

From the Editor

By Lyn Miller-Lachmann



At last! After several years of hearing your call for a more powerful web site, the new *MultiCultural Review* site is up and running at www.mcreview.com! Thanks to our talented designer Danielle VanCola, readers of *MCR* will have a new way of accessing current and past issues in a way that is quick, easy, and environmentally sustainable. For now, all issues from 2003 (volume 12) to the present are available, and issues from the journal's debut in 1992 to 2002, the final year of its publication by the Greenwood Publishing Group, are in the process of being scanned.

MCR institutional and individual subscribers will be able to access all features of the web site at a modest additional cost. EMIERT members who receive the print journal and already have access to the *EMIE Bulletin* through the EMIERT web site may sign up for a web-only subscription.

The new web site will allow small presses to gain more visibility for their publications as well, through a variety of affordable advertising options. Our managing editor, Deb Goldman, can explain these; contact her at deb@ggpubs.com.

We are interested in your feedback on the new site and in your ideas for additional features. One of the features being considered is an Editor's Blog, where readers, subject editors, and the editor-in-chief can reflect on trends in multicultural librarianship, multicultural education, the publishing industry, and media treatments of diversity issues. We will invite people to respond to our articles, reviews, and, of course, the "Parting Words" column, which presents the opinion of a writer intimately involved in some aspect of multiculturalism.

I invite you to visit the new *MultiCultural Review* web site, www.mcreview.com, and see for yourself. And please let us know what you think. We want your help to make this site the best that it can be.

This issue focuses on multilingualism and English language learning. There are articles on the special challenges facing English language learners from East and Southeast Asia and the needs of adult English language learners who use the public library, as well as our regular feature on children's books in Spanish. These books are useful not only for native Spanish speakers but also for native English speakers of all ages seeking to learn Spanish as a second language.

In the summer of 2005 Peter Edwards and Hui-Chin Yang sent me some fascinating, albeit alarming, statistics. In examining ten popular literacy textbooks, they discovered virtually no mention of Asian English language learners, even though immigrants from East and Southeast Asia comprise a large proportion of students in many urban, suburban, and rural school districts. I asked them to recheck their numbers. They did, with the same results, and in their article "Asian ESL Students and Literacy Development," they expand their discussion to point out where teachers can go to find the information and instructional strategies that standard textbooks lack. A byproduct, in large part, of the "model minority" stereotype, the lack of attention to English-language acquisition by Asian immigrant students has led to lower participation in classroom discussions, lower verbal scores on standardized tests, restricted opportunities for higher education, and occupational segregation. It is important for teachers, therefore, to pursue instructional strategies that allow Asian immigrant students to attain their full potential in school and beyond.

Former multicultural services librarian at the Toronto Public Library and now professor at the University of Toronto, Chrissy Mylopoulos offers a critical look at ESL resources in urban public libraries across Canada. Her article identifies the types of adult learners using English language learning resources at the public library, ranging from impoverished immigrants and political refugees to students preparing for college and professional school entrance exams. She then assesses libraries' policies for collecting

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materials and making them accessible to the public, in the process revealing that for many large library systems, such policies do not exist. She recommends that libraries work more closely with community-based ESL teachers to coordinate materials collection for classroom instruction, to ascertain the best resources for independent study, and to make sure that students of all types have access to sufficient copies to meet their learning needs. Many materials published today, Mylopoulos observes, are based on experimental techniques that have yet to prove their efficacy. Although she focuses on libraries in Canada, her lessons are relevant for libraries in the United States as well.

Also from Canada, Patricia Goldblatt contributes an article for English teachers, organizers of book groups, spiritual leaders, and anyone else with an interest in the ethical underpinnings of multicultural literature. "Exploring Ethics: The Role of Multicultural Narrative" examines the values at the core of three books that, together, take the entire globe as their setting—Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, and Miriam Toews's *A Complicated Kindness*. Although the books portray three distinct religious traditions—mainline Christian, Muslim, and Mennonite—they go beyond the confines of an organized religious concept of ethics to address the individual experiences of people living through personal and political crises. In diverse settings—an upper-class London neighborhood, Afghanistan before and after the Taliban, and rural Manitoba—characters witness violence and challenge (with varying degrees of success) constraints on their actions and relationships due to ethnicity, class, and gender.

Isabel Schon's semiannual column featuring children's books in Spanish goes beyond recommending exemplary books to discussing several instances of failure—translations into Spanish that do not reflect the literary quality of the original or may confuse young readers. Those who select materials in Spanish should read this piece carefully, as it mentions what one should look for in evaluating a translation.

Likewise, Sergio Troncoso's "Parting Words" column is a discussion of "what not to do" in writing popular history. This extended review of Eileen Welsome's *The General and the Jaguar*, about General John Pershing's pursuit of Pancho Villa after Villa's 1916 raid on Columbus, New Mexico, addresses the problems of sensationalism and stereotyping. Narratives that play up violence, and play into common negative misconceptions, often sell because they are exciting to read and do not challenge the reader's view of the world. But they do not provide an accurate account of events, failing to offer important context or to explore the perspectives of all the players involved. Our reviews section has more examples of problems related to the writing of historical narrative, among them a history of American Indians that ascribes conflicts between Indians and white settlers to irreconcilable cultural differences rather than to the settlers' desire for the land the Indians occupied and the resources they controlled.

Readers of our articles and reviews may note a more critical tone in places. It is important that our writers express these concerns, because all is not rosy, and even well-meaning authors, translators, publishers, and librarians make mistakes. We can learn much from the mistakes of others, as well as our own. The goal is not to find fault with one another but to do a better job that benefits us all. 🌐

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