

In 2013–2014 I was awarded full-year, residential fellowships by both the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, and the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University to complete *Undisciplining Knowledge: Interdisciplinarity in the Twentieth Century* (2015a). Weighing several factors, we chose to accept the Birkelund Fellowship at the National Humanities Center and lived happily in a rented townhouse in

Durham across the street from Duke University (where our friend from San Antonio John Martin taught history).

My culminating, preretirement, scholarly statement was my social, cultural, intellectual, and institutional history *Undisciplining Knowledge* (2015a). This groundbreaking study presented an unprecedented history for a topic typically, repeatedly, and mistakenly claimed to be novel. I traced the divergent and contradictory patterns of successes and failures over the decades and across disciplines and disciplinary clusters. My approach explicitly compared two identified interdisciplinary institutional developments in each chapter: genetic biology and sociology from the 1890s to the 1920s, the humanities and communication from the 1870s to the 1960s, social relations and operations research from the 1930s to the 1960s, cognitive science and the new histories from the 1940s to the 1980s, materials science and cultural studies from the 1960s to the 1990s, and, most recently, bioscience and literacy studies.

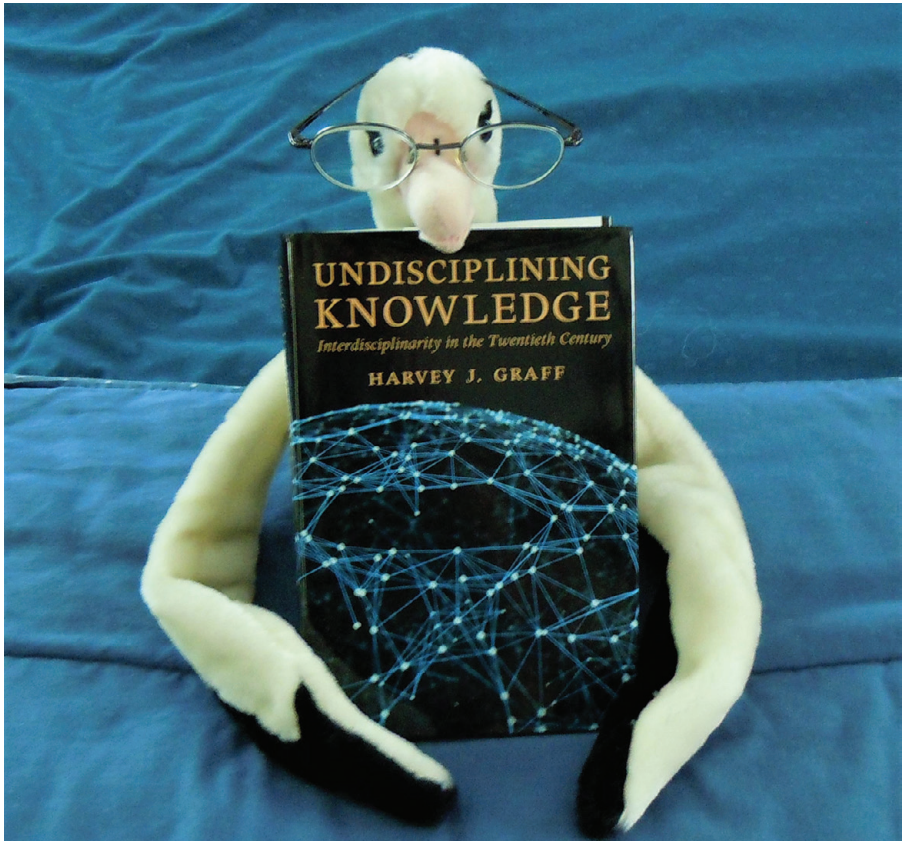


Figure 10.4. Plush toy Al B. Tross, co-author with Harvey and Vicki of *The Book of Tross: An Illustrated Glossary of Trossical Terms*, reading Harvey's *Undisciplining Knowledge*, 2015.

Overall, I offered a history for each field, including literacy studies, set within historical, disciplinary, institutional, and comparative contexts. I revealed a complex and contradictory history of change and continuity, achievements and limitations, a variety of paths to multi-, cross-, and what I defined as interdisciplinarity, arguing for the imperative to evaluate rhetoric and realities, plural. Each proclaimed interdiscipline arose within specific historical circumstances; many had an institutional half-life. Almost all fell short of their most grandiose claims. Interdisciplinarity is inseparable from the history of knowledge, disciplines, and higher education.

