



Four seasons in one day—literacies in changing climates

Cold heavy rain—today—succeeded by sultry heat—and then thunder—with frost in the evening! The weather of four seasons within twelve hours!!! from the journal of Georgiana McCrae (artist, Melbourne, 1844).

The conference title *Four Seasons in One Day—Literacies in Changing Climates* encapsulates the diversity of the adult literacy field. The Conference theme alludes to the potential for exploring literacies in changing climates, be they political, social, economic or educational.

Morag Fraser is confirmed as a guest speaker at the Conference. She is well known for her regular contributions to newspapers, radio and television, and as editor of *Eureka Street* magazine from 1991 to 2003. She has published books on the ABC and a collection of essays on aspects of Australian identity, *Seams of Light*, plus numerous articles in publications as diverse as *Meanjin* and *The Big Issue*.

The conference dinner will be held at the Melbourne Museum in the Australia Gallery.



Melbourne Museum—venue for the 2004 Conference dinner

Delegates may join a guided tour of the gallery before dinner. In a shift from past years, the Arch Nelson address will be delivered at the dinner by **Daryl Evans** who brings a breadth of knowledge of the field and in particular museums and their place in education for the twenty-first century.

This year's ACAL Conference will show the importance and value placed on further developing a literate and numerate society that embodies lifelong learning and community building.

The Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) is excited to host the ACAL conference and encourages you to register on the web site for regular updates—www.valbec.org.au/acalconf
We encourage people to make presentations at the Conference. Proposals can be submitted at— www.valbec.org.au/acalconf/call.html

The 27th National Adult Literacy Conference will be held Friday 10 & Saturday 11 September 2004 at the Carlton Crest Hotel, Queens Rd, Melbourne and coincides with the national research forum *Adult literacy—a barometer on policy and practice* on Thursday 9 September at the same venue.

Lynne Matheson
VALBEC

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Adult literacy

A barometer on policy and practice

National research forum and strategic conversation

Thursday, 9 September 2004
9.00am–3.30pm (includes lunch)
Carlton Crest Hotel, Melbourne
\$55 (including GST)

In changing climates what tools do we use to chart a course? What are useful aids to navigation? How do we get our bearings?

Research is a valuable tool for testing where we are at and helps us chart a course as to where we are headed. The aim of this event is to present findings from the national adult literacy research program as a barometer on current policy and practice, and to organise a conversation to inform the development of a national adult language, literacy and numeracy strategic plan.

The aim of the research forum is to bring participants up to date with the latest findings from National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) research on adult language, literacy and numeracy from the past two years.

The forum will cover :

- What does literacy mean in today's world?
- How does literacy influence life, workplaces, training and community settings?
- What are the new approaches to literacy provision?
- What are the features of successful adult literacy policy?

NCVER research forums are designed to provide an easy way to keep up to date with vocational education and training and related research findings, as well as crucial messages arising for policy and practice.

During the day participants will be invited to take part in a strategic conversation to discuss and inform the development of a national adult language, literacy and numeracy strategic plan as a companion document to *Shaping Our Future*, the national strategy for VET 2004–2010.

This forum is aimed at policy makers, employer and employee organisations, specialist adult literacy educators, community providers and interested individuals.

This important one-day event coincides with the ACAL 2004 national adult literacy conference *Four seasons in one day—literacies in changing climates* on 10 and 11 September.

Registrations for the research forum and the ACAL conference can be made through VALBEC (Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council). Conference updates and registration information can be viewed at:
www.valbec.org.au/acalconf

NCVER manages the national adult literacy research program on behalf of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) through the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). This event is subsidised by the ANTA Adult Literacy National Project.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is contributing to the renewed focus on national adult literacy and numeracy policy with seven new research projects.

The impetus for this research comes from *Shaping our future: Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training 2004-2010*, which emphasises the importance of adult literacy and numeracy policy and the development of effective strategies for adult learners. In particular, the emergent literacy practices associated with the growth of new information and communication technologies (ICT) are undergoing change at an unprecedented rate.

How will we gain the literacies essential to communicative workplaces? Are those VET educators, who are grounded by their education and values in the 'late age of print', prepared to work with these adult learners to help equip them with the new literacies in productive ways? How might adult literacy programs change to meet the needs of learners who must not only work with and understand words, but also digitised fragments of video, sound, photographs, graphics and animation? These are some of the questions that Ilana Snyder, Anne Jones and Joseph Lo Bianco will investigate in their project, *Using ICT in adult literacy education: new practices, new challenges*.

Another two studies are investigating the inclusion of literacy and numeracy practices alongside development of vocational skills within the vocational education and training (VET) sector. It has been claimed that the integrated approach is a dominant form of provision and that it is an effective model, but others have questioned its effectiveness.

Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick will investigate ways in which trainers and assessors integrate literacy practices into their VET programs. An important aspect of their project, *Investigation of the integrated approach to the delivery of adult literacy*, is how training provider staff interpret the literacy requirements in Training Packages.

Rosie Wickert is seeking to identify successful cross-sectoral training approaches and analyse the implications for community workers and programs. Importantly, her project, *Building literacy and numeracy capability in communities: learning from exemplary practice*, will contribute to identifying and updating trends in Australian social policy.

A further three projects consider the effects of poor literacy and numeracy, not just for the education sector, but for Australian society, economy, health and welfare:

- *Chemical spraying and handling: Teaching and learning numeracy on the job*
Ardyce Harris, Susan Micek and Gail FitzSimons are investigating numeracy practice in relation to chemical spraying and handling by workers in the horticulture, rural production, local government, outdoor recreation and warehousing industries. This type of work places high demands on employees' numeracy and literacy skills. Investigating how these skills are taught and learnt within the context of chemical spraying and handling in the workplace will provide useful insights to assist workplace trainers and institutional teaching and learning.
- *An analysis of the economic returns to training for adults with low numeracy skills in the US and Australia*

Lynne Gleeson will examine whether low
continued on back page

Literacy Link (ISSN 0158-3026) is the newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, a voluntary organisation set up in 1976 to support the development of adult literacy, numeracy and basic education in Australia.

