



FOCUS

ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

COMMITTEE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

On that last great Judgment Day
When they drive them all away
There are strange things happening everyday
Sister Rosetta Tharpe

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FROM THE EDITOR

*Hard times are only the other side of good times
but if you ever wished hard times were gone
you know what it's like to wish good times would come
And don't it seem like a long time
seems like a long time, seems like a long, long time*
"Seems like a long time" Rod Stewart

Yes, it has been a while since the last issue of *Focus* was issued. I hope you find it worth the wait. This is the first time a non-faculty member has been the editor. As Manager of Public and Branch Services at the Mott Library, I look at myself as a librarian as well as an administrator, building manager, instructor, computer guru and truant officer. Along with helping students with their information needs I also, at times, share the triumphs and tribulations that come with being a college student.

In this issue of *Focus* we will be getting an overview of the CETL Winter Conference by LindaLee Massoud and two articles that were originally published as ERIC documents.

Major changes were made to ERIC in December 2003. The ERIC Clearinghouse websites, AskERIC and the toll-free phone numbers are no longer active. ERIC is currently in "transition", as a contractor for the U.S. Department of Education develops a new model for the ERIC database. At this time you can still search the ERIC database and link to the ERIC Document Reproduction Service to purchase full-text ERIC documents at:

www.eric.ed.gov

The title of the 1st ERIC document is “Information Literacy: The New Challenge” written by Michele Mednick. Ms. Mednick is a librarian at Los Angeles Public Library (and also works part-time at Santa Monica College). Since one of my work stations is next to 12 computers with Internet access, I have had a lot of challenges with student use of the Internet; including misconceptions (everything ever published is not online) of what is available online and verifying the accuracy of the information found. The article asserts that information literacy needs to be incorporated into the college curriculum and that research skills are only part of the solution; students must then be able to critically reflect on the information found.

The 2nd ERIC document is “Poverty and the Power of Knowledge” by John D. Scolaro and Elizabeth Eschbach, both professors of humanities at Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida. I was led to this article by way of a conversation I had with a student who told me the reason he was attending college was to get out of poverty. I don’t believe I had ever been given this reason for attending so matter-of-factly before. The document reviews a course the professors teach based on the work of essayist Earl Shorris. Shorris believes that the study of the humanities allows disadvantaged people to develop broader perspectives and become more active members of society. An interview with Earl Shorris can be found at:

<http://www.mfh.org/newsandevents/newsletter/MassHumanities/Spring2000/shorris.html>

2004 CETL Conference Review

By

LindaLee Massoud

This year's CETL learning conference rivaled those of previous years. As before, we were privileged to hear two speakers who are actually teaching professors themselves. They bring to the platform that unique combination of learning theory combined with practical experience. Both sessions, the morning theory session and the afternoon practical session, offered participants the opportunity to gather new ideas that could be incorporated into a regular classroom immediately.

At our follow-up faculty meeting, various instructors expressed their impressions of the conference. It was amazing to see that each person was influenced by different information, demonstrating the rich wealth of material presented. As such, this article becomes little more than a single person's view listing *some* of the important information presented at the conference. For best results, attend the conference *yourself* next year so you can gain teaching knowledge that suits *your* personal educational needs!

Here are some of the topics this author found new or interesting:

- At least 80% of students cannot achieve the “deep learning” (the kind that lasts) merely from lecture. They need a combination of educational experiences and methodologies. Lecture puts the mind and body to sleep (heart rate and breathing declines to sleep levels). To be the most effective, use it for specific, definable purposes and limit its duration. While a few students can learn alone, in isolation, from a book, most need interaction to be successful learners. Intersperse lecture with sessions

of discussion, group work, or writing to increase the connection – and to wake the body and brain back up again!

