

Adult Development & Aging News

Volume 40, Number 2
Summer 2012



Adult
Development
and Aging

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President's Message

Bridging Aging Communities III

I'm very proud to introduce our new logo (to the left and on the next page)! **Michael Marsiske** has been working with the APA IT folks to transition our website to APA, hopefully in August. **Pat Parmelee** and I have been helping him with decisions on various aspects of the design, including the color scheme (navy and grey). We winnowed down the various options for the logo that the designer developed and put the three finalists to a vote of the Executive Committee, which selected this one. It's a little whimsical but charming, don't you think?

Much of our work this past winter has focused on the upcoming meetings in Orlando in August. **Monisha Pasupathi** and **Benjamin Mast** have put together a stellar program! Highlights include three continuing education sessions: Innovative Psychotherapy Treatment for Older Adults; The Power of Possibility—Holistic Programs That Promote Mind—Body Wellness of Older Adults; and Resilience Across the Life Span. Div. 20 is also participating in a Presidential Program on Integrated Approaches to Geriatric Health Care. **Chris Herzog** will give the invited address

for the **Baltes** Distinguished Research Achievement Award. **James Jackson** is giving an invited address entitled "From Social Diversity to Group Disparities: Aging, the Lifecourse, and Stress". And Divs. 20, 40, and CONA have banded together to sponsor a "Speed Mentoring" program for budding geropsychologists and neuropsychologists.

Division 20 will have a convention booth this year, where you can come and get information about the Division from our Executive Committee volunteers and pick up your new Division 20 ribbon. And—Early Career Psychologists (ECPs) can enter to win a free one-year membership to Division 20! Ten memberships will be given away, so you have a great chance of winning!

Jeffrey Proulx and **Lewina Lee**, our grad student and post-doc representatives, working with the Div. 12-II rep, **Amy Fisk**, have put together a wonderful social event Saturday night at Ming Court, where we will feast on dim sum. Watch for emails and see the



Carolyn Adwin
Division 20 President

information later in this newsletter on how to make reservations for this event.

Work has also been progressing on the interdivisional grant, GeroCentral, which is developing an "Internet Geropsychology Resource Clearinghouse", led by **Erin Emery**. For this project, **Lewina Lee** and **Jeff Proulx** developed a list of organizations that have been sponsoring aging webinars, a few of which are featured on the back of this newsletter with the whole list to be available on the website soon. **Joe Gaugler** and **Cameron Camp** are also developing webinars on various aspects of dementia care for this project.

Div. 20 clinicians have been hard at work this year! **Vincent Molinari**

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Adult Development & Aging News is edited by Grace Caskie (Lehigh University).

Deadlines for submissions are:
September 1
February 15
June 1

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Address Changes:

Address changes must be made through the APA office: Phone: (800) 374-2721; e-mail: membership@apa.org
 Your Newsletter editor must use the address that APA provides.

President's Message, continued from p. 1

and **Ben Mast** are continuing to advance the ABPP in Geropsychology; Divisions 20, 12-11, Psychologists in Long-term Care, and Council of Geropsychology Training Programs have each contributed \$2500 towards this effort. **Michele Karele** and **Sarah Qualls** are serving as part of an Inter-Organizational Work Group on Competencies for Psychological Practice in Primary Care. **Debbie DiGilio** is organizing an effort to update the Geropsychology Practice Guidelines and has put in a funding request to APA. **Greg Hinrichsen** is chairing that committee, and **Patricia Areán, Adam Brickman, Barry Edelstein, Tammi Vacha-Haase, and Kimberly Hiroto** will also be serving, among many others. I'm very proud to say that we were particularly careful to make certain that this group reflected our Bridging Aging Communities theme, and its membership includes both academic and practice psychologists, and

representatives from diverse groups and ECPs.