*Undisciplining Knowledge* (2015a) sometimes provoked upset as I stepped lightly and more strongly on often-fragile fingers and toes. Most offended, revealing their institutionally and intellectually thin skins, have been proponents of so-called “transdisciplinarity,” which is itself a logical and intellectual impossibility. But that challenge was among my purposes.

Preparation for this book, perhaps even more than most of my others, reflected varieties of interdisciplinary cooperation and collaboration. I see these varied cooperations and collaborations in my sequential and interactive connections with education, teaching, collegial relationships, conferences, lectures, and publications.

A special case in point is my long relationship with sociologist Jerry Jacobs of the University of Pennsylvania. Jerry and I began our intellectual exchanges in 2009 and continued through the publication of his *In Defense of Disciplines: Interdisciplinarity and Specialization in the Research University* (2013) and my *Undisciplining Knowledge* (2015a) two years later.

Not only do our disciplinary bases differ, but so do our interpretations. Nevertheless, we constructively shared our interests and materials, commented on each other’s drafts, wrote book jacket endorsements for each other’s books, authored reviews, and participated in conference sessions that featured each other’s books. We are close friends and continue to share our work. We may collaborate in the future by writing on disciplines in the public realm.

Responses to *Undisciplining Knowledge* (2015a) continue. Among the immediate ones were a stimulating session at the SSHA in 2015. The participants were sociologist Jerry Jacobs, social and cultural historian M. J. Maynes, historian and computer scientist Jan Reiff, historian and political scientist Bill Sewell, and literary historian and critic John Guillory. The papers and my response were published online as *A Forum on Interdisciplinarity* (Graff et. al, n.d.).

*Undisciplining Knowledge* (2015a) was also honored at a book celebration at the Rochester Institute of Technology in 2016 and featured in interviews with *Inside Higher Ed* (Jaschik, 2015); *A View From the Bridge: Nature’s Books and Arts Blog* (Van Noorden, 2015); and *News of the National Humanities Center* (Solomon, 2014), which was excerpted on the History News Network website (Graff, 2014b). I also wrote a complementary article, “Interdisciplinarity as Ideology and Practice” (2016c). I further reflected broadly in “The ‘Problem’ of Interdisciplinarity in Theory, Practice, and History” (2016b).

Finally, I advised, spoke, and wrote about more general history and humanities issues. In 2007 I conducted a grueling but intellectually stimulating, one-person review of the McGill University Arts Faculty Humanities Program and Interdisciplinary Studies, and in 2008 I was a member of the external review committee for the President's Advisory Board of the Department of History at Carnegie Mellon University.

I served as a reviewer for *Dropout Nation*, a documentary film for the Public Broadcasting Service's series *Frontline* (Koughan, 2012) in 2010 and as a member of the editorial advisory board of *American Periodicals* beginning in 2005. As earlier, I continued to advise, interview, and moderate radio and television news and talk shows. In Columbus, I worked with several *Columbus Dispatch* news reporters.

Related activities revolved around "Politics, Activism and the History of America's Public Schools: A Conference Marking the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *The Irony of Early School Reform*" by Michael Katz at the University of Pennsylvania in 2008. *The Irony of Early School Reform* (Katz, 1968) was one of the first books I read in 1971 when I became Michael's graduate student; he was my advisor and guide for more than 40 years. This conference was an incredibly special occasion.

Vicki accompanied me, and several of his graduate students joined us—from my era and more recent ones from Toronto, York University, and the University of Pennsylvania, where Michael completed his career. First appointed to the Graduate School of Education at Penn, he held an endowed chair in History and headed the Urban Studies Program. At my urging Ian Davey came from Adelaide, Australia, and Chad Gaffield from Ottawa, Canada.

I met a number of Katz's recent and current students. Among them was Dan Amsterdam, who began his career at Ohio State University's Newark Campus. Dan, his wife Kate Christman, and children Farrah and Eliot became our close friends. Dan now teaches at Georgia Tech in Atlanta.

Several of Michael's former students, over four decades and three universities, joined me in a tribute/memorial SSHA session in 2015 that I organized following his death in 2014. Leah Gordon, then of Stanford University, now of Brandeis University; Margaret O'Mara of the University of Washington; Mark Stern of the University of Pennsylvania; Merlin Chowkwanyun of Columbia University; participated in "Michael B. Katz: His Contribution and Legacy to Social Science History and Beyond: A Round Table Discussion," which I chaired (Graff et al., 2015).

