# Primary *Focus on* New Literacies



Naace
Advancing education through ICT

# Contents of Focus on The New Literacies

Naace welcomes contributions on any aspect of ICT and primary education.

# Focus on New Literacies

## Introduction

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### What new literacies? Can they be found in school?

Perhaps that is the wrong place to look. There has been considerable interest recently in the potential educational value of computer games, and particularly those in which the player creates or manipulates virtual worlds, or takes on a role in a multi-user game. The level of concentration on the 'hard fun' of a complex computer game or a games console is something that is rarely achieved in a classroom context.

Or perhaps (as our cover implies) the place to look is not on the computer at all, but in the mobile phone, which has colonised the consciousness of so many people, particularly the young, to an extent which substantially eclipses previous communications phenomena like CB radio (which, though it had its own patois, was only ever a minority interest, and was as male-dominated as mobile phones are co-ed). As time goes on, the convergence of technologies might render computers, video devices and phones virtually indistinguishable anyway.

One of the key features of the things mentioned above is that their locus of control lies outside the school. Only a decade ago, children were far more likely to encounter a computer at school than they were at home. Now, for every hour spent at a computer in school, children spend four hours at a computer elsewhere. They develop skills that are insufficiently acknowledged by schools, and that are sometimes ignored altogether. The children we are teaching inhabit a world where hypertext is

normal, and where they understand the visual rhetoric of a screen full of things to click, long before they learn to decode the text. Children do not now think of computers as schoolish things.

As somebody said, the day we put texting on the literacy curriculum is the day the kids will stop doing it. There are some places to which this publication deliberately does not go. It is intended to be speculative, but also immediately useful to classroom practitioners. Our starting point must be with current classroom practice, and ways of using technology to improve it. Our most important function is to consider ways of addressing important or emerging types of literacy that are under-acknowledged in the curriculum as it stands.

As an opening, Steve Higgins provides an overview of ways in which electronic texts can be used effectively by teachers and pupils.

Though it is not particularly a 'new literacy', it is evident that *information literacy* is in urgent need of substantial development in the curriculum. If we are to expect children to make sense of the enormous volume of information now freely available to us all via the Internet, we must consciously teach children some strategies for managing it and, as Heather Govier writes, of taking ownership of it.

At first glance, multimedia 'talking stories' seem self-evidently to be a good thing, destined to play a significant role in the literacies of the future, particularly in Early Years settings; and yet it can be argued that we have barely begun to explore the potential of the medium to create new works of literary merit, perhaps to rival the magnificent picture books that

have been produced in such profusion in recent decades. Ruth Wood and her colleagues provide some background information about an exciting project that is just starting to unfold.

*Developing Tray* was a greatly-admired program that was well ahead of its time when it appeared more than twenty years ago. The educational ideas that underpinned it make even greater sense now that technological developments have made it more possible to work on uncovering texts with a whole class or group. Heather Govier has updated an older article, to demonstrate how *Discloze* (the freely available MAPE version of the program) might be used to great effect.

Some people see the arts as entirely analogue territory, the antithesis of all things digital (which conveniently overlooks art forms like tapestry, but let that pass). How can you be artistically creative when you are constrained by technology? Trevor Millum provides some striking examples of ways that computers and poetry can work in harness. Heather Govier reviews Trevor's book at the end of this publication.

According to Gunther Kress (2003), the dominance of writing has given way to the dominance of the image, and the dominance of the book to the dominance of the screen. It follows, therefore, that we need to include *visual literacy* among our new literacies. Two articles explore aspects of visual literacy – my suggestions for illustrating Alice in Wonderland, and Angella Streluk's imaginative use of book covers.

Of the new types of literacy that would have seemed unbelievable twenty years ago, the medium of digital video is perhaps the most transformative and the most impressive. Anyone who has worked with it will testify to the huge possibilities of the medium, and to the relative ease with which children seem to get to grips with it. Jon Cardus provides some very sound advice about its effective use, and two articles, by Elizabeth Furness and Miles Tandy and by Tracey Buckley, describe an impressive but relatively inexpensive way of engaging with the medium.

Previous publications have described the use of *StoryMaker* as a means of creating multimedia stories. Mary Hayes's article provides a close-up of one child's interactions with the software and a supporting adult, and gives some insights into the literacies involved and the learning that takes place.

Without a doubt, the data projector and interactive whiteboard present the biggest opportunity for significant change in the way we teach. Used badly, they give us a way of demonstrating in a flashy way what we want children to do, before we hand out yet another worksheet ('But that's using ICT as well! I made it on a word processor!'...) Used well, they are the allies and agents of the new literacies we are describing here. Alan Rodgers provides some sound advice on the use of an interactive whiteboard.

That is not all there is to new literacies, of course, but I hope it will do for a start.

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# Using electronic texts in primary schools

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One of the most important contributions that ICT can make in supporting learning is in helping teachers provide pupils with resources that allow them to focus on the specific learning objective or objectives for a lesson and avoid getting side-tracked by other issues. Electronic texts clearly offer a number of possible advantages and these can be considered from two main perspectives. The first is where the *teacher* uses an electronic text (such as in a whole class text level work in literacy or looking at a source about the Great Fire of London on the Internet as part of a history lesson). The second is where *learners* use such texts either individually or in small groups as part of their learning.

## Electronic texts for teachers

Presenting sections of a text on a projector screen large enough for whole class to see clearly has advantages over other methods, though using longer texts may involve rather a lot of scrolling up and down pages or flicking through slides, which can be

something of a distraction. The real power lies in being able to interact with the text in different ways. If text is presented in a word processor, such as Microsoft's *Word*, it is possible to discuss features of text and highlight those features as necessary, perhaps by changing the colour of the section of text or perhaps by using the editing features of the application. A simple search for the adjectives in a piece of text can now become a very visual and engaging whole class activity. It provides pupils with strong visual clues that can help them develop their understanding of the concept being taught. This not only helps pupils engage with the ideas but also provides supports their learning when they see and hear other pupils' contributions.

Whole-class presentation technology also provides a way to bring stimulating materials into the class: you could project current news items from the world wide web as a way of discussing report genres or idioms; or you could show short video clips or even play real news radio footage to discuss features of spoken news reporting; you could study the features of scripts for radio plays or adverts; you could use live web pages to look for information about specific topics or different points of view when discussing argument; you could conduct searches of CD-Roms to find text relevant to the subjects you are discussing. The range of electronic texts that you can practically use is limited only by what can be shown on a computer. It would even be possible to have a piece of (written) text and a video clip from the same story to play side by side to discuss the changes and differences between the two formats.

Even where such technology is not available, electronic texts still offer the teacher a number of advantages. A further benefit relates to the provisional nature of electronic information in a form that can be adapted and changed easily. Producing different versions of a text for a printed activity is relatively straightforward; one might have a piece of writing where the adjectives have been highlighted for pupils to alter to improve the persuasive nature of the text, another might not so as to add an extra level of challenge. A third version could even have suggestions for possible alternatives as a column at the side as further support or scaffolding. Each version can be saved as a different file and stored to be used again, developed or shared with a colleague. An electronic text can also be used as a stimulus. Modelling revising writing with a group is possible with a computer and monitor, particularly if the 'track changes' option is used in a program like *Word*, the original text can be developed and improved.

## Electronic texts for learners

Two of the major benefits of electronic texts for pupils is that they can be interactive and can be easily adapted. The potential of speech support for particular learners is well established (though rarely used) and other facilities such as a thesaurus or dictionary can help pupils read and understand what is presented on screen. This can either be as part of the interactivity of the program (such as in a talking book) an additional menu option (where the computer 'reads' the highlighted text), or where the support is provided through hypertext (where a link takes the reader to further information or a glossary or 'reads' the word).

The main advantage of composing a text electronically is that it is easy to change and improve the writing, removing the need for recopying what does not need to be changed. For younger writers support can be provided through a word-bank or grid on screen which makes typing words less arduous and can offer support similar to a writing frame. The use of an electronic text also begins to blur the distinction between readers and composers. On a computer it is easy to take writing and adapt and develop it, or summarise and précis the content (copyright laws and plagiarism rules permitting, of course).

The final advantage of electronic texts for learners is the range of what they can produce as authors. From using the computer primarily as a composition tool (where the writing will be printed) to texts that are read on screen, as an e-mail, as a web-page or as a multimedia presentation, the potential of electronic texts vastly enhances opportunities for purposeful writing for a range of audiences for learners of all ages.

## Electronic literacy

The electronic medium of ICT not only increases the options for a teacher within the existing curriculum through the range of types and the quantity of texts that can be used but is also changing the nature of the texts themselves in terms of what can be presented and therefore used by a teacher in her work. If you consider that some teenagers probably text with a mobile phone more than they write with a pen and paper or the new skills required to 'read' a website with its hyperlinks, text, pictures and sound and the flexibility with which the information can be accessed you will see that schools are going to have to grapple with electronic texts, not just because they can make teaching and learning more exciting and more effective, but also because they are becoming a part of the world that the pupils will grow into.

# Taking ownership of information
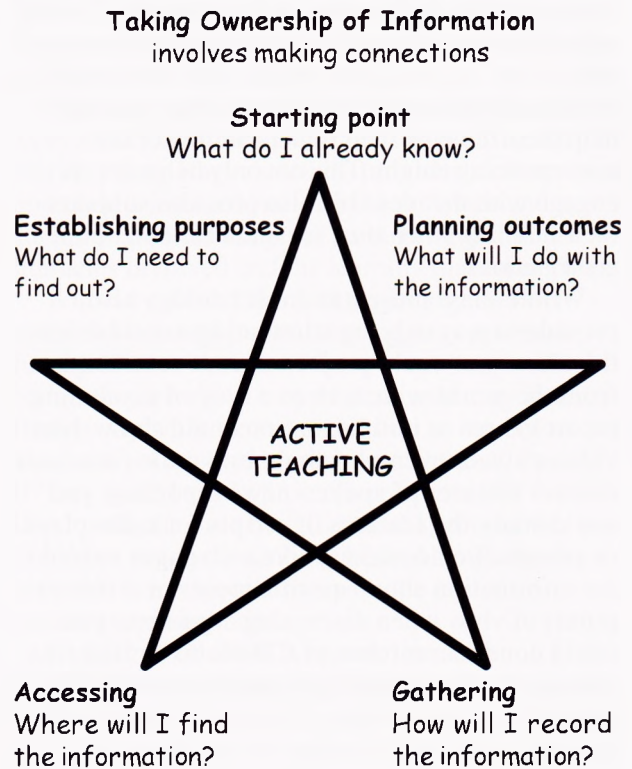
**Heather Govier**

All information handling can be seen as an extension of basic literacy and, when viewed in that light, it is clear that it has always been at the heart of the primary school curriculum. Children have long had access to rich information sources in the form of encyclopaedias or other reference books and a publishing industry exists to produce information texts for pupils of a wide variety of ages and reading abilities. Experienced teachers have developed many strategies for supporting their pupils in the use of these traditional resources.

Over the past decade, two new media for the publication of rich information texts have grown at a dramatic rate: CD-Rom and the Internet. Many of the materials available via these new media were not written especially for children and few teachers have much experience of using these resources in the classroom. Schools, therefore, need support in order to help pupils make effective use of these new opportunities for learning.

The danger with rich information sources in electronic form is that children feel that they have acquired the information once they have printed it onto a sheet of paper, even when they have not read a word of the text and barely glanced at the pictures. This is the equivalent of slavish copying from an encyclopaedia or reference book, but it is worse, because at least when copying from a book the child must make some engagement with the words or must study the pictures with care. Browsable, on-screen resources may also foster a 'butterfly' mentality as readers flit from screen to screen, endlessly sidetracked from the task in hand by some seductive graphics or gruesome video clip. For pupils to use electronic information effectively they must be helped to take ownership of the information, to study it with concentration, to understand it and to reinterpret it for their own purposes.

## The Star Model

In 1998 a group of teachers, working as part of a Becta project, set out to develop a model of information handling that could be of substantive support to teachers and pupils developing the use of rich information sources. This is the Star Model of information handling (see Fig. 1) which represents the information handling process as a pentagram in



**Taking Ownership of Information**
involves making connections

**Starting point**
What do I already know?

**Establishing purposes**
What do I need to find out?

**Planning outcomes**
What will I do with the information?

**ACTIVE TEACHING**

**Accessing**
Where will I find the information?

**Gathering**
How will I record the information?

**Fig 1.** *The Star Model.*

order to emphasise the links between different stages in the process and its lack of linearity. Explicit, active teaching is at the heart of the whole model.

