

Twenty Five Years of Midwest Research to Practice

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The intent of this conference is to bring together practitioners and researchers to discuss the results of theoretical and empirically-based inquiries. We have attempted to achieve this purpose by inviting paper submissions and conference participation not only through the traditional channels (e.g. universities), but also through the professional associations in the Midwest. We hope to include participants and presenters who have been to many research conferences and those who have never attended one. We believe the interactions which occur...can only strengthen our field of study and practice. (Cervero, Czisny, Ewert, Hentschel, p. 1)

Thus began the first Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference (MR2P) on October 8, 1982, at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois. Sponsored by ten Adult Education organizations that represented seven states, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin, a research to practice tradition began. It has continued for 25 years. While it will not be possible to list every paper submitted in this article, trends in keynotes and procedural changes give a picture of the evolution of this conference. Each host site has had the freedom to arrange things as they would, however, the issues of adult education can be traced by examining the development of Midwest Research-to-Practice in both topics and structure. As precedents were set, issues in research, practice and life began to take form. This paper is organized according to the three decades that it has touched, beginning with the eighties.

The Eighties

Submitting a call to researchers and practitioners alike, during the 1982 conference, 27 papers were presented. While the majority of the presenters had some university affiliation, many were graduate students who also had links to practice. This first conference began with a keynote entitled: *Research Needs and Issues in Adult and Continuing Education*. This was presented by Wendell Smith of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and President of the Adult Education Association of the USA (now AAACE). An evening seminar, *Explaining Explanations*, included: *The Scientific Explanation: A Paradox in the Human Quest for Understanding* and *The Politics of Explanation: The Ongoing Human Quest for Power*.

Throughout this conference, there were opportunities for informal and formal conversation, including two scheduled social hours. This set a precedent for future conferences as a venue for informal discussion and fellowship. MR2P became a place to visit, discuss, and learn for educators, practitioners, students and all lifelong learners, formally, informally and incidentally. The conference ended with a closing address: "Lessons from DeKalb: The Kernels of Truth." There must have been some truths in those lessons, since the conference was scheduled to repeat in 1983.

Different Time, Same Place

Again in DeKalb, on November 4-5, 1983, the interaction of research and practice was considered. The steering committee wrote:

It is our hope to present a quality conference which would more closely link research and practice. Our emphasis has been on the application of research findings. Indeed, if proper research questions are asked, there should be no problem in putting the findings into practice.

To begin this process, Cyril Houle began the conference by presenting the keynote address. Although there is no record of the topic, having such a well-known speaker indicated a commitment to the concept of the conference, since Houles' work in continuing education and research is well-known. He most likely provided a great deal to consider and discuss.

In this second conference, an Iowa organization came on board with the other organizations to lend its support. In addition to the topics of the first conference, this one included literacy, continuing education, extension, adult learners in universities and other settings, topics of policy, aging, disabilities, and mentoring. The evening keynote address was *Community Education in Appalachia through Participatory Research and Media*, given by Helen Lewis of Kentucky, in order to provide an example of how research and practice were closely linked. The conference ended with a panel that discussed *The influence of Practitioner Involvement in the Research Process on the Quantity and Quality of Research Utilization*. So it became apparent that one could not exist without the other.—practice without research or research without practice.

Continuing in DeKalb, at Northern Illinois University, the third annual MR2P conference took place on September 27 & 28, 1984. The introduction in the program had the following to say:

The conference is the result of a cooperative effort and the part of numerous individuals, more than a dozen adult education organizations, and...to present to you a quality conference in which researchers and practitioners are brought together to share ideas, articulate research needs, and disseminate research findings.

This conference began with a panel that included an anthropologist, a professor of philosophy, and a professor of sociology. The topic discussed; *Evaluating Research: An Interdisciplinary View* set the stage for the presentations to follow. Specific research paradigms, such as phenomenology and phenomenography, were included in the twenty-eight paper presentations. Additionally, the use of computers in education began to be discussed, since retention and motivation remained a concern.

While continuing education for the professions still played a key part of the research and practice, workforce education began to emerge as an issue for adult educators and practitioners. To end this conference, a precedent was set that was to continue for a number of years: the keynote address followed a luncheon at the end of the conference. The then editor of *Adult Education Quarterly*, Hal Beder of Rutgers University, spoke on *The State of Research in Adult Education*.