Edda Katz, Michael's widow, and Sarah Katz, his youngest daughter and only child residing in the US, attended with Vicki. We adjourned to the hotel bar, and most of us shared a lovely dinner—all in Michael's memory.

The papers were published in a special section of *Social Science History* ("Michael B. Katz 2015 SSHA memorial session," 2017).

In 2015 I was a keynote speaker at the Big Ten's Committee on Institutional Cooperation's (CIC) Conference on Graduate Education in the Humanities at Penn State University.

Related scholarly activities during this time included *Looking Backward and Looking Forward: Perspectives on Social Science History*, co-edited with Leslie Page Moch and Philip McMichael (2005), selected presentations and discussions from special retrospective and prospective sessions at the 25th annual meeting of the SSHA in 2001, and “History’s War of the Wor(l)ds. An Afterword” in Sigurdur Gylfi Magnusson’s *The History War: Essays and Narratives on Ideology* (2007, pp. 475–481).

I also continued my active national and international professional engagement with the history of children and youth, urban history, interdisciplinarity, and literacy studies until retirement in 2017. Not only were they my regular areas of instruction, but I attended, organized sessions, and spoke at SSHA meetings on these topics and themes through 2015.

A career-crowning, lifetime tribute came as I retired with a special session on “Harvey J. Graff, Literacy Studies, and Composition,” at the annual meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2017. Mike Rose (UCLA), John Duffy (Notre Dame), Patrick Berry (Syracuse), my former doctoral student Michael Harker (Georgia State), Amy Wan (Queens College, CUNY), and Peter Mortensen (University of Illinois) all presented papers honoring my contributions (a selection of these papers along with a response from me were later published in *Across the Disciplines*; see Duffy et al., 2024)

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Seventh, as in Dallas and San Antonio, colleagues, friends, and some neighbors in Columbus inextricably intertwined. They are inseparable from place, academics, and often the political domain. Their routes to professional relationships and then friendships vary but almost all share some of these threads. Among them are our neighbors, all of whom have or have had OSU connections: Chris Zacher (now deceased) and Kay Bea Jones, Ed and Dianne Efsic, Jep and Joyce Hostetler (now living in a progressive, Mennonite retirement community in Goshen, Indiana), Emily Foster and Lee Brown (now deceased), and more recently Nalani Stolz, Claire Verschraegen, and Ram Murthy.

There are also a great many OSU connections, from English, History, and Education colleagues and friends to people met through LiteracyStudies@OSU, university reform activities, and others. They include Ellen Manovich, Nick Sincere, Elizabeth Renker, Alan Farmer and Sarah Neville, Brian McHale and Esther Gottlieb, Steve and Janet Rissing, Randy Roth and Allison Sweeney, Brian Joseph and Mary Clark, Peter Shane and Martha Chamalla, Jake Risinger and Memory Blake, Kevin Cox, Ruth Friedman, Bob (deceased) and Sabine Holub, Marcia Farr and Mike Maltz (now retired), Ruth Colker, Beverly Moss, Brenda Brueggeman, Louis and Pat Ulman, Mollie Blackburn, Jared Gardner and Beth Hewitt, Amy Shuman, Alice Conklin and Geoffrey Parker, Mary Cayton, Kevin Boyle and Vicky Getis, Cynthia Brokaw, Elaine (Dr. E.) Richardson, Leslie Moore and Mark Moritz, Mike and Teresa Bevis, Sabra Weber (now retired), Ed Adelson,



Steve Acker, Ann Hamilton, Phil and Mary Lynn Binkley, Tom and Carol Mauger, Susan and Scott Fisher, Molly Blackburn, Patricia Enciso, Louie Ulman, Chris Highley, and Frank Donoghue.

Continuing non-Columbus friends, some dating from high school, graduate school, and Dallas include Gail and Bob Rudenstein, Ava and Art Doppelt, Chad and Pam Gaffield, Mike and Natalie Doucet, Natalie Zemon Davis (deceased in 2023), Ian and Gunilla (deceased in 2022) Winchester, Steve Weissman, Marvin and Janie Cohen, Bob Bradley and Carolyn Herrington, Paul Peretz and Jean Shroedel, Dan and Barbara Orlovsky, Tony Fracchia and Pearl Garza, Patty and Carl Hill, Soledad Jasin, Cathy Civello and Gary Worsham, Cindy Maciel-Reyes and George Reyes, Johanna Drucker, Michael Wilson, Erik Austin, M. J. Maynes and Ron Aminzade, Leslie Moch, Kathy Underwood and Gary Stark, Renate Bridenthal, Harriet Lightman and George Huppert, Barbara Hanawalt, Ellen Dwyer, Jim and Julie Turner, Shirley Brice Heath, Deborah Brandt, John and Kathy Duffy, Patrick and Sho Berry, Grey Osterud, Kathleen Doria and Ruben Silva, Bradley Kayser and Gemma Kennedy, Jerry Jacobs, and Jeff Pooley.

