



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Pat Earle

Guest Predictions is a regular feature in which we ask leaders in a number of professions a set of questions that affect us all.

After 35 years in New York City working in Politics as Speech Writer, Fund Raiser and Strategist, Pat relocated to her childhood summer home in Gloucester MA. A life-long reader herself, after hearing of the disastrous cuts to the local school budgets and libraries, she began the First R Foundation, whose mission is to recruit local community leaders to read aloud and distribute books to the all Kindergarten and First Grade classes on Cape Ann. The project is now in its 10th year of successful operation, and plans are under way for offering First R as a working model for other communities around the region and the country. Pat has a life-long husband, Richard Earle, two daughters and one granddaughter. To visit the First R Foundation: www.firstr.org

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: As school budgets are constrained, school administrations are more receptive to the donation of new books for young students. Additionally, in this electronic age there is still a high benefit to both placing a physical book in a young person's hands, together with having an adult they respect read to them. It is a statistical fact that young people who are read to develop improved verbal skills.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: In these difficult financial times, we, as well as our allied groups across the nation, have had an increasingly difficult time in funding the acquisition of new books to place in young hands.

Q: How will globalization affect your professional area in the near term?

A: While we are convinced that the combination of a physical book in young hands and a respected community leader engaged in reading to them are highly valuable, we are studying the best way to reach a top result by engaging the internet. While our current method is highly beneficial in the developed world, we may be forced to modify this at first in the third world.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: The increasing reliance on the internet, "apps", and texting may convince young readers that books are obsolete, which they are not.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: Their own lack of a broad spectrum of information due to the emphasis on specialization, limiting the full range of knowledge of cultures other than their own, in turn leading to a lack of appreciation of the variety of approaches to so much of life. Example: the history and implications of tensions in the Mid-east.