



## What is ACAL up to?

**T**he Australian Council for Adult Literacy Inc (ACAL) is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to raise government, industry and community awareness about the importance of a literate and numerate population, and to promote best practice amongst teachers of adult literacy and numeracy.

In pursuance of these aims ACAL undertakes a number of activities—it leads debate, responds to government papers and policies, organises a national annual conference and other professional development activities related to adult literacy and numeracy practice and policy and provides opportunities for debate as well as information on current policies and services. ACAL also produces a regular newsletter, *Literacy Link* and other occasional papers.

ACAL is governed by an elected executive and includes representatives of each State and Territory Council for adult literacy.

This year ACAL's goals are to:

- build a whole of life/whole of government

strategy

- ensure adult literacy and numeracy remains on professional and political agendas
- build support partnerships to further develop and sustain ACAL's goals and strategic objectives
- promote discussion about professional standards and qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy teaching
- increase practitioners' knowledge and capacity to incorporate approaches to new literacies in their practice
- improve the financial viability of the organisation
- improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation
- continue to improve communication with members and the wider community through a variety of modes
- explore marketing approaches that complement ACAL's directions and strategies.



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You can assist by becoming a member of ACAL. You may also like to volunteer your time to support ACAL in achieving its goals. More information about ACAL can be found on the ACAL web site— [www.acal.edu.au](http://www.acal.edu.au)

## Numeracy conference—places filling fast!

The ACAL & ALM (Adults Learning Mathematics) 2005 Adult Numeracy Conference to be held in Melbourne at the beginning of July is filling fast, but there's still time left to register!

There are nearly 100 presentations for you to choose from (see pages 14 and 15 of this issue of *Literacy Link* for a full list). There are options for attending the conference for one or more days. Each day offers a series of practical interactive workshops as well as relevant plenaries and research papers. Don't miss your chance to

be part of this first ever national and international Adult Numeracy and Mathematics Conference.

Information, on-line and printable registration forms, accommodation, are all available at <http://www.alm-online.org/alm12/>

### **Review of the National Reporting System (NRS) Phase 1**

In 2005 a formal review of the (National Reporting System) NRS is being undertaken. This follows a scoping exercise conducted in 2004 by Kate Perkins, to examine how the NRS is currently being used, how effectively the NRS serves these uses and its potential for adaptation to a broader range of applications.

The scoping exercise resulted in a report *Reframe, rename, revitalise. Future directions for the National Reporting System* (see page 6). The report recommended that the NRS be formally reviewed with all key stakeholders, and with a view to streamlining the conceptual framework and further exploring ideas for broader applications of the NRS in multiple contexts.

Phase 1 of the review of the NRS is being undertaken by a consortium of Linda Wyse and Associates, the CAE and Kula. This project group will review the NRS in order to validate the recommendations of *Reframe, rename, revitalise. Future directions for the National Reporting System*. It will not include any exploration of moving away from the five levels of the NRS.

The project will also explore the potential of a revised NRS framework for use in diverse contexts for example:

- for measuring adult LLN competencies in a range of educational and training environments such as Training Package delivery, VET in Schools, Adult and Community Education
- as a tool for measuring Employability Skills
- as an assessment tool
- as an aide to resource development
- as an agreed framework for describing the LLN competence of the population

This project will involve extensive and in-depth consultations with NRS stakeholder cohorts. Once initial data has been collected, collated and analysed, a series of state wide consultations will be held in each capital city. This will occur during August 2005. If you have questions regarding this project, please contact:

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Kate Perkins—	kate.p@bigpond.net.au
Philippa McLean—	philippa@cae.edu.au
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### **Update on WELL Environmental Health Project**

The purpose of this Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) project is to develop sustainable resources to support the development of literacy skills underpinning the functional work of Indigenous Environmental Health Workers (IEHWs) undertaking VET sector studies in the area of population health.

The resource is a 'just-in-time' resource. The information/practice sheets have been structured into small achievable tasks linked to the real work of IEHWs. The kit has been designed to be robust, durable and sit in the workplace where it can be accessed and used as literacy and numeracy issues arise.

The kit will be available in July. Register your interest to purchase by phoning Michele Bailey on: (08) 8981 2550 or [m.bailey@hstac.com.au](mailto:m.bailey@hstac.com.au)

### **WELL Indigenous Governance Project**

The Human Services Training Advisory Council (NT) has secured funds from the Commonwealth Department of Science Education and Training (DEST) to develop a Workplace English Language and Literacy kit for Indigenous governance.

The resources will support the learning of language and literacy skills that are required to carry out governance tasks in Indigenous organisations and enterprises. The structure and format of the resource will allow relevant parts to be copied and used as needed. But, if the kit is to be developed, we must have matching stakeholder funding. If you are interested in contributing funds contact Barbara Pitman on (08) 8981 2550 or [b.pitman@hstac.com.au](mailto:b.pitman@hstac.com.au)

### **Literacy Live—a new national e-learning network**

ACAL, with the support of the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre, has been successful in obtaining funding through the networks of the Australian Flexible Learning Community to establish a national e-learning network, Literacy Live.

ACAL has run many successful face-to-face conferences and forums attracting a wealth of international guests as well as local expertise. Our concern is that many of our members are excluded from these opportunities due to geographic remoteness or lack of funds.

The first new tool is a virtual meeting room that allows voice chat, text chat and shared files. There have been other chat tools available, including MSN, Yahoo Groups, MC2 and so on, but people who are slow typists can find this

method of communication frustrating. Fortunately a range of tools is now becoming available which do not rely on typing. In Talking Communities you will be able to hear and speak to others, as well as type questions for a guest presenter, and view a common picture, web site or file such as a PowerPoint presentation.

We hope the tool will enable regular online events with guest presenters. Initially a series of how-to sessions will be run and instructions will be available on the site below. You need internet access (a broadband connection is better), speakers and microphone or a computer headphone/microphone set (around \$10 from any electronics store or K-Mart).

The second tool is a web community within the VET EdNA Groups. The community will be used to provide information on how to access the virtual meeting room for planning, with a calendar of events and a discussion board for feedback and ongoing debate.