Midwest Research-to-Practice had become an informative and friendly place to discuss the connections of research to practice and practice to research, since now the conference was

well established, thanks to the work of many and especially those at Northern Illinois University. So, the time was right for the other supporters in the Midwest to take a more active role in MR2P.

Sharing the Experience

Michigan University in Ann Arbor Michigan hosted the 4th annual Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference on October 10-11, 1985. This began a twenty-five year road trip. According to the abstract in ERIC, this conference contained "... papers on practical applications of *research* on adult and continuing education." The practical applications of research included, in addition to other ongoing topic: parent and clergy education; McClusky's Concept of Margin; The Adult Learner and Microcomputer Manuals; Educational Needs of Hispanics; Returning Women Students; Naturalistic *Research* Methods; and work Work-Related Self-Directed Learning.

From Michigan, MR2P traveled to Indiana. Hosted by, The Institute for Community Education Development at Ball State University, Muncie, IN., the 5th annual conference took place October 3-4, 1986. Additional topics and those of growing concern for the field of Adult Education made up the wealth of presentations. Some topics of interest included: Professional Certification: A Critical *Research* Issue; Graduate Studies in Adult Education; Displaced Workers; Herman Hesse's Siddhartha compared with Fowler's Stages of Faith Development; Advancement of Women in Senior Managerial Positions; and Computer Awareness for Adults. Although the personal computer had not yet made it to everyone's home, computers began to be researched as instructional technologies for lifelong learning.

Still in Michigan, MR2P was hosted by Michigan State University in East Lansing, in October 8-9, 1987. This 7th conference began with a hospitality time on Wednesday evening, followed by the actual conference on Thursday and Friday. The General session on Thursday morning included a presentation entitled *Adults Pursuing Self-Directed Learning: An Example from Medicine* by Dr. Robert Edwards, Assistant Dean of the College of Human Medicine of Michigan State University. Wednesday afternoon and Friday morning, concurrent sessions and research colloquys provided an opportunity to hear your choice of 27 papers presented. Some topics included: A decade of Research contributions to the Adult Basic Education Literature; The Study of Human Resource Development Practitioners' Communication Methods in Organizations; interactive video, critical thinking, social and economic injustice, community and agricultural education. The conference ended with a keynote address, *Social Structure in the Education of Adults: Towards a Comparative Analysis*, given by Dr. Peter Jarvis, University of Surrey, UK. The final event was the presentation of the Graduate Student Research Award; that is now done at every MR2P.

The MR2P traveling show went to the state of Wisconsin in 1988. The Proceedings of this 7th MR2P included the following in the welcome:

...The opportunity for dialogue among researchers and practitioners is critical. Each shares common concerns and questions. Each brings a different perspective to their resolution. Through the application of research findings to practice and the struggle to resolve the practical problems through research, our mutual enterprises of adult, continuing and community education are advanced.

So the research to practice and practice to research continued. In fact, a key phrase listed in ERIC is that of Theory *Practice Relationship*. Twenty-six paper presentations continued to

discuss issues of literacy, transfer of training, continuing education, international adult education, decision making, cognitive styles, expert systems and other issues of lifelong learning.

To round out the eighties, MR2P traveled to St. Louis, Missouri in 1989. On October 12-13, the 8th annual MR2P took place. The local committee stated two primary objectives for planning the conference that included:

- 1) to incorporate Adult Education principles into the conference format in order to establish a balance between theory and practice; and 2) to provide an optimal level of hospitality to put you at ease and promote comfort.

These objectives remain at the heart of MR2P.

After an evening of hospitality on Wednesday, the conference began with a Panel of Experts discussing *Qualitative-Quantitative Research and Practice Issues*. Thirty-one papers were presented in four focus areas: Research Studies; Evaluation Studies; Research Issues; and Practitioner Concerns. This focus provided much to think about. To help to round out the balance of research and practice, included in the presentations were six specially invited sessions conducted.

Continuing the international flavor, the final keynote was presented by Dr Guenther Dohmen, Professor and Chair of Adult Education Department and Eberhard Karls of the University of Tuebingen in the Federal Republic of Germany. The topic was *Linking Research and Practice in Adult, Continuing and Community Education*. Further more it was stated that the presentation would focus on:

- An Educational Working Center for Adult Education: A Linkage Institute
- Research methods that help to understand learner patterns of interpretation and their modifications as well as transformations in learning processes
- Background conditions favorable for research-to-practice linkages

The final presentation of the Best Graduate Research Award concluded the conference.

