Technoliteracy, Discourse and Social Practice: Frameworks and Applications in the Digital Age

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Foreword

Technotlteracy, Discourse and Social Practice: Frameworks and Applications in the Digital Age by Pullen, Baguley and Gitsaki is about future citizenship and the need to embrace a diversified range of literacies to interact, communicate, learn and survive in the 21st century. To be productive in a modern world it is necessary to prepare multi-literate students by providing educational experiences that embrace linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural and spatial modes of communication.

Previous traditional connotations of literacy focused on text-based reading and the ability of the reader to comprehend, interpret and evaluate the text for understanding and communication. With the advent of more complex media through the internet, three-dimensional environments, mobile technology and the need to socially connect across national borders, literacy in the 21st Century needs to be re-conceptualized. Literacy in the digital age has now become multi-faceted, and its diversified nature means that global citizens require a range of skills to effectively communicate and interact in the modern world. Ubiquitous technology and unprecedented levels of access by privileged users mean that technology is fundamentally reshaping how people interact in the world. There has also been a blurring of our personal and professional lives as we have become network connected 24/7 both wirelessly and socially through our mobile devices as well as being geographically located through our GPS enabled accessories. To be functional and literate in the digital age requires a change in mindset from all community members as there is a widespread need to embrace multi-literacy. This involves embracing a new language that is intertwined with the internet, new media and new thought processes. We all need to become proficient in the new literacies; all levels of education will need to be cognisant of this shift in learning and teaching where students become designers and creators not consumers.

Technology is a fundamental component of new literacies, offering networking, access, rich media and immersive engagement in three dimensional network games that embrace millions of users across the globe. Technology has changed the way we interact, communicate, network and the language that we use. However the way we approach technology is essential for acquiring literacy. Technology skills are insufficient to assist this process and it is no longer relevant to perceive technology as a skill. Our mindset needs to recognize technology as a tool that is shaped and molded to suit the situation. This change in perception needs to occur at both the educator and student levels as teachers need to change their perceptions of technology, develop expertise and technology confidence in order to educate the next generation of student designers. What it means to be educated is fundamentally changing and it is essential that society does not create a wider digital divide between the multi-literate and the mono-literate. Access and equity is still a key concept in relation to internet technologies and there is still inequity of access due to socio-economic status and the infrastructure available within a country.

Chapters in the book cover a diverse range of topics related to technology, literacy, technoliteracy and multi-literacy which is a key concept throughout the book. Social inequality in relation to access to technology and access to innovative education create a digital divide which is eloquently examined
within the book. Users are generating new meaning through their use of new media as the affordances allow new ways of thinking and new ways of expressing ideas and thoughts across the global network of professional and social networks. This book is an essential tool for engaging with the key areas of multi-literacy and the digital age and will provoke wide discussion on communicating as a global citizen in a modern world.

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Mike Keppell is Professor of Higher Education and Director, The Flexible Learning Institute, Charles Sturt University, mkepell@csu.edu.au BHMS (Ed) (Qld); B.Ed (PG) (Qld); M.Ed (Calgary); Ph.D (Calgary). Professor Keppell is currently working in the roles of Director, The Flexible Learning Institute and Professor of Higher Education at Charles Sturt University. The Flexible Learning Institute, newly established within Charles Sturt University, has as its aim to promote and foster excellence in flexible learning and teaching, through pedagogical scholarship, promotion of exemplary practice and policy advice. Prior to this, he worked at the Hong Kong Institute of Education as Associate Professor and Head of the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Technology (LTT), from 2003 – 2007. Before joining the Institute of Education, he was Head of the Biomedical Multimedia Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Science, The University of Melbourne from 1998 – 2002 and Head of the Interactive Multimedia Unit, Division of Distance and Continuing Education, Central Queensland University from 1994 –1998. He has a background in teaching and learning, curriculum, evaluation and more specifically instructional design. His expertise lies in his ability to combine the operational and development tasks of educational technology with the academic study of curriculum, instructional design and evaluation. He has worked as an instructional designer on hundreds of technology-enhanced initiatives in areas as diverse as coal-mining, medicine, science, nursing, dentistry, physiotherapy, psychology, multimedia, human movement studies and education. His research focuses on blended learning, learning oriented assessment, authentic learning and transformative learning using design based research.
Preface

The nature of the education system is becoming increasingly more complex and more globally focused. Today, most effective teaching would incorporate a variety of different media types, or combinations of, as result of this interconnection of media learning and teaching has become much a more complex set of events (CISCO, 2008).

