



Central Australia—a magical place for our national conference

Central Australia is unmatched in the diverse opportunities it offers for learning about Indigenous culture. The forthcoming ACAL Forum 'Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and learning' (18 September) and the National Adult Literacy Conference (19 and 29 September— see registration details on page 3) offer literacy practitioners an unmissable opportunity to visit the Centre and learn first hand about Indigenous culture.

Aboriginal people have lived here for at least 30,000 years and within that time, have created an intricate culture moulded by the inland deserts. Food, medicine, music, customs, legends, art— all of these were adapted to suit the Centre's arid environment. For local Aboriginal people, the countryside is a living testament to a time when their ancestral beings travelled through the area and created the various peaks, hills and creeks of the Centre. Many features of the landscape have a meaningful association with The Dreamtime.

Aboriginal art from thousands of years ago can still be seen on rock faces around the region.

Why not find time to visit Uluru? Its immensity is only matched by the importance of it to the Anangu, the traditional owners. Understanding Uluru's cultural significance introduces visitors to how tightly the region's geography is woven into local Aboriginal culture and begins an appreciation of how all features of the landscape, big or small, play their parts.



Looking for bush tucker—in Alice Springs a wide range of cultural tours is available to acquaint visitors with aspects of traditional life.

courtesy—Northern Territory Tourist Commission

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So wot R U w8ing 4?

There is a new vitality creeping into writing as our linguistic conventions give way to developments in technologies that are fashioning new conventions for using language.

McLuhan's legacy 'the medium is the message' takes on new meaning in the face of the phenomenon that is SMS messaging. Designed as an afterthought for mobile phone networks, SMS text messages, millions of them, are crossing streets and continents every day, as users chat to friends, flirt with acquaintances, make plans to meet and so forth, creating whole new genres of communication.

On page 5 Di Dell suggests that practitioners should incorporate the phenomenon of SMS messaging into their literacy pedagogy.

Fees introduced for Adult basic education courses in TAFE NSW for 2004

The NSW State Budget, brought down on 24 June 2003, flagged significant fee increases for all TAFE courses. In addition, no courses will any longer be fee exempt. Adult Basic Education Courses are specifically mentioned as losing their exempt status.

Statement of Attainment courses will attract a fee of \$150 per semester, and Certificate One courses will attract a fee of \$175 per semester.

Students who are in receipt of a range of social security benefits remain eligible for individual exemptions. This information is available on the TAFE web site—www.tafensw.edu.au

Literacy researchers—expressions of interest sought

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) will soon be inviting researchers to submit expressions of interest for Adult Literacy Research Program projects.

An advertisement will appear in the national press during mid-late July 2003. An information kit, detailing research priorities and how to apply, will be placed on the NCVER web site (www.ncver.edu.au) at the time of advertising.

For further information contact Suzanne Curyer at the NCVER. Ph: 08 8230 8687, email suzanne.curyer@ncver.edu.au

The review of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)

ANTA will be beginning the review of the Australian Quality Training Framework as planned from July 2003. The report from this review will be prepared for the National Training Quality Council in early 2004.

As this is the first substantial look at our new national standards it is vital that your comments and suggested improvement be considered. Individuals and organisations may submit comment via the ANTA web site—look out for the review in late July/early August 2003.

Update—language, literacy and numeracy in the Training and Assessment (TAA) Training Package

In the June 2002 edition of *Literacy Link*, an article by Lynne Fitzpatrick described what this project was about and how Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) will be addressed and packaged in the revised TAA Training Package. Since then, the first draft of the Training Package was prepared in September/October 2002 with consultations undertaken over November/ January 2003.

While feedback from the first draft of the ten LLN units indicated a generally positive response, a number of issues were raised which we have addressed as part of the second draft of the units.

The most significant changes since the first draft are:

- a new 'super teacher' unit DEL503A which picks up much of the repetitive Performance Criteria in the first draft of the LLN Delivery units (note this unit is part of the core at Diploma level)
- more focussed LLN delivery units
- a new unit for providing LLN support in a workplace learning environment
- the unit for workplace delivery is now split into two units: one for design, one for delivery—this response followed concerns that the original unit was too big
- changes to the Coordinate Tutors unit so that programs where the coordinators are also volunteers can bring in qualified LLN specialists to do the training
- broadening the audience and hopefully some clarification in the unit, Tutor Adults in LLN, to include workplace and vet trainers
- changes to the wording around validity and sufficiency of assessment in all units to try to tighten this aspect up generally, but also make the Recognition of Current Competency and training issues clearer
- wording changes across LLN units

These units seek to provide clear advice for the assessment guidelines and language requirements in the Training Package as well as how the units should be packaged.

For further information contact Jane Carnegie, NAWT National Manager and Margaret Lanchbery, Senior Project Officer, Ph: 03 9645 7455 or email jane@bsitab.org and margaret@bsitab.org

26th ACAL National Literacy Conference

Metropolis to Desert Sands—Literacy in Multiple Environments

Alice Springs Convention Centre Northern Territory 19-20 September 2003

The theme for this year's conference is 'Metropolis to Desert Sands— literacies in multiple environments'. It aims to provide a unique experience to participants in capturing the diversity in adult literacy and numeracy provision across the country, and to examine the range of delivery modes which allow the needs of individuals and communities to be met. It will provide a window to the methodologies operating in particular domains such as vocational education and training, and Indigenous and multicultural environments where differing value systems and cultures exist.

A particular focus will be the uniqueness of the literacies and numeracies required in differing sites, such as literacies for society and work, the environmental literacies needed to sustain remote and regional communities, the use and impact of technology in literacy development and literacies for learners with special needs.

Due date for registration is 4th September 2003.

To Register:

Contact Dick Roebuck

Ph: 07 3875 5862 Fax 07 3875 6868

Email r.roebuck@griffith.edu.au

Conference details and the registration form are also available from the internet—

<http://cwpp.slq.qld.gov.au/qcal/arch/2001-odyssey.htm>



Desert marbles

courtesy—NT Tourist Commission

Keynote Speakers

Professor Donald Leu, University of Connecticut

Associate Professor Isaac Brown, Northern Territory University

Mr Bob Collins, Office of Chief Minister, Northern Territory Government

Accommodation and travel

Accommodation and group travel rates have been negotiated with Northern Gateway.