MR2P Traditions

At the end of the eighties, Midwest Research-to Practice had established itself as a unique entity. But not being affiliated with any organization or university, MR2P was able to provide a balance between research and practice, as well as nurture diverse study into all aspects of adult education and the adult learner. After six years certain patterns began to emerge. While the beginning conferences were scheduled in the first week of November, the time for MR2P became the end of September or beginning of October. Initially the conferences were primarily on Friday and Saturday, but by the end of the eighties it was begun with an event on Wednesday evening, with the remainder of the conference going through Thursday and into Friday through luncheon. On Thursday the conference began with a keynote address or panel, and ended with a keynote or panel after luncheon on Friday. Also established was the graduate student research award. The following described the award:

It has been a tradition of this conference that an award has been given for the best research presentation by a graduate student. This award is given on the basis of: the written proposal; abstract and paper; management of the session presentation; and competence in dealing with questions and comments directed during the session. Occasionally more than one student has been given this award.

Many of the traditions begun during the eighties still continue, but most importantly, MR2P continues to explore the research-to-practice linkages, not favoring one over the other. However,

therewas the encouragement of a combination, and it continues to be a place of learning, fellowship for everyone ,and the encouragement of MR2P graduate students.

The Nineties – There and Back Again

The start of a new decade brought MR2P back to its' beginning location, Dekalb, Illinois. This 9th conference took place ON October 18-19, 1990 at Northern Illinois University. Welcome thoughts included:

This conference has developed its distinction and excellence by linking research and practice. The sessions you attend as well as the others you just read in this publication, will provide opportunity for you to learn and grow...(we) offer you opportunities to consult and interact with colleagues from throughout the Midwest.

Twenty-four paper presentations continued the tradition. Papers on literacy, distance education, graduate studies, gender, and continuing education were included. Some titles included; The Continuing Professional Education of Corporate Technical Professionals: Reasons, Formats, and Implications; The Use of Audio Interaction in a Telecourse Offered by Satellite: Foundations of Adult Basic Education; Applied Futures **Research**: A Practitioner's Role; Getting the Horse before the Cart: Determining Continuing Education Needs of Vocational Educator; and Life Transitions and Trigger Events Leading **to** Participation in a Volunteer Literacy Program.

Ninety ninety-one saw the participation of another host site. The 10th annual conference took place at the University of Minnesota ON October 3-4, 1991. The Mission Statement had evolved to the following:

The conference provides a forum for practitioners and researchers to meet and discuss practices, concepts, evaluation and research studies and related issues in order to improve practice in adult education. It encourages, fosters and facilitates dialogue and the initiation and pursuit of projects among individuals and groups working in the various fields of adult education. Through such discussion and collaboration participants contribute toward the realization of a more humane and just society through lifelong learning.

Each host, while following MR2P traditions, brought a unique flavor to the conference. Such was the case in Minnesota when Michael Patton OF Union Institute Graduate School, presented the opening keynote: *The Research to Practice Linkage: Where all the Findings are above Average*.

Throughout the conference there were opportunities to make site visits, interestingly enough, to a variety of technology centers, as well as attend concurrent sessions.. Paper presentations were again balanced and included such topics as: A Research Agenda for Adult Civic Education; Learning Strategies Concerns among ABE [Adult Basic Education] Practitioners; Teaching toward Self-Directedness; and, Conducting Evaluation in Adult Literacy Programs. In a letter to conference participants, the co-chairs wrote:

Ten years ago, a group of practitioners and researchers from the region had the wisdom to meet and to begin discussing practices, concepts, evaluation, and research studies in order to improve the practice in adult education. A decade later we are continuing this discussion...Two features were added to this conference, site visits...(and) a symposium exploring the state of research and practice inquiry, as represented by the papers...

So the conference ended with two events. There was an invited symposium entitled *Research to Practice: Implications of the 1991 Midwest Research-to Practice Conference*, and there was the keynote address, *Education for Excellence in Service to Society: The Critical Issue for Research and Practice in Adult Education Today and Into the 21st Century*. This was presented by the President and Executive Director of the General Mills Foundation, Reatha Clark King.

More States Come On Board

On October 8-9, 1992, the MR2P road trip, found itself in Kansas. Kansas State University, in Manhattan, Kansas, that hosted the 11th conference. Now having the articulated mission statement published in 1991, the conference chair welcomed participants by stating:

Since its founding...the Midwest conference has provided an opportunity for graduate students, faculty, and practitioners from the broad field of adult education to critically explore ideas, innovations, and principles exemplified in the research-to-practice challenge...We encourage you to take advantage of the rich learning environment associated with Kansas State University...and the Manhattan Community.

