

ALLS data – an aid for planning and improvement

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There is general agreement about the importance of increasing the proportion of adults who have the skills and qualifications needed to enjoy active and productive lives. One of the COAG aims acknowledges the importance of continuous and lifelong learning to enrich people's participation in work and skills development to realise their potential as community members and citizens.

The Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALLS) survey represents a considerable investment on the part of the Australian Government. The detailed survey data now available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics could be an extremely useful planning tool for a range of government agencies including health, training, justice and welfare departments. Because the ALLS survey and the Census were conducted at the same time, the two data sets can be linked, and the data from each combined becomes a more powerful tool for analysis.

Any agency producing information for the public in print or electronic form could use the ALLS data to understand more about their target audiences. The data links socio-demographic characteristics with reading and comprehension skills, numeracy and problem-solving capability. Agencies could use this data to further investigate the correlations between literacy indicators and ways in which people benefit, or not, from different social policy approaches. Poor literacy has been associated with poor health, involvement with the criminal justice system, unemployment, under-employment, and welfare dependence. There is no simple causal relationship to be asserted between literacy indicators and poor social outcomes, but these large data sets provide the raw material for investigating the complex nature of the correlations, and could perhaps suggest new approaches to policy formulation.

In an era of very high employment and economic boom, companies are desperate to tap into the pool of unemployed or under-employed people. Training and skills development present a challenge when people have

poor literacy indicators, and unemployed people are over-represented at ALLS Levels 1 and 2. It may be that the two data sets (Census and ALLS) can be of assistance to businesses seeking to broaden their recruitment drive and successfully deliver training to people who are marginally attached to the labour market. The ALLS data is a tool that could assist both government business with their common goal of developing Australia's human capital.

ACAL wants governments and other organisations onside and seriously interested in life-long and life-wide learning. ACAL wants researchers from across different fields to use the data to investigate the complex issues and questions surrounding the influences, impacts and consequences of inadequate adult literacy and numeracy skills on not only the individual but on families, communities, workplaces and society as a whole. ■

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Adult literacy in Australia: Results from the 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey

Some key findings

The Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey (ALLS) was conducted in Australia in 2006 and early 2007. This survey is a large-scale, internationally comparative assessment designed to measure the skills and characteristics of individuals across and within a range of participating countries. The ALLS is the second survey of its type to be conducted in Australia. Its predecessor, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), was conducted in Australia in 1996 as the Survey of Aspects of Literacy (SAL). ALLS allows comparison of Australians' literacy skills with those of other countries, as well as time series comparisons for the key domains of prose and document literacy.

Some key findings

- In 2006, between 46% and 70% of adults in Australia had poor or very poor skills across one or more of the five skill domains of prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and health literacy. This means they did not attain skill level 3, the level regarded by most experts as a suitable minimum for coping with the increasing and complex demands of modern life and work.
- There has been some upward movement in performance from the lowest skill levels since 1996. In regard to prose literacy, there has been a significant 1-2% percentage point decrease in the proportion of adults with a skill level of 1 and a corresponding 2 to 3% increase in the proportion of adults with skill levels 2 and 3. In regard to document literacy, there has also been a significant decrease in the proportion of adults with a skill level of 1.
- The number and proportion of adults with low skills in the other countries surveyed to date have been similar to those in Australia. Australia's results across all domains were ranked in the middle. Australia's skill levels are generally higher than Italy and the United States, about the same as Canada and Bermuda, and lower than Norway and Switzerland.

Summary findings

Age

- Generally, age and skills are inversely related.
- The literacy skills of people aged 45 years and over were lower than younger age groups.
- Those in the 25 – 34 year had the highest level of literacy skills.

Sex

- The proportion of females with prose literacy skill levels of 3 or higher was slightly greater than that of males, while the proportion of men with document literacy skill levels of 3 or higher was greater than for females.
- Males significantly outperformed females on numeracy.
- Males and females performed similarly on problem solving and health literacy.

States and territories

- In 2006, there were no major differences in the skill levels of people by state/territory, except in the ACT, where proportionately fewer people were at skill levels 1 and 2 across all the skill domains.

Educational attainment

- The number of years of formal education has an impact on an individual's skill levels with those who completed more years of education generally performing at a higher level in all domains.

Employment

- Employed persons had higher literacy levels on average than those who were unemployed or not in the labour force.
- On the problem solving and health scales, the majority of employed people still achieved poor or very poor results (i.e. scores lower than 3).
- Between 1996 and 2006, the relative proportions of older workers with lower levels of literacy have decreased.

Income

- There is a strong association between prose skill level and median personal gross weekly income. For example, those with a skill level of 1 had a median income of \$205 less per week than those with a skill level of 2. This gap in income potential remained fairly steady as people moved up the skill levels.

Information Communication Technology

- There is a relationship between high literacy levels and greater computer and internet use, as well as the range of computer/internet skills that people have.

Background to the survey

ALLS in Australia was co-funded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the (then) Federal Department of Education, Science and Training with assistance from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. It involved a random sample of private dwellings in which one person per dwelling participated in the survey. The sample included people aged 15 to 74 years in all states and territories, excluding very remote areas.

Results are reported for five domains - two literacy scales (prose and document), a numeracy scale, a problem solving scale and a health literacy scale. The first four of these domains were captured in the survey by assessing skill levels through a series of tasks, or tests, that respondents were asked to complete. The fifth domain measuring health literacy was produced as a by-product of the above testing process.

Prose Literacy

The knowledge and skills needed to understand and use various kinds of information from text including editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.

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Engaging with ALLS: troubling my starting points

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Recent issues of Literacy Link have included a number of articles on the release of data collected in Australia as part of the *Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey* (ALLS). This is the second set of results collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics – the first being the *Survey of Adult Literacy* (SAL) – released in 1996 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996). With hindsight, it is clear that many English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) activists, myself included, had limited understandings of what the 1996 figures meant, how we might interpret and use them, or indeed the strategies we might activate to ‘keep literacy on the agenda’ in ways which reflected the messy social experiences conveyed by LLN learners and educators. At the time, the ABS also took a much less active role than current ABS Directors in engaging with and disseminating early findings to education and training partners, professional bodies such as ACAL and universities.

Ten years on, I admit to being more aware of strategies for debating the issues yet still confounded by the power of numbers to shepherd me through what I can know and say about LLN practice and LLN provision. Watching the approach and roll out of ALLS data has been a bit like watching a train wreck. At one level I know the outcome ahead of time: know it is not going to look good for ‘us’; media reporting will be problematic; government interpretation of results will take on a life of its own shaped by state concerns, and maybe even the odd state election agenda here and there. Yet I keep watching and participating in the belief that that participation will add different contours and shades to the debates. Lest you think I am being overly pessimistic, a quick run through some of the recent media headlines gives a flavour of the challenges we face in productively engaging a broader public with the Australian ALLS results:

- *Tasmania bottom of the class* (Killick, *Hobart Mercury*, 29/11/07, p. 5)
- *... We're the ninny state* (Metlikovec, *Herald Sun*, 9/11/07, p. 9)
- *Half of Australians illiterate* (Hiatt, *West Australian*, 29/11/07, p. 3).