- The best learning occurs over a period of time, with multiple exposures to the material, using different learning techniques. Each exposure causes physical changes in the brain: stated simply, the brain cells grow connectors that make it easier and easier to communicate with each other, thus resulting in better learning. Sleep periods between each exposure are a vital step in establishing these connections.
- It is very important to learn information correctly the first time. *Unlearning* incorrect information requires changing that physical brain arrangement, and that is more difficult than learning it correctly the first time.
- There are physical, genetic differences in how well people can memorize. Some people really are better than others at the skill of memorization. Contrary to previous opinion, however, people *do* continue creating new brain cells through adulthood, at least in some parts of the brain. (It was previously thought that brain cells developed only into the teenage years.) We need to provide many exposure opportunities to help all students learn.
- The emotional system (limbic system) is also involved with learning. Students learn better when they can see the teacher's face and lip movements. (Perhaps we should re-think our new idea of using the Screenwatch program to record the teacher's voice and the view of the computer screen, but without any face?)
- The actual number of brain cells (neurons) will affect a person's learning ability. Activities such as drinking and drugs kill brain cells. The fewer there are, the more difficult it is to learn new information.

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- Each generation of students has its own learning styles and approaches to education. To be the most effective, teachers should analyze the learning needs of the particular group and adapt classroom techniques to meet the specific needs of the group.
 - Help students “buy into” the learning environment by telling them *your* learning theories and goals for the class. They will know why you do what you do in class. Incorporate active learning methods to help students apply theory to practice. (The speaker promoted “service” learning, in which students engage in a real-life project as part of the learning requirements.)
 - Finally, as we expected, a significant factor in students’ learning is the teacher’s level of enthusiasm and expectation of the students. Your passion comes into the classroom with you. When the students see that you are concerned for their welfare and success, they are more motivated to learn. They have to do the hard learning, but you are there to open the door to their new adventure.

Information Literacy: The New Challenge

By

Michele Mednick

Information literacy, the current “buzz word” in academia, is causing quite a stir among community colleges. It is responsible for creating new librarian positions, additional funding and changing the way students, instructors and librarians look at their new role in the information Age. This article will attempt to define information literacy and how it affects education at the community college level.

The first step to better understanding what information literacy is to define it. This task may sound simple, but a single definition is not universally agreed upon. Then this paper will take a look at the role it plays in higher education. Details such as how it is incorporated into the academic curriculum and how it affects both educators and students will be addressed. Thirdly, the question of its success will be measured. Which leads into a discussion of whether it is successful or conversely, what are the road blocks to its success. Finally, a glimpse at what the future may hold for information literacy in the 21st century.

The Definitions

The question of what information literacy is cannot be easily answered. This is for a number of reasons. First of all information can be presented in a number of formats, thus the “term ‘information’ applies to more than the printed word”. (Plotnick, Info Lit ED427777). It can apply to other literacy’s like media, computer and visual. (Plotnick). Also information literacy is fluid and changes with technological advancements, economic needs national and state

standards to name a few factors. (Plotnick). Also, it can be used to define a person's abilities and skills.

In 1989, the American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy defined the information literate person as one who “must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use the needed information.” (Plotnick ED427777).

Later, in 1998, this definition was amended to incorporate the future of information literacy. In their mission statement for a global information society they said, the “21st century information literacy is the ability to seek and effectively utilize information resources, including knowledge of how to use technologies and the forms in which information is stored.” (Ercegovac & Yamasaki, Infor Lit). Additionally, according to the ALA, information literate people “are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them.” (Infor Lit Def p2).

Over the years, a number of scholars and professional associations have re-interrupted information literacy. To illustrate this point further, here are some additional definitions put forth by academics: In 1996, the Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) defined information literacy as, “the ability to locate, evaluate and use information to become independent life-long learners.” (Directory of Online Resources, Drew Smith). Another definition adopted in 1997 by the State University of New York (SUNY), which is also similar to the ALA definition is, “the abilities to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, effectively use, and communicate

information in its various formats.” (Directory of Online resources, Smith).

The Colorado Educational Media Association put out the following definition, "Information literate students are competent, independent learners. They know their information and actively engage in the world of ideas. They display confidence in their ability to solve problems and know what is relevant information....Information literate students are flexible, can adapt to change and are able to function independently and in groups." (Info Lit Def). The above definitions are not such a stretch from the ALA definition, but the one by Shapiro and Hughes is. Their definition is, "a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact."

