

Literacy beyond the classroom: ACAL's approach to literacy as both lifelong and lifewide

Dr Pauline O'Maley works for the Salvation Army as Co-coordinator of the Community Reintegration Program in Victoria, Australia. This is the first part of the paper she presented at the International Literacy Conference (ACAL Conference) in New Zealand in September 2007. Pauline would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of Margaret McHugh who provided input into the paper. The second part of the paper will be published in the June issue of Literacy Link.

The first part of this paper looks at the way in which ACAL developed its lifewide, lifelong literacy and numeracy strategy. Pauline looks at the research commissioned by ACAL and the broader research supported by funding from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) which focuses on literacy from a social capital perspective and on literacy beyond the classroom. The second part of the paper fleshes out the idea of literacy beyond the classroom, providing a case study of what it looks like now and what it might look like in the future.

Developing the ACAL lifewide, lifelong literacy and numeracy strategy

In 2001 ACAL published a national position paper for the future titled *A Literate Australia* which highlighted the importance of literacy and numeracy for the economy, society and the individual. It highlighted the initiatives of OECD countries in recognising the interrelatedness of literacy and numeracy and broader social and economic issues. The paper concluded with a comprehensive policy agenda which included: embedding adult literacy and numeracy issues in a framework of lifelong learning, addressing social inclusion and community capacity building; and the development of a new national adult literacy and numeracy policy which takes a whole-of-government approach 'that recognises the broader economic, social and health related aspects of literacy, numeracy and lifelong learning' (p.23).

A Literate Australia has influenced the strategic work ACAL has been doing since. This work has included a forum in Tasmania, entitled *Beyond Training: locating literacy in social policy* which examined issues around social inclusion and the exclusionary effects of poor literacy and numeracy in so many aspects of people's lives. Following this forum, ACAL established a strategy group. The first task of the group was to commission Dr Carolyn Williams to undertake a literature and desktop review of Australian and overseas examples of successful integrated literacy/community welfare initiatives. Dr. Williams found that, although there was growing interest in cross-sectoral and integrated approaches, and that a number of such programs had

been developed, not a great deal of attention had been paid to documenting the impact of such programs.

The strategy group felt that the absence of supportive documentation made more urgent the task to clarify and scope the success of examples of a 'life-wide life long' approach to literacy and numeracy development. The group continued to develop and refine the strategic direction and at the same time commissioned Dr Jane Figgis, educational author and former broadcaster, to undertake exploratory research. Dr Figgis' immediate task was to understand the potential for resonance between literacy and other social agendas - to understand advocacy for adult literacy and numeracy from other points of view - and devise advocacy strategies that took advantage of this mutual concern. She ▶

contents

<i>Literacy beyond the classroom: ACAL's approach to literacy as both lifelong and lifewide</i>	1
<i>New Literacies in the New Workplace</i>	4
<i>Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey: Some New Zealand and Australian findings</i>	6
<i>The Australian Core Skills Framework or ACSF</i>	9
<i>ACAL Conference: Surfing, outside the flags: catching waves, avoiding rips</i>	10
<i>Literacy skills underpin radio broadcasting</i>	13
<i>Literacy Live professional development program</i>	15

set out to understand what literacy and numeracy looked like to potential partners in other sectors: how people in these different domains think about literacy; the language they use in talking about literacy; and the actual literacy and numeracy demands made in their fields. The report, *Taking Literacy to Fresh Fields*, highlighted that the literacy field faces some significant challenges if it wants to build understanding and support beyond the education and training sector. Her findings indicated that literacy and numeracy are not a topic other professionals necessarily think or talk much about.

In 2004 ACAL ran two Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) sponsored interrelated events in support of further clarifying how to achieve broader cross-sectoral engagement and collaboration. The first was a think tank titled *Let's get serious* held in Sydney in August. The purpose of the think tank was to explore how to develop effective partnerships with other sectors. The think tank was followed the next day by a forum entitled *Responding to Diversity: Building literate and numerate communities*. At this forum Dr Geoff Bateson, Partnership Manager of the Birmingham Core Skills Development Partnership described Birmingham's experience of a joined-up government approach to raising literacy and numeracy standards across his city.

Pertinent research

In 2005 ACAL was successful in securing NCVER research funding to explore the benefits and costs of adult literacy and numeracy across domains in social life. This research was conducted by Robyn Hartley and Jackie Horne (2006), and is called *Social and economic benefits of improved adult literacy: Towards a better understanding*.

The work was wide ranging in its scope, its focus the identification of economic and social costs and benefits of literacy across contexts including health, finance and small business. It was conceived as an exploratory

study, a starting point for further thinking, exploration and research. Little work has been done in this area. Literacy and numeracy impacts are complex, cumulative and interactive, benefits to individuals and communities of learning can be both direct and indirect and there can be sustaining benefits that allow people to continue or improve what they do in communities and/or transforming benefits such as increased employability. I believe this is a significant but unappreciated point that the benefits of learning can be sustaining as well as transforming. In relation to collaborative partnerships Hartley and Horne suggest 'the task of collaboration across disciplines and areas of interest will take time and a willingness to understand each other's worlds to a certain extent' (p.9).

While there is little research in Australia to build this work upon there are some international examples of work that could be used to model further research on, one promising example is Nutbeam's (1999) framework that describes functional, interactive and critical health literacy. The success of such work is dependent on active collaboration across sectors. As is appropriate for an exploratory study Hartley and Horne give clear details of the research needed to follow. They believe further work needs to be done in addressing conceptual issues, in addressing issues related to measurement, on the interaction between multiple literacies and the different impacts of factors, such as age, gender, life circumstances, and level of literacy and numeracy disadvantage. There needs to be further targeted consultations and there is scope for small and large scale research projects as well as the possibility of buying into existing longitudinal studies. The ALLS data will also be a rich source of data.

Hartley and Horne's work has been followed up by other NCVER research that has also examined the benefits of building literacy capabilities that are pertinent for communities as well as individuals, and stress that literacy and numeracy can be a barrier for fair participation in society, for social as well as economic engagement.

Wickert and McGuirk (2005), focused their study, *Integrating literacies: Using partnerships to build literacy capabilities in communities*, on social and community settings. They assert that literacy needs to take place in authentic contexts, that these contexts are social and that literacy is fundamental for building social capital. Therefore, they posit, we need to have a better understanding of diverse and localised contexts and approaches that suit these situations. They believe there is potential for examining and trialling ways to apply the successful 'built in not bolted on' formula used successfully in workplace delivery to non-workplace situations. It is very early days in this thinking but the prospects are very exciting. Like Hartley and Horne, Wickert and McGuirk suggest that success in this type of venture requires viable cross-sectoral partnerships, there is a need for more work to be done in the area of sustainable partnerships. They are also clear that as yet we do not have the infrastructure for this work nor have we developed the language to discuss how potential literacy outcomes in these settings can be counted or recorded. Paradoxically once the literacy is embedded into a broad range of social settings it is then difficult to draw it out again to measure. There is the need for further education of practitioners in other social domains, not just in terms of awareness ▶

Contribute to Literacy Link

Do you have a view about an issue effecting literacy and/or numeracy? Have you developed a literacy or numeracy resource? Have you recently completed literacy or numeracy research? Do you want to tell others about a successful teaching program?

If you have, then think about contributing to Literacy Link. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Write a letter to the editor expressing your point of view
- Send your resource to ACAL for review
- Offer to review a new resource
- Write a research article
- Write an article about a teaching program that you have been involved in.