Given the changes that are occurring as a result of globalisation and the proliferation of digital technologies the nature of what is considered ‘core’ educational skills is also evolving. For instance, the nature of literacy has evolved from being able to ‘simply’ decode written information through to acquiring the basic knowledge and skills in reading and writing (Baker & Street, 1994). However the advent of the Internet and increasing access to information and communication technology (ICT), specifically computers, in the late 1990’s has necessitated a broadening of the concept and notion of what is literacy and what it means to be literate in the 21st Century (Lonsdale & Curry, 2004). In recognition, or perhaps as a result of the increasing globalisation and increasing use and reliance on technology, the United Nations (UN) proposed a need to redefine the term ‘literacy’ to acknowledge that the uses of literacy is rapidly being altered in the face of a new economy - the knowledge economy - which is seeing individuals from different social and cultural groups interacting via the use of technology (Lonsdale & Curry, 2004). With this increase use of technology-based communication societies and individuals are bringing into the conversation their own cultural processes, personal circumstances and literacy demands.

These communicative changes led a group of literacy academics in 1996 to coin the term Multiliteracies. Brought together in New Hampshire, New London the proponents of multiliteracies considered the future of literacy teaching and made predictions on how and what should be taught in a rapidly changing world. The New London Group, as they were to be called, believed that multiliteracies best described the emerging, cultural and institutional order of the day. They believed the term encapsulated the ‘multiplicity of communication … and media’ available to learners, whilst also recognising the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity between and amongst learners (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). However, the New London Group could not have foretold the rapid advances of technology and new communication mediums that have developed in the proceeding years. Accordingly the notion of multiliteracies has evolved.

Reasons for the evolution of multiliteracies, and hence literacy, include the developments of technology, globalisation of national economies, the proliferation of information, lifelong educational experiences, the diversity of cultural perspectives, new teaching and learning practices, a move to make learning possible anywhere and anytime, flexible modes of delivery and the critical dimension of questioning traditional practices. This broadening of traditional notions of literacy led Lonsdale and McCurry (2004) to believe that literacy “is multiple with multiple purposes” (p. 10), meaning that to be literate in a digital world learners need to be able to use a variety of literacy sources, or modes, such as print, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic or any combination thereof. The Internet is a good example of a text which is multimodal as it not only supports print, it also supports sound and pictures - and often with interconnections (hy-
perlinks) between several different literacy sources at once. As such, learners are presented with a range of ways to make meaning of their world and given the interactivity of the technology to also be able to contribute to the world at a personal and global level. For instance, wikis (i.e. Wikipedia) and social networking sites (i.e. FaceBook) allow individuals to communicate to their friends whilst also giving them the opportunity and some might say power, to ‘talk’ to anyone who visits their site.

Chapters of the Text "Technoliteracy, Discourse and Social Practice: Frameworks and Applications in the Digital Age"

This text commences with an introductory overview in Chapter One of how society has become increasingly reliant on technology titled An Overview of Technology in Society: An Introduction to Technoliteracy. Amanda Walker, Bridgette Huddleston and Darren L. Pullen highlight how a range of digital technologies are interconnected resulting in another form of literacy known as 'technoliteracy'. This brief overview of technoliteracy is supported by an investigation of both its theoretical and practical applications.

Chapter Two is Designs of Meaning: Redesigning Perceptions of School and Self Using Tactics of Resistance. In this chapter Donna Mahar has conducted a two-year investigation into young adolescents' use of information communication technology and popular media texts to make sense of themselves and their world. The subject of her study 'Colleen' utilises a range of technologies and multiliteracies to challenge social conventions and expectations of behaviour. During this journey Colleen eloquently explains her choices and rationalises her interactions. Her expertise in utilising multiliteracies is an important factor in her ability to defend and support peers who do have the capacity to do so.

