

American Reading Forum (ARF) Annual Conference
Wednesday, December 10 - Saturday, December 13, 2025
One Ocean Resort, Atlantic Beach, FL

Reassessing 21st Century Literacies at the Quarter-Century Mark

Program Chairs: Dr. Brittany Adams, University of Alabama
Dr. Michelle Commeret, University of Florida

Shifts in the collective understanding of *literacy* over the past three decades have embraced the multiple cultural, social, and technical contexts in which literacies are enacted. The technological, culturally rich, and information-driven nature of our increasingly global society at the turn of the century, alongside politically inundated education policy, have prompted education stakeholders to prioritize evolving skills imperative for 21st-century success (New London Group, 1996). Consequently, education scholarship has continually emphasized equipping teachers and learners with “21st-century” skills and literacies (Bangert-Drowns & Swan, 1997; National Council of Teachers of English, 2007). Yet, the interplay between digital innovation and sociopolitical realities has simultaneously fueled and impeded a coherent conceptualization of 21st-century literacies, even as we approach the mid-century mark. Situated within this evolving literacy landscape, we invite scholars to reconsider the notion of 21st-century skills and practices (Mirra & Garcia, 2021) and explore whether we must resituate these concepts to address contemporary challenges and opportunities.

At the American Reading Forum, recent conversations have centered on global realities of asynchronous learning, the role of profit in the literacy field, education policy, socially just literacy practices, reading comprehension trends, culturally sustaining literacy, and transdisciplinary literacy (Puig & Froelich, 2022). Regardless of the specific issue, sociocultural and political realities have shaped literacy education discourse. Perhaps most significantly, the triple pandemic of COVID-19, racial injustice, and rampant misinformation has redefined our understanding of 21st-century literacies. These challenges demanded navigating unprecedented health terrain, responding to social upheaval, reacting to shifting public policies (Harper-Anderson et al., 2023), and countering misinformation and disinformation (Lewandowsky et al., 2017), exacerbated by weaponized artificial intelligence (Kreps et al., 2022). Twenty-first-century literacies have become indispensable not only for educational advancement in information, digital, and social contexts (Street, 1995) but also for critically addressing health, sociocultural, and political tensions (Skerrett & Smagorinsky, 2023). As such, we must continuously read and reread the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987), reassessing these literacies for the next 25 years.

With these contextual realities in mind, we invite discussions around questions such as: How has 21st-century literacy evolved? What societal shifts have influenced its conceptualization? What must we address moving forward? This theme seeks to foster critical dialogue on literacy in the 21st century, its gaps, and what must be done to propel the field forward.

References

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A Focus on 21st Century Literacies

At the American Reading Forum 2025, we seek to offer spaces where our community can gather to share about our current research endeavors, our 21st century literacy realities, and our reimagined hopes for the next quarter century. Thoughtful reflection on where we have been and where we are headed will generate renewed energy for our collective scholarship. To support this goal, we will offer multiple opportunities for collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving. While papers, open forums, keynotes, and other standard conference attributes are certainly part of that conversation, they constitute merely an entry point for discussion. Throughout the week, at various points, the conference chairs and keynote speakers will offer moments to reflect and build on the discussions that transpire. Additionally, ARF will provide an ongoing forum to continue the conversation until we are able to meet again next year.

Themes and Subthemes

Given the breadth and depth of literacies necessary to navigate the 21st century, we invite contributions from a diverse array of stakeholders in literacy and literacy-adjacent fields. We encourage practitioners, administrators, literacy coaches, researchers, and scholars to submit proposals that speak to the overall conference theme including **but not limited to** the following sub-themes:

- Assessment
- Curriculum
- Disciplinary literacies
- Digital literacies and tools
- Diversity and representation
- Educational policy
- Equitable learning opportunities
- Instruction across P-20 settings
- Interventions across the disciplines
- Media and information literacies
- Pedagogy
- Reading and writing
- Teacher preparation and certification
- Teacher professional development

Tentative Program Schedule

Wednesday, December 10th

- 5:00pm – 6:30pm | Board Meeting
- 7:00pm – 9:00pm | Welcome Reception

Thursday, December 11th

- 8:00am – 8:30am | Registration
- 8:30am – 9:00am | General Session: Welcome and Introductions
- 9:00am – 10:15am | Keynote Presentation
- 10:15am – 10:30am | Break
- 10:30am – 11:45am | Breakout Session A
- 11:45am – 1:15pm | Lunch (on your own)
- 1:15pm – 2:30pm | Breakout Session B
- 2:30pm – 2:45pm | Break
- 2:45pm – 4:00pm | Breakout Session C
- 5:00pm – 6:30pm | Spirit of the Time Reception (included with conference registration)

