

A New Perspective

Reading with purpose

DEIDRE ALVES, M.ED.



Memories are amazing little thoughts that have the power to bring you right back to a moment in time—in an instant—and simply out of the blue. It is an unexpected experience that has such powerful impact. When I remember something, whether good or bad, I immediately transcend the present to visit the past, if only for that moment.

Finger on the Pulse

My priority has always been to keep IRWA on the leading edge of educational practice while creating innovative new programming. So I keep my finger on the pulse of the current research and thinking being done in the executive learning and development space to enhance and underpin our enterprise.

Recently, I was reading an article entitled “Your Brain on Learning” in Chief Learning Officer Magazine. It was on the importance of understanding how the brain works in order to successfully design and deliver programming that optimizes the learning experience—to fit how the brain learns best. While reading the article, I was immediately whisked back to an elementary school memory. I remember sitting at a circular table with my teacher as she taught me how to

read. She explained to me why I should not read with my finger underlining each sentence, and how I must be very careful not to do that even though it made reading easier. I remember her being kind but firm and not letting me slip. She insisted on only the best out of me. As I read this article, I remembered thinking how grateful I was to her for teaching me this skill. How reading allows me to understand and navigate the world, while experiencing the thoughts and feelings of others. It provides practical information for living everyday life and enables me to connect with and make sense of the world around me. With eyes to see and a brain to decipher and imagine, it is a source of wonder. I often think had I not been taught this precious skill, what would I do? Who would I be?

A Source of Wonder

I bet you never thought that reading infrastructure standards and documentation like an Environmental Site Assessment or the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice could be a source of wonder or amazement.

But I encourage you to revisit your life and work with new eyes. Having the ability to read, and all that enabled that to happen, including the special people

that helped you to learn to read along the way, is nothing short of a miracle. They helped you to be able to read those documents and those people are a part of you as you read them. Their purpose was to improve your quality of life by teaching you how to read so that you in turn could improve the quality of people’s lives in the work you do through infrastructure development. It is quite extraordinary when you think of your work and our industry from this unique perspective.

So, the next time you find yourself in the middle of bylaws or property descriptions or another type of infrastructure related document, remember the wonder that might never have existed if not for the patience and heart of a teacher, the courage to receive the gift—and the memory that keeps it alive. ✪



Deidre Alves is IRWA’s Vice President of Professional Development.