

February 2019



Making a Distinct Difference with Literacy

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book-gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children within four participating communities from birth to age five no matter what their family's income.

Inspired by her father's inability to read and write, Parton started her Imagination Library in 1995 for the children within her home county in East Tennessee. Today, her program mails over one million free books each month to children around the world.

Parton had the quintessential deprived, poverty background growing up in a family of 12 children. However, she was a talented and creative child and wrote her first song at age 5, was singing publicly at age 8 and at 13 years of age she made her first record. Her resilience allowed her to achieve and overcome various obstacles.

The traumas and deprivations associated with Parton's early life promoted her at age 23 to write the song *Coat of Many Colors*, an autobiographical account of clothing that her mother sewed for her out of scraps of fabric.

Parton stated, "When I was growing up in the hills of East Tennessee, I knew my dreams would come true. I know there are children in your community with their own dreams. They dream of becoming a

doctor or an inventor or a minister. Who knows, maybe there is a little girl whose dream is to be a writer and singer.

The seeds of these dreams are often found in books and the seeds you help plant in your community can grow across the world."



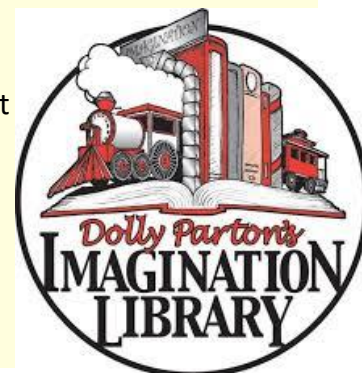
The Imagination Library program operates within four participating communities. After the success in the [United States](#) for ten years, the program was launched in [Canada](#) in 2006, followed by the [United Kingdom](#) in 2007 and [Australia](#) joined in 2013.

The motto for the Imagination Library is:

- Dream more
- Learn more
- Care more
- Be more.

For more information about how easy it is to access the Imagination Library, visit:

[https://
imaginationlibrary.com/
about-us/](https://imaginationlibrary.com/about-us/)



New Literacies for the 21st Century



Literacy was once many, many decades ago thought to be only about reading and writing. Fortunately, we are far wiser today and we recognise that literacy is a far more significant and vast aspect of everyone's life.

New literacies is a term being used to recognise that there is a social shift from 'literacy' to many literacies, especially in relation to how people view and use texts in different contexts that, in turn, support different kinds of reading, writing and communication. It is 'new' in the sense that technological, social, economic, cultural, intellectual and institutional changes are continually changing.

New literacies also involves the use of skills, strategies and mindsets required to navigate, interpret, evaluate, communicate and collaboratively create online using multiple resources available across multiple contexts to accomplish personal, educational and professional goals and to use innovative resources, tools and interfaces in efficient and flexible ways.

Think about your own life. Are there new technologies that you have learned or taken up recently? Did someone show you how to use or do something with technology lately? Even reading this article will illustrate that your literacy has been developed because of the new terms that

are being used in our society.

It is therefore essential to recognise that literacy exists within a new world of technologies and that they are used to continually change and generate even newer forms of literacy.

An example is **zines**: these are self-published magazines created by modern technology users to provide specialized or unconventional content not found in standard paper-printed magazines and which can be easily distributed electronically. There is also the term 'fanzine' - which refers to a magazine for those who are fans of someone or something.

Have you thought of the idea of encouraging your child or grandchild to create a zine about an interest, pastime or hobby? You might be surprised how creative that young person really is.

Another aspect of literacy to consider is **translanguaging**. This is the process where multilingual speakers use various ways of expressing themselves in an integrated communication system. A well-known example of translanguaging is present in South African classrooms (and also elsewhere in the world) where children use multiple languages to communicate meaning precisely (– realising that there are many words and concepts that are not available in English). We must recognise that translanguaging is an asset, not a deficit. The Japanese, for example, have a word for the moment that a petal is about to fall off a flower. English has nothing comparable.

We can't stand still and hope that it will all go away. Change is with us daily and constantly in so many ways and we just have to accept it and move with it.

Literacy is the same. It is constantly changing as the world advances around us. **Think how powerful it would be if you as a Rotarian advanced someone's literacy in your project.**

Applying Global Best Practice to Educate Girls living in Poverty

The story of Global Grant beneficiary Vimukti Girls' School, Jaipur, India

The World Bank¹ estimates the cost to society of not educating girls at \$15–30 trillion!. Or put simply, educating girls changes everything!

Such education reduces infant and maternal mortality, improves children's health and upbringing, reduces poverty, improves entire economies and reduces population growth. It counters climate change.

The World Bank has identified, based on its global experience², a series of interventions which are effective in encouraging girls to finish high school.