Chapter Three is titled Hybrid Identity Design Online: Glocal Appropriation as Multiliterate Practice for Civic Pluralism. Candace Doerr-Stevens investigates the concept of glocal appropriation. This is explained as the process where native English speakers use to combine local and global resources in strategic ways. This phenomenon is investigated through the case study of one native English speaker and how he has designed new images of self which enables him to participate in and find a space in which to engage in literacy learning in addition to exploring and participating in civic pluralism.

Chapter Four is titled Unpacking Social Inequalities: How a Lack of Technology Integration may Impede the Development of Multiliteracies among Middle School Students in the United States. Laurie A. Henry examines how limited or no access to technology may result in inequalities for students. The ramifications of this situation, particularly in terms of how it can affect the future of young people is examined along with a range of contextual factors.

Chapter Five by Thao Lê and Quynh Lê titled Information Technology: A Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective examines the field of Information Technology through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective. In addition to describing a range of new areas which information technology has developed such as e-commerce, e-health and e-learning the authors argue that IT is socially constructed and therefore cannot be divorced from this context. Therefore IT experts, educators and those who utilise IT in instrumental ways are challenged to consider the responsibility they have.

The second section of the text focuses on the practice of technoliteracy. Chapter Six by Abbad Albad, Christina Gitsaki and Peter White titled CALL Course Design for Second Language Learning: A Case Study of Arab EFL Learners investigates the impact of computers and the Internet on how English Foreign Language (EFL) students learn and how they feel about learning English as a foreign language. The study found that the participants motivation increased substantially when they were able to use a technology based approach when learning a foreign language. The authors therefore propose that a technology-enhanced environment is an important requirement when teaching a foreign language.
Chapter Seven titled *ICT in Malay Language Learning: Lessons Learned from Two Case Studies* written by Abduya Yaakub, Christina Gitsaki and Eileen Honan also investigates the complexities involved in learning another language. The authors argue that educators are required to develop a more complex understanding of language and literacy in order to design pedagogies that equip students with 21st century skills. This study is presented via two case studies which examine the complex interaction of teachers, students, writing pedagogies, language curriculum and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). This chapter builds on the previous one by exploring how students’ experience using ICT to assist them in their writing in a foreign language and also how ICT impacts on writing pedagogy and the curriculum.

Chapter Eight written by Martin Kerby and Margaret Baguley is titled *A Snapshot View of how Senior Visual Arts Students Encounter and Engage with Technology in Their Arts Practice*. This study investigated three senior art students from two different schools in order to compare and contrast the findings. Although technology is firmly embedded in the daily lives of these students the findings revealed that even though the schools were well resourced, the students often reverted to using traditional media with some technological aspects in the creation of their final work. Interviews were conducted at the beginning, middle and end of the year to provide a snapshot view at these critical stages of how the students work was developing in this critical year of their visual arts studies.

Chapter Nine titled *The Bard and the Web: Using Vodcasting to Enhance Teaching of Shakespeare to Pre-Service English Teachers* written by Anita Jetnikoff explores the challenges and concerns teachers face when teaching literature considered to be more complex for students such as Shakespeare. The author ponders whether technology can be effectively utilised to engage students in the study of Shakespeare. A series of digital vodcasts utilised by an expert teacher with pre-service English teachers are examined to consider whether using technology participants are familiar with will provide a greater connection with, and insight into, learning about Shakespeare. The ‘cognitive apprenticeship’ model adopted in this study is also examined in its potential to enhance the reflective aspect of professional identity.

Chapter Ten titled *Developing Literate Practices in Design and Technology Education* by Mike Brown examines how literate practices are demonstrated in the field of Design and Technology. The context of this study is Victorian Year 12 Design and Technology students. This study reveals that there is an increasing demand for literacy skills and expertise from both students and teachers in this area. To support this finding the author has analysed the curriculum and pedagogical practices associated with the mandated Year 12 Design and Technology program in Victoria and has illustrated how multimodal texts in particular are being utilised as an important aspect in this area.

