

Nurse Author & Editor

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Introducing the NEHP

Introducing the Nursing Editors History Project

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In mid-April of this year, Leslie Nicoll and I launched the [Nursing Editors History Project](#) (NEHP) – the realization of a long-standing intention that has been expressed by many nursing journal editors over a number of years. We both have a passion for history, and have recognized the importance of preserving as much evidence as we can related to nursing’s historical record. But as is often the case, taking the actual steps to do so is a task that too easily gets relegated to the “some day” file.

We have both been actively involved in INANE (International Academy of Nursing Editors) for a number of years, forming friendships and professional collaborations with many other nursing journal editors whose leadership in the development of the nursing literature has been amazing and inspiring on so many levels. Our INANE connections have given us first-hand knowledge of the many shifts and changes that happen in the life of any journal—changes that have become magnified many times over with the emergence of the digital age. Then a few years ago we began to witness first-hand the passing of several of the most esteemed nursing journal editors—women who provided years of forceful and effective leadership and unequalled influence on the direction of nursing literature, and of nursing as a discipline. In particular, the loss of prominent nursing journal editors Donna Diers, Suzanne Smith, Rheba de Tornyay, and Margaret Comerford Freda heightened our awareness of the need to capture and preserve our editorial history.

Donna Diers died on February 24, 2013, leaving behind one of the most notable legacies in nursing history. She was the Editor of *Image: the Journal of Nursing Scholarship* (now known as *the Journal of Nursing Scholarship*) from 1985-1993, wrote textbooks and articles on topics related to nursing scholarship, and served as Dean of the Yale University School of Nursing from 1972 to 1985. She was an international figure in nursing who played a key role in the development of advanced practice nursing. We both knew Donna as a valued professional colleague who challenged us in directions we would not have otherwise imagined.

Suzanne Smith, who died in September of 2013, was Editor-in-Chief of *Nurse Educator* from 1981-2013, and the *Journal of Nursing Administration* from

1981-2011 at which time she became Consulting Editor. She had been a driving force for INANE for many years, hosting several of our annual conferences. We both were working closely with her to plan the 2014 annual conference at the time of her sudden and untimely death. Because of her legacy of mentorship for new editors and authors, we named the new INANE “Mentoring Editors Award” in her honor. We often heard her speak of the need to preserve the history of nursing journals and nursing journal editors and challenged us to find ways to do so as part of our development of the new INANE web site.

Rheba de Tornyay was Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Nursing Education* from 1983-1990, and Editor Emeritus until her death on September 27, 2013. Rheba served as Dean of the University of Washington School of Nursing from 1975 to 1986, and was the first President of the American Academy of Nursing. Neither of us knew Rheba personally but we grew up in our own nursing and editorial careers acutely aware of her influence in our profession.

In April of this year we lost our dear friend and colleague Margaret Comerford Freda, who served as Editor of *MCN: The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing* from 1997 until 2014, when she assumed the role of Editor Emeritus. Margaret was a force of nature in many arenas, with one of the most important being her key role in negotiating a greater inclusion of nursing journals in the Science Citation Index which calculates and publishes journal impact factors.

These four esteemed colleagues represent a major reason that we decided to establish the Nursing Editors History Project—we have reached a point

where we are losing important historical insights and knowledge about the evolution of editorial leadership in nursing journals. The influence of nursing editors has been far-reaching and significant in that they have served in many important capacities that have left an indelible mark on nursing. Their specific contributions as journal editors, however, have largely remained invisible. We know little, for example, about their commitments and motivations for becoming journal editors, and how these values shaped their editorial actions. The editorial pages of their journals contain clues, even explicit evidence related to their editorial leadership, but finding these pages requires the arduous task of searching through archived, often hard to find, paper volumes of the journals. Once digitization started happening in about 2002, most of the articles of the major nursing journal became available online (mostly as downloadable PDF files), but the “front matter” containing the Editorial, where the Editor’s own voice is expressed, is often not available online. The material is available, but now scattered and buried deep in the stacks of libraries, requiring on-site search and retrieval—which we intend to pursue eventually as part of this project!

We launched the Nursing Editors History Project to:

- Document the history of editorial leadership in nursing from 1900 to the present.
- Identify the people and organizations that have influenced the development of modern nursing practice and nursing knowledge.
- Preserve stories provided by informants that relate to editorial leadership in nursing publications.
- Provide a database that can be accessed, searched, and used by a variety of

scholars who seek to understand the important role of editorial leadership. (see the [project homepage](http://nursingeditorshistory.com/) – <http://nursingeditorshistory.com/>)

Our only requirement is that the journals included in the NEHP database must be eligible for inclusion in the *Nurse Author & Editor* and INANE Directory of Nursing Journals (see <http://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory/>). We are focusing on the person who held or holds the key editorial leadership role—typically the person who holds the title “Editor” or “Editor-in-Chief,” and who makes the decision about which manuscripts are accepted for publication. We are seeking information from anyone: Editors, former Editors, publishers, authors who worked with a journal editor, friends and colleagues of journal editors.

To begin, we developed a simple online form that anyone can complete. The person completing the form can attach a data sheet on which an informant can enter information they have related to the journal’s history, or about the editorial leadership of the journal. We are collecting images of journal covers, including images of cover changes that occurred over time. We are also collecting PDF files of “first editorials” that typically contain a new editor’s values and vision for the journal.

To see an example of what our database contains so far, visit the page for [Research in Nursing and Health](https://nursingeditorshistory.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/entry-rinah.pdf) (<https://nursingeditorshistory.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/entry-rinah.pdf>). The initial data form was completed by Judith Gedney Baggs, who was Editor from 2003-2012 and it contains an important account of the Editors who preceded her tenure—information that would not otherwise be available in any other source that know of. We have located a PDF file of the

Editorial in the first issue, written by the founding editor, Harriet Werley. But we have a long “wish list” for this and other journals as well—first editorials for each new editor, narrative descriptions of how editorial leadership changes came about, and anecdotes of interactions with editors that reflect their editorial values and actions.

We are open to any pertinent information about any nursing journal that is eligible for inclusion in the Nursing Journals Directory (<http://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory/>) from any informant. If you have a story to share, or historical details about a journal’s evolution, or copies of significant journal content that reflects an editor’s leadership—please let us know! If you know of a student who would like to work on this project, we want to hear from you! We would welcome an opportunity to develop specific learning objectives and activities that would benefit both the student and the project. At this point we envision student activities to include searching, investigating, and locating evidence that comes to us only as clues—part of the project that can significantly enhance the historical resources available.

We welcome you to visit the [NEHP web site FAQ](#) page now to learn more, and if you still have questions or suggestions, use our [contact form](#) to let us know. Most important, return often— we anticipate steady growth in the months ahead. Thank you for your interest and support!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peggy L. Chinn, PhD, RN, FAAN writes, “I am Editor of *Advances in Nursing Science*, author of a few books, and manager or co-manager of several

websites/blogs including INANE. For fun I walk all over the San Francisco Bay area, read, knit, quilt and pursue general mischief with my grandchildren whenever possible!”

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Kim Belcik

OCTOBER 12, 2015 AT 3:13 PM [EDIT](#)

I am so very, very, happy to see the history of nursing editors preserved. It makes my heart sing!

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