

APPLICATION FOR EHS SMALL RESEARCH GRANTS

COVER PAGE

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Title of Proposal:
Health Literacy in Art + Literature of 19th 20th Century England + U.S.

Total Amount Requested: \$ 1150.⁰⁰

100 Word Abstract:

My goal with this proposal is to seek funding for the purchase of selective academic literature and artistic museum catalogs which represent how children and youth became subjects (or not) in print literature and artistic media over the last 200 years. By 21st century standards, children are central to education and social institutions. However, the emerging of children as subjects of books and paintings has developed over time. My specific objectives are to study and collect images of the personal and social life of children in 19th- 20th century England and the U.S. in order to write a book chapter on health literacy.

I understand that EHS Small Research Grants are competitive and that all decisions by the Committee for the Advancement of Teaching, Scholarship, and Awards are final, subject to approval by the Dean of the School of Education, Health and Society. Because grant monies are limited, it is also possible that my project may be only partially funded. In the event of partial funding, I will have the option to: (a) complete the project in its entirety; (b) complete the project on a more limited basis; or (c) decline the award.

I agree to submit a brief summary report describing the results of the project by February 22, 2013 (Fall awards) or September 6, 2013 (Spring awards) to the Dean's Office.

Valerie A Ubbes
Signature of Applicant

11/4/11
Date

II. Background and Context of the Problem

The problem to be addressed by the EHS Small Research Grant is the challenge that health educators face in educating for health within preK-12 classrooms due to pressures from the No Child Left Behind legislation which has crippled even more time for health education instruction and narrowed the curriculum to reading, math, and science. In challenging these top-down contemporary pressures, health educators with a liberal arts background, may have a greater chance of remaining buoyant through a redesign of curricula with interdisciplinary connections to literature and the arts. Scientific investigations are equally critical since medicine has a social anthropological link to health. However, this proposal narrows the discussion about health education curricula to *health literacy* using a social science lens.

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My specific objectives are to study the personal and social life of children as represented in print and electronic materials in 19th- 20th century England and the United States. By looking at genre literature and paintings to gather historical information, I will consider how artists and writers may not always be interested in producing an accurate documentary record so generalizations may emerge to get their messages across. Thus, I will specifically try to uncover some of the themes and messages availed in historical literature and art that may help to explain *eventually* why health education is not a valued and protected subject in school curricula. Since many of the early primers for American students were published in England, it is important that a comparative analysis between American and British works is studied. A historical narrative in words and pictures is planned to make the connections to the history of health literacy (and why that history matters to health education).

My expected outcomes are three fold. First, I plan to continue my extensive use of the Special Book Collections and Archives in academic libraries and museums, including how these institutions overlap with their literature and art collections. I plan to travel next semester during my Research Leave to study many more literature and art collections whenever electronic access is not available. Secondly, I plan to create an electronic collection of materials, namely images that show how children are represented in books and artistic works during the last two centuries. Thirdly, my research will result in a book chapter on the historical development of health literacy. Ultimately, I would like to write a book prospectus in 2013-2014.

The context for this investigation is grounded in 15 years of design and maintenance of my Children's Picture Book Database at Miami University (www.lib.muohio.edu/pictbks) in partnership with Miami University Libraries. My database provides ongoing bibliographic access to over 5300 picture books and 1200 web sites for designing literature-based thematic units for children. The database can be used across all eight academic disciplines. Each picture book can be used by educators for a variety of purposes, not only for its picture value in depicting children in their socio-cultural environments, but especially for its multi-modal representation of different signs and symbols in teaching language development. My own scholarship with picture books has emerged in the following ways: 1) picture books as a tool for teaching language development through the elements of words, pictures, numbers, rhythms, body language, and environmental cues; 2) picture books as

an art form and an artifact of culture; 3) picture books as text, context, and subtext in curriculum studies, 4) picture books as narrative story to extend the evidence-based curricula implemented in classrooms; and 5) picture books as construction of personal meaning making when explored through an inquiry-based pedagogy. Each of the five themes above is found in my curriculum vita through publications and presentations. My most recent design with students has been Electronic Texts for Health Literacy which brings each learner into the role as writer of a new genre of literature and art with a focus on conditions “4” learning: developmentally appropriate practices, culturally responsive representations, body-brain compatible living, and health-enhancing lifestyles. The Electronic Texts for Health Literacy (<http://www.units.muohio.edu/healthliteracy>) are contemporary curricula written by students for students through the writing forms of autobiography, ethnography, photography, and calligraphy. In the historical past, children did not produce educational materials for each other. The 21st century con-temporary view of health literacy is now quite different from the 18th- 19th century view of literacy and health.

