



## EDITOR'S REMARKS

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# ***New Literacies for Students and New Challenges for Teacher Educators***

This year's AERA conference featured several sessions on the topic of new literacies for students and the effects of these literacies on classrooms and learning. A general definition of new literacies includes, "...the skills, strategies and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the changing information and communication technologies and context that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives." (Leu, Kinzer & Coiro and Cammack, 2004 p.1572).

Roy Pea, the invited speaker at the Technology as an Agent of Change SIG provided an example of the importance in identifying and understanding these emerging new literacies. He announced that IBM is currently recruiting top players out of multiplayer online role-playing games like World of Warcraft because of their ability to operate in highly distributed, global, hyper-competitive, virtual environments. Yet according to The National School Board Foundation (2007) more than half of U.S schools have banned the use of any type of social networking despite evidence that students with high participation rates in these environments are developing the communication, collaboration and leadership skills valued in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century workplace and in civic life.

This has serious implication for children who have limited access to ICT outside of school for developing new literacies, and challenges for teacher educators who are likely outsiders in these virtual spaces and lack the "new literacies" required to operate in them (O'Brian & Bauer, 2005).

To address this need, the MacArthur Foundation has made a \$50 million dollar investment to investigate how digital media are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize, and participate in civic life in order to help schools react and adapt to new technologies. An understanding of new literacies and their effects is now essential for teacher education programs preparing preservice teachers.

Symposiums, sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation involved examinations of fantasy sports leagues as learning communities to provide educators with insights as to how the literacies students develop as they participate in these networks may be applied to classroom learning. Another was on game design as a strategy for enhancing young people's

interest and understanding of scientific principles and to foster critical media literacy. Perhaps most intriguing was the announcement of a \$1.1 million MacArthur Foundation grant for a new school that will use game design and game-inspired methods to teach critical 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills and literacies.

These investments indicate that perhaps we are on the verge of a tipping point in how literacy is defined and legitimized in the formal institution of schooling. It is becoming increasingly clear that simply using technology in the classroom will not adequately prepare students for the new literacies afforded by new information and communication technologies.

Students' experiences with technology need to go beyond the use of software packages designed to enhance the development of foundational skills for traditional print literacy acquisition. To acquire new literacies, student must be provided with opportunities to construct, design, manipulate and upload information with ICT and learn to critically examine and interpret multimedia with which they engage on the Internet.

All the articles in this issue of *JCTE* illustrate the commitment of our community to examining new approaches to teaching and learning using technology and ultimately to adapting to emerging student literacies.

In Joseph Freidhoff's article entitled "*Reflecting on the Affordances and Constraints of Technologies and Their Impact on Pedagogical Goals*" the author provides teacher educators an example of reflective practice as he evaluates his own use of discussion boards and blogs to sustain reflective writing among preservice teachers. In his conclusions he points to the use of blogs over discussion boards as more effective in sustaining reflective writing.

Renata Phelps and Anne Graham also focus on developing sustainable reflective practice for teachers in the article entitled, "*Developing Technology Together, Together: A Whole-School Metacognitive Approach to ICT Teacher Professional Development.*" Their findings suggest that the metacognitive approach can be implemented school wide to motivate teachers to take risks with technology integration and develop more positive attitudes toward professional development and improve relationships between administration and teachers, and change student-to-teacher relationships.

In the article, "*The Cost and Benefits of Electronic Portfolios: Faculty Perspectives,*" Neal Strudler and Keith Wetzel find that faculty satisfaction with the use of electronic portfolios was associated with their values for student centered teaching and their willingness to be a team player.

And finally, in "*Are We There Yet? The Power of Creating Innovation Configuration Maps on the integration of Technology into Your Teacher Education Program,*" Colleen Swain examines how word-picture descriptions of faculty visions of what technology integration should look like can help teacher education faculty develop a more cohesive plan for technology integration.

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