This is the story of a school which is trying to apply all global good practices to overcome gender prejudice and poverty constraints to girls' education.

How Vimukti Girls' School³ in Jaipur, India applies good practice:

- Lowers the cost: There is no cost to family of tuition, books, uniforms, winter clothing, nutrition.
- Ensures safety: There is an all-female campus and buses run between home and school.



- Allows time for needs at home: The school day is short to give time for chores at home, but the school year is long (278 days) in order to gain a stronger education.
- Provides incentives to finish: Annual stipends linked to performance are deposited in a bank account and disbursed when each girl finishes high school.
- Deals with pressure to get married: Full vocational and college scholarships are given to train girls to be ready for the job market.
- Pass rate in Board exams is 100%.



Vimukti Girls' School does all this at a rate of 67¢ per day.

The one missing piece is the use of technology to enhance quality of learning. Girls have access to computers for only two hours per week. Girls are soon to be provided with laptops loaded with self-learning tutorials and teachers trained to integrate technology into lesson plans.

Once all elements are in place, the impact of this model will be monitored with great interest.



1. World Bank 2018, *Cost of Not Educating our Girls* <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29956> The deficit in girls' education is serious and chronic. In poor countries, only 2/3 finish primary school, only 1/3 finish grade 8 and a tiny fraction finish high school.
2. World Bank: *Reaching Girls, Transforming lives: 2016*.
3. Vimukti Girls' School is supported by a 2016 Rotary Global Grant of \$39,000, hosted by RC Jaipur Royal and RC Potomac, which provided school buses and classroom infrastructure and other grants from RC Bethesda Chevy Chase and Potomac; and grants totaling \$400,000 from EduGIRLS Inc., an MD-based public charity founded by Rotarian and WB retiree Anand Seth and supported by hundreds of donors and corporate sponsors.

YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szc08i5wpZc>

e-Literacy Rotary Global Grant Project Media Release

In May 2018, RC Karachi East launched its new project with the mission “**To establish an e-learning teacher training facility for The Citizens Foundation, Pakistan**” as a pilot under the Rotary International Global Grant Program. This \$US102,000 project was implemented with the support of seven international clubs, one local club, four international Districts and a Rotary partner (EduGIRLS).

The three entities in the project were:

- Host Partner: RC Karachi East, District 3271, South Pakistan
- International Partner: Rotary Club of Ambur, Tamil Nadu, India, District 3231
- Cooperating Organization: The Citizen Foundation, Pakistan.

Initially in the pilot phase the project scope was restricted in order “**To equip 130 schools’ units (covering faculties of 640 schools) in Sindh and Baluchistan provinces of South Pakistan to implement e-learning based on the Teach The Trainer (TTT) program, with the capacity to enhance teaching skills of 1500 teachers annually (which is five times the existing capacity at that time)**”. The project completion was announced at the Rotary Awareness and Project Closure Seminar on 27 November 2018.



Above: To see teachers being trained digitally, [click here](#).

The success of this pilot project has encouraged The Citizen Foundation (TCF), the RC Karachi East (RCKE) and other donors in Pakistan to launch similar projects of larger magnitude, impact and budget in the immediate future.

To ensure success, Host Partner (RCKE) has put in place a very strong project organization headed by its Past President, Rotarian Nisar Ahmed Sheikh. Rotarian Sheikh has vast experience in successfully completing high-impact projects, both nationally and internationally.



The project success can be assessed by these strong outcomes:

- 3,000 teachers have been trained so far
- 77,000 students have benefited so far with improved digital course contents
- 30,000 courses have already been digitized and stored on computer-readable media
- TCF has agreed to share digitized courses with any other Rotary literacy program
- TCF has been able to find three more donors to replicate this project for the remaining 800 schools which were not covered in the pilot phase.

Special Acknowledgements:

- **PDG Rtn. Bill Gray** (RC Kingston Cataraqui) for his consistent guidance and support throughout the project cycle.
- **Rtn. Anand Seth** of RC Bethesda Cherry Chase and Chairman RI Literacy Rotarian Action Group, **Past Director Dr John Thorne**.
- **Rtn. G. Kannayeram**, DEMGC & Grant Coordinator District 3231 for initiating long-term bonding between Districts 3271 Pakistan and 3231 Tamil Nadu, India.



The Key Donors:

Besides RC Karachi East and RI District 3271, the international contributors who supported this project can be seen in the table on the following page:

No.	Donor	Type	Location	Country
1	RC Ambur	Club	Tamil Nadu	India
2	Bethesda Cherry Chase	RC Foundation	Bethesda (WV)	USA
3	D 7620	RI District	West Virginia	USA
4	RC Cataraqui Kingston	Club	Kingston (ON)	Canada
5	D 7040	RI District	Kingston (ON)	Canada
6	eduGIRLs	RI Partner	Washington (DC)	USA
7	RC Madras Coromandel	Club	Tamil Nadu	India
8	RC Medicine Hat	Club	Alberta	Canada
9	RC Cambridge North	Club	Ontario	Canada



“Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.”
 RI Vision 2018 – 2022.