Finally, the APA Aging Leadership Team, **Neil Charness, Erin Emery**, and myself, yet again organized by **Debbie DiGilio**, had a conference call to identify concerns that CONA would express to **Suzanne Bennett-Johnson**. In addition to membership and the need to recruit more ECPs, we also emphasized that APA should really spearhead the effort to increase the visibility of non-pharmacological therapies for dementia patients.

The three major issues that we will be addressing in next summer's meeting include changes in voting procedures, potential changes in the dues structure, and potential changes in the use of the list serve. As I mentioned in the last issue of this newsletter, APA is moving towards electronic voting, and we need to change

our by-laws to accommodate this. The EC has approved this change, but this is something that needs to be voted on by the Div. 20 membership (**YOU!**). Second, a number of years ago we voted to include *P&A* as a benefit of our membership, but that raised our dues by \$25. There are pros and cons for doing this, and we will be considering whether discontinuing this benefit and reducing our dues will help to increase our membership. Third, APA has changed its list serve guidelines to ban the use of list serves for most research purposes, an issue which I believe needs to be discussed.

It's shaping up to be a great convention this year in Orlando, and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone! Now if I can just find someone to go with me to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. . .

Carolyn Aldwin
 President, Division 20



Continuing Education Report

Submitted by Shevaun Neupert

We are pleased to note that three Division 20 sessions have received CE credit designations for this year's convention in Orlando:

- Innovative Psychotherapy Treatment for Older Adults (Sunday, 8/5: 10 am - 11:50 am)
- The Power of Possibility—Holistic Programs That Promote Mind—Body Wellness of Older Adults (Thursday, 8/2: 11 am - 11:50 am)
- Resilience Across the Life Span (Saturday, 8/4: 12 pm - 1:50 pm)

“Sessions offering CE credit have been approved by the American Psychological Association's Office of Continuing Education in Psychology (CEP) and the Continuing Education Committee (CEC) to offer CE credit for psychologists. The CEP Office and the CEC maintain responsibility for the delivery of the programs.”

We are also pleased to announce that Division 20 will soon offer APA CE credit for completion of online statistical training. We are working with The Center for Statistical Instruction (www.thectionline.org) to offer CE credit for online modules such as Multilevel Modeling, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling. Division 20 members receive a 25% discount (code = div20), and student members receive a 50% discount (code = div20students).

Division 20 Election News

Submitted by Jane Berry

Congratulations to our newly-elected members to Division 20 offices! The Elections Committee is pleased to announce the results of this year's election, as follows:

President-Elect: William E. Haley, University of South Florida

Treasurer: Joseph E. Gaugler, University of Minnesota

Members-at-Large: Katherine L. Fiori, Adelphi University
Ann Pearman, Georgia Institute of Technology

A special thanks to **all** candidates who stood for election. Your willingness to serve our division in this manner is vital to its successful governance and effectiveness. Thanks, too, to Division members who participated in this important process by taking time to consider and vote for candidates for office.

APA 2012 Program Report

Submitted by Benjamin Mast and Monisha Pasupathi, Program Co-chairs

Division 20 is pleased to offer an exciting convention program in 2012 that provides cutting edge findings for researchers, clinicians, and teachers. The 2012 Division 20 program offers two poster sessions and a variety of symposia and special presentations covering a range of topics. This year we have collaborated with Division 7 (Developmental Psychology) to offer a symposium on lifespan perspectives on resilience, complimented by a presidential address by Carolyn Aldwin on resilience and optimal aging. James Jackson will give an address integrating health, diversity, and aging. The Baltes award address will be given by Chris Hertzog, on metacognitive self-regulation and aging, and we also have a cornucopia of impressive talks that introduce our new fellows. We also will be offering a presidential symposium on integrated geriatric practice, a speed mentoring career event (with CONA and Division 40, Neuropsychology), and our always worthwhile social hour (jointly with Division 12, section 2, Clinical Geropsychology)

We hope you will at least be able to see you at some of the events highlighted in the program overview on the next page of this newsletter! Division 20 member Susan Krauss Whitbourne will be tweeting division events and other items of interest at the APA convention. Search for #APA2012 and @swhitbo. Questions about the program may be directed to the 2012 program co-chairs, Monisha Pasupathi (pasupath@psych.utah.edu) or Benjamin Mast (b.mast@louisville.edu).