On Wednesday afternoon, conference participants had the opportunity to choose from four pre-conference tours to areas of practice within the community. Taking us back to the research component, the conference began with a panel of educators discussing, *Diversity in Global Awareness: Research Directives for Adult Education*. In addition to concurrent sessions, there were also receptions and other opportunities to gather scheduled. The final luncheon keynote was delivered by Sharan Merriam, Professor of Adult Education, University of Georgia. Demonstrating the commitment to graduate students and all participants, the topic was *Writing up and Publishing your Research*.

With the 12th annual conference, trends were becoming more apparent. In the conference proceedings prepared by the committee at Ohio State University the following was noted:

Several trends regarding the theory-to-practice dynamic in adult, continuing, and community education can be observed. First, research has largely been driven by practice. That is, research has been seen as a means of generating knowledge to solve practitioner related problems...Second, naturalistic inquiry has become increasingly popular as a means of conducting research in the field. Third, the issues identified for research...are becoming increasingly complex. Issues such as gender, diversity, multiculturalism, economic and social development, and the social contexts of adult learning are presenting new challenges to researchers as well as practitioners in the field. (Freer and Dean, p iii).

Indeed, even as MR2P pursued the research to practice linkage, it was noted that:

As research becomes increasingly complex and sophisticated, it is less accessible, either to conduct or use, for practitioners. At the same time, the need for good information upon which to make well informed decisions has never been greater.

At the conference on October 13-15, 1993, at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, the presentations were organized in a new way. There were eight distinct areas presented. They were: adults as learners; continuing education/professional development; Gender, culture & diversity; human resource development; literacy; programming; research issues; and, teaching and learning. Concurrent sessions included both individual presentations and panel presentations.

As the conference moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin on October 13-15, 1994, it was noted in the introductory letter that:

This conference was developed in the early 1980's by researchers and practitioners from Midwestern universities with graduate programs in adult education and from professional associations to which adult, continuing, and community educators belonged. Since its fledgling beginnings, the conference has grown in the number of proposals submitted, the total number of papers presented, the number of students presenting, the geographic area from which participants are drawn, and the number of conference participants.

Following the format developed through the previous conferences, the conference began with a keynote address by Mezirow entitled *Transformation Theory: Implications for Practice and Research*, and ended with a panel that discussed the topic of *Critical Reflections on Urban Practice: Implications for Research*. Interestingly enough, it should be noted that the conference went back to a Thursday through Saturday schedule.

The 14th annual MR2P conference went back to Illinois. Co-hosted by National Louis University and Northern Illinois University on October 12-14, 1995, and conference participants gathered at National Louis University. With thirty-three papers accepted, the conference began with a panel discussing, *Issues and Concerns from Community Based Educators*. Issues of literacy, equity, mentoring, and transformation were at the forefront of the concurrent sessions. The conference closed after a closing lunch and panel.

Going on Fifteen

As the fifteenth year of MR2P was planned, the mission remained the same, and the beginnings of the conference were acknowledged. Schedules were similar, and the length of the conference remained the same. A comfortable tradition had been established. The issues of adult education continued, with new insights added, and new contexts coming to the fore. On October 17-19, 1996, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln continued the tradition. Some new ideas were added to the schedule. On the first evening, in addition to a reception and hospitality room, a town meeting was held to consider, *Research and Practice; A False Duality?* Also added to the conference were luncheon theme based discussions, and, foreshadowing a national trend, there was a symposium on *HRD and Adult Education*. This conference also ended with a panel at a luncheon.

Going back to a Wednesday evening through Friday noon schedule, Michigan State University held the 16th annual MR2P conference on October 15-17, 1997. Continuing an idea from the previous conference, a town hall meeting was held on Wednesday evening. The topic under discussion was *The Role of Politics in the Research and Practice of Adult Education*. During the following morning, the theme continued with the opening panel on *How Does the Political Context Shape and Influence the Practice of Helping Adults Learn?* While many conferences had a particular theme used in the planning process, it has been understood that a variety of papers would be considered regardless of whether or not they matched the current theme. With this conference, issues of politics and social and economic global equity were stressed in the conference wide presentations, and the final keynote was presented by Budd Hal of the, University of Toronto. He spoke on *Adult Learning, Global Civil society and Politics*. Although participants at previous conferences came from other countries, MR2P was not just for the Midwest USA anymore.

