

The Importance of Collegiality

Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference, October 4-6, 2006
<http://www.umsl.edu/teachers/mwr2p06>

Roxanne Miller

Hi! I'm Roxanne Miller, Civic Communications Specialist with University of Missouri Extension and Co-Chair of the 2006 Midwest Research-to-Practice conference. You will be listening to Dr. John Henschke, Extension Continuing Education Specialist and Associate Professor, University of Missouri-St. Louis and Dr. Trenton Ferro, Retired Professor of Adult Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

John Henschke



You want to talk anything about the history and background of the conference? How it got generated?

Trenton Ferro

Well, what I know, of course, is primarily hearsay. My first conference was 1983 at NIU (Northern Illinois University) which was the second one. I had started my doctoral program at NIU in January. Of course, they were touting the conference; and since it was handy I thought, well, I'll go. One of the things that I remember most about that particular conference was that the keynote speaker was Hal Beder. He was the editor of AEQ (Adult Education Quarterly) at the time. My understanding was that Sharan Merriam and in particular, Sue D. Orem from the college of continuing education, or school of continuing education at NIU, worked together on putting together the 1982 conference, and they thought it was worth continuing. And, it was at the 1983 conference that apparently that a wider group of people, including you, John, and from Kansas State, Chuck. That was his first conference, I believe, and several others got involved. So it really expanded. Although the original conception was to have the graduate programs in primarily Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio. Minnesota came in on that.



John Henschke

My impression also had to do with the fact that there was some in the adult education research conference that had been going for a number of years. It felt like there needed to be some practical aspect to it; and like you mentioned the linkage with the graduate students so that the practice aspect of adult education be addressed. Northern Illinois University, which is the name to the acronym NIU, is the one that started that up. They held it there for three years. After the three years, then it went to the University of Michigan, Ball State and Michigan State. It just kept roaming around in the various locations within the Midwest. It's been a vibrant thing.

One of the other things that I remember also, was that up until 1989, we'd only had three categories of research papers – research studies, evaluation studies, and research issues. That year, because of the conversation going on in the steering committee for a couple of years, we added the practitioner's concerns category. That's never disappeared along the way. That's been a high taker in terms of papers submitted, and it's been an excellent help for focus on the practitioner.

Trenton Ferro

We have a kind of annual re-acquaintance every time we attend one of these, as well as the new people coming along that we meet and we work into the fabric of that network. That has been just a marvelous aspect of the whole program. I don't know if that was part of the original design but it certainly developed quite early as one of the draws.

John Henschke

Collegiality has really been a mainstay and a driver of the groups getting together and maintaining what we've done in Research to Practice.

Trenton Ferro

Right.

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