Bookings can be made on the Toll Free Number 1800 174 800 or 08 8941 1394.

Cost

Presenter /Member	Delegate	Full time student /Pensioner	One day only Fri / Sat (circle)	Conf. dinner Friday evening	ACAL Forum (see below)
\$330.00	\$395.00	\$220.00	\$195.00	\$77.00	\$66.00

ACAL Forum— Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and learning

Alice Springs Convention Centre

Thursday 18th September 9.00am—4.30pm cost \$66.00

Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have among the lowest English literacy levels of any group in Australia. Researchers, educationalists, political leaders and Indigenous people agree that low literacy levels underpin social disadvantage for many Indigenous Australians. Even with the best of intentions much of the effort from the literacy and related fields fails to impact on a significant proportion of the Indigenous community and we need to again consider the reasons for this.

Register through Dick Roebuck (details above)

Tasmanian forum report— Beyond training: locating literacy in social policy

by Geraldine Castleton & Helen Foley

This ACAL forum held recently in Launceston represented a significant moment for literacy professionals in Australia. It examined the need for literacy policy responses to extend beyond the training sector, into the broader social policy arena and explored practical ways of how this might be done.

Lis De Vries from the Tasmanian Council of Social Services began with a sobering summary of the plight of the disadvantaged in Tasmania. The Senate poverty enquiry has confirmed that Tasmania is the most difficult place to live in Australia if you are trying to get out of the poverty trap—making it a pertinent place to begin a discussion about how to position literacy in the wider policy landscape.

...the whole day proved refreshing and exciting, reinvigorating the participants as social justice activists and reminding us what first drew us to this field.

A panel of speakers then took up key themes introduced by Lis. Pat Millar, from the Centre for Learning and Research in Regional Australia at the University of Tasmania noted that literacy continues to be seen as a problem of individuals rather than one that is more systemically-based and sustained. She pointed out, however, that there is evidence emerging of good outcomes coming from projects focused on community capacity building. Maggie Aird, Manager, Equity Standards Branch, Tasmanian Department of Education, then spoke of current initiatives in Tasmania that included a focus on a systematic approach to adult literacy.

The ACAL Archive

The Australian Council for Adult Literacy's Archive was established in 1996 for the purpose of collecting archival material related to the provision of adult literacy in Australia. The collection is located in Sydney. ACAL is seeking a person with an interest in this fascinating history to undertake the following tasks:

- sort and catalogue recent donations to the archive
- integrate these materials with the existing collection
- update the current hard data records.

This work may suit a postgraduate student, researcher or someone retired from the field. ACAL has funding for approximately 100 hours work, at a rate to be negotiated.

Further information—contact Rosie Wickert Ph: 02 9514 1315

Matt Garven, State Director of Fusion Australia, noted that his organisation copes with the consequences of social policy that typically takes a compartmentalised approach to issues, far removed from the lived realities of people in need of government and community assistance. He argued that organisations such as ACAL had a vital role to play in providing a conduit to reality for governments.

In the final session media consultant, Tim Grau, helped to crystallise ACAL's task. For many practitioners influencing government policy can seem unattainable as they struggle under their day-to-day teaching workloads. However, Tim's explanation of how governments prioritise an agenda and churn out policies and eventually programs (that do impact on every practitioner) was helpful in situating ourselves and the literacy agenda in the broader picture.

Tim pointed out that there are many competing issues fighting for space and if we are to have prominence we will need some strategic thinking and a sense of timing. Today's politics may be more of a contest of ideas than ideologies. There are far more swinging voters and independents today, and less predictability in how minor parties will vote in parliament. A key theme at all levels of government is a whole-of-government or cross sectoral approach to issues—this suits well our agenda of broadening literacy into other social arenas beyond training.

Tim was a virtual font of practical advice:

- identify the right individuals to contact
- understand the counter arguments to your cause
- tackle opponents early
- identify special groups/senate committees that can help
- keep briefings friendly, small, short
- leave a one page brief
- offer to be a source of further information.

Splitting into groups and working under the inspiring guidance of Tim, participants discussed aspects such as campaign management, developing a consistent message, identifying allied lobby groups, working with the media and lobbying politicians. The whole day proved refreshing and exciting, reinvigorating the participants as social justice activists and reminding us what first drew us to this field but has lain sleeping over recent years.

So wot RU w8ing 4? SMS text messaging and literacy

by Di Dell

In the following article Di Dell enjoins fellow literacy practitioners to build the new communication technologies into their teaching practice. This article is shortened for reasons of space. The complete article including the theoretical underpinnings and references can be found on the ACAL web site— www.acal.edu.au

Journalist Miranda Devine once asserted that the best thing about mobile phones is that they have spawned the revival of writing in a new generation. She pointed to the mobile phone as the best asset for modern day romance, coupled with 'a concise and witty writing style, operating within the constraints of the 160 characters of the mobile keypad.' [*Sun Herald* 17/6/01] Studies have revealed that text messaging is being used by young people to flirt [UR2DI4], to make plans to go out or to 'dump' a friend. Agility with the written word is once again reaping a social reward.

The questions arising from this are clear cut: Are our past literacy practices still adequate as new forms of texts emerge, mediated as they are by our new technologies? Does the impact of new technologies on our literacy practices require both the mastery of new and empowering genres and the mastery of the latest intellectual ideas? (For us as well as our students?)

SMS text messages are—

Text messaging is essentially the sending of short text messages in abbreviated forms, combining conventional and phonetic spellings, acronyms / e-acronyms and forms of iconography known as 'emoticons' or 'smileys' to replace a word or phrase or to give a non-verbal cue to the reader. Digital messaging text is formatted to fit the screen, which allows 160 characters.

Text messages are usually cheaper than a phone call [approximately 25 cents a message]. Users can subscribe to a PC-based SMS site, where value-added services and promotions allow mobile consumers to utilise free PC to mobile SMS messaging and to download logos, ring tones and picture messages to their mobile phones [eg, at <http://www.gomo.com.au>] They are both a local and international service.