In South Australia the coverage was less than generous in offering a complex reading of literacy as social practice (Novak, *Literacy improving*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, 29/11/07, p. 10) yet I also understand that journalist questions forwarded to state politicians prompted a welcome opportunity for state based workers to brief the relevant minister on LLN in that state. Nevertheless I was also relieved that SA weren't the dunces or the ninnies. Responses to these things are never a rational matter!

These reflections remind me that, while the actual data is important, equally at issue is what we do with it, how we think about it and most important how we help others connect it to a broader range of federal/state/local social and policy initiatives. And this it seems is the major challenge.

Media and academic commentary on comparative assessments occurs within ‘survey discourse’, a discourse which puts much faith in the power of numbers to steer us towards the ‘true’ LLN story. Despite numerous caveats, commentary invariably connects literacy skills, employment and economic productivity. My argument is not with the basic premise itself – of course there are connections. Rather I challenge the blanket claims that adult literacy and productivity can be formulated as if in isolation from social and economic conditions and the industrial contexts and resources available in local communities. In Australia a broader description of these conditions and contexts includes:

- increasing awareness of a racialised Australian population which challenges many of the assumed practices and values of white settler society and at times manifests as explicit hostility towards non-white/non-Christian citizens;
- continued intolerance towards ‘unemployed people’ and those who have not acquired the cultural and social capital of WASP Australia;
- impatience with the slow progress of Indigenous reconciliation initiatives, many of which resonate with assimilationist projects from the last century;
- new forms of communication and media which change the modes of interaction in workplaces and communities;
- changing labor practices shaped by ubiquitous demands for *documented* quality assurance; and
- ‘booming’ local economies which unsettle, at least in the short term, the claim that a ‘good’ education is required for employment.

The challenges are substantial. The release of the ALLS data provides one of those opportunities to get ‘the message’ out, yet that message is conceived, told and heard differently – may even consist of contradictory messages – by different people. In this article I use the opportunity of the release of the ALLS data to try out a way of talking differently about the surveys and associated activism.

I've been prompted to make these links after undertaking readings of previous survey reports through the lens of racial formation (Omi and Winant, 1994). Howard Winant

claims that '[r]ace is no mere by-product of capitalism [...] rather capitalism is a racial entity. Without its ability to racialise those whom it exploited, capitalism could not have accumulated the wealth needed to subdue the world' (Winant, 1994, 119). This offers a very different starting point from 'survey discourse' for engaging with international comparative assessments such as the ALLS. Winant and his colleague, Michael Omi do not imagine race as a function of genetically determined abilities: a hierarchy of competence based on a gene pool with white folk sitting at the top of the pyramid. Theirs is a 'process theory' of race – a socially constructed phenomenon – and therefore should resonate with those of us who support notions of socially situated and locally enacted literacies.

This presents substantial challenges though if we are to locate discussion of the ALLS in a more contemporary context which nevertheless recognizes that new and old capitalism spring from the same roots. Linda Smith reminds us that the capitalism/colonialism relation of old, "generally served to undervalue or invalidate other knowledges, [while] transnational capitalism seeks to own, exploit and profit from other knowledges" (Smith, 1999). What might these starting points offer as the roll out of ALLS presents new opportunities for LLN activism?

Transnational capitalism is the context for understanding Australia as a nation which has to balance the tension between external threats and those newly constructed internal threats which take the form of wasteful workers and unproductive citizens.

Successful, active and engaged citizens and employees are not simply those who manage to rank higher than the 'low-level' and 'rudimentary' scores associated with Levels 1 & 2 in the surveys. Success in employment and to a certain extent socially is also aligned with other features of the body. As Omi and Winant explain this occurs not only through surface readings of skin color, but also via associated readings of comportment – posture, attitude, a certain air and carriage of the body, dress (meaning a general approach to attire), hygiene and even humor. On talk back shows, in research and throughout educational discourse, the reading of people racially for employment and social purposes is a well known but not easily discussed topic. Marilyn Frye (1992, 154) noted, some time ago that:

Whitely people generally consider [ourselves] to be benevolent and good-willed, fair, honest and

ethical. The judge, preacher, peacemaker, martyr, socialist, professional, moral majority, liberal, radical, conservative, working men and women—nobody admits to being prejudiced, everybody has earned every cent they ever had, doesn't take sides, doesn't hate anybody, and always votes for the person they think best qualified for the job, regardless of the candidate's race, sex, religion or national origin, maybe even regardless of their sexual preferences.

When racial readings of competence are introduced into debates about employment – indeed even literacy competence – the links to white ways of being racialised are often resisted through a number of strategies: denial, dismissal, trivializing, distancing, or total and utter silence. At times these responses are related to the sheer enormity of the challenge: What would it mean to begin from a premise that not only are white people racialised, but that many of 'our' shared assumptions about literacy and progress are based on refusing or avoiding this prospect?

I have argued elsewhere (Shore, forthcoming) that if we accept, even as a starting point that IALS's and ALLS's discourses position people with 'rudimentary' and 'low level' literacy skills within a racialised framework of civilized competence, then it can also be argued that comparative assessments such as surveys *whiten* the workforce through a racial project of determining measures and levels of competence, aligning sections of the population with those measures, and venturing overt expressions of concern about the 'waste of human resources' caught in Level 1 & 2.

International comparative assessments, of which ALLS is part, are caught in notions of skills portability, national qualifications and assumptions of seamless movement across borders. These help to frame the *solutions* to the *problems* of national productivity which will be activated if the *barriers* (literacy and numeracy competence) are addressed. What such logics forget is that 'skill sets' are lodged in bodies which are always subject to a gaze which uses the ideas in Frye's quote above as the benchmark for citizenship and employability.

According to previous survey reports and early commentaries on ALLS, *incapacity* is repeatedly described as 'real', pinned specifically to Levels 1 & 2, and also positioned as something which can be ameliorated, maybe by workplace, community or formal bridging courses. These are the starting points from which many of us, researchers and practitioners, are pressured to begin policy activism, points which take the surveys, their mode of data collection, their claims for employment and wider social productivity and their implications for funding and delivery, as problematic but given. These starting points immediately locate our activism within the self-referencing nature of arguments based on survey results, including the internal repetition of claims linking employment and literacy skills, the recycled commentary lodged in long-term OECD indicator discourse and reports which, despite frequent reference to diversity, repeatedly plane that diversity back. Suggesting we start somewhere else, that we engage with the surveys differently, runs the risk of being portrayed as somehow recalcitrant, never satisfied with what has

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ALLS data is out there at last!