Articles should be emailed to ACAL - editor@acal.edu.au. Resources to be reviewed should be sent to ACAL, PO Box 2283, Canberra ACT 2601. And, if you are interested in reviewing new resources, email your details to editor@acal.edu.au indicating the type of resources you are interested in.

but also in relation to practical strategies. This also has implications for the roles that literacy workers currently fulfill and the need to expand these roles to include literacy workers as mentors, brokers and facilitators supporting workers in other social domains.

The work of Cumming and Wilson (2005), *Literacy, numeracy and alternative dispute resolution*, is one specific example of the impacts of literacy in a social setting of the type Wickert and McGuirk are referring to. Cumming and Wilson looked closely at this very particular aspect of legal work and concluded that while alternative dispute resolution is steadily growing, with 70% of disputes going to resolution of this type, limited literacy and numeracy are barriers to fair participation in this service. Parties represent themselves in this process and they are usually isolated from the supportive communities where their literacy and numeracy difficulties can be hidden. Consequently many are reluctant to engage with the law under these circumstances. Cumming and Wilson suggest there is an urgent need to develop resources and that these resources should be developed by literacy and numeracy practitioners in conjunction with the National Alternative Dispute Resolution Advisory Council. They also indicate the need for further research into the way in which messages are communicated. This research could address 'the fundamental principle established in Canadian case law that "a message has not been communicated unless the person receiving the message understands it"' (2005, p.41). Finally they believe there is much work to do in terms of practitioner awareness and education in how to manage working with clients who need literacy and/or numeracy support in the dispute resolution process.

While the work of Balatti, Black and Falk (2006), *Reframing adult literacy and numeracy course outcomes: A social capital perspective* is focused on classrooms, the focus is on social capital outcomes of LL&N courses, rather than the outcomes that are predominantly tracked and measured in these courses, the human capital ones. They used the twelve ABS indicators of social capital to examine outcomes for students in these stand alone courses and found that these courses do produce social capital outcomes but these outcomes tend not to be acknowledged and measured. They believe the National Reporting System 'does not adequately capture the complexity of outcomes when taking into account student perspectives which see course outcomes largely in terms of changes in sense of self' (2006, p.11).

Social capital, they believe, is a resource, one that makes

for a healthier society. Their interest is in identifying resources that draw on and build social capital. They conclude 'language and literacy practices are considered the vehicle for various transformations in the lives of people and their communities' (2006, p.9). The implications of this then are the need to make these social capital outcomes more overt. There is a need to identify relevant pedagogical elements that help build these social capital outcomes and experiment with ways to build on these elements. While this work focuses on outcomes from specific courses, it does so from a social capital perspective and therefore it is useful in helping to develop a more nuanced understanding of social capabilities and opportunities.

The final NCVER research I would like to mention here is the work done by Golding, Brown, Foley, Harvey and Gleeson (2007) *Men's sheds in Australia: Learning through community contexts*. This research focuses on men's sheds as sites of informal learning. Men's sheds are 'particularly successful in attracting older men who have proved difficult to engage through conventional health, employment, education and training initiatives. Many of these older men are facing issues associated with significant change, including ageing, health, retirement, isolation, unemployment, disability and separation (p.6)'. The shed provides a familiar context that is also therapeutic, which helps to foster a sense of belonging as well as hands on practical learning opportunities. Participants at men's sheds often also have limited schooling and post school education.

For educational opportunities to be taken up by the potential learners first have to be reached and it is clear that burgeoning men's sheds are an exciting new vehicle for reaching this vulnerable, hard to engage cohort. The possibilities for literacy and numeracy enrichment in this setting are clear; it is a setting they feel comfortable in, and such a setting offers ample opportunity for incidental literacy and numeracy. Golding indicates the breath of opportunity here when he says "[i]f you called it a men's learning centre, they would run a mile; if you called it a men's health centre they wouldn't come; to call it a suicide prevention centre would be stupid' (2007, *The Australian*), yet it is clearly all these things and more.

This research indicates that sheds are proving to be successful 'pathways to older men back to learning, work, and engagement with community' (p.11). I think they also provide us with an example of a successful way in which literacy and numeracy could be integrated into existing viable activities. ■

REFERENCES

- ACAL (2001) *A Literate Australia* Australian Council of Adult Literacy.
- Balatti, J., Black, S. & Falk, I. (2006) *Reframing adult literacy and numeracy course outcomes: A social capital perspective*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Bateson, G. (2003) *Moving the Mountain: Halfway there? The whole city approach to basic skills developments* accessed May 2004 www.comekills.co.uk
- Cumming, J.J. & Wilson, J. (2005) *Literacy, numeracy and alternative dispute resolution*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Golding, B. (2007) *Sheds network a boon for bikes*, *The Australian Higher Education Supplement* 30/05/07
- Golding, B., Brown, B., Foley, A., Harvey, J. & Gleeson, L. (2007) *Men's sheds in Australia: Learning through community contexts*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Figgis, J. (2004) *Taking Literacy to Fresh Fields* accessed April 2005 www.acal.edu.au
- Hartley, R. & Home, J. (2006) *Social and economic benefits of improved adult literacy: Towards a better understanding*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Nutbeam, D. (1999) 'Literacies across the lifespan: Health literacy', *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, vol 9, no 2, pp.47-55.
- Wickert, R. & McGuirk, J. (2005) *Integrating literacies: Using partnerships to build literacy capabilities in communities*, NCVER, Adelaide.

New Literacies in the New Workplace

Lesley Farrell is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. Her research is concerned with language and social change in globalising workspaces. This paper was a Keynote presentation to the Inaugural National Workplace English Language and Literacy Practitioners Conference, Melbourne, October 2007.

Local people in a global workspace

I'd like to begin by introducing you to three people I came to know while I was doing a research project at an automotive textile manufacturing company I call AFM (Farrell 2006).

Let me begin with Bill. Bill's a Warper. He has worked for AFM for a long time, over 25 years. Bill was trained as a machine lacemaker in the UK, and joined AFM just as it was moving from making velour lingerie to making velour car seat covers. Some of the warping machines at AFM are 'state of the art', but several are older and only approximately 'fit for purpose'. Bill knows how all the machines work, what their weaknesses are, when they are likely to break down, and how to fix them when they do. Bill is acknowledged as an invaluable employee who understands the workplace and understands the work.

Then there's Matt. Matt is an Operations Manager at AFM. He has been employed there for about 5 years and his previous position was in a different manufacturing sector. He is presently completing his degree in business administration. Matt knows that he doesn't know much about the textile manufacturing industry but he is learning a lot about how businesses in general run, and the challenges that are presently facing manufacturing businesses in Australia.

Margaret is a Workplace English Language and Literacy teacher. She was trained as a primary teacher but has spent most of her career teaching adults in a TAFE college and has been an enterprise-based teacher for many years.

I interviewed each of these people (and many more) about a program instituted at AFM to promote new forms of problem solving in the company. These new forms of problem-solving involve meetings and documentation. From Bill's perspective, things were not going so well. Bill says:

I had them here with the meeting on Friday to discuss these buggies what I'm after and they're going way above my head now. I don't even know what they're talking about. I mean, I worked out all the pricing, what I lost and what I think we're losing, what the company's losing, and they want to work it into hours, not the price dollars. I said 'What are you talking about?' The bosses understand dollars not just hours ... So, I don't know what I can do now but I've been losing a little bit of sleep over it and I've never done that before. Why should I lose sleep at my day and age, worrying about the job?