Chapter Eleven concludes this section and is titled *Multimedia, Oral History, and Teacher Education: From Community Space to Cyberspace*. Jenifer Schneider, James R. King, Deborah Kozdras, James Welsh, and Vanessa Minick have conducted a study at a Catholic PreK-8 school/parish community where pre-service teachers have worked with elementary students to create a range of multi-media projects. These projects, in addition to showcasing the oral histories of the participants, places and events of the school and church community, have allowed the pre-service teachers to integrate technology into their teaching. The study revealed that the pre-service teachers utilised ‘fast’ literacies when learning to incorporate technology into their teaching. In addition it became evident that there was an intersection evident through the use of technoliteracies between the school and the community.

Section Three of the text investigates the literacy of gaming. Chapter Twelve titled *The Hidden Literacies of Massively Multiplayer Online Games* written by P.G. Schrader and K.A Lawless, examines the multiliteracies associated with Massively Multiplayer Online Games also known as MMOGs. This chapter describes the nature of and examines the type of technologies used in these types of games. The games are based on the idea of supply and demand and therefore the study investigates the multiliteracies
of consumption and production in an effort to provide an understanding of the nature of skills necessary to function in a multiliterate and multimodal world.

Chapter Thirteen written by Pam Wright and David Skidmore is titled Multiliteracies and Games: Do Cybergamers Dream of Pedagogic Sheep? In this chapter the authors examine the way in which educators in a multi-literate society are expected to engage students to interact and interpret a multitude of new literacies. The authors explore how multiliteracies are bound up in computer games and consider how educators can employ these games through play, study and creation to shift students from consumers to creators of interactive narratives. This chapter also considers how computer games can be used in the primary classroom and in this process argues for an integrated approach to teacher and pre-service teacher professional development in the area of computer gaming.

Chapter Fourteen, the final chapter in this text, is written by Robyn Henderson and is titled Learning from Computer Games: Literacy Learning in a Virtual World. Through an autoethnographic approach the author investigates the Massively Multiplayer Online Game the World of Warcraft produced by Blizzard Entertainment®. During this process the author created an avatar and joined the online community of the World of Warcraft. The chapter explores the strategies the author used to access and navigate this MMOG with particular attention given to the game’s linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and gestural elements of design to provide an insider’s perspective of the meaning-making resources that were offered. The chapter concludes with some considerations given as to how a virtual world might inform the learning of literacies in schools and other institutions.

CONCLUSION

Each of the chapters in Technoliteracy, Discourse and Social Practice: Frameworks and Applications in the Digital Age provides a unique and important insight into the diverse approaches to and implementation of technoliteracy in different contexts. It is evident that the authors comprehend the significance and value of preparing students, educators and those responsible for Information Technology to use effectively and ethically to enhance learning. These dimensions are particularly evident in the first section of the book. An examination of the practical applications of ICT is of interest to practitioners and others interested in this area. How ICT is utilised in the classroom to enhance the way students learn and to utilise a form of communication many of them are comfortable with provides important information for educators. The building upon of research in this way results in a richer and more comprehensive understanding of how this important field is being utilised in education. The final section provides an important examination of how gaming combines a range of literacies and in the process develops quite sophisticated skills in its players. The ability to navigate complex levels of multimedia text and interactive elements requires advanced skills in multiliteracies. These skills are imperative to function in an increasingly visual world which relies on tacit understandings of a number of conventions to function effectively. The multiliteracies approach advocated by The New London Group has been transformed into a technoliteracies approach which complements their concern that young people need to be prepared so that they can operate in a world in which their quality of life is enhanced by whatever means they use to communicate.

REFERENCES


About the Contributors

Darren Lee Pullen is a lecturer in ICT, Professional Studies and Multiliteracies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania, Australia. He has worked with governments, industry sectors, enterprises (particularly health and training) and the education community to facilitate socio-technical change. His professional focus is on building viable humachine (human-machine) relationships and learning systems. Darren's previous employment includes being a Research Fellow in the health sector, ICT consultant and educator. He currently works as a lecturer and is the principal of an international consultancy firm—Humachine Consultancy. His research interest is in the management of change processes with a particular interest in the micro-meso-macro level relationships between technology innovations and human-machine (humachine) relationships and interactions.