Remember that old sayable acronym WYSIWYG or *What You See Is What You Get*? Well, the moment is back with more visual emphasis on the text itself— on capitals or not, on e-text markers, on the iconographs. Features of text messaging include shortcuts, experimentation, flexibility and tolerance. In our literacy classrooms we have created learning environments where different spellings of the same word have

been tolerated and where we have been accepting of different ways to represent ideas in writing, while moving learners towards greater language knowledge. Reminiscent of Elizabethan times, this tolerance is back in the learning community. However, this does not mean there are no rules or structure to these text mediated practices.

'...to be cool has long been desirable', connoting 'a profound effortless synchronicity with the universe as it actually is and will likely be' ... 'in tune with the future'.

Digital McLuhan, Levinson P.

Messaging texts are rule-governed and structured—

- Make messages brief and to the point—a text message is less than 160 characters
- Make words as short as you can while still readable: *Attn*, *bye*, *sec*, *min*, *pls*, *esp*, *re*, *spk*, *aka*, *ppl* [people], *thnx* [thanks], *wd* [would], *xlent* [excellent], *bcuz* [because]
- Use a letter instead of a whole word where possible: *U* you, *R* are, *B* be, *w/* with, or use combinations: *UR*, *CU*, *IC*, *ICQ* [I seek you]
- Use acronyms for longer phrases: *TBA* to be announced, *FYI* for your information, *IOW* in other words, *ASAP* as soon as possible.
- Use a number or combination of letters, words and numbers where possible: *2* to/too/two, *4* for, *B4* before, *L8er* later, *2day*, *2moro*, *3sum*

The mind boggles at the word building:

- W8*, *L8*, *M8*, *D8*.
- Spell however you like to make words shorter: *tho*, *luv*, *nite*, *wot*, *bin*, *thru*
 - Use run-on words [two or more words to form one word] if it saves space and 'saves a key-stroke': *lotsa/lotta*, *wadya*, *outta*, *CUL8er*.

Notice words that have combined with use like: *email*, *modem*, *online*.

- A capital letter will represent a longer vowel sound, while a lowercase letter a shorter one
- A capital letter can stand in place of double letters as in *gOd* [good]
- Use punctuation to replace words, the classic example being @ for 'at'. Use mathematical

symbols similarly eg. + for 'and'.

- Use combinations of letters, words and symbols to punctuate your message with your formatting, mood or intent:
<J> joking, <O> shouting, *TEXT* shouting
- Use 'emoticons' [iconographs] for the written conveyance of non-verbal cues. These are cheeky and fun as all sorts of messages are conveyed and meanings explained with almost cryptogrammatical cyphers made from punctuation marks on the keypad. The classic example being the colon, dash and a close bracket, which, when viewed sideways, shows a smiley face :-) Use them to draw an object or convey an idea: @-'—,—— represents a rose
- Combine all the above to write phrases:
EtYa<3Out = 'eat your heart out'—where a mathematical symbol + a number represent a heart: <3
{{{you}}} = a hug

Sue Butler, publisher of the *Macquarie Dictionary*, states that young people 'have to be fluent and articulate enough to pick up the style and master the in-words and the code...of the genre'. Lovers of long words and long prose, you have your dictionaries. For lovers of short words and obscure acronyms in need of translation, there are new dictionaries that abound in the bookshops and newsagents for your use—TXTMSG Dictionaries.

Textual practices for the classroom

How ready are we as teachers at tapping into successful strategies for young people that use the motivations of these new textual practices? As a strategy to exploit in the classroom, particularly with resistant learners and where resources are scarce, SMS messaging is a practical and 'cool' way to go. SMS messaging can be used as an end in itself with the learner, or as a gateway to extrapolate to other literacy events and to other forms of language use.

May I suggest that these are the sorts of classroom activities that could have their place on a teaching agenda:

- Developing a digital chat or text message into a print-based message or memo, or extended into a personal letter, where the audience is known and understandings are shared
- Paper-based written conversations
- Translations of SMS messages into written and conventional grammatical forms and spellings eg. *RU coming 2 movie L8er? W8 4 me @ usu café :-•* [kiss/love]
- Creating message situations / real tasks and constructing messages together to translate into the more concise SMS text messages, within their space constraints [using new texting dictionaries?]
- Writing concise syntheses of events, or other manageable short writing tasks, that reduce

text while still retaining meaning

- Replying to messages [new texting dictionaries have categories/chapters such as 'Reply' in their content that can be utilised, with teacher elaboration and extension].
MTE my thoughts exactly, *HTH* hope this helps, *WFM* works for me, *GA* go ahead, *Gr8*, *IOU*, etc
- Expressing an opinion using messaging acronyms in texting dictionaries, to link ideas:
AAMOF as a matter of fact, *BTW* by the way, *OTOH* on the other hand, *IME* in my experience, *IMHO* in my humble opinion, etc, and translating them into longhand—for opinion writing to a newspaper for example
- Working with abbreviated spellings to formulate conventional spellings and dictations
- Using pictures with captions/messages to simulate situations on WAP-enabled phones where picture messages with a line or two of text can be used
- Taking 'emoticons' and building up a written vocabulary of feelings and emotions to use
- Looking at abbreviations in conventional written use
- Looking at the function of punctuation to decide its use in messaging
- Using a keyboard or keypad to explain and name the punctuation marks at use in texts or to compose the vast range of iconography used in messaging
- Keyboarding/typing practice eg. word processing copy or copying email/text messages as a mechanical practice skill.

Reading poses its own challenges for new digital literacies. When texts become short and concise they can be scanned and readability improves. Short factual texts received from network phone providers [TELCOs or telephone companies], or standard voice mail message formats, typical of digital texts, can be read. However, teachers would be aware that reading skills developed in messaging and reading short digitised texts may not be sufficient to support the reading of printed texts or even longer digitised texts.

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A @-'—
by any othr name
wid smel as sweet...



LiteracyNet web site goes live

by Louise Wignall

As part of the communication strategy activity of the ANTA Adult Literacy National Project the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) **LiteracyNet** web site has been restructured and is now on line at— www.dest.gov.au/literacynet

The new site far more engaging than the previous Litnet site. The home page offers a menu of links to the Adult Literacy National Project, Programme information, Resources, Research and Useful Links. It also contains a What's New box that will contain regular updates on recently released resources or funding news.