Matt agrees that things are not going well for Bill, and he sees it as at least partly a literacy problem:

If you notice, at the meetings, as soon as we talk about writing things down, Margaret does it. Now ... I don't object to that. But it defeats the purpose of what we are all here for. So, Bill's the sort of guy we've got to bring into the discussion by picking his brain ... get it out of [him] and that's the site where we are going to do it.

...Bill's very quiet. I think he's intimidated. And he has, you know, literacy skills that he thinks are not up to scratch and when he ... thought they would be on display he pulled out. The pressure of the buggies project, you see, you know, he's obviously feeling the pressure from doing that.

From Margaret's perspective, things are not going so well either. She is beginning to feel that she is doing at least some of Bill's job for him, and she certainly seems to be taking the responsibility for writing:

I'm too much involved at the moment ... The fact is that we don't have formal meetings but it's more that I'm the link between various members and sometimes we get together informally and they talk about things and I write things down ... Often it will be that I will be talking to a couple of the warpers and then Bill will come up and then we'll say 'well, about that problem we've been working on' and then start to talk about it. And I always have my notebook with me so I'm writing things down about it. But I think then I'm seen as probably guiding and steering it. Particularly Bill, who'll say 'We've got to do this and Margaret, have you followed up?' on something or other. So in a way it's hard then to say 'Well, this is your team and you have to be doing this'.

Meanwhile, in an automotive hydraulics manufacturing factory on the other side of the world, in Cape Town, South Africa, Farida is dealing with similar issues (Scholtz and Prinsloo 2001). Farida, was appointed first as a machinist then as the first woman Team Leader in the company. Farida is a relatively new employee who has advanced rapidly through the ranks from her initial appointment as a machinist to that of Team Leader. Farida became Team Leader because the previous appointee resigned from the position:

That guy over there ... he used to be a Team Leader. But then it became too much paper work so he threw his sweater ... his Team Leader's sweater ... in the rubbish bin. Then he didn't want to be Team Leader anymore. Then he said it was the Boers (Afrikaans farmers/White men/bosses) but he was wrong ... it was because he couldn't write.

While inadequate literacy skills are cited in both these cases as the reason that people who have held supervisory positions are, either formally or informally, relinquishing their responsibilities, the situation is not so clear cut. In the months I spent at AFM I saw Bill write, and read, frequently and without any hesitation. Farrida's predecessor could also read and write and had done so on the job in the past. What I would like to suggest to you is that it is not *whether* Bill (or Farrida's predecessor) can read and write that is at issue, it is *what* and *how* he has to read and write, and what the implications are for who he understands himself to be at work, and how his knowledge is valued. These are new literacy practices he is being asked to take part in and he is reluctant to do so. Why would that be so?

I've talked about Melbourne and Cape Town as local worksites but, if we are to understand better what is being asked of these workers, and what is at stake for them, we need to understand how they fit into global systems of production. We need to remember that Bill, Matt, Margaret and Farrida are each part of the globally distributed supply chain that produces the global car. Bill, Matt and their colleagues produce the automotive upholstery fabric, and Farrida and her colleagues produce the hydraulic systems, that are components of a car that is sold under Autoco's brand, but Autoco outsources virtually all the manufacturing. In order to keep control of the quality assurance processes, Autoco produces a Quality Manual which dictates, not just the specifications of the various products but also the processes by which those products should be manufactured, the ways that one supplier should deal with another and the ways that problems should be solved. It requires comprehensive documentation of manufacturing processes, communications and decision-making. It is the literacy tasks that were generated by Autoco's Quality Manual that Bill, and Farrida's predecessor, resisted.

The tensions that were created as traditional, male, machine-based expertise was supplanted by female, text-based expertise challenged the established gender relationships of the workplace but at the same time reinforced the traditional divide between management and workers and, in the Cape Town case especially, exacerbated existing racial tensions. Workplace literacy, especially in the global knowledge economy, is not so much about basic skills but more about a repertoire of skills, values, attitudes and identities. The texts of the

global economy are not neutral. They assume a different kind of work, a different understanding of what counts as knowledge at work, and a different set of views, values and relationships.

Every worker a global worker, every worker a knowledge worker

What I am suggesting here is, first of all, that neither global corporations nor local companies can rely on the embodied knowledge and shared local practices that workplaces have relied on in the past. In that past, Bill's knowledge and authority in the workplace was evident to everyone who mattered. They watched him fixing machinery, adjusting schedules, negotiating with workmates, and ensuring that orders got out on time. They knew that he was a creative problem solver in the areas where he was acknowledged to have expertise. Bill is not used to justifying his decisions and he is certainly not used to justifying them in writing – he interprets this requirement as a sudden lack of trust in his abilities.

But, global economies mean that that all kinds of working knowledge is produced across geographically and temporally dispersed sites. The people who rely on Bill no longer necessarily work on the same worksite, they may be working halfway around the world, and, while he is working, they may be sleeping. They can't watch and see what he is doing and they have no historical knowledge of what he has done in the past that would give them a basis to trust him. His implied authority, and the locality of his working knowledge, established at the local site, has evaporated into cyberspace. No wonder he resists the new push towards documentation.

It is difficult to over estimate the significance and pervasiveness of written and electronic texts in joining up people and practices in globally dispersed organisations, and globally distributed supply chains. The people who make and use the texts – people like Bill and Matt and Margaret and Farrida – are knowledge workers. They produce the knowledge that makes the knowledge economy happen day by day. And, if that is the case, the knowledge economy relies very heavily on Workplace English Language and Literacy educators.

So, if Workplace English Language and Literacy programs are the answer, what are the questions? Texts are critical to

Continued on page 14 ▶

Literacy Link (ISSN 0158-3026) is the newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL), 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—for your copy contact ACAL info@acal.edu.au. Back issues are available from the ACAL website: www.acal.edu.au

Contributions to **Literacy Link** should be sent by email to info@acal.edu.au

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Jan Hagston and Dave Tout (Editors), Margaret McHugh, Stephen Black, Gabrielle Markus (Layout and Production).

Correspondence for ACAL including membership should be addressed to:

GPO Box 2283 Canberra ACT 2601

Telephone: (03) 9546 6892

Facsimile: (03) 9546 0421

Email: info@acal.edu.au

Web: www.acal.edu.au

DISCLAIMER

Material published in **Literacy Link** should not be viewed as endorsed by the Australian Council for Adult Literacy.

Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey: Some New Zealand and Australian findings

Paul Satherley has a BSc (Hons) in maths from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. After a few years working as a secondary school maths teacher, he joined Statistics New Zealand where he worked from 1985 until 2004 in a variety of roles including as project leader of a range of statistical survey developments. Since 2004, Paul has worked in the Research Division of the New Zealand Ministry of Education as the project manager of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. This involves managing New Zealand's participation in this international study.

Introduction

New Zealand and Australia participated in the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL) in 2006. Both countries published findings late in 2007. This article is a summary of some key findings comparing changes in New Zealand's performance with Australia's, as well as with Canada's and the United States'. It also compares patterns of educational attainment and participation with patterns of skills across these countries.

The ALL Survey

ALL measures adults' (16-65 year olds) skills in four domains:

- prose literacy – understanding text such as editorials, news stories, brochures;
- document literacy – understanding information in tables, forms, diagrams etc;
- numeracy – processing mathematical and numeric information in differing situations;
- problem solving – analytical reasoning in situations where no routine procedure exists.

