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Editorial

Welcome to the winter edition of *Fine Print* for 2005. We know that our readers like a balance, which is why in each issue we bring you a range of articles to suit your reading moods. Louisa Ellum's article will inspire practitioners through her passionate account of the digital storytelling movement. She persuades us quickly that digital storytelling has powerful potential for adult literacy and VET. The elemental art of narrative can be woven with images, sound, and graphics and act as a powerful medium for our students.

We are also pleased to present two of the feature articles from keynote speakers at this year's VALBEC conference. Catherine Kell has worked at the forefront in teaching, research and theorising as to how to New Literacy Studies can make a difference to literacy provision. In her article, Catherine says simple schooled literacy provision does not necessarily 'right wrongs'. Literacy is perhaps best as secondary to more meaningful enterprises such as development, income-generation or building.

Peter Waterhouse has been a key contributor to adult literacy in Australia. His paper is a truly reflective, personal, readable account of adult literacy in the broadest context of learning. Peter reminds us to continually challenge our practice, to question our embedded preconceptions about learning and to examine our own literacy contexts.

Debbie Soccio from Victoria University reports on her work as a flexible learning leader in the area of blended learning and what this means for lower-level literacy learners. Her article highlights the fact that technology is only one part of true flexible delivery.

Merv Edmunds, in Practical Matters, shows us how students can be encouraged to take on an identity for better learning experiences and better results.

Open Forum presents Michael Chalk reflecting on his studies and the work of Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel. His virtual and real life peripatetic experiences with the World Wide Web for literacy make interesting reading.

In Foreign Correspondence, Marlene Erikson and Barbara Old talk about successful programs with Aboriginal communities in British Columbia, which take community contexts and mentoring, housing and ethno-mathematics programs as foremost in developing programs for learners.

Isy Bilander teaches literacy to Deaf students at Holden Street Neighbourhood House. In Beside the Whiteboard, he talks to Julie Palmer about the rewards of working with this group and their particular literacy needs.

We know that this rich and varied collection of articles will make your winter professional reading an enjoyable experience.

Sarah Deasey

Digital storytelling as a teaching tool

by Louisa Ellum

Digital storytelling blends images, graphics, voice, video, music and text and could become a powerful medium for adult literacy and VET students. Because the form builds on oral storytelling traditions, a participant doesn't have to be an experienced writer to create a digital story. But is the reduced reliance on written text a good thing?

My association with digital storytelling began in 2002 when I ran a six-month ANTA-funded literacy program for disengaged youth. Its focus was on the development of digital storytelling throughout the program, and the creation of a range of stories based on the lives of the young participants' mentors. From that moment on I was hooked.

I took this project to the ACAL Conference in Alice Springs in 2003, and received a lot of interest from a range of groups. Many literacy practitioners showed interest in digital storytelling's potential to engage a wide variety of learners. What the majority of interested people also saw, however, was the hurdle of the use of technology. It was very easy for me to stand there in front of groups of practitioners and say that technology needed to be treated as secondary to the development of the stories. I was reasonably technology-savvy. For me, at that point in time, the assumption was that most people would be able to 'play' with the software needed and be competent enough to bring it into their classrooms. I met Robyn Jay from NSW at that time and her enthusiasm and work as a flexible learning leader focusing on ICT and literacy encouraged me to continue my plight.

I had a few other opportunities to present the wonders of digital storytelling to other groups and as much as the feedback was enthusiastic, there was the constant uneasiness of how much of a learning barrier the technology would cause to most practitioners and their participants.

Then in early 2004 I met Carole McCulloch from TAFE frontiers. Carole, by that stage, had caught the digital storytelling bug, had travelled to Wales to an international digital storytelling conference, and was ready to and had the means to develop a project team to investigate the best ways to incorporate digital storytelling into VET. Through TAFE frontiers and a keen group of practitioners around Australia, digital storytelling was about to make its move into VET.

What is digital storytelling?

Digital stories can take many forms, be derived from numerous means, and have differing purposes. They can be used for learning, for commercial purposes, for self-fulfilment or even as a tool to get a simple message across. In our industry or sector, digital stories are primarily used as a tool for teaching or as a way to engage participants in the development of literacy and ICT skills.

Digital stories combine narrated story with images, music and sound to create a short mini-movie that runs for approximately three to five minutes. The most powerful stories are those told in the first person about a life, memory or event that is significant to the creator. Digital stories enable ordinary people to produce and publish their own stories to share with others. Everyone has a story to tell and digital stories provide a dynamic voice for that to happen.

The beauty of digital stories lies in their approachability and the fact that they are less reliant on written text for communication. A participant does not need to be an experienced writer to create a digital story and people don't need to be readers to enjoy them. They build on oral storytelling traditions, adding extra dimensions to communicate a message.

Digital storytelling is the hot new trend in online marketing. By posting evocative personal stories on the web—told through voice, video, music, and text—companies are trying to engage customers and build brand. Most business people describe their dreams and strategies—their stories—just as they've been doing it for decades: stiffly, from behind a podium, and maybe with a few slides. Digital storytelling has been empowering business people and companies to use modern tools—computers, scanners, video—to update the ancient craft of telling tales. It helps companies to harvest their artifacts, to surface compelling stories, and to render those stories in ways that are engaging and exciting. Brands are built around stories, and stories of identity—who we are, where we've come from—are the most effective stories of all. This is a powerful way to bring them to life. Digital storytelling is more than a technique; it has become something of a movement among both teachers and business people.

For ACE, TAFE and RTO providers, digital storytelling offers an inroad for many participants to engage in literacy development, e-learning and technology. The breadth of

digital storytelling has, I feel, yet to be completely explored. Its scope is dynamic and its application is varied. Participants don't to be computer literate to cope with the demands of simple storytelling in this mode.

My entry into digital storytelling was by using more high-end software in the form of Adobe Premiere and Photoshop. Both of these programs are used in the film and design industry and allow for multiple levels of image, sound and movement manipulation and layering. Such software is expensive to purchase and difficult to self-teach and problem-shoot (unless you are very competent with computers). So, as much as I expounded my enthusiasm and passion for digital storytelling to willing listeners in our industry, the greatest barrier for most training providers was in the cost of the software and also the lack of computer competence with many of the practitioners.

The best things in life are free

So how can digital storytelling be made accessible to our organisations and clients? Enter the new wave of storytelling reformists who have used innovation, dynamic thinking and practical application to embrace this new tool in literacy development. There is a wide variety of software available free on the internet or that comes with your computer software package. With the popularity and commonality of digital cameras now, software makers and distributors have created simple yet highly dynamic programs that allow budding movie makers to insert still and moving images, music, sound effects and voiceover plus text, credits and special effects to create powerful and personal stories. Macs will often come with iMovie ready to go, while most PCs have Movie Maker available. There are many other free software programs available such as Photo Story, Photo Jam and PowerPoint is another option available to everyone who used Microsoft Office packages.

The use for digital storytelling in our industry is enormous. Our clients and participants are so diverse that the scope of using the digital medium in their training allows for a new focus in technology skill development. We know that as literacy facilitators, teaching technology is a vital element in our classrooms. Often technology is taught in parallel or separately to other elements of programs and this often causes pressure for the participant to comprehend both the technology and the content of the program. As obvious as this is, and also as much as we explain that technology is a tool to enhance our general learning, many participants get caught up in the complications related to using software and hardware packages.

The general consensus between practitioners who have been using digital storytelling techniques is that most participants don't separate the literacy development and

content with the use of the technology—they are one. Consequently, the mindset changes and the approach to the use of new software, even to the general technology used, is open and willing. The participant has an idea about how the final product will look, works hard to complete the stages and elements necessary to create the product, and quickly realises that the software and technology used is more of a vehicle than a tool driving towards a finished product.

> many participants get caught up in... using software and hardware packages
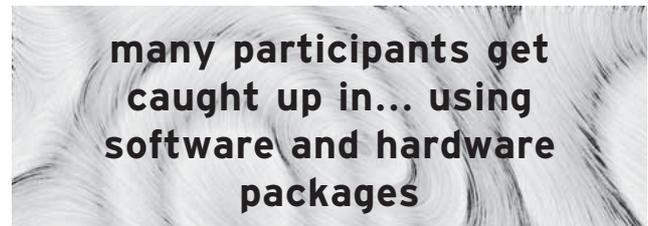
The software doesn't have to be fully understood and learnt first to be able to create a digital story. It is really there as a blank canvas with the special effects options available as palette knives, paintbrushes and paint. I could go on forever forming analogies about digital storytelling, but it really is one of the first meldings of literacy development and technology use I have experienced that empowers everyone who encounters it for the first time. Digital storytelling is about two things that most people enjoy—watching and creating movies and talking about themselves.

A recipe for success

There are two main parts to a digital story—content and form. The content can be broken into three main parts—the point of the story, the dramatic question and the emotional content. These are what drive a digital story and create the overall structure and feel and tailor it to a specific audience. The form is made up of four elements—the gift of the voice, the power of the soundtrack, the economy (being selective about script, images and the length) and the overall pacing of the story. Form is all about the technological choices made to enhance the script or content ideas. Digital storytellers around the world use this recipe for creating digital stories and it can be found in the text *Digital Storytelling Cookbook and Travelling Companion, version 4* (2003), by Joe Lambert—a bible for many of us.

As I have mentioned earlier, there is enormous scope for digital storytelling in our classrooms for both participants and for trainers. While most of the implementation to date has been in the creation of personal stories (such as stories of accomplishments, events in lives, recovery and discovery, history and family), there have been some innovative practitioners who have used the technology to create instructional films for their students to capture their industry in a new and inventive light, and look at ways to

develop training materials that allow for a more flexible ways of delivery and assessment.

The TAFE frontiers 'Digital Storytelling for VET' project

At the beginning of 2004, Carole McCulloch from TAFE frontiers developed a research and exploratory project called Digital Storytelling for VET. The overall focus was on the development of tools for teachers to show how digital storytelling could be used for a range of learners in the VET and ACE environments. The digital storytelling methodology was used to create a series of stories and supporting materials for immediate use in community learning centres, workplace settings and TAFE institutes as teaching, learning or assessment tools.

An action research and learning approach was used by a selected team of participants to create these strategies, and to prepare a set of case studies for their implementation by 2005.

The project team aimed to:
- explore the attributes of four DST software packages—Photo Story, Photo Jam, Movie Maker and Adobe Premiere
- host a series of digital storytelling workshops for participants
- produce a set of learning materials, including a selection of digital stories for use in a variety of educational settings
- undertake a marketing strategy to harvest, collate and publish the digital stories produced in the workshops
- prepare a website to house all materials, stories and findings for use by others who are seeking information and instruction about the digital storytelling methodology.

Team members included representatives from:
- AMES in Victoria
- Douglas Mawson Institute in South Australia
- Gecko Education Services in NSW
- Southern Westernport Learning Community in Victoria
- SkillsPlus Inc in Victoria
- Swinburne Institute of Technology (TAFE division) in Victoria
- TAFE frontiers in Victoria.

The project was focused primarily on:
- testing and documenting the use of digital storytelling methodologies in a range of diverse learning situations
- researching the potential implementations of the digital storytelling methodology as new practices for a range of practitioners

- implementing cross-sector collaborative processes and practical partnerships with the VET and ACE communities, commercial new media agents and the seafood industry
- using collaborative strategies in project-focused learning activities to promote innovative applications of digital storytelling methodologies
- actively involving the use of digital story tools to capture the learning journey of:
  - disadvantaged youth (16–24-year-olds) from ethnic and/or indigenous backgrounds
  - older learners in regional or rural learning centres
  - learners engaging with online or e-learning experiences for the first time
  - teachers creating and using innovative and flexible strategies.

The team's research methodologies identified a range of new practices currently being explored in re-engaging learners in the learning process. We gathered a selection of these projects to complement and collaborate within this project. The digital storytelling process, as advocated by the Digital Storytelling Association, was well researched by members of the project team.

Recent literature searches and project team interviews indicated a strong need for the furthering of the work of the pioneers in digital storytelling in Australia as suitable, relevant and culturally appropriate new practices in teaching, learning and assessment.

The team identified a limited advocacy for the digital storytelling methodologies, and as yet there are few qualified trainers in digital storytelling in Australia. Research also revealed that specific learning materials for the use of digital storytelling methodologies in flexible learning are not yet freely available or accessible to the VET practitioners, registered training organisations, schools or businesses in Australia.

Considerable research into Australian websites displaying 'personal stories' has uncovered some related and available solutions to the 'accessibility of digital stories' for education purposes. Synopses of uplifting and engaging stories produced by the SBS corporation in the 'If Only' series can be located at their website. A new feature at the SBS site called 'My Space is an Amazing Place' also revealed a plan for capturing the stories of individuals from all parts of Australia. A gallery of digital stories is also contained and displayed at the ACMI website.

Stories wanted

Web searches revealed very few Aboriginal role model stories online. Those found were mostly dreamtime stories

or articles about Aboriginal dreamtime stories. One site presented summaries of personal stories, but these were print-based resources. The Victorian Museum has an archive of 'Hidden Histories'— a collection of interviews of Aboriginal elders by children involved in the program. These are presented in text with some photos.

Recent research conducted by the Office of Training and Tertiary Education has identified the need for support strategies for VET teaching staff working with young people. The project outcomes and methodology aimed to promote the awareness of digital storytelling as an innovative use of flexible learning in non-traditional learning environments, as a response to such findings. The project team aimed to foster stronger collaboration between VET and industry, community centres, ACE communities in Victoria and the north coast of NSW, and between training organisations in Victoria, NSW and South Australia.

Towards the end of 2004, the team had undergone an extensive three-day digital storytelling workshop in Melbourne at ACMI and had communicated on a regular basis through eStudio. A selection of case studies has been produced as well as facilitator and developer guides for the digital storytelling process. Robyn Jay developed a comprehensive package on digital storytelling using Windows Movie Maker 2, which is being used in workshops run by Carole for TAFE frontiers. The project was presented at a handful of conferences and workshops during Flexible Learning Week activities in August 2004, at the ACAL Conference in Melbourne in September, and in a workshop and online at the Net*Working 2004 conference in November.

The project outcomes can now be found at the TAFE frontiers website *www.tafefrontiers.com.au*. Click on the Digital Storytelling link for an outline of the project's aims, outcomes, purpose, elements, methodology and resources. Other links connect to reports, examples of digital stories and workshop ideas.

Where to now?

I have been asked recently where I see digital storytelling heading in our industry and what the next step to be taken should be. In many ways I feel that digital storytelling has started to penetrate the many sectors of our industry, and I am hearing more and more stories of people either having implemented it or actively pursuing bringing it into their teaching and learning environment. The TAFE frontiers project has had the scope and drive to make the method-ology and technology accessible to people within the TAFE, RTO and ACE sectors. Instead of people asking 'What is digital storytelling?' the question seems to now be 'How can I use it in my organisation?' This does excite the growing number of digital storytelling reformists.

I have many ideas that I want to explore in relation to this methodology over the next twelve months. I am keen to research the self-editing process between oral storytelling and its application in the digital format. I'm interested also in looking at e-learning and flexible learning opportunities for digital storytelling, and how this can personalise distance learning more effectively. Another area is ePortfolios, which is generating interest from our sector and I know many of my colleagues are keen to explore its value-add ability for our participants and trainers alike. If anyone is interested in ePortfolio information, a good summary can be found at *www.elearnspace.org,* or you can find Dr Helen C. Earrett's 'Linking two dynamic processes to promote deep learning' mindmap at *http://electronic portfolios.org* that visually defines the ability of portfolios in an electronic format to layer information and create opportunities for learning through journeying.