The five points of the star represent the following five stages: starting point (what do I already know?); establishing purposes (what do I want/need to find out?); accessing (where will I find the information?); gathering (how will I record the information?) and outcomes (what will I do with the information?).

The starting point is the stage at which new learning is embedded in and mapped onto previous knowledge. It involves teasing out what pupils already know about the area under investigation in order to establish a context for new learning and to identify gaps in knowledge, which may need to be addressed. Traditional teaching strategies such as brainstorming or concept mapping (linking elements identified through brainstorming in the form of a grid or tree diagram) are appropriate at this stage. At first the teacher should lead these sessions (either with the full class or with a

smaller group) but once children understand the process they could brainstorm in groups without a teacher present. Artifacts, pictures, videos or simply questions could be used as catalysts to evoke existing knowledge and bring misconceptions into the open at the outset of any information-handling project.

The most powerful link in the pentagram is between establishing purposes and planning outcomes, and these two elements of the process must be carried out together. Pupils need to plan, at the outset, how the information will be communicated and to whom. Repurposing of the information from the form in which it is accessed to a form in which it will be presented gives pupils ownership of the information and will often involve a genre exchange. If the outcome envisaged is a book for younger children, for example, then in-depth information will not be required and the task will involve selecting and simplifying the data and preparing a presentation matched to the audience. This may be a very demanding exercise if the source material is complex. On the other hand if the outcome is to be a letter to the Council arguing a point of view, then the subject will have to be researched in greater depth and the task will involve careful analysis and the formulation of clear and persuasive arguments.

Thus close links between the receptive and productive aspects of literacy are forged at this stage. Information may be acquired by reading, listening or viewing and communicated by writing, speaking or showing. The new media have the potential to expand the meaning of 'reading' in the gathering of information as they make rich use of spoken commentary, music and other sounds, pictures, video, and animation as well as written words. Children will need to be shown how to make most effective use of these features. ICT also offers opportunities for communicating information in new ways that place less emphasis on writing. A multimedia presentation allows pupils to integrate spoken words, pictures, music etc. and may involve very little written text.

Another important concept for children to understand is plagiarism. They should appreciate that it is cheating to present work done by someone else as though it were your own. In order to avoid this, all sources should be acknowledged and no quote should be made without comment.

Establishment of purposes and outcomes also helps determine where to look for the information, the type of data required and strategies for gathering it. If the outcome is to be a poster, for example, then a good central illustration will be the prime need and information might be best collected and recorded in the form of a diagram rather than descriptive prose.

Accessing information involves locating the best resources for the task and adopting appropriate strategies for using them. Realistically, children are seldom faced with selecting resources from an infinite set. Traditionally teachers or librarians will have chosen a subset of books appropriate to the age and interest levels of the pupils. With the new media a similar pre-selection process is necessary. Teachers will need to bookmark suitable Internet sites and choose electronic encyclopaedias or information CD-Roms for their pupils.

Children too will need to develop existing skills and learn new techniques to make effective use of on-screen resources. They may need help with:

- keyword searching (and understanding of and/or logic)
- narrowing down and refining queries – being precise about the information required
- use of buttons, indexes, bookmarks, home pages etc. to move forwards and backwards through pages of information
- reading screens -where to look for different types of information (e.g. scroll bars, page counters, drop-down menus)
- listening and watching (to derive maximum benefit from spoke commentary and video clips or animation)
- assessing quality, validity, currency and authenticity of materials.

Traditional access skills must not be forgotten. Skimming and scanning are valuable strategies whether applied to text-based or electronic sources. Children must be taught these skills and know when it is appropriate for a competent reader to preview text without necessarily reading every word.

Information access using electronic information sources is likely to take longer than the same task using traditional media. This will certainly be true at first while both teacher and pupils are learning new techniques but may continue to be true even after new learning is firmly established because of the nature of the media. For example, time is needed to browse and gain familiarity with a CD-Rom, which may classify information in unusual ways. And searching the world wide web is a notoriously time consuming process.

Many of the strategies for gathering information transfer well from traditional to modern media. For example, text which is cut from an information source and pasted into a word-processor or desk-top publishing package can be manipulated using a variety of text marking devices such as highlighting or underlining key words or deleting or crossing out irrelevant materials. Alternatively these techniques can be
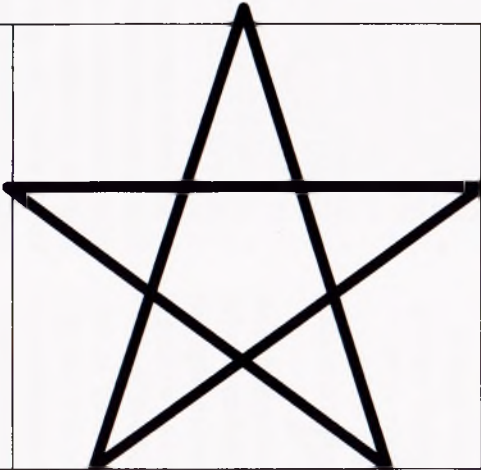
| Name: | Project title: | | Date: |
|---|---|---|---|

**What do I already know about this?**

**What do I want to find out?**
[what? where? who? when? how? why?]

**What will I do with the information?**

**Who will I present it to?**

| teacher | class | parents | young children |
|---|---|---|---|
| other | | | |

**How will I present it?**

| handwritten | word processed | DTP | multimedia |
|---|---|---|---|
| talk | interview | drama | |
| other | | | |

**What form will it take**

| report | explanation | letter | diagram |
|---|---|---|---|
| poster | newspaper | web pages | book |
| newsletter | advert | instructions | |
| other | | | |

**Where will I find the information?**

| Where will I look? | books | CD-ROMs | internet |
|---|---|---|---|
| | other | | |
| How will I search | headings | titles | pictures | captions |
| | keywords | index | menus | contents |
| What else will help? | sound | video | bookmarks |
| | animations | commentary | search engines |

**How will I gather the information?**

| Marking text | highlighting | underlining | crossing out |
|---|---|---|---|
| Making | diagram | chart/table | questionnaire |
| To help me remember | keywords | mnemonic | picture |
| I will also collect | pictures | sound | video clips |
| | other | | |

Fig. 2. *The planning grid.*

applied to printouts of the text. Similarly, restructuring information by recording it in the form of a diagram, chart or table is an appropriate way of collecting information from electronic sources.

However, there are also new techniques to be learned. Gathering data may involve capturing video and sound clips or cutting and pasting text and pictures from one application to another. The use of digital cameras or scanners also presents new opportunities.

Gathering must involve understanding and absorbing as well as recording. This is the essence of taking ownership of the information. Strategies here may include the identification of key words, the development of mnemonics to aid memory and the repurposing of information. Again the links between the points on the Star Model are evident.

## The planning grid

To assist teachers and pupils in the application of the Star Model of information handling, the project developed a planning grid based on the pentagram structure.

This is a tool that is applicable to most information gathering tasks and allows teachers to keep control of the learning process even when they are not necessarily in control of all the information. It provides a ready summary of the Star Model and highlights the five key elements of the learning process.

The planning grid is intended to be used at the outset of an investigation to allow pupils and teachers to plan the process. It is advisable that it is first used for demonstration or modelling by the teacher. In planning subsequent projects, groups of children could work together without teacher support and there might also be occasions when it would be appropriate for a single child to use the grid alone to plan an individual assignment.

A blank box is given for the first point on the star (What do I already know about this?) inviting pupils to make a note of existing knowledge about the topic. This could be completed after a brainstorming session or with reference to a stimulus picture or artifact.

The second box (What do I want to find out?) is also almost blank but contains the key question words (what? where? who? when? how? why?) to prompt the type of questions that could be asked. This box also asks pupils to think about the time allocated to the project so that they can appropriately restrict their search strategies and set realistic targets for the outcome.

The boxes for the other stages (Where will I find the information? How will I gather the information? What will I do with the information?) present sets of checklists, which serve as reminders of what is possible at each stage of the process. Blank spaces in the list offer opportunities for pupils to add items of their own.

The planning grid is intended as an empowering tool, which will broaden the range of strategies that may be used at any stage of the information handling process. The grid is a useful aide memoire but it cannot be assumed that children will acquire skills and strategies unless these are specifically taught. Active teaching is the central key.

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# The design and development of contemporary talking books: The Books Alive! Team

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### Talking book software: a brief history

Since the early 1990s, when multimedia technologies first began to make their impact upon education, a range of resources employing features such as animation, sound and text have been designed and created which intend to support teaching and learning in the primary curriculum. One such example, known as talking book software, is generally available on CD-Rom and provides an interactive multimedia presentation of stories or poems. The majority of talking books imitate real books by having 'pages' and a linear story format. There is often a 'cover page' with the title, author and illustrator and, where there is a collection of stories or poems, a content page allows the children to choose which one they would like to read. The mouse is used to activate 'hotspots' on each page which usually consist of animations, sound effects or narration. Words, sentences and paragraphs can be read and re-read by the computer if the child chooses to click on the appropriate area of the screen. In this way, the child is in control of their own learning and is able to listen over and over again to all or part of a story or poem which, in turn, allows them to become more familiar with the sound, purpose and meaning of words (Higgins and Cocks 1999), and the way in which sentences work. In the same way in which pictures provide visual cues, graphics also offer further information about the text on each page. In the context of talking books however, the graphics may become animated and so provide a richness of information which is not possible in the static pages of a conventional storybook.

Broderbund's 'Living Books' series began with Mercer Mayer's *Just Grandma and Me*. Interestingly enough, this particular title was chosen by Broderbund because Mercer Mayer possessed sole rights to the book, not because the book possessed any special qualities which lent itself to a multimedia version. A team of six or seven animators takes approximately 6 months to a year to complete each Broderbund title. During this time, animations are developed which are acti-vated on a mouse click. Such a design relies on the natural curiosity of the child who actively selects parts of the scene with the hope of further rewarding animations such as dancing starfish or amusing sound effects. The emphasis upon 'fun' is clear and Broderbund titles, with their ease of use and amusing interactive elements, are appealing to a wide range of readers.

For the reader, some of the advantages of multimedia reading resources are the opportunities to interact with the text and so discover more about characters, setting, meaning of words and so on. It is possible to add actions and create interactions which would, in a paper based version, be difficult if not impossible to communicate. Studies of talking books have highlighted the effectiveness of such software as an educational resource in terms of supporting the reader in their ability to read accurately and with understanding. Additionally, it has been reported that some children's attitude towards reading became more positive and their confidence also increased. The emphasis appears to have been placed upon the potential of talking books to encourage and assist in the process of learning to read. (Medwell 1998; Lewin 2000). Equally, there have been some concerns regarding the role of the interactive elements in enhancing the story they appear within. As pointed out by Burrell and Trushell (1997:3) the first screen in *The Tortoise and the Hare* (Living Books) has a total of twenty-four interactive elements or 'hotspots' activated by mouse clicks. Seven of these were considered by the researchers as being supplemental to the story whilst the remaining seventeen were considered to be incidental. The difference in the number of supplemental and incidental elements is evident throughout the story. Although children enjoy activating hotspots on each page in order to observe the effects, it is questionable as to whether the time spent on these interactions actually enhances the reading material or, in fact, prevents the child from progressing through the entire story. Perhaps the children are interacting with the technology rather than with the story itself.

## The picture book perspective

Since the 1980s, picture books have become more sophisticated, with author/illustrators creating complex and challenging texts for both adults and children alike. For contemporary picture books, text and illustrations combine together in what Lewis (2001:36) refers to as 'mutual interanimation'. The meaning lies not with the illustrations alone, but in the way the written text and the picture as text interact. The reader is encouraged to explore the meaning that exists between their union. Both picture and text are essential and one without the other would change or diminish the overall experience of the reader if not change the story entirely.

Author and illustrator Anthony Browne has created numerous titles which employ such techniques, for example *Voices in the Park* and *The Tunnel*. Because the traditional role of pictures within books has generally been to provide the reader with visual cues which support the process of decoding written text, picture books seem to be viewed as appropriate for young children or for those who face difficulty in learning to read. The contemporary picture book can challenge more able readers, including adults, in that it encourages the reader to creatively explore intertextual concepts within a story. These books have much to offer yet the focus within education appears to relinquish such books when a reader is considered to be proficient in decoding written text.

