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Why Join MRA/IRA? Student Members Extoll the Benefits

by Cathleen D. Rafferty, Ph.D.

Both MRA and IRA offer significant reductions in their membership packages for students. Why? Because they realize that student members are part of the reading scene today and indispensable to the reading profession tomorrow. Most current MRA/IRA members probably remember when and why they joined - I do! As a Reading Masters Degree student in 1975 I clearly recall my major professor promoting the benefits of student membership - journals, professional publications, reduced conference registrations, etc. Of course, she was right and today I continue to profit from this professional affiliation. In fact, in my role as student membership coordinator for the Michigan Reading Association I am constantly seeking ways to help my colleagues attract "the future" of our profession. Recently when I was asked to write this piece, I turned to MRA/IRA student members for assistance.

Several of my colleagues at Central Michigan University graciously agreed to donate some of their class time to have students respond to two questions: 1) Why did you join MRA/IRA? and 2) what are benefits of MRA/IRA membership? Select responses follow.

Dana - *"I joined because it was strongly suggested by my professor. The benefits are the publications! I use them frequently for*

classes and to build my resource file."

Delores - *"I joined because I wanted to find out information and ideas about how reading is used in schools today. I also thought it would be useful when I begin to teach."*

Rita - *"I joined so that I could gain more information in the professional literature. I have gained much practical advice in the publications."*

Kevin - *"I joined because I felt it would help me prepare for life in the classroom. The journals have been useful in many of my classes."*

Ruth - *"I joined for the benefits of the journals. Allowing students to join at a lower membership fee is a plus! The journals provide information to apply to class projects and concepts that I will use when teaching."*

Susan - *"I joined when urged by my professor. She said it would be good and she was right. I have used the journals several times for class projects and research papers. The reduced prices for students is an excellent idea."*

Although this was neither a large nor a scientific sample, these statements are representative of those collected from two CMU classes and likely convey what many MRA/IRA student members would report. It is obvious that many of these students joined for the same reasons that many of us did - a

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- NIE Week is fun, and "fun" motivates learning. Teachers have a chance to explore approaches and resources they may not have tried before.
- Michigan Reading Association will have a NIE strand at the annual MRA reading conference in March 1991.

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professor, colleague, or friend cared enough to explain the advantages and shared publications with us.

At the Michigan Reading Association conference in March 1991, there will be two sessions entitled, "**Student Reading Councils - Let's Establish a Network!**" The purpose of these interactive sessions is to provide participants with ideas, information, and contacts for establishing and maintaining student reading councils at Michigan colleges and universities. Please plan to attend if you are a student member or faculty sponsor of an established council or a student or faculty member seeking information about organizing a student reading council. I am requesting that established student reading council members or sponsors bring copies of favorite projects and/or meeting ideas to share with others. Hope to see you in Grand Rapids in March!

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