The Adult Literacy National Project funds much of the resources and reports listed on the site. The opening page of this section outlines the history and rationale of the project. Hotlinks in a feature box on the right hand side of the screen link the user to information about key work of the project such as the Reading and Writing Hotline, the ACAL forums, and a listing of a range of targeted research, resource and professional development.

A direct link to Innovative projects funding guidelines and application forms is provided with links to recently funded projects, projects currently under development, and listing of resources and reports produced through past Innovative project funding.

2003 Innovative Grants Program

As we go to press grant recipients of the ANTA Innovative Grants program will have been notified. Full details can be found on the **LiteracyNet** web site.

The Programmes section contains links to the Commonwealth's three major language, literacy and numeracy support programmes: the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Programme, the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP) and the Adult Migrant Education Programme. Contact details for each State and Territory Training Authority are provided.

The Resources section is divided into two sections: Key national tools and resources, and Online WELL and Innovative Grant resources. The Key national tools section covers important general PD and policy resources and initiatives developed in recent years such as the suite of Workplace Communication Project PD resources; the ANTA Quality Assurance resources and national assessment resources.

Key web site links to additional sites such as the National Reporting System; the National Training Information Service and Negotiating Workplace Training make this well worth book-marking.

The second section of resources includes a comprehensive themes-based listing of resources developed using funds under ANTA Adult Literacy National Projects and/or the WELL Programme (Workplace English Language and Literacy). There are over forty resources online that can accessed or ordered via external links or that are directly downloadable from the site.

The Research section includes: Statistics, Australian research, and International Research. The statistics section provides links to useful statistical articles that provide information on Australian language, literacy and numeracy and essential skills performance. The Australian research section includes links to key recent research overview documents on the VOCED database, the ALNARC web site and the NCVER Adult literacy Research page. These links provide the user listings of key national adult literacy research outputs from the last ten years.

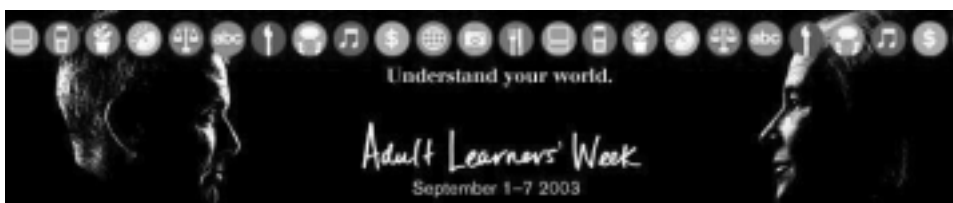
The final section of direct links to International Research agencies that include adult literacy amongst their focus is still under development.

Finally the Useful Links section includes links to a range of additional sites that offer specialist information and resources. These include a list of professional development bodies and associations including ACAL and ACTA, associated Commonwealth Government services, access and equity related links and key resource development agencies that hold quality adult literacy related resources that are not funded through DEST.

Overall the **LiteracyNet** site is a major improvement from its predecessor and is a valuable professional development tool for the adult literacy and numeracy field that can be used by those new to the field for orientation purposes or drilled into by experienced practitioners for a specific purpose.

Trialling of the site over July and August should allow for any technical bugs to be eliminated. Feedback on the site about omissions or technical hitches should be forwarded by August 29, 2003 to Michael Johnson at DEST— michael.johnson@dest.gov.au

During Adult Learners' Week (1-7 September), debates on literacy will take place around the country, in communities big and small—collectively these debates form The Great Literacy Debate and will be a key feature of Adult Learners' Week 2003. Adult literacy is a serious issue. The debates will highlight the complex nature of literacy in the 21st century, facilitate a sophisticated understanding about how adult literacy education is provided, for whom and for what reason, encourage greater policy attention to the problem of poor adult literacy rates, and explore funding issues.



There will be one or two high profile debates staged in a major city, possibly involving the media and celebrities around one of the following topics:

- 'That literacy is the cornerstone of our democracy'
- 'That it is better to be literate than to be able to fish'
- 'That literacy is created by content'

Or you can choose your own topic, exploring for example, the role of government in adult literacy education or the question of funding.

How can your organisation get involved?

- Select a topic.
- Find three speakers per team and a lively moderator. (Participants with a local profile are good, for example: a Mayor or member of State or Federal parliament; a local radio, newspaper or TV personality; a sporting star or local actor; colourful local characters.)
- Set a date during Adult Learners' Week (1-7 September 2003) and a time and venue
- Promote, promote, promote
Contact Adult Learning Australia to register your event (free) and to advertise it on the national Adult Learners' Week web site
Contact the local radio stations and newspapers and put up flyers around town and promote the event.

Adult Learning Australia can help with a kit which includes: literacy fact sheets; 'cheat sheets' for the three topics (offering arguments for and against); and tips for promoting your debate. Your Great Literacy Debate details are promoted on the national Adult Learners' Week

web site and in media promotions. By participating in the Great Literacy Debate your organisation has the opportunity to raise its profile in the community and to showcase its work to different audiences

Here are some ideas about how you might shape a debate:

Topic 1: That literacy is the cornerstone of our democracy

Democratic nations are built on words—parliamentary debates, news media, governmental reports, constituents' letters. Yet words can be corrupted. The media can be selective; politicians can manipulate their words. So does literacy offer a key to democratic and intellectual freedom, and if so, what levels of literacy are required for citizens to make the most of their democratic rights? Or does the sophistication of today's communication open up opportunities for misinformation and imbalance?

Topic 2: That it is better to be literate than to be able to fish

Does a farmer need to know how to use the Internet? Does a footballer need to read? Does a novelist need to understand legal jargon? The world of work is increasingly dominated by computer technology, some would argue at the expense of valuing more traditional and practical skills. Others might say that computers mean we need fewer of the basic literacy skills. Will technology really improve our lives and move us beyond the mundane?