TAFE frontiers has been running a series of one-day workshops in digital storytelling using Movie Maker 2, and these have allowed practitioners to create their own personal story while learning about the technology and methodology. Carole McCulloch has also started a network of digital storytelling practitioners. As TAFE frontiers ends its role in our sector in mid-2005, this network will allow those interested practitioners to have access to DST information, workshop details and an exciting range of DST enthusiasts. You can join this network at *http://www.groups.edna.edu.au/course/view.php?id=107*

I am finally starting to produce digital stories for me. It has taken a few years to find the opportunity to do so but I wish I had done this at the beginning of my exploration. I produced a story about my parents' and my migration from England to Australia by ship in the early 1970s. The creation of that story in digital format was the most emotional and challenging thing I have done in many years. Digital storytelling has the potential to unleash not only untold stories, but also creativity and a real sense of achievement and empowerment. It can be, and is, an exciting experience.

Louisa Ellum is a manager at SkillsPlus Inc in Frankston, Victoria. She joined the TAFE frontiers project as a mentor to other members and to encourage its place in literacy and training development in the VET system. Louisa's work background includes secondary teaching, university lecturing, writing, editing and research.

Writing wrong: conundrums of literacy and human rights

by Catherine Kell

We should stop talking about access to literacy being a human right, because 'we don't know how to do it and we don't know what it does or doesn't do'. Having said that, the author— a tireless exponent of the role of New Literacy Studies—proposes a three-pronged approach to policy and provision in literacy and adult basic education.

The UNESCO EFA (Education for All) Global Monitoring Report of 2002 contains two interesting paragraphs:

> The meaning of the word literacy has developed radically … Conceived now in the plural as 'literacies' and embedded in a range of life and livelihood situations, literacy differs according to purpose, context, use, script and institutional framework. But its *conceptual advancement* has not been matched by the priority accorded to it in policy. (p.17, my emphasis)

> The Dakar goal covers a kaleidoscopic area of learning, with close links to the goal on literacy and continuing education for adults. A comprehensive picture of what is happening worldwide is not yet possible, in part because there are *unresolved conceptual issues*. (p.18, my emphasis)

The edifice of the EFA campaign, the weightiness of its reports, the machinery of its advocacy and research, and the marshalling of its facts and figures belies what we can learn about literacy provision from the space between those two phrases—the positive assertion of 'conceptual advancement' and the tentative 'unresolved conceptual issues'. In this paper I aim to explore what lies in between those phrases in order to put forward some ideas about the role and future of literacy, and its relation to human rights. In this I hope to show the continuing importance of adult literacy work and the fact that it cannot be disregarded if the ideals of EFA are to have any reality. I will address literacy and adult basic education separately.

The idea of 'writing wrong' has been introduced purposefully. 'Wrongs' in the sense of the denial or absence of human rights are inscribed deeply and pervasively into the very structure and fabric of our world. Every time we engage in writing and reading we are exercising the rights and freedoms that we have cumulatively had access to during our lives, and the shadows in our inscriptions are the wrongs on which our rights have been built. Crying out from the words, figures and pages of the 2002 Global Monitoring Report is the evidence of searing inequality, built on worldwide divisions and injustices. But wrongs can be turned into rights, rights can be lost or gained, wrongs and rights are written into history and our understandings of these are rewritten over time. As Appadurai states:

> It has now become something of a truism that we are functioning in a world fundamentally characterised by objects in motion. The objects include ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques. This is a world of flows. It is also of course a world of structures, organisations and other stable social forms. But the apparent stabilities that we see, under close examination, are usually our devices for handling objects characterised by motion.

As we write and read words and texts that are recontextualised and recirculated across time and space, we rewrite and read anew our own ideas and those of others—one person's right is often another person's wrong.

Conceptual advances—uses and acquisition of literacy

In line with the first quote above the perspective taken here is strongly rooted in what has come to be called the New Literacy Studies[1] (NLS), which pioneered the conception of 'literacies'—the notion of literacy as variable according to context and the view of literacies as inextricably embedded in life situations. I will briefly outline some the key conceptual advances that have been made in this field with regard to literacy. Until recently literacy has been seen as the ability to read and write, to encode and decode print, and therefore the building block for doing other things. Literacy therefore stands in some linear relationship to 'other things', acting as an independent variable bringing about effects with its intrinsic power. The advances made within the NLS have enabled researchers and practitioners to see that, as Lankshear[2] puts it:

> literacy can only be meaningfully understood in relation to the social practices and purposes that are mediated by semiotic

texts, and where texts are produced, distributed, received, exchanged and negotiated as an integral part of pursuing the practices or purposes in question.

Further, the purpose of 'making people literate'[3] is not so that they can deal with texts. It is to enable them to take part in the practices and accomplish the purposes within which the texts are embedded. It is therefore less important to consider literacy in context (as many of the more progressive literacy pedagogies have been trying to do), it is more valuable to view it as context, like language it 'provides the architecture of social behaviour itself'[4].

I therefore take literacy to mean the whole range of practices that surround and give effect to written language. The acquisition and development of capacities in reading and writing develop and draw on a repertoire of resources within social roles (I draw from Lo Bianco and Freebody 1997; Luke, 1992 here) that enable people to:

- Crack the code, including what sounds are represented by what letters or groups of letters, what punctuation marks signify, what the conventional design and format of texts signify, what graphic symbols represent in different technological and social texts. The role here is that of code-breaker.
- Participate in the meanings of text, including understanding and composing meaningful texts, using selected forms of written language to understand and build meanings appropriate to their context. This can be understood as semantic competence and the role here is that of text-participant.
- Use texts and other forms of literacy functionally, including the different social functions of different types of texts and how these functions shape the way texts are structured and the forms of language used. This can be understood as pragmatic competence and the role is that of text user.
- Analyse texts critically, including how different types of texts are shaped by particular social interests and being able to ask questions about positioning, power and control of a text. This involves critical competence and the role involved is that of text analyst.

There are two key points here. Firstly, in social practice people will draw on some of these roles and not on others; factors influencing which roles they draw on are not necessarily related to their abilities to code-break or not. Secondly, development of capacities in these four roles is not staged and sequenced, especially amongst adults. I have written on adults who play the latter three roles convincingly without being able to play the former role[5].

Further insights gained from the research and theory of the NLS include the following:

1. Literacy as social practice

The common understanding of literacy influenced by school teaching practices and understandings is that literacy is an individualised capacity and a solitary activity. In practice, particularly amongst people with limited exposure to schooling, literacy is often a collective and shared event, with multiple social actors performing different social roles depending on their skills and location. Rather than the model of knowledge and skills as residing in individuals, the more contemporary metaphor of the distributive system is appropriate, where effective performance does not require the equal skilling of all its parts but the effective performance of the system as a whole. The sharing of literacy capacities across people with different experiences of schooling is the norm in social practice.

2. People without schooling can play a meaningful role in textually mediated social practice

A body of work has now focused on the concept of literacy mediation. My own research has shown how people without schooling can play an important role in their communities by drawing on the literacy skills of those around them and by reciprocating with the use of other valued skills. Important networks can build up around these delicate social processes and members of such networks can attain status and satisfaction. Usually success in these mediated processes depends on access to a wider set of discourses, resources and contacts, and literacy is not necessarily required for such access to occur. Such resources may lead to the acquisition of aspects of the four roles and competences described above, but the acquisition of literacy-related skills does not necessarily lead to access to the resources.

3. People have different orientations towards schooling and learning

In the Social Uses of Literacy project undertaken in South Africa[6], cultural and ideological orientations away from schooling were prominent, particularly amongst older men, while older women felt that their learning years had passed them by and expressed scepticism about the value of schooling. Younger people accepted modernist discourses around schooling, and would not resist it for cultural, historical and ideological reasons. However many did indicate that they would not attend classes if they were offered, perceiving an incompatibility between going back to school and pursuing strategies for survival in an era of structural
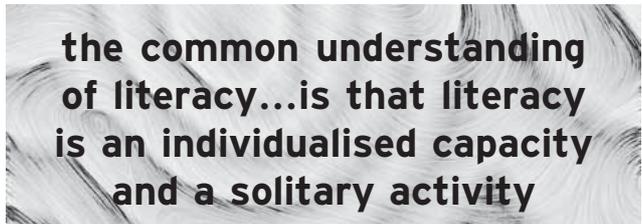
> the common understanding of literacy...is that literacy is an individualised capacity and a solitary activity

unemployment. The oft-cited 'barriers' to adult learning—such as transport problems, childcare arrangements and dangerous living conditions—did emerge in the data, but interestingly only amongst those who already had positive orientations towards schooling.

4. Literacy skills can (but not necessarily) confer a sense of empowerment, identity and social competence

Again, in the South African research, the data was convincing on the variable effects of literacy in relation to context. In studies with farm workers, men 'without literacy' were powerful and achieved economic benefit from their skills as well as a strong sense of identity. On the other hand, women 'with literacy' occupied less valued jobs and exercised less power and control both in the workplace and in their families. In some cases people achieved a strong sense of identity from attributes such as masculinity and leadership. Furthermore, my own research has shown that the arrival of the night school in an informal settlement actually made people self-conscious about what they saw as a lack of literacy and schooling that they had not necessarily perceived before.

5. Surveillance and control can be pursued through the medium of literacy

Literacy practices are often linked to surveillance, where people are forced to inscribe their actions or behaviours into standardised textual formats that carry sets of relations from outside the immediate context into the context of inscription. Research has shown that people either comply with this, resist it or ignore it. On the other hand people sometimes develop their own forms of text involving the inscription of their actions or behaviours into non-standard or very idiosyncratic formats. They do not necessarily see this as literacy, and are often required to hide these from public scrutiny.

6. Literacy skills can be acquired informally and tacitly

Research in the NLS approach has shown that people often apprentice themselves to others formally or informally to acquire skills needed in the four roles described above. Apprenticeship processes are context-specific and analogous to craft learning, often involving guided participation or legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice.

7. Grapho-numerical symbols, icons and images are becoming increasingly integrated with alphabetic/ideographic scripts

Alphabetic written language does not carry the same load of meaning that it has in the past as it has come to be integrated with other technologies, symbol systems and modes of representation. Even literacy in the narrowest sense of code-breaking needs to be a much broader undertaking in the contemporary period, and if taught as a set of conventions in

restricted scripts may run the risk of missing key communicative functions. Taking the Roman alphabet as an example, it is no longer appropriate to say that there are 26 letters for learners to learn, and the same may well be true for other scripts. The ubiquity of texting has led to the reduction in importance of vowels. Writing in the texting environment is no longer a matter of knowing the letters of the alphabet, but of understanding letters as bits of information in a spatial arrangement coordinated through numbers (for example, an 's' is conveyed with three clicks on the number 7).

Punctuation marks play an ever-increasing role in written communication, in their traditional role of demarcating meaning, but increasingly in the role of carrying effect and short-circuiting meaning-making. Smiley faces are now an integral part of online written language. Icons operate internationally, and the influence of the spatial logic of the screen is relacing the linear and temporal logic of the page. Such changes are hugely important and have led people like Kress (2003) to suggest that the linguistic mode of communication is finally in decline after being dominant for centuries, to be replaced by the visual.

Castells (2000) has claimed that the technological revolution has integrated the 'written, oral and audio-visual modalities of human communication into a single system for the first time in human history'. The implications of this for literacy education amongst adults are far-reaching, and it may be possible that traditionalist approaches may actually disadvantage adult learners who already have familiarity with some such modalities.

Unresolved conceptual issues—teaching of literacy

These are some of the conceptual advances that have been made in relation to understandings of the uses of literacy. Each of these understandings has implications for policy and provision of literacy amongst adults. In addition, there is a proliferation of schools of thought about the teaching of literacy, very few of which are able to take account of the above understandings. I will generalise some of these implications into four main points.

1 The first and over-riding implication is the knowledge that literacy does not come by itself. It always carries extrinsic meanings and is vested in a range of discourses and practices surrounding those extrinsic meanings. Even when it is at its most stripped of those extrinsic meanings, what is evident is that it then usually carries meanings that are specific to the educational context or the discourses and practices of schooling. I will return to this point below.
2 Secondly, the social nature of literacy practices, their embedding in broader social purposes, and the role played by apprenticeship and mediation in such practices and

purposes have the effect of 'questioning the long-standing and unexamined homology between schooling practices and literacy learning'. The 'technology' of the school as it currently stands as 'institution' cannot provide for adults to be apprenticed into and participate in textually mediated purposeful processes (other than, obviously, those of schooling itself —again, I will return to that).

3 Thirdly, adults without schooling are moving targets when it comes to policy development and provision. Orientations to and take-up of education shift dramatically across one's lifespan, influenced by gender, social purposes, access to technology-mediated communication and so on. To assume that the opportunities for learning must be provided simply for their intrinsic value may mean that the targets are not there, or simply that they are missed. This can lead to wasteful and inappropriate forms of provision.

4 Finally, rapid changes 'within the code' are occurring, perhaps at a faster rate than ever before in history. Literacy theory and practice has traditionally tended to be driven by 'Great Divide' approaches that portray the movement from illiteracy to literacy in evolutionary terms. Quite apart from the errors in theory underlying this approach, in practice the timescales are simply wrong! As 'we' try to help people claw their way to literacy, literacy is simply running away from them at a pace. The implication of this is that very creative ways are needed, not for an evolutionary leap forward but for leapfrogging over the outdated conceptions and practices that still dominate in the field.

These are precisely the unresolved conceptual issues that exist, despite the advances that have been made. So, even if there is total agreement about the need to provide literacy and the right to education, there are still no clear answers to the question of how to provide it in effective and efficient ways. This problem is exacerbated when posed against the growing divisions and injustices in the world.

New orders—world, work, words

The work of Castells[7] has recently provided a broad canvas for understanding the scope and impact of contemporary global change and I will draw closely from his work (2000) in what follows. He claims that the new global economic situation is characterised by three features. Firstly, it is informational, in the sense that the capacity of generating knowledge and processing information determines the productivity and competitiveness of many kinds of economic units. Secondly, it is global, in the sense that its core strategic activities have the capacity to work as a unit on a planetary scale in real time or chosen time. Castells claims that globalisation proceeds in a selective way, 'by linking up all that has value according to dominant interests anywhere in the planet and discarding anything (people, firms, territories, resources) which has no value or becomes devalued in a variable geometry of creative destruction and destructive

creation of value.' Thirdly, it is networked. The network provides the new form of economic organisation which is organised on a project basis, whereby networks connect, switching directions to maximise productivity and returns.

Labour is divided into what Castells calls self-programmable labour (which is equipped with the ability to retrain itself and adapt to new tasks processes and sources of information) and generic labour (which is exchangeable and disposable, and can be switched on and off according to location in the network). In the cultural realm these changes are reflected in a similar pattern of networking, flexibility and ephemeral symbolic communication. Cultural expressions of all kinds are increasingly enclosed in or shaped by the electronic hypertext.

These changes need to be viewed against growing polarisation. Without active policies of intervention and regulation, by the year 2020 'the top fifth of American earners will account for more than 60 per cent of all the income earned by Americans, the bottom fifth for 2 per cent' (Reich, 1992). Reich adds:

> to improve the economic position of the bottom four-fifths will require that the fortunate fifth share its wealth and invest in the wealth-creating capacities of other Americans. Yet as the top becomes ever more tightly linked to the global economy, it has less stake in the performance and potential of its less fortunate compatriots.

Coming from the ex-Secretary for Labour to President Clinton and written in 1992, these are strong words indeed, ever stronger if one extrapolates for the global situation. And even stronger if one takes into account the new world order emerging in the aftermath of September 11. Wrongs and rights take on a different light when seen against this backdrop.

The term the 'new work order'[8] derived from close analyses of what have been called 'fast capitalist texts' and qualitative analyses of workplaces complements Castells' and Reich's picture. The new work order is characterised by forms of production which are oriented to niche markets through segmented retailing strategies and total quality management. The projects making up these forms of production are undertaken by teams working in flattened hierarchies, where the management of information and symbolic communication are highly valued, and where the generic labour can be shunted in and out to suit the needs of projects. Reich calls the new breakdown of labour the symbolic analysts versus the routine production workers.

Lankshear[9] draws attention to the possibility that the emerging divisions of the network society and the new work order may be reflected in and entrench a new word order. By this he means a highly stratified population in terms of literacy.