Factors that also influence and change the definition of information literacy include additional research, economic, state and national standards and technology. It must be pointed out that information literacy is a process (Plotnick). and as research on information literacy continues, the definitions will continue to change to reflect future investigations. This is one of the reasons that information literacy needs to be incorporated into the academic curriculum. (Plotnick). Information literacy is also dependent upon changes in the workforce. According to Plotnick, "The workplace will require workers who possess skills beyond those of reading, writing and arithmetic." (p2). To further illustrate this point, according to a study in 1998, "55 percent of all employees now use computer technology; 70 percent are connected to a local area network." (Adler p 34 ED433005). As information literacy progresses, national and

state standards will be adopted and will have common components relating to information literacy. (Plotnick). Finally, as technology changes, so will information literacy change to meet the growing needs of the users.

The Role in Higher Education

Now that information literacy is adequately defined, this paper will address how it affect students, administrators, librarians and faculty at the community college level.

Information literacy affects college students in the following ways, “In order for students to obtain a good education, they must have access to a wide variety of sources that challenge their minds, encourages them to read and research broadly, and makes them aware of the range and breadth of the knowledge developed by many people and cultures. Expanding information Competency will help students achieve this goal.” (10 421191). According to the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, “Information competency is a critical skill for student success.” (7 421191).

For college students to succeed as information literate people, they must start learning these skills at an early age. According to Humes, “In order to produce learners who are information literate, schools will need to integrate information literacy skills across the curriculum in all subject areas beginning in the earliest grades.” (ED430577 P2). This idea directly ties into the mission of higher education. In a document entitled Information Literacy Competency Standard for Higher Education, which was put out by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2000, they assert, “Developing lifelong learners is central to the mission of higher education institutions..... Information

literacy is a key component of, and contributor to, lifelong learning.... Because information literacy augments students' competency with evaluating, managing, and using information, is it now considered by several regional and discipline-based accreditation association as a key outcome for college students." (ED 440624 p.6). Likewise according to the Ross Report, "Higher education has a critical role in the acquisition by adults of information literacy, but this form of literacy is part of a continuum which should commence with school education." (Bundy 12 ED434662).

The idea of information literacy and its link to college students being lifelong learners is echoed in many of the University Library Mission Statements all over the world. For example, the University of South Australia Library's mission is, "To be the university's key information provider in facilitating student centered learning, research and information literacy for lifelong learning." (14 Bundy ED434 662). And the Deakin University's mission statement was rewritten in 1997 to reflect this need. "The library will be pre-eminent in providing information skills, services and resources for the university community to succeed in lifelong education." (Bundy 14 662). As Bundy writes, "The lifelong learning wagon seems a singularly appropriate vehicle to which all types of libraries should hitch themselves, and particularly academic libraries." (14 662).

The way to assure that college level students are information literate is to integrate information literacy into the academic curricula--across all disciplines. Because of this information literacy takes a commitment from all levels of academia, from the top down—from administration to faculty to students. "Incorporating information literacy across curricula, in all programs and services, and throughout and administrative life of the university requires the collaborative

efforts of faculty, librarians, and administrators.” (ED 440624 ACRL p6).

The best way to incorporate information literacy in the college curriculum is to start from the top down. High level college administrators need to become aware of the growing need to implement information literacy in their institution. Their awareness will then trickle down and support for information literacy will increase on their respective campus. To enhance their knowledge about information literacy, administrators should attend conferences like the one on March 24, 1998 in Atlanta, Georgia. This conference panel by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) met to discuss “integrating information literacy into the curriculum.” (Conference Circuit, Oberman). The symposium was geared toward educational administrators, such as presidents and vice-presidents to “assist the audience in evaluating their own institutional information literacy awareness.” (Conference Circuit).

Likewise, Breivik writes, “...if we keep information literacy as a library issues, if we fear being rejected, if we fear losing control by partnering with educators and others, we are never going to get anywhere. This is not a library issue. This is an educational issue.” (3 ED447823). In her paper, Ms. Breivik continues to address directors by saying, “You need to be involved in ensuring across general education curriculum students’ learning basis information literacy abilities.... This isn’t going to happen without the director’s active involvement.... You need to be out there working at policy level; because, unless you are, your librarians can never be a significant partner in the process... You have to be out playing a leadership role on your campus.” (8 ED447823).