ACAL promotes co-operation among interested organisations and individuals, both government and non-government, by undertaking and encouraging appropriate study, research and action.

Literacy Link is distributed free—to obtain your copy contact ACAL. Back issues are available from the ACAL web site— www.acal.edu.au

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International trends in adult literacy policy and programs

by Rosa McKenna & Lynne Fitzpatrick

Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick are directors of Communication in Education and Training Pty Ltd. They have both worked in the adult literacy field for many years. Currently they are working on developing a resource on contextualised teaching and learning in vocational education and training and an NCVER project to identify and describe the literacy practices developed using an integrated training approach (see previous page).

What does literacy mean in today's world, with its rapidly changing technology and new landscapes in education and the workplace? To answer these questions the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training (NCVER) funded a suite of research projects in 2003. One of these projects investigated international literacy policies, trends and initiatives and their implications for Australia. The report, *Building sustainable adult literacy provision: A review of international trends in adult literacy policy and programs*, will be published by NCVER shortly.

This article provides some of the significant messages drawn from the research and a summary of the features of adult literacy policy provision in countries in the study. The full report includes a chapter describing adult literacy policy and provision in each country and Australia and provides a critical insight into how Australia might continue to rebuild its adult literacy policy and provision. It features a comprehensive reference section.

The scope of the study

The countries selected by NCVER for the study were Canada, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The research was confined to a desk study. It includes an analysis of the significant research and policy statements by international institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD). It also covered descriptions and analysis of the adult literacy policy initiatives, frameworks and program provision including investment levels and outcomes, an analysis of the extent to which 'new literacies' are being addressed in other countries and Australia; and a discussion of the implications of international trends for Australia.

The study is limited to programs funded by governments or their agencies. The study used

Lankshear's four categories of literacy—the lingering basics, the new basics, the elite literacies and foreign language literacy to describe the range of approaches in each country¹.

Messages from the research

- The countries in this desk study: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the U.K. and the U.S., have a similar distribution of literacy performance among their adult population according to the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) conducted 1994–1998.
- Significant proportions of adults in these countries, between 45% and 55%, perform at the two lowest levels of the prose scale of the IALS indicating that many adults will have difficulty performing everyday literacy tasks and taking advantage of opportunities to participate in further education and work.
- Most of these adults are already in the labour market and many will remain there for the next twenty years so that interventions to improve literacy need to be targeted at the post-compulsory education system. Needs analysis and participation studies in the countries studied have yielded important information about the extent of unmet needs and ways to tailor provision to meet adult needs and lifestyle.
- Understandings of literacy and literacy pedagogy have changed over the last decade. Literacy requirements will continue to expand to include progressive use of technological means of communication and a larger volume of information. The pedagogical trends are towards a provision contextualised to adult experience. The sites and contexts for learning need to fit adult purposes and be available through all life stages. This implies that an ongoing and lifelong strategy for literacy development in post-compulsory education is necessary.
- International organisations such as the United Nations, the Organisation for

1. Lonsdale, M and McCurry, D 2003, *Literacy in the new millennium: A discussion paper*, NCVER

Economic and Cultural Development and the International Labour Organisation all recommend the development of a strong system of adult basic education as part of a country's education and training system.

- In all comparable countries adult literacy remains marginalised and under-resourced, lacking the capacity to deliver programs to meet estimated needs. The U.K. has developed the most comprehensive policy and provision while federations like Australia, Canada and the U.S. need to engage the cooperation of the states, territories, provinces and major stakeholders to make progress.
- Features of a successful national adult literacy policy recommended by international organisations and gleaned from the experience of countries in the study appear to be a national leadership structure, national research and referral programs, flexible funding and diverse delivery models, nationally consistent reporting and quality assurance systems, and employing and maintaining enough teachers.
- The Australian post-compulsory education system already has many of these features in place and policies affecting the delivery of adult literacy have been 'built in'. To ensure that the benefits of adult literacy are available to those who need it to fulfil personal opportunities and also contribute to Australia's economic and social development, adult literacy goals and targets need to be established and monitored.
- Australia has a mechanism for national adult literacy policy development through the Australian National Training Authority strategic planning process, *Shaping Our Future*. This strategy was endorsed in late 2003. The twelve strategies of this plan should be used to facilitate an action plan to identify need, to set participation rates and achievements for target groups, to build a capacity to deliver diversified programs, systematically collect data and monitor quality of delivery in an action plan to be negotiated by those with a stake in the system in 2004.
- A successful strategy for raising awareness about the effect of poor literacy and policy development has been to conduct national summits or forums. The Australian National Training Authority and the Department of Education Training and Science should demonstrate national leadership by engaging stakeholders in these issues.
- The U.K., New Zealand and Ireland all feature



similar qualification frameworks to Australia. These countries have identified levels of the national qualifications systems in which 'basic' or 'foundation' skills are developed. Australia needs to develop a similar mechanism so that adult literacy needs can be identified and provision tracked within the national system.

- Australia and Canada both have excellent records in funding national innovative projects. Both countries could learn from strategies in U.K., Ireland and New Zealand supporting the take up and maintenance of new forms of provision.
- Australia has a most successful workplace literacy program and has had success in building in literacy with vocational education and training. Innovations in intergenerational, health and financial literacies have been successfully developed in other countries and are worthy of consideration in Australia.
- As funding has increased for adult literacy so have accountability measures. Most countries have engaged in developing adult oriented frameworks for guiding curriculum and assessment and evaluation or quality assurance systems regulating provision.
- Most countries have or are developing a single gateway on the Internet for information about adult literacy provision and research.
- Most countries in the study have identified a lack of capacity or a skilled workforce as a major difficulty in meeting the need for an effective adult literacy provision. Development of qualifications within national qualifications frameworks and the provision of professional development to up-skill existing workforce and for new recruits are essential features of policies in the U.K., Ireland, Australia and New Zealand.