## Contemporary talking books?

Since their introduction in the early 1990s, talking books, unlike picture books, have not evolved. In many ways, Broderbund were ahead of their time with the technological solutions employed to create such material; however there has been little change witnessed since that time. The stories are still linear and the design is firmly weighted towards young children who are beginning to develop their reading skills. In a national survey conducted in 2001 by the Books Alive! Team it appeared that talking book software was predominantly used in Foundation Stage and KS1 with some instances of use in KS2 to support children who were experiencing difficulty in developing their reading skills. (Wood, Rawlings and Ozturk 2003)

If contemporary picture books can challenge more able readers, there is much to be gained from interactions with multimedia texts. At present, there appears to be an increased interest the ways in which meaning can be conveyed through pictures, animation, sound and video in addition to, or instead of, written text (DfES 2002). It seems appropriate therefore that the design and purpose of talking books is reconsidered by both the intended audience and the developers with an emphasis placed upon the educational perspective.

With this in mind, the Books Alive! Team has embarked upon a journey to develop materials which exploit the potential of multimedia and challenge current design of talking books. The team has enlisted the support of Anthony Browne and has, as a starting point, used existing work created by the author and illustrator. At present, the first, tentative steps have been made and the initial response from audiences has been positive. When Mark Schlicting of Broderbund presented a Living Book version to the original author he noted that it had a profound effect upon the way the author thought about books in terms of animation and interaction (Peterson and Gavini 1993). Similarly, the Books Alive! Team are witnessing a shift in the way educationalists are viewing both contemporary picture books and multimedia texts in terms of their wider application and potential for teaching and learning. The next step for the Books Alive! Team is to examine more closely the impact of a contemporary talking book design on higher order reading skills and explore how such a resource may be integrated effectively within the teaching and learning context.

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# Text changing – using a word processor to develop writing skills

## A literacy lesson for Y4

**Heather Govier**

### 1. Sentence work
*Revise and extend work on adjectives from Y3*

a) Choose an extract from a story that describes a setting.
b) Present the extract in word-processed form on screen.
c) Demonstrate how to find and underline all the adjectives.
d) Children work on the text to underline all adjectives.

### 2. Text work
*Develop use of settings in own writing ... write own examples of descriptive, expressive language based on those read ... link to work on adjectives ...*

a) Show the children how to 'Find and Replace' the key noun in the setting, e.g. 'wood' with 'beach' in the extract below. Re-read the extract showing the need to change more to make the revised text 'work'.
b) Children read and revise the text, e.g. in the text below especially the section which describes the beach and the setting for the magic.
c) Children change names, etc. to personalise the story using 'Find and Replace'.
d) Extension – children change the title and continue with the 'new' story

*Magic Time 1* **(the original story introduction)**

Lido was a yellow Labrador dog. He lived with Katie-Lee and her family in a comfortable little house on a modern estate called Forestdale. Next to Forestdale there was a large wood. Lido knew the wood very well because each day he went there for a walk. Sometimes Dad took him, but usually it was Mum. Lido and Mum went walking in all weathers, come rain, come wind, come snow, but when the weather was fine and sunny Katie-Lee often went along too.

The wood was a beautiful place all year round. In the spring the ground was carpeted with bluebells. In the summer the thick canopy of leaves kept it

shady and cool. Autumn was the time for blackberries and nuts. And in winter, when it snowed, the wood was silent and magical. But whatever the time of year, Katie-Lee's favourite place in the wood was where the Monster Trees grew. The Monster Trees were two huge yew trees with thick knobbly trunks and wide spreading branches. These hung almost to the ground, making each tree into a sort of tent. Inside the tents it was cool and dark and Katie-Lee and her mum used to pretend that a monster lived in each tree.

Every time that Katie-Lee and Mum took Lido for a walk in the wood they would pass the Monster Trees and peep inside together to see if the monsters were at home. It was all a game of make-believe, of course, there weren't really any monsters. But one New Year's Day, soon after Katie-Lee's fourth birthday, something magical happened and the make-believe came true!

It was the first day of January and although it was cold, the sun was shining and the air felt fresh and crisp.

*Magic Time 2* **(an example of work in progress by a Y4 boy)**

Lido was a <u>yellow Labrador</u> dog. He lived with Katie-Lee and her family in a <u>comfortable little</u> house on a <u>modern</u> estate called Forestdale. Next to Forestdale there was a <u>large</u> beach. Lido knew the beach very well because each day he went there for a walk. Sometimes Dad took him, but usually it was Mum. Lido and Mum went walking in all weathers, come rain, come wind, come snow, but when the weather was <u>fine</u> and <u>sunny</u> Katie-Lee often went along too.

The beach was a <u>beautiful</u> place all year round. In the spring the waves were calm. In the summer the water was <u>warm</u>. In autumn the beach was <u>quiet.</u> And in winter, when it snowed, the beach was <u>magical</u> and <u>white</u>. But whatever the time of year, Katie-Lee's <u>favourite</u> place in the beach was the Monster Caves. The Monster Caves were two <u>huge</u> caves with thick <u>rocky</u> entrance's and hard walls. The walls were as hard as steel. Inside the caves it was cool and dark and Katie-Lee and her mum used to pretend that a monster lived in each cave.

# *Discloze*: a sample run

**Adapted from an article originally written by Bob Moy and Heather Govier (1982)**

In the initial stages *Discloze* is a sort of 'hangman' activity, but to describe it thus entirely fails to do justice to its use and potential. A piece of text is stored in the computer but remains hidden from the readers as though it were an undeveloped photographic print. The pupils, or developers, are able to bring up the text a little at a time. As it is slowly revealed the readers are called upon to hypothesise about the meaning, initially with inadequate information. Thus their understanding grows slowly through a series of false starts and blind alleys until a final consensus is reached.

Probably the clearest way to explain this is to describe the course of a session using the program. The 'developers' were a group of six Y5 children who were working with a teacher. While this size of group probably represents the ideal, the program has been used satisfactorily with groups ranging from a full class to a pair. Once children have become familiar with the activity there is no need for the teacher's constant presence. Indeed it may be preferable for the teacher to be involved only intermittently.

While this group of pupils was chosen from among the most able nine-year-olds, the program was originally developed for use with remedial readers in withdrawal groups at secondary school and it has also been successfully used with infants. It can thus be used for a wide range of age and ability levels. Groups need not be matched tightly for ability. The program works well with mixed-ability groups and, as pupils become used to working in a collaborative way, it is worthwhile noting how members of the group support each other's learning. This approach is more productive than emphasising preconceived differences in ability.

The text used in this example was a poem in which a visitor from outer space mistakes cars for people:

> A tourist came from Orbitville,
> Parked in the air and said,
> "The people around here
> Are made of metal and glass.
> Through their transparent parts
> You can see their guts.
> Their feet roll
> On long measuring tapes,
> Dark with white lines.
> They have four eyes
> (The two at the back are red).

> Sometimes a special one passes,
> His fifth eye flashing.
> Then the others slow down;
> It's clear they respect him.
> But those soft shapes,
> Shadowy inside their hard bodies
> Are they their guts ...
> Or their brains?"

## Introducing the activity – looking for letters

The pupils, who were all new to the program, were initially introduced to the text as in Diagram 1, where all that was presented to them was a screen full of dashes and punctuation marks.

'Orbitville' in the poem had been replaced by asterisks.

```
-   ---   ----   **********,
------  --  ---  ---  ---  ----,
"---  ------  ------  ----
---  ----  ------  ---  -----.
-------  ----  ----------  -----
---  ---  ---  -----  ----.
-----  ----  ----
--  ----  ----------  -----,
----  ---  ----  -----.
----  ---  ----  ----
(---  ---  --  ---  ----  ---  ---).
--------  -  ------  ---  -------,
---  -----  ---  --------.
----  ---  ------  ----  ----;
--'-  -----  ----  -------  ---.
---  -----  ----  ------,
------  ------  -----  ----  ------
---  ----  -----  ---- ...
--  -----  ------?"
```

**Diagram 1.**

The workings of the cursor, which can be used as a pointer, were explained to them and the task introduced as a game of hangman. At the outset, the team were given a budget of 100 points and told that they might buy a letter for 20 points. In considering which would be the best letter to buy there was much discussion about vowels and about which was the 'most usual' letter, resulting in the agreed decision to buy a letter E.

## The value of discussion

In discussions over which letter should be bought next. A, R, and S were suggested.

'Who votes for A?' said one child. Here the teacher introduced the group to the consensus politics of the game. If a vote was taken, some people would be disappointed and so it was agreed that a letter would only be bought when total agreement had been reached. By requiring consensus the teacher encouraged the members of the group to substantiate their points of view and conversely to consider new ideas.

Through such a process, the individual has opportunity to contribute to and to share in the group's thinking. All contributions need to be valued if effective learning is to take place. Discussion prior to consensus illustrates many aspects of language learning and thinking. Reasoning processes, normally internal, become accessible both to the group and to the teacher.

## Anticipating and predicting – looking for words

Pupils were encouraged to think now in terms of words rather than just letters and to ask themselves which words are common. 'The' was felt to be the most common word and after discussion of the relative merits of buying H or T, the letter T was finally chosen. The text now looked like Diagram 2.

Now some pupils began to make informed guesses about specific words. Was that 'feet' in the seventh line down? Where could they predict H? After several possible combinations of 'THE' had been identified, it was mutually decided to focus on the one at the beginning of line 3.

The H was predicted and the computer instructed to reveal all further instances of the letter H. Fifteen instances of 'the' were now counted but was this always going to be the word 'the'? No, it could be 'there', 'they', 'either', etc.

At this stage they were able to draw upon their knowledge of English orthography. Someone spotted the apostrophe in line 15 and 'it's' was predicted followed by 'here' in the third line of text. All the Rs and Is were now taken giving a text that looked like Diagram 3. Focus was immediately turned to 'their' with much discussion as to its meaning. 'Their feet' seemed a likely combination and was successfully predicted.

## Hypothesising and testing

After taking S a combination 'th-se' was spotted. What could it be, 'these' or 'those'? 'Yes, but we've had all the Es, said one girl, 'So it must be 'those'!'

This type of good thinking and good checking is seen throughout a session with *Discloze* and is just as apparent with groups of children as it is with adult groups such as teachers. Teachers however, as with all aspects of computer use, exercise more caution and are more inclined to be reticent when asked to state their views!

```
- t-----t ---e ---- **********,
----e- -- t-e --- --- ----,
"T-e -e---e ------ -e-e
--e ---e -- -et-- --- -----.
T------ t-e-- t-------e-t ---t-
--- --- -ee t-e-- --t-.
T-e-- -eet ----
-- ---- -e------- t--e-,
---- --t- ---te ---e-.
T-e- ---e ---- e-e-
(T-e t-- -t t-e ---- --e -e-).
---et--e- - --e---- --e ----e-,
--- ---t- e-e --------.
T-e- t-e -t-e-- ---- ----;
-t'- --e-- t-e- -e--e-t ---.
--t t---e ---t ----e-,
------- -----e t-e ---- ----e-
--e t-e- t-e-- --t- ...
-- t-e-- ------?"
```

**Diagram 2.**

```
- t--ri-t ---e -r-- **********,
--r-e- i- the -ir --- --i-,
"The -e---e -r---- here
-re ---e -- -et-- --- -----.
Thr---h their tr-----re-t --rt-
--- --- -ee their --t-.
Their -eet r---
-- ---- -e---ri-- t--e-,
--r- -ith -hite -i-e-.
The- h--e ---r e-e-
(The t-- -t the ---- -re re-).
---eti-e- - --e-i-- --e ----e-,
Hi- -i-th e-e ----hi--.
The- the -ther- ---- ----;
It's --e-r the- re--e-t hi-.
--t th--e ---t -h--e-,
-h----- i--i-e their h-r- ---ie-
-re the- their --t- ...
-r their -r-i--?"
```

**Diagram 3.**

## Using prior experience – looking for meaning

Successful prediction of 'A tourist' in the first line added a new dimension to the task. Now it was possible to speculate about the general meaning. The pupils were intent on creating a meaningful context; this would enable them to focus on appropriate forms of language and content words. 'Perhaps it is about visitors to America or Hollywood?'

There was much discussion about the word hidden by 'the stars'. It was explained that this word had been deleted from the passage and would not appear until the end of the exercise. Perhaps this hidden word indicated where the tourist had come from. Clearly it had many letters and so the children tried to think of long place names. Could it be Switzerland or Australia?

Suddenly it became possible to spot words and phrases. 'Are these their boots' was suggested for the penultimate line, but after careful counting 'boots' was seen to be too long. Was that 'around here' in line 3? Perhaps line 5 read 'you can see their huts'? This led to much discussion; whose 'huts' were they? Finally, a bit of good checking was exhibited when someone said, 'No, we've had all the aitches, it can't be 'huts''. Perhaps it was 'cuts' or 'nuts'!

