The lead story in the Globe and Mail Focus & Books section on March 8, 1997, warned readers: "This article is complicated. It delves into disparate ideas. It doesn't seek straightforward answers. It is about simplicity."

The article highlighted the tension between the increasing complexity of our lives and the corresponding drive for simplicity that pervades our culture. It examined several historical, political and economic illustrations. It could just as easily have made its case by looking at literacy.
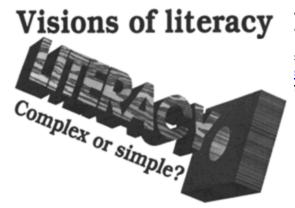
Literacy has taken its place on the public agenda in North America with a series of simple slogans and simple proposed solutions. It seems like a motherhood issue, and it is -recognizing that even motherhood is no longer simple in this age of genetic engineering.

LAC has always understood literacy as a labyrinth and has attempted to explain some of the complexities in ways that opened paths for teachers, researchers and policy makers without being simplistic. This issue exemplifies our practice. *In the Classroom* lays out a grid representing two of the different theoretical approaches to literacy, one which sees literacy as a set of skills, the other which sees it as a set of contextualized practices. The two perspectives foreground the ideas that guide most literacy programs anywhere today and the divisions that exist between the two. They represent two world views.

Visions of literacy

Literacy
Complex or simple?

These oppositions are further illuminated in the extended response by Stan Jones to Brian Street and Harvey Graff on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). In "Ending the myth of the 'Literacy Myth'" Jones offers evidence from another group of disciplines to support his claim that IALS provides a more complex public definition of literacy than ever before and new ways of measuring it.

Some of the controversies surrounding the impact and uses of technologies on literacy are accented in the report from the Winter Institute on Technology and Adult Basic Education co-sponsored by The Centre and Georgia Tech in Atlanta in January (pp.6 -9). Tom Reeves has a vision of machines as cognitive tools offering new learning opportunities for adults. Rand Bohrer

has lived the experience of having his mind reconfigured through mastering the Web after a stroke; he believes other adults with disabilities, including literacy problems, can benefit from a non-linear way of gathering, creating and disseminating information. Tom Sticht lays bare the conceptual contradictions in recent American policy on literacy and adult basic education. All these presentations hark back to the two theoretical views.

Coming full circle, participatory literacy practice in a developing country is the subject of a report commissioned by a British aid agency and reviewed on p. 18. Examining the gap between the anticipated and actual outcomes of a program in Uganda, the report casts light on questions that run across nations. How does an agency test its assumptions about communities, needs and motives? How does it respond to outcomes that do not match its own philosophy? Is the concept of "partnerships" viable or is it simply a fiction to provide funding agencies the illusion of work among equals'?

And, a Canadian perspective on training and accreditation for literacy practitioners (p.19) also inadvertently reveals the conflict between philosophies of literacy.

Which brings me to a warning to readers: "This [issue] is complicated. It delves into disparate ideas. It doesn't seek straightforward answers. It is about [literacy]." (LS)