The prose literacy, document literacy and numeracy domains are assigned five cognitive levels of skills. The

problem solving domain is assigned four cognitive levels.

The following graphs show proportions of people at levels 1, 2, 3, and 4/5 combined. They are anchored at the boundary of levels 2 and 3 to allow comparison of either 'low literacy' (levels 1 or 2) or 'higher literacy' (levels 3, 4 or 5) between different countries. The proportion of a country's adult population at level 3 or above is a simple indicator of average skills¹.

Prose and document literacy were measured in the same way in both ALL and the earlier International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). This allows comparisons over time in these domains, as well as between countries. New Zealand's and Australia's data collections for IALS and ALL took place in 1996 and 2006 respectively. Canada's and the USA's took place in 1994 and 2003.

Prose literacy

The proportions of four countries' 16-65 year old populations at different levels of prose literacy skill are shown in Figure 1. It also shows the changes in the period 1996-2006 for New Zealand and Australia, and 1994-2003 for Canada and the USA.

In terms of the proportions of their adult populations at prose literacy skill level 3 or above, Australia's and New Zealand's adult populations perform very similarly to each other. Canada performs a little better, and the USA not so well.

Over a decade, New Zealand, Australia and Canada have had relatively stable performance but the USA's performance has declined. All four countries continue to have significant proportions with low prose literacy skills.

The proportion of the adult populations of these four countries with level 1 prose literacy skills either decreased or remained stable over this decade. The proportions with level 4 or 5 prose literacy skills also decreased. This indicates a narrowing of the distributions with smaller proportions at the extremes and larger proportions in the middle of the distributions.

Document literacy

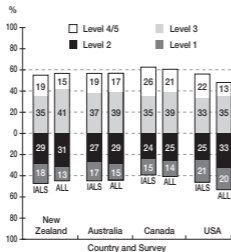
Figure 2 is a similar graph to Figure 1 showing the document literacy skill domain.

In ALL, the relative performance of the four countries in document literacy is similar to that for prose literacy. New Zealand and Australia performed very similarly in 2006.

Note

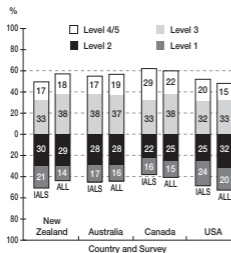
¹ Level 3 is the level regarded by the survey developers as the minimum for coping with the increasing and complex demands of modern life and work.

Figure 1: Prose literacy levels; New Zealand, Australia, Canada, USA; IALS and ALL



Note: Figures may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Figure 2: Document literacy levels; New Zealand, Australia, Canada, USA; IALS and ALL



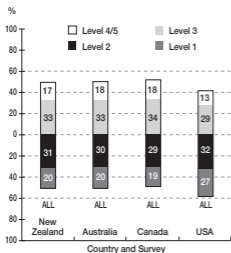
Note: Figures may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

They do better than the USA but less well than Canada.

New Zealand's performance in document literacy has improved since 1996. In 2006, about 57 percent of adults had document literacy skills at Level 3 or above compared with 49 percent in 1996. The decrease between the IALS and ALL surveys in the proportion of the adult population with level 1 document literacy skills was more substantial for New Zealand than for Australia, Canada or the USA.

Australian and Canadian performance in document literacy was relatively stable over the decade between IALS and ALL, while the USA's performance declined.

Figure 3: Numeracy levels; New Zealand, Australia, Canada, USA; ALL



Note: Figures may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Numeracy

Figure 3 shows the proportions of the four countries' adult population at different levels of numeracy skill. Numeracy was measured only in the ALL survey.

The distributions of numeracy skills in New Zealand, Australia and Canada are very similar. For the USA, the proportion at level 1 was substantially greater than for the other three countries and the proportion at level 3 was less. The four countries have similar proportions at levels 2 or 5. The proportion of the USA's adult population at levels 4 or 5 was less than for New Zealand, Australia or Canada.

Problem solving

Figure 4 shows proportions at different levels of problem solving skills. Problem solving was not measured in the USA.

The proportion of the population at each level of problem solving skill was very similar for all three countries.

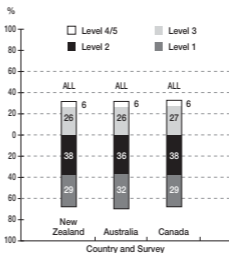
Cross-country comparisons in educational attainment and participation

This section makes some simple comparisons of differences in educational participation and attainment between countries and over time in the context of the findings from IALS and ALL.

For countries participating in adult skills surveys, a strong positive relationship is demonstrated between educational attainment and skills in each domain². Though the relationship between education level and skills is strong and persists over a person's life cycle, skills are not determined by education level.

Table 1 provides an indicator – upper secondary education – for education attainment in the age groups whose skills are measured in the IALS and ALL surveys.

Figure 4: Problem solving levels; New Zealand, Australia, Canada; ALL³



Note: Figures may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Note

- 2 Learning a Living 2005, OECD and Statistics Canada, pp 59-60
- 3 Problem solving has four cognitive levels rather than the five of the other skill domains.

Table 1: Population that has attained at least upper secondary education, 2005; percentage by age group⁴

	Age group				
	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	25-64
New Zealand	85	82	78	66	79
Australia	79	66	61	50	65
Canada	91	88	84	75	85
USA	87	88	89	86	88

The USA stands out as having high rates of at least upper secondary education across adult age groups. This contrasts with New Zealand, Australia and Canada which all have lowering rates for older age groups. Out of the latter three countries, Canada has the highest rate overall, New Zealand next and then Australia. This seems only roughly parallel to the three countries' performance in the skill domains, and an opposite pattern with respect to skills performance in the USA.

Table 2 provides another indicator – proportions with tertiary education – of educational attainment.

Table 2: Population that has attained at tertiary education, 2005; percentage by age group⁵

	Age group				
	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	25-64
New Zealand	31	28	27	21	27
Australia	38	32	31	24	32
Canada	54	50	43	36	46
USA	39	40	39	37	39

The USA again differs from the other three countries in having similar rates of tertiary education attainment across all ages. But Canada's overall rate is the highest of the four countries and is much higher for the younger age groups. This pattern, leaving aside the USA, parallels the comparative pattern of skills as measured in ALL.

Adults with higher skills have a greater probability of participating in adult education and training. Countries participating in ALL, including the four countries compared in this article, have seen marked increases in the rate of participation in adult education and training in the decade between the two surveys.

Table 3 provides an indicator of participation in adult education and training.

For this indicator of education participation, the USA stands out again, with much lower rates across all ages compared to New Zealand, Australia and Canada. The parallel in the four countries' performance in skills is closer for adult education participation than it is for educational attainment.

Table 3: Enrolment rates by age group, 2004; Full-time and part-time students in public and private institutions⁶

	Age group			
	15-19	20-29	30-39	40+
New Zealand	73	30	12	4
Australia	82	33	14	6
Canada	79	25	Data not available	
USA	76	23	5	1.5

Table 4 shows a trend over the approximate time period of the IALS and ALL surveys for participation in adult education and training.

