During the past 20 years there has been an explosion of literature related to adult education. A survey research tool was designed to reveal perceptions of the value placed on various adult education publications. The first part contained a list of 393 English language books related to the adult education field. Respondents were encouraged to include additional publications they had found to be of value; this resulted in 125 new books and monographs being mentioned. Participants checked on a final list those publications they judged to be of high value. The second part of the instrument contained several questions designed to obtain demographic information about the respondents. Responses were returned by 135 out of 400 adult educators. Most respondents mentioned a fairly large number (39.13) of books of value. Eight of the top 20 were focused on adult learning or adults as learners, including the top 5 books. Eight were general, historical, or introductory in nature. The other four covered topics of continuing professional education, program planning, more radical approaches to adult education, and research. Suggestions for further research included an update every decade; a larger, more diverse audience; a study of the value of journal articles and conference papers; and an evaluation of the sources. (Appendixes include the project bibliography of 393 sources, the list of the 125 additional books and monographs mentioned by respondents, and 14 references.) (YLB)
ENGLISH LANGUAGE 
ADULT EDUCATION BOOKS: 
THEIR VALUE TO ADULT EDUCATORS 

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Technical Report No. 4 
February 1991 

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This report provides an introduction to computer conferencing as a means for delivering instruction. It discusses pertinent issues and suggests areas where research is needed to help realize the potential of computer conferencing for adult education.

Documenting Adult Education: Toward a Cooperative Strategy
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This report describes the Syracuse University Kellogg Project's efforts to initiate a documentation strategy for the field of adult and continuing education. Such a strategy would help ensure adequate documentation of the field for current and future scholars.

The Electronic Journal: Promises and Predicaments
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By Michael Ehringhaus

This report examines the process, nature, and results of disseminating knowledge via computer networks. It focuses on a particular electronic journal, New Horizons in Adult Education, which was initiated in the fall of 1988 by the Syracuse University Kellogg Project.

Kellogg Adult Education Thesaurus (KAET)
(Technical Report No. 5)
By Eileen Allen

This thesaurus provides terminology specific to the Adult and Continuing Education Research Collection at Syracuse University. It is intended to give researchers more "handles" on collection contents.

Radical Thinking in Adult Education
(Occasional Paper No. 1)
By Irene Baros-Johnson, Bernita Bowen, Jane Hugo, Ollie Owen, & Brent Snow

This publication comprises five graduate-student papers from a course taught by Phyllis Cunningham and John Ohliger at Syracuse University during the summer of 1987.
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ABSTRACT

During the past 20 years there has been an explosion of literature related to adult education. This report describes a survey research project designed to identify the most popular publications in the field. Using a variety of resources and activities, the authors compiled a list of important publications and asked a large sample of adult educators to select the ones they judged to be of high value. The results of the survey are presented, along with suggestions for further research.
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ADULT EDUCATION BOOKS: THEIR VALUE TO ADULT EDUCATORS

Roger Hlemstra
Albert Mgulambwa
Brent Snow

THE INTEREST IN ADULT EDUCATION LITERATURE

For hundreds of years various publications in some way related to the education of adults have been available. "Adult education as a conscious movement began in Europe before it began in America, and several countries of pre-Hitlerite Europe produced a rich and varied literature" (Beals & Brody, 1941, p. xiv). Grattan (1955) highlights some of the literature related to the education of adults from the time of the Greek and Roman empires. Hudson (1969) and Pole's earlier work (1816 as included in Verner, 1967) references literature on this topic from nineteenth century England. Davies and Thomas (1988), Knowles (1977), and Stubbsfield (1988) present information on more recent publications.

During this century, adult education as a field of study and practice has burgeoned throughout the world. Especially during the past 20 years, there has been an explosion of adult education publications, including journals, newsletters, occasional papers, conference proceedings, and books. Further, the electronic journal for adult educators published by graduate students at Syracuse University (New Horizons, 1989) may foreshadow a future proliferation of electronic publications.

