

Introduction to the Special Section: Keeping Our Legacy Alive by Honoring the Past and Embracing the Future

Theresa C. Chrisman, Guest Editor
Life Story Work Organization

Dear Readers,

I am excited to introduce this special issue of the *International Journal of Reminiscence and Life Review*, which features selected papers from the International Center for Life Story Innovations and Practice (ICLIP) 2024 Biennial Conference, *Keeping Our Legacy Alive: Honoring the Past and Embracing the Future*. This collection brings together nine articles that exemplify the diversity, creativity, and scholarly rigor defining contemporary work in reminiscence and life story research and practice.

ICLIP traces its roots to the pioneering work of **John A. Kunz** at the University of Wisconsin–Superior, whose early conferences in the 1990s helped establish the field of reminiscence and life review. Now housed at the University of Connecticut Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing, ICLIP continues to unite the strength of that legacy with the promise of the future—fostering international collaboration and advancing life story work across research, practice, and education.

The ICLIP biennial conferences have become vibrant gatherings for researchers, clinicians, educators, students, and older adults. Each convening cultivates collaboration and innovation, fostering the exchange of ideas that sustain and advance the field. The 2024 conference carried this tradition forward, welcoming participants from across the globe—including Canada, Jordan, Turkey, and the Netherlands. Presenters represented a wide array of disciplines such as medicine, social work, psychology, nursing, occupational and physical therapy, narrative practice, and gerontology, reflecting the interdisciplinary richness of our community.

I wish to recognize the outstanding work of the **2024 ICLIP Conference Planning Committee—Cheryl**

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With deep gratitude, the author extends sincere appreciation to **Dr. Juliette Shellman**, Director of the International Center for Life Story Innovations and Practice (ICLIP), whose visionary leadership, encouragement, and steadfast commitment to advancing life story work—and to supporting the Center's mission, biennial conferences, and international collaborations—continue to inspire this community.

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Brohard (Chair), Abdallah Abu Khait, Alison Kris, Robin Mintzer, Deniz Pamuk, Deena Stewart-Hitzke, Diana Taylor, Galen Tinder, Juliette Shellman, and Gerben Westerhof—whose months of preparation and many volunteer hours made the **virtual conference** a success. Their thoughtful planning, coordination, and commitment ensured a rich and engaging online experience for participants world-wide.

Our keynote speaker, **Dr. Elizabeth Keating**, Anthropologist at the University of Texas at Austin, delivered an inspiring address on uncovering stories to create connection—a message that resonated deeply with attendees. Readers are encouraged to consult the 2024 Conference Brochure to appreciate the breadth of projects and initiatives represented by our members: (<https://iclip.nursing.uconn.edu/symposiums-and-conferences/>)

Since 2015, ICLIP has also recognized excellence in the field through its annual awards program. The following individuals were honored at the 2024 conference:

The Robert Butler and Myrna Lewis Exemplar Research Award

Gerben Westerhoff, Ph.D.
University of Twente, The Netherlands

The James and Betty Birren Exemplar Practice Award

Sarah White, MFA
The Birren Center

The Florence Gray-Soltys Graduate Student Award for Exemplary Research or Practice in the Field of Reminiscence and Life Review

Yuxuan Yang, Ph.D., RN
University of Connecticut

The John A. Kunz Award for Distinguished Service to the International Center for Life Story Innovations and Practice

Cheryl Svensson, Ph.D.
The Birren Center

I also extend our appreciation to the **Awards Committee—Cheryl Svensson (Chair), Esther Gieschen, and Sharon Mackenzie**—for their important contributions in reviewing nominations and recognizing excellence in reminiscence and life story work.

Also included in this special issue are two reflective articles that chronicle the evolution of ICLIP and its journal:

- *The Legacy Project: Presentation of IIRLR and ICLIP Milestones*
- *Voices of Legacy: Contemporary Innovators Who Shape Life Story Work*

These contributions provide valuable historical insight and feature interviews with past presidents and leaders whose dedication continues to strengthen our shared mission and global network.

The ICLIP biennial conference continues to build multidisciplinary, collaborative relationships among researchers, practitioners, educators, and students—encouraging shared learning and the co-creation of innovative approaches to life story and reminiscence work. Looking ahead, the 2026 conference will no doubt carry this momentum forward, offering new opportunities for engagement, innovation, and shared learning within our ever-growing international community as we continue to celebrate the enduring power of life stories. **Interested contributors are encouraged to review the Call for Abstracts for submission details and important dates (<https://iclip.nursing.uconn.edu/abstract-submission-form/>).**

I extend our heartfelt appreciation to all authors and reviewers whose thoughtful contributions have advanced the study and practice of reminiscence and life story work.

I hope you enjoy reading the informative articles in this issue!