The site is still in its establishment phase but can be accessed at—

<http://www.groups.edna.edu.au/course/view.php?id=221>

If you are not yet a member of EdNA Groups you will first need to register by clicking on the link in the top right corner of your screen.

Once you have joined the Literacy Live group you will receive regular emails to keep you up to date. Start by introducing yourself and letting us know what online events or guest speakers you would like to see. Along with attracting guest speakers we can use the tools for discussing current national issues.

The virtual meeting room will be also available free of charge via a booking system for the State Councils and for any Australian adult literacy group or project team to use for meetings. Those of you engaged in LearnScope or

Reframing the Future projects may find it useful particularly if your team is geographically dispersed. Facilitators may also be available if needed.

Some of you will already be members of the 'Technology in Literacy' (AL-T) network run by Michael Chalk and team. Over the past 12 months or so the group has shared ideas and resources regarding innovative ways of using technology in their teaching practice. If you would like to join this group, subscribe at—  
<http://prace.vic.edu.au/al-t/> to subscribe.

These tools are intended to support technology users who are more advanced, but they also enable the rest of us to learn from them.

### **Calling those interested in assessing Information Technology (IT) competencies in their literacy classes**

Coffs Coast Community College has been successful in obtaining some Reframing the Future funding to form a network of literacy teachers interested in formally recognising the IT skills of learners. (See 'Recognising ICT skills' in *Literacy Link* March 2005.)

That group is now hoping to begin to use their Certificate 2 in IT to allow them to assess Certificate 1 Units of competency within their classes. If you do not hold a formal IT qualification you might locate an IT trainer as an assessment partner. The network will provide support and explore new ways of integrating and assessing IT to meet the needs of our target group.

If you are interested in joining this network, or if you have any questions about Literacy Live, contact—

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*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](http://www.acal.edu.au)

**Contributions** to *Literacy Link* should be sent by email to: [dicksond@labyrinth.net.au](mailto:dicksond@labyrinth.net.au)

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#### **Disclaimer**

Material inserted with *Literacy Link* should not be viewed as being in any way endorsed by the Australian Council for Adult Literacy.

# Empowering Aboriginal communities with a driver education project

*Steve Fitzgerald works for ACE North Coast, a Community College on the North Coast of NSW that provides a range of programs to local Aboriginal communities. ACAL's Robyn Jay spoke to Steve about his Driver Education Project—a splendid example of life wide learning and also the 'built in' approach to literacy skill development that ACAL is pursuing.*

*What is your program about Steve?*

In NSW, the Roads and Traffic Association (RTA) now requires all learner drivers to undertake 50 hours of supervised driving in order to obtain a Provisional licence. Our Driver Education Project is about empowering Aboriginal community members to obtain their driver's licence. We've set up accessible Driver Knowledge Test (DKT) software in the local community centres so people can practise and gain support before getting their Learners permit.



Some participants need assistance to negotiate fines with State Debt Recovery Office (SDRO) and regain their driver's licence. We helped one woman who lost her licence because she didn't vote in the last state election and didn't do the follow-up paperwork.

Her fine was sent to State Debt Recovery Office but with our help she successfully made an application for time to pay off her fine and have the suspension lifted on her driver's licence. Other people need a hand to apply for a birth certificate. A big hurdle is lack of confidence.

*Tell us about your Rally concept?*

The concept of 'Rally for Reconciliation' is a community response to a community need. Licensed drivers volunteer their time, and possibly their vehicle for a day, to assist disadvantaged community members to gain part of their required 50 hours.

The rally provides the possibility for the non-Aboriginal driver to meet an Aboriginal person, to have some one-to-one discussion and, perhaps to do some personal reconciliation. We are also building in more cultural content for future rallies, and may be able to attract government and non-government workers who require Aboriginal cultural awareness training.

*How are the rallies going so far?*

They've been really successful. We've now run six and we're building up a network of drivers and learners. There have been expressions of interest from Lismore Court staff, INTRA (Drug and Alcohol counselling) and a worker for the Premier's Dept on transport issues is taking part in the next rally.

*Do you have any Aboriginal instructors?*

Maurice 'Bucky' Robinson became the first qualified Aboriginal driving instructor in NSW in July 2004. He's provided a real boost to the program, making the best use of his deep connections into our local communities.

*What sort of community support have you had?*

There's been a great response. The Lismore Neighbourhood Centre is assisting with bookings for the rallies and the local councils supply morning tea when a rally passes through their town. We get referrals from all sorts of local organisations such as the local youth centres, refuges, men's groups and have good ongoing relationships with the Local Aboriginal Land Councils in the area of operation. We're developing opportunities with the Probation and Parole Dept for people to work off fines to State Debt Recovery Office by doing payback community service.

*What stumbling blocks have you had to deal with?*

The biggest issue for many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members is the length of time that they are disqualified from driving, with no hope of appeal. As I understand it state law in nearby Queensland is quite different with the right of appeal after two years. Another major difficulty is physically accessing an RTA office to do the Driver Knowledge Test. If this test could be administered locally, say in schools, many more isolated rural community members would have equitable access to something that is readily available to urban dwellers.

*So how is the information on your web site different to what is available through the RTA?*

Our web site at <http://www.drivingproject.org> is up and running smoothly. It has information and links to many more organisations than just the RTA including all the latest forms and costs from SDRO, Births Deaths and Marriages, as well as RTA information. There are also information sheets and work sheets, recent changes to the road laws and other relevant information.

*How is literacy integrated into your program?*

It's really about negotiating complex systems and having the skills and confidence to grapple with non-friendly bureaucratic processes. We give assistance with forms, applications, letters, court dealing, phone calls and so on.

Unfortunately the Driver Knowledge Test is quite difficult and couched in double negatives. For people with a good written English the multiple choice test is pretty straight forward but for others it is necessary to teach them how to negotiate the language. We spend time reading the Driver Knowledge Test to clients who have a literacy difficulty. I learned about improved voice recognition software in a recent ACE tutors workshop and am planning to trial this as an alternative.