Joint Divisions 20 and 12-2 Social Hour at the 2012 APA Convention

WHAT: Divisions 20 and 12-2 Social Hour at the APA 2012 Convention
WHERE: Ming's Court
 9188 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819
 (407) 351-9988
WHEN: 6pm to 8pm; August 4, 2012 (Saturday)
COST: \$15 (students), \$25 (faculty); check payable to Amy Fiske at the address below

At the 2012 APA convention, Division 20 (Adult Development & Aging) and Division 12, Section II (Society of Clinical Geropsychology) will have a **combined social hour/cocktail reception on Saturday, August 4th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm** in Ming's Court, just an 8-minute walk from the Orange County Convention Center. The cost is \$15 dollars for students and \$25 for faculty to cover hors d'oeuvres and space rental. There will also be a cash bar at the reception. Join us for a jolly time over shumai, sushi, and spring rolls (carnivores and vegetarians are welcome)! Please feel free to include family and friends.

To make reservations for the reception, please make out a check directly to Amy Fiske, Ph.D., who will be collecting for Div. 20 and 12-II members and interested guests. **Please mail your check by July 25, 2012 to Amy Fiske, Ph.D.,** Department of Psychology, West Virginia University, 53 Campus Drive, P. O. Box 6040, Morgantown, WV 26506-6040. (Email: Amy.Fiske@mail.wvu.edu; Phone: 304-293-1708)

Please note that dinner is not included in this event. If you wish to dine afterward at Ming's Court, you can make a reservation by phone at (407) 351-9988.

Please join us for a wonderful time on August 4th with your friends and colleagues!

DIVISION 20 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Thursday, August 2

- 8:00 – 9:50am Symposium: Caregiver support intervention programs: Reaching beyond REACH at the department of Veterans' Affairs; Convention Center W105A (Open)
- 10:00-10:50 Poster Session: Cognitive Aging and Dementia; Convention Center West Hall A4-B3 (open)
- 11:00-11:50 Symposium: The power of possibility: Holistic programs that promote mind-body wellness of older adults; Convention Center W205B and C (open) - CE credit available
- 1:00-1:50pm Fellows address: Rebecca Allen, Lisa Brown, Jamila Bookwala, Adam Davey, Greg Smith; Convention Center W311F (open)
- 2:00-3:50 Memory self-efficacy (MSE) effects on performance in adulthood: MSE-ing is believing; Convention Center W304C (open)

Friday, August 3

- 8:00-9:50am Executive Committee Meeting; Peabody Orlando Hotel Blue Spring Room 1 (closed)
- 10:00-10:50 Poster Session: Well-being and Mental Health in Late Life; Convention Center West Hall A4-B3 (open)
- 11:00-11:50 Baltes Award Address by Christopher Hertzog: Metacognitive Self-Regulation in Older Adults; Convention Center W311D (open)
- 12:00-12:50pm Speed Mentoring for budding Geropsychology and Neuropsychology careers (CONA, Division 20, and Division 40); Convention Center W311F level III
- 4:00-4:50 Presidential Address by Carolyn Aldwin: Resilience and Optimal Aging; Convention Center W304H (open)
- 5:00-5:50 Division 20 Business Meeting; Convention Center W304H (open)