In order to accomplish symbolic analytic work, high levels of discursive skills combined with symbolic manipulation are needed. This is usually taught as 'elite literacies' through high levels of formal education.

A word order in a work order in a world order, the imperative of writing and rights may be more linked than even Freire imagined.

Implications for literacy provision

What does this mean for literacy, adult basic education and initiatives like EFA? On the human rights issue, it must be taken for granted that provision is a right. But rights do not exist in a vacuum and there are no clear universals. Adult learners might have the right to access, but do they have the right to success in terms of learning literacy? Of course we cannot say that, but in the absence of clear guidelines for effective provision the right to access cannot mean very much. It might simply be the case for keeping second rate teachers in work, or acting as a sop to distract attention away from the inequalities discussed above, or perhaps for fuelling the growing ranks of aid and development advocate and bureaucrats who fly around the world.

Brian Street's edited collection called *Literacy and Development* (2001) contains two very interesting case studies which together perhaps tell a more positive story about real people, writing and rights. In the first chapter, Dyer and Archana, working with Rabari pastoralists in India, experiment with what may seem, in the new literacy studies perspective, to be an appropriate type of literacy intervention based on an ethnographic analysis—peripatetic provision, where increased exposure to and engagement with literacy was linked closely with the cycles and rhythms of migration and animal husbandry. However this was not satisfying to the nomads, who were undergoing 'shattering' changes and threats to their nomadic existence as a result of surrounding programs of industrialisation and modernisation. The authors address candidly the fact that their intervention was not successful, and that deeper scrutiny of the data and of development theory showed that what the nomads desired and needed was access to economic, cultural and symbolic capital that they saw as being provided by an ideology of literacy secured and given currency by the institution of schooling.

The authors know that this is much easier said than done, and the chapter leaves us presented with this conundrum.
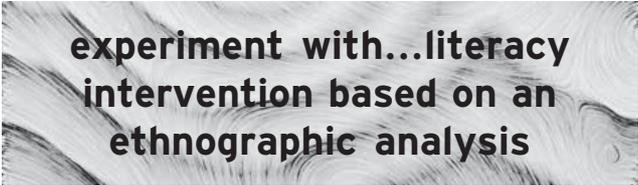
> ## experiment with...literacy intervention based on an ethnographic analysis

From our perspective the desire for access can seem conservative, even hopeless, but in a context where transformation seems a remote and visionary ideal, the Rabari are trying to gain a foothold in an ever-encroaching modernising world.

On the other hand, Aikman's chapter about the struggles of the Harakmbut peoples in Peruvian Amazonia weaves together very complex theoretical themes about development, in an altogether more hopeful scenario. Aikman shows that the Harakmbut peoples can draw on an indigenous self-development discourse in the context of parallel and sometimes opposing, sometimes complementary, development discourses. Aikman brings to the surface a productive pluralising of literacies, languages and most importantly, developments. Within this the Harakmbut participate in implementing a range of self-development projects that provide spaces and possibilities within which their needs and wishes may be exercised, if not always met.

The more successful project was the one in which literacy was not prioritised and certainly not pedagogised, but it enabled the Harakmbut to acquire a facility with literacy by using it in a meaningful context. Indigenous mediators played an important role in this. The history of collective struggles against conquest, the missionaries and the colonisers, intertwined with the rise of the self-development discourse, had positioned the Harakmbut differently from the Rabaris in India, and perhaps because they were already able to mobilise more resources they did not feel the need to recapitulate the schooling they had not had access to. In the context where 'development is a negotiated, socially constructed and never-ending interaction between many social actors' it may be more appropriate and more hopeful to also consider transformation as too much of a grand narrative, with lesser, multiple transformations providing smaller beacons on branching paths.

The reason why these two accounts were so gripping was, I think, because they both do theoretically what Rogers[10] has been telling the literacy field to do practically for years. That is, to put literacy secondary to 'something else'. The 'something else' comes first, whether it is development, income-generation or building. If this is done, coherence is gained with the conceptual advances addressed above—it's not reading and writing in themselves that count; it's the meanings that are carried in the flow of text as it creates context that count. In both of the above examples the authors really did prioritise development above literacy, and they were thereby able to cast very different lights on literacy itself. The Rabari, I believe, need to be able to enter a system of adult basic education that will offer them currency, even if it takes years. On the other hand the Harakmbut already have the discursive and social resources to enable them to search out the integrated, literacy-second approach that will suit their needs.

Four important conclusions emerge from all of the above.

1 Firstly, literacy provision needs to be separated conceptually from the provision of adult basic education, and different approaches and methods need to be developed. I will suggest some of these below. Systemic links need to be in place for the two types of learning and provision to articulate if desired.

2 Secondly, we should stop writing and speaking about access to literacy as a human right and about the consequences of literacy—we don't know how to do it and we don't know what it does or doesn't do. Until we do know let's not cheapen our work by making claims for it that can't be sustained. I will make some further suggestions about this below.

3 Thirdly, access to an adult basic education system can perhaps be seen as a human right, but this is not necessarily the best vehicle for providing literacy, especially in the senses described above.

4 Fourthly, inputs of financial aid should not be measured against outcomes defined as per capita achievement of literacy. No matter how complex and sophisticated our assessment vehicles may become, per capita achievement will always be an imperfect and incoherent measure of improvement in addressing inequities in literacy rates and provision.

I have argued for a three-pronged approach to policy and provision in literacy and adult basic education[11]. I believe that this approach has validity in a wider range of contexts and is relevant to the arguments being made in *Convergence*[12].

The first strategy involves diversifying strategies for informal promotion and for supporting, scaffolding and sustaining literacy learning within existing contexts of use in the informal economy, development projects and civil society. This would involve de-linking literacy promotion from the formal system, and setting up explorations into ways in which apprenticeship and mediation processes could be lodged within local grassroots structures or organisational processes. The staff of structures like libraries, advice offices and resource centres, and workplace resource centres could both mediate literacy demands and facilitate diverse strategies for promoting literacy. Organisational processes like development activities; for example, income-generation, building, health care and early childhood development—articulation could occur between these opportunities and the formal system if necessary. Development workers, project field staff and community organisers can add an awareness of the literacy dimension to their work, mediating, translating (in the widest sense of discursive translation as well as narrower code or mode translation) and scaffolding literacy acquisition in contexts of use and purpose, as was indicated by the example of the Harakmbut people above.

The second strategy involves strengthening the formal system. This would involve growing the system slowly, resourcing it well, and producing strong administrators, researchers and above all, well-trained teachers, while at the same time recognising that it would not provide quick fixes for the literacy problem, and that there are no short-term gains in this. Strong systems can act as anchors for innovation and research into ways of dealing better with the first strategy above, as well as for more formal accredited types of provision and the articulation between them. Furthermore, there is no alternative to higher education in order for literacy teachers to achieve the kinds of goals necessary if success in adult literacy work is to be claimed.

Finally, literacy is like holding up a mirror to ourselves. Sometimes those of us who have had our rights guaranteed and our literacies developed to high-level symbolic analysis, can only see it darkly. If we illuminate it clearly we will need to ask ourselves about whether in our own work we are writing rights or wrongs, and hopefully we will avoid what can only be seen as downright untruth or staggering disingenuity, like 'literacy is the key to health, wealth and happiness'.

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Professional practice: a personal patchwork

by Peter Waterhouse

In reading this engaging account of a life in literacy and education, we are reminded of the need to continually challenge our attitudes and question our assumptions. This is an abridged version of the keynote address delivered at the VALBEC Portraits and Visions conference held in Melbourne on May 20, 2005.

Thank you to for the invitation. I am very pleased to be here. For me there is a sense of turning full circle, twenty six years ago, when I first became involved with a small group trying to establish the Victorian Adult Literacy Council, I could not have anticipated delivering the keynote at the annual conference.

My partner, wife and soul mate, Maree, is an active member of a patchwork and quilting group. Individually, and collaboratively she creates amazing works of art by cutting fabric into pieces and then stitching the pieces back together again. Most of these quilts are given away, to family and friends. Some go onto beds, others finish up hanging on walls, some are folded up in cupboards, some have been sent to places of trauma, pain and suffering around Australia and overseas. Other quilts—small ones—are made specifically to be donated to hospitals where they are given to parents who wrap within them, their tiny infants that have been still-born, or have died shortly after birth. Our friend Mike has a primary-school-age daughter who has had one of Maree's quilts since she was tiny. Mike says that the quilts are 'sort of like batteries, they store up love and then they give it out'.

This talk is dedicated to Maree and constructed in the spirit of her patchwork quilts. My aim is to share with you some of my reading, writing and research—my literacies. I'm not sure that I can put it together as well as Maree makes her quilts, my stitching won't be as good. And I'm not a hundred per cent confident that the design is going to work (but sometimes the quilts are like that too). Like the quilts, my speech has lots of different pieces, with different patterns and colours and multiple layers. Some pieces are old and worn, others are new. I'd like to include more of some pieces—simply because I love them, but there is never enough room—and they might not fit the design. There may be some pieces you will like, others you'll wish I'd left out. Chances are you wouldn't have done it this way—but then it's my construction, not yours…and I offer it to you now. Hopefully it will give you some warmth and food for thought.

Pale young professional

It will come as no surprise (for some) to see there are poems in my patchwork. We might think of this piece as a kind of mini-portrait, a picture in words. See if you can visualise the 'teacher's friend' and the 'pale young professional from the university'.

Teacher's Friend
It was years ago now,
A colleague, in her kitchen,
introduced a neighbour.
A massive agrarian beast of a man;
boney and weather-beaten,
with copious hairs sprouting
from his nose and ears.

He could mend a fence,
or pull a calf,
or a tooth,
with equal practicality.

He lumbered forward,
towering over the pale young professional
from the university.
He extended a huge leathery hand,
'So you'd be another bloody teacher then wouldn' ya?'

'Well,' I replied, smiling bravely,
'You won't hold that against me will you?'

'That depends entirely,' he replied,
as he squeezed my hand with his steely gaze
'on what you're teachin' 'em son'.

As a pale young professional it had never occurred to me that teachers might be part of the problem. I knew teaching was an honourable profession; teachers were to be admired, respected, and supported. I knew my parents were proud of me for becoming a teacher—I was even proud of myself. No one else from my family had been to university; higher education was not so readily available to the working class. But education and teachers were valued in our family.

It had not really occurred to me that approval for a teacher would be conditional…'that depends entirely', the big man replied, 'on what you're teachin' 'em son'.

Looking back now, I have a greater sense of the wisdom of that man; a greater appreciation of how what I already know may be part of the problem—rather than part of the solution. What I know determines the questions I ask. What I know fixes the frame through which I view an issue or a problem.

Now I find myself questioning what I 'know'. How do I know what I know? How do I know it's true? And what does that mean anyway?

I 'know' literacy is important and 'good'— but what does that mean? How is it important? Why is it important? Why is it 'good'? Who is it good for?

Easy unconscious learning

My PhD research was an exploration of experiential learning. Towards the end of the process I found myself talking (and writing) about 'easy unconscious learning' and 'difficult, conscious unlearning'.

The 'easy unconscious learning' was the learning that led me to being confronted by the Teacher's Friend. The Friend failed to offer the 'pale young professional' the praise, respect and admiration which the young man felt was due. The Friend's conditional regard failed to meet the young man's expectation (it's easier to talk about what an idiot I was in the third person). It jolted sensibilities and challenged assumptions.

It was easy to learn about the status and inherent goodness of teachers. One didn't need a competency-based program or an online virtual reality to learn that. By the time the 'pale young professional' left university he had learnt a great deal that was not taught there. We can all remember being taught, but not always *what* was taught. We can also identify profound learning for which there was no teacher at all.

At times the processes of recognition, association and identification that are part of experiential learning may be quite unconscious. As Salmon[1] puts it, if the embedded values and beliefs do not run counter to one's central assumptions and understandings then learning may hardly be noticed by the learner. Hence existing prejudices and misunderstandings may be consolidated and extended.

However there is a conundrum. The more we come to know, the more what we know determines how and what (else) we may come to know. McKay[2] uses the metaphor of the cage. We all live in our own cages and we view and communicate with the world through the bars. But we are not always conscious of the cages, their bars, or how we are shaped by our experiences and culture.

Difficult, conscious unlearning

Then, if we are lucky, we have experiences to challenge our complacency. They jolt our assumptions, shake the foundations of our beliefs—they provide what Theobald[3] calls 'mindquakes'. Freire wrote about 'conscientization'[4]—a kind of critical awakening. Mezirow wrote about 'transformative learning'[5]. When we experience such learning we may find that many things that we have taken for granted no

longer seem 'safe'. We learn that what we have learned is not altogether helpful (in classrooms and in research I heard students say they had 'never learned nuthing at school'. The problem was less about what they did not learn at school, but more about what they did learn).

As adult educators we like to promote the idea that learning is joyous by nature. We think of learning as a developmental process building confidence and self-esteem. Yet some of our most profound learnings are not joyous and sometimes require 'unlearning'. This can be difficult, requiring a conscious process of working through assumptions and beliefs. My study showed me how these processes are subtle, complex and multilayered. They are ambiguous and contradictory, sometimes confusing and painful, tied up with questions of selfhood, identity, belief and values. The processes of identification and ownership that are fundamental to transformative learning may require a painful unmaking of self.

We rarely question our basic assumptions any more than we question the ground we walk on. This reminds me, of two things. First, I want to acknowledge here the Indigenous people of this part of the world. It is my understanding that we stand upon the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri and Boonwurung people who lived and worked on these lands for many generations prior to colonisation. Unlearning the myth of terra nullius is one of the most important learning tasks we face as a nation. We will not be at peace with ourselves until we make peace with Indigenous Australians.

Secondly, when I say that 'we don't question the ground we walk on' I am reminded of part of Maree and my experiences as Australian Volunteers Abroad. In the mid-1980s we lived in an old house in Western Samoa. We had never lived in the tropics before, and the house was full of holes, cracks, crevices, and cavities, with all manner of creeping, crawling creatures. The house had been empty for quite some and despite our best attempts we could not evict all of its 'occupants'. The worst were large, hairy spiders, rodents of about the same size, monstrous flying cockroaches and centipedes. The centipedes grew to 15–20 centimetres in length were poisonous and could inflict multiple, painful stings. They liked to curl up in shoes, pillowslips, and clothes left on the floor. It was several years after our return before I could wake in the dark and walk to bathroom without turning on the light (I still check). I learned not to trust the ground I walked on.

Powerful learning can be very uncomfortable; compared to the learning some of our adult learners are undertaking, avoiding tropical centipedes in the dark is a walk in the park. Remaking self and identity is not so easy, even when it is highly desired, because it involves challenging and questioning things which we have always taken for granted; things we know, things which make us who we are.

Here's another piece for the patchwork, another portrait. As my research journey evolved so too did my career. By the time I came to the end of my study I had become a company director and co-manager of our own business. A new 'character' is emerging from the patches sewn together—the manager 'self'. There are still some wild threads.

It's hard for me to adopt the manager-self; it feels unsteady, unsafe. If the manager-self is to succeed he must take further risks, he must 'let go'. Parts of what must 'go' are traditional constructs about management laced with notions of power, control and direction. Such constructs are not helpful for the work I need to do. I need to build new, more appropriate constructs of manager and management. I must also let go of the dangerous ideas that I 'can't be an excellent manager', that I'm not 'naturally good with numbers' and 'can't do budgets an' stuff like that'. I need to unlearn the idea that there are others more suited. I could as Newman says 'define the enemy'[6] but I still have to deal with it.

Contradicting the stereotype

So, let me now move to a different series of portraits, some new pieces for the literacy patchwork. Recently, Crina Virgona and I worked on an adult literacy research project, funded by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). In this study we were privileged to hear the life stories of ten individuals from English-speaking backgrounds who have significant difficulties with literacy. What is particularly interesting about these individuals is that they are 'contradicting the stereotype'[7]. The study questioned what we understood of literacy. Such questioning is not usually popular. Saul (1997) reminds us that, 'Socrates was executed…for stubbornly doubting the absolute truths of others' [8].

