In the spring of 2001, the two of us began discussing the possibility of hosting an interdisciplinary conference on Narrative. We had been feeling the need of such an event ever since our days as doctoral students a decade earlier at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Our sense was that researchers and practitioners who, like ourselves, see narrative (or story) as central to human life – for instance, to learning, culture, relationships, identity – can often feel marginalized within their respective areas of inquiry.

One person came immediately to mind as a potential keynote speaker, if we could get her. She was Mary Catherine Bateson, daughter of legendary parents, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, and known to many within education and beyond for such insightful, cross-disciplinary books as *Composing a Life* (1989). Dolores had first become acquainted with Dr. Bateson, or Catherine as she prefers to be called, in the late 1990s at a conference dedicated to research on mothering, at Brock University, for which Bateson gave the keynote address. The two of them had kept in contact throughout the intervening years. One afternoon at Dolores’ home, in Fredericton, New Brunswick, we dialled Directory Assistance and traced Catherine to her home in New England.

“We’re planning a conference for the long weekend in May 2002,” we explained to her, thanks to a speaker phone that permitted a three-way exchange. “We want to bring people together from a variety of fields and from both the academy and the community to compare notes and share ideas about the importance of stories in human life. The time is ripe to bring people together to explore what ‘story’ is and does — not just scholars and researchers but also practitioners, writers, and artists so that we can have a more truly interdisciplinary exchange than traditional conferences tend to make possible. We’re calling it *Narrative*
Would you consider coming up to Fredericton and delivering the opening address?”

Catherine, no stranger to the lecture circuit and sought after by countless conference organizers just like ourselves, was immediately intrigued. To our delight, she agreed. A year later, with the help of colleagues and students from our respective institutions and a conference grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), Narrative Matters became a reality. The response from the 200 or so delegates who attended – included among whom were writers, artists, social workers, literary scholars, nurses, educators, historians, ethicists, and therapists – was so positive that they insisted we plan a follow-up conference. The result was Narrative Matters 2004. The response from the 300-plus delegates who attended this second event was, again, so keen that it became clear a third conference would be in order. Thanks to the hard work of Patrick O’Neill, Janice Best, and their colleagues at Acadia University, Narrative Matters 2006 was held in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

In addition to Bateson’s keynote at the 2002 conference, this special issue features papers presented at Narrative Matters 2004. In selecting from the numerous submissions that were received in response to the Call for Papers, that was issued at the 2004 event, our criteria was that the articles should: (a) be international in appeal; (b) be interdisciplinary in scope; (c) have implications for education, broadly defined, and (d) represent critical consideration of narrative ideas, given the enthusiasm which many “narrativists” bring to their work. Before giving a short introduction to each article selected, we need to trace the emergence of the so-called “narrative turn” within the human sciences.

In the latter half of the 1980s, a number of publications in a variety of disciplines signaled a shift in how we think about knowing and learning. In Actual Minds, Possible Worlds, Jerome Bruner (1986), one of the founders of cognitive science and a prominent voice in educational psychology, proposed that the social sciences generally and education specifically, in their preference for logical or “paradigmatic thought” – as the sine qua none of scientific reasoning and their adoption of the metaphor of cognition as computation, had overlooked a mode of cognition that is central, he said, to how humans make meaning in their day-to-day lives. He called this “narrative thought.” Bruner, whose work has mentored Bill in many ways and who kindly endorsed our applications for SSHRC conference grants, has reinforced this proposal in subsequent publications.