Once information literacy is accepted by administrators, then it is the job of the librarians and instructors to make sure it is practiced in the classroom and library setting. According to the Ross Report, “librarians have an important perspective to contribute to the teaching/learning process for they see the problems clients have in carrying out research/enquiry based tasks...librarians have a teaching role to perform, a role that focuses on information and skills needed to access and use it.” (12 Bundy 662). Therefore, librarians must act as both educators and agents to help facilitate the spread of information competency.

The role of the librarian is changing drastically with the new Information Age. Traditionally, librarians were viewed as just “custodians of printed information resources” (Ercegovac p2), but in the Age of Information, their role now has changed to becoming educators. In the early 1970’s librarians were on the forefront of promoting the link between information literacy and lifelong learning. (430 577 p5). Because of their unique role in education, librarians, as information specialists, will be increasingly called upon to work with faculty together to develop curriculum. (430 577 p5). According to Ercegovac and Yamasaki, “..librarians have become the primary instructors in community colleges to teach research methods and critical thinking skills as applied to information access. As such, there is increasing support for community college librarians to be seen as key instructional team members and as partners with faculty”(p2).

Faculty development is crucial to the implementation of information literacy. Faculty must be well trained before college students can become information competent. (421 191 p6). In order for faculty to achieve these demands certain processes must be first be obtained. This includes

additional money needed to properly train academic instructors. (421 191 p6).

Also, faculty will need continual updating of their skills due to the rapid technological advances. (421c 191 p6). According to the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, "Community College faculty have the primary responsibility in determining curriculum and developing a program for information competency on the local campus." (421 191 p.7).

The Standards

Once information literacy is incorporated in the community college curriculum, the challenge then is to measure its effectiveness and to discover what roadblocks are in its path to divert its success. Information literacy standards for higher education are important because they provide "a framework for assessing the information literate individual." (4 ebschost 26). The standards help pinpoint specific indicators which librarians and faculty used to identify a student as information literate. (p4). Standards are also helpful to students because it provides them with a "framework for gaining control over how they interact with information in their environment." (p4). Also, students need to be continuously assessed of their information literacy skills throughout their educational endeavors. (ED 421 191 p6).

However, it is not always easy to assess the effectiveness of the standards themselves. The difficulty lies in the fact that the assessment is a group effort which is shared by librarians and students. According to Bosseau, "Assessment is difficult because libraries cannot do it alone. The results are potentially frightening because librarians, although not solely responsible, may fear being held solely accountable." (p2 record 14). Bosseau also maintains that information

literacy outcomes can be measured on at least four levels. These levels are: “within the library; in the classroom; on campus; and beyond the campus.” (p2).

Different educators or associations use various methods to measure information literacy . For example, according the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), there are five major standards that must be assessed through performance indicators and outcomes. The five standards are:

- 1) The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.
- 2) The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
- 3) The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
- 4) The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
- 5) The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally. (ED 440 624).

The paper “Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education” goes into specific details about how each of these points are measured and what outcomes are obtained.

Similarly, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), have put forth nine recommendations of information literacy standards for student learning. In their paper, they divide the standards into three main groups of “information

literacy, independent learning and social responsibility".
(Information Power).

One way to determine the success of information literacy skills is to "test" the students. For example, questionnaires and surveys can be administered to the students.

Some colleges and universities mandate exactly what level of competency students are to reach each year they are enrolled. For example, at the University of Connecticut, the "Library Instruction: Information Literacy Curriculum" is divided into the four undergraduate years and then graduate level. This document clearly states what information literacy skills should be obtained at each education level and what objectives should be met. (<http://webapps.lib.uconn>) Their continual assessment of the students mastery of information competency skills directly ties in with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges when they suggest, "Just as information competency skills should be distributed throughout the curriculum, so too, should the assessments of student mastery. Information competency skills need continual assessment as every level of the student's course of study." (p.6 421 191).

The Roadblocks

There are many reasons why students can fail to become information literate. These reasons range from issues of students who are distance learners, have language barriers, have social-economic conditions that may hinder their advancement or they may just simply have information overload.