Everyone 'knows' that literacy is absolutely necessary to function effectively in the world these days. It is necessary in home and community life, in work, in commerce—even in virtual reality we need to be literate. We 'know' that if individuals are unable to develop the requisite literacy skills they are likely to be unemployed and unemployable.

Despite misgivings about Socrates' fate, we set out to explore the 'positively deviant'[9] strategies and behaviour of these individuals who agreed to share their life stories with us. It was not so difficult to find 'literacy-challenged' individuals who were successful. They had found ways to get by, to achieve their goals, to compensate for being print-disabled. They were able to sustain employment, to be effective parents, to run businesses and employ other people, to generate wealth and in some cases to attain academic success.

We wrestled with how to name the stance the participants in the study took in relation to literacy. Despite their difficulty with literacy, virtually all used written texts, at least to some extent. It was as if they held literacy away from their inner selves; yet demonstrated some literacy-like behaviours and practices. Like the parallel lines on a railway track, these twin threads of personal practice never seemed to meet. For the moment, we are proposing the term 'para-literacy' which also has interesting metaphorical and etymological connections. Think, for instance, of the defensive positioning of a parapet (on a castle wall), or the work of a para-professional in relation to professional practice.

The study also showed that these individuals required and demonstrated considerable determination, resilience and creativity to overcome the print-based obstacles put in place by others, but it is not an easy path. The study showed that the strategies adopted sometimes involve a measure of deception, withdrawal and a degree of dependency. Inefficient, indirect and cumbersome strategies can still help people reach their goals. Their accounts suggest that their para-literacy strategies and skills are not legitimated by the world at large, or by educational institutions. Yet these people are demonstrably successful. They have made and are walking these paths, surely their stories have lessons for us.

Two-dimensional work

I want to move to another portrait, a different vision for the future, based on another NCVER adult literacy project[10] in which Crina and I examined communication practices through case studies in aged care and call centre services.

We wanted to investigate the relationship between literacy and the changing world of work which values flexible employment, self-managed careers and individually negotiated contracts[11]. I was talking to a colleague recently who runs a labour hire and job placement business. He has a '40 Minute Contract' with a major manufacturing client. This means that the client can call him, day or night, and he guarantees to have workers at the factory within 40 minutes. The only way you can gain a job at that factory is to first be in his labour pool. He calls his people every morning to tell them if, when and where they will be working. In this context we wondered how those with limited literacy are getting on.

The workplaces visited were highly proceduralised and textualised with are carefully described, documented, systematised, replicated and audited work practices. Our study revealed that the opportunities for genuine critical literacy to be developed and exercised by contingent workers in aged care and call centres are extremely limited. Their mandatory work practices—which include literacy practices—leave little space for questioning the status quo. People work within a closely guarded culture of compliance.

The title 'Two-dimensional work', reflected one of the key themes emerging from our analysis. Lankshear[12] and Green[13]

discuss the complex and multidimensional nature of literacy—to be fully literate is to be critically literate: critical literacy is the crucial third dimension.

Workers exercise complete three-dimensional literacy when they understand the values that drive the systems in which they operate. This implies an understanding of the power and authority structures and the principles of centralisation. Without such understandings workers are unable to influence the nature or direction of literacy practices. The practices remain circumscribed, shaped for 'functional empowerment' and the needs of the systems themselves.

Gowen's[14] US research illustrates this point. The literacy that the managers wanted for their entry-level employees was one that would ensure conformity, obedience, a higher degree of formality and tighter work routines to enhance productivity and efficiency. Her research shows that management held 'a whole set of beliefs about literacy's power to transform individuals into workers who are silent, obedient, and easily controlled'.

In our view, critically literate employees will recognise the role of proceduralisation in managing workplace productivity, and recognise their own role in contributing to it. In cooperating with proceduralisation and standardisation they can:
  • provide information to sustain their operations
  • make informed judgements in keeping with the status quo
  • suggest ways to improve monitoring processes or to increase productivity by refining the system or conversely,
  • they may question centralised authority and act strategically to resist it.

Three-dimensional literacy is not always appreciated by employers or reflected in genuine workplace empowerment or job security. 'Fast capitalists' don't:

> want to promote critical reflection in the sense of questioning systems as wholes and in their political relations to other systems. On the contrary, they are keen to pre-empt this[15]

This leads us to further questions. What kind of literacy do we want for our workers, or our vocational learners? Will two-dimensional literacy provide us with clever, creative, innovative workers, capable of solving problems and adapting to change? And how does this critical third dimension relate to our ordinary everyday lives? How does it relate to what we know—and how we know what we know?

The American dream
Maree and I recently enjoyed a short holiday and, as usual, we had several different things to read. I was struck by the piece in Women's Weekly on the United States of America's Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. The magazine presents a glowing portrait of a black American woman. She is the American dream writ large. A descendent of slaves, Condoleezza Rice has risen to be 'the face of America to the world' and perhaps the most powerful woman on earth…President Bush's closest advisor'.[16]

The feature presents the story of a '50-year-old black woman, (a) great grand-daughter of slaves' who has become 'the ultimate power broker in Washington', with mild surprise that despite its history-making overtones her appointment as Secretary of State 'has not been universally lauded in America,' Her strength of character is admired, several sources providing testimony to Rice's strengths, including her capacity to be 'charming and affable but…tough as nails when the situation required' and her ability to brush off criticism.

On the same holiday I read a remarkable and disturbing book by John Pilger, a multi-award winning investigative journalist. In *The New Rulers of the World*[17] I read of the extent and depth of the human tragedy in Iraq. He documents, with multiple cases and personal testimony, the suffering not only during the war, but afterwards. He describes the impact of the economic sanctions preventing vital medical supplies and equipment from reaching Iraq.

The cost in lives (he says) is staggering. A study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), found that between 1991 and 1998 there were 500,000 deaths above the anticipated rate among Iraqi children under five years of age. This is, on average, 5200 preventable deaths per month. Against this background Pilger recounts how, in 1996, Madeline Albright, then Ambassador to the United Nations was asked,

> we have heard that half a million children have died…is the price worth it? Albright replied, 'I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it'.[18]

As I read Pilger's account and Albright's comment on the price of the war, I was led to deeper reflection upon the portrait of Condoleezza Rice. I'm sure the Women's Weekly publishes the truth but I am equally confident that John Pilger speaks the truth. Yet these two 'truths' present quite different portraits of the United States government and the people within it. Which portraits am I to believe? How can it be that my literacy presents me with such confusions and dilemmas? In my bag of scraps there are pieces here on this theme.

Handy argues that complex, multiple understandings are essential for coping with the constant paradoxes of our times. He suggests that 'the acceptance of paradox as a feature of life is the first step towards living with it and managing it'.[19]

Handy says he 'no longer believe(s) in the Theory of Everything, or in the possibility of perfection'. Paradox, he suggests, is 'inevitable, endemic and perpetual'. He's not alone in this reading of the world, although others tend to name the complexity differently. Australian radio broadcaster Phillip Adams articulates the dilemma this way:

> One of the problems as I get older…is the longer I live, the more complicated, multilayered issues are, and the more difficulty you have pulling out a simple synthesis. And I find almost every view I hear, to some degree, plausible. You know I find almost every argument to some degree persuasive and seductive. Now that doesn't mean I'm an imbecile, it simply means that I think that's how complicated reality is. And I think you've got to layer paradigms one on top of the other before you've got any hope of really seeing how things really are…it's important I think, to admit to complexity, to admit to difficulties, to admit to shades of grey.[20]

It's yet another quite coarse and prickly fabric, the label is hard to decipher, I think it's called 'post-modernist discourse analysis'—or something like that. Perhaps this is also part of my patchwork design. Adopting such a postmodernist worldview all things are called into question. 'Facts' are no longer facts but a particular construction of reality that works to serve the interests of a particular group or groups. Knowledge becomes 'a form of discursive production', culture is 'a terrain of contestation'[21]. The postmodern stance encourages scepticism. Still, I ask myself, how does my literacy help me with all of this? What does it mean to be literate? What does literacy mean?

I suspect Condoleezza Rice could tell me, quite unequivocally, what literacy means and I suspect Phillip Adams would be tentative. A fixed answer on this question reflects a particular position, a point a view, a particular set of values. The definitive answer is determined by the definitive frame of reference. The grand 'what is literacy?' question, is an impossible question. It is impossible unless we reframe it; what does literacy mean to whom? What does literacy mean in this context, at this time? Or we might usefully ask, what does literacy mean to me? Margaret Meek insists upon the value of autobiographical and self-reflective processes to explore our own literacies. She writes:

> As I began to clear a path through the maze of literacy studies I was struck by the apparent indifference to their own literate history on the part of many scholars and researchers, most of whom wrote wisely and well. Unlike poets and novelists who confront their struggles with words as part of their resource material, academics who write about literacy are notoriously reticent about how they learned to read and write…Come then. What is it to be literate? We have to draw our own maps, trace our own histories, acknowledge our own debts

and consider ways not taken. Our literacy autobiographies reveal riches and gaps…[22]

In my literacy bag of scraps and patches there are more pieces here. Much of my research has been like this, trying to see the invisible bars of my own cage. There is not the scope here to discuss critically reflective autobiographical methods and 'alternative' research texts. However I now know that I am not alone. Researchers Goodson and Walker note, in their book titled *Biography, Identity and Schooling*:

> …what we have written is deeply autobiographical…This may seem self indulgent, but we have come to realize that with regard to our research, the value of our lives as lived is an integral part of the way we view our work [23].

This is very much what I was attempting to do through my research journey.

(Personal) conceptions of literacy

Through study of this type I came to better appreciate the multiple literacies rippling through my personal and professional, private and public lives. Through the case studies I identified some of my multiple metaphors and uses of literacy. To name a just few, I noted literacy as:

- *glue*, a means of holding experiences together to enable patterns and meaning to be constructed
- *flash freeze* or 'snapshot', a means to preserve experiences for later analysis and reflection
- *catharsis*, a means of expressing (and sometimes venting) thoughts and feelings which might otherwise get in the way of effective (useful) construction of meaning and action—a way of both sorting and taking out the (mental) garbage
- *reflection*, a way of thinking, writing as a means of discovering and constructing meanings
- *food or fuel*, for the mind (the 'diet' varies according to time, context and circumstances)
- *recreation*, in the simple sense of taking 'time out', but also in the more literal sense, re-creation of self, re-building, re-vitalising personal and professional identities
- *security*, a means to seek confirmation and reassurance
- *a lifeline*, a way to hold onto and sustain connections, links and associations which are personally meaningful and important
- *demonstration*, a way to show and tell
- *credibility* and status.[24]

Through the study I came to see how important literacy is to generate my own meanings and to make sense of the world. It is a way of bringing some kind of art and order out of the chaos of emotions and ideas…mindquakes can be pretty bloody frightening. I also came to appreciate the extent to which literacy is tied up with issues of identity, identification and

ownership. Conceiving oneself as reader and writer is important. Literacy is socially and culturally shaped and yet it must be personally constructed. For literacy to be empowering for individuals and groups of people, they must claim ownership of it and make it their own. Unless learners conceive of themselves as persons who may use literacy in their own ways for their own purposes, they will not be able to do so despite explicit instruction and despite their exposure to the discourses or the genres required. Skills of self-perception and recognition emerged as critically important. I saw how I needed to recognise and identify myself as a reader and a writer (and as a researcher), not only as a consumer but also as a creator of different sorts of texts. So becoming 'literate' is not simply a matter of skills acquisition, it is a matter of identity.

We come again to the theme of portraits and visions. How do we know and see ourselves as literate individuals? How do we see ourselves as literacy teachers, tutors, practitioners, researchers? Or as managers, coordinators or policy makers? Do we really know our selves and our literacies? Argyris and Schon noted nearly 30 years ago that there is often a substantial gap between what practitioners say they do and their actual practice. The 'espoused theory' does not match what happens in practice. Argyris wrote:

> It is important to emphasise that we are reporting more than that people do not behave congruently with what they espouse. We are reporting that people are not aware of the theories-in-use that inform their behaviour.[25]

So as Meek and others have advocated, it is well to think carefully about our own engagements and practices with literacy. Which literacies do we truly 'own' and embrace, which are we ambivalent about, which do we avoid? Where do we opt for our own 'para-literacy' strategies?

Such questions are important because our demonstrations, passive and unconscious, can be much more powerful than those deliberate and contrived. For literacy 'to matter' to our learners it must be both embodied and impassioned. It must have life breathed into it, it must be inspired. This suggests literacy as something much more than neutral content to be delivered. It suggests that teachers can really only share literacies to the extent that they own them. We teach best that which we live.

And what self-portraits and visions do our learners carry? Are their constructions of self and literacy compatible, complementary? Does becoming literate mean becoming somebody else? I've heard it said that everyone has at least one book in them. Ask yourself, would you be the same if you wrote and published your latent novel? But of course it need not be writing a novel, or a thesis that makes all the difference. It might be a letter, a shopping list, a funding application or an email address that changes a life, refocuses a vision, and reframes a portrait. Indeed the most significant lessons and insights might be there in front of us all the time.

Years ago an artist, who was a painter, told me that the difficulty in his work was not the painting, but the seeing. Our problem may be not that the learner, or the learning, is out of sight. The problem may be that we simply don't recognise the opportunities; we don't 'see' the way we could see. Sometimes we just don't notice…or perhaps, more frightening, we choose not to notice. But what we need to see may be as close as the morning paper on the kitchen bench.

Morning Paper: On Saving Face…
The newspaper photographs show
his smiling face
as The President
cheerfully tries on a new peaked cap,
for 'Operation Desert Storm'.
(It's just like the one I wear for painting
and shovelling compost.)

The President says the war is going well.
It is a just war, for peace and freedom.
The Minister agrees.
No compromise. No backdown.
The commentators point out
he is such a powerful and important man
he can not afford to lose his face.

Cloaked by the masses
I cower in my anonymity saying nothing.
I don't understand it. Besides,
it's way over there after all.
It's not my war.

Yet in the same paper
the eyewitness says
she saw an old man covered in blood
and a young boy
with part of his face missing,
blown away in the desert storm.

A young boy loses his face
so that old men may save theirs;
in this just and honourable war.

My gut churns and I am haunted
by the thought
that I am one of the faceless men
who blew his face away.

Closure

So my patchwork is almost done. I have a few more little pieces here to stich into the last row. One of these is relatively new; 'Morning Paper' goes back to the first President Bush.

But although it may be a little worn I couldn't leave it out because it too provides a portrait, or perhaps a series of portraits—there is the President, the Minister, an old man, a young boy, and an artist, a faceless man, a writer, a teacher…

Every time I read this piece in public I feel frightfully alone in the midst of the many thousands of faceless others. I feel simultaneously responsible and irresponsible. As a writer and an educator I am forced to face myself here—what do I stand for? What is my purpose? What use is my work? What value my literacy? I do not feel brave, it seems easier, to fit in than to stand out.

However, if important literacy lessons are embedded (like journalists, one might say) with 'The Morning Paper', the cornflakes and vegemite toast, then we need to be constantly mindful. Perhaps a useful starting point for our mindfulness is an exploration of our own personal and public literacies.

I have been a fan of Sidney Poitier ever since I first saw *To Sir with Love* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. In his autobiography Poitier discusses the challenges of confronting systemic racism and unbridled prejudice. He talks about 'true progress' and where it comes from:

> True progress doesn't come from unbridled rage any more than it comes from polite submission. Progress then and now comes from the collision of powerful forces within the hearts of those who strive for it. Anger and charity, love and hate, pride and shame, broken down and reassembled in an ingenious process that yields a fierce resolve.[26]

I was struck by the parallel theme that emerges in Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. Both men talk about how the most important work they have done is not the work they have done on others; it is the work they have done on themselves.