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In this chapter thus far, I have written less about Vicki and me. That is not intentional. It follows from the calmer domestic currents of the Columbus years.

McDonald remained a happy member of the family until the early 2010s when he developed a series of ailments, ranging from his skin to his eyes, his kidneys, and his heart. His vet referred him to the excellent OSU Veterinary Hospital where he received extraordinary care and love. With the assistance of an implanted heart pacemaker (donated by the manufacturer to the teaching hospital), he lived until age 15, which he reached in 2013.

Knowing that he was irreplaceable—and after pondering that for six months—we began to collect a new family of robot pets, introduced in Chapter One. Our current four generations are beloved by our “surrogate grandchildren” and some of our adult, even senior friends. Those older than the age of three operate varying levels of artificial intelligence creations better than I do.

Despite Ohio State’s explicit commitment to assist Vicki to quickly obtain suitable employment, more than a year passed after our arrival with no results. As chance had it, the direct link to her position for nine years at OSU’s Nisonger Center, a federally-funded University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, was a LiteracyStudies@OSU public forum on literacy in medicine and health. The center’s director was among the speakers. Vicki attended, found his comments stimulating, and contacted him. An interview and job offer came soon after.

For most of those years, she coordinated and promoted the center’s exemplary Next Chapter Book Club program. Each club consisted of a group of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They met in semi-public places like the cafés of bookstores, large stores, or coffee houses, with two trained volunteer leaders. Each member took their turn reading a book page aloud; some were

experts, while others could barely sound out a few words. Vicki developed literacy curricula, wrote grant proposals, and conducted and analyzed research interviews. She and other staff co-authored a how-to book that explained the program and provided guidelines to others (Fish & Rabidoux, with Ober & Graff, 2009). As with her work with the American Heart Association, her “life with literacy” paralleled and intersected with mine.

When the Nisonger Center’s director asked her to initiate a newsletter, Vicki created, designed, co-wrote, edited, and expanded the *NisongerNews* from a four-page, quarterly, PDF file with 130 readers to a semi-annual, hyperlinked webpage with more than 1,100 listserv members. As program manager of communications and dissemination, she wrote and/or edited many online curricula and teachers’ guides, brochures, and webpages. Budget cuts ended her position in 2014, after which she retired. She concluded that over her working lifetime, each time one career ended, a new, more fulfilling, and better-paid one followed. That is, until the final one.

At home Vicki devoted time to the Indianola Forest (Homeowners) Association as active member and treasurer and was a once-removed advisor to Literacy-Studies@OSU. When not tending to her plants and flowers, she does photography (now with her phone), Hatha yoga, Yamuna body rolling, other exercises, and receives regular massage therapy. She also manages our finances, investments, taxes, and technology. In 2023, she began to publish her poems written in the late 1970s.

Our exciting travel continued. We spent lovely holidays in the Canadian Maritime provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 2006 and Newfoundland in 2008. The latter venture entailed a cruise on a small, newly refitted sailing ship from Halifax along the coast of Newfoundland.

During one of the Maritime trips, my doctoral student Kelly Bradbury moved into our home to care for McDonald (only to deal with the dining room ceiling falling down). On one of the Swedish jaunts, our dear friend and fellow dog lover, Ruth Friedman, moved into our house to stay with McDonald. It takes a village, as they say.

We had a sensational visit to Greece in 2011. Beginning in Athens, we explored the sites of Greek antiquity and Christianity, including Nafplio, Olympia, Delphi, and the mountaintop monastery at Meteora. We also sampled the lovely islands of Santorini and Crete, which were full of archeological and architectural wonders. We will never forget dining at the end of the trip on an outdoor balcony watching the sunset over the Acropolis. This trip also allowed me to follow literacy’s historical paths.

Summer 2012 took us to Ireland, first enjoying the streets and sights in Dublin, then renting a car and driving more than 2,000 kilometers around the island to Dingle, Galway City, Achill Island, Donegal, and back to Dublin via Drogheda.