Saturday August 4

- 9:00-9:50 am Symposium: Video Games as Interventions for Cognitive Aging: Bridging the gap from lab to life; Convention Center W307D (open)
- 11:00-11:50 Invited Address by James S. Jackson: From Social Diversity to Group Disparities: Aging, the Life Course, and Stress; Convention Center W110A (open)
- 12:00-1:50 pm Invited Symposium: Resilience Across the Lifespan (in collaboration with Division 7); Suniya Luthar, Ann Masten, Elizabeth Stine-Morrow, Alex Zautra, Carolyn Aldwin; Convention Center W110A (open); CE Credit Available
- 12:00-1:50 Presidential Program - Integrated Approaches to Geriatric Health Care; Convention Center Rooms W206B and C; CE Credit Available
- 5:00-6:50 CONA conversation hour: The Changing Faces of Aging; Peabody Orlando Celebration Room 3
- 6:00-8:00pm Social Hour at Ming's Court

Sunday, August 5

- 9:00-9:50 am Skill Building Session: How to Counsel Grandparents Parenting their Grandchildren; Convention Center W311F (open)
- 10:00-11:50 Symposium: Innovative Psychotherapy Treatment for Older Adults; Convention Center W206B & C (open); CE Credit available
- 12:00-12:50 pm Symposium: Social Media in Long-Term Care Settings: Roles, Responsibility and Unlimited Possibilities; Convention Center W304A (open)

Teaching Tips

Supplementing Courses with Online Assignments

Submitted by Julie Blaskewicz Boron, Ph.D., Youngstown State University

Most individuals in the academic setting use their computers, tablets, and/or phones to access email, network, and search the web. Technological advancements have allowed us to access information more readily, and students and professors alike take advantage of these progressions. There are e-books and even e-readers that can be used in lieu of hard copy textbooks. Some students opt for online courses rather than traditional in-person courses. Often times, regardless of whether we require students to complete something for our courses electronically, students are online. Thus, finding ways to supplement our courses with online material and assignments can help students learn and become more engaged with the material we teach. These observations and suggestions stem from my experiences using online assignments in a variety of courses such as General Psychology, Lifespan, Cognition, and Health, Cognition, and Aging.

Many recent versions of textbooks come with online supplemental material to encourage student learning. The content varies and may include flashcards, quizzes, pre and posttests, videos, and demonstrations, but each of these offers an opportunity to bolster student learning both in and outside of the classroom. Several advantages exist for students and professors when integrating online assignments. First, this provides students with structured time on the material outside of the classroom. Although students spend time outside of the classroom studying, completing assignments facilitates preparation for quizzes and exams, and retention of learned information, by reviewing the material more regularly. Further, this can help students identify strengths and weaknesses in their comprehension and synthesis of material, so that if need be, they can seek out assistance earlier.

Online assignments also provide an opportunity to apply knowledge gained from lecture. In the many experiences I've had with online assignments, the majority of feedback from students has indicated that completion of these assignments reinforced material learned in lecture and overall helped them gain a more thorough understanding of the material by applying the concepts learned to situations pertinent to "real" or daily life. As instructors, we provide examples in class; however, exposure to more examples allows students to realize how broadly some of the learned concepts may apply and hopefully promotes recognition of the material in their own lives. Online supplements are available for developmental courses that allow students to make decisions and then see the program simulate how their decisions may influence development. Students virtually observe the impact of individual decisions and environments. This type of program helps students comprehend and appreciate how theories are applicable to development, in addition to recognizing the relevance to daily life and individual differences.

In some courses, online supplements can provide students with hands-on or "real-time" examples of the concepts they have learned about, which is especially important for more abstract material, such as that covered in Cognition. Online lab programs are available that can be used as course supplements. Students have the opportunity to be participants in the online experiments and read about the theory that led to the research and how the results support or refute prior work. Often, this helps students not only understand the basic concepts, but also allows them to consider practical applications. Through discussion in the classroom, students may be able to extend their knowledge and devise experimental ideas of their own. Further, appreciation of individual differences is also gained when results are discussed in groups or as a class. Another example, particularly for developmental courses, is video clips that show progression of skill and ability development and change over time. These also help students synthesize the material, and realize normal individual variation that occurs.