Distance learners present the education world with a unique situation. According to statistics done in 1995 by the

National Center for Education Statistics, one third of higher education institutions in the U.S. offer distance education classes. (p 1 Record 11). One the average distance learners are older than the typical student, married and employed full time. (Record 11 p2). Because of these circumstances, distant education students may find it harder to visit the library and interact with the librarians. To meet this challenge, academic librarians are “struggling to develop successful information literacy instruction for distance students.” (p3 Record 11). Examples of what academic librarians have done to meet the needs of these students includes the development of web-based tutorials, online course-integrated information literacy instruction and information literacy credit courses. (Record 11 p6-7). However, in order for any of these strategies to be successful, students must first be technologically literate. It is assumed that students in these classes will be Web savvy, which may or may not be the case.

Since the above mentioned methods are very time consuming and costly to develop, assessment of their success is crucial. (p9 Record 11). In this case, assessment is done to “provide statistical information to administrators, to compare delivery systems, to determine cost-effectiveness, to judge to performance of the individual, and to measure and provide feedback on overall learning in a course....” (p9 Record 11)

Another group of students that may have difficulty in measuring up to the information literacy skills required of college students are those that are foreign or bilingual students. These students present a great challenge to educators and librarians. Questions that arise when dealing with this group include, “How can we assure the non-English speaking and reading students will have the same access to

information skills training and practice as other students? How can we develop appropriate strategies and techniques for working with bilingual and monolingual students when we have limited bilingual or English as a Second Language training? How will we as a profession address the real and substantive problems associated with evaluating/assessing the information literacy skills of bilingual or monolingual students?" (p17 Loertscher). These questions are not easily answered but have been addressed in the From Library Skills to Information Literacy manual put out by the California School Library Association. (p17).

In the United States, we take issues of literacy and access to technology for granted, but in developing nations these are luxuries. For example, in 1991 the illiteracy rate in the United States is .5 percent whereas in Uganda the rate was 43.9 percent, Brazil had a rate of 20.1 percent and Mexico had 12.4 percent in 1990. (p3 Rudisill ED434681). Another problem that the developing nations face is a lack of publishing which is important because it "reduces the assets available for information professionals to lobby governments for support for programs." (p3-4 Rudisill). According to Rudisill "Illiteracy, lack of publishing, lack of recognition of the importance of information and information professionals, and governmental instability are more tangible than the final roadblock to adoption of information literacy initiatives....Much work needs to be done to tailor a useful system for information delivery and the skills needed to deal with information in the developing world." (4). It is no wonder that students entering our community colleges from these developing countries have difficulty keeping up with our information literacy standards.

Finally, information literacy can be difficult for college students to master because of simply "information overload".

According to Lenox and Walker “there is more information in a single edition of the New York Times than a man or woman in the sixteenth century had to process in the whole of his or her life.” (Karelse ED 434 670 p1). People are often overwhelmed by the amount of information that they are expected to process. (p1 Karelse). According to Karelse, “Learners who have the competencies to learn for life therefore need the abilities to navigate a range of information systems, vehicles and highways and additionally require skills to work with information critically.” (p1) Since information literacy skills are in constant flux and updated to meet the changing needs of our society and workforce, it is not obscure to see why students may feel overloaded.

The 21st Century and Beyond

The future is always difficult to predict, but in the case of information literacy, we can see the trends. The one constant thing that will happen in the future is change.

The workforce is changing to include more industries that require knowledge based work. To meet the demands of a changing society, educators must prepare the upcoming generation to fulfill these higher goals. According to Bundy the challenge of the 21st century is “where the librarians, libraries and information access and the use are the top priority for funding and where the primary task of the teachers and lecturers is to provide frameworks which facilitate information literacy.” (p11 ED 434 662).

In order for educators and librarians to do their part and adequately prepare students, they must have support. This support needs to come in various forms including monetary—additional funding for developing information literacy instruction for all students (including distance

learners, ESL and those from developing nations). Support also needs to come from the top down, in the form of administrators becoming aware of this need and promoting changes in curriculum and policy. Also, changes need to be made to the way librarians are perceived. Librarians will no longer be the gatekeepers of information, but the key masters -- opening the doors for knowledge.