We returned to the UK in 2013 and stayed in the same Crescent Hotel on Cartwright Gardens as on our first trip to London in 1974. It aged less well than we had. In Scotland we revisited the Isle of Skye as well as other Highland spots

and enjoyed one of our best meals at the Castle Terrace Restaurant in Edinburgh with colleague Rab Houston and his wife.

In 2015 we returned to South America, another “trip of a lifetime.” We toured the Galápagos Islands aboard a three-masted, ecologically friendly, tall ship called the Mary Anne with an excellent Ecuadorian guide and a finely self-selected group of fellow naturalists and environmentalists.

It’s difficult to describe the wildlife that is unique to these islands, made famous by Charles Darwin’s voyage on the Beagle in 1835. On many hikes and excursions, we saw sea turtles, sea lions, marine and land iguanas, Sally Lightfoot crabs, giant tortoises, pelicans, finches, blue- and red-footed boobies, Nasca boobies, great frigatebirds, tropicbirds, flamingoes, penguins, and wave albatrosses (our favorite), doing their amazing mating dance. Our base before and after the cruise was the delightful Hotel La Casona de la Ronda in historic Quito, almost at the Equator.



Figure 10.5. Harvey and Vicki at the Equator in Ecuador, 2015.

We also explored the cities of Ohio, getting to know and appreciating Cleveland and Cincinnati, their museums, green spaces, and restaurants. And we continued to travel across the country, including a visit with several UTSA friends in San Antonio in spring 2016 and, along with UTD friend Paul Monaco, a trip to Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks in Montana that summer.

I suffered and recovered from several health incidents. My right eye required five cornea transplants and my left eye one. Under the expert and humane care of ophthalmologists Tom Mauger, followed by Andrea Sawchyn and Rebecca Kuenen, I read and write without complications. They made me a “tenured patient” and presented me with a physician’s jacket embossed with my name.

In 2010 a lifetime of lower back pain, treated in San Antonio, led to spinal surgery on several vertebrae. My OSU Wexner Medical Center internist highly recommended a surgeon at Riverside Hospital who expertly performed that procedure. After the addition of two titanium rods and six titanium screws holding me together, a week’s recuperation, a brief period of wearing a back brace, and physical therapy, I fully recovered. Over time, I began to acknowledge the contributions of my excellent physicians to my lifetime of activity and achievements. I thank them explicitly in my books, as all writers should.

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Eighth, and finally, there is place—in particular, the city of Columbus and within it *The Ohio State University*. Until my retirement, I had been less involved in the place that I call home for 20 years than at any previous time. My (over)commitments to OSU, LiteracyStudies@OSU, my students, and my research partly but do not fully explain it.

Columbus is not only the smallest city that I have lived in, relative to the time time that I lived in it, but also the most lacking in a clear identity, written history, or sense of itself. Although it is now the 14<sup>th</sup> largest city in the United States and the Ohio state capital, it is identified more with a college football team (the Ohio State Buckeyes) than anything else. (See my essays under Columbus Past and Present in the Appendix.)

Ironically—no, contradictorily—newspaper columnists, amateur historians, and radio and TV shows (*Curious Cbus* of WOSU Public Media or *Columbus on the Record* of WOSU Public Broadcasting Service, for example) grasp at straws to fabricate earlier identities to put behind the falsely forward-looking metropolis—in other words, from which it has moved on. These include, laughably, calling Columbus “Cowtown” (confused by the *Columbus Dispatch*’s editorial board with “Crop Town”) or “Arch City.” There is no ongoing, critical attempt to construct a contemporary identity. Developers’ and city boosters’ marketing are not serious efforts. They are distractions at best. At worst, they are fabrications.

Fantastic dreams of fictitious futures fail to substitute for a factual, shared past. Recently, several self-described “planners” imagined Columbus as a city on the water—the Amsterdam or Venice of central Ohio. Dredging connections

between small lakes and other bodies of water was somehow meant to evoke the grand canals. None of these false images represents accurately any part of the city's history or a plausible future. Unlike Dallas, which often proclaims that it has no history to hold back its advancement or any geo-historical reason to exist, Columbus plods on, hoping that its Major League Soccer or National Hockey League professional teams will compensate for the absence of a Major League Baseball, National Football League, or National Basketball Association team.

In contrast, San Antonio, Toronto, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, the other cities where I have lived, have significant, documented, and published histories and, to a greater extent, representative city government and both public *and* private institutions with distinctive, public presences—and an array of major professional sports teams as well.