Dr Chris Duncan is Director, National Centre for Education and Training Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Feature

The summary publication for the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (cat no 4228.0) was released on 28 November 2007. A datacube containing 24 tables in Excel format was released on the ABS website on 9 January, followed by the release of microdata in the form of a Basic Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) and an Expanded CURF on 22 January.

The ABS is planning at least two more ALLS releases. The first of these will be a Health Literacy report which will be available in April or May of this year, followed by an ABS research paper. At recent presentations that ABS staff have given to highlight the key findings of ALLS, we have made the point that we are more than happy to hear from people who have ideas about issues that they think should be addressed in the ABS research paper.

There was a fair bit of media coverage following the release of ALLS. In many instances the ABS directed journalists to literacy and numeracy specialists for comment. In the radio interviews that I did, journalists and members of the public who phoned in to comment, were surprised by the finding that approximately 7 million (46%) Australians aged 15 to 74 years had scores at Level 1 and 2 on the prose literacy scale. They questioned the assertion by the survey developers that persons whose scores placed them in levels 1 and 2 do not have the skills required to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work in the emerging knowledge-based economy.

Rather than get into a debate about the veracity of the survey developers' claims, I cited the finding in ALLS about the relationship between literacy levels and income. The median weekly income for those who attained literacy scores at level 3 on the prose literacy scale was \$695. For those who attained literacy scores at level 4/5 on the prose scale, the median weekly income was \$890. People who attained scores lower than level 3 on the prose scale, had a median weekly income less than \$504. These statistics tell us something about the relationship between people's literacy skill levels and their earning capacity.

The media also focused on the fact that literacy levels tend to decrease with age, with higher proportions of people in the older age groups attaining skill scores lower than level 3. The exception to this was the 15 to 19 years age group, which had lower literacy levels than the 20 to 24 year age group. Of those ages 15 to 19 years, 52% attained skill scores lower than level 3 on the prose literacy scale, compared to 37% of those aged 20 to 24 years. Comparing prose literacy levels in 1996 to those in 2006, there were fewer people over the age of 50 years attaining level 1 and more people aged 55 to 64 years attaining level 3.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to have input into the research paper or are hosting an event at which you would like the ABS to give a presentation on the key findings of ALLS. ■

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◀ been done (surveys are indeed expensive and involve an enormous amount of work), trying to do everything at once, or worse, disconnected from the 'real issues' facing learners, providers and policymakers.

Many policy documents, transnational research reports, government statements and institutional reports are overwhelmingly silent when it comes to surfacing the messy but central relations between such things as employability and employment, or the social lives of learners and an adequate theorizing of social capital premised on this messiness. While reports would have us believe "[t]here is no arbitrary standard distinguishing adults who have or do not have skills. ...who are either 'literate' or 'illiterate'" (Statistics Canada & OECD, 2005, p. 15), a discussion of the racialised nature of the social reminds us that there are always parallel assessments being made, other benchmarks being used to complement decisions about LLN competence.

I am left with a number of questions, but not too many easy answers. What might policy activism look like if it questioned the 'facticity' of survey discourse, connected to a wider body of literature on employment, labor processes

and economic restructuring, and made explicit attempts to racialise the social? At a minimum it would encourage LLN 'workers' in the broadest sense of the word – educators, tutors, volunteers, researchers, managers, administrators, consultants (have I omitted anyone?) – to be wary of trivializing and dismissing this approach as unrealistic, out of touch, not pragmatic and so on. For these approaches are also lodged in the very lives learners lead. It would challenge us to think about how socially situated and locally enacted theories of literacy might provide some leverage for 'seeing' the racialised nature of all literacy activities, as practices which encourage access, and freedom of choice as they also draw us back into those moralizing discourses of what a proper employee/citizen should be.

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Engaging with ALLS: troubling my starting points

The power of engagement

Alison Reedy is a Senior Lecturer in ESOL at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. In this article she reflects on her two years as a coordinator of English language, literacy and numeracy programs across the Top End of the NT. She also delivers programs on campus and in remote communities to Indigenous students. This is an adaptation of a paper she presented at the International Adult Literacy Conference in New Zealand in September last year. She is currently managing a DEST funded and DFEEST (SA) supported project *Building Literacy Capacity in Learning Communities* in partnership with the City of Playford and LLN providers in South Australia. Contact for correspondence: sue.shore@unisa.edu.au

The Northern Territory (NT) has a population of 210,000 people, or 1% of the total population of Australia. Around 32% of the NT population is Indigenous and more than 80% of these, roughly 50,000 people, live in remote or very remote locations (SCRGSP 2007, MCEETYA 2004).

It is clear that the Australian education system has failed across the board to provide real English language, literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous Australians of all ages. Figures released by The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA 2004) indicate that in very remote communities of the Northern Territory just 41.8% of Indigenous students reached the reading benchmark at year 3, with a drop in achievement levels in years 5 and 7 respectively.

LLN levels of adult Australians

Although national benchmark literacy and numeracy testing has increased the data available about school age children, there is very little data available on the English

language, literacy and numeracy levels of Australian adults as a whole and Indigenous adults in particular.

The most recent data we have available on adult literacy in Australia is from the 2006 Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALLS), released in 2007. The results of the survey were startling, with approximately 7 million Australians aged 15 to 74 years having such low levels of literacy that the survey developers regarded them as not having the minimum level of skill required to meet the complex demands of life and work in the emerging knowledge-based economy.

Whilst there is no reference to the literacy levels attained by Indigenous Australians in the summary publication of the abovementioned 2006 survey, a similar survey conducted in 1996 found that 'significantly greater proportions of Indigenous peoples were at low literacy levels compared with other people who spoke English as their first language' (ABS 1996). However, as remote and sparsely populated regions were excluded from the sample in both the 1996 and 2006 surveys, they do not provide any information about the literacy skills of Indigenous people living in remote areas.

What information we do have about Indigenous adult literacy in remote areas is gleaned from our experience in the field, and from reading and listening to other people's experiences. It is through our human connections that we know the stories about life and literacy in remote communities.

The need

We know that there is a huge need for adult English language, literacy and numeracy provision across the Northern Territory. Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Batchelor Institute) had 614 enrolments in the Certificates in Spoken and Written English in 2007. Of these, the majority, 382 students, were enrolled at the Certificate 1 level or below. 197 students are enrolled at the Certificate II level and only 35 at the Certificate III level. These numbers are just the tip of the iceberg. There is unmet demand for provision each year that Batchelor Institute does not have the resources to respond to. These requests come from individuals, community representatives, employers, vocational training providers as well as from government organisations.

The extent of the unmet demand, whilst difficult to quantify, suggests that Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory

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value education and are keen to pursue study to improve their basic skills. The reasons for study may include improving literacy competence in order to access training and employment opportunities and thus take control of their own communities (Kral and Falk 2004:18). The levels of participation and unmet demand also reflect government policy linking welfare payments to participation in training and employment programs (Australian Government 2007).