Many attempts have been made to take stock of this growing literature base. For example, Beals and Brody (1941) developed an annotated bibliography covering a vast range of adult education materials. They grouped materials according to seven major ordering concepts, and included several smaller subdivisions. Draves (1985) did a survey of the readership of Adult and Continuing Education Today. Readers were asked to name the top books, in and out of adult education, that had influenced them the most. Lisley (1983) developed a list of ten classic adult education books by polling
professors of adult education at ten universities. Sork (1985) created a bibliography of all adult education research materials.

For several years Syracuse University has been involved in many ways with collecting, processing, and disseminating adult education literature. In the fall of 1986, a large grant was received by the University's Adult Education Program from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to disseminate adult education information and materials worldwide. The resulting five-year Kellogg Project initiated an electronic network, an electronic journal, an information sharing network for adult educators in developing countries, an optical scanning system for storing adult education archival information, a distance education initiative, visiting scholar support, and considerable historical research related to the adult education field.

In the spirit of these initiatives—and prompted by some advice from Dr. Cyril O. Houle—the authors decided to find out how a sample of adult educators rated the field's literature. Thus, the authors designed a survey to provide at least some benchmark information regarding the value of various books and monographs.

The following sections describe the development and results of the survey, and offer suggestions for further research.

THE SURVEY

A survey research tool was designed to reveal perceptions of the value placed on various adult education publications. The instrument was divided into two parts. The first part contained an extensive list of books related to the adult education field. Various resources were consulted in constructing the list:

1. The Syracuse University Library, including the archival collection on which many of the Kellogg Project's activities center.
2. A list of books suggested by Dr. Cyril O. Houle.
4. The personal library of the senior author.
5. Three bibliographic essays or annotated resources (Houle, 1972; McMahon, 1970; Ohliger & McCarthy, 1971).


8. A list of books that resulted from brainstorming with colleagues.

The above resources, along with discussions among researchers regarding what constitutes an important book or monograph in the adult education field, netted a list of nearly 400 titles. No doubt many publications were excluded that others would consider important. For example, only certain booklets from the *New Directions* series were included. Many books suggested by the various resources shown above were not selected. Certain books may be perceived by some as belonging outside the adult education field. Only English-language books were used and most books published outside of North America were not included. The final list of 393 sources used for the survey is shown in Appendix A. Respondents also were encouraged to include additional publications they had found to be of value. This resulted in 125 new books and monographs being mentioned; they are shown in Appendix B.

The final list was abbreviated for the survey form, and included only last names of authors, along with titles, shortened where necessary. Figure 1 shows an example of what the list looked like to participants.

Participants were asked to check those publications that they judged to be of high value. Figure 2 presents the list of instructions. No limit was placed on the number that could be selected. The intent was to obtain an understanding of the popularity of various books based on how many respondents judged them to be of value, rather than to force some sort of rating or ranking. Rankings were obtained simply by tabulating the number of times each book was selected.

The final section of the instrument contained several questions designed to obtain some basic demographic information about the respondents as adult
This included questions about current position, highest degree earned, tenure status if a teacher, and past scholarly activity. A question on gender also was included.

The instrument's first draft was evaluated by a panel of adult educators, including two professors of adult education and an advanced doctoral student who also had college teaching experience. A second draft was pilot-tested with seven adult education professionals who were on the Syracuse University campus as visiting scholars. Both of these efforts provided information useful in producing the third and final draft of the instrument.

__ Knowles, *The Adult Learner*, 1984
__ Knowles, *Using Learning Contracts*, 1986
__ Knowles and Knowles, *Group Dynamics*, 1972
__ Knox, *Assessing the Impact of Continuing Education*, 1979

Figure 1. Selected Sources from the Adult Education Books Survey

The following is a list of authors and short titles representing a selected number of adult education works. The list has been compiled by examining the Syracuse University adult education collection, perusing published bibliographies, reading book reviews, and seeking advice from adult education consultants. We ask that you examine the list and indicate with a check mark in the space provided to the left of each source whether or not it, in your judgment, has been of high value. Note that there are books listed on both sides of each page. The guidelines or boundaries for your choices are up to you. Your decision to include the book can be based on its creativeness, its impact, its literary distinction, or some personal summation of these and other values. Please focus on the books and their contents rather than on the authors. In other words, you can choose more than one source from one author while choosing none from several others. Some people will select as few as 15 or 20 books that fit personal guidelines for outstanding sources, while others will select 30 or even 40 works. Space also is provided to add sources, but remember to supply full citations. Following the list of sources you also will find self-explanatory demographic questions.