Friday, December 12th

- 8:30am – 9:00am | Registration
- 8:30am – 9:00am | Graduate Student Meeting
- 9:00am – 10:15am | Keynote Address
- 10:15am – 10:30am | Break
- 10:30am – 11:45am | Breakout Session D
- 11:45am – 1:15pm | Luncheon (included with conference registration)
- 1:15pm – 2:30pm | Breakout Session E
- 2:30pm – 2:45pm | Break
- 2:45pm – 4:00pm | Breakout Session F
- 4:00pm – 5:30pm | Business Meeting (members are invited to attend)

Saturday, December 13th

- 8:30am – 9:00am | Registration
- 9:00am – 10:15am | Keynote Address
- 10:15am – 10:30am | Break
- 10:30am – 11:45am | Breakout Session G
- 11:45am – 12:00pm | Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Award Opportunities

Graduate and Undergraduate Student Scholarship Award

Graduate and undergraduate students presenting at the annual conference are eligible for consideration for a scholarship. The amount varies from year to year. The scholarship may only be awarded to a person once.

Recipients are selected based on ratings obtained during blind reviews of their session proposal, slide decks, and a nomination letter from a current ARF member. Those who accept the award are expected to consider submitting an article describing their conference session to the *American Reading Forum Yearbook*.

Nomination materials should be sent to Nance Wilson (nance.wilson@cortland.edu).

Gary Moorman Early Career Literacy Scholar Award

The Gary Moorman Early Career Literacy Scholar Award is given to junior American Reading Forum members who are at the early stages of their career (generally defined as the first five years post doctorate). This annual award was established in 2017 and is named after Dr. Gary Moorman, Professor Emeritus, Appalachian State University, in honor of his leadership and mentoring of young scholars. The award includes both a monetary prize and a commemorative plaque.

The award targets early career ARF members. The primary criterion is engagement in innovative reading/literacy research that addresses critical questions about policy, theory, and/or instructional practice. Active participation in professional organizations, particularly ARF, will also be considered.

Nominations materials include:

- A nomination letter (maximum 1000 words) submitted by a current ARF member (self-nomination letters will not be accepted)
- A statement about the importance of the applicant's research for the reading/ literacy field (maximum of 1000 words)
- A current curriculum vitae
- Sample publications (maximum 2)

Nomination materials should be sent to Vicky Zygoris-Coe (vzygouri@ucf.edu).

Brenda S. Townsend Service Award

The Brenda S. Townsend Service Award is given to one American Reading Forum member for their dedicated service to the organization. Awardees must have been a member for 10 consecutive years and have served the organization in multiple capacities.

Only a Brenda S. Townsend Service Award recipient may nominate a member for this award by submitting a letter of nomination.

Nomination materials should be sent to Enrique Puig (Enrique.Puig@ucf.edu).

Submitting a Conference Proposal

Important Dates

August 1, 2025	Deadline for session proposals
September 1, 2025	Feedback on proposals will be sent out via email
October 1, 2025	Deadline for graduate student proposals
November 1, 2025	Feedback on graduate student proposals will be sent out
November 14, 2025	Regular conference registration ends
December 10-13, 2025	Conference held at One Ocean Resort, Atlantic Beach, FL

Session Types (Note: All sessions run for 75 minutes)

- **Paper Session:** The program committee will schedule two to three papers on related topics in a session. The program committee will appoint a discussant who will start the session and facilitate a 15-minute discussion about the papers, including comments and questions from the audience. The timing of sessions may be adjusted based on the number of presentations scheduled for the session.
- **Problems Court:** In the first 20-30 minutes of Problems Court presentation, the presenters should pose a persistent problem of practice or opportunity for growth in the field of literacy research and instruction, supported by theoretical and/or empirical evidence and connected to the conference theme. The next 20-30 minutes should be reserved for a facilitated, critical conversation with the audience about the ways in which this problem or opportunity has been treated in the past, what has advanced our progress, and what has hindered it. In the final 20-30 minutes, the emphasis of the discussion should move toward developing concrete action items that individuals or small groups can continue to pursue in their own contexts. These might include directions for research, research-practice partnerships, or other steps to be initiated once the conference is completed. The session should close with a 5-10 minute wrap-up of the discussion by the presenters. Problem Court proposals should identify how many presenters will be involved in the session and their specific roles (e.g., presenters, discussion facilitators, timekeepers).
- **Advancing Literacy Roundtable:** Advancing Literacy presentations should describe an ongoing study, work in the planning stages, or theoretical work. The program committee will organize the papers into groups of three so that related topics will share a space. Presenters will share for 15 minutes with 10 minutes for follow-up discussion.
- **Teaching Burst (Saturday ONLY):** This year, ARF will host a new event where teachers of all levels can come together to exchange teaching ideas and practices. Each participant will have 25 minutes to provide a snapshot of an instructional practice, a demonstration of a short classroom routine, or an “Ignite-style” showcase of current children’s and adolescent texts (print, digital, or multimodal) and how each text might be used with students.