There were too many possibilities, but all agreed on 'you can see' and a successful prediction was made. The score now stood at 130 but not many of the pupils were still interested in it. The task had become so engrossing that the score had become almost irrelevant.

## Collaborative learning

After taking U, the screen looked like Diagram 4. Ideas began to pour in thick and fast; 'in', 'around', ' transparent' were spotted and the opening was reread as 'A tourist came from'. The last two words seemed to be 'their reins'. Perhaps the passage was about 'asses'. But how should reins be spelt? No, the spelling was wrong. It must be something else; anyway wasn't there a letter missing? It could not be 'trains' because Ts have gone; could it be 'brains'?

```
A  tourist  - - - e  - r - -  *********,
- - r - e -  i -  the  - ir  - - -  s - i -,
"The  - e - - - e  - r - u - -  here
- re  - - - e  - -  - et - -  - - -  - - - ss.
Thr - u - h  their  tr - - s - - re - t  - - rts
You  can  see  their  - uts.
Their  - eet  r - - -
- -  - - - -  - e - suri - -  t - - es,
- - r -  - ith  - hite  - i - es.
```

```
The -  h - - e  - - ur  e - es
(The  t - -  - t  the  - - - -  - re  re -).
S - - eti - es  -  s - e - i - -  - - e  - - sses,
His  - i - th  e - e  - - - shi - -.
The -  the  - thers  s - - -  - - - -;
It's  - - e - r  the -  res - e - t  hi -.
- ut  th - se  s - - t  sh - - es,
Sh - - - - -  i - si - e  their  h - r -  - - - ies
- re  the -  their  - uts ...
- r  their  - r - i - s?'
```

Diagram 4.

This level of thinking and reasoning permeated the whole session which lasted uninterrupted from 1.30 pm to 3.45 pm. All the pupils chose to work through break time and some wanted to stay after school. In the current crowded curriculum pupils rarely get the opportunity to pursue a task uninterrupted over a long period of time. Use of this program shows that when pupils are involved in their own learning they are more inclined to persevere until the task is completed.

On Inset courses the same happens with teachers who happily abandon their coffee break and have to be reminded to stop for lunch. It is also interesting to note that in many instances the same text can be used for teachers and pupils alike.

## Applying logical reasoning

What sort of people, they wondered, had transparent parts? Were they models in a museum? Perhaps you could see their 'guts' not their 'cuts'? 'It must be 'guts',' said someone because 'cuts' would be on the skin and if you can see through them...'

The phrase 'parked in the air' was spotted in line 2 leading to much speculation on how someone could park in the air. The tourist must be in an aeroplane, a helicopter, a balloon, a hovercraft or a jump jet.

## Encouraging effective learning strategies

There was thus still much confusion but the group hung tenaciously to the theory that the tourist came from Australia (despite the fact that the letter count was wrong) and that these strange people were museum models. One of the most clear-cut effects of repeated use of *Discloze* with a group of pupils is that they quickly learn to doubt and question their first hypothesis, becoming more open to alternatives. With this, their first experience of using the program it was a long time before someone suggested that these were beings from a different

world, that the tourist came from outer space and that the spaceship had been parked in the air because there was no gravity.

### Reading the text aloud

What could the group now read of the text? What did it all mean? They were encouraged to try to read as much as they could, substituting a mumble for the words that they could not guess.

By this time it had become possible to 'read' almost everything. The 'special one' was like a commander who ruled the others. But who were these strange people? Where had they ever seen 'people' whose 'feet roll on long measuring tapes, dark with white lines'? 'Perhaps they have wheels – these people. Are they cars?'

'Yes!'

Suddenly it all made sense. The space tourist comes to earth and mistakes the cars for the inhabitants. The 'measuring tapes' are the roads and the 'special one' with the 'fifth eye flashing' is a police car. 'Oh what a con!' shouted one child, but the pleasure and satisfaction was there on the face of all of them. All were amused and intrigued by the final question.

There was no doubt that the session had been exhausting for the pupils and teacher alike but everyone involved left with a feeling of exhilaration. By taking things slowly, and working collaboratively in a relaxed non-censorious atmosphere, this group of 9-year-olds had been involved in a process of deep text analysis rarely seen in the primary school. The focusing of attention on the monitor screen had oiled the social wheels. Because eye contact could be safely avoided, even the most introverted child had felt able to put a point of view. This aspect is especially important for inexperienced readers with a record of failure and a consequent low self-image.

The process had required the simultaneous application of analytic, convergent thinking and creative thought. The developers had to combine both styles and every child's talents were used to the full.

### The benefits

*Discloze* thus brings to language work much of what Logo brings to maths. Readers are set in a microworld:-

- where errors become profitable learning experiences

- where a trial and error approach is possible allowing exploration with a structure imposed from inside rather than outside the group
- where discussion and hypothesis testing are possible at all levels from the simple spotting of words to the complex analysis of deep meaning
- where the final understanding results from combined analysis and synthesis using elemental building blocks.

There are many items of software that focus on language. Some test spelling, others set cloze exercises and store the pupil responses. However, *Discloze* is different from these. It allows children to build upon what they already know about language and about reading; to read in a new way, a way both magical and powerful. It is based upon the assumption that good reading and good writing often grow best when rooted in a rich subsoil of worthwhile talk, and it links reading with thinking, talking, listening and writing. Further, it encourages co-operation in an atmosphere in which it is recognised that everyone has a valuable contribution to make. Perhaps it is this last point which most of all makes *Discloze* a significant teaching resource.

### Footnote

This article was originally published in *Language Development in the Primary School – The Role of the Microcomputer – A Teacher Training Pack*, MEP 1983.

*Discloze* from MAPE is based upon a program called TRAY created by Bob Moy in the late 1970s. He was, at that time, an advisory teacher with ILEA, and the software was developed for his work with older children who had reading difficulties. From this beginning he experimented with using it with other age groups and it was found to be equally effective with children of all ages and abilities (and indeed with adults). Groups for whom it has been found to be effective include:

- children in primary schools
- pupils with reading difficulties
- 'A' level students
- ESL pupils
- students of a foreign language
- adult literacy groups
- trainee teachers
- teachers on in-service courses
- family groups at home.

Several publishers have produced variations on the theme but *Discloze*, from MAPE, is the only one freely available on the web.

# The mouse and the muse

## Trevor Millum

Poetry and ICT are made for each other. What other medium allows us to experiment with language so freely? What tool comes close to the word processor in enabling us to revel in words' possibilities? Whether we are helping children to write poetry or encouraging them in their reading and understanding of poetry, there are many many ways in which we can call upon ICT to assist.

### Transforming texts

The word processor provides us with an ideal means of making changes to texts. One of the simplest changes involves re-ordering or re-sequencing. Putting pieces of writing which have been de-sequenced back into their original order is a very good way of learning about texts, how they are constructed and how they cohere. Doing this without ICT is awkward and frustrating, as many of us have learnt!

In this simple poem pupils can be directed to look for clues in the rhyme pattern as well as the meaning of the piece. Model the process with pupils before asking them to sequence the same poem and then other, similar, poems. Let them build up confidence with, say, limericks before moving on to more demanding poetry.

> The sky was dotted with stars
> For he was only the farmer's boy
> He lifted up the bars
> She neither smiled nor thanked him
> And she was the Jersey cow
> They walked the lane together
> Because she knew not how
> They reached the gate together
> (Anon)

This is an activity which works equally well with a sonnet as with a limerick, G.M. Hopkins as well as Edward Lear – and which brings up interesting questions even (or perhaps especially) with a haiku.

There are several ways in which texts can be de- and resequenced:

- Word processors have various ways to cut and paste (tool bar icons, Edit menu items, keyboard shortcuts, drag and drop).
- Some word processors (e.g. *Textease*) and publishing packages (e.g. *PageMaker*) allow text to picked up and moved around the screen and placed wherever you wish.

- *PowerPoint* can be used in a similar way.
- Words typed into an art package can be moved around like 'fridge magnets'. *Paint* will allow you to do this – but be careful, it's easy to lose words – or bits of them!

Other types of transformation include encoding a poem, using wingdings or webdings or any other symbol font:

[symbol font text]
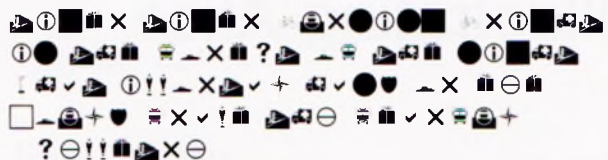
(A free copy of 'ICT and Literacy' for the first person to send the correct version of the above verse to me at NATE – address below.)

In this activity, use the word processor to prepare the activity (remember to omit punctuation marks and capitals) and then print it out for pupils to crack the code. Depending on the text, you may wish to provide clues, e.g. a particular word or all the vowels. Alternatively, discuss the passage together and ask questions such as, 'If this is an F, what letters might follow it?' or 'Here are two symbols the same next to each other, what could they be?' This kind of task also works well as a pair or small group activity.

A further transformation might look like this, collapsed into its component parts, i.e. words in alphabetical order.

> I a a a a an ancient and and and and and and away away beast beast before black bluebirds chime clocks come day day day day distant dolphins east echoing echoing every eyes far far faraway feast for friends from from fun future future glade gold grey grey had had hadn't heard hearken I I I I in in in in In jade kind land land learned legged light light lived man mountains night night of of of once once once once one one one our pale pale played purest rhyme rise rise river said sang saw saw saw saw say! seer shimmering shimmering shining shining silver slay speak spoke the the the the the the then there there they time time to to to two two-legged unicorns up up upon upon was west what when where where where white with within within

These are the words from a poem arranged in alphabetical order. Present this collection of words

to pupils as a document file to use in their word processor. They can then use them as if they were fridge magnets to create a piece of writing of their own. Drag and drop is the method most like using real fridge magnets and it is worth teaching pupils this skill if they are not familiar with it.

Pupils will request additional words. I usually refuse unless there is a very good reason; sometimes I relent if it is a preposition or relative pronoun. More interestingly, they will begin to ask if they can change words – for instance, to add an -s or an -ed. With an appearance of reluctance, I tend to give permission. As this activity progresses, discussions about language automatically arise.

Any text can be used in this way. The nature of the original text will clearly affect the kind of writing which is possible. Experiment with different texts and with the kind of writing you ask pupils to produce. Does advertising text produce good material for poetry? Can persuasive or instructional texts ever really become anything else? Try it yourself and see!

Lots more ideas on using ICT to support and develop literacy will be found in Trevor Millum's book 'ICT and Literacy' (£6.75 incl. CD from NATE: 50 Broadfield Road, Sheffield S8 0XJ; 0114 255 5419; www.nate.org. uk). It also includes instructions on how to create alphabetic texts.

# Illustrating Alice

**Bob Fox**
*University College Worcester*

At first glance it might seem odd, in a publication devoted to new literacies, to place emphasis on one of the longest-established texts in the canon of children's literature. The Alice books are so firmly entrenched that they are sometimes mistakenly classed as fairy stories. Many adults have a long-standing attachment to the Alice books (sometimes coupled with a slightly appalled fascination with Dodgson himself), and this has made them a popular theme for websites. Googling on 'Alice in Wonderland' produces 412,000 hits – though admittedly many are Disney-related. One American site offers 101,000 school essays on Alice. Many of the best sites are labours of love, nurtured over time by devotees. It is possible to use content from some of these sites to good advantage in the context of literacy teaching at KS2.

### Reasons for Using Alice

Some reasons for considering using *Alice in Wonderland* resources might be:

- The antiquity of the text means that it is free of copyright.
- The full text is easily available on-line.
- Background information about it is readily available, in the form of letters, photographs, facsimiles of the earliest version, and so forth.
- The continuing popularity of the story has meant that, over time and around the world, there have been scores or hundreds of published editions, and a similar number of sets of illustrations.



- Many of the pictures are by outstanding illustrators, from the originals by Sir John Tenniel, via Arthur Rackham and Mabel Lucie Attwell, to Tony Ross and Anthony Browne. There are illustrations by Mervyn Peake, Ralph Steadman and even Salvador Dali. Many of the older images are also free of copyright.
- The set-piece nature of many of the scenes in the book has meant that, once the general scene has been set, it is possible to work with relatively short passages, more or less in isolation.
- This has also made for considerable commonality in what illustrators have chosen to depict – thus virtually every illustrator has a picture entitled 'Advice from a Caterpillar', and another entitled 'A Mad Tea-Party'.
- By means of a little careful web surfing it is possible to assemble a collection of hundreds of these illustrations. This is not difficult to do, as there are some websites that specialise in exactly that (see below). Bear in mind that all

the more recent pictures are still covered by copyright, and be conscientious, considerate or circumspect in the uses to which you put them – do not assume, for example, that you can pepper your school website with them; on the contrary it is better to assume that you may *not* freely use them for this purpose.