Topic 3: That literacy is created by context

This topic allows an exploration of the idea of multiple literacies, looking at either the notion that we all have skills and knowledge in some form of literacy even though we might be branded 'illiterate' in others (e.g. SMS, 'youth talk' or a language other than our native tongue) OR that evolving society means that we will never be able to be skilled in all possible literacies.

Debating rules

The following web site might be helpful:

ACT Debating Union

http://www.actdu.org.au/archives/actein_site/aboutd.html

Further information:

John Cross

Adult Learning Australia

email j.cross@ala.asn.au

Ph: 02 6274 9505

Untangling the web—an Internet learning resource

by Pat Hazell

This article is about learning materials Pat Hazell has developed that are designed to meet the Internet learning needs of adult literacy and English language students. Pat works at Petersham College, in Sydney Institute of TAFE, and these materials have been funded by Sydney Institute under its Institute Initiatives program. The writing process is nearing completion and publication options are currently being investigated.

It is now a requirement for students and teachers to be able to use the Internet. Many vocational courses are offered in flexible modes, involving online technology in the teaching process. At its most basic, a mixed flexible mode of delivery will involve email. Other modes of delivery included the use of the Internet for searching for information, student forums in chat groups, and online teaching platforms such as Blackboard.

Many people have great online skills and can fly with this mode of delivery. However, there are many others who are seriously disadvantaged by even partial online delivery of courses. These are often the same students who are already struggling with literacy, numeracy and English language skills in their studies. As well, many teachers struggle with the online skills they need.

In TAFE NSW, the policy is to increase online delivery of vocational courses. It is well recognised at Petersham College that support for students in basic online learning skills is an essential component of successful online delivery, and this project has been supported at both the college and Institute level.

However, providing basic online skills is not considered a learner support issue only but also an educational access issue. Lack of the necessary Internet skills for online study introduces a new barrier for many learners. Adult Basic Education teachers are in a position to offer learner support to students in vocational courses with online components because they know how to teach people how to learn. These learning materials should assist teachers to support online study.

Online skills for general education

Basic Internet and email skills are not only needed by students studying vocational courses by mixed modes of delivery. The need also exists for adult literacy and numeracy students in general education courses to gain online skills as part of their coursework. Part of the curriculum includes the acquisition of literacy skills in emerging technologies, including online skills. And beyond our own student cohort, the

same skills are increasingly required by everyone in our society. There are many people who do not have basic Internet literacy skills and who are not our part of our student group who would also like access to a resource that would offer a user-friendly introduction.

Developing the resource

I have been teaching Internet skills to ABE students for several semesters now. Having developed a teaching program and a range of materials for classroom use it became apparent to me that these materials could provide the basis for this resource.

The Adult Basic Education section at Petersham applied for funding through the Institute Initiatives program and I was funded for the writing of the resource. A wide range of published resources, both paper-based and online, were gathered and evaluated for their usefulness in teaching adult basic education students, and for the technical content that I would need to include in the resource.

As modules were developed, they were trialled with students in an Internet class, which led to further refinements. At the same time, Diane Dell, a literacy teacher with particular expertise in both the required technology and instructional design, reviewed the materials and trialled them separately with a different group of students. The materials have also been offered to other teachers to trial as they wish, and teachers with IT expertise have also been asked to review the materials. Feedback from this procedure has influenced the look and content of the final product.

General description of the learning materials

Untangling the Web is a set of paper-based learning materials for use by literacy students, who want to gain generic skills using the Internet and email. The skills include a basic understanding of the Internet and its uses, Internet language, basic Internet searching strategies and basic email skills. The text and activities are never higher than NRS Level 3 and could be used effectively at NRS Level 2 with teacher support.

The learning materials are paper-based because teaching online skills using the Internet on its own is difficult. Internet learning can later be extended through ongoing use of the Internet. Where possible, answers are provided. Visually, they have many graphics, text is not dense and fonts are reader friendly.

What the materials do not cover

There are limits to the scope of the learning materials. The resource does not attempt to address the needs of people with very low literacy skills, or of people who have no familiarity with a computer.

It was important to choose content that would provide enough useful information to give learners a jumping off point, so they would then be able to extend their own learning. Choices also had to be made that would accommodate the access issues being addressed, such as the use of public access computers. An example of this is the choice of the Internet based Hotmail email program, rather than Outlook.

Content

The resource is made up of five units, teacher notes and a glossary. The first unit is basic Internet information—the history of the Internet, how it works, how to get connected, places where the Internet can be used if you don't own a computer. The second and third units address Internet skills. They include language of the Internet, some basic functions of the Internet, browsers, search engines and searching strategies. The fourth and fifth units teach email

skills. Each unit includes a glossary of terms. Teacher notes have been kept to a minimum.

Instructional design

Readability is of prime concern— word meanings are never difficult; sentence construction is direct; paragraphs are short. The tone is direct and friendly. The writer is not evident in the materials, so occasionally passive voice is used. This resource is primarily a procedural text so the classic elements of the procedural genre are present such as: frequent use of headings as signposts; attention to instructional layout; extensive use of labelled diagrams. All technical terms are explained, and instructions are clear and unambiguous. The whole text is ordered step-by-step. It was difficult to decide the best order for Internet teaching materials, which are not in any way linear. It was necessary to create a logical order that would build a set of skills without leaving gaps of knowledge that would be needed at a later time, or be repetitive. Reading online does not work from left to right and top to bottom. The reader has the power to go into any part of the text through hyperlinks.

The text is full of activities to actively engage the learner. It should assist in literacy development, as well as Internet skills development. In addition to paper-based activities, students are offered a range of online activities to practice and extend the skills they have been learning about.

Sample activity pages opposite—

What innovative strategies work for low-level learners?

I asked myself this question when I started teaching low-level learners four years ago because traditional strategies didn't seem to work. I started to experiment with various strategies: from using the senses with activities like aromatherapy, cooking, also art and craft, to promoting self-esteem and physical well-being. I discovered through time that some students were making progress and this was very exciting.

I wondered what other teachers who taught low-level learners did and this led me to talk to my manager about the possibility of an investigation. We approached the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and they provided funding to undertake a research.