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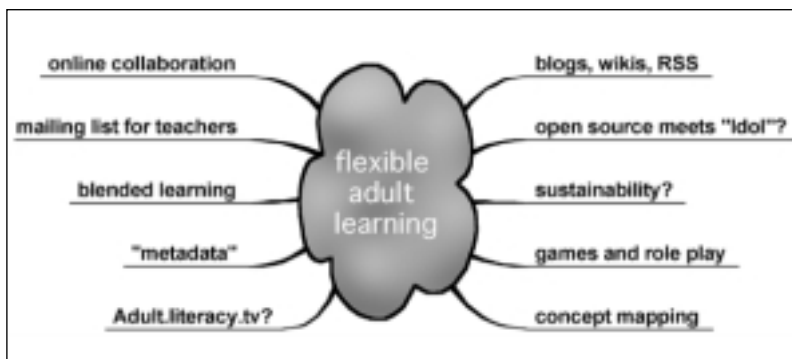
Emerging technologies—what is the most flexibility we can work into teaching and learning?

by Michael Chalk

Emerging technologies are providing additional options—including on-screen concept maps for brainstorm planning, collaborative writing for communication or project work, games for pleasurable learning, discussion boards and role-play games for socially interactive learning. Through his research into Open Source and web-based language learning, Michael Chalk has found many useful things for the literacy field. This article conveys his enthusiasm for emerging technologies and a strong sense that the field in Australia is rapidly growing.

Adult learning environments can be so amazing, because teachers are open to the huge range of possibilities such as multiple learning styles and multiple intelligences (eg visual, musical, emotional, interpersonal, collaborative and others) while still keeping the focus on what is relevant and crucial for people's lives. The adult literacy field is important here because educators understand that new technologies represent new literacies.

At last year's *Networking Now* Conference there was a definite sense that flexible learning is not about technology—it is about ensuring that teachers are able to focus primarily on the needs of the learner, and about building systems where schools can adapt rapidly to the needs of their teachers and learners.



Some strange and exciting new possibilities are opening up for the adult learning field

The Internet has made it possible to build public learning resources where teachers contribute materials, and collaborate to shape a public resource. The 'Merlot' site is just one of many fine examples of teachers sharing resources—www.merlot.org.

But what about learners collaborating to shape a course?

Open Source offers a model as to how this might be done. The basic idea behind Open Source is very simple—'*When programmers can read, redistribute, and modify the source code for a piece of software, the software evolves. People improve it, people adapt it,*

people fix bugs. And this can happen at a speed that, if one is used to the slow pace of conventional software development, seems astonishing. The Open Source community have learned that this rapid evolutionary process produces better software than the traditional closed model, in which only a very few programmers can see the source (eg, Microsoft Windows) and everybody else must blindly use an opaque block of bits.' (<http://www.open-source.org/>)

Open Source and American Idol

There was a recent comparison between Open Source and education, likening Open Source to the *American Idol* television phenomenon. Why did that show become so popular? Because the audience had the power to co-create the show! It was argued that the same thing happens with Open Source software — users become heavily hooked on the products because they have the power to influence the direction of software development.

Adult literacy practitioners are very accustomed to shaping their courses to suit the needs of the learners—and this is the phenomenon which will create great learning in any setting, whether online or face-to-face. (See—www.xplana.com/articles/archives/American_Idol_Open_Source)

Games online and role play

You have probably noticed shop fronts filled with people late at night working on computers—actually they are playing 'LAN (network) games'. These interactive adventures are hugely popular and teachers are working on ways to adapt these to education. Kate Fannon has done some great work investigating the use of role-play as online learning adventure. You'll find some of her work via a conference collaborative keynote at—www.tafe.sa.edu.au/institutes/douglaslawson/marie

Marie Jasinski is one of the most amazing and genuine pioneers in this area—her latest works investigate the chaos inherent in successful learning organisations, and the way many educators are becoming more and more disruptive!

Marie was brought in as a consultant on one of the New Practices projects last year. The goal was to make a dull subject enjoyable—learning the AQTF via online games. (See— www.designplanet.com.au)

Blogs, Wikis and RSS (syndicated) news

These pieces of jargon also have the world in a spin as people search for new ways to write, edit and publish collaboratively. ('WebLogs') Blogs are an easier way to publish direct to a web site. A 'Wiki' enables a whole group of people to build a web site without needing authoring software - the web site has authoring built in. RSS news allows anyone to easily list the latest topics from their favourite writing (blogging) colleagues. Web pages become more like a regularly updated mail-out newsletter - which people can read if they want.

East Gippsland TAFE used blog tools for their strategic planning process—to consult with staff across the Institute. One woman in the USA has been delivering university courses via a multi-player blogging system. Bloggers in every field have been vying with published journalists for the 'most-read' titles. Social networks have been building up around groups of bloggers who write on similar topics.

Metadata—'intelligent' networking systems

Many people are now working on better ways of categorising information, so that the machine gets better at finding what we're looking for. A major buzz word in programming circles has been 'XML' - extensible markup language - how to include not only data and presentation with your web site, but also inherent meaning: how to tell the machine 'this page represents a film review written by an ESL group' - and to be able to extract the details librarians would love, i.e., author, publication date.

The internationally renowned EdNA web site is built on a fine categorisation of a huge range of learning resources—carefully sampled through their 'metadata': information which describes the content. True tech-heads will tell you that one day soon everything will be indexed. Searching will be so much easier. (See— www.edna.edu.au)

YOLA, 'your online learning assistant', is another 2003 New Practices project—a brilliant initiative from the team led by Theo Kavidias. The aim is a system to recognise that learners are working on particular mathematical skills, in their Training Package-related Toolbox. While somebody is pacing themselves through individual numerical training, the YOLA assistant pops up to offer advice and further training in skills such as shape, multiplication, estimation and so forth. (See— [\[jects/learningassistant.htm\]\(http://jects/learningassistant.htm\)\)](http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/pro-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Concept Mapping

Marty Cielens demonstrated the power of an Open source concept mapping tool - CMap. Part of the hard work of adult literacy learning is understanding different ways of organising information. This tool allows people to develop ideas in visual and holistic ways. Not only that, it allows people to collaborate on the same mind map. (See— www.cmap.ihmc.us)

“...flexible learning is not about technology—it is about ensuring that teachers are able to focus primarily on the needs of the learner...”

Adult.literacy.tv ?