Some online programs have students gauge their confidence and provide feedback as to whether they are over, under, or reasonably confident in their knowledge of the material. For example, with each question posed, not only

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Division 20 welcomes the new members who have joined during the last year!

Member

Kelly Cotter
Nicky Newton
Karim Yamout
Besangie Sellars
Anne-Marie Kimbell
Molly Maxfield
Ian Rivers
Kira Birditt
William Palmer
Maggie Syme
Erin Cassidy-Eagle
Mary Gooch
Lewina Lee
Sunui Lee
Marlana Opitz
Marcy Shoemaker
Terry Arbuckle
Joy Jacobs-Lawson
Allison Bielak
Judy Kaplan
Kelly Mohondro
Marie Dacey
John Guthrie
Lauren Lopez
Nicole Alea
Melinda Davis
Jerri Edwards
Amanda Harrell
Jana Nikitin
Jennifer O'Donnell
Shirley Oxidine
Jeanine Parisi
Joshua Magee
Jyoti Savla
Susan Mickel
Paul Short
Marianne Thomas
Cynthia Waggoner
Jill Cohen
Nancy Dorr
Janine Jennings
Mary Macedonio
Ritwik Nath
Alan Castel
Matthew Costello
Chiung-ju Liu
Lynn Schaefer

Student Member

Melissa Boudreau
Amanda Trujillo
Kristin Jacobson
Robin Beaumont
Emily Schoenhofen
Jill Waring
Christy Denckla
Charles Marquez

A. Holt
James Houston
Jay Smith
Mary Kemp
Monique Pimontel
Janae Sones
John Coleman
Shirley Mackley
Mona Mikael
Mosun Ayanoshodi
Freda Feng
Jason Sibson
Krista Dettle
Ekaterina Mahinda
Amanda Mark
Shanice Parks
Jennifer Weeks
Andrew Bloch
Allyson Brothers
Lena Chu
Colette DeMonte
Meghan Marty
Michael Mejia
Cassandra Neuhaus
John-Richard Pagan
Breanna Wilhelmi
Beth Woysville
Christopher Barmann
Joshua Brown
Shelly Davis
Debbie Rogers
Holly Carlson
Ashley Curiel
Mariana Guzzardo
Steven Pappas
Kisha Bazelaiss
Tammy Grabreck
Rachna Rangan
Lauren Chisholm
Jennifer Cobin
Stephen Flanagan
Brooke Martin
Michael Morgan
Chelsae Roby
Priscilla Wright
Caroline Ciliberti
Abhishek Jaywant
Manuela Menendez
Katherine Ramos
Brandi Saltzman
Maggie Syme
Ashley Wohleber
Justin Centi
Krystal Culler
Nicky Newton
Sara Pointer
Malika Brown
Larissa Maley

Amanda Leggett
Abimbola Farinde
Michael Scullin
Andrew Bender
Sasha Dessy
Weston Donaldson
Johnathan Martin
Briana Pruyt
Mauli Shah
Leslie Trumble
Rachel Hemphill
Selina Oneal
Ting Ding
Clair Rummel
Sarang Kim

Professional Affiliate

Heidar Modaresi
Tina Hammer
Natalia Dmitrieva
RaNae Healy
Douglas Hershey
Linda Pearson
Jutta Heckhausen
Anna Mascherek
Marina Petrash
Judith Post
Michael Feiler
Lisa Bahr
Carolyn Adams-Price
Brent Small
Melinda Davis
Anthony Lauricella

Life Status Member

Carol Goldberg
Philip Scrofani
Paul Robinson

International Affiliate

Phoebe Bailey
Anna Kornadt
Oliver Schilling
Yuzu Shimura
Leander Mitchell

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does the student select or enter an answer, the student also indicates how confident he/she is that the answer provided is correct. This type of information may be helpful to both students and instructors to guide study. For example, if a student is struggling, and the data show that for many incorrect answers the student was not confident in his/her knowledge, this information can be used to direct the student to review that material further.