The funding is to pay for a research worker for ten hours a week to oversee the project for one year. The researcher will develop surveys to be sent to teachers nation wide. From the survey

responses 12 teachers will be selected to attend a focus group on 'Innovative strategies for low-level learners'. Those 12 teachers will each keep a reflective journal for a period of a term and produce a summary of their findings which will be incorporated into the final report. The teachers will meet again for a final focus group session and share their information.

The findings will begin to document the wealth of experience that teachers who teach low-literacy learners have. They will also begin to provide teachers with the support they need to assist with their teaching and isolation.

If you would like to be put on an interest list for the research please contact—

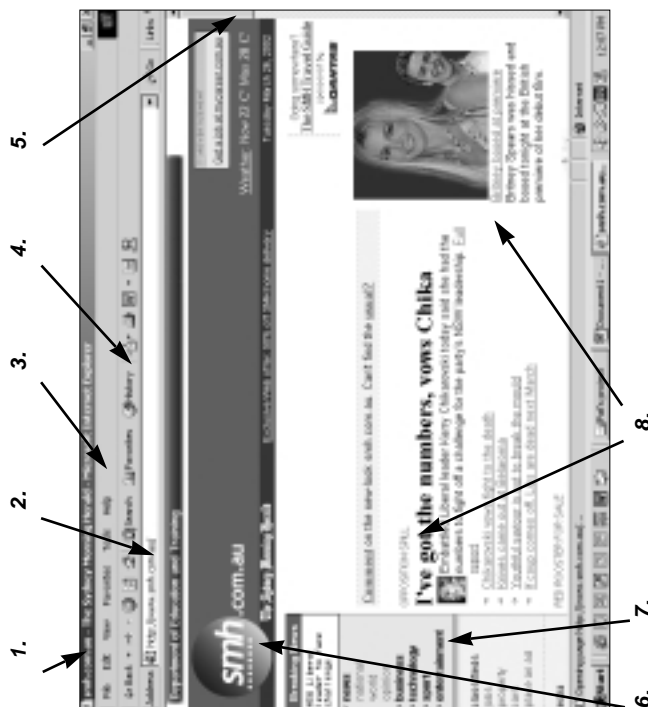
Natalie Nawrocki
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A page from Unit 1

This page contains an activity about home pages, and follows some information text and a labelled example of a home page which are on the previous page. In this activity, the learner deconstructs an Internet text to look at how it is organised, and the language that is used. When we teach the Internet, we need to teach how to navigate text – how to move from page to page and read dense graphical text. People have a large number of choices on this page. The aim here is to look for generic features in a web page that is full of text.

Activity

Look at another home page. This one is for the newspaper, the *Sydney Morning Herald*. See if you recognise some of the things you saw on the TAFE NSW home page. There are also some different things, such as advertising. All web sites are a bit different from each other.



—courtesy Sydney Morning Herald

Match the numbers to the names in the list below. The first one has been done for you.

1. — title bar
- scroll bar
- directory
- internet site name
- news stories
- button bar
- internet address
- advertisement
- menu bar

A page from unit 1

The literacy in this activity requires the analysis of graphic representation of information in a table. Learners use the text to do the activity, by scanning to locate specific information, as well as referring to a short article on the previous page. They also use their understanding of how a table works. This paper-based activity enhances students' literacy skills as well as teaching about the Internet.

Activity

Below are some things that happened in the world at the same time as the Internet was developing. Write the Internet event beside the world event. The information on the previous page will help you. One answer has been done for you.

Internet event

- 50 000 networks connect to the Internet and the number is growing fast
- The Internet gets its name, and first comes to Australian universities
- The US Defense Department develops a network to withstand nuclear attack
- The US networks link with networks outside the United States
- Commercial organisations realise how useful the Internet can be and the amount of information available increases very fast

World events

- The first man walks on the moon
- President Kennedy is assassinated

Internet events

- The Vietnam war rages
- The Beatles reach the height of their fame
- Sydney Opera House opens

- Chernobyl nuclear power station explodes
- Australia's Bicentenary
—200 years of white people living here

- The Gulf War takes place
- Princess Diana dies in a car crash in Paris

- Sydney holds the Olympic Games
- Terrorists destroy New York's Twin Towers
- 50 000 networks connect to the Internet and the number is growing fast

Keeping ALBE teachers able—who is responsible for our professional development?

by Helen Foley & Jim Thompson

In a time of hotly contested controversies, few topics in adult literacy bring about such an instant, varied and feisty response as the professional development of the Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) practitioner.

The past few years have seen the debate about pre-service and in-service skills and knowledge of this group alter dramatically. It seems the centre has shifted away from the array of university sector under-graduate and post-graduate education programs, supplemented by marginalised accredited programs, and some non-accredited programs that until a short while ago were the accepted norm for transiting into the field. In just a few months the relevance of these programs has slipped away.

We now hear talk of our professional development almost exclusively in terms of the place skills and competencies have within the most central of all National Training Packages—the Training and Assessment (TAA) Training Package. The surprise and hostility expressed by ALBE teachers to this change shows that many have been caught napping.

The current situation is a profound shift and one that brings with it significant possibilities and grave concerns. ALBE, in its more training flavoured guise of language, literacy and numeracy (LLN), now has a firm foothold in mainstream vocational training rhetoric and compliance and a broader profile. This could seem to give ALBE a new bargaining position within the national training reform agenda. However this comes at a price. ALBE's traditional philosophical base and highly reflective practice, and its university based, theory-embedded professional development ideology, sits uneasily within the 'staff training' notions and minimal requirements of professional development that pervade the national training agenda.

The ALBE field at this critical time must put forward a clear position of professional development, a position that will ensure the most vulnerable and disadvantaged clients in the VET sector, ALBE students, are also those who receive the very highest quality teaching from the highest quality teachers.

Equally important is the need to ensure that ALBE's successful foray into mainstream VET programming is not compromised by a limited vision of what constitutes 'quality' in integrated LLN. The field still has much to learn and offer

in developing collaborative solutions to long term issues of LLN demands in Australian vocational training.