So I find myself thinking about my uses of literacy. How do I use and demonstrate literacy? What literacies do I use, how do I utilise them—to what ends? To whose gain—or pain?

Does my literacy help to break us down?
Does it contribute to our reassembly?
Does it yield a fierce resolve?

Here's the last piece to stitch into my patchwork presentation. It was inspired by meeting two colleagues from South Africa at a conference last year. A poem should not require explanation or too much introduction. So, as an artist, I am cheating a bit here; but as an educator, the references to Jeremy will give more value with a little background.

Jeremy is a white South African educator. He speaks the Zulu language quite well and bits of other African languages. He told me a wonderful story about trekking and rock climbing in his country. Apparently, in rural KwaZulu it is considered very impolite to walk past a home and to call out a greeting as you go past. It is even more impolite to continue walking onto the lands of that traditional owner. The appropriate and courteous thing to do is to stop, and perhaps touching the fence, to call out to the owner of the home. Everyone will have more than one calling name or title, according to the history, personality and achievements of the individual. So the visitor will call out these names, acknowledging the individual and their achievements until a voice calls back in response. Some conversation will follow, each person acknowledging the other, their place in the world and perhaps where they are going. When this exchange of courtesy and acknowledgement is complete the walker will continue his journey.

Jeremy tells me that he travels around KwaZulu and is almost always greeted with friendship and hospitality. He adds that many others do not know or follow this simple courtesy. We know that this kind of problem is not unique to South Africa. Jeremy has a visual impairment and has only one good eye. However he seems to me to be a man that sees with great vision and critical insight. I wrote this piece for Jeremy and his colleagues.

Ozzie Conference Sandwich
For Jeremy & colleagues

The bread is a bit dry,
I don't like this salmon filling, it's too garlicy…
The lettuce is bitter in these ones,
And they should have multi-grain…
Or whole grain, or rye…

They're all white.
Says my South African colleague,
What I don't understand is, where are the Aboriginal delegates?
Where are the indigenous researchers?
The answer is more embarrassing than the question.
I'm sorry.
I don't know any…

And Jeremy from KwaZulu Lands
Jeremy the Praise Singer,
Jeremy the Inspiration,
Jeremy, with 'an Eye Out for Questions',
Jeremy the Speaker of Tongues and Gentle Truths,
Tells tales of the Homelands
and 350 eager young minds, starved of knowledge,
crammed into three classrooms,
with a single computer, in the headmaster's office,
which is also the school's office.
And they're doing absolutely amazing things,
with just an ounce of opportunity

added to enthusiasm and little else.
There is so much we can learn from you. he says.
My thoughts exactly.

And as before, I wonder,
Do I have the strength to smile,
The courage to act,
the wisdom to know
when to stop blaming myself, and others.
My gluten-free bread is clagging in my mouth…
I'm searching for the right response
in cyclic games of 'ain't it awful'.
Try the chicken and salad, with herb mayonnaise,
They look pretty good.

Thank you for listening.

Dr. Peter Waterhouse is managing director of Workplace Learning Initiatives, a company he formed with colleagues to facilitate change in industry through teaching, consultancy and research. Peter has held numerous positions in the field of literacy, and his recent research, with colleagues, investigated adult and workplace literacies, generic/employability skills and adult community education pedagogies.

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Blended learning: getting the best from flexible delivery

by Debbie Soccio

The growing demand for education and training means flexible learning approaches are experiencing an increasing reliance on technology. But while websites, multiple email accounts, CD and DVD burners, plain paper faxes and digital everything are as familiar as the right wine with seafood for many people, there can be serious ramifications for disadvantaged learners.

More importance is being attached to education and training both by individuals and by society as a whole. Lifelong learning has become important to the lives and employment prospects of all citizens, not only an elite few. Independent of the initial or continuing vocational education and training required by the labour market, there is growing demand from adults, particularly jobless and retired people and part-time workers, to have access to a form of training that will develop their intellectual, technical, cultural or even physical abilities. This demand for personal fulfilment is central to lifelong education.

The diversity of demand from these client groups therefore has to be matched by a diversity of supply, which is unlikely to be provided by any one type of institution, or even necessarily by a single nationally supervised 'system' of education and training. Flexible delivery options provide greater opportunities to resolve access problems for those wanting to study.

The intention of flexible delivery is the provision of access to learning for all, irrespective of 'race, handicap, ability, domicile, previous experience, present occupation, and preference in learning styles'.[1] The adaptability to individual needs makes flexible learning an attractive strategy for encouraging equity group participation and supporting the principles of access and equity for all. Flexible learning means that a variety of learning strategies can be used in a number of different learning environments, to meet the needs of an individual's learning styles, interests and training needs.

Rapid response

The World Wide Web allows teachers and learners to interact directly, despite the distance between them and thereby allows them to engage in open discussion or one-to-one consultation. This has prompted educators to revisit flexible learning as an important means of disseminating knowledge and promoting an educational system that according to a range of studies[2] shows 'no significant differences' in student outcomes.

However, Warner, Christie and Choy[3] state, 'that to assume that good flexible delivery must include a reliance on technology … is a misrepresentation and misperception'. The adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) client group is one that is generally socioeconomically disadvantaged and thus, although figures are high in terms of stating access and ownership of home computer systems, it would probably come of no surprise that this group is grossly misrepresented in the reporting of these figures. Programs that rely on access to computers and the internet may be inequitable and limit access to training. As adult educators we need to consider that technology is not the panacea of flexible learning. It is a component of flexible learning.

Just a place

As Holmes[4] states, 'computers alone cannot educate anyone', and nor can the internet. It's the people using the tools, and how they do it, that really counts. The interactions between the teacher and learners motivate and promote much of the learning. The classroom is just a place, as is the online environment. The tools, like the whiteboard or the overhead projector in a classroom, are only of use when there are people actively and effectively using them. The World Wide Web allows us to make resources available to students that previously were only available by attendance. But these resources are passive information until they are transformed into knowledge and then to learning[5] by the activities of students and teachers. 'The question is not, 'how can we transport the classroom? But rather 'what can we do with the new technologies to reform, change and improve adult learning?'[6] In other words, we should be developing models for blended learning.

A primary aspect of my 2004 Flexible Learning Leaders project was to identify the range of positive delivery

methods, teaching and learning materials/mediums and best practice exemplars that support a blended learning approach of delivery. The target audience included, but was not limited to, adult learners experiencing barriers to learning. In particular, I was keen to investigate the degree of blending that was occurring in each program, and the positives and negatives that underpinned success or failure in delivery.

Blended learning

Blended learning is a fairly new term in educational lingo, but the concept has been around for decades. Blended learning is defined as the method of educating at a distance that combines technology ('high-tech': television and the internet; 'low-tech': voicemail, conference calls); with traditional (face-to-face) educational training. Blended learning programs may include several forms of learning tools, such as real-time virtual/collaboration software, self-paced, web-based courses, electronic performance support systems embedded within the job task environment, and knowledge management systems. An example of a blending learning program is one that provides study materials and research resources over the web and instructor-led, classroom training sessions as the main medium of instruction.

According to Colis and Moonen[7] blended learning is a:

> hybrid of traditional face-to-face and online learning so that instruction occurs both in the classroom and online, and where the online component becomes a natural extension of traditional classroom learning.

The blend of learning should combine multiple delivery media that are designed to complement each other and promote learning and application-learned behaviour. It may mix various event-based activities, including face-to-face classrooms, live e-learning and self-paced learning. This often is a mix of traditional instructor-led training, synchronous online conference single training, asynchronous self-paced study, and structured on the job training from experienced worker or mentor.

Here are some examples of the variety of blends that demonstrate how a mix and match of different flexible learning styles complement and support a blended learning environment—things we are probably already doing in our classrooms. See Table 1.

Blended learning is thus a flexible approach to course design that supports the blending of different times and places for learning, offering some of the conveniences of fully online courses without the complete loss of face-to-face contact. The result is potentially a more robust

Table 1

Offline	Online
Workplace learning	*Online learning content*
Manager as developer	Simple learning resources
Learning on the job	Interactive generic content
Projects	Interactive customised content
Apprenticeships	Performance support
Shadowing	
Placements	
Site visits	
Tutoring/coaching/ mentoring	*E-tutoring/e-coaching/e-mentoring*
Tutoring	E-tutoring
Coaching	E-coaching
Mentoring	E-mentoring
360° feedback	360° feedback
Classroom	*Online collaborative learning*
Lectures/presentations	Asynchronous: email, bulletin boards
Tutorials	
Workshops	Synchronous: chat, application sharing, audio & video conferencing, virtual classroom
Seminars	
Role play	
Simulations	
Conferences	
Distributable print media	*Knowledge management*
Books	Searching knowledge bases
Magazines	Data mining
Newspapers	Document and file retrieval
Workbooks	Ask an expert
Keeping a journal	
Review/learning logs	
Distributable electronic media	*The web*
Audio cassettes	Search engines
Audio CD	Websites
Videotape	User groups
CD-ROM	E-commerce sites
DVD	
Broadcast media	*Mobile learning*
TV	Laptops
Radio	PDAs
Interactive TV	Mobile phones

Ref: *www.epi.centre.co.uk* (2003)

educational experience than either traditional or fully online learning can offer.

Different levels of blended learning can occur, depending on the complexity of blends. It's important to have a clear methodology behind your decision to use a particular method. Blends can be combined to incorporate hybrid methodologies to suit:

- learning content
- target audience
- operational requirements.

There are also varying degrees of blends that can occur. Each level is separated by the design complexity of the

task, the type of structure and the degree of interaction required between one or more participants.

1. Level 1 Component Blends take separate delivery channels and strings and together to make a simple blend. Simple blends would stand alone as separate tasks.
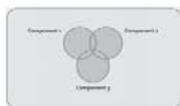
2. Level 2 Integrated Blends integrate components into a single mutually supported structure. Each component is designed with others in mind including direct design features, style, cross references, links and dependencies that make the learning experience a single unified whole.
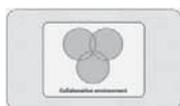
3. Level 3 Collaborative Blends provide a collaborative environment. Further cohesion to the components and learners is required in this blend by providing face-to-face or in electronic tutoring, coaching, mentoring and/or collaborative facilities.

4. Level 4 Extended Blends are more expansive by nature. These blends take learning beyond the boundaries of the predictable components of formal learning into the workplace, use of offline print resources, use of e-media, the World Wide Web and mobile learning.[8]

Why blend the learning?

Flexible delivery has experienced a renaissance of changes, having moved from being an alternative delivery system into the mainstream as a viable delivery system for both instruction and training. Most proactive institutions are already utilising some form of flexible delivery and many others are currently contemplating its use.

However, much of what is offered via a flexible mode is too sophisticated in its demands of clients whose functional literacy is at a level that may encroach on their ability to 'adapt to the rapidly changing needs of societies as well as to the opportunities offered by technological

advances'.[9] If efficiency and effectiveness are critical criteria to be infused in the flexible delivery planning process, a number of important issues need to be examined when providing such programs to ALBE students.

There are many advantages to blending the types of training delivery that have been part of their teaching and learning classroom. Blended learning enables the teacher to keep the best parts of the traditional classroom teaching whilst introducing new forms of learning to the classroom. Blended learning provides a flexible approach to course design that supports the blending of different times and places for learning, offering some of the conveniences of fully online courses without the complete loss of face-to-face contact. Blended learning can combine offline and online forms of learning. The online facility can be incorporated into a blended learning program enabling people more time to learn. Blended learning takes advantage of the power of technology to deliver training just in time, anywhere and at any time.

A blend of learning methods and mediums allows the practitioner to offer a range of alternatives that meet the varied needs of learners. It is about providing the supports, strategies and resources that individual learners need to be successful. Blended learning approaches allow for a range of skill levels to be developed across a range of learners. Blending a variety of delivery strategies provides a suite of complementary learning tools that give the learner choice in how they choose to access and complete the course.

If blended learning technology (and in particular, online education) is used in ways other than as an isolated tool, it can play a key part of comprehensive workplace performance solution, providing not only the means to educate, but can be considered an adjunct to the overall education process. It is in the interest of the provider, and the learner's best interest, to provide as many opportunities for the learning to occur.

How do we get the blend started?

Don't reinvent the wheel—begin with a blended learning pedagogy, evaluating the 'traditional' materials and practices you have been using with your adult learners and reflect on how your programs can be improved or enhanced with technology. There are a number of questions that can prompt your critique.

Do you need to implement technology? Remember, not every program needs technology implementation. Do not presume the technology has an automatic place in every learning program. Ensure that students are not at a disadvantage in enrolling in programs that rely on access to computers and/or the necessary skills needed to use the technology.

What kind of technology do you want to incorporate? There are several technologies already existing in many workplaces and a considerable amount of common, everyday tools, such as email and voicemail, which many adult learners will be familiar with. Remember this, because when adult learners encounter technology as an adjunct learning tool, it should be something they are comfortable using. Otherwise, the process of having to learn new software, hardware or process stands in the way of expediting the learning style.

What new or extra training will be required? If you are using a new software program, you should be prepared to train the learners in the basic use of the tool, even before you get to train the learners within the content of the course. So select your educational technology adjunct teaching tool carefully.

What resources do I already have? Check the good resources you may already have on hand, such as end of course surveys and recent interviews and technology surveys that your organisation may have conducted. Look for information that identifies the type of technology learners are comfortable using (email, voicemail and internet browser types) and more specifically, the level of comfort in using technology as a way of learning, and the amount of times they have actually taken self-directed or semi self-directed continuing education courses before.

Are your learners self-directed? If you do not have this information, do not assume that they will simply adjust to using the new technology. Malcolm Knowles[10] has shown in his research that the majority of adult learners are not self-directed, and that they tend to use the learning process in which they are most comfortable. If the whole process is different, or brand new, most adult learners will avoid it, unless they are shown how it works in the learning situation

What other perspectives might be useful here? Ask other trainers what changes they would incorporate into existing course content.

What is your final outcome? Your final choice in selecting educational technology should be determined by departmental and teacher assessments focusing on the result they desire from the education or training session, or from the course content. That is, are you using the technology to learn to read and write, or are you using the technology to learn the technology?

Where are the opportunities for practice? It is in the interest of the provider (and the learner's best interest) to provide as many opportunities for the learner to get to the educational content as possible—without breaking the bank—in ways that learners can absorb the new information without finding the learning experience onerous. In other words, adults don't just learn in one way. Likewise, providers should not make the mistake of providing just one way for adult learners to receive the educational content.

Learn to learn

We learn anywhere, any time and any place. There are opportunities to learn all around us, every day. We need to use every opportunity, both within the class and beyond, to build skills. Blended learning offers the potential for adult learners to reinforce the new knowledge and to take up new learning quicker.

What about physical communication cues? It is important to put in place strategies to deal with the lack of physical communication cues that occur when we use online forms of communication. New learning technologies create new environments for conducting social situations in which learning can occur. Support the initial use of online communication interactions to adult literacy learners by 'training' in the classroom, where success is immediate and encouraging. Ensure that protocols are established when using online communication tools. This sets standards of participation, establishes boundaries and minimises opportunity for negative online experiences.

strategies to deal with the lack of physical communication cues that occur when we use online...communication
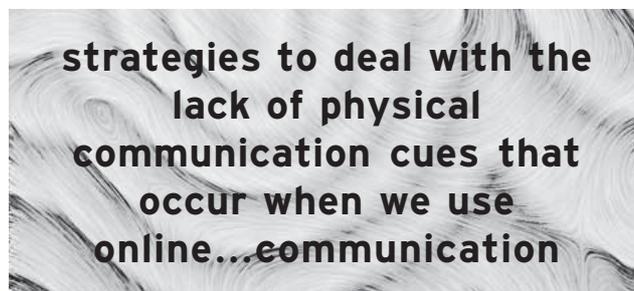
How to can I support low-level literacy learners? Most online interactions are text-based, which may put less agile writers and those with a strong visual thinking propensity at a disadvantage. Consider other multimedia that can support text-based online interactions such as sound, graphics and images.