III. Methodology

My historical research will use a content analysis methodology, because I am planning to assess the art and image narratives of Victorian paintings and picture books from 19th century England and America. Content analysis is grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1989) which looks at social modeling, collective efficacy, and self efficacy as primary indicators of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in different environments. Because I will not have a minimum of two coders to conduct the content analysis of art and image narratives, I will use a thematic textual analysis to conduct the field work. I have had experience doing thematic textual analysis with a comparison of the McGuffey Readers, a primary textbook used in the U.S. for teaching reading, spelling, rhetoric, and writing, and the Children’s Picture Book Database at Miami University, in which the keywords and themes of the materials were outlined for health. Thematic textual analysis affords the researcher an opportunity to compare the narrative story of different texts both in words AND in picture images. An example for the current work might include: A painting called Rustic Civility by William Collins (Victorian and Albert Museum of Art and Design, London, England, 1833), in which three boys are barefoot gathering firewood in a rural setting. In another example, in a picture ABC book by Walter Crane for which he is noted as the designer of the first picture books in England, he may draw and represent the letter “F” as firewood. These two examples suggest both a historical and social interpretation of how valued firewood was for heat, energy, and fuel during 19th century England. Since I am interested in health literacy, all the comparisons will arguably be about people interacting with things, e.g., books, food, water, nature, pencils, and with each other, e.g., human beings of different backgrounds. My content analysis, and its narrower methodology of thematic textual analysis, will be trying to describe and explain how children were represented in books and in art (or not), and to what extent they were represented in the context of learning to read and write and in doing health-related activities (Ubbes, 2008).

III. Timeline

January – February 2012. I will complete additional analysis and written reviews of British picture books in the Walter Havighurst Collections of Miami University Libraries from a health literacy point of view.

February 2012. If awarded a one-month fellowship at the University of Delaware Library and Delaware Art Museum, I will study additional British picture books and Pre-Raphaelite paintings & photography that center

on children and their image portrayal. I will specifically use the lens of literacy, health, and lifestyle in my intensive study. The subtexts of my study will be access, gender, representation, culture, and environment.

March 2012. Research for this EHS Small Research Grant will commence with a one-week trip to England to complete a comparative analysis of early Primers used in England and the U.S. (New England Primer and the McGuffey Readers) during the Victorian Period, including how children were portrayed in paintings, lithographs, and photographs from a health and lifestyle perspective.

April – June 2012. Continuation of my historical research and writing on the early American and British forms of health literacy for children and youth as demonstrated in words, pictures, body language, and environmental cues of different print and artistic media. My plans are to write a chapter of a book to show how contemporary views of health literacy in the U.S. have been shaped by historical images and narratives from a narrow, selective audience of children. There is growing evidence that children are now more valued and central to society based on the accumulated materials for and about young people in both print and electronic media.

IV. Budget and Justification

Books. At the present time, I have 45 art, literature, and history books checked out to me through Miami University Libraries. During my Research Leave next semester, I will be reading and writing about this accumulated knowledge base that is not yet part of the health education literature, and will most likely be shaped into health literacy scholarship that I am helping to write. I would like to own some of these books through EHS support which cost on average \$60 per book since many are old reprints and/or costly museum catalogs with extensive photography of art materials. Therefore, the majority of the Small Research Grant request is to narrow down my borrowed library collection into an essential book library which will not need to be renewed and/or returned through interlibrary loan agreements. I am seeking funding for a minimum of 15 books to support my focused writing on the history of health literacy as shaped by print and artistic media from the 1800's forward. **Request: \$60 x 15 books = \$900.00**

Special Collections Photocopying. My research in the past year has been located in Special Collections of University Libraries and Art Museums. These visits often require reprints of archived materials that are viewed in person during restricted viewing hours. Therefore, it is important that I have the funds to represent the new findings as primary evidence in photocopy form while doing my historical investigations. **Request: \$250.00**

TOTAL REQUEST = \$1150.00

V. References

Bandura, A. (1989). *Social cognitive theory*. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Annals of Child Development*, 6. Six theories of child development (pp. 1–60). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Ubbes, V.A. (2008). *Educating for health: Inquiry-based approaches for preK-8 pedagogy*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publisher.