In nineteen ninety-eight the conference was expanded to include a pre-conference program for graduate students and a practitioner research showcase in addition to the four categories of presentations. During October 8-10, 1997, Ball State University presented what was now essentially a three day conference. The conference co-chairs stated their objectives thus:

We hope that you will be able to use your time well in exploring new research, new issues, and new concerns in new ways with your professional colleagues. We hope that you will be challenged to look beyond the simplistic and the mundane. We hope that you will find yourself constantly engaged in reflecting upon ideas being shared at this conference. And we hope that you leave here excited about something which will improve your professional practice.

To assist the graduate student, the pre-conference included the following topics sessions: Scholarly Writing; How to Publish; and, The Dissertation Process. In the evening, a special guest presentation was offered. It was *An Evening with Butch Wilson*, presented by Arthur L. Wilson of North Carolina State University. Practitioner Research Showcases included: Adult Basic Education, Literacy, GED, ESL Practitioner Researchers; Business and Industry Practitioner Researchers; and, Health Practitioner Researchers. These three constituencies had been and would continue to comprise a large segment of the research to practice conversations. The final keynote was presented by Rosemary Caffarella of the University of Northern Colorado on *Learning in Adulthood: The Individual and Contextual Perspectives*. Caffarella wrote the following on two approaches that she also presented, focusing on the learning processes and a contextual approach to learning::

My basic belief is that both perspectives inform our practice as adult educators. They can in fact be brought together, providing a more comprehensive platform than either perspective does by itself from which to design adult learning activities.

Nineteen Ninety-nine saw the 18th annual conference returning to St. Louis, Missouri on September 22-24. at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. In keeping with the MR2P traditions, the following was stated:

Our goal is to balance voices of adult educators in a dialog that will be exciting and provocative. Past traditions have been preserved and newer features have been added. We hope that the Graduate Student Pre-Conference, Industry Site Visits and the Town Hall Meeting will complement the thirty-nine papers that will be presented this year.

The Graduate Student Pre-Conference featured Sharan Merriam of the University of Georgia in a conversation about the graduate experience. Since new learning technologies impacted the field of adult education, the scheduled keynote speaker, one of the founding fathers of the conference, Larry Berlin, traveled from his new home in Christchurch, New Zealand. He shared his personal reflections as a catalyst and practitioner in our field in *The Accidental Tourist*. Fittingly, the very first Keynote speaker at the nineteen eighty-two conference, Wendell Smith, closed the conference. In the first conference the topic was concerned with research needs in continuing education. At this conference, the topic was more narrowly focused to reflect current trends. The topic was *Research Needs in distance Education*.

The 21st Century

To begin the new century, on September 27-29, 2000, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the 19th annual conference, “Honoring our Roots and our Branches... Our History and Future,” continued the MR2P experience. On a Wednesday, the conference began with the Graduate Student Pre-Conference, featuring Alan Knox. That evening a reception and open forum reviewed *Trends in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education*. On Thursday, the day began with a panel entitled *Social Justice and Adult and Continuing Education*. This issue had been presented in previous conferences but now came to the fore as global equity issues were researched in adult education. The second important issue for adult education was the topic of a luncheon keynote address. Dr. Colim Latchem, an educational and open learning consultant from Australia, presented *Open and Distance Education: Adding Value to the Community?* The closing remarks were presented by another former speaker, Michael Patton, who now spoke on *Changed Practice: The Fruit of Applied Research*.

The century continued with the 20th annual conference on September 26-28, 2001, and was hosted by the School of Adult and continuing Education, Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois. After the Graduate Student Pre-Conference and reception on Wednesday, the main conference began on Thursday with a keynote address by Alan Knox on *Partners in Praxis* The themes of spirituality and andragogy joined those of international adult education, transformative learning, online education and faith-based programs. On Friday after a concurrent session, the keynote address was delivered by Dr. Donald E. Hanna, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Reflecting current issues of important to adult education, the topic was *Research for 21st Century Learning in an Era of Organizational Change*.