I do not recommend asking children to search the web for Alice sites. Though many sites are charming, and most are safe, there are some that contain unsuitable material. There is actually a considerable range of types of unsuitability – the Alice theme seems to attract some strange people.

## Alice Text Sites

There are several sites containing the full text of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Some of these also contain *Through the Looking Glass*, *The Hunting of the Snark* etc.

The Millennium Fulcrum Edition 3, based on the Project Gutenberg version of the text can be found at

http://www-2.cs.cmu.edu/People/rgs/alice-table.html

This has all the Tenniel illustrations embedded at the appropriate points – click on them to enlarge them.

The version of the text at the Bedtime-Story for the Busy Business-Parent site,

http://www.the-office.com/bedtime-story/classics-aliceinwonderland.htm

is generously sprinkled with pictures from several notable illustrators, and could serve as a one-stop-shop for anyone wishing to assemble material quickly.

Lauren Harman's Alice site is perhaps the most comprehensive, with an exceptional set of links to other materials:

http://laurenharman.tripod.com/alice/links.html

Lauren Harman also has an extraordinary collection of different illustrations, at

http://laurenharman.tripod.com/alice/illustratorsal.html

and

http://laurenharman.tripod.com/alice/illustratorsmz.html

## Illustrating Alice

Assemble as many pictures as you can, and store them on a hard disc or CD-Rom, perhaps arranged in folders by artist, or perhaps by theme. Where you might be in danger of infringing copyright, you might prefer to create a word processor file of links to the pictures on websites. Include the Tenniel pictures, at least one other set of early pictures, and some more recent pictures, perhaps including Disney ones. Do not let the children see any of them beforehand.

Select a passage from the story to read as a whole-class activity. If you have a data projector and wish to project the text, choose an on-line version without visible illustrations, or copy and paste the relevant section of the text into a word processor. Ask children to work in small groups or pairs, and compare notes about what they imagine the scene would look like. They may wish to draw simple sketches to assist them – at this stage, do not spend ages producing finished works of art. The important point is to encourage the children to visualise the scene in their own heads, and this visualisation should not be constrained by the limits of their drawing ability.

Make sure they consider:

- Where is the scene set?
- What would you be able to see in the background/middle ground/foreground, apart from the characters?
- What time of year is it?
- What time of day is it?
- Is your view based on evidence from the text itself, or from your own imagination?
- Who would be in the picture?
- Where would each character be standing/sitting/lying?
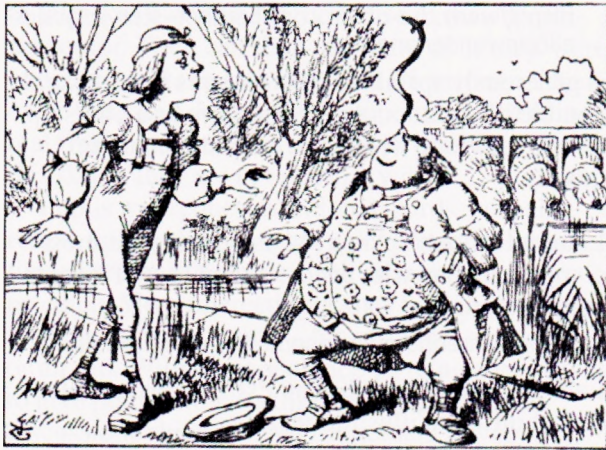
- What would each character look like?
- What would they be wearing?
- What would they be doing?
- If you can see their face, what expression would you expect to find?
- Where are you viewing the scene from?
- Is your view a freeze-frame, a close-up or a long shot?
- Are you looking down from above the characters, looking up from below them, or level with them?
- At the point in the story that you are illustrating, what would any of the characters be saying?
- What other noises would they be able to hear?

No doubt you can add some more questions of your own. If children have different points of view (which they probably will have), can they justify their position in terms of evidence from the text?

When this discussion is complete, invite the groups to work at a computer to examine the various ways in which their scene has been depicted. If they can manage to do so, get them to put more than one picture on the screen at a time, to compare them. Get them to discuss each picture in terms of the questions they applied to their own visualisation, and also to speculate on other aspects of each picture:

- How long ago do you think this picture was made? How do you know?
- Can you tell how this picture was made? Is it a drawing, a painting, or what?
- Is there anything about the layout of the picture, the colours used, or the atmosphere of the picture that surprises you?
- When you look at the picture, what is the first thing that you notice?
- Look at the picture carefully for several seconds – are there elements of it that you did not notice at first?
- Is there any detail or object in the picture that you would not have expected to see? If so, why do you think it is there?
- In what ways is this visualisation similar to

yours? In what ways is it different?
- Precisely what point in the text do you think is being illustrated?
- If you know the name of the artist, do you know anything else that he/she illustrated?

Ask the children to place the pictures in order, from their most favourite to their least favourite, and then to compare notes with others. Is there a commonly-held view? (Be prepared for this to be Disney...)

You might then like to create your own version of the scene, for example as a *PowerPoint* presentation, with children's illustrations interspersing the original text.

## More useful sites

Another very worthwhile site is Lenny's Alice in Wonderland Site:

   http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/

Click on Index for a list of potentially interesting materials, including a very convenient way of accessing all the Tenniel pictures and a whole range of Disney images.

The index also links to an unofficial version of the script of the Disney cartoon. Though there are a few bizarre spellings in it, it could provide a very instructive activity. Take a familiar set-piece scene in the original text (say, the encounter with the Cheshire Cat), and invite children who are not familiar with the Disney cartoon to use a word processor to re-cast it as a cartoon film script. Then give them access to this script, so that they can compare notes. What can they notice about the way the Disney script works? What do they think about the ways in which the Disney script differs from the original text or plot? For example, is it a good idea to have the Cheshire Cat singing *Jabberwocky*?

This site:

   http://www.bugtown.com/alice/

is a quick and easy source for all the Arthur Rackham pictures.

The Wired For Books site:

   http://wiredforbooks.org/alice/

contains an unabridged, dramatic audio production, which runs through RealPlayer. Note that if your network has a firewall, this may prevent it from playing. This could be a useful classroom resource for reading-while-listening, but the production (in American accents) is rather too fast for any but the most accomplished readers to keep pace with it.

Lewis Carroll produced a 'simplified' version of his text, for younger children, the 'Nursery Alice'.

This contained coloured versions of the Tenniel illustrations. See

http://home.earthlink.net/%7Elfdean/carroll/nursery/index.html

You could use this text with KS1 pupils, or, better, ask KS2 children to make their own simplifications and abridgements, using a word processor, and then compare their efforts with Carroll's. This could be quite instructive, as the style of the Carroll version may well seem arch and rather patronising to modern readers.

The Pazooter Books version,

http://www.megabrands.com/alice/indexx.html

includes some small animations of the original Tenniel drawings, complete with sounds. This is quite amusing in itself, and older, very ICT-literate children might like to think about how the animations were achieved.

Another interesting Alice site,

http://www.alice-in-wonderland.fsnet.co.uk/alice_index.html

contains a considerably abridged version of the text, with graphics that quite cleverly combine photographs of a real 'Alice' with the Tenniel illustrations. Again, older children might like to speculate on how this was achieved, and perhaps, if they have access to software like *Paintshop Pro* or *Photoshop*, they could have a go at producing their own.

http://www.ruthannzaroff.com/wonderland/

This site contains a number of Alice-related Java and Javascript games, of variable educational value.

http://www.textarc.org/Alice2.html

If you were hoping that 'New Literacies' in this publication would be highly avant-garde and experimental, this site might meet with your approval.

# Cover story

**Angella Streluk**
*Y5/6 Teacher, Amington Heath Community School, Staffordshire*

Long ago at the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy I spent a whole year producing large texts. Scouting round for suitable texts for Y5 and Y6 I selected *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells for a fun science fiction text. Naturally the Internet was a good place to search for supporting resources. I came across a veritable goldmine at

http://drzeus.best.vwh.net/wotw/wotw.html

Here I found over one hundred covers from various editions of *The War of the Worlds*! Don't we always tell our pupils to look at the cover and see what it tells them? This was a golden opportunity to see how the different covers of the same book could be represented in a variety of ways. What but the Internet could make this possible on this scale? We had a new version of

the old 'let's look at the cover first' activity.

I made a simple *PowerPoint* presentation with a few of the covers. A grid was provided for pupils to record some comment on each cover. They recorded the year and the details of aliens, machines and humans along with any other comments they wanted to include. Responses were very varied and most interesting. Pupils were intrigued to see the many languages of the editions. (My favourite was the version in Russian). It was also clear that the novel had been adapted into different formats such as cartoon and an Armed forces version. Pupils related to the pictorial representations and their accuracy, or lack of it. The colour of the cover or the simplicity of the design was commented on, relating to the story and genre. The worksheet is summarised below.

*War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells
*PowerPoint* Presentation

Select some editions which particularly interest you to make notes on.

| Edition Year | Aliens or Martian Vehicle? | Earth People? | Other Points (including language) |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

We had already completed two other activities linked to this work. We had listened to Richard Burton's narration in Jeff Wayne's musical version of *The War of the Worlds*. We compared the opening of the book with the narration, annotating the book opening with the differences and discussing why the opening had been altered. (This was very similar to the National Literacy Strategy Y6 Term 1, Text level 1 'To compare and evaluate a novel or play in print and the film/TV version.') We had also read a description of the Martian machines and tried to draw our own representations. Both of these set the scene for our book cover work. Some pupils were shocked at the licence artists took in the drawings of the alien machines on the cover. Some noticed that this late Victorian novel was moved on in time in some of the pictures to make it look more modern. They correctly attributed these changes to a desire to sell more copies of the book.

Pupils already found this story interesting, but with these stimulating activities as part of their work they became even more keen on the study of science fiction. It would be interesting to see what other classics could be used in a similar way.

Having corresponded with the author of this website I find he is delighted to think that his collection is being used in this way. Perhaps other people could come up with similar sites to suit more people's choices of texts.
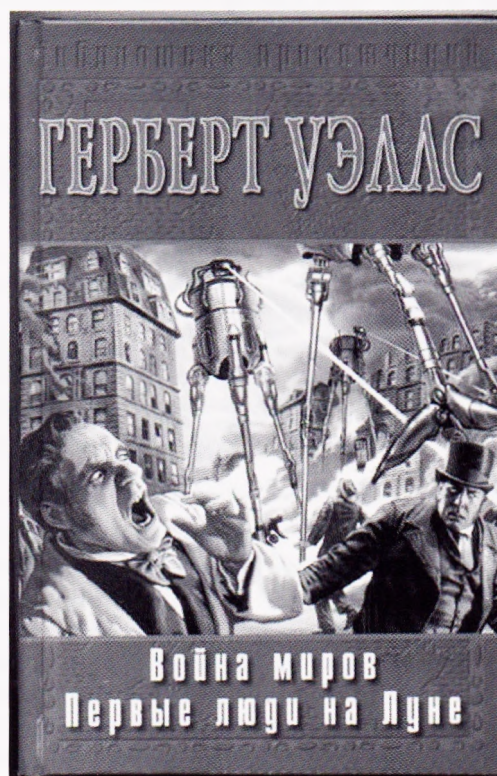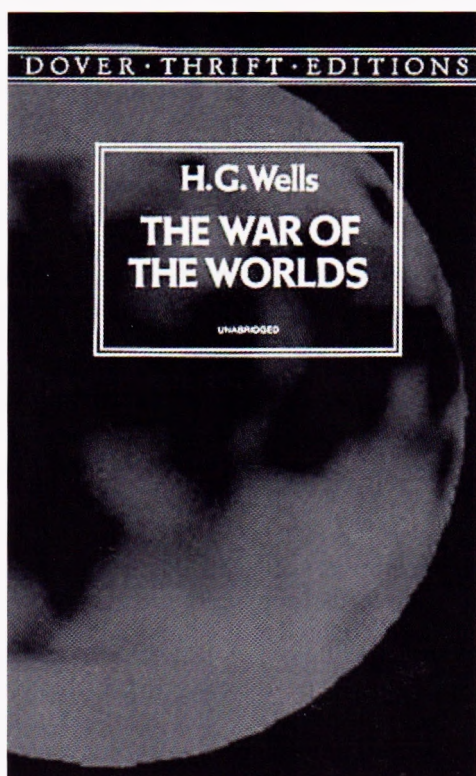
# Digital video in the classroom

**Jon Cardus**
*Digitalsavvy*

Child development is, of course, primarily a social activity. Fortunately the nightmarish vision of rows of pupils sat in front of computer monitors memorising information, their every move electronically tracked, never came to pass. Common sense prevailed and technology has developed to support collaborative learning and the development of the higher cognitive skills through watching, listening, thinking and dialogue. Technology is now seen more as a tool for learning, not a machine for teaching, and reinforces the role of the teacher.