Requiring online assignments encourages students to stay up-to-date with the material in the class and provides them with additional opportunities to more thoroughly learn, apply, and synthesize the course material. It offers a type of learning experience that may be more active, and sometimes more interactive, than traditional studying habits outside of the classroom. Given the increased integration of technology into our daily lives, incorporating an online learning component in our courses is one way to help keep students interested, active, and engaged in the material we teach.

Education Committee Recommends Movies for Summer*

For some of us, summer means catching up on movies. Here are a few that we recommend that explore aging or late life issues. There is no harm in combining work and leisure!

- The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (2011)
- The Iron Lady (2011)
- In Time (2011)
- Up (2009)
- The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008)
- Gran Torino (2008)
- Is Anybody There (2008)
- The Bucket List (2007)
- Away From Her (2007)
- Grey Gardens (2007)
- Young@Heart (2007)
- The Fountain (2006)
- Second Hand Lions (2003)
- About Schmidt (2002)

*List compiled by Dr. Matthew F. Komelski, Virginia Tech.

Student News

Questions for the Grant Proposal Reader

Submitted by Jeff Proulx and Lewina Lee

In the last newsletter, we compiled a list of funding resources of interest for graduate students and post-docs. Writing for grants can be time-consuming and sometimes difficult, especially when one wonders what happens in the “black box” of the proposal committee process. We wanted to follow up our last newsletter article with a conversation with a grant proposal reader in the hope of providing insight into the minds of the proposal readers. We hope that this conversation will be beneficial to those of us who will be studiously writing for academic and financial support for research projects in the coming months. One of the most important exercises in our nascent careers may be figuring out what gets our manuscript or application from being discarded (and on top of the pile, for that matter), especially considering that the competition for funding can be daunting. However, strong competition should not dissuade a researcher from applying. Perhaps a well-formatted and conscientious application is the key to a successful proposal and, hopefully, you'll get the notice that your research funding is approved.

What is the format during the time all the readers converge to go over grant proposals? What occurs during this time period?

This depends on the agency and the competition you are reading for, but there are common elements: all readers must be qualified, so each of us has had to obtain a DUNS number so we are independent contractors, and each must register with the CCR Central Contractor Registry to work for the federal government. Then, for each agency separately in their particular system, each of us will have had to fill out a demographic and professional profile, upload a CV, and provide a statement of the competitions we are qualified to read for, and why. Then months to years later, we receive an emailed invitation to read for a specific competition 6-8 weeks in advance to check our availability and give the block of time of the reading window. If we are available, we go into the system and check the box and say yes. Then, a week later, if we are selected as a possible reader, we get an email saying we are selected and providing passcodes to enter into the competition area of the database. We download the proposal RFT application instructions the applicants had, the rubric and instructions for readers, and read them all. We are given directions for how to participate in an orientation phone call (although some agencies are moving to webinars now). We do the

orientation, which lasts about an hour and provides all readers the same instructions. After the orientations are complete and the agency sees the list, they select the readers they will use. If not selected, you get \$100 for doing the orientation and are placed into a list of alternates that might be called in at the last moment. If selected, how the reading happens is variable. Sometimes we all start by reading and ranking a sample proposal and participating in a calibration exercise so that we know what to look for, but in other competitions, we just read without the calibration.

Some agencies deliver proposals in physical form to your home; for others, you download the applications to your computer. Similarly sometimes we have the ranking discussions on the telephone in group calls moderated by a monitor from the agency, but in others you will read, rank, enter and then be flown to Washington DC to have the discussions while yet in other competitions, you will be flown to Washington DC to participate in reading panels where you are reading and ranking in real time and entering your scores in a computer or reading and ranking on paper sheets in the room with all the readers and in those cases the pressure to read quickly and rank precisely is enormous as we have to get them all read and ranked in the time period available, even if we have to work late into the night.