*What outcomes have you seen as a result of your program?*

In rural areas having a licence means employment, access to services, self esteem, health, safety and so on. We've had some wonderful success stories worth sharing here. Every time a driver's license is obtained by a member of an Aboriginal community there is a 'ripple on' effect of esteem and empowerment for the individual and for the community.

One local woman used our service to negotiate fine repayments and to practise for the DKT—she now has a NSW driver's license and is Deputy Mayor of Kyogle, one of only two Aboriginal people in the State to hold that title.

A worker at the Cabbage Tree Island canteen obtained her license with our assistance—this meant she was able to take a community car into town to purchase supplies for that small business.

One of the two licensed drivers for the nearest Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) gained his license with strong support from this project. He is also a member of an electric country gospel group, and uses his license to provide transport for group members and equipment to functions.

A young woman living in a remote area gained her license so that when her partner started to bash her, she could put the children in the car and get them to safety.

The chairpersons of a number of Local Aboriginal Land Councils have regained their driver's license with assistance from this project.

A young man who is attempting to integrate Aboriginal Cultural and Land Care philosophies to fulfil community needs (riverbank restoration linked to a culturally significant area) has started repaying his fines and now has his Learners' Licence.

A young mother who lost her license because she didn't repay a fine was able to access part time employment (and Certificate 1 in Indigenous Cultural Tourism) by using the aid

of the Driver Education Project to negotiate with the State Debt Recovery Office. Her mother has also gained part time employment with NPWS and with Adult Community Education after accessing this project to negotiate with State Debt Recovery Office.

A young teacher of Aboriginal Language and Culture in four schools was assisted to access the fifty hours supervised driving required to gain his P1 license, in conjunction with Northern Rivers Community Transport.

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*“Every time a driver's license is obtained by a member of an Aboriginal community there is a ripple-on effect of esteem and empowerment for the individual and for the community.”*

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The chairperson of Bonalbo Aboriginal Corporation regained his license with the assistance of this project. This also enables the Bonalbo Aboriginal Corporation to purchase supplies for their café at a competitive price. All of the Adult Community Education Aboriginal tutors for local Aboriginal Cultural Awareness courses have been assisted to gain or regain their license as part of this program.

The person teaching Aboriginal Language and Culture at Kyogle school obtained his license through the Adult Community Education Driver Education Project, gained that job and is able to further spread his knowledge. A young artist, now on his P1 license, is able to transport and sell his works to a larger market.

*So where are you heading from here?*

The project needs a better 'fixed base' so that Aboriginal community members seeking assistance in accessing information and filling in forms know they can contact a trained person at a particular place at fixed and reasonably convenient times. We're trialling a contact person at our ACE office in Lismore to meet this need. Publicity is pretty time consuming especially for the rallies. I keep trying to delegate this one, but no takers yet! We'd love people to check out and pass on the web site. It needs more "links" so we'd love to hear from people with suggestions.

As the number of Aboriginal Learner drivers is increasing, and access to forms and information has been improved, the project workers are beginning to be able to spend more time on development, liaison, and actually giving driving lessons in the project vehicle, or occasionally in Bucky's vehicle.

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# ▶ ADULT LITERACY RESEARCH

## Reframe, rename, revitalise: Future directions for the language, literacy and numeracy National Reporting System

Kate Perkins

THE NATIONAL REPORTING SYSTEM for adult English language, literacy and numeracy was the result of a project jointly commissioned in 1994 by the then Department of Employment, Education and Training and the Australian National Training Authority. It was conceived as a way of reporting outcomes of students in the vocational education and training (VET) system, in labour market programs and in the adult community education sector.

The National Reporting System was designed to explain and track literacy progress, and the developer aimed to base it as closely as possible on a model reflecting real-life performance. Although intended to accommodate a range of underlying theoretical approaches to literacy, this was initially problematic as no one theory of language or learning was sufficient to provide a firm basis for the project. Nevertheless, a system utilising the five-point scale developed for the International Adult Literacy Survey was created and has achieved substantial acceptance.

The system was trialled and evaluated in 1997. It was found to provide a valid framework for reporting adult language, literacy and numeracy outcomes across a range of sectors, contexts and learners. It was also noted that the system was already in use for non-reporting applications—in curriculum development and review; program, regional, state and system planning and reporting; and the integration of language, literacy and numeracy in vocational education and training.

For the last eight years, the system has been used to report on several government programs—most adult basic education curricula have been mapped against it, and after 1997, it was used as a guide for incorporating language, literacy and numeracy skills into training packages. Since 1998, the National Reporting System has been the required reporting system for the Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme and the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme.

It continues to be put to other uses.

### The research

If the National Reporting System is to continue to be used and further developed and applied, a number of issues need to be resolved.

The research aimed to examine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the National Reporting System, to highlight issues that might influence future applications of it, and to identify options for developing it further. The research involved targeted consultation with:

- academic experts in literacy and numeracy
- practitioners experienced in the National Reporting System
- members of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy
- federal and state training authorities
- the initial developers of the system
- moderators and verifiers operating in the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme.

### The findings

The research found that the National Reporting System has built a strong following among those with the background knowledge and experience to become expert users. Although in need of an update, its conceptual underpinnings were generally considered academically sound.

It appears that the system has had a wider impact than might at first be obvious, especially in ensuring that adult literacy and numeracy curricula have appropriate scope, developmental sequences and support resources. However, as a reporting tool for funding bodies, it is accepted by some more than others. Many practitioners do not use the National Reporting System outside the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme and the Workplace Language and Literacy Programme. This is partly because it has not been

endorsed as a national system, but also because it is not quick and easy to learn and apply. Lack of necessary professional development to support its uptake has been a problem since its inception. There is almost unanimous support for a review of the system.

Most of those consulted wanted the conceptual framework retained, but revised to take into account changed conceptual understandings of language, literacy and numeracy, including the emergence of information communication technologies and associated texts. A revision would allow the National Reporting System to be streamlined as a reporting tool, with the potential of transforming it into a new framework for thinking, analysing and discussing language, literacy and numeracy in multiple contexts.