Digital video (DV) is primarily about narrative construction and self-expression. It is about team work, structure and communication. It also allows those who are textually weak to escape their bonds and communicate freely. However there is far more to the use of video than the transfer of words from page to screen. In the same way that e-mail allows the user to construct an argument carefully and distribute it quickly, DV allows children to research, analyse and think critically about a story or sequence and then provides an enormously powerful visual presentation of their work.

## DV, the curriculum and visual literacy

Visual literacy describes the ability of an individual to recognise and interpret visual stimuli. Everyday stimuli include body language, facial expression, signs and symbols, stills and moving images, and these are core to the ability to communicate effectively. At one level, visual literacy can simply be employed to gather information and to determine fact from fiction, but, more significantly, it can be so powerful as to directly affect emotions and under-

standing through the ability to interpret the subtleties of irony and metaphor.

Successful use of DV in the curriculum correctly contextualises the technology, allowing pupils to develop the ability to recognise a problem and define that problem; to determine the questions suggested by the problem and find the information necessary to develop a solution and then to be able to evaluate and organize that information.

Digital video as a tool provides a canvas upon which a pupil can present an argument by applying moving video, stills, animation, commentary and music, which are blended together in order to describe an event, engage the audience, accentuate emotion – essentially telling a story, a constructionist creativity. This is reflected in the process of classroom DV production which can, for simplicity, be categorised into two genres, documentary and dramatic.

A documentary style can be used by pupils to describe and analyse an event such as the production of the school play, a sporting activity or the outcomes of a science experiment or a school trip. It can also be used to develop a point of view, such as discussing citizenship issues or developing the environmental debate. We know from experience that pupils often focus on the task at hand, such as a discussion or presentation, much more when there is a camera pointing at them.

The dramatic genre supports the visual representation of pupils' creative writing or maybe the visual interpretation of poetry, the re-enactment of an historical event or dramatic representations of bullying.

## Planning a DV project

Careful planning is essential to the delivery of a DV project. The following outlines a typical route.

### 1. *Curriculum and resources*

Decide what area of the curriculum is being developed, ensure there is access to necessary equipment, and allow enough time for the project completion.

### 2. *Create a production team*

By defining the production team you can describe and communicate the roles and responsibilities of each pupil within the project.

### 3. *Develop the idea*

Working as a team, decide on the key areas of the subject being developed and the overall aims and objectives. Define what you want to say and who you are addressing, i.e. your audience, and decide what genre will best accommodate your chosen style.

### 4. *Research*

Select useful research resources for the pupils to use. This not usually a problem with traditional classroom sources but if the pupils wish to use the web as a tool try to identify good websites which provide good quality content – this saves hours of surfing by the pupils. Alternatively you could tie in a session on how to search the web time-effectively.

### 5. *Outline script and storyboard*

Story boarding is the process by which the pupils create a visual plan for the making of a film. Initially, the film idea is subjected to the '5 Ws', that is Who? What? When? Where? Why? This allows pupils to decide what they will film and what they will discard. It also demands the development of characters, script, action, time, location and reasoning. Once happy, pupils can begin to script and storyboard.

A story board is a series of pictures, which can be hand-drawn, computer generated or digitally photographed. Traditionally the pictures run down the left hand side of the page, and the text on the right hand side. Basically the storyboard is a document that tells us what we will be seeing and what we will be hearing, shot by shot, in the final film. The storyboard can be annotated to add detail, for example action, mood, location, sound effects and props. *Do* use the pictures to tell the story as far as possible. *Don't* use the commentary to describe too literally what you are seeing in the picture – the picture is already giving you that information! The story board essentially provides the planning tool to be taken to the shoot. A copy should be given to each member of the team.

### 6. *The Shoot*

Using the story board, each scene can be set up and shot. Pupils should feel confident in handling the equipment so allow time for experimentation and familiarisation with the controls. Here are some top tips for shooting:

*Lighting*
Do not shoot in the direction of bright objects – everything else will look dark. You will be surprised just how bright windows look if the blinds aren't drawn. Position the subject so as much natural light falls on them as possible. To increase light on the subject you can use reflectors. White card reflecting light onto the subject will be fine but for the professional look you can buy a 'Lastolite' reflector. Too little light makes the video grainy. Have fun experimenting with different lighting conditions.

*Use a tripod*
A steady shot is vital and avoids the feeling of motion sickness in the audience. If possible use a tripod. If you have to hold the camera, stabilize yourself against a wall and keep your elbows tight to your sides. Another tip is to switch on the 'steady shot' function – this removes a lot of the camera shake.

*The zoom factor*
When anyone first uses a DV camera they enjoy using the zoom function. It can be used for effect, but minimal zooming in and out is preferred. If a sudden close-up is required, stop filming, set up the 'close' shot then film again. Generally speaking, it is usually best to keep the camera zoomed out as wide as possible and place the camera nearer the subject. This will prevent camera shake, which is emphasized when you zoom in.

*Sound*
The built-in, on-board microphone will not pick up sound at a distance. If possible use a separate microphone to get close to the dialogue and use headphones to monitor the sound. If you don't have a separate microphone, this is another reason to get as close as possible to whoever is speaking, since this will give you clearer sound. Also remember you can record sound effects – the sound of a door closing for example – and drop them into the sound track of the final film.

*Experiment with different shots*
Different shots and camera angles give different interpretations. Establishing shots show an object, subject or incident in relation to its broader environment. To make the subject look dominated shoot

from above; shoot from below to make the subject look dominant. Other interesting shots include 'point of view' (POV) – shot from the perspective of the subject, reaction shots (the reaction of a character to another's dialogue or actions) and extreme close-ups – big close up shots to focus audience attention. Remember, you can shoot things several times to get them right, and then use the best shot in the editing process. Overall, think about your film in relation to what you see on TV, it will become obvious how directors use different shots and angles to create different effects.

*Editing*
It is possible to shoot everything in the right order, and 'edit in the camera' so to speak. But generally, to give the best results, you will want to edit the material you have shot. Fortunately this process is a lot easier than it used to be. A modern computer, either a PC or a Mac, should be up to the job, although it will need to have a sound card and speakers if you want to be able to hear your sound. The digital video can be transferred directly on to the computer via the Firewire socket. If your computer does not have one of these, you can buy a Firewire card. Editing software is now quite cheap, and software such as *Pinnacle Studio 9* for the PC and *iMovie* for the Mac are both easy to learn.

Once the video is transferred onto your computer, you can start editing. If you have shot a lot of material or your film is quite complex, it can be useful to work out your editing plan on paper first. Essentially the editing process involves choosing shots from your video material, and dragging these shots onto the video 'timeline', which places them in the final movie. In some ways the process is not unlike cutting and pasting paragraphs of text using a word processor. You add a shot afterwards, even if it is in the middle of your movie, and all the later shots will automatically shuffle up to make room for the extra shot.

You can add graphics to your movie, so long as they are in digital form. And you may also want to create a commentary. Most editing packages have several sound tracks, so one can be used for the sound that accompanies the video, i.e. a presenter talking, and another sound track can be used for the

commentary. If you don't like the way a piece of commentary sounds, you can easily delete it and record it again.

Once you have finished your film, you then 'create movie', which means that the computer combines all your video shots, graphics, commentary and music, into a single video file. You can often choose whether you want your final movie to be created as a large file that you can transfer to a CD-Rom. This would give you a high quality final video. Alternatively you might want to create a smaller file, which will have lower picture quality, but can be sent over the Internet, or posted on a web site.

## Why Use Video in the Classroom?

The recent Pilot Project by Becta showed that the use of digital video in the classroom can increase pupil engagement with the curriculum, it can promote and develop a range of learning styles, and it can stimulate and support the development of other skills, such as problem solving, negotiation, thinking, reasoning and risk-taking. There is widespread evidence from the Becta pilot that using DV dramatically increases the motivation for learning and engagement of a wide range of learners, but particularly those excluded from the traditional curriculum.

*Factfile*

Digitalsavvy specializes in creative uses of digital technology in the classroom. We have a vision of the 'classroom of the future', with digital video and audio technologies embedded across the curriculum, and we are very keen on supporting teachers to develop the process of user-generated content, where the students design and create their own resources.

*Web links*

www.digitalsavvy.co.uk
http://www.becta.org.uk/research/research.cfm?
    section=1&id=532
http://www.pinnaclesys.com/
http://www.apple.com/uk/imovie/

# The digital movie creator

**Miles Tandy**
*Teacher Adviser for Creative and Cultural Education, Warwickshire Educational Development Service*

**Elizabeth Furness**
*Teacher Adviser (ICT) Warwickshire Educational Development Service*

We used digital movie creators (DMCs) as part of a Warwickshire initiative called *The Creative Hub* where classes of Y6 pupils of all abilities worked with an artist, their teachers and an ICT facilitator on projects linked to the curriculum. Pupils spent some time working with the artist in their own school and then had a day in *The Hub* – a space at an LEA centre with various ICT facilities including the DMCs. As the projects developed, the DMCs were used extensively to produce a range of outcomes.

One class, for example, was working on World War II and produced short films in the style of the public information films of the time covering such subjects as 'digging for victory' and preparing for the evacuation of children. In preparation for this, the children watched an original public information film and excerpts from the Pathé News reels. They discussed the vocabulary, sentence structure and way of speaking. Some were also very interested in the type of music used and searched for suitably stirring music to accompany the film.

Another class had worked with a dancer to develop work based on their own version of the poem *Jabberwocky*. They filmed their dance in all sorts of exciting and unusual ways and edited it to produce a remarkable video which, rather than just recording the work, was a wonderful piece of creative work in its own right.

Another worked on the story of *The Siege of Troy* to produce a film which included the spectacular use of a model to recreate the Trojans dragging the horse into their city. Working with a video artist, the children discovered how camera angle and positioning of subjects can create dramatic effects (see picture: the 'horse' is 30 cm high and sitting on a picnic table!) Using the filming process to stimulate writing, a group wrote a short script that resulted in a goose-pimple-inducing scene where an abandoned Greek slave is questioned on the whereabouts of the Greeks and the reason for the appearance of the horse.

The more we used the DMCs, the more we became aware of their extraordinary potential. The children found them easy to use and quickly got into the editing process so that they could concentrate on what they were making, rather than spending the day learning to work the technology. All the schools involved now have at least 2 DMCs in school and are exploring a whole range of ways in which they can used imaginatively right across the curriculum.

The digital movie creator is one of the most exciting ICT developments that we have seen in years. Pupils can learn its basic functions in minutes but, by adding their own imagination and creativity, produce remarkable results of which they can be genuinely proud. It is robust, affordable and easy to use – what more could we ask for?

# 'Digital Blue – Movie Creator': just what the primary curriculum has been waiting for!

**Tracey Buckley**
*Y1 Class Teacher, Valley Infant School, Solihull West Midlands*

In June 2003, the Solihull Infant and Junior Lead Literacy Teachers had a wonderful time during an ICT and Literacy workshop run by Miles Tandy from Warwickshire Education Development Centre. Amongst other brilliant ideas, Miles set up a structured drama session where we were asked to dramatise scenes that were filmed using a video camera called the 'Digital Blue – Movie Creator'. Everyone involved in the workshop was surprised how 'teacher friendly' the camera was and in no time the clips were being edited and played back as a movie. All the teachers, including myself, were charged with ideas to try out with their children.

The beauty of the Digital Blue – Movie Creator is its simplicity. Holding down the button at the front of the camera starts the recording process and a number of short recordings can be made. When the camera is inserted into the docking cradle the video is moved to the computer, thereby freeing the camera's memory to be used for new recordings.

In addition it can be used as a digital camera, being able to store hundreds of small images (320 × 240 pixels), which are of sufficient quality to incorporate into pupils' work. The camera is highly portable, being powered by batteries when not plugged into the docking cradle.

If I am totally honest I have always worried about using ICT and drama effectively in the Literacy Hour but I realised that the movie creator allowed me to use both in my teaching. Determined to overcome my worries I set about adapting my existing plans to incorporate the digital movie camera.