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Poverty and the Power of Knowledge

John D. Scolaro and Elizabeth Eschbach

Poverty in America, however defined, is among one of the best kept secrets in town. This conclusion is discussed at length by Earl Shorris, founder of *The Clemente Course in the Humanities*, in his *Riches for the Poor* (1997-2000). In fact, Shorris says that poverty in America hides behind a veil. What we do not see, does not exist, or so we think. He believes, as we do, that most of us are self-insulated. The real conditions of poverty and homelessness remain obscure. Furthermore, Shorris believes that the root causes of these life-conditions into which any of us may fall at any time should be unveiled and examined if we, as Americans,

are truly interested in helping to resolve these modern plagues of the human spirit. This is where education and knowledge as a source of power enter the door Shorris has courageously opened

In fact, in Orlando, Florida, where we have lived and worked for over a decade now, the Orlando *Sentinel's* January 10, 2002 issue reported that there are at least 6,500 homeless individuals living in Central Florida. This is a 10% increase over last year at about the same time. The real number of poor and homeless individuals, however, is actually higher if other independent and more dependable demographic sources, such as *The Pew Center for the People and the Press* are accessed. Local media, therefore, tends to distort the data in order to obscure these starker realities, especially in light of the fact that Orlando, the home of Walt Disney World and other entertainment venues, would undergo a rather formidable transformation if another more realistic image of the city were disclosed. If we add to this that 44% of Florida's workforce is currently in low-wage, service jobs, is it any wonder, then, why Florida ranks 35th in the nation in median household income or why 13.3% of all households in Florida are below the poverty level? Remember that Walt Disney World is the largest employer in Central Florida. Despite this, many of its employees must work at least two or more jobs in order to make ends meet. The fact is that the data on poverty and homelessness reported by non-government sources is more accurate, suggesting that the actual situation of poor and homeless individuals in Central Florida and in America shows a much darker future than we have ever imagined. This was even the case *before* the tragic events of September 11, 2001. And it has gotten much worse.

Most Americans should know that the poor and homeless often experience, as Shorris contends, such a loss of dignity that they have been encased in what he calls '*the surround of force*' and have been excluded from what the Greek Classical Period statesman, Pericles, called '*the political life*' or from what Veniece Walker, an inmate at a Bedford Hills maximum security prison for women in a Westchester suburb located 50 miles north of New York City, called '*the moral life of downtown*'. In other words, forces such as hunger, isolation, illness, landlords, police, abuse, drugs, racism, neighbors, criminals, and agencies of government designed to assist the poor out of poverty actually enclose them in a '*surround of force*' which makes it virtually impossible for those trapped by such experiences to extricate themselves. It is as if these marginalized citizens of our community are condemned to poverty forever. Borrowing Veniece Walker's pungent phrase, Shorris also believes that those immersed in the abyss of poverty have been excluded from '*the moral life of downtown*' by which she meant the moral alternative to the street, such as the theater, museums, concerts, and lectures. He believes that the humanities is the way out of this conundrum because it is driven by the truth of knowledge as a source of real power and nurtures reflective rather than reactive thinking.

Since a disproportionate number of families and individuals are, in one way or another, touched by homelessness or poverty at some point in the 'dance of life', stereotypes arise which are consequently imposed on the poor involuntarily. This means that, to most of us, the poor people we see or casually bypass on the streets of those sprawling urban centers across America are there, it is assumed, because they are lazy, or irresponsible, or unmotivated, or illiterate, or on drugs. This, of course, is far

from the truth. If you believe that statistics do not lie, the fact is that less than 6% of all Americans are homeless by choice, 25% of those who are homeless are employed full-time, 43% of America's poor live in city or urban centers rather than in rural areas, 25% are war veterans of one kind or another, and 25% are emotionally disturbed. According to the Rand Corporation, the most powerful predictor of personal and professional failure among children in the United States is not achievement test scores, parental income, or parental education levels, but poverty. Such data requires all of us to revise how we understand poverty and homelessness as well as what we may have thought caused both. Such stereotypes of the poor and homeless have been advanced, if you ask us, to rationalize our own apathy. A better path would be to understand, once and for all, that life throws all of us curve balls at times which we cannot hit, so we 'strike out', as it were, and find ourselves on the street with virtually no place to lay our head. *This can happen to anyone. No one is exempt.*

Of course, the answer to such a dilemma as we have tried to elaborate is multifaceted. There are many reasons for poverty in America, foremost among which is the low federal minimum per hour wage many of America's employed workers earn and the virtual absence of affordable housing in many cities throughout the United States. The road back to self-respect and dignity among America's poor is hard, very hard, and it is dangerous, very dangerous. It may include living without the benefit of shelter or food or without those we love or once loved. What is more important, however, is the role and function a humanities education, in its more unconventional form, might play in helping poor and homeless individuals find their own way out of poverty. This is why *The Clemente Course in the*

Humanities might serve as a way out for many individuals trapped by what Earl Shorri's calls '*the surround of force*'.