As presently constructed, there are four requirements for effective use of the National Reporting System:

- having background knowledge of language, literacy and numeracy to appreciate and interpret conceptual elements of the system
- experiencing regular interactive professional development
- having access to relevant support materials
- time to use the system.

## Implications for policy and practice

Although there are some reservations about developing a new national literacy framework, there was also support for the idea. Without reducing the role and capacity of the system as a tool for expert use, the new framework could be developed in several formats for a wide range of audiences and users to raise awareness and increase understanding of adult literacy and numeracy issues.

It is suggested that improvements to the system should include:

- maintaining a detailed National Reporting System for literacy and numeracy specialists
- developing a simplified language, literacy and numeracy framework with a new name, based on the revised National Reporting System, and integrating it into mainstream VET (and possibly adult and community education), thereby providing a new emphasis for literacy and numeracy in training packages
- promoting the revised system through interactive professional development programs tailored for different groups.

The full report of *Reframe, rename, revitalise: Future directions for the language, literacy and numeracy National Reporting System*, by Kate Perkins, will be available from the NCVER web site at <http://www.ncver.edu.au>



## ▶ ADULT LITERACY RESEARCH

### Integrated approaches to teaching adult literacy in Australia: A snapshot of practice in community services

Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick

Practice in English language and literacy instruction has broadened and deepened over recent decades, as has the conceptual base underpinning emerging practice. This change has resulted in the growth of 'integrated training', in which the acquisition of literacy skills are 'built in' to broader skills development, and where literacy learning is placed in authentic and real-life settings.

In Australia the major development has been the integration of adult language and literacy education into vocational education and training (VET), and specifically into workplace and work-related training. While this is only one way in which literacy training has become an integrated discipline, it is an important one, as new ways of thinking about how language and literacy is taught

have coincided with fundamental policy change in the VET sector.

#### Concept of the integrated approach

The development of national training packages presented an opportunity to integrate language, literacy and numeracy explicitly into industry standards. However, this has not meant that literacy standards are sufficiently specific, and research has suggested the need for greater consistency across training packages and clearer guidelines for both their developers and practitioners in understanding how to use them.

The extent to which language, literacy and numeracy is

delivered is dependent on the ability of facilitators and assessors to interpret training packages and to develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies.

The complexity of these issues makes it important to gain a better understanding of what actually happens in Australia when putting integrated literacy into practice, especially in the workplace. How is literacy conceptualised in practice by registered training organisations? What literacy practices are developed in an integrated approach? What teaching and learning strategies are employed? What are the key factors which might describe the 'integrated model' of adult literacy delivery?

### The research

The research used a qualitative methodology, combined with a historical overview of adult literacy, language and numeracy education and the development of competency-based curriculum. Three workplace learning sites delivering the Community Services and Health Training Package were also examined.

### The findings

The study identified the use of integrated practices in the delivery of the Community Services and Health Training Package. Facilitators saw the teaching of language, literacy and numeracy as a continuum, where different levels of knowledge are taught as required.

The research verified that the extent of integration of language, literacy and numeracy with vocational competencies depended on the facilitator's ability to understand training packages and to develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies. For some, actually understanding the packages was a challenge.

There was little difference in the strategies adopted by specialist literacy and language teachers, and generalist vocational facilitators. However, industry specialist teachers recognised the importance of both technical and language skills and tended not to differentiate them in delivery. All facilitators recognised that many

students need to be supported through simulated approaches, and all integrated 'learning to learn' strategies.

### Implications for policy and practice

Professional development is extremely important. Both industry specialists and literacy specialists have advantages from their backgrounds, but each needs to acquire some of the other's skills.

There are policy implications for funding models that do not provide for specialist professional development, leaving registered training organisations to make commercial decisions about levels of support required by learners. In some instances, specialist funding is restricted by type or level of program or trainee.

The importance of support materials was highlighted, especially as some facilitators rely on these rather than on the training packages themselves.

The following features were identified as central to successful integrated models:

- using a constructivist approach, which acknowledges that learning is affected by the context in which it is taught as well as by students' beliefs and attitudes
- developing an explicit model of language
- using a multi-disciplinary approach
- providing a framework for describing language, literacy and numeracy
- conducting an analysis of training packages and workplace context
- ensuring the capacity to identify critical points of intervention
- using direct instructional activities
- considering the needs of learners.

The full report of *Integrated approaches to teaching adult literacy in Australia: A snapshot of practice in community services*, by Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick, will be available from the NCVER web site at <http://www.ncver.edu.au>

# Embedding literacy learners in the UK

*The following article is an abridged version of an article which appeared in 'The Guardian' (UK) March 15, 2005. The author, Helen Casey of the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (UK), puts the case for 'embedding' literacy, language and numeracy and suggests how it can help more vocational learners to achieve their goals.*

*Embedding is part of a global trend. Human Resources Development Canada argues that, 'Literacy is often more effective when it is combined with teaching practical skills.' Ireland's National Adult Literacy Agency reports that, 'Literacy skills are best developed in the context of meaningful, relevant and purposeful activity.' New Zealand's Workbase, an adult basic skills organization, indicates that it 'supports literacy practitioners to integrate literacy effectively into vocational courses' and in the United States integrated or embedded basic skills and relevant context knowledge is being referred to as 'Functional Context Education'.*

*It is worth remembering that ideas of embedding or integrating literacy and numeracy with other forms of learning and training have a long history in Australia, and in this regard Australia has led the world. Commencing with programs such as English in the Workplace, a workplace English language program for migrants which expanded into the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program to include all workers requiring support and finally embedding literacy as part of quality vocational training. (See— 'Exploring an integrated approach to teaching adult literacy in Australia: a brief history and snapshot of practice in the communication services sector' on page 7 of this issue of 'Literacy Link'.)*

The underlying concept of 'embedding' involves creating ways for learners to improve their literacy, language and numeracy skills as part of another learning activity. For some it is a new name for a familiar approach previously known as 'integrated' or 'linked' or 'contextualised'. For others it is uncharted territory. It makes literacy, language and numeracy integral to an individual's primary learning goal, which might be learning to cut hair or to become a plumber.