The movie camera was incorporated into a three-session lesson plan. My Y1 children were looking at the traditional tale of the 'Three Little Pigs' and comparing it to a play version. Below I have summarised the lessons to show how I used ICT and Drama to get the very best out of my pupils.

## Session 1

The main objectives were to familiarise the children with the story, its structure and to understand the roles of the four main characters.

- The Independent Groups were asked to write sentences appropriate to each character in speech bubbles.
- The Teacher Guided group worked on the laptop to insert speech marks into the correct places in a given sentence.
- During the plenary I asked the children to think of the most frightening and exciting parts of the



**Fig. 1.** *The movie creator.*
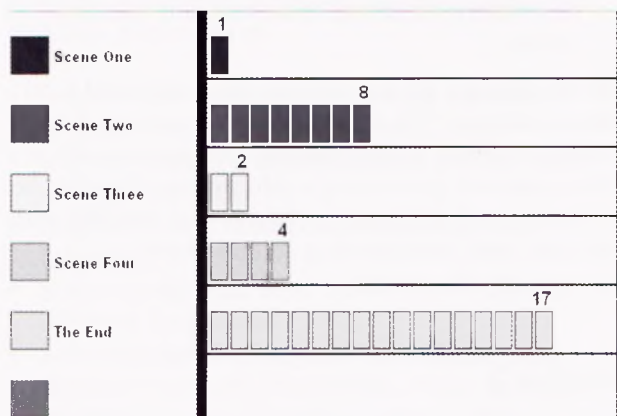


**Fig. 2.** *This is the Fear Graph. 'Have a guess at which scene was the most popular?'*

story. Simple graphing software was used to create a 'Fear Graph'. The children were then introduced to the Digital Blue – Movie Creator and told the objectives for the next lesson.

**Session 2**

In this session we compared the play version of the Three Little Pigs to the traditional story read in Session 1. The play version enabled us to see the story in clear parts (scenes). We then chose three main scenes from the story and the children were put into groups to act them out. The children chose the best re-enactments and we filmed these using the Movie Camera.



**Fig. 3.** *This is how the* Movie Creator *software appears on your computer. Here you can see the clip insert bar.*

• The Teacher Guided group was fortunate to use the Movie Creator and write sentences for each scene. The software that comes with this product makes it easy to write captions and sentences that scroll up the screen as the movie is being played.
• The Independent Group wrote their own descriptive sentences to accompany the three scenes.

In the Plenary we all watched the movie and read the sentences. The children were encouraged to decide whether each sentence was appropriate to the scene and gave enough information. Finally, the software enabled music to be put with the film and we had great fun choosing suitable music to accompany the movie.

**Session 3**

The children studied the final scene from the play. We watched the movie again and thought about the 'speech' used by each of the characters in this final scene. The children worked in pairs to decide suitable speech sentences. I demonstrated how to write these sentences on the computer using a writing frame that was based on a play format.

• The Teacher guided group, who needed more support, worked with me on the computer using the frame.
• The independent groups were given the frame to copy from the board and insert their own sentences.

**Evaluation**

During this unit of work it was noticeable that all the children's writing improved dramatically, particularly the boys. They enjoyed the active learning that the drama offered and through it they were better able to internalise the story. Seeing the movie played back gave them great satisfaction and became an excellent stimulus for their descriptive sentences. The use of the computer gave the writing a real purpose – they were thrilled that 'their' sentences scrolled up the screen while the movie was being played.



**Fig. 4.** *'I'll huff and I'll puff,' said the wolf. The straw house fell right down to the ground.*

This unit of work was so enjoyable to teach. I got a real sense of satisfaction knowing that we had completed a successful writing experience. In addition I had overcome two of my fears – using ICT and drama effectively! This year I intend to use the same lesson ideas but improve them by using E-books. These computer books support Literacy work and traditional tales in Key Stage One. The software is exciting and motivating and has a feature that allows text to be typed straight into speech bubbles on the computer pages.

I had a great time using the Digital Blue – Movie Creator and I would like to encourage all teachers to see what it can do for their lessons. Go on, have a go and have fun!

*Factfile*

The *Digital Blue – Movie Creator* video camera and software are available from:

TAG Learning
E-mail: sales@taglearning.com
www.taglearning.com

Price (excl. VAT) – January 2004
  1 Unit Licence: £84.95
  5 Unit Licence: £404.95

Can be networked? No
Publisher: Digital Blue
Windows: Windows 98, Windows ME, Windows 2000 – Needs a working USB port. A free site licence is included with this product, enabling the installation of the software on every computer in your school.
"*Movie Creator* enables pupils of all abilities to collect their own dynamic video and sound resources for use within multimedia or web-based project work. The video files can be utilised by teachers to add extra impact to teaching resources and to record pupil achievements."

E-Books can be purchased from
Kingscourt/McGraw-Hill
E-mail: enquiries@kingscourt.co.uk
www.kingscourt.co.uk

# What new literacies are involved when children use multimedia programs? Children linking their ideas to create a hypertext narrative

**Mary Hayes**
*Nottingham Trent University*

Traditionally, education has relied heavily on the printed text. Since the invention of the printing press the highest status in education has been granted to text. Text has retained its position as an important mode of communication but is now being challenged by visual forms of data, and by hypertext structures.

McClintock (1999) observes that multimedia 'makes it evident' that the work of thinking can take many forms – verbal visual, auditory, kinaesthetic. He argues that multimedia raises the status of non-linguistic forms of communication since they can now be accessed more readily and can be used to '*serve the needs of disciplined thought and inquiry*'. McClintock sees the development of learning under the present historical conditions as being '*a function of increased participation in intellectual work*', rather than increased access to information.

I worked with a whole class of children in a suburban school with a mixed catchment of children. I demonstrated how *StoryMaker* worked at its most basic, showed them some more complex creations, then worked with the children by feeding in extra information as required to create stories. The research took place in the classroom. The

school was semi open plan, in that each classroom had a work area, a quiet carpeted area where whole class discussions, reading and singing occurred, and there was an open play area between each pair of classrooms. The computers were situated at one end of the open play area. Initially children were in pairs, then later worked on their own. The work took place over two terms and the children were six and seven years old.

At the beginning of the data collection stage I set out some principles for myself when working with children. I intended to:

- respect their views and value their opinions;
- try not to control the learning situation;
- involve them in decisions about how and what they wish to learn;
- ask them about their constructions of their learning;
- acknowledge that their frame of reference is different from mine;
- acknowledge that they are at a unique stage physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually;
- treat them as equals in the learning process;
- clarify with the class teacher the levels of independence with the computer that I intend to

encourage, so that I was sure that this was acceptable to the school;

* work on an equal footing alongside the pupils, although if there is any behaviour that was regarded as unacceptable by the teacher, I was be forced to intervene;
* use software that responds to the requirements of the research focus, and that will require ethical screening with the contents carefully analysed.

I kept referring back to these principles when carrying out data collection.

What follows is a vignette that illustrates what one child did.

## Lewis

Lewis learned quickly and was keen to create a story which had both structure and style. He was keen to attempt complex manoeuvres to make the characters act the way he visualised the story unfolding, and made evaluative comments early on in the sessions. He indicated that he wanted to take control very soon in the second session and was proactive in building a relationship through the use of jokes. We problem solved together in using the program to achieve the effects he wanted.

Lewis had a very clear idea for a story to create with a setting, characters, an event and an ending with a moral.

*Lewis: The vampire in a house*
Have you got one particular person that's important in the story?
*Lewis: The vampire*
What's going to happen that makes the big event in the story?
*Lewis: He finds some treasure and in the house and then he doesn't share it and then......*
So the vampire finds the treasure, he doesn't share it with the other people in the house, right....then what happens?
*Lewis: And then he didn't share it so he gets turned into a frog*
Who turned him into a frog?
*Lewis: Umm a wizard.....then the other people get the money then the nice people they become normal*

As we went on working it became evident that Lewis had quite a clear idea of details of the story too; he studied the backgrounds carefully, searching for *'like a stony place ... with cobwebs in'*, then clarified that the vampire was going to *'go down the steps and to a door but the mummy ... wants to go over the door ... so he can't get in 'cos it's a secret room where the mummy's in'*. Lewis also acted creatively as the story progressed; he used the phrase 'I know' to signal a new idea, which made me wait and listen.

He gradually took control of the situation as the sessions progressed and the interactions between us became more like conversation, with the interventions almost extinguished. The next example shows a conversation which developed the storyline.

*Lewis: right we're going to be in where he turns into a frog*
What does he turn into?... you need another bit because you've got the vampire introduced, you've got the vampire finding the treasure
*Lewis: and you've got the vampire............... what?*
And then you've got to have something about people wanting him to share it
*Lewis: oh ah ah ... go, different background ... more ... more ... ...that one*
So he's thinking of taking the chest into that room
*Lewis: what's that?*
That's a cobweb I think, and that one – they're all cobwebs
*Lewis: ooh that's a big one, I'm gonna put that one in*
OK so why are we in this room and what's that...you know,
*Lewis: 'cos he comes through that door*
Right,..with the chest?
*Lewis: yea*
OK
*Lewis: and then, he's hided the chest under the stairs ...... and then he 'cos the Egyptians know 'cos there was a big hole*
Aah! Good thinking
*Lewis: and they didn't know what happened*
So if we have instead of this page a page where they find the hole
*Lewis: oh I want it, wanted it like, they say, the Egyptians come in, they say 'what was in that hole? What did you dig up?'*
Right, go on then
*Lewis: hey ... whoops ... action, ?? ... flip ... uuum ...which one is the......?*
Which one's what?
*Lewis: oh! ... got it ...*

Lewis asked direct questions about the mechanics of using the program, created interesting ideas for actions in the story and asked why when he did not completely understand some action or logic. He treated me as an equal from the second session on. He was persistent when he found an aspect difficult, such as clicking the mouse button once only. He occasionally said that he wanted to do a specific action, as a request for information. Sometimes Lewis asked for confirmation that what he thought was correct.

He was able to be clear about what he did or did not know about the program. Lewis's approach to

the tasks was to say or sing what he was doing, which helped him to verbalise and remember it. He also tended to treat the characters as if they were actors, using voices and intonation to make the intended action 'come alive'. He made it very clear to me when he did not understand something, and often asked why something that he had tried didn't work. Lewis almost thought aloud – he often finished my sentences, implying that he was following my logic.

Lewis was very clear and pragmatic about what he had learned from the initial demonstration and creating a page with a partner: *using sounds; putting in new backgrounds; turning things a different way; how to play the story and put the speech bubbles in; putting writing in speech bubbles and click on it to make them say it.*

He demonstrated a stamp action and remembered which icon to use to make the stamp stay at the end of its movement path. He read the choices and asked for confirmation:

*Lewis: Action selected?* [reading the choices]
No, its go to the end of the path and stop, that's the one you're looking for...so try that
*Lewis: aah*

Lewis was critical of the outcomes of his work with the program:

*Lewis: lots of ?????.........mmmm ...didn't work......that should have moved.......*
It should have moved earlier...did you click on it?
*Lewis: yea*
Just play it and don't click on it
*Lewis: uuuh............bit too late..........*
Don't click on there.....[both laugh] ah that was better.......uuuh its very slow isn't it?
*Lewis: mmm-mmm don't know why*

I observed problem solving in action: He was having difficulty with the mouse – in clicking it to play the sequence he was unintentionally clicking twice which affected the sequence. He came up with a suggestion:

*Lewis: aaah... I know...record that again...shall we record that again and then, 'cos that doesn't get doesn't get to where that bit starts and we should put it a little bit further*

Having solved that problem he decided to put a speech bubble into the picture:

*Lewis: taller...no perhaps not, you go like that...and then ...oh...want to make it bigger... taller* [the speech bubble]

He was also able to explain why something expected didn't happen, indicating an awareness that he was using a machine that would only do what he had told it to do:

*Lewis: wooooah* [the speech bubble doesn't work]
It won't let it speak....why won't it speak?
*Lewis: OK because I didn't tell it to do it*

Lewis used the paint program to create a spade, since there were no spades in the stamps store. He found mouse manipulation more difficult than using a real pencil. He was quite critical of his own efforts at drawing, but also used praise when he felt that he had achieved his goal, and stayed good-humoured when things did not go right first time. Lewis tended toward perfectionism – he was happy to re-do until he had the image he wanted.