“We sought international support because we strongly believed in Rotary’s current vision,” said Rtn. Nisar Ahmed Sheikh HCC.

There is an [80-second video](https://youtu.be/gW2Jgy5fVrA) about the project: <https://youtu.be/gW2Jgy5fVrA>

To view the various media coverage reports, [click here](#) and please scroll through to the end.



LitRAG Display
 Rotary International Convention, Hamburg
 1–5 June 2019

Are you going to the 2019 Hamburg Convention?
 Be involved with LitRAG through the several opportunities we have planned!

Please volunteer to be on the LitRAG booth – it’s a great way to meet other like-minded Rotarians; to learn about different projects in other Districts and countries; and to promote and find partners for your projects!

A sign-up list will be shared among all LitRAG members. Please consider signing up for a two-hour shift and help promote literacy projects and LitRAG!

Contact John Thorne or Carolyn Johnson:
info@litrag.org

Using Problem-Solving with Literacy in Rotary Projects

Whether you are a pre-schooler, teenager or adult, problem-solving arises every day. Two researchers from the University of Kansas, Professor Michael Orosco and Chancellor's Fellow, Naheed Abdulrahim, have recognised that "It's all about reading comprehension and vocabulary development."

"In the U.S., we're just programmed to hate math and we don't teach a lot of problem-solving," Orosco said. "It's a skill you're not born with. It's just got to be taught. When our kids don't understand something in class, our teachers need to find a way to be able to help them get it."

The education professors developed a comprehension-based strategy to help English learners improve their math word-problem-solving abilities. The approach boosts reading comprehension and problem-solving as well.

The results show the value of focusing on comprehension with word problems. Comprehension strategy instruction addresses math, reading, writing, vocabulary and, perhaps most importantly, reading comprehension. Improvements in those areas lead not only to better test scores but also to students who are able to solve problems in other areas of life.

The first thing is to determine what is relevant information and what is irrelevant information. Cross out words and sentences that are not needed to solve the problem and make the problem clearer.

The study had teachers use a strategy in which the teacher restated the question and helped students understand the factors of a math word problem beyond the numbers.

The authors include the following sample word problem: "Esmeralda was shopping at the mall. She visited four different stores. She bought a new pair of shoes and a new purse. She spent a total of \$45. The purse cost \$10. How much money did Esmeralda spend on her new pair of shoes?"

Some students may not experience difficulty in computing the math to arrive at the correct answer. However, others are blocked by the sentence "She

visited four different stores". Students can learn to remove irrelevant (or 'blocking') information.

English learners are likely to face the challenge of processing information contained in a word problem in the English language, such as understanding the meaning of the word "pair" and the verb "spend."

Orosco and Abdulrahim make several specific recommendations for teacher preparation programs to better educate future teachers to use such approaches, helping them understand how reading, writing and math are all related and providing encouragement and instruction on solving word problems.

If you are creating a new project and including literacy, think about how you can improve problem-solving skills as well. Design exercises and tasks for your literacy learners that begin with simple wording and start to increasingly include less relevant information. In this way, you will require the learners to remove the irrelevant content and focus on exactly what is required. Source: [Science Daily](#), June 2018.

LitRAG Office-Bearers

LitRAG Executive Committee:

- Chair: John Thorne, PRID (Australia)
- Vice-Chair: Carolyn Johnson, PDG (USA)
- Secretary: (position vacant)
- Treasurer: Harvey Baxter, Rotarian (USA)

LitRAG Directors:

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- Sylvia Byers, PDG (Australia)
- Chebab Elawar, PDG (USA)
- David Fowler, Past President RIBI (England)
- Shekhar Mehta, PRID (India)
- Anand Seth, Rotarian (USA)
- Courtney Doldron, Rotarian (Canada)

LitRAG Advisors to the Board:

- Bill Boyd, Past RI President (New Zealand)
- Noraseth Pathmanand, PRID (Thailand)
- William Stumbaugh, Rotarian (Ecuador)

Website: www.litrag.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Reading.Rotary/>

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The Literacy Rotarian Action Group is a recognised Rotarian Action Group and operates in accordance with Rotary International Policy but is not an agency of or controlled by Rotary International. Note: Rotarian Action Groups are a resource to Rotary clubs and districts in their specialty but are not an agency of RI and may not act on behalf of RI as part of all agreements.