My favourite experience from last year remains a visit to the Centrelink Learning-via-Interactive Satellite TV broadcast station in Canberra. One person can operate a broadcast studio—and five thousand viewers can give an instant response via their keypads. CentreLink workers, in their fully accredited workplace training program, are now used to hearing the TV presenter reply 'Well it looks like only 34% of you got the correct answer to that question, so let's ask our Content Expert to reiterate some of the facts around this issue.'

Hopes for sustainability?

The five year funding of the Australian flexible learning framework is in its final year—affecting *LearnScope*, *Flexible Learning Leaders*, *New Practices*, and *Toolbox* funding and the flexible learning community.

The main question is this: How can flexible learning be sustainable when providers must compete for shrinking pools of professional and resource development funding?

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For more details about Open Source, see— prace.vic.edu.au/flex - the *FLL (Flexible Learning Leader) Journey* blog

New adult-literacy & technology mailing list

Are you an adult literacy teacher or researcher with an interest in using technology to improve learning? Now is a great time to join a new email list for people involved with adult literacy and technology. There is already a diverse group of talented and enthusiastic people, from all around the nation, establishing this network. At the moment, people are still introducing themselves to the group—come and join us. <http://lists.vu.edu.au/info/adultliteracy-t>

PowerPoint® in the classroom— —not just for (boring) men in grey suits

by Kathie Warren

'Literacy Link' committee person, Robyn Jay, has been locating case studies of how technology is working well for literacy programs. In this issue Robyn's colleague, Kathie Warren, discusses how she has used PowerPoint to enrich her teaching.

Robyn comments: 'One mention of the word 'PowerPoint' used to be enough to make me run for cover but not any longer! PowerPoint's ease of use and almost immediate results mean that it can be used with quite limited Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. Its multi-modal products (including voice and music, digital images and text) make it accessible to many literacy learners while addressing a range of learning styles. And it is free with most versions of MicroSoft® Office®. So if you haven't yet discovered the benefits of PowerPoint, you must have a play!'

Microsoft® PowerPoint® can be much more versatile than the usual presentation we see so often in meetings. At Coffs Coast Adult Education (CCAEC) we have been developing materials for our Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE), and literacy and numeracy students, and teaching them to use PowerPoint as a way of introducing them to basic computer skills.

Background

PowerPoint is a relatively simple way to produce attractive, colourful materials for reading and listening. And with a little practice, videos, blank spaces for typing answers, music, sequenced activities, and links to other sites can be built-in to a presentation. 'Presentation' is the term used for a number of 'slides' which are sequenced to run automatically. For the purposes of this article, each individual presentation will be called a 'PPS' - the filename for PowerPoint show.

Creating PowerPoint shows for reading

The teacher needs at least to have created two

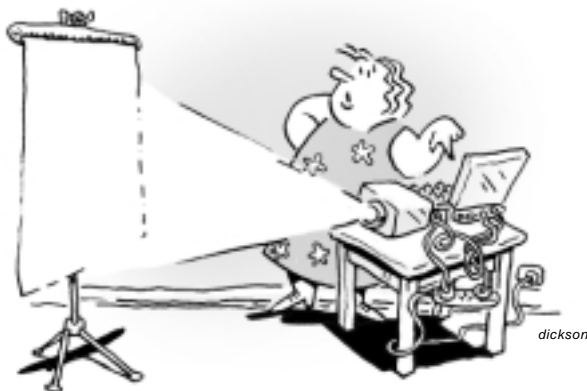
or three basic class resources using Microsoft PowerPoint before teaching students to use it.

Initially we created illustrated stories for students to read. This was done using clipart, images available on the Internet, or using photos from a digital camera. The obvious choices are student accounts of class trips, visits to local facilities: the library, ambulance station, botanic garden or whatever, and class parties, barbecues, or picnics. PowerPoint shows can be made for different levels featuring different students for different classes. Our first PowerPoint shows were automatic. The students could sit and read along while the story unfolded. As teachers' competence grew, sound, animated effects, and timing sequences were introduced to make the reading more interactive for the students.

Creating PowerPoint shows for practising vocabulary or language patterns

A simple lesson might involve, say, road signs, or safety signs. The pictures can be followed several seconds later by the text, to allow students time to say what the sign means. This is good for early beginners when you want to use exactly the vocabulary used in class. For more advanced students, there are many commercial or internet programs (some of which are available free) which allow vocabulary practice.

With early learners, formulaic language can be introduced this way, using language relevant to the individual students. 'This is Ben. He comes from Holland. He is married. His wife's name is Helen.' This can be created in a series of slides, or as a class profile, one slide for each student, using the same formula on each page with the teacher's voice reading the sentences. This is excellent for beginning students who can't yet read or write. If it is simple enough they will learn it by heart, then the teacher can produce the same text on paper.



Applications for 2004 Innovative Projects

The Adult Literacy Section of the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) recently advertised in the national press for applications for funding for the 2004 Innovative Grants program.

There are two categories for funding:

- Community Projects (maximum funding \$35,000, tax exclusive). These are for projects in smaller/local communities and can include action research projects, pilot programs, innovative training delivery, or minor print resources. These projects will be required to report on literacy outcomes and deliver a minor report.
- Resource/Strategic Projects (maximum funding \$80,000, tax exclusive). Funding in this category can be for either the production of a major resource that has national applicability, or for a major strategic project. A

major strategic project may demonstrate cross-sectoral partnerships, community capacity building, or the development and trialling of new assessment or training methods.

As is the case every year, applications will need to demonstrate that their project is innovative. Applicants are encouraged to consider focusing on Indigenous and other disadvantaged learners, mature learners, or any other area of perceived need.

The closing date for applications is 5pm Eastern Standard Time, Friday 4 June.

Guidelines are now available on literacynet at www.dest.gov.au/ty/litnet

If you have any questions please call Michael Johnson at DEST on (02) 6240 9120.

Creating PowerPoint shows to inform

Using the animation and timing features in PowerPoint we created a 'where is it?' slide for our 'Coffs Harbour' resource file. Beginning with a map of Australia, clicking the mouse reveals a series of maps: Australia, NSW, and Coffs Harbour each with a short text. A link takes students to another slide of an aerial photo of Coffs Harbour with empty text boxes beside ten main features. They are asked to refer to a conventional map of Coffs, then type the names of the features in the blank boxes on the screen.