When asked what he learned from using the program, Lewis focused on story creation. He mentioned adding speech to a story (he didn't normally use speech in a story but had sometimes *'if I say he said or my mum said..'*). He also said that he learned how to make a story understandable to someone else. When asked what had been the most difficult, he replied that it was where there were many changes of direction to create. He felt that the program made story creating easier because it *'allows you to have more ideas for stories because you can move things around and act it out.'*

New technologies bring different ways of presenting and processing learning materials. Were my learners able to be self directed? The children in my sample were clearly able to do this. Each child was at a different stage in a continuum that could be identified as moving from a position from being totally activity oriented to being totally learning oriented with a personal purpose. Lewis was task oriented but used his own creative ideas to learn as he achieved the task.

One new literacy is that of non-linguistic forms of communication. Early on in the research I was concerned that the use of pictures for story making might be encouraging the pupils to think more visually and less textually, thus possibly making it more difficult to learn to write well. It is clear, however, that this use of pictures does in fact lead to a better understanding of story structure, and the use of speech in stories. Lewis learned *'about story creation, ...making a story understandable to others... moving things around and acting them out.'* This is clear evidence for new learning developed through the use of multimedia activity in ICT. Lewis had a clear view of the reader and was keen to share his work with his peers.

My conversations with the children established that children can and do evaluate their own learning with computers, and that as teachers, we should value and respect those views. We should remember that children first learn about learning at home, and that we should be asking ourselves how we

can build on those early experiences. To assist that process I include a set of questions that this research has raised:

- How can we acknowledge other 'teachers' in the child's life?
- How can teachers plan to give children the chance to observe sufficient examples of computers in use, and opportunities to explore programs, so that you can build up an understanding of what they know and can do with computers?
- What approach should teachers take in class-rooms? Equal opportunity or positive discrimination?
- Where do children find out about new computer developments?
- How are children involved in making choices and decisions?
- How are children encouraged to share their knowledge and opinions?
- How can a teacher help children to make

choices? What strategies might the children suggest?

For me, the most important aspect of the research is that given opportunity, children are able to clarify their own learning agenda; and given support, are highly motivated to act upon it. They select the method they prefer to use to learn, and use strategies that enable them to develop their own views of the quality and correctness of their work. To build a wide range of new ICT literacies the child needs to be a willing communicator and to have confidence in the social working relationships.

*References*

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# Interactive whiteboards (IWB) – some thoughts on their use

**Alan Rodgers**
*Independent ICT Consultant*

Unless you had been living under a rock for the last couple years you cannot have failed to notice that one of the biggest developments in teaching has been the rapid development/deployment of interactive whiteboards. Indeed even the Prime Minister has been seen in front of one, pen in hand, writing in light.

This short article makes no pretence at being a fully comprehensive review of the current use of interactive whiteboards. It is simply an attempt at sharing a few observations and recommendations based on some experience gained by showing others how to get the best from this expensive equipment. It is presumed that a reader of this journal would have a basic knowledge of what an interactive whiteboard is about. If not then the following website is recommended.

  http://www.ictadvice.org.uk/index.php? section=te&cat=004&rid=521&rr=1

What follows are some general comments on how interactive whiteboards can be used, what the main features are, and some do's and don'ts of working with such a system.

Interactive whiteboards are ideal for the delivery of many curriculum areas. Principal examples are naturally Literacy and Numeracy. The IWB can bring the shared parts of the Literacy Hour to life, taking the strain out of producing texts. Simply revealing the text section by section or annotating texts are impressive improvements on flat printed text and OHP acetates. An IWB can eliminate the need for large sheets of acetate, dry marker pens and blu-tack! The interactive whiteboard also means that presentations can be saved and re-used. No more reinventing the wheel. It is just as liberating for work in the Numeracy hour. Number lines, number squares, shapes, coins, place-value cards and many more features appear and are manipulated at the click of an interactive pen.

Combined with many commercially available packages an IWB brings the warm-up and starter sessions alive. It is well suited to the whole class teaching methodology required by both the literacy and numeracy hours.

Listed below are some features that can be used with an interactive whiteboard.

### Some Things you can do with a Whiteboard

- Stay in front of an audience instead of behind a computer.
- Turn a class into a group
- Show a whole class whatever can be shown on an ordinary computer screen
- Whatever can be done on a computer can be shared on a large screen; the pen is like a mouse
- Exploit a never-ending set of whiteboard presentations, recall and reuse them.
- *Use different features,* e.g. Reveal, Spotlight, Magnify
- Use a large set of pen colours
- Prepare presentations
- Take snapshots of slides and incorporate them into *PowerPoint* type shows
- Use clip art, photographs, animations, slideshows and videos
- Play sound clips
- Use a virtual keyboard or number pad.
- Save different settings for different uses.
- Undo and redo actions performed on the board.
- Connect straight to the Internet
- Annotate a picture or painting
- Display a counting timer (counting up or down)
- Run ticker tape-like messages

If the following list of do's and don'ts seems terribly obvious I hope that the reader will forgive me.

Don't be afraid of an interactive whiteboard. Once it is established and working it can be a powerful tool in your teaching life. Enjoy it.

Remember the *teaching* is the main thing. Don't get too seduced by the technology.

Always stand to one side of the board so that you don't cast a shadow.

Make sure that there are no obstructions in the pupils' field of view

As an interactive whiteboard system will give you several screens to move between, get used to spacing out text and not crowding too much onto one screen.

Make sure the font size of your text is large and clear enough so that it can be read from the back of the room.

Make good use of colour; think about using a standardised template.

Always keep a dry wipe marker pen in a drawer in case of power cuts or technical problems (especially if OFSTED are at the back of the room) – no batteries required!

If your interactive whiteboard can make words and phrases appear and disappear after a certain time, make use of this feature for quizzes, games and class activities.

Don't think that every lesson has to be a pre-designed and totally polished set of slides. It's good to improvise and annotate, especially in response to points made by the pupils. One of the mistakes made by novice users of interactive whiteboard is totally pre-creating *PowerPoint*-type presentations. Whilst this is an excellent idea for some lessons it should be remembered that it's not called an interactive whiteboard for nothing, so get interacting.

Very often an interactive whiteboard comes with a new computer. The user should take this as a golden opportunity to keep careful notes and records about the file storage system for the files made. It really is time well spent to create a logical and user-friendly folder system for archiving lessons. It may seem like a contradiction to the paperless office concept to make a printout of the slides made and used, but it is easier for the memory to have the visual stimulus with a short note showing the storage media/folder/file name and even date.

Great care should be taken in the initial set-up of an interactive whiteboard system. It is time well spent.

If costs permit, have the projector ceiling mounted out of the reach of meddling fingers, and I don't just mean children. Adults can also be well intentioned but misguided. If the projector is on a moveable trolley you will find that a lot of time will be spent in setting it up at the beginning of each session.

If your system is not working check the obvious. Most problems occur because it's not turned on or a connection is loose. Eighty per cent of my time spent trouble-shooting as a primary school ICT co-ordinator was devoted to reconnecting misplaced cables.

After a session when the system has been shut down allow the projector to cool the bulb inside. Generally this will prolong life of the bulb. Rough treatment while the bulb is hot will not.

Make sure that the screen is mounted at a height on the wall suitable for the children to use. It is as much their resource as the teacher's, so they should be able to reach it. It is also important to have enough room on both sides of the screen so that a left-handed and right-handed user can control it without being in the way of the projection beam.

Invest in a projector bright enough for you not to have to close the curtains on summer days. Using a black background with white writing may also help on bright days.

Avoid using a white background for the slides as this can be quite glaring for children to look at for a length of time, there are some pleasing pastel shades available.

Consider the use of a tablet pad so that the user does not have to go to the front of the class all of the time and so that people with mobility problems can also use it.

Remember it's a large screen and the things a teacher chooses to show can be very varied. There are many resources available such as sound effects, video clips, and clip art. Make use of these features, but don't let the medium get in the way of the message. Children may remember the flash and bang of the presentation but not the message.

Whatever software is selected to run, time will be well spent in getting to know it thoroughly so that all of its features can be brought into play.

Share your resources with colleagues; perhaps they will share their ideas and resources with you.

These are just a few thoughts on the use of interactive whiteboards. It is by no means a definitive list, but I hope it is helpful to someone.

It used to be a taunt by some people that if a visitor from the past were to find himself in a modern operating theatre they would be amazed and only vaguely aware of what happens in that place. If however they were to find themselves in a classroom they would find themselves instantly at home even down to the chalk and talk. Perhaps now things have moved on, indeed perhaps they might even think it magic that pictures, sounds and movies are shared with an engaged and motivated audience. Perhaps this new literacy is a good rebuttal the former taunt?

For the reader who wishes to know more about research into the effective use of interactive whiteboards then the following sites are recommended:

http://www.ros.org.uk/iwb/
Interactive Whiteboard Research Forum

http://www.interactiveteaching.org/
The Review Project

http://www.nesta.org.uk/
NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts)

http://www.becta.org.uk/research/reports/docs/wtrs_whiteboards.pdf
What research says about the use of IWB

# Book review

*ICT and Literacy – Ideas and resources for ages 7–11*
by Trevor Millum
ISBN 0 901291 97 8
available from NATE (www.nate.org.uk)

This is a source book of ideas for using ICT in literacy teaching with an accompanying CD. Most of the activities use only software readily available in schools (mainly a word processor) and all are fully referenced to the Literacy Strategy.

The section on Frameworks covers the use of partial texts and templates to scaffold children's writing. This includes the use of starter paragraphs and writing frames to stimulate narrative and persuasive writing, a variety of poetry pattern templates and the use of *PowerPoint* to present persuasive arguments. Files to support all of these activities are provided on the CD.

'Transformations' looks at ways in which existing texts can be changed to engage pupils in thinking about the ways in which writing is constructed. Examples include sequencing activities and rewriting for different audiences or purposes. I was especially intrigued by the activities that involve arranging all the words of a text in alphabetical order. This can be simply achieved with a few key presses in *Word* but you will need to read the book to discover the educational value of such a bizarre transformation.

The section on Investigations and Demonstrations includes some of the work with alphabetical texts but also covers coding (using symbols fonts) and the use of various techniques for highlighting and demonstrating aspects of text using a projector or whiteboard.

The final two sections of the book on Communications and Presentations look at web publishing (or publishing on a local intranet), the use of the web as a source of information for persuasive writing, story writing using e-mail, and presentation using software such as *PowerPoint*.

There are loads of useful Hints and Tips scattered throughout the book (also collated at the end) and Pupil Worksheets are provided for some of the activities.

This book would be a very valuable addition to any primary teacher's resource bank.

Highly recommended.

*Heather Govier*

# Reborn as Naace Primary, what does the future offer for MAPE?

The start of 2004 saw a merger of MAPE with NAACE and CEG (Computer Education Group) to form a newly constituted Naace. This was the result of a series of meetings over the past 18 months between a number of organisations supporting the use of ICT in education. The MAPE Council had welcomed the discussions as it had become increasingly clear that for various reasons our organisation would only be able to continue in its current form for a few more years.

MAPE activists continue to be enthusiastic proponents of the use of ICT in education and were keen to secure a future for the community. Naace offers a structure under which an enhanced range of resources will continue to be produced and disseminated.

The intention is to continue to offer members:

* the excellent primary website which will be under constant development – this is still accessible through www.mape. org.uk but is also directly linked from the Naace website www.naace.org under Curriculum Resources;
* a termly publication aimed at primary practitioners;
* access to conferences and other training events at an appropriate time and cost;
* an opportunity to participate in the development and evolution of national strategies;
* an opportunity to contribute to the advice given to national and local bodies on matters relating to ICT;
* a continued presence at major events.

Many members of the old MAPE Council have been elected to the new Primary Community working group of Naace where we hope to ensure continuity of service to members over the changeover period. However, we look forward to being able to step down from this group when new members are elected in coming years. As loving parents we have cared for our baby for the past 23 years. We are delighted to see MAPE married into a new family and look forward to seeing the partnership thrive.

## Members of the Primary Community Working Group



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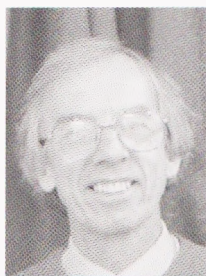


**Roger Keeling**
Roger Keeling has worked in the field of ICT since the late 70s. He was one of the founder members of MAPE and was also the founder, and first chairman, of ITTE. He is currently chair of the IT Network and has been instrumental in bringing MAPE into the Naace fold. Roger is the Primary Community's elected representative to the Naace Executive Committee.
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For many years he has enjoyed doing voluntary work for MAPE and is now looking forward to the new NAACE partnership.
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# Primary *Focus on* New Literacies



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Advancing education through ICT