



# Intersection Points

The Newsletter of the Research Council on  
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The Research Council on Mathematics Learning seeks to stimulate, generate, coordinate, and disseminate research efforts designed to understand and/or influence factors that affect mathematics learning.

Visit us on the Web at: [web.unlv.edu/RCML](http://web.unlv.edu/RCML)

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



By Mary Swarthout

### **RCML – Research Council on History Learning?**

The start of 2014 marks a time when my RCML thoughts are focused on the upcoming conference. And as I have

followed and been involved in the preparations taking place for February's meeting, I have been thinking a lot about history. I know RCML is not RCHL – we are not the Research Council on History Learning, but history matters – and it matters for RCML. As Winston Churchill said, "The further backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see".

How do we as an organization look back? One avenue for knowing about our early history is to check out the RCML History link on our organization website [<http://web.unlv.edu/RCML/history.html>] Another way we incorporate the history is to have a Founder's Lecture during the

annual conference. This year, we are pleased that Dr. Jon Engelhardt from Baylor University will be with us to share on Friday morning. Jon is one of the founding members of RCML [or as it was known at that time RCDPM], present at those early conferences held at Kent State University. Additionally, RCML is lucky to have Bill Speer, another of the founding members, working as our archivist to keep the history of our organization – providing the information and input needed as RCML looks forward in its mission. We are able to look back to the beginning – and use that to inform our decisions and actions going forward in 2014.

Our history is documented in the history of our publications, *Investigations in Mathematics Learning* and its previous incarnation, *FOCUS on Learning Problems in Mathematics*. RCML experienced some changes in 2013 related to the publication of our journal – a change of editors for *Investigations in Mathematics Learning*. Jean Schmittau has been such an important asset in the development of our publications and was essential during the transition to journal ownership. Most importantly, the history of the journal informs the organization as it moves forward – and informs the work of Vicki Schell, our new editor, as she continues to produce an excellent publication on our behalf.

One of the joys of working in leadership for RCML is being a part of preparations leading into the annual conference – and in that process, hearing from longtime

members like David Boliver and Jim Heddens (the first Founder’s Lecturer and founding member). The message from David reminded me of the history attached to our conference location, the Menger Hotel in San Antonio. He noted that Teddy Roosevelt stood on the bar at the Menger to recruit and organize the Rough Riders for service at San Juan Hill. In doing some further investigation, I also found some history related to Sam Houston and his visit to the hotel soon after it opened its doors and signed the register as “Sam Houston and horse.” While I don’t expect many of you will be arriving on horseback at the Menger, I hope you are planning to join us February 27 – March 2, 2014 for a great experience and time of professional sharing.

I am looking forward to a wonderful conference in San Antonio – along the Riverwalk, near the Alamo, and in the historic Menger Hotel. Come join in adding to the history and work of the Research Council on Learning Mathematics. You are an important part of continuation of the mission of RCML: *The Research Council on Mathematics Learning seeks to stimulate, generate, coordinate, and disseminate research efforts designed to understand and/or influence factors that affect mathematics learning.*

See you in San Antonio!

Your President,

Mary Swarthout

# 2014 RCML Election Results

Congratulations to the following individuals elected to serve and lead RCML:

***President Elect: Juliana Utley***

***Treasurer: Kerri Richardson***

***Vice President of Conferences: Eileen Durand Faulkenberry***

***Conference Committee: Jonathan Bostic and Sean Yee***

Thank you to all of the nominees for being willing to serve RCML. For the 2014 election, we will be seeking nominees for the position of Secretary (2015-2017) and for two Conference Committee positions (2015-2018). The nomination process will begin at the San Antonio conference.

## **RCML MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP THANK YOU**

I would like to thank the Research Council on Mathematics Learning for the generous RCML Memorial Scholarship. I was extremely excited to learn that I was selected as the first recipient of this award.