Who is the audience? Ensure that learners know who they are communicating with and for what purpose. Text-based online interaction creates a different type of accountability. It is important to be aware of perception and interpretations. Through online interactive communication, it is becoming more widely accepted that the focus is on 'communicating one's message' rather than on the 'writing of one's message.' The potential anonymity of online interactive communication means the focus of one's message is on the

communication, not on the age, gender, race or status of the person.

How will you assess the learner? Planning for effective assessment is just as important in a blended learning environment. Supporting this is the need to ensure that appropriate assessment methods are incorporated into the teaching and learning plan. Some assessment methods work well. Others do not. The nature of the assessment should, as with any learning environment, support the best demonstration of learning outcomes of the module being studied. Use assessment methods that meet certain criteria for effectiveness such as reliability and validity, cost-effectiveness, ease of administration, perceived fairness and information leading to improvement. Consider assessing the online discussions. This gives purpose to the communication and ensures that learners participate.

Where to from here?
Adult education relies on the use of a wide range of teaching and learning strategies. Curriculum should be targeted to learner needs/goals and supported by appropriate strategies. Computer-assisted language learning programs are one of a range of strategies and resources that should be made available to the learner. Within the maintenance of a 'literacy perspective', the focus of educational computing may not be on the computer, but on the texts that are mediated by the computer, and at the practices surrounding those texts. This reflects an emerging shift away from the 'notion of literacy as a set of skills with identifiable consequences' towards the view 'that literacy can only be understood in the context of the social practices in which it is acquired and used'.[11]

Seeing literacy as social practice shows significance of the people, the settings, and the relationships, as well as the hardware/software involved in the development of the ability to work with print texts as well as computer-mediated texts. It's not just what people do with literacy, but also what they make of what they do, the values they place on it and the ideologies that surround it. An ordinary piece of work looks fantastic in print. Add a variety of basic changes to the format and layout of the document (such as changing the font size and style) and what is produced in print looks professional.

Actual learning activities reflect very uneven practices and differing perceptions of technology, literacy and how they are related. There are a wide range of practices, exposure to different experiences, and conceptions of the nature, purpose and value of literacy and technology that learners' children are using and that learners are expected to use in their workplaces, at banks and in many other institutions with which they interact. Teaching screen-based reading

and writing skills is now part of our working environment because many types of texts encountered via electronic interface are commonplace.

literacy can only be understood in the context of the social practices in which it is acquired and used
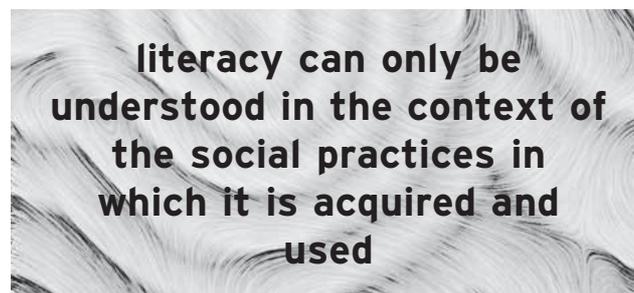
The extensive experience and knowledge of practitioners in the education field has demonstrated that a blended learning program must retain a range of essential features if it is to be sustained and effective. Whether teaching mainstream students or adult literacy learners, it is imperative that the blend of essential features is considered. What is adapted and included within each program seems clearly to lie with the individual organisations. At closer scrutiny, the decisions being made are reached through a combination of local knowledge, educational pedagogy, and organisational or financial constraints. Whatever is being created, good, bad or indifferent, produces a sense of pride at the organisational level.

What the future holds will to some extent depend on the priorities and consequent budget arrangements within organisations. If flexible learning is seen as a priority, there will be more funding available to those working that field within the organisation. If flexible learning does not receive the same kudos, then less financial support, organisation infrastructure and professional development will be available to practitioners, instructional designers and curriculum advisers. With the considerable level of professional development money that has been available through federal government initiatives like the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, there is acknowledgement by policy makers that it is now time to move to a consolidation of skills phase. Having established the funding for the development of flexible learning skills programs, there needs to be a commitment to ensure programs for ongoing initiatives. We are in the midst of technological revolution. We must continue to support the development of flexible learning initiatives for the less experienced and more advanced curriculum developer.

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2004 she was a successful applicant to the Australian Flexible Learning Leaders Program.

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Stealth learning: be alert not alarmed

The title of this edition's Practical Matters is a play on the Prime Minister's post-September 11 words of caution in his role as 'wartime leader'. It is perhaps fitting then, that Merv Edmunds' article discusses how to take on another identity as a stratagem to enhance the learning experience.

I love books with catchy titles. *If you want to be rich and happy, don't go to school*…riches and happiness and school in the one sentence? How could a teacher resist getting it sent to their home address in plain wrap—I mean, not the thing to land on the staff room table with one's name all over it. And how about: *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*…video games teaching us anything after all we have said about them? Catchy titles, and very interesting content.

As it turned out, I had been out of school for several years, rich, happy and playing video games. No, seriously, out of school long enough to reconsider what different approaches I would use if I were to take up the game again. Then from a local school came an offer I could refuse but didn't—taking the kids that didn't want to be there. I made it clear at interview that whatever these kids had known for the last ten years hadn't worked, so what happened next had to be very different. I also told the panel that I was an old dog with some new tricks, a dog that needed a long leash. They hired me, forgot about the leash, and the tricks are looking very interesting indeed.

Robert Kiyosaki's book *If you want to be rich and happy don't go to school,* talks about the failure of a system that was never designed for the present needs and expectations of education stakeholders. He also describes methods that can make a difference, and while these methods are best suited to the training organisation Kiyosaki runs, they appeal to teachers looking for new approaches. In short, the book gave me confidence to ditch the stuff that doesn't work and try some new thinking for getting better results.

It has long baffled educators, how kids—including functionally illiterate ones—can get the required information on new video games, process it, and apply it with obvious success. According to popular thinking, if they haven't read the instructions they will not know what to do, what the strategies are, and how to play to win. Popular thinking—or should we say our generation thinking—is wrong on each count. James Paul Gee, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison opens up lots of new thinking in his remarkable book *What video games have to teach us about learning and*

literacy. He describes about 30 learning principles in detail, and three are worth considering here: 'stealth' learning, virtual identities, and thinking as a social activity.

I want you to be alert but not alarmed with this notion of 'stealth' learning. And before you start thinking you need flak jackets and night vision eyewear for the model, consider this definition:

> …when the learners are so caught up in their goals that they don't realise they are learning or how much they are learning or where they actively seek new learning.
>
> Professor James Gee, *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*, 2003, Palgrave Macmillan

How then, you might ask, do learners get 'so caught up in their goals' that they don't realise they are learning? My response is twofold. Firstly the learners, especially disinterested ones, need to have a reason to be engaged that makes good sense to them. I start my programs by proposing a week on a luxury yacht—a goal that represents visible and equitable success—it is my engagement strategy of choice and it works every time. Secondly, stealth learning works best when the various learning activities (or subjects) are embedded into a single project. This allows learners scope to face the tasks without the labels of 'maths' or 'English' setting them up for failure before they even get started. It also provides for the two agendas of stealth learning to function. One agenda is overt, the nature of the project as understood by the teacher and the learner. The other agenda is covert, specific learning tasks—such as maths—embedded into the project work.

Now before I describe the project work, let's look at the second learning principle from Professor Gee's book, the identity the game-player takes on. They play with a whole set of skills, attributes and resources they don't have in real life.

> Taking on a virtual identity constitutes a form of identification with the virtual character's world, story, and perspectives that become a strong learning device at a number of different levels.
>
> Gee, 2003

And the third principle helps explain why many young people get left behind in the learning process—thinking is essentially a social activity, not an individual affair. Gee's study of electronic games confirm that brain function is interactive with its environment (in this case a virtual one), not isolated from it. So our challenge as educators is to create a learning environment in which young people can take on all the characteristics of a successful person, someone not carrying the baggage of any learning difficulties, real or otherwise.

The question becomes, "Can students be encouraged to take on an identity for the purpose of learning better?" My answer is yes. I start with images of success—sailing around on a luxury yacht, airline travel, house, car, family. Some I propose, some they propose, all embraced at an emotional 'this can be me' level. I use visualisation and guided imagery, manipulation of digital images, and constant application of the question, "What would I look like if I were very successful at this task?"

I use two projects that integrate four discrete subjects—maths, English, personal development and work-related skills—into a single real-world activity. The way this activity is undertaken creates the learning environment conducive to new thinking.

1 Design Projects—creating and presenting a design to a review panel, a response that has maximum effect with a minimum of construction and equipment involved. Uses image manipulation to show finished design in full size context.
2 Information Communication Technology Project—builds on skills this generation already has: computer fluency. Involves the preparation of teacher resources for online delivery and automatic correction. Young people provide instruction for the teacher in the process on a fee-for-service basis. This funds their travel.

The young people have to 'apply' to join the projects and undergo a 'selection' process involving several psychometric tests. They are taught to relax and visualise the task and various solutions, as well as seeing themselves confidently explaining their work to visiting teachers or a news reporter.

My role is split between a classroom teacher and a 'project manager'. The former is providing some instruction and lots of assistance to the young people in completing, on time and on standard, the tasks set by their 'project manager'. This latter role is done online. All my contact in this role is by emails written as a person managing the project and coordinating the expectations of the client with the performance of the 'professional'. Sounds confusing, but not

to the generation raised with the new forms of interacting with their environment—real or virtual.

Let me give you an example. Last term, there were clear signs that the development of a positive work ethic was not taking place. I was disappointed, and told them so, pointing out the specific areas of concern. I also told them that I would be reporting my concerns to the 'project manager'. The next day each student received an email from the project manager (me) detailing the specific concerns, and asking them to show cause why their contract should not be terminated. The kids took it very seriously, and asked me to help them prepare their replies. Were they confused? Not at all. I asked one of them later if it was confusing getting me to help him write a letter to myself. His response was, "I didn't think about it."

Let's look at the design projects. There are eight on offer but we can look at this example here. The young people respond to this advertisement:

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
Survival/Storage Modules

Finchley Pomeroy & Associates has been contracted by a major international aid and development organisation to seek expressions of interest from individuals or organisations for the design of modular panels that could be used for emergency and long-term housing, livestock shelter and fencing, water storage, and erosion control.

Expressions of interest are invited from interested persons for the design, manufacture, and presentation of module prototypes.

A complete description of the design project will be forwarded to those persons who register online before 17 February 2005. *http://www.plasform.com.au/projects/register.html*

Finchley Pomeroy & Associates
Aid and Development Consultants
Locked Bag 93602
Canberra ACT

The 'registration of interest' includes the writing of a 'vision statement'—what skills/attributes they could offer the team—and project information including a project specification is sent to them to consider. This message thanks them for their interest, and includes the statement that they have been shortlisted. They are later sent the URLs for two online personality and learning-style questionnaires, with a request that they summarise the results and forward them to me. Pretty real stuff, and the amazing thing (to those of us who have not played a range of roles in computer games, that is) is the extent to which the young people take the selection process very seriously. It is clear they don't want to miss out even though they realise they are all doing the projects anyway.

Teachers who were involved in the project last year were convinced the kids would not take it seriously. "Why apply for a place on a team when they know they are all going to be doing it anyway?" they asked. Well, the teachers learned a good lesson—the sweat on the brow of the young people as they presented their designs to a panel of strangers or prepared to teach teachers was very real. The current generation is used to playing all sorts of roles as if they are real. Playing video games often requires someone to take on a persona and think like a drug runner, a soldier, or a special operations team. This is thinking and pattern matching at a pretty sophisticated level, and we do well to recognise the value of duplicating this virtual environment for the development of other skills.

The design projects are unique in a number of respects. One is the focus on process, not product. Few classrooms can facilitate the construction of full size projects such as these panels. If, however, the finished result is an image presented to a review panel, the project can be part real and part digitally manipulated image. This overcomes the issue of storage, because the several modules manufactured for the above project would not fill a shoe box, even though the images show hundreds of them assembled as houses, fences, and water storage units.

Another aspect is, the use of simple plastic forming equipment, an oven and a vacuum cleaner can turn any ordinary classroom into a facility capable of producing quite amazing design options. And before you start thinking about the skills you think you lack, remember this project work is being done in primary and secondary classrooms all over Australia by teachers who claimed to have no hands-on skills. Supported by an extensive set of online resources, they have surprised themselves, and discovered the benefits of learning by doing.

The design projects provide an ideal context for the development of several workplace and personal skills, including teamwork and a sound work ethic. The ICT project follows a similar process, the young people respond to this advertisement:

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Online Teaching Material

Expressions of Interest are being sought from primary and secondary teachers wishing to have existing teaching material (worksheets, tests etc) prepared for online delivery and auto-correction. Registration of interest from teachers can be provided online:

Teacher Registration

Expressions of Interest are also being sought from ICT professionals to negotiate with individual teachers for the preparation of classroom materials. Registration of interest from ICT professionals can be provided online:

ICT Professional Registration

Project specifications and application forms will be forwarded to all respondents.

Corangamite District Adult Education Group Inc
124 Manifold Street
Camperdown 3260

When the young people have completed the selection process, they sign a memorandum of understanding to formalise the professional nature of the work, and to facilitate payment when the work has been completed. They are also allocated a 'client'. The 'client' is a teacher with some worksheets they regularly hand out to their students, collect and mark. The 'ICT professional'—the term 'student' does not appear on any of the project materials—then uses a simple form-building program to construct an online test, either multiple choice or missing word questionnaire. The client is given the URL address and can suggest changes if desired. When the client is satisfied, the 'professional' negotiates a suitable time to go through the process used so the teacher can do similar worksheets on their own.

One TAFE teacher used to give each new student a general ability questionnaire several pages long. It took him hours to mark. Now he points the students to the site, they do the questionnaire online, get immediate results and the teacher gets an email with each student's score. No photocopying or correcting—you can see why the teachers and the college pay real money to the ICT professional. No doubt you can also see how previously disenfranchised learners can get fired up with the way knowledge empowers them and changes their view of themselves, the learning process and their future.

If the concept appeals to you, the structure to make it happen is all available. It is possible to incorporate various VET certificate courses, as well as several CGEA units, into the ICT project. The form building program has been developed especially for us and it is all open source (free). For a nominal fee I can provide workshops for teachers and act as the e-facilitator for the program in your setting.

In a recent interview with David Lipman, producer of the movie *Shrek 2*. He was asked the formula for achieving such record-breaking success ($129 million in the first five days), not to mention the acclaim from film critics as well as children: 'We're not about making a critically successful movie or entertaining 10 year olds…we're looking to entertain ourselves as much as the kids'. (David Lipman, *The Age A2 Supplement*, 19 June 2004, p.11)

The reason I refer to it here is to help you see your role in a new light. It is possible to try too hard to please our various masters and finish up pleasing none, not even ourselves. When I think of my career highlights—like taking young people to sea, to Disneyland, to the Whitsundays, to remote indigenous communities—I recognise they each began with what could be seen as a selfish passion, essentially something I wanted to do. Passion infects people, and before long you are surrounded by people sharing the vision. I believe there is good reason to grasp an idea that appeals to us—like chartering a yacht for a week, going overseas, making a movie—not as a 'retirement' project but as part of your present involvement with people who are waiting for that something and that someone to fire them up. You might even write a book—with a catchy title.

Merv Edmunds is the VCAL coordinator at Mercy Regional College in Camperdown, Western Victoria. He is regarded as Australia's foremost practitioner using the Human Givens model in education, and is noted for his innovative approach to curriculum design. Merv is currently coordinating an integrated VCAL program based on the award-winning *avec esprit* curriculum project.

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Open Forum

We welcome your responses to the articles featured in Fine Print. See the back cover for contact details.

Carlton and Havana are as different as cheese and, um…Michael Chalk writes marvellously wild and free about blogs, and leaves us pondering on the possibility of ' e-valbec' blog.