Figure 2. Instructions for Completing the Survey Form.
The instrument was mailed to more than 400 individuals living primarily in North America. These names were obtained by using membership lists from the Adult Education Research Conference, AEDNET (an electronic Adult Education Network developed by the Kellogg Project), Coalition of Adult Education Organizations, and Commission of Professors of Adult Education. Responses were returned by 135 people (29%).

Obviously this low rate of return, the instrument's length, a potential for respondents to select some titles because of an interest in the subject shown rather than first-hand knowledge of the publications, a high percentage of adult education professors among respondents (professors usually produce most of the field's books and monographs), and the possibility some books may have been perceived as not "adult education" in nature, suggest that certain biases are built into the results. In addition, transferring computer files between the second and third draft inadvertently resulted in seven errors discovered after the instruments had been mailed (misspelled names, two duplications under different authors, and authors' names being left off).

However, even given such limitations, the researchers believe the resulting information provides a useful beginning in efforts to understand the literature's value.

THE RESULTS

Demographic Information

Table 1 provides a summary of some demographic information obtained from the 135 returned instruments. The respondents can be characterized as predominantly male, tenured associate or full professors currently teaching, with either Ph.D.'s or Ed.D.'s. The mean number of years in their current position was 11.

Respondents also were asked three questions pertaining to the highest degree they had obtained. They were asked to indicate their primary area of subject specialization. As this was an open-ended question, many different answers were provided. The two areas that seemed to stand out were "adult learning" and "adult literacy." Respondents identified, too, the year they
obtained their highest degree. The modal year given was 1973. Finally, they were asked to indicate the institution from which they obtained the degree. Many colleges or universities were identified, most being named only a very few times. However, four were mentioned with more frequency: Wisconsin-Madison (15), Chicago (7), Florida State (7), and Syracuse (7).

They were asked to provide the name of any person who had served as their primary mentor. Fifty-six percent responded, and many names in and out of the adult education field were given. Three names mentioned most frequently were Cyril Houle (6), Bob Boyd (3), and Howard McClusky (3).

Respondents also answered questions pertaining to their own publishing or scholarship history. Table 2 provides the results.
Table 1.
Selected Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Best Describes their Current Position:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor of adult education</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education administrator</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate student</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Rank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full professor</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant professor</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those Currently in a Tenure Track Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those Who Currently Have Tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Degree Earned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdD</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 135; rounding errors account for any percentage summations not totalling 100.
Table 2.

Scholarship Activity of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholarship During the Past Ten Years</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books on adult education authored or co-authored</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book chapters written</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles published</td>
<td>20.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertations chaired</td>
<td>14.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Obviously, not all respondents have had an opportunity to chair dissertations. No doubt many people may have provided estimations rather than counting actual publications. Generally it can be said that this group of respondents was quite prolific, suggesting the possibility of a positive bias toward writing, publishing, and literature. Thus, the rankings provided in the next section must be considered carefully.