Part 1 of *The Clemente Course in the Humanities on Moral Philosophy and Literature* concluded on November 20. Students enrolled in the course met for a period of 8 weeks every Wednesday evening from 7 p.m.-9 p.m. at the following two site locations in the downtown Orlando area: *The Women's Residential and Counseling Center (WRCC)* on East Colonial Drive and *The Wells' Built Museum of African-American History and Culture* in Parramore. The class at the *WRCC*, a temporary shelter for women, included a total of 8 students; the *The Wells' Built* course had a class of 12 men from the *The Wayne Densch Center for Preferred Living*, a temporary shelter for men, including 3 students from *The Ripple Effect*, a local non-profit organization serving the needs of homeless individuals in Orlando. This initiative to employ the humanities as a 'door' out of poverty has been very successful. As a college-level, non-credit course of study, students have said that it has broadened their thinking and has made them think outside of the box. We are hopeful that a college-level, credit course of study will also be introduced sometime in 2003.

In order to enroll in the course, students were asked to write a one to two-page application letter in which they expressed their interest in the humanities, discussed a book or story they had read which had a significant impact on their life, and explained what they hoped to get out of *The Clemente Course*. Two professors of humanities were invited to teach the courses as part of their contract load. Their competence and pedagogical style were exceptional.

They are the true architects of this unique experiment in education for the multi-generational poor. Our work together with the students enrolled in these first two *Clemente Course* classes was guided by the following *Outcomes* and Goals which had been formerly defined before the start of the first classes:

Outcomes:

- To nurture, as a result of the pedagogy of dialogue based on the disciplines of Moral Philosophy and Literature via use of the Socratic Method, a discovery or rediscovery of one's unlimited potential among students of The Clemente Course
- To move students from reactive to reflective thinking based on their understanding of the great ideas of philosophy, art, literature, history, and logic
- To instill in students the advantages of negotiation over the use of force
- To demonstrate among students the psychological benefits of working within a group as well as the importance of mutual respect between them and their professor
- To emphasize the importance of family involvement in the form of more effective parenting as well as the values of reflective thinking and self dignity as a method of transcending the cycle of multi generational poverty

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- To demonstrate Valencia's responsibility for building an inclusive learning community which extends beyond the boundaries of our classrooms and campuses to the community we serve
 - To equip those individuals encased in what Earl Shorris calls 'the surround of force' with the requisite knowledge of the radical nature of the humanities so as to recover one's self-dignity based on the view of the nature of knowledge and its pursuit as a source of power
 - To expose students to the 'moral life of downtown' both within and outside of the classroom context (e.g., theater, museums, concerts, lectures, etc.) as the 'door' to the recovery of what Pericles called 'the political life' in the form of greater participation as citizens within the context of one's family, neighborhood, city, state, and nation
 - To build respect for diversity as a method of increasing the opportunity for all to participate in the prosperity we seek

Goals:

- Successful completion of *The Clemente Course in the Humanities* by enrolled students based on defined course requirements

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- The ritualization of successful completion of the course of study and its requirements by the presentation of a Certificate of Completion from Valencia within the context of a formal ceremony hosted by the president of the college
 - An increased level of motivation among students, as a result of successful completion of the course and its requirements, to pursue a college-level, credit course of study at Valencia or at any other institution of higher education or to secure gainful employment

As Dr. Sanford C. Shugart, president of Valencia Community College and avid supporter of *The Clemente Course in the Humanities* said: "I am intrigued that learning can be liberating. It empowers people with knowledge to make their way through the system. Sometimes people are trapped." This sentiment was echoed by another first-time *Clemente* Course student who said: "The most valuable thing I learned in the course is that you can overcome." What more effective outcome can we seek as teaching professionals than to know that one of our students learned something of value in our class? After all, knowledge is power.