The issues are far from simple. Professional development has come to mean all things to all people and indeed must cover a broad spectrum of developmental needs from the raw beginner to the most experienced ALBE teacher. Professional development for ALBE teachers and managers encompasses—

- pre-service teachers qualifications in adult education
- post-graduate VET qualifications and training
- university recognised qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy
- assessment and training in the VET sector
- curriculum development and moderation
- keeping abreast of changes to clientele
- working with diverse learners
- the dissemination of new teaching and learning methodologies and strategies
- personal survival techniques
- up-skilling in the new funding and reporting mechanisms
- familiarisation with Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) policies and procedures
- Registered Training Organisation (RTO) strategic and business planning
- human resource changes
- enterprise teaching agreements
- new technologies and software.

Issues for staff new to the ALBE field

Teachers new to the ALBE field must work out how their experience and qualifications relate to what is required in the VET sector. They are also immediately confronted by the following questions: How do their university recognised qualifications articulate into those required for the VET sector? What do ALBE students need that is different from school or university students, or indeed students in mainstream vocational courses? How are the pathways for diverse students from ALBE into mainstream VET, university, work, community and personal pursuits constructed and maintained? How is the development and delivery of a VET based ALBE curriculum different from the delivery of other qualifications? What resources are there for adults and where are they located? How do they gain an understanding of the Australian Quality Training Framework, the Australian Qualifications Framework and the National Reporting System? What do all the jargon and acronyms mean and how will they be affected

by them? How do casual and part-time teachers find the answers they need or even anyone to talk to at a large busy RTO?

Issues for existing ALBE staff

In addition to the issues confronting new staff, experienced staff are often required to take a leading role in—

- moderation—some ALBE curricula such as the CGEA and CSWE have had moderation built in as a key component in ensuring quality and assessment. This has been an advantage for ALBE staff since the implementation of the AQTF. However time and resources still need to be found to ensure that all staff are familiar with curriculum and AQTF requirements.
- training staff in the use of national mechanisms such as the NRS.
- incorporating new learning, new theory of adult literacy into practice
- integrating LL&N into Training Packages and VET training
- working with non-ALBE students
- providing LLN and cultural awareness training for others such as managers, administrative, auditing, vocational training and customer service staff.
- rejuvenating their own practice and the practice of their peers
- re-thinking the philosophical aspects of ALBE and the links with practice in changing political and economic times and social environments
- preparing submissions and project applications.
- coming to grips with new technologies for communication and delivery.

ALBE staff are usually made up of a mix of experienced and inexperienced staff from diverse backgrounds and with diverse expertise. Together they face the above issues and emergent issues concerned with new funding programs and reporting mechanisms. These issues are often magnified for remote and isolated ALBE staff who are pressed for time, resources and communication opportunities.

Where to from here?

For appropriate professional development and the enhancement of their professionalism, ALBE practitioners will need to be pro-active to

gain what they need. The field has diversified extraordinarily in the last decade and will continue to evolve. It is often perceived by practitioners that professional development has been severely eroded with the passing of the National Staff Development Committee ALBE modules and the limited offering of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Teaching courses. This combined with the reduction in university post-graduate courses for adult literacy and numeracy teaching has made it very difficult for teachers to assume responsibility for maintaining their professional currency.

The continual improvement emphasis of the AQTF should encourage managers to work in collaboration with practitioners to provide relevant professional development. Attempts will be made to partly address ALBE practitioners needs with the proposed inclusion of ALBE competencies in the Training and Assessment package. The danger here is that these competencies will be seen as all that is necessary and not part of a continually evolving and broadening professional development process.

In spite of all of what seems to be an almost overwhelming number of issues and concerns facing the ALBE practitioner in these busy times, there are many professional initiatives constantly under way across Australia. These may occur as part of an overall plan or as isolated activities. Many are generated for, and funded by national programs such as Reframing The Future and Australian Flexible Learning, or guided by contractual funding arrangements. Many more arise spontaneously across groups of like-minded practitioners who assume a sense of responsibility for maintaining and expanding their own professional base. A coordinated network approach in each state and territory will ensure that ALBE practitioners can not only participate in existing opportunities but make their voices heard so that professional development is truly relevant and current and the commitment of ALBE practitioners can continue to deliver the goods well into the future.

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Culture and Numeracy—just how useful are our western concepts of numbering?

by Helen Verran

As a lecturer in the Institute of Education at the University of Ife in Nigeria, Helen Verran was responsible for retraining primary school teachers. In this article she writes entertainingly on how Western concepts of number, and how it should be taught, ran smack-bang into the version of numbering held by the indigenous Yoruba people.

Working across divides in teaching and learning can be addictive. We can become sensitised to delicious moments of interruption when, fleetingly, we glimpse that our world could be other than it is.

A Story

Mr Ojo was not the most organised of teachers, but he had good rapport with children. This morning he had excelled himself in his preparations, but my heart sank when I saw how he had set himself up to teach the lesson on measuring length. He had assembled about twenty small cards: thick cardboard 10cm long and about 5cm wide, marked off in 1cm divisions along the length; one card for each group of two or three children. To go with this he had twenty lengths of string about 2m long. Discussing how the lesson might be modified so that it would be suitable for the 50 or so Yoruba children, in classrooms quite devoid of resources, helped students prepare for their practical teaching exercise in the schools around Ile-Ife in Nigeria.

The lesson Mr Ojo was to teach, 'Length in Our Bodies', involved children using string to record another child's height, leg length, arm length etc, then a metre rule to report the length in metric units. In the lab we had measured each other: string to represent height, lay the string on the floor and use chalk to record the length, then when one of the few metre ruler becomes available, measure the distance between chalk marks and record the measurement in a chart. The student teachers were nervous about teaching this way. It meant getting children out

of their desks and putting materials other than pencils and exercise books into their hands. They were liable to become unruly and noisy at such a departure from the norm, and this could be a serious problem with 45-50 pupils in a small, enclosed space.

I had already watched several other students deliver our jointly devised lesson— and with very mixed results! Mrs Taiwo, for example, had as usual been well prepared. She had twenty one-metre rulers which she had commissioned a local tinsmith to produce and paid for with her own money. But her lesson had been a disaster. Very few of her carefully drawn charts were filled up with names and numbers representing heights— somewhere between bodies, string, and chart most children 'lost the plot'. Mrs Taiwo, upset, blamed the children and the poor teaching of their regular teacher.