You read the proposals in numbered order, and no matter who you read for you are instructed NOT to do comparisons, but rather to make sure that you are only considering the information and data in the one you are reading. Personally I work with a printed copy so that I can make notations on the first read through right on the paper, which is helpful in the discussions later. We complete the scoring rubric and generally input the information and your comments into a form in the online database provided by the agency, and then after all 3 or 4 committee members in your panel subset have read and ranked and placed comments in the panel area, we are allowed to enter into a group conversation about them. We look for wide variation in scoring first as we have to be within a specified range of one another. If we cannot come within the range because one of us highly disagrees with the assessment of the others (a situation highly discouraged), then the proposal cannot be completed and has to be sent to a different panel for reading. Interestingly, in most cases, the proposal in

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the batch that received the highest score from me will have also received high marks from the others and vice versa for the poor ones. The differences are generally in number of points we awarded, but overall excellence rises in the collective assessment process. The panel of the proposals and their scores are sent forward to the agency. Agency personnel read all the comments and look for any contradictions; we are asked to adjust our comments, then the panel is cleared to send forward the scores to the agency as official. The agency then distributes funding based on the internal directives, generally on numeric order, but not always as geographic or disciplinary distribution might also be a factor, but that will be spelled out in the application packet. We generally will read and rank 10 proposals in a panel in a two-week time period, but may have to do more. Compensation for all of this is generally \$100 per proposal read. Most readers have “day jobs” as teaching faculty or researchers or administrators, so this work is an add-on to our regular work schedule and requires us to use our vacation time to participate.

In rare cases, we are asked to read and evaluate a single research proposal that has been sent to us from a program officer and is being considered independently for a targeted or solicited research project, in which case we do that and make a written report.

What are you looking for in a proposal?

Within the conditions of panel readings, a reader is trying to read quickly to find the information and data that must be in that section for either awarding or deducting points. Once located, then the quality of that piece is ranked. Clearly from the reader's perspective, we hope to find the proposal arranged in the order dictated in the application with headings to guide us. If we have to search the proposal to find the information, it makes the task more difficult and can add an element of confusion in ranking and in the discussions later.

We hope to find excellence. A solid idea for a systematic investigation that is well planned and articulated, that will yield findings of value to the agency in that competition and that has qualified staff and budget that balances and provides adequate resources to accomplish the proposed project in the given time frame. We are looking for evidence that if funded, the project has a high likelihood of being completed.

With proposals for fellowships for pre-doctoral awards/graduate fellowships, we are funding the person not exactly the proposal idea; so we will be looking for

evidence of potential, such as previously completed research, transcripts of not only grades but courses taken, presentations at conferences, ability to write well, and strong letters of recommendation.

How do you decide if the proposal you are reading fits the criteria for the funding source?

Once it is scored, you know. If it is not a good fit, it does not receive a high score. If it seems to be placed in the wrong disciplinary group, for instance sent to the social-psychology panel but it is for neurobiology research, you alert the program officer and it will be relocated to the proper panel to read.

Do proposals that don't exactly match the statement of the grant provider get a break if they are good?

The readers are required to read and rank and score using the rubric, so it would be rare to be off the mark and receive a good score. However at funding sources, the program officers are often also looking for innovation, and readers might flag a proposal for consideration for a different sort of funding, but cannot score it highly, for example, just because it is my favorite topic or is proposing an innovation I personally think would work really well.

Readers must see lots of applications during the review period. What makes a proposal easier to read?

Follow the format to the letter, and provide internal headings to guide us. It is a subjective process, and we are under enormous time pressure to complete the task quickly, so searching the entire proposal to verify whether or not one specific element/data item is somewhere in there takes time, can frankly annoy the reader, and put the reader in a negative space for the rest of the proposal, which might result in a lower score for the same project than if it were presented in a coherent way following the guidelines exactly.