So why embed literacy? A major incentive is the real possibility that it might help more learners to pass vocational qualifications. Poor basic skills and low confidence are often responsible for early dropping out. Many learners lack motivation to focus solely on literacy and numeracy. Embedded approaches work well with learners who would otherwise be reluctant to do anything about improving their literacy.

Recent work at the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy at the Institute of Education (NRDC) is beginning to reveal the potential of embedded approaches. One study describes the shifting attitudes towards literacy and numeracy from young apprentices in construction as their bricklaying teacher impresses on them the essential role of literacy and numeracy to succeed in the construction trades. If a learner's primary motivation is, for example, to be a bricklayer, then the vocational relevance of literacy and numeracy skills needs to be made explicit as part of the programme.

Naturally, the attitude of vocational staff towards literacy is critical. Embedded

approaches do not mean that vocational teachers must become literacy teachers, but they do mean that vocational and basic skills staff need to work together to ensure that literacy development moves in tandem with vocational development. It is clear from the research so far that there is no one way to organise embedded provision. It can, in some instances, be carried out by a dual-skilled teacher but it is more likely through a team with complementary expertise working together.

The organisation of the learning will vary according to the skills of the staff, the needs of the learners and the demands of the particular situation. Case studies reveal successful teams as having time to plan together, and being willing to learn from each other. Behind successful teams there needs to be a culture that values 'Skills for Life' (the Blair Government's strategic commitment for improving adult literacy and numeracy).

Another NRDC project led by the National Institution for Adult and Continuing Education (Niace) working with young adults, in its report *Success Factors in Informal Learning*, recommends that practitioners should 'ensure a positive projection of literacy, language and numeracy. If the tutor dislikes 'basic skills' so too will the young adults. Integrate, embed, but don't disguise. Don't treat basic skills as a bolt-on; it must run through everything, not just (an extra, say) on Thursday afternoons.'

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# Generating new knowledge and putting it into practice

*Jo Hargreaves, from the (Australian) National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) attended the (UK) National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) International Conference in Britain in March this year. In this article Jo shares her insights from the conference.*

The theme for the UK conference was putting new knowledge into practice, and over three days we were offered a range of plenaries and workshops providing a rich insight into the knowledge that is being generated through NRDC research and related projects in the UK and other countries including the US, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia.

This clearly was a fantastic opportunity to showcase the adult literacy and numeracy research program in Australia and to reflect on just how much we are accomplishing, particularly with limited resources.

Some of us might know the UK has invested a great amount of time and money into adult literacy and numeracy policy and practice through their Skills for Life strategy (see page 9). As a result the UK government has developed a standardised national curriculum for basic skills and has clear outcomes for literacy and numeracy skills development against very specific targets.

The opening session at the conference was led by Barry Brooks from the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). His resounding message was that the UK government is committed to Skills for Life as a long term strategy and not just a quick fix.

There are recognised tensions however between the UK government's focus and the views of practitioners and learners. Advocates of the Skills for Life Strategy believe a focus on targets is useful in providing motivation, stirring up an area that has been described as a 'comfort zone'. Others believe a target-driven program puts undue pressure on individual providers. They bring into question the validity of their activities and suggest such policy initiatives do not address the real issues where learners are concerned.

Policy makers and practitioners in the UK were keen to talk about embedding literacy provision—How should learning be organised? Do learners prefer such approaches? Is the learning effective? How do you convince and attract new learners? This was an ideal opportunity for me to promote the research report by Rosa

McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick investigating the integrated approach to teaching adult literacy in Australia (see page 7). And as Lynne Fitzpatrick alluded to on the front page of April's *Literacy Link*, the approach we have taken to 'embeddedness' in Australia is seen by the UK as 'the way to go'.

I had the opportunity to chair a workshop by Karen Evans from the Institute of Education, University of London on Adult Basic Skills and Workplace Learning. Karen is undertaking a six year longitudinal study on the benefits of delivering workplace basic skills. Her research is aiming to fill a key gap on the effects of poor literacy and numeracy on learners and businesses over time. Karen is specifically looking at business performance measures and the costs to businesses when employees have poor basic skills. I will be watching the outcomes of this project with great interest.

Keynote speakers at the conference included John Comings (Harvard and NCSALL Director), John Bynner (Institute of Education), Ben Levin (Deputy Minister, Ontario Ministry of Education) and Allan Luke (National Institute of Education, Singapore). In summing up NRDC Director Ursula Howard commented on the strength of research, and grounding research activity in local contexts.

I was particularly encouraged by concrete examples of just how new knowledge can be put into practice. Initiatives such as collaborative projects and practitioner-led research are powerful tools, providing opportunities for practitioners to reflect on research findings and relate research to current experience and practice. Another important aspect is identifying connections and creating synergies between related research projects and programs.

A resounding theme emerging from the conference was the need for researchers, practitioners and policy-makers to work more closely together. This sounds familiar, and is something that NCVER encourages through our research program.

Copies of the keynote speaker presentations and a collection of papers from the conference are available at:

Many in the world of adult literacy will know the name of Dr. Paul Brock. Paul was John Dawkins' chief education adviser during International Literacy Year and was instrumental in the development of the ensuing Australian Language and Literacy Policy. Following its adoption, Paul became the senior consultant for some years to the Australian Language and Literacy Council, which is when many in the adult literacy field would have met him or heard him speak at conferences. Late last year I was fortunate enough to be invited to attend the launch of Paul's autobiography, *A Passion for Life*. It was a grand occasion—there must have been three hundred people there, including three generations of Paul's family and at least four current and past state and federal ministers.

Paul is now sixty, but at fifty-three, happily married with three children, he was diagnosed with motor neurone disease (MND) and given three to five years to live. As he says in his book, 'I can no longer walk, play the piano, scratch my nose, cuddle my wife, hug my kids, drive, wipe my backside, play sport, dress myself, sign my name, swim, play the guitar, turn on a light switch, drink without a straw, wear my wedding ring, get in and out of bed without being hoisted or clean my teeth'. But, he says, 'I retain my passion for life, and for telling stories'. Remarkably, he still (actively) holds a senior position in the NSW Department of Education and Training.