Some research

Some small scale research has been carried out which supports what we know from anecdote and experience about adult literacy in the remote Indigenous context. Kral and Schwab (2003) investigated the perception versus the reality of English language and literacy levels of 55 Indigenous adults from two remote communities, one in the Top End and one in the Central desert area of the Northern Territory.

Their research found that more than 70% of people regarded themselves as literate, as being able to read and write in English, whereas assessment showed that this was not the case. In lay person's terms, two thirds of the males assessed and almost half of the females were not yet competent at level 1 of the National Reporting System (NRS). That is they could only, at best, complete basic functional tasks such as identifying or writing personal details such as their name and address (Kral and Schwab 2003:12).

The researchers' findings included an assessment that:

People's experience of the literate world and what it really means to be able to read and write in English is very limited. In everyday life people in these regions have had minimal exposure to the infinite range of what can be read and what can be written and the myriad ways and contexts in which texts can be interpreted, comprehended, composed, drafted, redrafted and refined. Thus, in comparison to those who cannot read and write at all, those with very limited English reading and writing competence are likely to describe themselves as literate (Kral and Schwab 2003:13).

Kral and Schwab's interviewees were not drawn from a statistically valid sample and therefore the researchers do not consider the results to be generalisable. They do, however, believe that 'the patterns [they] have identified

are common to many remote indigenous communities across the country' (2003:8).

Subsequent research extends the concept of literacy and its relationship to vocational readiness. Kral and Falk (2004:7) suggest that 'adult literacy is increasingly seen as a major factor affecting the participation of Indigenous people in training and the subsequent delivery and management of services in remote communities'. When literacy is not factored into vocational education and training to people from rural and remote Aboriginal communities and where that training is delivered without consideration of the need for and application of that delivery, there have often been 'questionable outcomes in terms of vocational competencies linked to the development of the communities concerned [and the training has] often failed to achieve resonance with the self-determination priorities of Aboriginal people' (ANTA vol 1, 1998b:2 cited in Kral and Falk 2004:19).

This sends a strong message that English language, literacy and numeracy training, as well as vocational training, 'must be integrated into the social and cultural framework of the community, and must include community goals and aspirations' (Kral and Falk 2004:8)

Journey of discovery

This brings me to my own journey of discovery. Early in 2006 I arrived in the Northern Territory to work as a lecturer at Batchelor Institute. I delivered Certificate III in Spoken and Written English (CSWE). During that year I worked with a group of students who were very reluctant to give their opinions on most topics that were raised in the classroom. This translated into the students achieving limited success in structuring and writing expositions, which was a formal outcome of the course.

As part of my reflection on teaching I asked myself questions relating to my own practice, principally questions about whether I had structured delivery with sufficient scaffolds to support successful learning outcomes for these students. I felt that I needed to explore this issue more closely, particularly as the ability to engage with ideas and give opinions is so important to participation in public discourse which 'is inextricably tied to the idea of democracy and to the idea of citizenship' (Moraitis and McCormack 1995:3).

There were many concepts I needed to explore. I wanted to

The power of
engagement

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know more about the manner and form in which opinions are given in traditionally oriented contemporary settings, and how kinship relationships impact on communication. I wanted to know how the ownership of knowledge determines what topics can be openly and freely discussed. For a non-Indigenous teacher it is not clear cut which topics are appropriate to use, and with whom.

I also wondered about the impact of shame in the students' reluctance to engage in opinion giving. At a secondary school level, shame is a major factor in the way Aboriginal school students react in the classroom and 'in traditional Aboriginal society it was preferable as a learner to plead ignorance rather than to try, fail and be shamed' (Groome 1995:73).

I explored the topic of opinion giving with my students. We started with a whole class mind mapping activity where we built a picture of individual, family and community level decision making and we looked at how decisions were made and on what issues. We then broke into smaller focus groups facilitated by myself and an Indigenous tutor. This exploration was an exciting time for me as I was invited into the students' worlds.

Most students said that their reluctance to express an opinion in the classroom was because they were shy, not confident or frightened of making mistakes. An additional response was that expressing an opinion might upset another person, so it was better not to express it. A further response was that there are consequences to giving opinions.

The students noted that they all have opinions, but felt bound to either give or not to give an opinion depending on the subject. The tutor facilitating one of the groups elaborated that she felt constrained to limit her opinions on many topics, particularly in areas that are men's business such as the sea and trade.

Students also discussed how opinions are given. Those from remote community settings advised that traditionally decisions were reached at a community level by elders talking quietly amongst themselves, going back, again and again, to listen and to understand everyone's opinions

until a consensus is achieved. One student said that in her community the elders historically were really strong people in culture and in law and followed very strict rules about how decisions were made, where one leader listened to everyone, made decisions and kept the peace.

Other students talked about the impact of the break down of traditional community structures, and how this has left many communities unable to make decisions. Several students mentioned that instead of the traditional quiet talking amongst elders there is now apparent a culture of fighting, arguing and name calling with no framework for the constructive expression of opinions or for the resolution of differences. One student talked about the emergence of a trend, where people demand rather than discuss. Another student said that there was no constructive framework for giving opinions and resolving problems in her community except with the input of white men. In her analysis of the situation she gave the example of a neutral white council member being brought in to act as a mediator in a recent dispute.

Common ground

This activity and exploration was extremely valuable to me personally and as a teacher. It showed me that there are very strong differences in the way that we give opinions in a Western context as compared to the traditional consensus building approach that my students related to, even while they acknowledged that the old ways were no longer working in many places and in many situations. This activity provided my students and I with the common ground and mutual understanding that we needed to recommence our teaching and learning journey.

My experience demonstrates the connection that needs to be made between the Western view of literacy and the Indigenous world view. From this knowledge base I was able to reposition the concept of opinion giving and exposition writing to the lives of my students and together we were able to look at the purpose of these skills of public discourse and exposition writing and apply them to their own lives and communities. ■

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Top of the Class: Indigenous radio trainee wins State award

Ellie Rennie is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology. She has published one book, *Community Media: A Global Introduction* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

In September 2007, a young man called Mike Rennie won the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year award, which recognises outstanding achievements in vocational education. Mike's winning qualification was a Certificate III in Radio Broadcasting, completed through the Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA). BIMA is the not-for-profit organisation behind the Indigenous radio station 989fm and its Registered Training Organisation, Triple A Training. Mike's mentor and the manager of BIMA, Tiga Bayles, also attended the awards ceremony. For Tiga and his colleagues, the win is a recognition of the importance of Indigenous media, particularly in terms of training and creative industries development.

When I rang to pass on my congratulations (Mike's my cousin) he still couldn't believe that he had actually won, despite the fact that he knows the value of community radio training better than most. Mike now works as a trainer himself, teaching radio to Indigenous young people on Cape York peninsula.