Table 4: Trends in enrolment rates, 1995 and 2004; Full-time and part-time students in public and private institutions, by age group⁷

	15-19		20-29	
	1995	2004	1995	2004
New Zealand	68	74	17	31
Australia	81	82	23	33
Canada	80	79	22	25
USA	73	76	20	23

New Zealand rates of participation in education and training for 15-29 year olds have increased very strongly compared to the other three countries. This parallels the significant increase in New Zealand's performance in document literacy, and slight increase in prose literacy.

Some further New Zealand context

A wide range of other social, demographic and economic variables, at both individual and whole-society levels, are related to a country's adult skill patterns. Some examples for New Zealand are described in this section. Some are likely to be related to increasing overall skills, and others might be associated with decreasing overall skills.

- In 1996 the IALS population of 16-65 year olds covered those born approximately 1930-1980. In 2006 this population was born over the period, 1940-1990. The educational opportunities of those born in the 1930s were lower than in later years, confirmed by the large decrease by 2006 of those with primary-only education. Compulsory schooling to age 15 was introduced in 1944.
- The unemployment rate was much lower in 2006 than in 1996; 3.6 percent in June 2006 compared to 6.2 percent in 1996.
- Far fewer students now leave school without formal qualifications. However, upper secondary school retention rates have been declining since the early 1990s. In 1992, retention to age 16.5 was 87 percent; in 2006, 80 percent. In addition, youth unemployment rates have lowered over this period. The school leaving age was increased to 16 in 1993.

Continued on page 14 ▶

Note

4 Education at a Glance 2007, OECD, p 37

5 Education at a Glance 2006, p 38

6 Education at a Glance 2006, OECD, p 291

7 Education at a Glance 2007, p 292

The Australian Core Skills Framework or ACSF

Kath Brewer, Philippa McLean; Kate Perkins; Dave Tout & Linda Wyse

It has been a long time coming but the publication of the Australian Core Skills Framework or ACSF is imminent. While the previous draft was conditionally named the Essential Skills Framework, based on feedback from the field and further reflection by the project team, it was felt that Core Skills better described the fundamental importance of language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) in contemporary life. There have been enormous changes since the original National Reporting System (NRS) was developed, not only in new modes of communication but in our reconceptualisations of literacy. The project team has spent considerable time refining and revisiting the document in order to ensure that the ACSF captures and reflects these.

How does the ACSF differ from the NRS?

Although the ACSF is based on the NRS, there are some key differences. The NRS was designed as a mechanism for reporting the outcomes of adult LLN provision. The ACSF has been designed as a framework with applications in a range of contexts. These include the provision of benchmarks against which to assess performance in each of the core skills; the identification of core skills required in the workplace through the detailed descriptions in the Performance Features; the mapping of curricula and support with curriculum design.

What are the embedding principles that have informed the ACSF?

As with the original NRS, it was required that the ACSF must:

- Satisfy a variety of purposes, and the requirements of a range of users
- Reflect and promote good educational practice
- Be fair, valid and reliable and
- Be functional in practice.

The development of the ACSF was informed by the knowledge and experience of both the project team and a wide range of practitioners, by analysis of current accredited curriculum documents and by the following theoretical understandings:

- Theories of adult learning, language, literacy and mathematical development
- Theories of text and task complexity

- Theories and philosophies about human, psychological and social capital.

The ACSF is grounded in the following critical views on adult learning:

- An individual's level in their core skills is influenced by purpose and context and by their interests, needs and aspirations across different aspects of life such as workplace, training, personal and community settings
- A person's performance at any time in any of the core skills derives from the interplay between the chosen activity, the features of the text/task and the context and level of support under which the activity is performed
- The core skills can be seen as discrete skills, however their interrelationships are critical.

What will you find in the ACSF?

The ACSF has 2 separate documents, designed for different audiences. The Summary document outlines the key concepts and applications of the ACSF and has been designed for non-specialists such as workplace trainers and assessors, to assist in their understanding of the factors that influence core skills development and performance.

The full ACSF is the one that LLN practitioners will use. The 5 skill areas are the same although the learning core skill now has greater depth and breadth to better capture contemporary understanding of the multiple dimensions of adult learning. The importance of learning, underscored by the change of name

from Learning Strategies and its positioning reflect that it underpins, and is fundamental to, the development of all skills.

How is the ACSF structured?

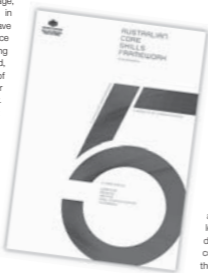
The ACSF describes 5 levels of performance in each of the core skills. A key feature is that it takes into account the factors that influence a person's performance:

- The degree and nature of support offered
- The familiarity with the context
- The complexity of the text, including written, diagrammatic, visual and oral
- The complexity of the task.

The number of Indicators of Performance has changed from 13 to 11, there being 2 each for learning, reading, writing and oral communication and 3 for numeracy. The Indicators need to be interpreted in conjunction with the support, context, text and task statements as well as with the Performance Features.

The Performance Features have been grouped together to reflect the key functions of the Indicator in each skill area although it is obvious that they do not neatly fall into discrete groups nor can overall performance be reduced to a set of stand-alone sub-skills that can be developed

News snippet



◀ independently of each other. Individual Performance Features are represented as developing progressively and these are represented in a series of grids which provide a means of focusing on specific elements to identify specific teaching points.

The Sample Activities provide a guide or indication of what a person may be able to do in order to demonstrate competence at a particular level of performance in a core skill. They cover a range of contexts and have been grouped according to six Aspects of Communication. However, they are not in themselves assessment tasks.

What happens now?

As we write this article, the final version is with the project team who will do a check for consistency. The document will be sent out for formatting and layout prior to being reviewed by an external editor. Once editing changes have been incorporated, the project team passes it onto the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and it will then be available in the public domain.

How can you be involved?

Although two series of workshops were held across the country to capture the views and experience of adult LLN practitioners, it proved to be very difficult for practitioners to trial the drafts in any meaningful way. Feedback on the ACSF has been extremely positive but minor adjustments may need to be made once the document is in use. DEEWR has agreed that this version will therefore be the penultimate one. Once the ACSF is available in the public domain, practitioners will have a year to really work with the document and record their comments or suggestions. At the end of this period these comments will be reviewed and changes made as appropriate. ■

Australian Council for Adult Literacy Conference 2008

Thurs October 2 – Sat October 4

Crowne Plaza
Surfers Paradise QLD Australia

For registration and Call for Papers
visit: www.qcal.org.au



We look forward to
seeing you there!

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL
FOR ADULT LITERACY

Surfing, outside the flags: catching waves, avoiding rips

31st ACAL 2008 Annual conference

2-4 October 2008

The Crowne Plaza, Surfers Paradise, Gold
Coast, Australia

The conference title 'Surfing outside the flags: catching waves, avoiding rips' was deliberately chosen to be provocative, to start you thinking about what the phrase could mean. The conference is being hosted by the Queensland Council for Adult Literacy and, as we shall be meeting on the Gold Coast, it seemed appropriate to select a surfing theme. For potential overseas participants it is important to note that for safety reasons you should swim between the flags. However, board surfing takes place outside the red & gold flags. Surfing is all about catching the perfect wave and avoiding dangerous currents or rips. So, one aspect of the conference is to pick up ideas that bring exhilaration or joy into literacy learning.

Of course 'surfing' in common usage also refers to 'surfing the net' so we look forward to hearing about interesting and innovative ways of engaging learners in and via new technologies, as well as current research around multiliteracies. We urge you to consider multimedia presentations.