This book is an intriguing mosaic of stories and reflections of Paul's very full and adventurous life, with much of the adventure happening after his diagnosis. There are wonderfully candid and very amusing accounts of travelling overseas with his adored wife and daughters, as he fulfilled his desire to see certain parts of the world, albeit in a wheelchair. But these trips were not just as a tourist; he has continued to speak at academic conferences in Australia and overseas: 'I bring a thick, sloped folder on which to

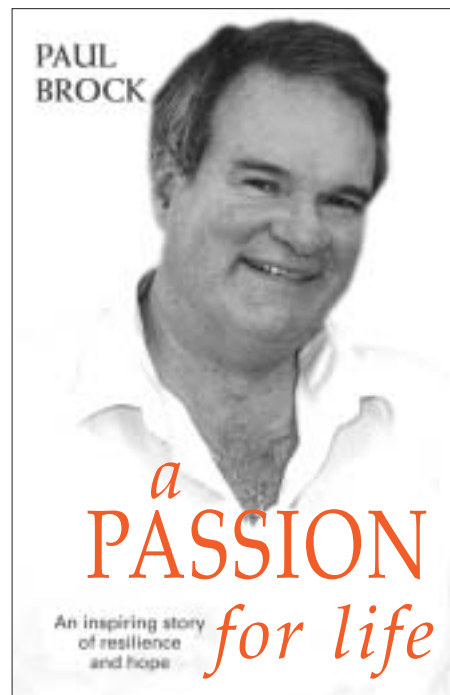
rest my speech so that I can maintain eye contact. If I am not higher than the audience I may have to pause at some point or interrupt my flow by asking my carer, who has to sit beside me, to turn the pages or to take my neckbrace collar out of my briefcase and fasten it around my throat in order to support my head on my weakening neck muscles'.

With an extraordinary openness, Paul takes us into the daily life of a person with MND and we experience, with him and Jackie, the frightening certainty of its progression alongside the fear of not knowing what particular trajectory each person's form of the illness might take.

There is not space here to do more than mention how much we get to learn about Paul—his fifteen years as a Marist Brother; his years as a teacher of English; his experiences of standing for the ALP in the seat of Armidale; his years as an academic at UNE; his current activism with the Motor Neurone Disease Association; his passion for music, for cricket, for public education and, of course, for literacy. The ALLP was a controversial policy, some would even say 'disastrous'. Whatever one's position in the controversy, however, it is fascinating to read about this period in adult literacy and ESL's history through Paul's eyes.

Above all in this book, we come to love and admire Paul's wife Jackie and their two girls. Through humour, poetry and sadness we are invited to share, intimately, their story. Amazingly, Jackie has kept on with her academic job, even managing to publish. And yes—he still wears that yellow jacket!

Rosie Wickert  
University of Technology Sydney



<http://www.nrdc.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=657>.

There are numerous topics to select from so I encourage you to visit the web-site. Examples include: reaching the 'hard to reach', success factors in informal learning, developing effective strategies for workplace basic skills and making numeracy teaching meaningful. For

recent adult literacy research reports and overviews go to [www.ncver.edu.au](http://www.ncver.edu.au)

Jo Hargreaves  
NCVER



## Interactive road rules—a new resource

*To learn to drive in Australia one must first get a pass mark of around 85% in a written or computerised multiple-choice test. Consequently many student's motivation for attending literacy classes is to achieve their driving licence. Prior to sitting a driving test there is little opportunity for learners to 'learn by doing'. In this article Michael Gwyther (who co-manages the private registered training organisation Yum Productions Pty Ltd and has spent over 15 years in Adult and Community Education working in adult literacy) describes a new resource developed to meet the needs of students seeking to pass their driving licence test.*

Supporting a learner to successfully complete a learner driver test can be rewarding for the literacy practitioner. This is despite the length of time it can take some learners to achieve their licence.

The right to drive is an expression of independence in our society. The issuing of the license represents one of the few validating moments where the literacy learner has the opportunity to publicly test and succeed with their skills. Often a student's motivation for attending literacy classes is simply to achieve their licence, but many continue with their literacy learning once this objective has been achieved.

So what challenges arise for teacher in preparing a student for the learner's and probationary driver's test? To learn to drive in Australia one must first get a pass mark of around 85% in a written or computerised multiple-choice test. Prior to sitting the test there is little opportunity for the learner to 'learn by doing'.

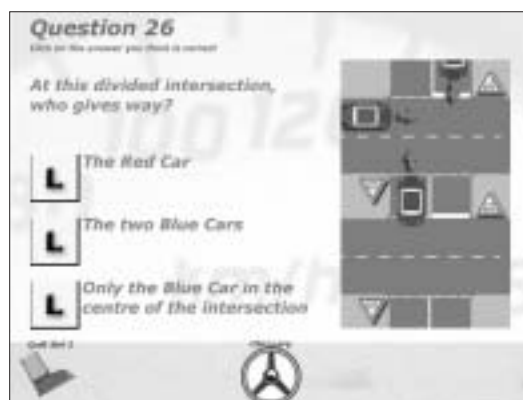
When the literacy requirements inherent in obtaining a learner's permit are unpacked one can see that the challenge is fairly broad. There are spatial literacy issues in communication, eye movement, anticipation of driver's actions and the traffic around you. Drivers need to watch behind the vehicle and be alert for blind spots.

There are reading issues: information must be scanned for a variety of direction, regulatory and speed signs. Numeracy issues involve speed and stopping distances (the speed multiplier effect), and judging distances to other vehicles and their speeds. Reading issues centre on the test itself. This used to be a written test but is now screen-based with multiple choice questions. Learners interact with a test 'kiosk' which has full sound support.

I have offered road rules classes for a variety of learners over many years in the neighbourhood house I managed. All sorts were attracted to these classes—people from non-English speaking backgrounds, young adults, those with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities, people who had lost their licence and others who had struggled with literacy all their lives. When the

classes first began I would go with the student to book in our test. The candidate could request an oral test to be undertaken by one of the traffic authority officers if there was a literacy issue. (This was the alternative to undertaking the written test.) On the day of the test, the officer would ask each question and alternative answer in turn, recording the candidates' response.