The 21st conference saw a return to the original host. The conference chair outlined the history in the following manner:

This conference got its start here at NIU in 1982. It was the brainchild of a handful of adult education faculty and practitioners working in various institutions throughout the Midwest who thought it was time to provide a regional forum for scholar/practitioners to exchange ideas on topics of immediate relevance as they affect adult learners. Twenty years later, this conference is back on the NIU campus and going strong. Its relevance is no less important to the growing body of adult education scholar/practitioners who work in different contexts, from literacy to higher education, from corporate training to the promotion of social justice, and much, much, more.

This was the sixth time that Northern Illinois University hosted the conference.

The first day of the conference began, again, with the Graduate Student Pre-Conference followed by a reception. An evening seminar, *Local Activism, Feminism and Globalization* was presented by Angela Miles of the University of Toronto. She helped continue the conference with the keynote the following day. The topic was *Global Visions*. In addition, this conference consisted of poster presentations. The conference concluded with a panel discussion on *Current and Future Research Issues for the Field of Practice*.

Two thousand-three saw a return to The Ohio State University on October 8-10. for the 22nd annual conference. This pre-conference consisted of two concurrent sessions with topics of interest to graduate students. An evening reception provided opportunities through table-top sessions. The keynote address was provided the following morning by Patti Lather, Professor, Educational Policy and Leadership at the Ohio State University, who spoke to *Paradigm*

Proliferation: A Good Thing to Think About. The conference concluded with a panel that discussed the following question:

From your perspective based on our conference theme of 'Adult Education and Work, Family, and Community,' how do you connect research and practice to one or more of those areas?

This provided a good question for all to consider as we looked forward to the next conference.

Hosted by both Indiana University and Ball State University, the conference traveled back to Indiana. It took place October 6-8, 2004, in Indianapolis at Indiana University- Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI). The theme of the conference, "Future Directions in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education," was based upon the work of Dr. Alan Knox who presented the keynote address. He encouraged us to consider the topic, *You are the Future*. Conference participants we encouraged to consider future directions related to professional roles, provider agencies, and the field of adult and continuing education. Themes included: aspirations, praxis, mission, collaboration, leadership, and societal benefits. Many of the ongoing issues of adult learning were represented at this conference; however, the use of electronic technology for adult education was, by far, the majority topic. This is no surprise if one considers the trend of organizational administrators to promote current technology. The conference ended with a panel discussion, and all looked to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for the next MR2P conference.

The 24th Annual Midwest Research to Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education, took place September 28-30, 2005. After the Graduate Student Pre-Conference and reception on Wednesday, Karen Watkins, from the University of Georgia, opened the conference Thursday Morning. On Saturday morning, Dr. So posed the following question, and Cheryl Keenan, Director of Adult Education and Literacy of the US Department of Education was scheduled for the final keynote. The conference concluded with lunch and a presentation on the wonders of St. Louis, Missouri, the site of the coming 25th annual conference.

Now we are looking forward to this 25th Annual Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, Extension, and Community Education that will be taking place at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. As we celebrate a quarter century of MR2P, many traditions are continued, while some from the past have been revisited. Beginning with the Graduate Student Pre-Conference, we will go through three days of discussion learning, and fellowship. Just as technology has come to the fore in paper presentations, electronic means have been used to allow participants to consider issues to be presented in advance of the conference.

A Life of Its Own

When first considering an article highlighting 25 years of MR2P, the original intention was to provide a literature review. However, after seeking out notes and conference proceedings, the paper began to take another direction. The evolution of this unique experience that is Midwest seemed to provide a description of why, in my belief, this venue needs to continue.

I have provided a reference list that can take you to locations that you will find the papers for all of the conferences except for 2005, since these papers have not been 'uploaded' yet. As I searched, I determined that what was often missing, were the program schedules that highlighted special keynote and general sessions. Whoever we chose to speak provided a chronicle of what

was forefront in our minds. So, for future reference, I would ask that the *entire* conference proceedings be archived. Our roots are important.

In the last few years, there has been discussion about the future of both Adult Education and MR2P. Is there a future for Midwest? As someone who began MR2P as a graduate student 11 years ago, I would certainly hope so. For me and many others, this conference has become *family*, and provides an environment that no other conference provides. Maintaining a balance keeps researchers thinking about practice, and practitioners thinking about how research can assist them. So I pose the following question; who will host MR2P in the future? I hope you all consider it.

You will note that not everything is included in this paper, so, I charge everyone at the conference to seek out those who have attended any or all of the conferences (there will be at least two that have attended all but one) and have them share their experiences. There is much that cannot be communicated on paper., so let us keep the oral tradition alive!

Have a fun and productive 25th!

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