Mike (28) and his brother Dan (25) were adopted into my family as toddlers. They share the same birth mother who comes from the Kimberly and now lives in Darwin, where they sometimes visit. After leaving school, Mike studied to be a park ranger, but struggled to find work locally. Instead he became a landscaper and, later, a baker. In June 2004, both Mike and Dan began volunteering at 989fm (formerly 4AAA). The station, which commenced broadcasting under a community radio license in 1993, has a significant following. Under the guidance of Tiga Bayles, 989fm is more 'mainstream' than most community broadcasters – although it is completely unique in Brisbane, playing country and Indigenous music alongside Indigenous news. Bayles insists that Indigenous broadcasting does not have to sound amateur, that it should appeal to a wide audience and strive for economic independence. Training is essential to that mission.

Aside from the formal components of his training, Mike produced a 3 hour program 4 times a week, participated in the Gympie Muster and Telstra Road to Tamworth interviews and organised a sponsorship deal with Ellaways Music. He also worked on a national current affairs program called "The Wire" which is produced by the Triple A training team. He covered mining on Lake Cowal in NSW, the introduction of OPAL fuels in Central Australia and the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing in South East Queensland. Meanwhile, his brother Dan was employed as 989fm's drive-time DJ and has become something of a local celebrity.

Mike now compiles AFL programming and produces his own half hour footy show. Both are broadcast on the

National Indigenous Radio Service, a satellite service which distributes programming to Indigenous stations across the country. He also teaches classes at 989fm and travels to Cape York with Triple A Training Training.

Mike believes there is a real need for media training in remote Indigenous communities. Triple A Training has been quietly working towards improving skills in Cape York, focusing their attention not only on the benefits for individual students, but for the media system as a whole. After an initial pilot the Department of Education, Science and Training came on board for a two-year term, which they renewed in 2007. The Cape York communities possess their own radio production equipment and transmitters, provided through the federal government's Remote Indigenous Broadcasting program. Triple A Training's involvement has enabled the stations to make local programs, which they supplement with the NIRS service. Mike and his colleagues use online and face-to-face methods, visiting the townships of Weipa, Kowanyama, Aurukun, Cooktown and Wujal Wujal in the Daintree every 5-6 weeks. Participants are also flown down to Brisbane for one week of intense training at the 989fm studios.

The training takes place in schools where attendance can be as low as 30%. However, the fun of radio is getting kids back to class voluntarily. According to Bayles, the radio training has produced significant outcomes in terms of overall literacy, 'making reading and writing relevant' through tasks such as putting together an interview or reading the back of a CD case. Although accredited radio training has been available through TAFE colleges, Bayles believes that it can only succeed if it is designed for remote community needs and delivered by Indigenous media trainers. ▶



The ultimate aim is to get more stations producing local content, with the intention of setting up a regional content network. Bayles hopes that radio will become the hub of each community – as essential as a local store, school or health clinic. For that to occur, the Indigenous media sector needs a structured plan that will create media jobs and professional standards, which Triple A Training is working towards. He insists that the community nature of remote Indigenous broadcasting does not have to mean bad quality. In the past, ‘we have made ourselves look and sound stupid’ because of a lack of skills. If the value of the resource is to be realised, young people need to be taught how to construct and communicate their thoughts effectively, while stations need to understand how to schedule programs to meet audience needs.

Mike and Dan’s experience at 989fm demonstrates the unique experience of community and Indigenous media training. Both have found meaningful work opportunities in an industry that is notoriously difficult to enter. Almost from the moment Mike started at 989fm he was on-air, learning how to produce radio against deadlines and within the constraints of broadcasting law, ethics and practice. The station took him to real events, had him researching issues of local and national importance and introduced him to successful artists and leaders. Aside from the daily acquisition of skills, Mike was responsible to an audience. His communication skills transformed, both on-air and off. I could write about the impact it had on his personality (confidence, eloquence), but he is my little cousin and I know he’d hate me for it. I can say for certain, however, that 989fm has given both Mike and Dan a deep connection to Indigenous culture and politics which they might otherwise have missed. In the remote communities, where Mike now works, the cultural and educational potential of community radio is equally, if not more, significant.

When Mike commenced his training at Triple A Training, 989fm was one of only five community radio stations to provide accredited courses. A year later, in 2005, the government fulfilled an election promise of \$2.2 million for community radio training, which is currently being administered by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia. The programs that flow from this money (which are focusing on management training, particularly for ethnic, regional, print handicapped and Indigenous stations), will no doubt lift the standard and sustainability of community broadcasting. And, as community broadcasting is a common step towards employment in the national and commercial broadcasting sectors, industry as a whole should benefit.

For the Indigenous sector, more intensive programs are required in order to raise digital literacy within communities, skill-up local media workers and create culturally appropriate courseware. Vocational training stands for jobs and sustainable industries. In the creative industries, training also results in social and cultural outcomes. Mike Rennie might be surprised that his community radio training could take him so far. In fact, it makes a great deal of sense. ■

This article first appeared in Creative Economy www.creative.org.au

For the past 20 years at election time, I have been a Dec vote officer. This means that I issue the blank voting forms to people who DECLARE they are entitled to vote. They fall into two categories. Those who claim they have the right to vote in the electorate but are not on the electoral roll (provisional voters) or those that are out of their electoral area but within the state, in which cases they require an absentee vote.

Before Election Day polling officials including Dec vote officer undertake training – they work through a book and attend a formal training session. I generally look forward to these as I know the trainers, and occasionally meet with other old war horses. As an educator I look forward these sessions with a ‘professional eye’. Training is generally well presented, although sometimes it does not allow for ‘individual differences’.

This election there were some changes to the processes. For the first time, provisional voters wanting a Dec vote needed to produce some form of official identification (ID). The Dec official had to sight the identification and match the type of ID to a list printed on the back of the Dec vote envelope. If no ID was presented, the Dec vote issuer was to give the person a special form which had to be filled in and returned to the electoral commission office within 5 days with a certified copy of some form of ID. Once that was done the vote would be sorted and counted.

Each Dec vote official has a series of tasks to do – provisional voters, have to provide name, address and ID which is written on the back of the Dec vote envelope. They sign the envelope declaring that they have formally identified themselves and what they have said is true. The voters are then given the appropriate voting papers, directed to the special Dec vote booths to fill in their ballot papers and return them to ME, the Dec vote officer. The votes are then placed in the previously completed Dec vote envelope and sealed and the envelope is put in the special Dec vote ballot box.

The absentee voter is treated in a similar fashion except that ID is not required.

This year on the envelope were 3 little boxes which I, the Dec voter officer had to fill in. When I looked at them I thought “How do I do this? What information do I need so I can fill them in correctly?”.

I went back through the training manual and could not find the answer. I felt a FOOL. However, I thought that I could ask my co-Dec vote officer. Then I remembered that my co- Dec officer had been relying on me for help and assurance.

“What should I do?” Well I read and re-read the training manual. I couldn’t find the answer. So for the first time in many years, I took the advice given at the training session. I rang the electoral office for help. I asked about the 3 little boxes that I had to check.

