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Interview with Evan Ortlieb **A Rising Star**

By
Jack Cassidy, Co-editor,
The Literacy Professional

Typically, these profiles of the prominent members of the Specialized Literacy Professionals have focused on literacy leaders who have a long history in the field (i.e. Dorothy Strickland, Linda Gambrell, Heather Bell etc.) However, this interview is with a literacy professional under 35.

*Evan Ortlieb, the incoming Chair of the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG, at only 33, is already a full professor at St. John's University in New York where he coordinates the graduate programs in language and literacy. He is editor of the ongoing book series *Literacy Research, Practice and Evaluation*, and also the author of countless journal articles including pieces in premier publications like the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Literacy Today and Literacy Research and Instruction. For the last few years, he has joined Stephanie Grote-Garcia and me in authoring various pieces related to the *What's Hot in Literacy* study. Before coming to St John's University, Evan served on the faculty of universities in Georgia, Texas and Australia. For Monash University in Australia, he taught classes near Melbourne and also in Singapore. When he was looking for a rental home near Melbourne, he was featured on an episode of HGTV's popular program, *House Hunters International*. Today, he cautions those who watch the show not to believe everything they see on TV. This profile could be just a litany of Evan's many academic accomplishments. However, the focus is more personal – on Evan, the remarkable young man.*

Tell us about your early life.

I was born in Louisiana and spent all of my early years there. As a child, I was always interested in science. I had a childlike interest in experiments and explosions. "MacGyver" was one of my favorite TV shows. I definitely preferred riding my bike to reading. Competitive sports like baseball, basketball and golf also occupied much of my time. I was a middle child – my older brother is an engineer and my younger sister is a speech language therapist. My mother was always pushing language and literacy. Originally, I had intended to be a pharmacist and, with that goal in mind, I attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. One semester, as part of a service-learning project at LSU, I was tutoring science to students in a local elementary school. It was that experience that instilled in me a passion for teaching and a realization about the importance of literacy for all learning. Soon, I entered a five-year program that gave me both a bachelors and masters degree as well as my teaching certificate.

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A Rising Star, continued

Do you have a person or persons you consider a mentor?

Undoubtedly my mentor would be Dr. Earl Cheek, Professor Emeritus at Louisiana State University. I studied with Dr. Cheek for both my masters and doctorate. At a partnership school with LSU, Dr. Cheek gave me the opportunity to teach many diverse learners who were experiencing various literacy problems. He also gave me a historical perspective on literacy leaders of the past and present. I both gained a new appreciation for those who came before and expanded my own interests. I came into the literacy field with all these amazing "unique" ideas. Dr. Cheek kept me grounded by reminding me that my amazing ideas were not always as "unique" as I thought.

Tell us about your avocations.

My avocations are typically aimed at spiritual growth and physical fitness. I live in Grammercy in New York City, and I constantly go for long runs or vigorous work out sessions in the city. Recently, I have taken up a new hobby - photography. As I run, I stop to document cityscapes with my camera. Also, I try to volunteer as much as I can.

What is the Ortlieb Foundation?

The Ortlieb Foundation is dedicated to providing college scholarships to cancer patients or cancer survivors. Since 2009, we have awarded 27 scholarships, and are looking to grant another five for next semester. Typically, young cancer patients often face challenges on three fronts - academics, finances and health. Hopefully, these scholarships help relieve financial burdens associated with attending college. My dedication to this cause was prompted by my own personal experiences. At the age of 16, I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. For two and a half years, I underwent about 150 treatments, some of which at St. Jude Children's Hospital in Memphis. During my treatment, I went to see a psychologist who mentioned that I was not college material. Probably, that comment, the cancer experience, and my early interest in competitive sports have made me more aggressive in my career and propelled me to start the Ortlieb Foundation.

What do you like to read?

I like non-fiction. Typically, I like to read books about religion, spirituality, and Eastern philosophy as well as books on finance and physical fitness.

What is your favorite food?

I am addicted to protein shakes.

Now for the big question - are you single?

Yes.

(Jack Cassidy is the Executive Secretary of the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG and co-editor with Jennifer Shettel of the newsletter. He is a former president and board member of the International Reading Association and the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers (ALER). Ideas for newsletters should be sent to dr.jackcassidy@gmail.com)

Chair's Message

Dear Members,

I write this column as we prepare for the annual conference of the ILA to be held in Boston, July 8-11. We as classroom teachers, reading specialists, literacy coaches, and curriculum leaders know how our teaching is making a difference for our students and our peers. We are making the *Difference that Matters*. We also need renewal of our professional learning and coming together at conferences to learn about new practices and current research and share our practices with others can be transformative, making a *Difference that Matters* in our professional learning. Here are some updates on the work of our SIG and its members.