Submission Process

All regular proposals must be submitted electronically by **August 1, 2025** via this [Google Form](#).

Graduate students interested in a Graduate Student Scholarship do not submit through the provided Google Form link. Instead, they should submit their proposals by October 4, 2024, to Nance Wilson (nance.wilson@cortland.edu).

Proposals should be no more than three double-spaced pages (exclusive of references). Please ensure that proposals do not include author names or identifying information. See below for specific expectations for each proposal type.

Paper Presentation

Paper proposals should include:

1. Objectives and/or research questions
2. Perspectives or theoretical framework
3. Methods and/or techniques
4. Data source(s)
5. Results, findings, or interpretations
6. Educational or scientific importance

Advancing Literacy Roundtable

Advancing Literacy proposals should include:

1. Objectives or research questions
2. Perspectives or theoretical framework
3. Methods and/or techniques
4. Questions for discussion

Advancing literacy sessions are designed for presenting ongoing studies, work in the planning stages, or theoretical work. As such, any of the above items may be tentative or developing.

Problems Court

Problems Court proposals should include:

1. Statement of the problem/opportunity for growth in the field of literacy
2. Historical context, including perspectives or theoretical framework
3. Educational or scientific importance
4. Key questions for discussion or ideas for facilitation
5. Initial ideas for “next steps”

Symposium

Symposium proposals should include:

1. Overall description of the symposium

2. Objectives and/or research questions (for the full symposium or for each paper within)
3. Perspectives or theoretical framework (for the full symposium or for each paper within)
4. Educational or scientific importance (for the full symposium or for each paper within)
5. Questions for discussion or other method of audience involvement that ties the symposium together

As noted above, your proposal may present the symposium as a series of connected papers, each with its own objectives, perspectives, and significance OR you may choose to present an overall set of objectives, perspectives, and significance that applies to the entire session.

Teaching Burst (Saturday ONLY)

Teaching Burst proposals should include:

1. A brief description of the instructional practice, classroom routine, or text showcase to be presented.
2. Objectives of the presentation (e.g., what participants will learn or take away).
3. Relevance to the conference theme or literacy instruction more broadly.
4. A description of the format and content delivery (e.g., demonstration, “Ignite-style” presentation, hands-on activity).
5. Anticipated outcomes or implications for classroom practice.

Teaching Burst sessions are designed to be practical, engaging, and highly applicable for educators. Presenters are encouraged to highlight creative and innovative approaches that can be immediately implemented in classrooms or adapted to various teaching contexts.

NOTE: Data projectors will be provided; however, laptops, dongles, or other computer equipment will not be provided. Presenters are responsible for additional equipment, including adapters unique to their laptops. Audiovisual equipment is not guaranteed for the Advancing Literacy sessions.

About the Conference Co-Chairs



Dr. Brittany Adams is an assistant professor of literacy education at the University of Alabama. She has been a member of ARF since 2016 and has served multiple roles in the organization, including board member (2021-2023), conference chair (2022), vice president (2023), president (2024), and now past president (2025). Additionally, she was awarded the Gary Moorman Early Career Literacy Scholar Award in 2021. Brittany's research interests include critical literacies, children's and young adult literature, and the preparation of culturally sustaining teachers. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *Teaching Education*, and *The Reading Teacher*.



Dr. Michelle Commeret recently graduated from the University of Florida (UF) with a Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction, Language and Literacy Education. At UF, she served as vice president of the university's Organization for Graduate Student Advancement and Professional Development (OGAP) where she assisted with graduate students' academic career preparation and the organization's flagship events. Michelle has been a member of ARF since 2022. Her research interests include nuanced literacies in the ELA classroom, the preparation of teachers for equity pedagogy, university-K-12 informal mentoring partnerships with early career ELA teachers, and visual arts-based methodologies. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *Journal of World Languages*, *English Journal*, and *English Leadership Quarterly*.