Surfing outside the flags is also used as a metaphor for raising issues and provoking debate — which is what a good conference should do. From a literacy perspective we want you to be thinking outside the box or the square. We invite you to inform us about new research findings or techniques, demonstrate cutting-edge technology, or present innovative teaching/learning ideas. However, we also need to be aware of policy implications as well as a number of research or implementation pitfalls.

Adult literacy and numeracy learning continues to be influenced by a range of internal and external debates and intersecting forces that are shaping its future. These include the results of the international Adult Literacy & Lifeskills Survey (ALLS), government responses to the skills shortage and interventions in Indigenous communities. Other influences include the blurring of sectoral boundaries, the influence of learning technologies and calls for new pedagogies for learning across the lifespan. This conference seeks to critically engage researchers, educators and policy-makers in informing this future.

The following themes have emerged as critical issues from discussions during 2007, at the ACAL conference in New Zealand, in the lead up to the federal election and the release of the ALLS data. Each theme might be addressed from the perspectives of adult literacy or numeracy research, theory, policy, or practice.

Papers are being sought that address issues within each of the themes:

Indigenous literacy & numeracy: what factors allow for

or inhibit successful adult literacy/numeracy learning throughout learners' lives? Whose literacy and for what purposes? How do we engage in culturally inclusive practices?

Vocational & workplace literacy & numeracy: what are the literacy & numeracy issues facing young people in the transitions between different learning contexts eg: school to work, school to employment or training? What pedagogies work to re-engage disaffected learners? What factors allow for or inhibit successful adult literacy/numeracy learning in the workplace? What are the implications for the assumptions underpinning increasingly textualised workplaces?

Meeting the literacy & numeracy needs of African refugees: what socio-cultural, economic or other factors allow for or inhibit successful adult literacy/numeracy learning? What pedagogies allow for or inhibit successful adult literacy/numeracy learning?

Numeracy: what can we learn from the ALLS numeracy data? How can we use these data to inform practice? How can we move learners from a focus on functional skills to better understand mathematical concepts?

Community literacy: Literacy and social capital. How can we engage learners with reading, writing, numeracy or new technologies? What works in assessment? How to choose appropriate resources. How best to meet the needs of reluctant learners? Planning a lesson or unit of work.

Keynote Speakers

Noyona Chanda is Assistant Director of LLU+ (formerly the Language & Literacy Unit) and Head of the Numeracy Division at London South Bank University. LLU+ is a national consultancy and professional development centre for staff working in the areas of literacy, numeracy, dyslexia, family learning, English for Speakers of Other Languages, community and workplace.

Hermine Scheeres is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney. She has worked for over 30 years in TAFE colleges and universities in Australia and overseas in the fields of adult education, and language and literacy education. Hermine uses ethnographic and discourse analytic approaches to research culture, communication, identity and learning, particularly in workplaces and organizations. Her current government-funded research projects focus on communication flows in hospital emergency departments, and the relationships between employee and organisational learning across a range of workplaces.

Call for presentations

The conference committee invites expressions of interest for presentations of seminars and workshops for this conference. All presentations should address one or more of the conference themes.

Complete and submit the Abstract Submission Form by 10th June 2008. See QCAL website (www.qcal.org.au) for the form and further information.

Guidelines for presentations

- Keynote addresses should be 40-45 minutes.
- Seminars should be of 35 minutes' duration with five minutes for questions.
- Workshop presentations should be of one and a quarter hours' duration.

Publication of conference proceedings

It is planned to publish all abstracts accepted prior to the conference on the conference website. Selected papers may be published on the website or in *Literacy Link* (ACAL newsletter), *Write On* (QCAL newsletter) or submitted to the international journal *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*.

Refereeing

All abstracts will be reviewed. ■

The Reading Writing Hotline

Did you know that Australia has a Reading Writing Hotline to provide callers living anywhere in Australia with advice and referral information to adult literacy course providers?

The Hotline is a national telephone adult literacy referral service funded since 1994 by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and managed by TAFE NSW Access and General Education Curriculum Centre.

The Hotline is staffed by experienced adult literacy teachers who can provide callers with advice and referrals to one or more of the 1100 providers listed on the Hotline's national database. These providers include TAFE colleges, Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES) Centres, Adult and Community Education centres and colleges (ACE), private providers and community adult literacy volunteer tutor networks. In addition to providing callers with information on adult literacy, numeracy and English as a Second Language course providers, the Hotline can also advise employers of workplace adult literacy courses funded by DEEWR under the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program.

Since its inception in 1994, over 116,000 callers have telephoned the Hotline. Most callers are seeking help to improve their literacy skills for the first time and usually cite employment-related reasons for wishing to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

For more information on the Reading Writing Hotline telephone 1300 6555 06 or visit www.literacyline.edu.au ■

News mippet

“Still glides the stream” VALBEC conference Registrations now open

Registrations are now open for “Still glides the stream” VALBEC conference 2008 Friday May 16, 9.00-4.30pm.

Pre-conference workshops Thursday May 15, 3-5.15pm. At William Angliss Centre, La Trobe St., Melbourne.

The two keynote speakers are Bev Campbell and Kate Burridge.

Program details: see the VALBEC conference website: <<http://www.valbec.org.au/conf08/reg.htm>>

Registrations are due by Thursday, May 10, 2008. ■

VALBEC 30 years Celebration Dinner Thursday May 15

Invitations have been sent out to over two hundred past and present members to join in celebrating the achievements of VALBEC as an organisation and the people who have been associated with VALBEC over three decades. This will be a significant event for many to share stories, laughter and experiences over dinner.

For further information contact Don MacDowall, Conference organiser or Lynne Matheson, Conference convenor. Email conf@valbec.org.au. Phone 03 9546 6892 ■

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



Adults Learning Mathematics conference

The fifteenth annual conference of Adults Learning Mathematics - A Research Forum (ALM), A Declaration of Numeracy: Empowering Adults through Mathematics Education, will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from June 30, 2008 to July 3, 2008. ALM is an international research forum that brings together those engaged and interested in research and developments in the field of adult mathematics/numeracy teaching and learning.

For more information about the 2008 ALM conference visit: <<http://www.alm-online.net/>> ■

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) conference

RaPAL's annual conference will be held at the National University of Ireland, Galway on 20th and 21st June 2008, with an optional, free pre-conference event on 19th June. The conference theme will be Inclusion and Engagement in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL. You are invited to participate by offering workshops, taking part in panel discussions, contributing to practice-based workshops or presenting posters.

For more information please visit <<http://www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk/rapal/>> ■

Advanced Diploma of Language Literacy and Numeracy Practice in VET 40499SA

In 2008 CAE, Melbourne will be offering the Advanced Diploma of LLN Practice in VET. This national qualification has been designed for specialist educators and VET Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) practitioners. The four core units will be offered in a mixture of face-to-face delivery, readings, project work and work placement.

The four core units are:

- NYRA Conduct initial assessment for placement within an adult English language, literacy and/or numeracy program.
- NYRB Apply adult literacy methodologies to develop literacy skills.
- NYRC Apply adult numeracy methodologies to develop numeracy skills.
- NYRD Apply adult TESOL methodologies to develop English language skills.

For more information please contact Philippa McLean philippa@cae.edu.au or mobile: 0413620182 ■

Literacy skills underpin radio broadcasting

In the last issue of Literacy Link Ellie Renie wrote about Michael Rennie, one of the 2007 Queensland Training Award winners. In this article, Michael recounts the journey that led to the award. His story shows how literacy skills underpin much of the learning and work skills in radio broadcasting.