Information pages can also be constructed so that students get used to using 'links' buttons which take them to other pages in the PowerPoint show, and even to exercises elsewhere. (e.g. to a suite of exercises created using Hot Potatoes software, to a word game, or to an Internet site. This is good preparation for navigating when using the Internet.)

Creating PowerPoint shows for introducing computer skills

Students need at least an acquaintance with computers if they are going to do further study or join the workforce. We teach the students to use PowerPoint to publish their individual writing. This means they need to learn many basic computer skills; become familiar with computer terminology; and learn to follow verbal and written instructions in a computer-based language environment.

The amount of input a student actually does on the computer depends on their level of English and prior computer skills. The teacher of the Preliminary Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) 1 class created a template

page for each student and put a digital photo of each student on each page.

Students chose the background colour for their own page and the teacher set-up the page. In class the students each worked on writing and editing the oral pattern they had been learning. 'My name is... I come from...' and one other piece of information. They then used the classroom computer to each type the text on their own PowerPoint page. The page was printed, and the student took the copy home to practise. The teacher then recorded each student reading, or sometimes reciting, their own story. This was then added to their page with a sound button. The finished 'introducing our students' production was played for the class, visitors and other teachers.

We have written a very detailed step-by-step document to introduce CSWE 2, 3, and 4 students to using PowerPoint. They do the writing process in the classroom and bring a final draft to the computer lab. To create their own PowerPoint show, each of the four CSWE classes has 2.5 hours a week (half their weekly class time,) in the computer lab for one term. When classes are in the lab, a second teacher assists the class teacher. The students also have access to two stand alone computers in the classroom.

Students learn basic file management, inserting clip-art and pictures, basic word processing skills, making and inserting sound files and, of course, using Microsoft PowerPoint as a tool.

continued over

Radio Adelaide—literacy success stories

by Angelina Edwards

Inspirational stories telling how people have overcome literacy barriers to achieve personal goals will be broadcast on radio during August 2004. Radio Adelaide has been funded by Australian National Training Authority's Adult Literacy National Project to develop a series of 20 short radio programs and to conduct a one hour live-to-air forum. Broadcast locally on Radio Adelaide 101.5FM and nationally via the Community Radio Satellite (to over 200 community radio stations around Australia), these programs will also become available worldwide on the Web at www.radio.adelaide.edu.au

Since February, Radio Adelaide has been contacting stakeholders and service providers to gain background information on the various literacy areas and contacts for possible interviewees. Radio Adelaide's initiative is to:

- produce 20 pre-recorded programs (5-7 minutes each) which include the stories of a range of people and the strategies they've used to improve their literacy skills
- conduct a live-to-air forum (one hour) with contributions from academics, workers, and employers on literacy issues and strategies
- produce a 3-CD set of the programs and the forum. The CDs will be available nationally and can be used for professional development for people providing literacy services; as a teaching resource; during course induction or information seminars; and as a useful take home resource for students.

We have interviewed people aged from 20 to 70

years from a variety of educational, employment and cultural backgrounds. These people have told stories of their personal, educational and employment successes through improved literacy—not only language, literacy and numeracy, but IT and computing, health and cultural literacies as well.

The people we have interviewed also describe how they chose the right service provider for them, and how they overcame challenges like first day nerves, fearing that other students would know more than they did, and confronting and admitting a learning difficulty.

The programs will also feature interviews with tutors and lecturers from Neighbourhood Houses, community centres, voluntary organisations, TAFE and Universities. Listeners will hear the enthusiasm, care and interest that tutors and lecturers have in helping students to succeed and achieve their goals.

Things we have learnt using PowerPoint

- Teachers need to use PowerPoint (at least the basics) before teaching students to use it.
- To maximise use of computer time, the teacher needs a clear idea of skills which can be covered in the classroom: preparing, writing, editing, creating storyboard pages, and so forth are done there. This lets you focus on computer skills separately.
- Do not seat competent computer users next to beginners. This can a) frustrate the former, and b) terrify the latter. It's also easier for the teacher if students with similar skills sit near each other. Teachers can then demonstrate for several students together.

PowerPoint is not loaded on all computers, and can be 'tricky' from version to version. This can be overcome by downloading a (free) PowerPoint viewer from the Internet. It should be copied on to any CD where you burn your PowerPoint files. When you want to run your PowerPoint shows on a computer without PowerPoint, or on a computer with a different version (probably earlier), copy the PowerPoint

Viewer onto the computer first, then you will be able to run your files.

Potential problems

- file sizes—if you add pictures and sound files, you will probably need access to a CD burner to be able to make your exercises portable
- teacher time—initially this is a problem, but with practice, it becomes about the same as designing a complicated worksheet
- buying software? Make sure you have Microsoft PowerPoint—it is not included in some versions of Microsoft Office

Last comment

The students don't have to create their own PowerPoint shows—you can do that for them (especially if time is a problem), but their involvement and pride when they see their own work is worth the effort. They also have new material to read when reading each others' work.

Kathie Warren
Coffs Coast Adult Education

The stories are as varied as the people themselves and identify barriers many people have been able to overcome in order to improve their literacy levels.

One interviewee describes being retrenched from a job when he was in his mid 40's. Although he didn't believe he would be able to find further employment, he was encouraged by his wife to attend an adult re-entry course. Although willing to attend, he had to confront his earlier negative experiences of formal education where teachers, although realising that he was having learning difficulties, did not have the time to help him. 'I found myself being moved further and further to the back of the classroom and just amusing myself as best as I could...'. He consequently left school at an early age and found employment doing various labouring jobs.

After only one week at the adult re-entry course, the staff discovered that his earlier learning difficulties were caused by severe dyslexia which, up until then, hadn't been diagnosed. After the staff helped him develop strategies to make learning more enjoyable, he went on to complete a number of TAFE Certificates and now has full time employment as a supervisor 'working with computers. Before that I didn't want to have anything to do with them!'.

