



Western

Interdisciplinary Centre for Research  
in Curriculum as a Social Practice

Language and Literacy  
Researchers of Canada



L'Association canadienne des  
chercheurs en langue et littérature

**Tuesday May 11, 2021**

**12:00PM – 1:30PM EST**

## **Designing new approaches to investigating primary literacy education research mobilities in England**

Presenters: Cathy Burnett (Sheffield Hallam) & Julia Gillen (Lancaster)

In this seminar, we outline a series of developments in England which, we argue, combine in powerful ways to sustain certain ideas about literacy and about research and to silence others. These include the promotion of 'evidence-based practice', reductive frameworks for initial teacher education and early careers professional development, and a strong accountability framework via inspection. At the same time, as we illustrate through data generated through two small pilot studies, to suggest that such discourses are all pervasive is to ignore other, less predictable, ways in which research circulates, underplaying the activity of teachers, communication channels, and others working in literacy education, and the work of digital actors in assisting the movement of ideas. We suggest therefore that the movements of research are produced, accelerated or halted as multiple brokers (human and digital) combine in diverse ways, through what we see as dynamic, fluid sociotechnical assemblages. This complex picture calls for a sociomaterial analysis of the movements of literacy research 'in the wild' to account for how different kinds of knowledge about literacy are propelled, amplified, stalled or simply lost. We outline a series of methodological resources for investigating these 'research mobilities' from different vantage points, combining a focus on movements of research at macro level with fine-grained analysis of individual teachers' experiences and the movements and translations of specific pieces of research. Such work, we suggest, is needed to gain critical purchase on the range of ideas about literacy that are gaining credence in educational practice, and those ideas that remain stubbornly underused.

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*Cathy Burnett is Professor of Literacy and Education at Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University. Her research has focused predominantly on the relationship between new technologies and literacies within and beyond educational contexts from a sociomaterial perspective, with a recent interest in the relationship between research methods and practice. She has published widely in these areas and her books include *Undoing the Digital: Literacy and Sociomaterialism* (with Guy Merchant for Routledge) and *New Media in the Classroom: Rethinking Primary Literacy* (with Guy Merchant for Sage). She is President of the United Kingdom Literacy Association.*

*Julia Gillen is Professor of Literacy Studies in the Department of Linguistics and English Language and Director of the [Lancaster Literacy Research Centre](#). She has diverse research interests in Literacy Studies including projects relating to young children's learning in and beyond schools. She is also co-editor of the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*.*