My name is Michael Rennie and I won the 2007 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year at the Queensland Training Awards. It has been the highlight of my professional career and something I will always remember.

My journey began in June 2004, volunteering at 989fm, which works in partnership with Triple A Training. As I began to recognise the importance of Indigenous radio I became further involved in every aspect of 989fm. I recently completed a Certificate III in Radio Broadcasting Traineeship at Triple A Training. This traineeship and the opportunities provided by the Brisbane Indigenous Media Association (BIMA), 989fm, Triple A Training and the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS) have made me realise that nothing is impossible when you are willing to push yourself and to commit to something that you feel passionately about.

I was offered a traineeship studying a Certificate III in Radio Broadcasting through BIMA and the Queensland State Government at Triple A Training in February 2006. Through the online elearning training, I was able to study onsite and from home and was given great support from Triple A Training staff. I was trained in a variety of competencies including industry knowledge, operating a studio panel, on air presentation, production and script writing.

The traineeship was more than an opportunity to gain accreditation; it was a pathway to a new career. As such, I went above and beyond the expectations of my Certificate III studies and took every opportunity to gain knowledge and experience in every aspect of the radio industry:

One of the first opportunities was on-air announcing. This involved planning a radio segment 4 days a week and pre-recording a 3-hour nightly program using 989fms on-air

system Maestro. I was responsible for researching relevant and up to date information on country music artists, writing time restricted scripts for on-air segments and monitoring the program nightly. Being given this responsibility so early in my training inspired me to challenge myself, to multi-skill and improve my announcing at every opportunity. My knowledge of panel operation and understanding of on-air processes has provided a solid foundation for my training development.

Another highlight of my traineeship was being in charge of promoting the 'Telstra Road to Tamworth' competition (a singing contest where the winner receives a trip to

Nashville, prize money and a recording contract).

I was given responsibility on this important project due to my already proven record of completing assigned tasks and meeting deadlines. I put together segments ranging from up-coming heats to interviews with heat winners and past winners of the competition.

One of the most challenging and interesting programs I worked on was a national current affairs program called "The Wire". "The Wire" was produced throughout 2006 and broadcast across Australia on the National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS). This half hour program produced by the Triple A Training team

focused on Indigenous current affairs. I was involved in every area of production from initial concept to the final on-air product. I was in charge of researching stories that were currently affecting Indigenous communities across Australia. Some of these issues included developments from Mining on Lake Cowal in NSW to the introduction of OPAL fuels in Central Australia. I also worked on issues relevant to the wider community, including the proposed dam at Traveston Crossing in South East Queensland. In order to create a quality account that was non-biased, I attended protests and rallies and interviewed people from all sides of the argument. I also worked on good news stories highlighting successful ventures and outcomes for Indigenous organisations and people.

Working on "The Wire" I developed further skills in interviewing, researching, editing and on-air production. At all times I strived to produce quality on-air presentations. I also learnt about copywrite issues and gained a deeper understanding of the radio broadcasting industry. Working on "The Wire" was a rewarding experience and my skills in this area were recognised by the National Indigenous News Service (NINS) where I was asked to work one day per week assisting journalists with producing hourly news segments. ▶



A personal view

◀ During my traineeship, my editing and paneling skills were brought to the attention of NIRS who offered me an opportunity to work on the weekends as part of the AFL broadcasting team. Initially I began as a panel operator and in August 2006 I was promoted to the Control Panel Coordinator for the NIRS broadcast of the AFL. This position involved organising the team roster, game schedules and I was also responsible for payment to other panel operators. This improved my leadership, time management and organisational skills and gave me invaluable experience in the industry.

While taking on all these challenges I continued my online e-learning, completing my traineeship and Certificate 3 in February 2007. I believe the mixture of online training and practical experience at an early stage of my career has given me a unique and comprehensive learning experience which more young Indigenous Australians should have access to. I have been trained in the industry while working in the industry, providing me with far greater knowledge than a degree alone.

Since winning my award I work full time as a trainer with Triple A Training. As well as training the on-site students, I regularly travel to the Cape to deliver face-to-face training to students in various high schools and to trainees working in Indigenous community Radio stations. I am still the Panel Coordinator for the broadcast of AFL and worked with NBL.com during the basketball season. I am also studying a Certificate IV in Radio Broadcasting and upgrading my Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment.

Looking back over my journey since joining 989fm, I am grateful for the opportunity that I have had to work in Indigenous media. I am also grateful for the rewarding experience of assisting other young Indigenous people to achieve their dreams.

I am looking forward to expanding my horizons in the future. ■

New Literacies in the New Workplace

◀ Continued from page 5

globalisation, they are critical to sharing knowledge, in so far as it can be shared, across global webs of production. It seems to me that, for Workplace English Language and Literacy educators, the really important questions aren't about the quantity of texts, or about the distinctive characteristics of the texts. The critical questions are 'What work does the new text do? How does it impact on the social relations of work? How does it change the power dynamic? How does it change relations of power and authority? How does it change what counts as knowledge at the local site? What about remote sites? What resources do people use to interpret texts? How are the texts integrated into local work practice?

If we can answer these questions then we will be further ahead in understanding what we are asking people to do when we ask them to read and write in the local/global workplace. ■

REFERENCES

- Farrell, L. (2006). *Making Knowledge Common: literacy and knowledge at work*. New York, NY, Peter Lang & Co.
- Stoltz, S. & M. Pirnsloo (2001). "New Workplaces, new literacies, new identities." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 44(8): 710-713.

Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey: Some New Zealand and Australian findings

◀ Continued from page 8

- New Zealand has seen significant increases in tertiary education participation over recent years with people over 40, in particular, participating at a much higher rate in 2006 than previously.
- In 1996, 34 percent of those aged over 15 had no formal qualifications, 32 percent had a school qualification, and 34 percent had a post-school qualification. In 2006, the proportions were 25 percent, 35 percent and 40 percent.
- In 1996, 21 percent of New Zealand residents were not born in New Zealand compared with 26.5 percent in 2006.

Summary

- In New Zealand and Australia, the distributions of prose and document literacy skill have narrowed between 1996 and 2006 with, in particular, smaller proportions with low skills.
- New Zealand adults' performance in document literacy has improved since 1996.
- In each skill domain, New Zealand and Australian

performance is very similar, better than the USA's but not as good as Canada's.

- In New Zealand, Australia and Canada the rates of tertiary education attainment parallel the relative pattern of the skills measured in ALL. This is not the case, however, for the USA.
- New Zealand 15-30 year olds' participation in adult education and training has increased strongly in the last 10 years, compared to Australia, Canada and USA. This parallels the increase in document literacy skills in New Zealand, compared to stable performance in Australia and Canada and decreasing performance in the USA.
- Over a decade many changes occur in a society and economy, some of which are likely to lift and others depress overall skills.

For further information on New Zealand's Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey see www.educationcounts.govt.nz/goto/all ■

the Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALLS) survey that was conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in Australia in 2006 and early 2007.

The ABS figures released in late November last year show that about 7 million adult Australians lack the literacy skills to cope with the demands of modern life and work and understand, for example, a newspaper article or read a bus timetable. The figures were worse in other domains of the survey including in numeracy and problem solving. The forum will look at the structure and content of the ALLS survey and what range of information is tested and collected. Key results of the survey data will also be presented with a focus on the numeracy results, including what the figures were across different states in Australia, what the differences are across different ages, between men and women. Questions and implications for teaching literacy and numeracy will be posed and considered too.