Mr Ojo, had, it seemed to me, taken a much easier way out in lesson preparation with his 10 cm cards. But I was not impressed with them. Yet I was soon forced to change my opinion. Speaking in Yoruba, Mr Ojo called a boy to the front. End of string just under the boy's heel, he held his finger at the point on the string which matched the top of the boy's head. Tying a loose knot at this point, he took the other end of the string from under the boy's foot and, holding this at one end of a card, he wound the length of string around until he came to the knot. He instructed: 'Count the number of full lengths on the card (eg. "nine" 10cm lengths). Write down the number. Multiply by ten. How do we multiply

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by ten? Now add the bit of string left over... Yes, we have 96cm.'

I was delighted and scandalised at the same time. The lesson could only be judged a complete success— Mr. Ojo was beaming and so was I. But at the same time I was confused and puzzled. 'Where was the notion of extension so important for children to grasp as the "abstract" element of length?' I asked myself. The lesson was both the same and different to the one we had prepared. Mr Ojo's friends were not confused— they thought his little card a great invention and enthusiastically incorporated it into their lessons.

Whenever I tell the story of this episode I am liable to begin shaking again with laughter. I remember my confused feelings of delight and suspicion, failure and success. The laughter has a lot to do with the fact that it is difficult to write that story to accurately capture the subtle and complex relations around knowledge that characterised my participation in that classroom.

In the complex arenas of working across divisions as teachers and learners, we can easily lose sight of what really matters— grasping the transformative moment. It is easy to become blinded by theories and policies, implementation strategies, and evaluation tactics. In staying grounded, in attending to the here and now, one of the things that really matters, is having robust stories of knowledge and knowing— of what numbers are for example.

The most common story of what numbers are, a story which has numbers as 'natural', would see Mr Ojo's lesson as failure by 'Africans'— children, teachers and whole societies who adopt 'primitive' ways of numbering. And failure on the part of the lecturer too. I did not uphold the standards of modern university teaching and insist on the teaching of length in the 'proper' way. I was a lecturer accredited with institutional power to induct teachers into the canon—in this case the warranted account of numbering through length. The adult learners I was supervising were students under my jurisdiction. I had the right and the responsibility to tell them they were wrong—award 'pass' and 'fail'. And Mr. Ojo should have failed—he did not do things correctly.

Another almost equally orthodox story, one that has numbers as 'constructed', would see a different story— in this version Mr. Ojo and his fellow students are heroically resisting Western incursions and teaching a Yoruba version of numbering in the school curriculum. This story would have them opposing and challenging the white lecturer, replacing her prescriptions with a form of indigenous measurement. My third sort of story of numbers would say that here is the

possibility for a transformative moment. It would keep the laughter and try to stay true to the disconcertment. It would precipitate the question of how we might do things differently.

There is of course endless disagreement about what numbers are, just as there are unresolvable differences over what knowledge and knowing are. Each theory provides its own basis for pedagogy. Mr. Ojo presented an image to the children where length was portrayed as a multiply-divided bundle of string. The implication was that multiplicity could be counted and manipulated to come up with a value for length. Mrs Taiwo who presented an uninterrupted straight line, portrayed the proper, and only correct image for length. Mrs Taiwo's line will be sectioned as a subsequent (an arbitrary) action, but the linear extension is understood to constitute a true image of how (abstract) qualities, and (abstract) numbers really exist in the world. This, as I implied earlier is a Eurocentric analysis. It excludes local knowledge from the curriculum. Teaching across the divides is (re)making 'them' like 'us'.

According to the 'number as a socially constituted tool' explanation, both Mrs. Taiwo and Mr. Ojo were correct, but for different reasons. We can understand Mrs. Taiwo as giving the children an elegant picture of number in English, and Mr. Ojo as doing a good job in coming up with a neat picture of number in Yoruba quantifying. The explanation presents English and Yoruba quantifying as separate symbolising domains. Children should learn either one or the other: the English one if you take the point of view of conventional schooling, the Yoruba one if you are a traditional Yoruba fundamentalist. We could imagine that learning in the one domain might interfere with learning in the other— this escapes the pitfall of Eurocentrism, but falls for divisionism. It implies that divisions should not be taught across, that differences, purities, should be promoted. Yoruba teachers should teach Yoruba number and Westerners



Total population of Nigeria is (July 1999 est.) 113,828,587. Out of the 250 (or more) ethnic groups, the Hausa and Fulani of the north, Yoruba of the south-west and Ibo of the south-east constitute 65% of the total population. (source SBS 'World Guide'— www.theworldnews.com.au/Worldguide)

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should teach Western number. This opts for what might be called 'an apartheid of numeracy'.

If we look carefully we see that Mr Ojo and the children are doing something that is at once neither and both Yoruba number and Western number. Mr Ojo is managing a complex arena where numbers have life. He is 'negotiating' with the numbers, and messing around with them, bring new sorts of number to life— a bit different and a bit the same. There lies problem with both those orthodox frames of analysis. The ways they explain what numbers are, that sort of 'both and neither,' is not even conceivable. If we are to stay true to the laughter in working across divides, we need another story of what numbers are.

With orthodox stories of number we cannot recognise Yoruba classrooms, and other contexts of working across divides, as sites where it might be possible to generate new ways to go on together, as well as regenerating the old, different ways of going-on. In contrast to these

two orthodox explanations— the one having numbers as found and natural, the other having numbers as socially constructed and relative, I want an account of numbers which recognises numbers as our familiars. I want numbers as real 'inhabitants' of the here and now. I want to be able to tell how we remake numbers in going-on, as they re-make us.

I want an account of numbers as embodied— embedded in the here and now. I am looking to the ways numbers are consolidated as routines, repetitions, and rituals. Number here is dependently arising within the collective in which it has life. And it is an object, an entity. Mr Ojo, by combining the constituent routines of English language and Yoruba language numbers in novel ways, effects a numbering that is, at the same time, 'both and neither'. This is where the success of his lesson lies. And, this is also the origin of my disconcertment.

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