Even Dallas has more serious research about it in print than Columbus. The lack of documented histories is both cause and effect of this series of contradictions. On one hand, Columbus has few if any defining events, landmarks, or personalities. Its geographic location is quite ordinary. On the other hand, the necessary and inextricably interconnected linkage of institutions and historiographical constructions is largely absent.

Ohio State's History Department long disdained local and state history as demeaning to its grand but unfulfilled self-conceptions and rhetorical self-promotion. Thus, its students do not regularly excavate the region's past. My colleague, geographer Kevin Cox's documented study of the city, *Boomtown Columbus* (2021), is a rare scholarly statement. Contrastingly, there is no such false pride and local and regional disdain among scholars at Harvard, Columbia, the University of Chicago, Penn, or UC Berkeley, for example.

Institutional and historiographical failures underlie the weakness of local historical, archival, landmark, even folklore traditions. An entity called the Ohio History Connection passes inadequately for a state historical society. Hosting the Ohio State Fair and printing old photographs in *The Columbus Dispatch* do not make a city. *The Columbus Dispatch* and *Columbus Monthly* print either fake history or insignificant anecdotes with no context or interpretation. Little state or local history is studied or taught at any level.

Paralleling the weakness of institutions and also helping to explain the lack of identity is the weakness of Columbus' media. I discussed this in "Columbus' Identity Crisis and Its Media," in which I argued,

Columbus is a city in search of itself. "Cap City" lacks an identifying and unifying identity. Neither site of the state capital nor home of Ohio State football carries that weight. Nor does ranking in the top 20-25 largest US cities. A sign of its insecurity comes in the habit of its institutions claiming to be the "best" in the state or nation, and failing to admit whether this comes from popularity contests or expert evaluations. Typically, the

ranking is a more nebulous “one of the best.” The mayor’s promotion of the city’s “equity agenda” remains largely rhetorical. At best, only COSI [Center of Science and Industry] and the corruption-ridden Columbus Zoo have legitimate claims.

A “great city” requires excellent local media. Its newspapers and television and radio stations must be committed to more than boosterism or cheerleading. They must develop and practice excellence in terms of constructive, reflective, and responsible criticism of the city’s institutions, significant groups, and leaders. In this, Columbus’ media fail.

None of the city’s major media maintains a consistent focus on the city and its needs. While occasionally ground-breaking, their investigative reporting is limited and inconsistent. No one has established a tradition of constructive social, political, or cultural criticism. Especially at the present challenging moment, Columbus urgently cries out for this....

Together, Columbus’ leading media do not provide the active, responsible reporting and criticism that a city in search of itself, seeking to advance, and working to meet its challenges requires. By all accounts and both direct and indirect indicators, they all fear backlash if they move in these directions and directly confront the city’s most pressing issues. Columbus’ political and institutional leaders too often share these hesitations. I call on them to rise to the challenges now. (Graff, 2021a)

That essay stimulated general assent other than one ridiculous attack, not on me but on the news site that published me, Columbus Underground (Downing & Oliphint, 2021). I replied forcefully in “Response to Columbus Alive” (2021m).

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Unlike Dallas or San Antonio, Columbus offered me few ongoing opportunities for participating in the city’s discovery and interpretation of itself. Neither active historical society, city landmarks commission, public library activities, nor other formal and informal associations that I found in all my other cities exist to any serious or rigorous extent in Columbus. This is central to Columbus’ exceptionality, what I named “The Columbus Way.” That phrase is catching on more widely.

As a result, until my transition to public education in retirement, my major relationships lay in assisting a handful of news reporters at *The Columbus Dispatch*, now owned by Gannett. With a focus on higher education and the University District abutting OSU, I also advised some city, neighborhood, state, and political reporters. That has largely stopped.

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So, an overwhelmingly successful culmination of my professional career came to a more or less predictable end in 2017. As described earlier, I left my Ohio Eminent Scholar chair and concluded LiteracyStudies@OSU as a direct result of the English Department's, the College of Arts and Sciences', and the provost's self-admitted failure to honor their commitments. Many of the broken promises were made in writing.

In the end, neither that nor the unpredicted achievements of my institutional and academic programs mattered. The then English department chair fumbled my emeritus status for more than six months, neither of my departments ever announced my retirement, and I was not invited to join the Emeritus Academy for several years.

My accomplishments from 2004–2017 live on in the minds and careers of many faculty members, staff members, and now former students, a muffled institutional memory. They also live on well beyond Columbus and Ohio State and in my own memory. So be it.