I am a wife, mother of two, and Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics at Western Kentucky University. I am the newsletter editor for RCML and the president of Western Kentucky's Council of Teachers of Mathematics. My research interest is in post-secondary mathematics education, with emphasis in equity education. I have presented my work at several conferences, including annual meetings of RCML, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the North American Chapter of the Psychology of Mathematics Education. I have also published my work in various conference proceedings and journals. In my spare time, I travel with my family to the Middle East in order to keep in touch with my Jordanian background and pass on my second language (Arabic) and culture to my children.

By awarding me this scholarship, RCML has lightened my financial load which has allowed me more time to focus on my teaching and scholarship. RCML's generosity has not only inspired me to spend more time working on the improvement of my career, though, it has also motivated me to want to "pay it forward." It is so nice to be a part of an organization that is considerate of the needs of Assistant Professors. I hope that I may one day be able to give back to new faculty in the same ways that RCML has given to me.

Sincerely,

Summer Bateiha

# RCML Conference 2014

February 27–March 1, 2014

The Menger Hotel, San Antonio, Texas



If you are passionate about the art and science of teaching and sharing your research findings, the 41<sup>st</sup> annual RCML Conference is the place for you. The conference will bring together faculty members from campuses nationally to share research and to network with likeminded individuals who care about teaching and learning. Featured speakers include NCSM’s Immediate Past President, Suzanne Mitchell. The Founder’s Lecture will be provided by Jon Engelhardt, currently Dean of the School of Education at Baylor University. With such great featured speakers and almost 100 sessions scheduled, the conference promises to provide innovative, effective, and reflective ways to encourage and support growth in students and their learning through research that focuses on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Of course, you will learn plenty outside the presentations by sharing ideas and experiences with colleagues from other campuses. Expect lively discussion, spirited debate, and a rewarding exchange of ideas throughout the conference. Join us in beautiful and historic San Antonio, Texas for an exciting and thought-provoking conference that will continue the RCML vision “to stimulate, generate, coordinate, and disseminate research efforts designed to understand and/or influence factors that affect mathematics learning.” We look forward to seeing you deep in the heart of Texas where the stars really will be big and bright in San Antonio on February 27 through March 1, 2014!

**Further Conference information** can be found on the RCML website at <http://web.unlv.edu/RCML/conference2014.html>.

Conference registration can be found at <http://www.tomfaulkenberry.org/RCML/rcmlRegistration.html>.

Hotel reservations should be at the Menger Hotel, San Antonio, Texas. Reservations can be made by calling (800) 345-9285 and mentioning RCML.



## Why? Who Cares?



by Mary Harper  
Assistant Professor  
East Central University  
Ada, Oklahoma

“Why? Who cares?” We have probably all heard these questions in one form or another. Perhaps many of us instantly think of mathematics students’ long-standing question, “When will I ever need to know this?” And I am sure that we have the answers to these questions when it comes to numerous mathematics topics. But I am not asking these three questions about mathematics, I am asking ‘Why?’ ‘Who cares?’ and ‘When will I ever need to know this?’ in relation to our *research*!

As a new year shines brightly ahead with all of its endless possibilities, I ponder my goals for this year as a mathematician, educator,

and life-long learner. In light of the events I see around me, and in an educational season of unparalleled testing, the world of mathematics education is going through a major upheaval with legislation that is changing the face of education for all students. In my role as an educator, I see many teachers bogged down with curriculum and tests that do not allow them the time for enriching learning experiences such as reading children’s books like *The Greedy Triangle*, and using these resources for experiences like going on a scavenger hunt to find some of the shapes in the story. In my role as a parent, I see more and more ‘red-shirting’ as demands on children and parents increase in our current system. I find myself increasingly frustrated by curriculum that varies from insightful, rich and conceptually-oriented to tasks that are confusing, disorganized, and often muddled in how they seek to develop student thinking. Thus, as a researcher-educator-parent, I find myself going through a ‘crisis of perception’ wherein my beliefs about the ways in which mathematics should be taught are at conflict with how I see that interpreted and carried out in our current, increasingly technical system. Consequently, as a researcher, I am beginning to question the direction of research.

