This article reviews readability formulas and related methods of predicting readability published from 1960 until 1974 and provides references to reviews of earlier work. The article stresses that such methods (correctly chosen) can provide good *indices* of reading difficulty but do not indicate *causes* of difficulty or describe how to write readably. [The *SSCI®* indicates that this paper has been cited in over 110 publications.]

George R. Klare
Department of Psychology
Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701

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In 1971, after six years of service, I resigned as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Ohio University and returned to research and teaching. I spent the academic year 1971-1972 on leave as a visiting professor at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, using the time primarily to catch up on my field, readability.

The year proved to be a fruitful one, but not always an easy one. Stony Brook was a relatively new university, which meant the library's holdings were far more extensive for recent than for older literature in my field. Consequently, I made heavy demands upon the interlibrary-loan department—so many, in fact, that they rationed me in number of loan requests per week. The effect was perhaps not all that unfortunate, since I did manage, in time, to get the references I wanted—and since it may have prevented some more serious eye problems, in view of my requiring the regular use of reading glasses by the end of the year, chiefly because of the illegibility (not unreadability!) of many of the microfilms and photocopies I read.

My original intent during the year was not to write the review article cited here, but rather to look at the validity of readability formulas in predicting reading difficulty. Readability formulas, though widely used in education, the media, industry, and the armed services, have long been controversial. I wanted to examine the published and unpublished research literature to see if I could determine under what conditions they might be expected to provide valid versus invalid indices of difficulty. (I had long since decided not to develop a formula myself in hopes of remaining an unbiased observer. Getting comments from readers to that effect has been encouraging; finding that authors have occasionally cited the same one of my articles for both positive and negative evidentiary purposes, perhaps even more so.)

The rather thoroughgoing look I took during 1971-1972 (and afterward) eventually convinced me that a review of the existing methods could prove useful to readers. The cited article was the result. But I also pursued my original purpose, first through an invited address at the 1975 meeting of the National Reading Conference and later through an article in the *Journal of Reading Behavior*.[1]

Readability formulas have become, if anything, more controversial since that time, chiefly because they can be, and often are, misunderstood or misused. I have tried to provide some research-based guidelines for use of formulas in a chapter in the *Handbook of Reading Research*[2] and elsewhere. A recent publication of the International Reading Association[3] might also be of help to potential users.

1. Klare G R. A second look at the validity of readability formulas. *J. Read. Behav.* 8:129-52, 1976. (Cited 35 times.)
2. ————. Readability. (Pearson P D, ed.) *Handbook of reading research.* New York: Longman, 1984. p. 681-744. (Cited 5 times.)
3. Zakaluk B L & Samuels S J, eds. *Readability: its past, present, and future.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1988. 144 p.