From Cuba to Carlton

I first witnessed the powerhouse duo of Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel in action in the steamy town of Havana, Cuba. Lucky me! Many of us were engaged in wrestling with the UN-sponsored translation devices—the only 40 in the country, precious as a CIA scalp. I'd already worked out the duo were speaking English, so handed my device to a local. But many from the US hung onto their device believing the accent, combined with their bio and the locale, indicated some kind of Mexican.

Lankshear and Knobel were keynote speakers in a conference as inspiring as it was confused. Following a series of articles which examined the topic in depth, the duo had travelled from Mexico to talk about their analysis and experience of blogs. They had to spend much of their keynote time explaining this bizarre term 'blog' (Not a 'bog', nor a 'log' but somewhere in between).

(In a country where the proletariat must fight for internet access, their talk was strangely appropriate. They followed on from Michael Apple, who had railed against the Ultra-Conservative/ Neo-Liberal takeover of public education, urging us to reconnect with our counter-hegemonic Gramscian ideals. Colin and Michelle also railed against the lack of radical presence within the Blogosphere.)

The same year, there was a repeat performance, in Carlton with Colin. This very different audience seized on the luxury of posing questions. Fine Print readers have recently been treated to Jane Westworth's in-depth practical introduction to the keys of blogdom, so you would make the perfect audience for Colin and Michele. If you weren't fortunate enough to be at either show, you can still catch their articles online. You can also dip into their own 'blogspot', tucked away at everydayliteracies.blogspot.com. If all goes to plan, you'll be able to join a live interview, to follow up this article as well. After these extraordinary experiences from Cuba to Carlton, I ventured into the more ordinary act of reading their articles, and grappling with the ideas.

Do it yourself broadcasting

It was the intricacies of Do it Yourself Broadcasting that really grabbed me. Colin and Michele give a sweet, discourse-analysis style description of the typical blog. They explore several examples, they supply a taxonomy of blogs—something I have seen nowhere else. They tackle ideas of how some kind of 'power law distribution' is affecting bloggers and their audiences, at this point venturing into 'blogging as powerful writing' and challenging the genre movement, dusting off the limits of 'metacognitivist educational applications', and finally positing this astonishing notion of the blog as a 'hive brain' or 'backup brain'.

It's taken me several readings! I'd like to translate for you, and bring in some additional readings to broaden the perspective.

The Lankshearian-Knobellian taxonomy of blogs

This table only gives you half the information—you ought to track down the original, as it's worth reviewing, and contains examples of each kind of blog.

Links with commentary	Hybrids (Links with commentary & journal entries)	Journalling	Meta-blogs
Community blogs	Personal	Personal	Aggregators
News filters	Open community	Corporate	Indices & portals
Personal	Mainstream media	Hoax	
Targetted	Group	Photo	

One example of a personal, hybrid blog, Littleyellow different.com, received a full analysis in Havana and Carlton. This young gay Chinese-American software developer has gathered a huge audience, receiving an average of 30 comments per posting. A collection of vignettes provides a 'sophisticated picture of a person' over time, and the 'uncovering of a vibrant mind'.

Ernie is engaged in 'identity work' about corporate life and young people in cybercultural worlds. His new blog, at 360.yahoo.com, has a disclaimer: 'The opinions on this weblog are mine and not necessarily of my employer. Which is Yahoo!'.

This kind of disclaimer could be increasingly necessary. In late 2004 James Farmer was rebuked by his employer for using the blog—an unauthorised communication system—specifically to 'cease supporting and promoting weblogging, wikis or any other technology not officially supported by the University'. His message received over a hundred replies from around the world, supporting the blogger vs the institution.

Successful blogging meets powerful writing

While the genre movement assured us that learners would be able to 'realise their purposes more powerfully', Lankshear and Knobel wonder if this has had any real impact in the classroom. Within the blogging context, they suggest that the hugeness of potential audiences could inform our understanding of 'power in relation to language'.

What are the key characteristics of successful blogging? Purpose, Point of View and Presentation, say our duo. According to Colin and Michele, a successful blog needs to have:
- a strong sense of purpose
- a recognisable and well informed point of view
- high quality presentation.

An academic friend was reading my drafts and asked, 'So, what is powerful writing?' Enjoying the esoteric realisation that this term was constrained to a particular context—researchers who go deep-sea diving in the worlds of 'Capital D. Discourse' and 'meaning-making', I tried to explain. After telling her how adult literacy had emerged from the progressivist movement of transformative diary writing and building personal power through self-esteem, I moved to the story of real-world authentic texts and the discourse/genre movement, which enabled people to write texts that would make a practical and powerful difference in their lives. (I left out the tale of the mighty competency-based training, and how this had enabled teachers and learners to discover new levels of flexibility and freedom.)

As I talked around in circles, telling tales of limbs lost on methodological battle grounds, I realised that these literacies have also gone around in circles. Blogging takes us back to the journal-writing that the genre folk dismissed so…pedagogically. So, now writing a journal can be powerful again? Because it's public, and everyone can read it. But I thought the best part of having a journal was that nobody else would read it.

Public writing meets the Power Law Distribution

So what makes a blogger powerful? The ability to bring a point of view, to break rules and hybridise genres. Also, having an audience already. There are millions of blogs, and it seems that the more bloggers arrive on the scene, the more popularity moves to the already-established gatekeepers—the 'A-list'. This creates the 'long tail' effect. Newcomers to the scene are disadvantaged because an increasing volume pushes audience to the better-known bloggers.

People at the popular end get all the audience, and operate as broadcasters, receiving many comments and 'trackbacks' (comments on other people's blogs)—too many to reply. People at the 'small audience end', will probably be writing either for themselves, or for a small group of friends. Popular bloggers can add advertising to their site and make money. Unpopular writers can experience the joy of writing for themselves.

In the information age, information itself is a marketplace, and to be powerful requires market share. So, market ideologies drive the formation of knowledge for the masses. Lankshear and Knobel make the point that this law of power distribution benefits right-wing ranters in the USA, because other people link back to them, even when writing to disagree. The more options there are, the more skewed the distribution.

Other writers: on the unequal power distribution of the blogosphere

Stephen Downes also writes about this effect, and looks for ways to counter it. Downes is one of the most prolific writers on blogging (and its associated technology—'syndication', which is the gathering of headlines from blogging writers). He's also commented on the meaning of community, the nature of blogging (how the meaning of the blog post is contained not in the words—but rather in the network of people reading and writing), the 'long tail' of the power law distribution, and the gradual shift in online learning from centralised meaning and resources to distributed chaotic systems and networks.

Jon Garfunkel really lets loose on the notion of Gatekeepers (This ties in with the powerful end of the blogging spectrum). For him, the notion that bloggers will become the 'second superpower', take over from journalists, and lead to 'digital democracy', is a bunch of 'blogbunk'. Some say that bloggers have defeated the gatekeepers of conventional mass media, but Garfunkel replies that we merely have a new set of gatekeepers. The Law of the Few says that some people will always act as connectors between people, and between ideas.

Where Garfunkel's article really impresses is in its analysis of the writing values behind the blogging phenomenon. Blogging is great because it emphasises freedom, anonymity, immediacy, which can be good to encourage and develop fluency writing. The trouble is that other values are glossed over. 'Freedom over responsibility, anonymity over traceability, immediacy over thoroughness, talking over listening, breadth over depth…serendipity over coherence'.

In essence, the blog emphasises 'quantity over quality', and individualistic values—the kind of values media critics deplore as the basis for the shallow, ego-driven dross we read in the papers and consume via The Box.

Practical applications of blogging in education

Lankshear and Knobel contend, that while blogging depends on a strong point of view, 'writing pedagogy usually does not presume purpose'; that while blogging could become 'the new turn of the wheel technology integration in schools', there is 'little evidence of…authentic purposefulness'. They

say that schools 'risk killing the medium by reducing its potential scope and vitality to menial school tasks'.

I found this challenging to read. Their point may be that when you use a tool for writing, you need to observe the different social practices that genuinely occur in and around the real life use of that tool (Or their point may be that teachers need to put their school work behind a login where academics can't peer and sneer).

The duo suggest in DIY Broadcasting that blogging has 'epistemic potential', and that if schools could get 'beyond…'pretend' research activities', and engage in significant problems, then blogging could enable highly sophisticated learning forms, allow learners to engage with 'systematicity in searching', and hone their ability to hold a point of view. Basically they say that blogging has huge potential, but that schools are getting it all wrong.

Other writers on the topic: blogging in class

Stephen Krause is someone who openly admits to getting it all wrong. He tells a story of a blogging experiment that failed in his writing class. His conclusion is that blogging is great for publishing a research journal or peer review, but if you want collaborative discussion you ought to stick with email. Many teachers would read his article and conclude that perhaps you ought also to provide learners with some clear and contained writing task, and work to facilitate discussion between learners, rather than open-endedly saying, 'here's an environment you could write in, if you want'. Lingerfeldt explores the notion of a 'literacy event as normative'. For him, blogging was an amazing revelation—he discovered a new way of writing, and a new joy in writing for an audience. His article urges us to remember the need to connect writing with real life writing practices, and remember that blogging will not be a 'normative literacy event' for every teacher or learner. (I think he is using normative to mean transformative.) The key issue is choice—some students will accept, others will reject the writing tool, and ask for a different one.

Lankshear and Knobel make a similar point in another article, 'From i-flogging to blogging', that the technology chosen will not always suit the learner. Some young learners regard email as a stodgy, formal old way of doing things, and will prefer to use instant messaging—even when their assessment depends on using email. Anne Bartlett-Bragg put together a very good overview of blogging in education last year[1]. **

The nature of blogging as a community communication tool

Last year, I explored the differences between the blog and the bulletin board. While the bulletin board represents a group space, in which individuals must work hard to present their own personality, the blog is mainly an individual experience, allowing each person to create a space dedicated to themselves and their very own interests and tastes. Within the blogdom, a sense of community can develop in the threads and links between individual spaces. As people comment on each other's writings, the blog software can create links automatically.

Blogging is an individualistic experience. This can be what gives it strength. Writers have their own virtual fortress within which to take a strong position. They don't have to wrestle to build an identity within a group space, but can retreat to their own room, and be public at the same time. Awareness of audience—there is conflict here. Apparently writing a blog can help you develop this awareness, but if you write for your audience you could lose them. People want you to retain that point of view that sets you apart.

The blog: one tool amongst many evolving technologies

For many teachers, the blog is a new phenomenon. Naturally some are eager to try it out for learning potential, while others will ignore or resist this as another passing wave for the fanatics and fad addicts. Fortunately the field of adult education is still packed with teachers who put their students first (despite the efforts of the auditors to convert our practices to a business ideology). Teachers who are strategic will firstly think about their own goals, their students' needs, and find the most suitable tool.

As an easy tool to provide regular postings for a fully or partially online class, the blog could be very suitable. If you want every student to conduct a reflective learning journal, in public, then a class set of blogs could be really useful. If you're looking for an environment where learners can engage in discussion and work collaboratively to some depth, perhaps you need something different.

Email remains a decent way to enable ongoing discussion on a topic. Thiagi's email games are a good way to start people interacting. A Wiki, for example, enables people to work on the same structured document—WikiPedia.org is a great example of how knowledge can be rapidly built up in one place, with a high degree of organisation.

If you're looking for an environment where you can post online learning resources and invite discussion, then perhaps a fuller resource such as moodle.org (now available via groups.edna.edu.au—and soon to incorporate blogging as an additional function) or the tafeVC.com.au (which now has 'voice boards'—you could try a version of 'audio-blogging'). Some experts rave about a thing called an 'e-portfolio', which could be a mix of a blog and a collection of works. One new example is 'elgg', a 'personal learning landscape', at http://elgg.net/. There are also blogging tools

which are more sophisticated than blogger.com—tools you would load onto your own web server. WordPress.org is a very popular blogging tool that allows multiple authors for the one blog. Drupal.org provides an environment which allows for individual blogs with feedback/ commentary, and also allows forums and polls, plus a 'collaborative book' feature.

Time to upgrade your skills, again

Yes, these tools often require some technical assistance or expertise, but more and more web hosts are providing easier installation for open source communication tools on your web server.

Whatever tool you're using, you'll need some new skills—not just technical skills, but new ways to bring your abilities to facilitate discussion into the online arena. Without the benefit of visual immediacy, it takes a whole new set of strategies to get students collaborating.

A followup interview?

There are so many questions I want to ask Colin and Michele. How does a diary become a powerful broadcast? Will blogging be 'genre-ified'? Will someone evolve a blog which organises thoughts as well as logging them by date? Will adult literacy classrooms set up their own photo-radio blogs? What happens when every single person in the universe has their own blog/ broadcast station? How will that affect the power differential? Why did I remain so silent in both places? How could I manage to ask these questions? Could we arrange some kind of online meeting? If so, Fine Print readers will be invited to join in. Stay tuned to 'e-valbec'.

Michael Chalk has taught adult literacy for over eight years and now works in technology-based learning. He is the flexible learning coordinator at Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education, and was on the VALBEC general committee and the Fine Print editorial group for several years, but recently retired from this position to finish his Masters in Education.

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Foreign Correspondence

Aboriginal education in Canada

In British Columbia, efforts to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in higher-level education and training led to the development of community-contexted programs that include housing and the appointment of senior students as mentors. Marlene Erikson and Barbara Old elaborate on the workings of these successful enterprises.

Aboriginal communities in Canada, like other Indigenous peoples, have suffered the effects of colonisation. At the same time communities were being assaulted with waves of epidemics bringing their numbers to all time lows by the 1930s. The *Indian Act* confined people to reservations and gave the federal government sweeping powers over all aspects of individuals' lives. Later, the compulsory attendance at residential schools dealt a crippling blow to social and cultural wellbeing. More recently, communities are unveiling the dark history of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. These historical laws and policies have left virtually all Aboriginal communities in a cycle of poverty and despair. The road to healthy communities will be a long one, and many communities are well on their way through social and economic development. Most bands recognise education as a key factor towards self-determination and are willing to invest their best efforts in improving the retention and success rates of their membership. Presently the largest barrier is poverty and all the social problems that arise from it.

The poverty of Aboriginal communities is reflected in the educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples, which remains low compared to non-Aboriginal students in British Columbia (BC) and throughout Canada. The most recent statistics released by the government of BC state that in 2002–03, 46 per cent of Aboriginal students graduated from high school with a Dogwood, the BC Grade 12 academic credential, compared to 81 per cent of non-Aboriginal students. In the Prince George school district and the surrounding rural areas, graduation rates of Aboriginal students remain even lower than the provincial average for Aboriginal students.

Additionally, the statistics regarding the numbers of Aboriginal students writing Provincial Math 12 and Provincial English 12 are even less encouraging. In BC, only 41 per cent of Aboriginal students write the English 12 exam (compared to 72 per cent of non-Aboriginal) and 9 per cent write the Math 12 exam (compared to 36 per cent of non-Aboriginal). It is encouraging to note that the few Aboriginal students who do write these key exams score at or slightly above the rate of non-Aboriginal students. However, for the most part the skill sets of the majority of Aboriginal students who apply to college are lower than non-Aboriginal students[1].

The City of Prince George is located near the geographic centre of the province of British Columbia. The city has a population of 72,000 and is dependent on a resource-based economy, namely forestry and related services. Approximately 10 per cent of the population is self-identified Aboriginal, the indigenous *Yinka Dene* (Carrier) Cree and Metis peoples.

The College of New Caledonia (CNC) consists of five campuses serving a region spanning 117,500 square kilometres with a total population of approximately 145,000. The 2003–04 full-time and part-time student head count was 5224, with the majority attending on the Prince George campus. CNC has been serving the region for more than 30 years, offering a full range of programs and services for adult learners. College foundations (adult upgrading), trades, technologies, career/vocational, business and university transfer programs are all available. The college also has extensive offerings through its community and continuing education (C and CE) in Prince George and its regional campuses. CNC has extensive experience in delivering skills specific training, in working with individuals in transition, and their support systems, and in liaising with community and business for advisory purposes and employment support. The Department of Community and Continuing Education is committed to developing and implementing transitional and transformational opportunities for at-risk individuals, using education and training as the tool.