The Rankings

As no upper limit was placed on the number of books of value to a respondent, a fairly large number (mean = 39.13) was mentioned by most people. Table 3 displays information on the top twenty books. No comparisons by demographic characteristics were attempted because the sample was small. Appendix A contains information on the number of respondents selecting each source.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Cross</td>
<td>Adults as learners</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Knowles</td>
<td>The modern practice of adult education</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Kidd</td>
<td>How adults learn</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Houle</td>
<td>The inquiring mind</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Tough</td>
<td>The adult's learning projects</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Freire</td>
<td>Pedagogy of the oppressed</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Houle</td>
<td>The design of education</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Lindeman</td>
<td>The meaning of adult education</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Darkenwald &amp; Merriam</td>
<td>Adult education: Foundations of practice</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>Adult development and learning</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Smith, Aker, Kidd (Eds.)</td>
<td>Handbook of adult education</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Brookfield</td>
<td>Understanding and facilitating adult learning</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Elias &amp; Merriam</td>
<td>Philosophical foundations of adult education</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Grattan</td>
<td>In quest of knowledge</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Houle</td>
<td>Continuing learning in the professions</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Bergevin</td>
<td>A philosophy for adult education</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Jensen, Liveright, Hallenbeck (Eds.)</td>
<td>Adult education: Outlines of an emerging field of university study</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Thorndike &amp; others</td>
<td>Adult learning</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Knowles (Ed.)</td>
<td>Handbook of adult education in the United States</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^1Number of respondents selecting the book.
Eight of the top twenty were focused on adult learning or adults as learners (A, B, C, D, E, J, L, & S), including the top five books. Eight were general, historical, or introductory in nature—the type that might be used as text material for a beginning adult education graduate course (H, I, K, N, O, Q, R, & T). The other four covered the topics of continuing professional education (P), program planning (G), more radical approaches to adult education (F), and research (M—although some might argue with this label).

Twenty-two different authors were involved, including Houle (three times), and Darkenwald, Kidd, Knowles, and Merriam (each two times). Included, too, were two Canadians (Kidd and Tough), one from England (Brookfield—now residing in the United States), and one Brazilian (Freire). Only two females were involved with the top twenty books, but similar research in another decade should find the number of women increasing. A wide range of time was represented, from Lindeman (1926) and Thorndike (1928) to Brookfield (1986). Finally, twelve of the authors were or currently are full-time professors of adult education.

RESEARCH NEEDS

The findings reported above suggest a need for further research as follows:

1. Repeating the survey used for the current study (updated as new material is developed) every decade would provide useful information about changing views on the field's literature.

2. A larger, more diverse audience, perhaps excluding adult education professors, should respond to the survey or something similar to provide new information.

3. A study conducted to understand more about the top twenty to forty sources would be invaluable in providing new adult educators with guidance in building a professional library.

4. Some effort to categorize books according to various subject areas and a subsequent assessment of their perceived importance would help publishers and potential authors in their selection of writing topics.
5. Some effort to study the value of various journal articles, conference papers, and even dissertations to the field would provide a useful supplement to the type of research attempted in this study.

6. Finally, a study is needed to evaluate literature sources using various criteria, such as usefulness as a classroom resource. This would provide potential consumers and users of the field's scholarship with important information to guide their selection of text, resource, and professional library material.

This study has only provided a beginning in efforts to assess the field's literature base. However, the continuing increase each year in the volume of material being published makes it imperative that we understand more about the perceived and actual value of such literature in guiding the work of adult educators.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Project Bibliography


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Chadwick, A. F. (1980). The role of the museum and art gallery in community education. Nottingham: Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham. (N=2)


Munk, R. J., & Lovett, M. (1977). Hospital wide education and training. Chicago: Hospital Research and Educational Trust. (N=0)


Ogden, J., & Ogden, J. (1947). These things we tried. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Extension. (N=4)


Penland, P. R., & Mathai, A. (1978). The library as a learning service center. New York: Marcel Dekker Inc. (N=2)


Wedemeyer, C. A. (1981b). *Never too old to learn*. Madison, WI. (N=7)


1Numbers in parentheses refer to how many times a source was selected by respondents as being of personal value.

2No respondents selected 47 of the sources, 42 were selected only once, and 31 were selected only twice.

3Unable to verify publishing source or accuracy of the citation. Originally obtained from a list of adult education publications.
APPENDIX B

Respondents' Citations

This appendix includes a list of those citations added by respondents as influential to their own thinking. All citations are included, so some are not necessarily "adult education" in nature. However, the reader of this technical report may find it valuable to assess the broad range of materials that are deemed as important.


---

Reference given by a respondent but that could not be verified through the Syracuse University Library resources. They may therefore be incomplete or incorrect. A few references given by respondents were too incomplete to include.

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