“Oh”, says the person – no name – no identification – “do you realise that when you seal the envelope these boxes

Literacy and the Federal Election

Gabrielle Jarvis has been a literacy and numeracy teacher for 30 years, working for a range of providers including Canberra Institute of Technology, Illawarra TAFE, Riverina TAFE and the Work Resources Centre. She also has experience working with youth and Indigenous students. She is currently working for the Department of Corrections NSW at Goulburn in the minimum Security Gaol. Come election time, Gabrielle is also a polling officer in the ACT.

A personal view

are covered up? It doesn't matter if you fill them in or not". I felt a complete fool. Could I not read?

But being ME I wanted to know what the three boxes were for. "Oh", says the same voice "this is just a self check. Is the voter an absentee voter or provisional voter? This is just a reminder for you. Sorry I've got to go, there is some one at the counter. Good bye".

Wow, I felt a fool; someone who did not count; my years of experience were irrelevant. I was just an illiterate who needed spoon feeding. I was a non-person. I felt angry. How dare she treat me like that? I am an adult educator. I CAN read. The information was not clear. In fact it was not even explained in either the written training manual or explained at training – well maybe it had. I had been late BUT I was welcomed as a War Horse. YET I was too embarrassed to ask.

Then I calmed down – well maybe!!!

Polling day

On polling day, two of us started at the Dec vote table, but because there were so many people waiting to vote, I was asked if I could manage by myself. So I was there alone. No one to talk to; no one to discuss filling in the Dec Voter envelopes; no one to discuss the other duties - like getting provisional voters to fill in their current and permanent address - but what if they didn't have one? I suggested they use their previous home address.

Throughout the day people came to my table asking for assistance, expressing fear of an unknown outcome and genuinely asking for help for problems that might have repercussions later on – "What happens if an ill person doesn't vote?"; "My daughter is over seas what will happen if she does not vote?"; "How do I report the death of a relative who dies since that last election".

Others voters came too. Could I please help? Their explanations came quickly – "I have left my glasses at home". I said, "How can I help you?" "Well I want to vote for Paul Keating". I did not have the heart to say, "Sorry, Paul Keating is no longer in parliament". I took the message that the person wished to vote Labor. I then asked, "Would you like me to fill in the form for you or show you where to put the numbers?" The reply was to ask me to fill in the form. I did as I was asked.

Another Dec vote person came. I noticed his very blackened, greasy hands – a mechanic, I thought. After all I had taught reading and numeracy for many years. I asked his details, filled in the Dec voter envelope. I had

discovered many years ago that it was better to do so, because many people could not fill out these envelopes and were embarrassed to ask for help - as I had been with my 3 boxes - or their writing was illegible.

I explained, with what I thought, was great clarity, how to fill in the electoral ballot papers. On the green paper for the House of Reps, a number had to be put in every box, starting with number one for the party you want to get into power and be the government and going through to the party you do not want as the government. With the white Senate paper I explained that the voter could EITHER put the number 1 above the line in the box for the party they wanted to be in government OR they must put a number in every box if they voted below the line.

I had been doing this all day. I thought my explanation was not only clear, but voter friendly. I remembered my humiliation when I rang the Electoral Commission for help and tried even harder to make everything explicit. After all I spend my professional working day trying to help those who find reading and writing difficult.

Well my mechanic came back – his boss, who had been the person at the Dec Vote table before him, was gone. Now my mechanic was safe – he could not read the people's names on the ballot paper. I felt compassion for him. He asked me again, "How do I fill in these papers?" Again I repeated all the instructions I had previously given him. "On the green paper you must put a number in every square. Put the number 1 for the person/party you want elected. On the very large white paper you need only put the number 1 in the square of the party that you want to vote for".

As I was explaining things to him – very clearly I thought and hoped - a flash of recognition came, he could not read. "Oh", says I, "would you like me to fill in the papers for you?" His relief was obvious. I recalled my distress, fury, humiliation, anger when put down by the person on the phone at the Electoral Commission. I was not going to do that.

So I said, "Who do you want to vote for?" I was greeted with a blank response. I tried again, "Do you watch any TV?" "Yes", he said. I asked if he had heard anything about the election. Of course he had, but used that time to do something else like flick through and see what was on the other channels. I asked if he knew the name of the two leaders. He thought he did. I then asked him if he could name them; with a little help he did. I then asked him, "Do you want to vote for Kevin Rudd or John Howard?" His relief was overwhelming.

Continued on page 14 ►

Adult Literacy – a propeller

Mercy Chiluvuri works at Manukau Institute of Technology in Auckland, New Zealand as a Literacy Educator currently teaching the Parents/Whanau Literacy Course.

I was so delighted to read the article titled “Adult Education as a Human Right”, published in the ACAL Literacy Link, September 2007. The article was an edited version of Melissa Jones’s talk aimed at persuading her WA audience to lobby for the inclusion of a Right to Education for adults in the WA Human Rights Act.

As I was reading through, I was moved tremendously by one of the statements, which goes “Adult Literacy courses provide a starting point, people are able to begin where they are”. It is very true that the adult literacy provision is all powerful and does bring a change in learners’ motives, actions and emotions. However, it is my experience that the great majority of literacy practitioners tend to think that literacy education generates no immediate outcomes. There are many reasons behind their thinking. We could list the reasons as: age, no formal qualifications, no academic contacts, no rich educational background etc.

All these years I was under the impression that the whole lot of academic achievement miracles can be seen in and performed by mainstream learners only. Surprisingly, my learners who take part in the Parents/ Whanau Literacy Course offered by Manukau Institute of Technology, New Zealand have proved me and my thinking wrong and I intensively support the cardinal idea put forward by Melissa Jones, as the literacy provision provides a starting point and none can deny that the adult literacy courses are of great value, both to participants and the population as a whole.

To support the statements I have made above, I present the written stories of learners (exact version) who were greatly moved and influenced by the Parents/ Whanau Literacy Course to take a drastic decision of achieving something in the field of education, despite their shortcomings and the difficulty of reaching their goal.

Tangi Tupo: A Cook islander

I am Tangi Tupo. I am very happy to come to this course to learn more knowledge. I really want to learn more and more. In the beginning, I was not a good reader in English to my kids. They always say that I don't know how to speak, read and write. But since I started coming to this course, I am learning to read and speak. From now on, I don't put my self down.

Teioa George: A Cook Islander

I am a cook islander married with 4 children, 13 grand children and a humble handsome man George. I left school at an early age with no qualifications, came to New Zealand in the 90s. Until I joined the course (Parents/Whanau Literacy) I called myself a 'woman of no future'. But the introduction of the Parent/Whanau

Literacy course by Manukau Institute of Technology made my way of thinking absolutely positive and it has taught me the value of being a constant learner to perform my duties effectively as a chairperson of Board of Trustees of Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate, which is situated in the south of Auckland.