Roles and Responsibilities of Specialized Literacy Professionals. Rita Bean and Diane Kern (co-chairs) and their committee co-authored a position statement and a research brief for the International Literacy Association. The title of the position statement is *The Multiple Roles of School-Based Specialized Literacy Professionals*. Both the statement and the research brief can be accessed at this address: (www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/literacy-professionals-position-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=4)

February 2016, Literacy Summit. We hosted an extremely successful literacy summit celebrating the 20th anniversary of *What's Hot and What's Not in Literacy*. We also hosted a featured session, celebrating Dr. Jack Cassidy for his long-term commitment and leadership to our Specialized Literacy Professionals Special Interest Group. Co-Chairs were Stephanie Grote- Garcia, Jack Cassidy, and Elda Martinez.

Previous Webinars. Along with the literacy faculty of the University of Texas, San Antonio, we hosted two webinars for literacy professionals. Julie Coiro, current ILA Board Member, Associate Professor at the University of Rhode Island, was the keynote speaker for the first webinar entitled, *Online Reading Comprehension: Opportunities and Challenges*, and the second webinar, entitled *Strategies for Supporting Productive Online Inquiry*. If you were unable to attend our live webinars, they are archived for you to access independently. The first webinar (held February 2) is archived at this address (www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9t9zGKZV4c&feature=youtu.be#sthash.oCpl0Dey.dpuf). The second webinar (held March 30) is archived at this address (www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwuyKZMxPIQ&feature=em-share_video_user#sthash.oCpl0Dey.dpuf).

Vicki Risko, Chair

(In addition to being chair of the SIG, Dr. Risko is a former IRA President and former president of the Association for Literacy Educators and Researchers. She is a member of the Reading hall of Fame.)

Literacy Summit— A Smashing Success

The Literacy Summit, “Celebrating 20 Years of What’s Hot” held on February 12 & 13, 2015 was a fantastic success. Over 300 educators came to the beautiful University of Incarnate Word (UIW) campus in San Antonio to hear speakers from over 20 states. The Summit was co-sponsored by the Specialized Literacy Professionals SIG, the Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE) and UIW. Dr. Stephanie Grote-Garcia, a UIW associate professor and a SIG Board member, was the conference chair. She said, “This has been a wonderful professional development experience for Texas teachers as well as educators from across the country.”



Pictured left to right: Jack Cassidy, Stephanie Grote-Garcia, Evan Orlieb, Victoria Risko, and Earl Cheek



Pictured left to right: Rona Flippo, Jill Lewis-Spector, Linda Gambrell, Victoria Risko, and Jack Cassidy



Pictured: Jerry Johns

Our Members Publish! 2015

(Here is a list of just some of the many 2015 publications of our members. Specialized Literacy professionals should send a list of their 2016 publications to newsletter co-editor Dr. Jennifer Shettel, Millersville University (Jennifer.Shettel@millersville.edu))

Rita Bean (University of Pittsburgh), **Diane Kern** (University of Rhode Island School of Education) and several other SIG members co-published:

- Bean, R., Kern, D., Goatley, V., Ortlieb, E.; Shettel, J., Calo, K., Marinak, B., Sturtevant, E., Elish-Piper, L., L’Allier, S.; Lane, M.; Frost, S., Mason, P., Quatroche, D., Cassidy, J. (2015). Specialized literacy professionals as literacy leaders: Results of a national survey. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, Taylor & Francis, 1-32.

Jack Cassidy (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi), **Stephanie Grote-Garcia** (University of the Incarnate Word, TX) and **Evan Ortlieb** (St. John’s University, NY) published:

- Cassidy, J., Grote-Garcia, S., Ortlieb, E. (2015). What’s hot in 2016: Recognizing new trends and celebrating 20 years of data. *Literacy Today*, 33, No 2., 12-16

Jeanne Cobb (Spardoni College of Education, Coastal Carolina University) published:

- Cobb, J. B., Ryan, T., & Laster, B. P. (2015). Renewal in the land of eternal spring: Teacher educators reflecting on their practice. In J. Rhodes & T. Milby (Eds.), *Advancing teacher education and curriculum development through study abroad programs*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Laurie Elish-Piper (College of Education, Northern Illinois University) published:

- Elish-Piper, L., L’Allier, S.K., Manderino, M., & DiDomenico, P. (2015). *Collaborative Coaching for Disciplinary Literacy: Strategies to Support Teachers in Grades 6-12*. New York: Guilford.

Rona Flippo (University of Massachusetts Boston) published a book that included four of her former students as contributing authors, and the Foreword by P. David Pearson.