To demonstrate that improving our literacy should continue throughout our lives, one interviewee describes that after being retired for some time she wanted to finally further her interest in art and train to become a volunteer Art Gallery guide. The 12 month training course involved learning about many different types of art as well as communication skills and the rights and responsibilities of being a volunteer. 'I find now that things like washing the floors and doing the housework can just wait!'

An accountant tells the story of the ever-growing pile of unread and, in some cases, unopened professional journals in her office. Realising that this meant she wasn't keeping up to date with developments in her profession she decided to do a speed reading course. The pile of unread journals has disappeared. 'Allocating that hour a week to myself to improve my reading made me realise how important it is to take a break during the week. Now I keep that hour a week and spend it on me!'

Who is involved?

The programs and live-to-air forum are being produced by Angelina Edwards from Radio Adelaide. The project manager is Dr PJ Rose who is the Program Manager at Radio Adelaide, while Denise Janek, Executive Director of

English Language Services at Adelaide Institute of TAFE is the principal researcher.

The project is being overseen by the members of the Reference Group: Sue Ross from the Adult Community Education Programs at the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology and Paul Mulrone and Marie Smith from ASK Employment

Who is Radio Adelaide?

We began broadcasting in 1972 as Australia's first community radio station. Established by Adelaide University, we provide a real radio alternative for people curious about new ideas, issues, sounds, music and culture. We broadcast innovative, thought-provoking talks programs interspersed with good music for all music lovers. Programs are diverse and varied with a strong focus on news and current affairs, local issues, arts and culture, community access and lifelong learning.

We broadcast from high-profile street-front studios on North Terrace, Adelaide. Our 101.5 MHz FM signal reaches across the Adelaide metropolitan area to also include some of the surrounding country regions—the Mid-North and the Yorke and Fleurieu Peninsulas and 24 hours a day on www.radioadelaide.edu.au

With more than 500 volunteers, Radio Adelaide brings a wealth of skills, talent and community networks to the airwaves. We produce high quality and imaginative programs and play a significant role in Adelaide's cultural life. Our achievements have been recognised by over 65 broadcasting awards in the last 10 years.

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone interviewed for this radio literacy project. Your time and willingness to be involved with the programs will be invaluable to other learners.

Broadcast Dates

The programs will be broadcast weekdays at 7.30am and 4.30pm from Monday 2 August 2004 until Friday 27 August 2004. The forum will be broadcast on Sunday 29 August 2004 at 10.00am (SA time) as a lead in to Adult Learner's Week.

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*Angelina Edwards (top) and
interviewee at Radio Adelaide
101.5 FM.*

When asked to do a training course on Dealing with Difficult Customers in the hospitality industry, in connection with the WELL Programme, Elaine Henderson felt somewhat out of her comfort zone. She decided she needed a reliable framework on which to build the training, providing a secure knowledge base and foundation for strategies and decision-making. Accordingly Elaine decided to construct a Process Diagram, which she had first used in a very simple form teaching Year 10 Geography students. Elaine is an adult literacy teacher at Petersham College, TAFE New South Wales.

I have dealt with many 'difficult customers' from out of control teenagers to inflexible principals but delivering a training session for personnel at a four star hotel on dealing with difficult guests was a different kettle of fish! I was concerned I would have difficult customers on the course and needed something really solid to depend on.

Developing a training tool

My husband, who has a very methodical and logical mind, helped me to produce the Process Diagram and we tried to deal only with facts, as they are concrete and manageable. The Diagram gave me an opportunity to consider very carefully, the inputs and outputs for each stage of possible conflict. Developing the Diagram really made me think from a different perspective and organise the presentation from a methodical and sequential angle.

I needed to be able to work flexibly, and within an effective framework because trainees (known at the hotel as 'associates') were unknown to me before the training. I didn't know how many associates would attend, from what departments of the hotel they would come, or their status, language, literacy or learning backgrounds.

In my work, I've always drawn on my own experience to support me, so I went through a checklist of the difficult people I'd dealt with, even though hotel guests were not in my background! I like to incorporate brainstorming, mind maps and role-play in my training so I fitted these strategies into the basic framework that the Process Diagram provided for me. It was important to include aspects of personal value to the associates and also information pertinent to their job so that they found the training worthwhile.

The Process Diagram (see below) as developed for Dealing with Difficult Customers comprised what we termed the '3R response'—Receiving, Responding and Resolving: it was necessary to develop a catchy phrase to attract associates to the training sessions, and this slogan proved successful. The Process Diagram worked

through 'inputs', 'processes' and 'outputs' concerning each of the three 'R' components of the process, specific to the hospitality industry.

Training using the 3R Process Diagram

The first 'R', Receiving, occurs when a customer has a problem: someone is not happy! What are the inputs that have led to this? What does an associate have to consider? What are the circumstances surrounding the problem? By considering the inputs, we are forced to deal with the immediate environment, in this case the hotel. A problem could occur because guests might be tired, jet lagged, confused, unable to understand English very well, or just excited.

For whatever reason, there is a dissatisfied customer, a specific complaint and as a result, a request for something to happen. Here the Process Diagram helps us deal with facts rather than emotional opinions.