Mii Lovey: A Cook Islander

I am a desperate, greedy mother/ grandmother lost my love for education many many years ago. I never wanted to be in public and avoid public meetings because I always labeled myself as “uneducated and not deserve the place in public”. Thanks to the literacy course, which has opened my ‘closed eyes’ to develop the passion for reading and writing. This course made me take the decision of helping my undeveloped community.

Louise Siu: A Samoan Mother

I am a mother of 8 children . I am 46 years old. I left school long time ago. Before I came to this Literacy course, I thought I was alright with just knowing how to speak English. But when I joined the course and started learning, then from there, I opened my eyes and knew that this course is just the start.

And now I can see that, there is a future for me, even though this is just the beginning. I know there is something I can do and help my family and myself in the future.

Mele Keremete: A Samoan

I am Mele Keremete and I am a Samoan. I am 44 years old. When I first started this course, I didn't have the intention that I will get any good outcome from it. But this course opened my eyes to see the path of my dream that I was holding on to it all these years. This course changed me how to feel for my children's education. Luckily because of this course, I got a job as a teacher aide in the same school. I am so lucky to have this second chance to start afresh and to get involved in education. I think now I am going on the right path.

In the light of the evidence provided, I would sincerely like to echo with the voice of Melissa Jones and greatly appreciate and thank the governments and providers for the Adult Literacy provision, which currently exists in different forms and shapes enabling people to fully utilise a second chance for the rejuvenation of their educational lives. ■

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Having fun with maths: Activities and games for developing maths language and skills

Chris Tully is an experienced and well respected numeracy practitioner working at Kangan Batman TAFE, Victoria.

I was very excited when asked to review *Having fun with maths*, written by Dave Tout. I have attended a number of interactive workshops run by Dave on engaging students in Maths and have always come away from these sessions with many new resources that I have been eager to use with my students. I have also reflected on my teaching practices and made some changes that have worked well in my classes, after listening to Dave's experiences. Based on these sessions, I had high expectations of *Having fun with maths*. I was not disappointed.

As the title suggests, this is a book that contains games that can be used in all levels of Numeracy classes. It is well laid out, with the games grouped in sections by type of game. The first section is on co-operative logic problems like those in *Strength in Numbers* by Ruth Goddard, Beth Marr and Judith Martin and in *Equals: Get it together*. The problems are as well laid out as those in *Strength in Numbers* but there are many more problems. Although *Equals: Get it together* is all co-operative logic problems, there are a number of problems that I only use infrequently or not at all, as they are too difficult for my students or the language used is not appropriate. This is not the case with *Having fun with maths*. All the problems are written in language that students would easily understand. There is a variety of levels in the problems, starting at a very easy level and building up to more difficult levels. The co-operative logic section is grouped into different areas, for example shape, number or map reading, making it easy to find problems that support the topic being covered in class at that time. Best of all, all the resources needed to do the problems are provided in the book. This section has a clear list of instructions for the teacher, a guideline of the teachers role when using the problems, some problem solving strategies and instructions on how to make your own games. What more could a person want!!

Section 2 is dice games. Again this section is well laid out with games that I would use at all levels in my teaching. There are clear instructions on how to play the games. There are also suggestions for teachers to use on how they would present the games in the class. Another benefit is the number of variations given for the dice games so that the game can be adapted and used many times without the students tiring of it.

The next section is calculator games. The games in this section are based on those in *Mathematics: A new beginning* by Beth Marr and Sue Helme, but Dave has extended the games from that book, giving more problems of the same type but using different numbers.

The last section of the book is word games made up of crosswords, word finds and the value of words. These puzzles are excellent because they use concepts that can open the class up for discussion rather than the students just doing the problems. For example, the crossnumber puzzles uses a number of words for the maths operation in a puzzle. In crossnumber puzzle 1, the operation "+" is represented by the words "plus", "more than" and "the sum of". This then allows the teacher to find out if the students know any more words they can use for the symbol "+". The word finds are topic specific so if fractions are being covered in class, there is a word find on fractions. The word find can be used to clarify students understanding of concepts. For instance the teacher can check if the students understand the word "equivalent".

Perhaps the most valuable part of the book is the introduction. This area discusses the benefits of using games in the classroom and how both the teacher and student can develop using games. It should encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching practices.

Overall I highly recommend this book. It will be one that I will use often and that I will be encouraging other Numeracy teachers to get.

Review



Having fun with maths: Activities and games for developing maths language and skills

by Dave Tout, Multifangled P/L, December 2007

Availability: Various outlets including Multifangled P/L,

Web: <http://www.multifangled.com.au/>,

fax: 03 9687 3553;

email: multif@multifangled.com.au

Also available from AAMT, MAV, CAE and Bookery.

Cost: \$29.70 plus postage and handling.

News from Victoria: VALBEC turns 30 in 2008

"Still glides the stream"

VALBEC conference 2008

Friday May 16

Pre conference workshops Thursday May 15

30 years Celebration Dinner Thursday May 15

VALBEC is excited to be entering its 30th year and invites practitioners from around Australia to submit proposals for presentation at the conference or to join us at the conference and the 30 years celebration dinner to be held in Melbourne, May 15 & 16, 2008.

The 30 years Celebration Dinner will provide an occasion for people who have been associated with VALBEC over three decades to come together and celebrate the commitment and work of so many and to reflect on the development of the sector. There will be much sharing of stories, laughter and experiences over dinner, so mark the date in your diary and spread the word to colleagues, past and present.

'Still glides the stream' is a motif for endurance that typifies the spirit, commitment and passion of VALBEC in its 30th

year and provides the theme for the annual conference. Despite the ebb and flow of government funding, policy shifts and curriculum change, VALBEC and the adult literacy and numeracy fields it represents, continues to support large numbers of learners on their education pathways.

The VALBEC conference will again facilitate practitioners to engage in professional conversations and to be inspired and re-energised in the spirit of collegiality. The VALBEC conference will provide practitioners with a forum to explore new ideas and effective approaches to deal with changing student cohorts, challenging workplace conditions, variations in curriculum and compliance requirements. Together we will spend time reflecting on achievements and milestones for VALBEC and the adult education and ACE sector, providing insights for the future.

We are pleased to announce two keynote speakers Bev Campbell and Kate Burridge and will post more program information on the website as it is confirmed. ■

For further information contact Don MacDowall, Conference organiser or Lynne Matheson, Conference convenor.