During my graduate work, I had a brilliant and yet exasperating teacher for a couple of research courses who always asked “Why?” and “Who Cares?” to every idea of research her students proposed. My peers and I would have to justify not just the need for the said research but also the reason that *anyone* would care about our research idea, project, paper, etc. So, my challenge to you is simply this: examine your future research goals in light of this changing atmosphere in mathematics education in which particularly striking is the influence of technology.

Exceptionally fast, the world of technology is changing how we view everything in our lives and this includes education. ‘Apps’ are a huge attraction and help-mate for many parents but which apps are the best? Which actually focus on conceptual reasoning?

Which is mere fluff? Further, which have technical issues that keep them from being meaningful (time spent on a concept, always starting at the same level, lack of motivation, etc.)? Additionally, more and more online schooling is being advertised as a practical option for those looking for an alternative to traditional schooling-not only for college but also for all of K-12. Is this a viable option for learning meaningful mathematics for young students? What kinds of curriculum are best suited for this type of learning environment? How will these impact students when they eventually take part in a ‘seated’ course? Please thoughtfully consider ‘Why? Who Cares?’ and ‘When will I ever need to know this?’ as you think about the rich opportunities for research that are on the horizon, if we will just consider them!

## 2014 MEMBERSHIP

### 2014 Membership – Renew or Join NOW!

Membership payment was due on **1 January** for the calendar year **2014**. You can submit your 2014 membership form and pay through PayPal or use the provided information to mail your check to Jean McGehee at <http://web.unlv.edu/RCML/memberform.html>. Please take time to complete the membership form to ensure we have your up-to-date email and mailing addresses for newsletters and journal mailings. Note that membership dues have increased, regular membership is **\$40** and student membership is **\$34** for the 2014 calendar year.

Please note that the conference registration fee is **\$160**. If you are attending the conference and paying for membership, you should pay a total of **\$200**.

# INVESTIGATIONS IN MATHEMATICS LEARNING

Sheryl A. Maxwell, VP Publications

It is that time of the year once more! The holiday season has passed with a new semester on the horizon once more. Time to check to see IF YOU HAVE PAID YOUR RCML 2014 dues? If you are attending the RCML Conference in late February-Early March 2014 in San Antonio, you have a suburb opportunity to do this and received a reduce price on the conference. This is IMPORTANT as membership in RCML for 2014 is connected to the Volume 7 issues of *Investigations in Mathematics Learning*. You can also send the \$40 annual membership directly to:

Dr. Jean McGehee  
12160 Southridge  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72212

Check your bookshelf to see if you have been receiving Volume 6 issues of *Investigations in Mathematics Learning*. If you see NO Volume 6 issues, it may be because you did not pay your 2013 dues. Write a quick e-mail to me at [smaxwell@memphis.edu](mailto:smaxwell@memphis.edu) so I can check the status of your RCML membership, prior to you paying for the RCML Conference fee. By

paying for the 2014 membership dues of \$40 you will be guaranteed the Volume 7 issues that start in September 2014.

## UPCOMING OPPORTUNITY:

Have you met Dr. Vicki J. Schell, new editor of *Investigations in Mathematics Learning*? She will be introduced personally to you at the upcoming RCML Annual Conference in San Antonio, TX. She is scheduled to have a presentation time slot, where she will tell you about the submitting, reviewing, and perhaps eventual publishing of your manuscripts. It would be worthwhile for you to attend this session to gain some of the pointers that she has for you. Then, you can schedule a time to talk personally with her about your ideas. Additionally, you might want to volunteer to be a reviewer of submitted manuscripts. Just send her an e-mail at [rcmleditor@cox.net](mailto:rcmleditor@cox.net), giving your name, address, e-mail information, and areas of expertise. She will be delighted to have new reviewers to add to her list of reviewers.

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