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# EVALUATIONS DO EFFECT CHANGE

by Betty Childs  
MRA Program Chairperson

Each year those who attend the Michigan Reading Association Conference in Grand Rapids are asked to fill out an evaluation form.

While Evaluation Forms may seem to some "just more paper work" they are important to planning and developing a meaningful conference.

Each year the evaluation forms are correlated. The Program Chairperson and the Steering Committee review the results and determine what suggested changes to implement in order to have a more meaningful and pleasant conference.

Changes have been made as the result of the annual evaluations. Some changes in recent years have been: a Keynote Speaker on Monday; Conferencees may attend general sessions without meal tickets; a simplified pre-registration to include only the pick up of a program and badge at the conference; and evening entertainment.

Some suggestions made last year are incorporated into planning for the 1976 Conference. These include the Continuation of Workshops; a repeat of the social evenings; the utilization of a Bi-Centennial theme to show the progress in Reading Instruction; and expansion of programs with secondary interest.

However, there are problems associated with the organization of the Michigan Reading Association Confer-

ence over which we have no control. Such problems as limited facilities and over-crowding for a popular session usually plague all conferences which are well attended. In assigning space for Sectional Meetings and Workshops there is no way to predict the number of persons who would be interested in any given topic.

There would be no way to produce and mail Program Booklets for distribution prior to the conference, without a fulltime paid executive and staff. Under our present system we canvass the membership in October for Sectional Meetings and in this way we often attract Sectional Meetings at the peak of interest.

Overall opinions on the Annual Conference vary from 16 percent rating it excellent to less than one-half of one percent rating it poor. Two out of three rate the conference good with praise for speakers, small group sessions, workshops, and for new ideas gained.

This year's Conference will be the 20th Anniversary Meeting of MRA with a special Bi-Centennial theme — Reading: A Foundation of Freedom. It will attempt to focus on the Learner, the Teacher, Instruction, and Society.

(Betty Childs is MRA President-Elect and MRA Program Chairperson, 1975-76.)