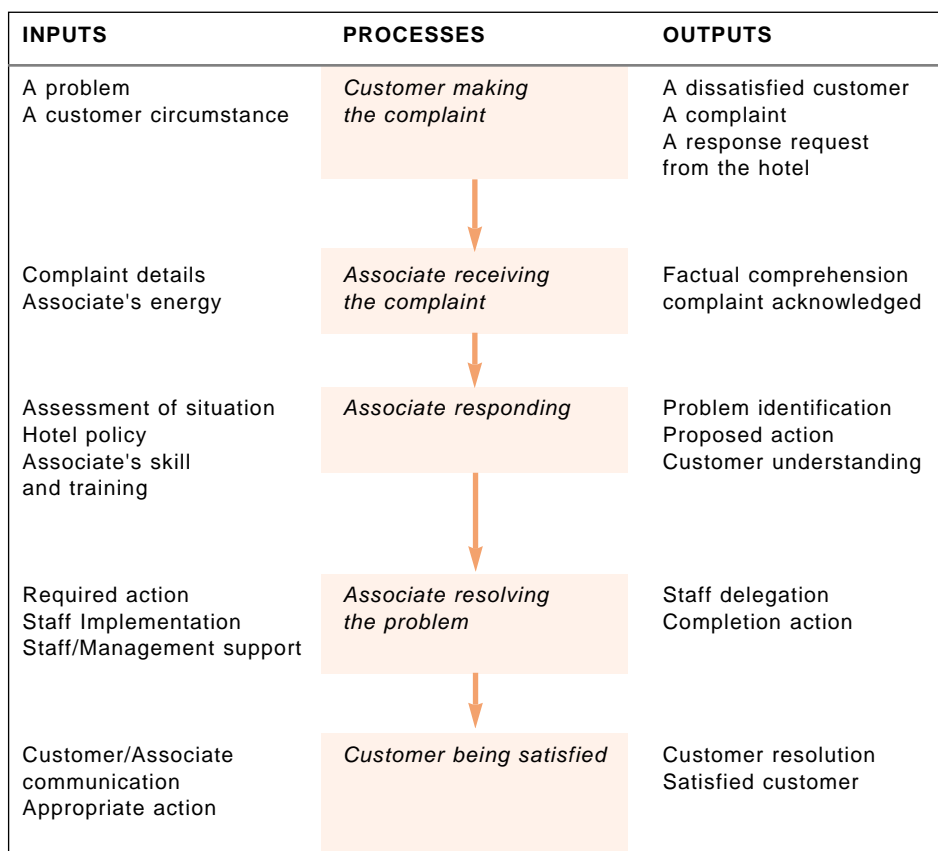
Associates who receive a complaint need to be involved in finding out details and background. It is their energy that puts a guest at ease or creates tension, and a situation becomes positive or negative from this point. The way in which the complaint is received is the most significant part of the process, and is very important to the hotel. Research has shown that dissatisfaction from one guest can flow on to sixty other potential guests.

The next stage of training offers strategies to deal with an appropriate output. This session centres on positive body language and active listening, two communication skills useful for the associate's work in the hotel and also for their everyday life.

Outputs for the second 'R', Responding, require the problem be identified. It is necessary to look at the whole picture so that people don't jump to conclusions and provide a 'quick fix'. An action is proposed to solve the identified problem. It is crucial that the guest understands what is being done and also the hotel's perception of the problem. This leads to communication training, using brainstorming, star diagrams and memory

techniques. In addition, it is necessary that the associate considers hotel policy in making responses.

Inputs for the final 'R', Resolving, lead to the required action being taken. It is not necessarily taken by the first associate involved in the problem, as support may be required from more senior associates and a team response is initiated. Some sort of delegation and discussion may be necessary for the completion of the action. The associate needs to be sure the guest is satisfied: not just think he or she is satisfied. The output here is the complaint resolution and guest satisfaction. Interaction, discussion, role play practising dealing with facts and not opinions are good training strategies for this section.



It seems simple to move from a problem to a satisfied customer. However, until a problem is clearly identified, responding to it and resolving it can be haphazard. The Process Diagram provides a reliable framework for hotel associates to work from when dealing with difficult guests. It can be applied and adapted to many other contexts.

Using the Process Diagram in other situations

I have since conducted two other training sessions and have used Process Diagrams to support me. I have found them to be a most useful, reliable and innovative resource which provides a basis for discussion, brainstorming, mind mapping, role play, team work, decision making, assessment and reflection.

The response to Process Diagrams in the evaluations completed by participants, has been most encouraging, with specific mention of them in helping to make the training successful, unusual and effective. I thoroughly recommend experimenting with the formation of a Process Diagram for problem solving, training, managing effective meetings and presentations. The groundwork takes time, thought and reflection, but the resulting diagram and framework from which to base the presentation is most worthwhile and beneficial in a 'systems approach' to facilitating learning.

Literacy aspects of the Process Diagram

and its design

Producing a Process Diagram requires the accurate use of verbs and nouns in customising it for the particular training situation. Verbs are required for the Processes: nouns for the Inputs and Outputs. It can be hard when constructing a Process Diagram to express Inputs and Outputs as nouns, but this is an integral and essential feature of the diagram for it to become an effective tool, as is the progression from one Output to the next Input, and the flow on from Process to Process.

Distinguishing between facts and opinions is also an important factor in producing Process Diagrams. An action must be based on facts in order to resolve a problem.

Chunking information for learning is another aspect of literacy that the Process Diagram incorporates. Each stage of the Diagram requires a different 'chunk' of information, and different learning techniques associated with it. In the program described, the chunking was represented by the '3R' approach, and provided a well-organised structure which proved to be effective and stimulating for the training delivery.

I have found the exercise of producing a Process Diagram and creating a learning and training experience using it, to be motivating and satisfying, with many literacy benefits. It is worth a try and I recommend it.

In other words... health care communication from an adult learner's perspective

by Helen Osborne

Educator and occupational therapist, Helen Osborne, MEd, OTR/L, is President of Health Literacy Consulting in Massachusetts USA. Health Literacy Consulting offers many programs and services, provides training and support to help health professionals and others communicate in ways patients, families, and employees can truly understand. To learn more, please visit the Health Literacy Consulting web site at www.healthliteracy.com

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Archie Willard is an adult learner who learned to read when he was 54 years old. Although he was always good at solving problems and making decisions, Willard struggled with reading and spelling. He worked for many years at a meat packing plant in a job which didn't require any reading. When the plant closed, he was offered a job as an insurance adjustor which meant he needed to learn to read, spell, and fill out insurance forms.

About this time, Willard's wife read an article about Bruce Jenner. The article wasn't about Jenner's athletic successes, however. It was about his dyslexia. Willard thought Jenner's story sounded a lot like his own, although he hadn't heard the term 'dyslexia' before. He went for testing and, indeed, was diagnosed with two types of dyslexia. Willard explains that his reading difficulties are due to brain processing problems which make it hard for him to blend sounds together to make words and also cause 'motor-clumsy disorder' which affects his fine motor skills. Willard's testing also showed that he is of above average intelligence and not 'stupid' like some of his teachers had said.