Through C and CE, CNC has piloted several program models and services in order to address the education needs of Aboriginal youth and adults. The college works closely with bands, the tribal council and Aboriginal organisations to develop, fund and implement the programs and services. A board of governors appointed an Aboriginal advisory committee that works with the college through C and CE to advise on appropriate services and programs that will meet the needs of Aboriginal students and increase participation and success in post-secondary education.

In 1991, the provincial ministry of advanced education established First Nations Education Support Services (FNESS) in all post-secondary institutes. At CNC, FNESS immediately partnered with the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council (CSTC) and has expanded its mandate to provide other programs and services. Currently, FNESS is staffed by a coordinator and a part-time assistant. The CSTC also funds a part-time cultural advisor to assist the students in cultural activities and healthy lifestyle choices. The programs and services described below were developed and implemented by FNESS and C and CE Prince George.

Aboriginal youth peer mentoring program

Since 1997 the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, representing eight bands throughout the region, in collaboration with CNC has offered summer education and career planning workshops to support Aboriginal youth in defining and achieving their education and career goals. Students were presented with Aboriginal role models who encouraged them to stay in school and continue on to post-secondary education. In 1999, the college completed additional project activities that included meeting with Aboriginal youth who participated in the workshops, assessing the effectiveness of the workshops and providing career-specific information to youth. It was the youth who identified the need to have Aboriginal mentors, so CNC began researching and developing an Aboriginal mentoring concept. Youth identified barriers to their continued pursuit of education with respect to motivation, support, racism and lack of confidence. Research indicated that mentoring programs are particularly appropriate to support individuals in overcoming barriers with respect to self-esteem, confidence and socialisation skills. A mentoring program was further supported by the BC Teachers' Federation. The federation identified a lack of role models as a key factor in the attrition rate of Aboriginal students. Other research indicated that mentoring programs are particularly appropriate to support individuals in overcoming barriers with respect to self-esteem, confidence and socialisation skills. Therefore, in September 2000 the Tribal Council and the CNC piloted the Aboriginal Youth Peer Mentoring Project. A community advisory committee with representation from Aboriginal community leaders, elders, educational advisors and school district representatives was involved in the development of the pilot and a sub-committee participated in the selection of mentors. The program was initially funded by the Vancouver Foundation, and the federal government. Since 2001 the Aboriginal Education Board of school district 57 has funded the program.

Mentors are current students of CNC or the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). High school participants represent high schools and some alternative programs in Prince George and are in Grades 9–12. A 24-hour orientation curriculum was developed and workshops on roles, responsibilities, boundaries and safety and expectations are delivered to all participants. Mentors also participate in workshops on communication, conflict resolution, teamwork and leadership skills.

Mentors spend up to ten hours a month with their high school participants. They focus on career/education support and guidance and participate in group and pair activities. The mentors are positive role models and provide support in areas such as healthy lifestyle choices, self-esteem and motivation. By participating in this program, the participation and retention rates in high schools and post-secondary institutions have increased for both the mentors and the high school students. Yearly evaluations of participants, parents, high school counsellors and Aboriginal education workers support this premise.

A dedicated project coordinator is vital to the success of the program. The project coordinator organises group activities designed to provide the information, support and encouragement the teens need to stay in high school to graduate. Group activities have included career information days in law, health sciences, media, education and social sciences; a weekly drop-in homework club; tours of the college and university; workshops with academic counsellors. Students also participate in cultural activities such as dancing, beading, drumming and playing traditional games. The program also emphasises healthy lifestyle choices and encourages participants to visit art galleries and attend conferences and sporting events. Support from the high schools is crucial to the success of the program and the Aboriginal education workers in the schools have proven to be vital links between the students and the mentoring coordinator.

An unexpected outcome of the program has been the direct benefits to the mentors. Anecdotal evidence from CNC and UNBC students tells us that the mentors themselves have become better students because they realised that the young people are looking up to them to provide an example. Because the participation rates in post-secondary education are still so low, the mentors realise they are 'blazing a trail' for the youth to follow. In this way, the mentoring program increases Aboriginal retention and success rates in post-secondary institutes as well.

Ethno-mathematics and ethno-science

Over the past several years numerous programs to increase Aboriginal participation in science and technology have been implemented by the College of New Caledonia with the input of the Aboriginal community and employers. However, math skills continue to be a stumbling block to program participation. In our region there are only five Aboriginal people with graduate degrees, none with PhDs and there are many fields that have little or no representation of Aboriginal

peoples, such as medical doctors and other health science professionals, registered foresters and most other professional sectors' jobs.

Through a series of community consultations held with fisheries/forestry administrators and native organisations, strong math and science skills were overwhelmingly identified as a means of overcoming barriers to accessing science and technology programs. In summer 2002, a CNC math instructor committed to spending his professional development time and money researching the potential of the development of an ethno-mathematics curriculum. That research and subsequent research has led us to believe in the strong possibility that such a math curriculum would improve the success rates of our learners.

Ethno-mathematics is comprised of the following: it integrates the contributions to mathematics from indigenous groups all over the world; it integrates Aboriginal examples into the curriculum; it evaluates skill development by assessment of projects rather than by tests/examinations; it emphasises teamwork as opposed to competition. In the fall of 2004, a math instructor was given release time to revise the Math 030 (Grade 10) and integrate ethno-math into the curriculum. Ethno-math was piloted as a regular section of Math 030 in January 2004 and external evaluators evaluated it. The evaluation indicated that the integration of Aboriginal content and perspectives increased motivation and decreased math anxiety among the Aboriginal students. Group projects such as constructing a moose caller (geometry) that test students' knowledge and abilities to apply math concepts, appear to be particularly significant for the Aboriginal students[2].

Building on the success of the ethno-math project, the college has recently completed a partial revision of Science 030 (Grade 10) and has replaced the biology section with ethno-biology. The chemistry and physics sections are currently being revised. The curriculum will be piloted in September 2005.

Rural Aboriginal student housing project

The College of New Caledonia in Prince George serves several rural Aboriginal communities in our region. Bands in these communities send students to the city to further their education. However, frequently these students abandon their studies and go home because they simply cannot cope with urban shock and post-secondary studies at the same time.

In October 2003, C and CE and FNESS held a discussion session with Aboriginal students to learn about their challenges with adjusting to college life and life in Prince George. We learned that the transition is difficult for many of our Aboriginal rural students. Students face homesickness, a lack of knowledge of community services, difficulty with

finding a place to live, difficulty with budgeting and other issues. Many of these students drop out of college and waste their potential, their time and their money.

A survey was also sent out to the bands for the purpose of identifying what they saw as the reasons for this high attrition rate. One question asked: 'Have all your students successfully completed their studies in Prince George? If no, what are some of the reasons for non-completion?' The following reasons for dropping out were identified:
- under stress, failing grades, no help available, new surroundings, homesickness
- poor lifestyle choices
- lack of understanding of academic process
- acceptance into programs without having criteria, especially sciences
- struggle with living costs
- poor course selections.

Student input echoed the issues identified by the bands, and based on student input, survey respondents and observations of the college a concept that the college believes would help the most vulnerable students adjust to living and studying in Prince George was developed. Using a group home model, the college plans to build a rural student residence in Prince George. The house will accommodate about 10 students plus a live-in support person, an elder or elder couple. The elders will provide a positive learning environment for the students by teaching the students about budgeting, balanced meal preparation, transportation options, and in the process students would develop necessary life skills. Alcohol and drugs would not be tolerated and students will be charged a competitive room and board rate. A business plan for the project is currently being written. The plan will provide the blueprint to the implementation of the rural Aboriginal student housing project.

The college's commitment to providing programs and services that will increase Aboriginal student success is reflected in the Aboriginal Education and Services Policy written and formally adopted in 1999. The policy reads:

> The College of New Caledonia recognises and supports First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples in their goals of self-determination. CNC recognises that the learning environment is enriched by diversity, and will specifically include Aboriginal cultures. CNC will actively work with Aboriginal people to identify and respond to their needs. CNC commits to the principles defined by the Aboriginal Post Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework, including:
> - accessibility
> - lobbying for and maintaining appropriate resources
> - recognising and implementing instructional styles that respect different ways of learning

• supporting Aboriginal post-secondary institutions
• finding ways to increase Aboriginal participation and success
• recognising the validity and worth of traditional knowledge of Aboriginal peoples, including the role of community-identified elders in education
• supporting Aboriginal advisory committees(s) throughout the College region.

The policies, programs and services described above are making inroads in increasing Aboriginal student success. Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations and the Aboriginal Advisory Committee are critical to our success. They are directly connected to communities and therefore more readily identify issues and solutions. Presently many communities are involved in the treaty process wherein they are negotiating co-management agreements over resources and services. At this critical time in their history they need their community members equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to administer these programs. CNC is proud to be a part of this process.

Marlene is *Yinka Dene* (People of the Earth, known as Carrier Indians) from Fort St James, BC. She has a BA in anthropology at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA. Marlene is the coordinator of the First Nations Education Support Services at the College of New Caledonia, and has served for many years on the Aboriginal Education Board of School District 57.

Barbara Old is associate director of Community and Continuing Education at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George. She has a BA in linguistics from the University of Victoria and a Masters of Education (adult education) from the University of British Columbia, and is actively involved in a number of community social planning strategies.

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Beside the Whiteboard

Isy Bilander teaches literacy to Deaf people at North Fitzroy's Holden Street Neighbourhood House. He talks to Julie Palmer from the *Fine Print* editorial group about his involvement with this group and their particular literacy needs.

How did you become involved in the program at Holden Street Neighbourhood House?

In late 2002, after I returned from Vietnam where I taught as a Australian Volunteer Abroad, I was offered a job at Holden Street to teach basic computer skills to several classes. This included supporting the literacy teacher of the Deaf class. In 2003 I took over the role of literacy teacher.

Tell us more about the Deaf program.

This is a unique program funded by ACFE catering for the needs of adult Deaf students, most of whom have low literacy skills as well as additional learning difficulties. Some were born overseas and have had very little education prior to coming to Australia. Others have significant additional physical disabilities. For example, one of my students is confined to a wheelchair. On the other hand, some learners in my class were educated here in Australia, and have no physical disabilities other than being deaf and mute. The students come to Holden Street for one full day a week and work on modules from the Certificate in English Language Literacies (CELL). Some of this is done as part of a cooking class. In the afternoon they come to me, hopefully well satisfied with what they've had for lunch, seeing that they eat what they've cooked. We then spend three hours on various literacy tasks in the classroom and the computer lab. The program couldn't function without the help of Robyn Beasley. She teaches the morning cooking class and then interprets for me in the afternoon—most of the students know AUSLAN, but I don't.

It seems from what you've described that your students have a great range of needs. How do you manage to cater for that?

With great difficulty! It's not just the physical and learning disabilities or the range of literacy levels. It's also that all of them have led very sheltered lives, whether in institutions or at home with their families, so their level of general knowledge is low. I try to devise learning experiences that cater for individual needs and yet provide some form of commonality for the class. Without the latter, I don't think the class would develop a group identity. I think this is very important, since earlier on when I first started there was a great deal of absenteeism, whereas this year it hasn't been a problem. Perhaps I should regard this as one of the successes of our program.

Some of the students have such low literacy skills that they need learning experiences specifically designed for their individual needs, such as letter formation skills. Others, though at varying literacy levels, can work as a group. I typically set the individual tasks and then focus on the group. We frequently work on themes of interest to my students. For example, at one stage several of them desperately wanted to learn about human reproduction. My science background helped me develop a literacy unit with this theme. I was able to borrow a microscope from a local high school and incorporate some simple experiments into the unit to broaden my students' experiences. Believe it or not none of them had previously looked down a microscope! At other times I'm more of a dictator. Deaf people often need to write down questions when they are trying to communicate outside of their close circle. I recently did a short course on AUSLAN which demonstrated to me that AUSLAN grammar is very different from that of standard English. So in the current unit there's a focus on asking questions in standard English.

I break up our time into classroom activities and computer tasks with a substantial break in between. I find that my students lose concentration unless they have such breaks.

You mentioned earlier about Robyn being your interpreter. This must be very expensive. Could you do without her?

I'd really be lost without Robyn. If we had to employ a professional interpreter the program wouldn't run. Robyn herself is deaf but can lip-read and speak. The few times she was away I found it very difficult. That's why I tried to learn AUSLAN. Unfortunately not enough people enrolled for the second unit so CAE cancelled the class. I'm still very bad at it. Robyn also can fill me in on cultural aspects of the Deaf community, which helps me to better understand where my students are coming from.

The wheelchair-bound student I mentioned earlier cannot sign so we communicate through limited gestures and eye contact. This may not sound like much and I guess it isn't, but it's surprising how much we can get across to one another.

How do you use the computers?

There are some wonderful programs produced by Protea which I find very useful. For example, I use The Alphabet

program to teach my weaker students basic skills like recognising capital letters and lower case correspondence. Computers don't get frustrated so they're ideal for this sort of task. More skilled students use computers for word processing, drawing and labelling diagrams, email and researching on the internet. Another Protea program, Issues in English, helps with reading comprehension and punctuation. I personally use the internet to locate various resources, for example, relevant pictures to demonstrate the meaning of words.

Do you discuss teaching Deaf students with other professionals?

Yes I do. I've met with staff from NMIT Centre of Excellence who teach Deaf people. Some of our students also attend the centre. We share experiences and approaches. Recently I attended one of their workshops and found it particularly useful. We occasionally get visits from support staff at VicDeaf who refer students to us. There is also a network for teachers of disabled students within our ACFE region.

This sounds like a pretty challenging class. Can you comment on the successes and frustrations?

I mentioned before that the class is becoming more cohesive. My students seem to also trust me more. This has had some really positive effects. They are more motivated and are much more ready to acknowledge particular problems they have with literacy, say, understanding what they've read. Other staff at Holden Street tell me that the students are much more relaxed and keen to communicate with them, notwithstanding the difficulties.

I've also noticed an improvement in the general knowledge of my students. For example, they now know that the body is made of cells—they've seen them. They know that we are surrounded by air rather than by nothing—even though we cannot see it or smell it, we can feel it.

My students have had experiences that they otherwise would not have had. For example, we visited the city, we saw Federation Square and the Town Hall, at another time

we measured our blood pressure, and so on. All this has led to broad improvements in literacy skills such as a wider vocabulary, as well as improvements in specific skills such as reading a map.

Frustrations, I've had a few. The difficulty in communicating is ever-present. I'm learning how to 'listen' to my deaf students, to check if they've understood me or whether I've understood them. Often I'm still left in doubt. I largely develop my own resources and that takes time. But I don't enjoy a time allowance for preparation since I'm employed sessionally. I'm teaching at a Neighbourhood House, not at a school, so I don't have ready access to resources such as a library or science equipment.

There's also the requirements of CELL that don't necessarily suit my students. The most glaring example is that CELL contains a compulsory oracy module, which means my students can never obtain a full certificate. Last, but by no means least, there's the frustration of the often painfully slow progress my students make. I have to keep reminding myself to constantly look at where each individual student was initially and where they're at now. For example, my wheelchair-bound student can now use an ordinary keyboard to readily type individual letters. Not much you may think, until you realise that initially she couldn't associate a letter on the screen with a letter on the keyboard, and that she has cerebral palsy with limited movement of one arm only.

Now all of these successes and frustrations relate to me in my role as a teacher. But in this class I'm also a learner, and I find this particularly satisfying. I'm learning a new language, AUSLAN, where Robyn and my students are my teachers. I'm learning about the culture and the interactions within the community of Deaf people here in Australia, just as I did with the Vietnamese people in Vietnam. And, I'm learning new techniques of communication when the commonly-used channels of communication are blocked.

Thank you Isy, for sharing your experiences teaching in what seems a challenging but hugely rewarding area.