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Margaret Baguley is a senior lecturer in arts education, curriculum and pedagogy in the Faculty of Education, University of Southern Queensland, Australia. Her teaching and research interests are concerned with the role of visual art in the education of early childhood, primary and secondary students. She has an extensive teaching background across all facets of education, in addition to maintaining her arts practice. An interest in collaborative practice and exhibition underpins her teaching. Dr Baguley's research supervision encompasses studies in visual arts education, children's engagement with the arts, teacher development, museum studies and the value of the arts in the community. In 2008 Margaret received a national award to recognize her outstanding contribution to student learning from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC).

* * *

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**Candance Doerr-Stevens** is currently working toward a Ph.D. in critical literacy from the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota. She has taught writing at the elementary, junior high, and college levels and currently teaches education courses for pre-service and practicing teachers. Candance’s current research interests include the emergent literacy practices involved in digital writing, in particular the rhetorical affordances of online role-play and the identity practices involved in the multimodal composition process of digital storytelling.

**Robyn Henderson** is a Senior Lecturer (Literacies Education) at the Toowoomba Campus of the University of Southern Queensland, Australia. Her current research interests are in the areas of multiliteracies and digital literacies and the relationship between learning digital literacies at home and at school, especially in relation to students who might be marginalised within an education system. She also researches in the areas of academic literacies and the implications of mobility and poverty on school-based literacy learning. All of her work is underpinned by a concern for social justice issues.

**Laurie A. Henry** is an Assistant Professor of Early Adolescent Literacy at the University of Kentucky. Prior to this appointment, she was a researcher with the New Literacies Research Team at the University of Connecticut where she completed a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in Cognition and Instruction, Literacy and Technology. Henry’s work focuses on early adolescent literacy development, including development of the new literacies of information searching, Internet-based critical reading, expanded definitions of the digital divide, and social equity issues related to the acquisition of digital literacy skills among marginalized youth. Henry teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy education at the University of Kentucky, speaks and consults widely on the new literacies of online reading and writing, and is an active member of several state, national, and international professional organizations. Henry is author of five refereed articles and coauthor of thirteen invited articles and book chapters.

**Eileen Honan** is Senior Lecturer in English and Literacy Education at The University of Queensland. Her research interests include developing methodological applications in educational research of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical work, and working with teachers to develop their understanding of theoretical issues related to their literacy teaching practices.
Bridgette Huddleston is a primary school teacher (specialised in Early Childhood Education) and is the author of an Honours Dissertation “Teachers Attitudes and Beliefs towards ICT in the Catholic classroom”. Bridgette has studied a Bachelor of Education at the University of Tasmania, Launceston, and has worked side-by-side with Darren Pullen a lecturer in ICT, Professional Studies and Multiliteracies at the same University. An interest both personally and professionally in the area of Information and Communication Technology in education underpins her teaching and research focus.

Anita Jetnikoff lectures in English Curriculum and Film and Media curriculum Studies at Queensland University of Technology. She is a highly experienced secondary and tertiary teacher. Her research and publication interests include literary theory, literature and cultural studies, teaching and technology, multiliteracies, 'new literacies' and new media, and youth, gender, culture and identity representations in media and literature. She is a documentary film maker. She is the co-author of the new book Media Remix due for release in July 2008.

Martin Kerby is the Head of Information Services and Museum Curator/Archivist of St Joseph's Nudgee College Museum in Brisbane, Australia. He was also a foundation member of the Middle School program in 2001. He has written two books, Undying Echoes (2001) about the military history of St Joseph’s Nudgee College and Where Glory Awaits (2005) the military history of St Joseph’s Gregory Terrace, another boys’ school in Brisbane. Martin is currently working on a PhD examining the life of war correspondent Sir Philip Gibbs. In January 2008 he was awarded a place at the inaugural Australian Government Summer School in History held in Canberra.

