

ABOUT THE AWARD

The International Literacy Association (ILA) Timothy & Cynthia Shanahan Outstanding Dissertation Award honors an outstanding doctoral student who focused their research in the reading, writing, or literacy field or who conducted related research with implications for reading, writing, or literacy. Interviews with the winning scholar are published each year in [Reading Research Quarterly](#).

ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants for the Timothy & Cynthia Shanahan Outstanding Dissertation Award must have completed dissertations in any aspect of the field of reading, writing, or literacy between January 2025 and December 2025 and had their dissertation approved by their committee.

Studies may use any research approach (ethnographic, experimental, historical, survey, etc.). Each study will be assessed in light of its approach, its scholarship, and its significant contributions to knowledge within the reading/literacy field. **Previously published monographs are not eligible for this award.**

Dissertation monographs will be evaluated, through a blind review process, using the following criteria:

- Significance of Research Question
- Theoretical Framework/Literature Review
- Rationale for the Research
- Appropriateness and Adequacy of the Methodology/Approach
- Significance/Implications for Practice and Research
- Clarity, Cohesion, and Specificity

Condensing a dissertation to meet the page requirements for this award is challenging work. Applicants should know that the criteria are weighted equally by reviewers, and they are encouraged to seek mentorship to prepare the best possible submission.

To be eligible, an applicant must be an ILA member in good standing and maintain active membership through **June 30, 2027**.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications are submitted through [an online process](#). A title page, table of contents, dissertation monograph, and reference list—prepared in strict adherence to the guidelines below—should be uploaded as one (1) document (preferably a PDF).

Because of the blind review process, applications must not include any identifying information, including names and institutional affiliations, except in the applicant information section. **Failure to remove all identifying information may result in disqualification.**

Title Page With Abstract

Provide a 150-word abstract. You should state, in nontechnical language, the purpose and major findings of your study. Please include the full title of your monograph.

Table of Contents

Include a table of contents that lists major divisions and headings in the monograph.

Dissertation Monograph

Prepare a monograph based on your dissertation research that is no longer than **40 double-spaced pages, in Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier font, with 1-inch margins on all sides**. This page limit applies only to the main part of the monograph and does not include the abstract, table of contents, or reference list, but it *does* include any tables or figures that are included in the main part of the monograph. **Monographs that exceed the maximum length will not be accepted**. If additional space is required to present details of a research instrument or to elaborate on some other vital point, an appendix of up to three additional pages may be attached.

Include a short title with the monograph and review it carefully to ensure that it does not include any identifying information.

References

Provide complete bibliographic information for all sources cited in the proposal. References should be formatted using American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition style. To accommodate the blind review process, if the submitter's own publications are cited, the submitter should substitute the word Author in the citations (e.g., Author, 2019) and substitute all coauthor names with Coauthor (e.g., Author, Coauthor, 2019).

SUBMISSION TIMELINE

To be considered for the 2026 Timothy & Cynthia Shanahan Outstanding Dissertation Award, **applications must be completed and all required materials submitted no later than February 2, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET**. Applicants will be notified of the results before June 30, 2026.

SELECTION PROCESS

Members of the ILA Timothy & Cynthia Shanahan Outstanding Dissertation Award Committee will read and rate all monographs through a blind review process. Please note that committee members are instructed to abstain from rating submissions for which they cannot complete an impartial review, including but not limited to submissions for which they served as chair or member of the applicant's dissertation committee.

The award will be granted only in years when the committee concludes there is a high-quality application that meets the rigorous standards outlined above. The committee also reserves the right to identify one or more additional papers for Honorable Mention.

Please direct any questions about eligibility, selection criteria, the application process, and/or the selection process to ILAAwards@reading.org.