Once aware of his problem, Willard went for help at a local literacy program where he worked one-to-one with a tutor twice weekly for two and a half years. He went from reading at a fourth grade level to being able to fill out job-related insurance forms and reading newspapers and most other 'items that are not complicated.' In fact, after his second career as an insurance adjustor, Willard became a literacy coordinator at Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge, Iowa where he was a student.

Willard knows first-hand how difficult life can be when people cannot read, or read well. He is particularly sensitive to how literacy difficulties affect health care. A well-known and well-respected 'health literacy advocate,' Willard shares tips that health providers can use to better communicate with all patients—including those who have limited literacy skills.

Allow time to get to know each other. Willard says that he finds it usually takes him two to three visits to 'bond' with new health providers. From his perspective, one of the most important ways providers can help patients feel more at ease is to spend a few minutes at the beginning of appointments getting to know each other. Willard said that when providers talk about situations they've found difficult, he's generally much more willing to discuss his struggles with reading.

Be sensitive to patient's feelings of shame or fear. Willard says that people often try to keep their illiteracy a secret from almost everyone, including health providers. This means they might answer 'no' to all health history questions so as to not get any follow-up questions. 'People who cannot read, or cannot read well, have been hurt real bad,' says Willard. 'There's always fear in the back of your mind that you'll be asked to read.'

Make a conscious effort to learn if patients can read. Within the health literacy community, there is active discussion about whether to formally and routinely test all patients for literacy.

Although literacy tests like the REALM (Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine) and TOFHLA (Test of Functional Health Literacy) are common and well-regarded research tools, Willard and many other health literacy advocates do not think that this is a good idea. 'As a dyslexic and an adult learner with reading problems, I speak for many other adult learners. We hate having to take another written literacy test. People with other kinds of handicaps are not continually asked to expose their weaknesses to whatever degree they are handicapped.'

'There is no physical pain in taking a written test, but when we have to go back and take a written test there is a lot of frustration inside each of us. We grew up feeling humiliated because we had poor literacy skills and now we are adults. More written tests are seen as another step backward and it turns us away.'

Instead of formal literacy testing, Willard recommends that providers develop questions 'that people like myself are comfortable with and that give professionals the information they need to know.' These questions can be along the lines of 'Do you like to learn by watching TV, listening to the radio, talking with people, trying it yourself, or reading?'

It's also important to notice 'red flags' of reading problems, such as when patients:

- Take extra time or have a lot of misspelled words when they fill out forms
- Always bring other people to help with reading tasks
- Ask many questions about what providers say or give them to read
- Have 'terrible' handwriting. Willard shares that the 'motor-clumsy' part of his dyslexia causes him to press down so hard on paper that 'you can almost trace the pencil marks on the next page.'

Don't avoid written materials just because patients have trouble reading. Even those who struggle may better comprehend when they are relaxed and have sufficient time. Also, patients might share written materials with others who can more easily understand. To reach a wide audience, Willard recommends that health

"As an adult learner with reading problems, I speak for many other adult learners. We hate having to take another written literacy test."

materials be written at a sixth grade reading level.

Don't avoid necessary medical words like 'chemotherapy' and 'bronchodilator' just because they are difficult. Instead, define them and give examples. And, when possible, use simpler words (sometimes referred to as 'living room language') like 'show' instead of 'demonstrate.'

In addition to written materials, communicate your health message in non-written media such as audio tapes, pictures, and objects. Even though Willard can read the word 'beans,' he says he still recognises which canned vegetables to buy by looking at the can's colour, not label. 'We go back to old habits - that's how we've lived our life.'

Assess what patients are getting and not getting. Make sure patients understand the information you are communicating. You can do this by asking them to restate, in their own

words, what you just said or asked them to do. A way that does NOT work well is to ask



patients, 'Do you understand?' Readers and nonreaders alike often respond by simply nodding 'yes.'

Be conscious of individual strategies. Adult learners, like everyone else, find strategies to navigate the health care system. This may be recognising their medicines by shape and colour, not prescription label. Problems can arise, however, when generic drugs change or are packaged differently.

Another strategy that Willard says many 'successful dyslexics' use is having strong support systems of people they can go to, confide in, and feel comfortable sharing that they cannot read. Providers can help by accepting, not challenging or trying to change, the strategies that adult learners find successful. If and when these strategies fail, however, providers should help adult learners come up with new alternatives.

Admittedly, it is hard for providers to always know the best way to communicate—especially with patients who are poor readers. To improve this situation, Willard recommends that providers and adult learners get to know each other better. 'The medical field should partner with adult learners to listen to one another and look for answers together,' he says.

How to find out more

Printed references for this article are available www.healthliteracy.com/oncallapr2004.html

Archie Willard can be reached by email at millard@goldfieldaccess.net. To read his compelling story about life as an adult learner, go to www.readiowa.org/archiew.html



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numeracy skills affect the likelihood of receiving training. For adults with low numeracy ability, she will also explore wage changes in response to the type and level of training. The research will provide insights into how training programs, in particular, can meet the needs of those with low numeracy skills.

- **Literacy and numeracy demands of, and disadvantage in, legal mediation processes**
The current trend in the Australian legal system for settling disputes - from family matters, personal finances or small business matters, to employment issues - is 'alternative dispute resolution', including arbitration, negotiation and mediation. Joy Cumming is investigating the literacy issues in the legal mediation process. The project will provide a strong empirical and theoretical basis for future work in law and literacy.

Finally, it is important to recognise that there are people with limited literacy who

demonstrate considerable success in sustaining employment, in changing jobs, in managing businesses, particularly small business, and in contributing to the community in a variety of ways. Peter Waterhouse and Crina Virgona will identify the factors, strategies and experiences that have assisted those with literacy difficulties to be successful in the work environment, despite their limitation. Positive approaches to literacy will be highlighted in *Contradicting the stereotype: case studies of success despite literacy limitations*, which will broaden the literacy debate to acknowledge the roles undertaken by those with limited literacy.

This program of research is funded under the ANTA Adult Literacy Research Program by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Science and Training. The research program will be completed towards the end of 2004.

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