I was allowed to give the candidate support and occasional clarification as we worked through the test. On the bus back to the neighbourhood house, we'd strain our brains to remember all the questions so I could incorporate them into our small but growing question set for the rest of the class. When someone from our class finally broke through and got their learners permit, it was mandatory for them to come back to class for tea and cake and show off their new license and receive their 'League of L-Platers' certificate, signed by all the group.



The classes became popular and soon we had two groups. We had more people at varying stages of readiness to sit the test. To cope we produced games, recorded all the questions onto cassette for self study, made heaps of overhead transparencies, made visits to the Road Traffic Authority, and brought in volunteers to assist. Eventually we came to understand that a resource that assisted the learners to work through the knowledge and undertake road law question sets by themselves would be useful.

We wanted a resource that would enable electronic testing of multiple-choice questions



presented randomly to the student. The resource had to enable independent study. It had to provide opportunities for testing drills, and a review of the knowledge. It had also to be accessible to learners of varying literacy and computer abilities through the provision of sound support for the text.

We succeeded in attracting Department of Employment, Science and Training (DEST) support for developing the resource and *Interactive Road Rules* is now ready.

*Interactive Road Rules* is designed to support the literacy practitioner working with students of varying ability who are studying for their learner's permit. The program is an additional tool for the teacher to use in combination with their existing classroom practise to support student's acquisition of road rules.

It contains content that will enable students to acquire the information behind common legal principles they will be required to understand to pass the test.

The program is designed to run from the CD ROM or it can be copied onto a computer hard drive or server.

Teachers can use the program for a variety of purposes in the classroom—

- private study for part of the student group while working more intensively with the remainder of the group
- familiarity with using a multiple-choice format used in Road Rules Testing
- testing understanding of concepts through the use of the maze and multiple-choice questions
- to review knowledge gained through the program or the classroom
- and as part of a broader attempt to build computer literacy skills.

There are three sections in the program, each covering a different knowledge set of road rules and principles of safe driving. Each section contains a 'Maze' and a question set. All screens in each section have sound support for the learner, so they can hear the text being read to them each screen.

Each section has a range of topics for users to work through including:

- getting started
- road signs
- road markings
- traffic lights
- give way to pedestrians
- give way to other vehicles
- turning

A glossary of common terms is available to the learner at each stage of the resource.

At the end of each section, users can attempt a question set. Questions are multiple-choice and users have two opportunities to choose the correct answer. If both choices are incorrect, the user is moved to a feedback section for that question before proceeding to the next question. Score feedback is given at the end of the question set in terms of number of questions correctly answered and numbers of questions correctly answered on the users first attempt.

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***“The issuing of a driver’s license is one of the few validating moments in our society—where the literacy learner actually has the opportunity to publicly test and succeed with their skills.”***

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Once the user has completed each section question set, they can choose to navigate to the question bank where they can undertake a series of 32 questions presented randomly from a bank of 70 questions. The format for these questions is the same as the section question set. Questions are multiple-choice and users have two opportunities to choose the correct answer. If both choices are incorrect, the user is moved to a feedback section for that question before proceeding to the next question. Score feedback is given at the end of the question set in terms of number of questions correctly answered out of 32 and numbers of questions correctly answered on the users first attempt.



The resource was funded under the ANTA Adult Literacy National Project by the Commonwealth through the Department of Education Science and Training. Thanks to VicRoads for permission to reproduce text and information in the resource from *The Road to Solo Driving*.

Interactive road rules will soon be available for use by all literacy providers and practitioners.

For more information contact—

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# National and International Conference

ACAL & ALM (Adults Learning Mathematics) 2005  
Adult Numeracy/Mathematics Conference



*Connecting voices: practitioners, researchers and learners in adult mathematics and numeracy*

Sunday 3rd July (evening) to Thursday 7th July, 2005, Melbourne

**Filling fast! Register Now!**

**Don't miss your chance to be part of this first ever national and international Adult Numeracy and Mathematics Conference**

Information, on-line and printable registration forms, accommodation, available at  
<http://www.alm-online.org/alm12/>

## **Almost 100 presentations to choose from...**

- more than 30 practical workshops
- about 45 with a primary adult numeracy (and literacy & language) focus
- about 35 with a primary Bridging Mathematics focus
- a significant number addressing themes of adult mathematics in relation to indigenous issues, financial literacy, professional development, vocational education, technology or literacy and language
- a significant number reporting on research projects and their implications for teaching

## **Great speakers...**

- Ruth Cossey from the USA considering mathematical literacy as a civil right
- Mary Jane Schmitt from the USA disputing narrow conceptions of "the basics"
- Eunice Bartlett, Michael Michie, Caty Morris, and Kura Raureti on a panel addressing issues around Indigenous adults and maths
- Janet Taylor & Linda Galligan talking about research in Bridging Maths
- Doug Clarke exploring the use of current events to generate maths learning
- Keiko Yasukawa asking what social justice issues are relevant to our field
- Dave Baker from England, Sylvia Alatorre from Mexico, Trevor Birney from Papua-New Guinea, Susan Reid from New Zealand continuing the conversation begun by Keiko
- Clive Kanes and Gail FitzSimons highlighting relevant issues from the overlapping conference on Maths Education and Society in Brisbane
- Beth Marr, Barbara Miller-Reilly, Dave Tout and Betty Johnston giving an introductory glimpse of Australasian perspectives

## **Social events...**

Sunday reception, Tuesday dinner and bush band, mathematics smorgasbord, Women of Notes singers, indigenous performance,

drummers, wine and cheese and stuffed animals!

## **Attendance options...**

There are options of attending the conference for one day, or two days, or for the whole four days. The first two days include a particular focus on issues relating to the adult numeracy and literacy and language field, and also to workplace and vocational mathematics and numeracy the focus of the third day is bridging maths, the fourth day has a particular focus on social justice issues.

Each day will offer a series of practical interactive workshops as well as relevant plenaries and research papers. And just to give you an idea of the richness of choice...