How important is it that the budgeting match the aims of the proposal exactly?

Agencies seek to provide funding to projects they think are going to be successfully operated. If the budget is too low, the readers (who are experienced with budgets and research) will know that. If the budget is too high, or if a lot of less-than-specific consultants are to be used, and the narrative does not explain the reasons for

this, that is cause for notation too. But the most frequent problem with budgets is that either they do not add up due to mathematical errors or they do not match the figures presented in the narrative budget justification statement.

How do you approach proposals that are not from your field of expertise?

We are rarely selected to read outside of our areas, but when that has happened with me, for example being called in at the last moment as an alternate, I have done my best in the reading and ranking and then listen carefully in the discussions and ask for the others to explain to me their logic if I am far out of alignment with their assessments, and I may adjust my comments and scoring a bit.

What makes it easier for you to understand the importance of a study that is not specifically in your field?

It is helpful if the proposal is not filled with acronyms (or they are defined in the first use) and if the language is not overly filled with jargon. A good abstract and a solid budget justification narrative with details of how amounts were calculated are also very helpful.

Where do you expect to see the goals of the proposal outlined in a way that answers the question, “So What?”? In other words, how can a writer explain the importance of their study in a way that grabs the reader?

Assume that your readers are in your discipline, and often in your sub-topic area of knowledge, so they “have a clue” regarding the field. I know that proposals that can set the project in the discipline and then tell how the results of such an investigation might be applied “in the real world” are useful to the reader, even if the proposal is not addressing the applications itself. To tell someone how the knowledge can have practical applications is helpful.

What do you do with a proposal that doesn’t have a realistic budget?

The proposal receives a low score or a zero score on that piece and will not be funded. This is true also of proposals that request an amount that exceeds the level stated in the application; however, if the proposal is otherwise sound, the program officer might encourage

the applicant to adjust the budget and submit again in the next competition 1 to 5 years from then.

What are the things about a proposal that gets it talked about? What sets a proposal apart from the others?

I was raised in an oral tradition so I personally like a proposal that tells me a “story” or provides an “anecdote” as a very short example of either the problem or why the research should be conducted. But more importantly is that we like the excellent ones. They are easy to read and rank, the applicant took care in construction and, if presenting a novel or new idea, they tell us that it is such.

Are there any other comments you would like to add?

My advice for graduate students and people starting their careers in research or the academy is to engage in the process yourself. You will quickly become a better proposal writer by engaging in the funding process through participation as a reader. Then, when you write for funding, you will put on your “reader hat” and critically evaluate your own proposals.

Readers seldom engage in this process “for the money” because, in the end, the amount of compensation for the time expended results in minimum wage or less. However, sometimes when the reading transports you to a different location, you meet new, interesting, and engaged peers and are given the opportunity to meet the program officer in person. If you do a good job, the program officer will call on your services again and/or they will remember your name when you are calling them about a call for proposals and will give you time to vet your idea and give you constructive feedback before you write and submit a proposal, which can save you significant time and energy and enhance the odds that your project, if well-articulated, will be funded.

Readers engage in the process to learn more about a topic, keep their own knowledge of the contemporary field current, develop their proposal writing skills and/or to be of service to their country, their disciplines, and the common “good”.

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Upcoming Free Webinars on Aging

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic & Web Address</u>
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8/15/2012	How to Balance Work and At-Home Care URL: http://asaging.org/August-15-2012
8/23/2012	Lifelong Learning: A Frontier for Self-Discovery URL: http://asaging.org/August-23-2012
8/30/2012	"Move with Balance" for Healthy Aging URL: http://asaging.org/August-30-2012
9/19/2012	Senior Cognitive Issues URL: http://asaging.org/September-19-2012
10/17/2012	Helping Seniors with Finance URL: http://asaging.org/October-17-2012