

## Chapter VII

# New Media Pathways: Navigating the Links between Home, School, and the Workplace

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter uses the case of students enrolled in the Multimedia Pathway offered by Harbourside High School to discuss the tensions and contradictions inherent in the views that: (a) school curriculum and pedagogy have much to learn from young people's informal and leisure-based learning; and (b) school-based courses in new media are important because they increase student retention and the chance of success in post-school employment. We draw on literature about the "new work order" (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996) to explore the nature of these students' learning about and with ICTs and show that the students' knowledge exists "in a network of relationships" (Gee, 2000) that bridge the formal and informal learning divide. Finally, we discuss the parts played by their in- and out-of-school engagements with ICT in their becoming the kinds of portfolio people supposedly required by the new capitalism.*

## INTRODUCTION

The terms literacy and technology remain highly contentious within the field of education. What is meant by literacy and the methods used to measure it vary quite markedly in educational and historical contexts across the world. Similarly, while there is a shared concern to research the potential impact of new information and communication technologies (ICT) on patterns of teaching and learning, there are major discrepancies about which aspects and uses of these technologies should be incorporated into formal learning environments and how this can be accomplished. While government policymakers tend to regard ICT in relation to ideas of *smartness*, *efficiency*, and the *knowledge* (or *new*) economy, educators and educational researchers promote them as offering new tools for learning and critical thinking, and the development of new literacies and socio-cultural identities. This clearly has ramifications for the ways literacy is taught and conceptualised throughout the years of schooling, in K-12. Outside school, meanwhile, students engage with ICT on another level entirely, as tools for the maintenance of social networks for leisure, and for learning and participating in the cultures of their peers. Whatever the differences in perspective, it remains the case that a society's dominant understandings about literacy and technology will have significant implications for the development of school curriculum.

We begin this chapter by introducing some of the theoretical work being done within Literacy Studies on the relationship between literacy and technology, and consider some of the broad issues and challenges this raises for curriculum development and pedagogy. The main body of the chapter addresses those issues and challenges specific to the secondary

curriculum as the personal computer becomes ubiquitous and new media pathways open up at work, in the home, and at school. To illustrate this, we use brief case studies from a recent research project conducted in a suburban, publicly funded Year 8-12 comprehensive secondary school in which both literacy and ICT are high curriculum priorities.

## The Literacy-Technology Interface in Literacy Studies

The increasing pervasiveness of computers has focused the attention of literacy educators on the literacy-digital technology interface. The argument has been made that information and communication technologies and the new media are changing what it means to be literate (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2003; Lankshear, Snyder, & Green, 2000). This is more than a question of changing what it means to be *functionally* literate. Rather, it has been suggested that more complex models of literacy, and theories of meaning-making or semiosis, are required in an age in which the image, sound, and hypertext have become integral to the modes and media of representation and communication (Kress, 2003).

From this perspective it is not tenable to try to incorporate ICT into conventional literacy frameworks. Instead, literacy scholars and educators are faced with the challenge of responding to the changing world of literacy-technology in informed and systematic ways. Australian scholars have been at the forefront of this theoretical work in literacy-technology studies which begins from the theoretical position that literacy is a social practice (Street, 1995). This work assumes that "emerging technology-mediated literacy practices...can be understood only when they are considered within their social, political, economic, cultural, and histori-

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