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Thao Lê received his PhD in theoretical linguistics at Monash University in 1977. He is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania. He teaches and conducts research in the following areas: research methodology, applied linguistics, TESOL, and e-learning. He was a keynote speaker at several major conferences in computer education and research. Dr. Lê has over one hundred conference papers/articles. His forthcoming book is Critical Discourse Analysis: An interdisciplinary perspective.

Donna Mahar, PhD, is Assistant Professor of English and literacy in the Masters of Arts in Teaching Program at Empire State College, the State University of New York’s hybrid learning program. She has also been a professor of literacy at the State University of New York’s Cortland campus. Formerly a middle school English teacher who achieved National Board Certification as well as local, state, and national recognition for her work with early adolescents, her research on adolescent literacy and information communication technology has been published in academic and practitioner journals. Her current work is concerned with 21st -century literacies as they impact school reform; youth, culture, literacy, and identity studies [YCLI]; and teacher-research.

Vanessa Minick is a doctoral student in the department of Childhood Education and Literacy Studies at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Her research focus concerns composition theory and learning to write.

Jenifer Jasinski Schneider is an Associate Professor in the Department of Childhood Education and Literacy Studies at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Her research focuses on writing development and writing instruction as well as the use of process drama in literacy teaching and learning.

P.G. Schrader is an assistant professor of Educational Technology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Dr. Schrader’s recent work involves understanding learning in complex nonlinear digital environments like Massively Multiplayer Online Games and Hypertext. In these contexts, he has examined aspects of expertise, literacy, and the dynamic exchange of information. His work has appeared in a number of journals as well as at national and international conferences. While he’s not writing, you might find Dr. Schrader further itemizing his level 70 druid in the World of Warcraft.

Dave Skidmore is currently a Freelance Educational Consultant and was previously Head of Department of Health Care Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University for 14 years. He was at MMU for 26 years where he undertook various positions ranging from lecturer.

Amanda Walker currently fulfils the role of Literacy Leader at a local primary school, providing literacy support for the early childhood area. Amanda has recently completed her Bachelor of Education, graduating with Honours, and worked closely with Darren Pullen, lecturer of ICT and Professional Studies at the University of Tasmania, Launceston and fellow student, Bridgette Huddleston. Her Honours Dissertation, entitled “Early Childhood Education (ECE) - Supporting it with ICT” was the result of observations that instruction in the use of ICT’s in this area was sadly lacking. She believes in the importance of ICT use in both personal and professional pursuits and continues to research to enhance her own knowledge and understanding as a base for her teaching growth.
James Welsh is a doctoral student in the department of Childhood Education and Literacy Studies at the University of South Florida in Tampa. His research focus is new literacies, with particular attention to critical media literacy in elementary education. In addition, James coordinates support for technology integration at the USF College of Education through his work at the Florida Center for Instructional Technology (FCIT).

Peter White has been a lecturer in computer assisted language learning in the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at The University of Queensland. He has a background in applied linguistics, computing and public policy.

Pam Wright has an Honours degree in History from Lancaster University (UK) and also has a Masters degree in Managing Information Technology from the University of Salford (UK). Pam has extensive experience in e-learning having been an early adopter and has previously been employed as an advisor to teachers using e-learning. Pam has lectured in universities and colleges in both England and Australia. She currently coordinates the ICT programmes for the Faculty of Education (Bundoora) at La Trobe University, where she also teaches in the postgraduate program: the areas are: Using Multimedia for Learning, Learning Technologies in Education and Teaching, Learning with Computer Games and Learning in Virtual Environments. Wright has been successful in three recent grant applications relating to the uses of ICT and learning and she has contributed to a number of journal articles.

Abduyah Ya’akub is a graduate from the Nanyang Technological University, in Singapore, and has recently completed her PhD at the University of Queensland. She has taught Malay Language in Singaporean secondary schools, and worked with the Singapore Ministry of Education on planning and developing curriculum. Her research has focused on identifying the changes of social and cultural practices when digital technologies are used in school. A particular interest is the connections between literacy, technology and disadvantage.