In early May, we have Caryl Oliver presenting a very interactive session focussed on mobile learning and the range of fun things we are now able to do with mobile technologies. If you are interested in finding out more, between now and then, why not check out Caryl's websites:

- www.carylover.com www.digitalstorytellingworld.com
- www.elsearningworld.net
- www.iamlearn.carylover.com

Later in May we have been fortunate to secure an international guest speaker for our early May Literacy Live session. Heide Spruck-Wrigley, the 2007 ACAL Conference keynote speaker has welcomed the opportunity to continue the conversation with Australian practitioners. Her session entitled "Less Teaching and More Learning: Promising Practices in Adult Literacy" will present findings from several studies in adult literacy with a special emphasis on adult English language learners. Heide will present and discuss examples from the field that illustrate what works for teachers and learners and highlight those practices that match up with recent research results. Examples will include activities that engage learners and connect the classroom with language and literacy use in students' lives. Video and audio will be used to illustrate multi-modal teaching, designed to deepen learning.

Participants will have access to websites that include lesson plans, student projects and a full curriculum for beginners. All participants are encouraged to share their own experience teaching lower level learners.

Please note, we are trying to get an optimum time for this Literacy Live session, but we need to bear in mind the time difference between New Mexico and Australia.

In May, VALBEC will celebrate its 30th Anniversary and we have lined up two Literacy Live sessions following the 2008 VALBEC Conference in Melbourne. Dr Bev Campbell, is currently working on a history of VALBEC. At the conference, she will present a keynote address entitled "VALBEC - Celebrating 30 years." Her presentation will be audio taped and this will be available on the VALBEC website after the conference. In the follow-up Literacy Live session, Bev will continue the conversation about adult literacy and the changes that she has seen over her extensive career in adult education.

Kerrin Pryor is Project Manager for the "Integrating New Literacies into Classroom Practice" Project. She is interested in the burgeoning changing forms of literacy. In the June Literacy Live session, Kerrin will present a session, "Utilising new literacy in the classroom: an online teacher resource," focussing on her experiences in working with young people and new literacies. We know that young people love the new literacies such as mobile phones, messenger and computer games. Kerrin will demonstrate how mobile phone texting and playing computer games can be used to teach spelling and critical thinking. Upper Yarra Community House, as part of a DEST funded Literacy Project will launch a web site in June that will inform teachers about the new literacies and how youth use them in their daily lives. The web site will also provide trialed new literacy activities that teachers can implement in their classroom. In this Literacy Live session, participants will be able to experience and learn about this innovative and contemporary resource for teachers.

The Literacy Live virtual meeting room provides a free online meeting space for ACAL practitioners. It could be used for project meetings or meetings across small clusters of geographically separated providers. As well, the virtual meeting room can be used as a teaching space to support learners who may be working or living at a distance from their educational learning place.

If there is a special topic you would like discussed in this forum, let one of the ACAL Executive or your ACAL State representative know. If you're thinking that this is all too difficult to participate in, please give me a call and I will be able to assist you in getting into the room successfully.

If you'd like more information please do not hesitate to contact Debbie at Debbie.Soccio@gmail.com. For details about forthcoming Literacy Live sessions go to < www.acal.edu.au/litlive.htm > ■

ACAL has a new email address

info@acal.edu.au

Please change your address book now.



Literacy Live professional development program

Debbie Soccio works at the Malka Group, a private RTO in Melbourne, as e-Business Solutions Manager. She is currently the ACAL Vice President and will be coordinating the Literacy Live Forums this year.

In the next four months, ACAL will facilitate a range of national professional development events, some of them with international speakers, in a virtual classroom space. This virtual classroom space is a great mechanism for communicating with other practitioners around Australia. By using this space, ACAL has opened the door to more professional development opportunities for all practitioners working across Australia.

Behind the scenes, we have been planning an exciting professional development series for the ACAL Literacy Live program. As part of ACAL's continuing support we have acknowledged the need to ensure professional development is accessible to all ACAL members as well as the wider Adult Community Education (ACE) field. We continue to build on our experience from 2007 and hope that the program we offer for the first part of this year is exciting and supports your needs.

Five Literacy Live forums are being scheduled for delivery before the end of July. Each Literacy Live forum will focus on a different topic. Some of these forums will involve learning new skills for the participants, whilst others will provide access to professional development from leaders in the field of literacy from across the world.

To date, we have had one session in 2008. Stephen Goldberg, Coordinator of the Reading and Writing Hotline since 2000 has, in that role, overseen 40,000 enquiries.

Steve has some special insights into where the new demand for literacy teaching may come from. In this role, callers to the Reading & Writing Hotline are telling Steve and his team that they need help, not with basic literacy but with the skills to deal with all the new, complex digital environments and technologies they encounter in every aspect of their lives.

Steve raised the question in the March Literacy Live session, "Should we start thinking about how we define our literacy service so that initiating people into the discourses of digital technologies becomes another of the primary roles of the adult literacy teacher?"

The Literacy Live session was a very lively debate and there was much discussion about the future of adult literacy and Hotline insider stories.

Looking to the future, during April we have two sessions planned. Dave Tout will be our next guest presenter on April 22nd. In this forum Dave will look at the results of

Continued on page 15 ▶

ACAL contact details

www.acal.edu.au

EXECUTIVE

President:

Margaret McHugh
Principal Consultant, Literacy
WA Dept of Education and Training
margaret.mcHugh@det.wa.edu.au
Ph: 08 92644638

Vice-President:

Debbie Soccio
debbiesoccio@gmail.com

Secretary:

Jenny McGuirk
jmcogg@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Lorraine Sushames
lorraine.sushames@odu.edu.au

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

Don MacDowall
PO Box 2283
Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: (03) 9546 6892
Fac: (03) 9546 0421
Email: info@acal.edu.au

STATE REPRESENTATIVES

NSW

Susan Roy
susan.roy@det.nsw.edu.au

NT

Ian Falk
ian.falk@odu.edu.au

QLD

Sandra Rennie
sandrarennie@optusnet.com.au

SA

Sue Shore
Sue.Shore@unisa.edu.au

VIC

John Radalj
jradalj@qordontafe.edu.au

WA

Maxine Tomlin
Maxine.Tomlin@central.wa.edu.au

TAS

Jakki Bourke
jakki@bigpond.com

Co-opted

Kita Scott
kita.scott@tatesa.edu.au

STATE AFFILIATE COUNCILS

NSW ALNC

PO Box K450
Haymarket NSW 1240
Renata Alkin@alnc.edu.au
rswalnc@alnc.edu.au

NTCAL

Ian Falk
PO Box 311
Charles Darwin University
Darwin NT 0909
ian.falk@odu.edu.au

QCAL

P.O. Box 301 Red Hill QLD 4059
Phone/Fax (07) 3878 9944
info@qcal.org.au
www.qcal.org.au

SACAL

PO Box 610
Magill SA 5072
tess.vincent@tatesa.edu.au

TCAL

PO Box 904
Devonport
Tasmania 7310
jakki@bigpond.com

VALBEC

Box 861
Springvale South VIC 3172
info@valbec.org.au
www.valbec.org.au

WAALC

WAALC Secretary
PO Box 6304
East Perth Business Centre 6892
shered_au@yahoo.com.au



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL
FOR ADULT LITERACY