## **Network with people from...**

every state in Australia, and from Canada, England, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Papua-New Guinea, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, and the USA. Network with people involved in every aspect of the field of adults learning maths.

## **Titles of current papers and workshops...**

*Asking Good Questions in the Numeracy Classroom* —the story of how one teacher can get to know the mathematical background of her students

*Love the new syllabus but where is the text book?* Reconceptualising mathematics for senior high school students to build their confidence and success

*Finding & Using Training Resources: A Guide for the ACE Sector*

*Proportional reasoning of illiterate vs. schooled adults*

*Money for Life*

*The Struggling Apprentice*

*Teaching Functional Concepts in an Algebra Course*

## **Titles of adult numeracy conference papers and workshops... (continued)**

*Which Comes First, Learning or Development?*  
*Adult Education and Oral Culture*  
*Cartoons in numeracy: a laughable idea*  
*Financial literacy = workplace competence*  
*An integrated approach to the CGEA Oral Communication Learning Outcomes through Numeracy & Mathematics.*  
*Mathematics in Hair & Beauty: Staying In Business*  
*Using topic maps to support adult's mathematics learning*  
*Integrating Learning and Assessment across Core Content*  
*Evolution of Enabling Programs through a changing environment*  
*Engaging Youth – Numeracy in Practice.*  
*Parents learn to help their children learn*  
*Designing an excursion to integrate literacy, numeracy and computing skills*  
*These are a few of my favourite things*  
*Hands, feet and other body parts*  
*Statistics for Diploma in Marine Studies*  
*Prayer or Mental Mathematics - A Snapshot of Vedic Mathematics*  
*Indigenous issues in numeracy: Round Table 40 minutes*  
*Blended online learning in mathematics: a comparative study*  
*Vocational Education and Training as a platform for enhanced development of life skills*  
*Bending over backwards!*  
*Australia and the ALL survey*  
*Fractals: strange attractors*  
*The School is not capable alone*  
*How can there be mutual respect between home and school in mathematics learning?*  
*Wages, taxes and income support – a case study of a numeracy class*  
*Utilising voices for making connections*  
*Using co-operative groups in the classroom*  
*Games to start classes with*  
*Mathematics as social practice: implications for teaching and learning*  
*The KAM-project*  
*Key concepts of chance*  
*From a leaky boat to Concorde—One adult's journey in mathematics*  
*Mapping the Mathematics problem in Ireland; a longitudinal study of diagnostic test results*  
*Numeracy in mind and body of a vocational student*  
*Using mobile phones and the Internet to deliver LLN*  
*Developing a theoretical framework for adults learning mathematics*  
*3 Plus*  
*Capturing the moment/Engaging the learner*  
*If Maths Was a Food, What Would It Be?*  
*New Ways into Geometry : Ideas + Readily Available Computer Tools = Powerful Learning*

*Finding the Fire: Numeracy and Literacy for Public Safety Volunteers*  
*Professional development resources*  
*First Results of the ALL Project*  
*Using web based maths resources with Adult Learners*  
*Recent and current research in adult numeracy teaching and learning in the UK*  
*Bridging maths – helping students own the maths*  
*Reflective Practice in Adult Numeracy Professional Development at Queen's University, Belfast*  
*Context Based Practice in the Adult Numeracy classroom in Northern Ireland*  
*Adults Learning of Mathematics - some critical issues from a Swedish Perspective*  
*Challenging negative attitudes, low self-efficacy beliefs, and math-anxiety in pre-tertiary adult learners.*  
*Skilling up: Preparing students for the mathematical demands of tertiary study*  
*House water expert*  
*What should be in a training course for adult numeracy?*  
*The LLU+ National Numeracy Centre—a strategic approach to teacher education and professional development*  
*Integrating questioning and observation techniques into teachers' routine practice in adult numeracy*  
*Bridging within a course*  
*The blank page assessment: towards a social and holistic approach to numeracy*  
*Maths and the Electro-technology Industry*  
*Researching literacy and numeracy costs and benefits: What is possible?*  
*Using new technologies in adult numeracy teaching*  
*Fear of Maths*  
*Bridging the gap for first year students with the use of peer tutoring.*  
*Preparing a Journal Article*  
*Financial numeracy: in whose interest?*  
*Developing Critical Numeracy: Reading and Interpreting Tables*  
*Connecting voices – youth and applied/adult learning working together*  
*Numeracy in the workplace – WELL resources and training*  
*Make Your Own Resources*  
*Online numeracy resources in the context of Safe Administration of Medicines(SAM)*  
*Adults' dialogic productive interactions in the classroom.*  
*Reviewing numeracy in the National Reporting System (NRS)*

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Information, on-line and printable registration forms, accommodation, available at  
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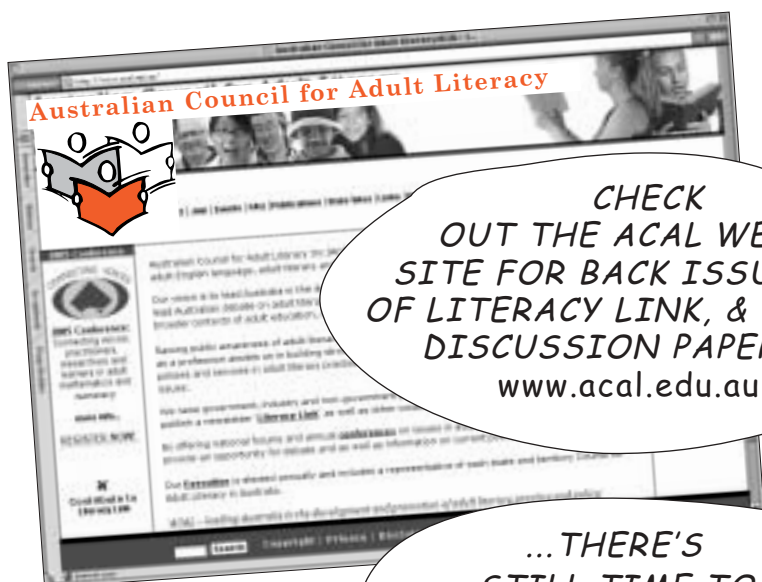
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