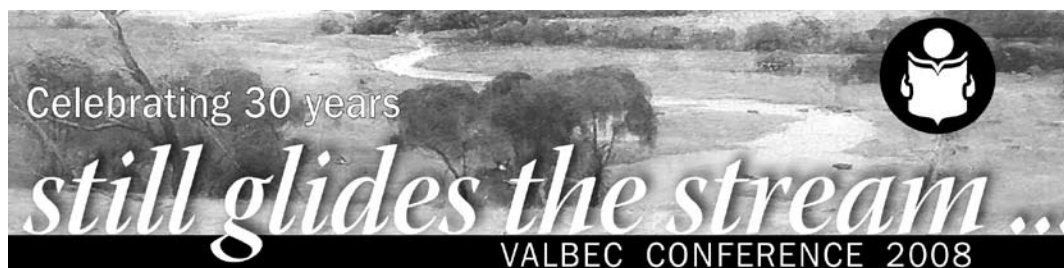
WWW: www.valbec.org.au

Email conf@valbec.org.au

Phone 03 9546 6892

VALBEC, Box 861, Springvale South VIC 3172

ARTHUR STREETON,
Still glides the stream,
and shall for ever glide
(detail). 1890,
oil on canvas.
82.0 x 153.0cm
Purchased 1890.
Collection Art Gallery
of New South Wales



Literacy and the Federal Election

◀ Continued from page 11

I then named each current Senator and the party they belonged to. Then I read out the names of each candidate and his/her party. Once I got a clear mandate, I asked my mechanic if he would like to fill in the paper. His response was that my writing was better than his so would I please fill it in for him. I filled in the Senate paper as he directed.

I asked him to fold his ballot papers and put them in the Dec Vote envelope. I sealed the envelope and he dropped his vote in the special Dec Voter Box.

He was quite pleased with how he managed the voting, so I told him that at CIT (Canberra Institute of Technology) there were understanding teachers who could help him learn to read and write I suggested that he enroll at CIT or a TAFE in NSW in an adult Reading and Writing class (RAWFA). He checked the details of how to do so, so I hope that he will.

My anger and humiliation to the response of a simple relevant question to an official at the Electoral Commission made me a more caring Dec vote person and also a more receptive person to those with literacy needs.

Election Day for the many in the Community who find reading and writing difficult is an embarrassing nightmare.

For those of us who pop into a nearby polling booth in our neighborhood, give our name and address, receive our papers, voting is an easy process but for those who have been dropped off the electoral roll, perhaps because they had could not read and had not returned the form from the Electoral Commission confirming their address, it is not the same. These people, if they wish to vote, must then go through a more complex process, which some find challenging.

If you find filling out the electoral form difficult, then consider those who find reading and writing difficult. For to this group filling out the form is almost impossible. ■

◀ Continued from page 16

want do more work on a particular area. There is also a variety of activities used throughout the scenarios rather than the same activity in a different context. Some of the activities require participants to type an answer, some to click and drag answers, some are true false quizzes and a number use other interactive options.

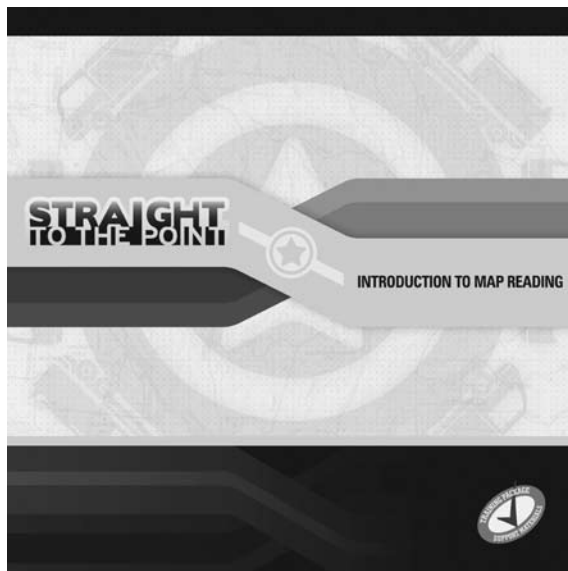
I would highly recommend this CD. It is very easy to use and could be used both as a whole class activity with some discussion with the teacher or as a self paced learning tool. Students from a NESB would also find the CD fairly easy to use. ■

*Availability: Workplace Skills Access, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE,
369 Stud Road, Wantirna South VIC 3152.*

Ph: (03) 9210 1170

Email: tbandopadhyay@swin.edu.au.

Cost: \$30 incl. postage and handling.



Straight to the Point CD

◀ Continued from page 5

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Engaging with ALLS: troubling my starting points

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Document Literacy

The knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and charts.

Numeracy

The knowledge and skills required to effectively manage and respond to the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

Problem solving

Goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solution is available.

Health Literacy

The knowledge and skills required to understand and use information relating to health issues and staying healthy. Information collected in the survey includes details of participation in education; educational attainment; parental education, languages spoken; labour force status, industry and occupation; respondents' literacy and numeracy practices at work and elsewhere; social capital and well-

being; use of information and communication technology; income; and other socio-demographic information. You can find more information about ALLS at www.abs.gov.au ■

Adult literacy in Australia: Results from the 2006 survey

Are you a member of ACAL?

Some of the benefits of membership to ACAL include receiving your own copy of Literacy Link, special rates for forums and conferences, access to information regarding current practices in all states and territories throughout Australia, representation on committees, information relating to latest policies on adult literacy and numeracy, and government lobbying.

Cost: \$44.00 for an individual membership, or \$66.00 **for an organisation** (all costs incl GST).

You can join online at www.acal.edu.au

Straight to the Point CD

Chris Tully is an experienced and well respected numeracy practitioner working at Kangan Batman TAFE, Victoria.

The *Straight to the Point CD* is an interactive CD about map reading. There are two main sections to the CD, street directories and topographical maps.

I found this CD to be visually pleasing, with excellent graphics and very easy to navigate around. The face pages are uncluttered and all tabs are easy to find. All the instructions are clear and are often both written and spoken. The oral part is succinct and easy to follow.

Another feature that I liked is the ability to skip past sections that are not appropriate at the time, unlike a lot of interactive CDs where you have to complete a section before progressing. This enables a participant to get back to where they may have stopped in a previous session or to skip over parts that they do not need to do.

Each of the two sections follows a scenario. The street directory section is about two people needing to deliver goods to a new business. For the first delivery person, the participant is required to listen to the address, find it in the Sydway street directory, then make some decisions about the best route. When doing the activities, the participants need to identify key features on the maps. The second

delivery person uses a GPS system and the participant is required to enter details into the GPS and make some alternative route decisions. The program discusses some possible short comings with GPS systems and provides activities for participants to do to overcome these problems.

One drawback of the CD might be seen to be that it uses a Sydway instead of a local directory like the Melway for street directions. However, I don't think this is a problem as the aim of the CD is to help use a street directory — it is more likely that a street directory will be used when people are unfamiliar with an area or location, so there is often the need to use an unfamiliar directory, and all street directories follow the same or similar principles and visual representation.

The topographical maps section cover different types of maps used in rural areas, contour lines, different types of roads and other geographical features. The contour lines were explained very clearly (as are all the sections) and I thought that I could use that part of the mapping with my Year 12 Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) students studying Further Maths, as this is a concept that they struggle with.

The other features that I really liked about this CD, is that the pages have a repeat, go back, get help and a skip tab. There are additional exercises and information that a participant can do if they want to investigate a concept or

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