- Flippo, R. F. (with Gaines, R., Crane-Rockwell, K., Cook, K., & Melia, D.) (2015). *Studying and learning in a high stakes world: Making tests work for teachers*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

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Our Members Publish, continued

Rosalind Horowitz (The University of Texas, San Antonio) published:

- Rosalind Horowitz (2015). Oral language. The genesis and development of literacy for schooling and everyday life. In P. David Pearson & Elfrieda H. Hiebert (Eds.). *Research-based practices for teaching common core literacy*. (pp. 57-75). New York: Teachers College Press and Newark, Delaware: International Literacy Association.

Sharon Kletzien (West Chester University, PA) published:

- Dreher, M. J., & Kletzien, S. B. (2015). *Teaching informational text in K-3 classrooms*. New York: Guilford Press.

Donald Leu (University of Connecticut) published:

- Leu, D.J., Forzani, E., Rhoads, C., Maykel, C., Kennedy, C., & Timbrell, N. (2015). The new literacies of online research and comprehension: Rethinking the reading achievement gap. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 50(1), 37-59.
- Leu, D.J., Forzani, E., & Kennedy, C (2015). Income inequality and the online reading achievement gap: Teaching our way to success with online research and comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 68. 422-27.

Barbara Marinak (Mount St. Mary's University) published:

- Strickland, M. J., & Marinak, B. A. (2015). Not just talk, but a "dance"! How kindergarten teachers opened and closed spaces for teacher-child authentic dialogue. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 43(6), 1-9.
- Marinak, B., Malloy, J., Gambrell, L., & Mazzoni, S. (2015). Me and my reading profile: A tool for assessing early reading motivation. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(1), 51-62.

Evan Ortlieb (Monash University, Australia) published:

- Ortlieb, E., Shanahan, L., & McVee, M. (2015). *Literacy Research, Practice and Evaluation: Vol. 6. Video research in disciplinary literacies*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.
- Ortlieb, E., McVee, M., & Shanahan, L. (2015). *Literacy Research, Practice and Evaluation: Vol. 5. Video reflection in literacy teacher education and development: Lessons from research and practice*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

Victoria Risko (Vanderbilt University) published:

- Risko, V. J., & Walker-Dalhouse, D. (2015). Best practices to change the trajectory of struggling readers. In L. Gambrell & L. Morrow (Eds.). *Best Practices in Literacy Instruction, Fifth Edition* (107-126). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Jimenez, R. T., David, S., Pacheco, M., Risko, V. J., Pray, L., Fagan, K., & Gonzales, M. (2015). Using Translation to Drive Conceptual Development for Students Becoming Literate in English as an

Additional Language. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 49(3), 248-271.

Misty Sailors (The University of Texas at San Antonio) published:

- Shin, J., Sailors, M., McClung, N., P., P. D., & Hoffman, J. (2015). The impact of first language reading and writing on learning English as a second language in an African context: the case of Malawi, Chichewa and English. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 38, 255-274.
- Sailors, M., & Price, L. (2015). Support for Improvement of Practices through Intensive Coaching (SIPIC): A model of coaching for improving reading instruction and reading achievement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 45, 115-127.

Laurie Sharp (West Texas A&M University) published:

- Sharp, L. A. (2015). Personal Writing Histories: A critical step in preparing future teachers of writing. *Ohio Reading Teacher*, 45(1), 52-59.
- Sharp, L. A. (2015). Conditions for developing powerful writers within a workshop approach to writing. *The Reading Paradigm*, 9(1), 5-11.

Sheri Vasinda (Oklahoma State University) published:

- Vasinda, S., Kander, F., & Redmond-Sanogo, A. (2015). University reading and mathematics clinics in the digital age: Opportunities and challenges of iPad integration. In Niess, M. & Gillow-Wiles, G. (Eds.), *The handbook of research on teacher education in the digital age*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Vasinda, S. & McLeod, J. (2015). Podcasts: Adding power and new possibilities to the Readers Theater experience. In Rasinski, T., Pytash, K., & Ferdig, R. (Eds.), *Using technology to enhance reading: Innovative approaches to literacy instruction*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Wolfram Verlaan (University of Alabama in Huntsville) published:

- Verlaan, W., & Verlaan, S. (2015). Using video-reflection with pre-service teachers: A cautionary tale. In E. Ortlieb, L. Shanahan, & M. McVee (Eds.), *Video reflection in literacy teacher education and development: Lessons from research and practice* (pp. 151-171). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

Shelley Wepner (Manhattanville College, NY) published:

- Wepner, S. B., Henk, W., & Lovell, S. (2015). Developing deans as effective leaders for today's changing educational landscape. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 30(1), 51-64.

Kathleen Williams (retired) published:

- Williams, K. T. (2015). *Building early literacy skills: Phonological and print awareness activities*. Torrance, CA: Western Psychological Services.
- Williams, K. T. (2015). *Phonological and print awareness scale (PPA Scale)*. Torrance, CA: Western Psychological Services.

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