

ADVANCING ENGLISH SKILLS WITH

MULTIMEDIA

YEARS 7-10

Barrie McMahon • Robyn Quin



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Private Bag 7023 Marrickville NSW 1475 Australia
Tel: (02) 9516 1122 Fax: (02) 9550 1915
sales@sciencepress.com.au
www.sciencepress.com.au

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INTRODUCTION

This book is designed to help you understand the information communication technologies, also known as ICT, multimedia, or the new media. Most of you are quite proficient in using some of these digital technologies, for example in playing computer games. What is not always obvious is the important role our forms of communication, be they games, World Wide Web access or emails, play in helping us to understand ourselves and our world. You will need to develop more literacy skills in order to further this understanding. As you become more able to use these new media, your satisfaction and enjoyment of them will increase.

Multimedia does more than give you pleasure. As important means of communication they provide varying perspectives on life, and different insights into the way people live and think. The explanations provided in this book and the tasks that you undertake will illustrate the connection between how these media are constructed and what they may mean to you and those around you.

Because the new media are such important forms of communication, it is now apparent that the skills needed to read, understand and use them are the new literacy. The new media demand good reading and writing skills and skills that are specific to the technology.

With many books the practice is to start at the beginning and work through page by page until you get to the end. You may want to do this out of interest but it is more likely that your teacher will guide you in selecting the parts for study. There is enough information in the book to last for four years so it does not have to be covered in four weeks!

Your teacher will also guide you in the tasks to be completed. It is likely that when you begin, those tasks that are marked * will be set. As you learn more about multimedia, the tasks with ** or *** may be more appropriate.

As you work through the chapters in this book, your task is to create your own journal. Chapter 1 provides more information about your journal.

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chapter 1

New Technologies, Culture and Literacy

In this chapter you will learn:

- how modern technologies have added to and changed our forms of communication
- the communication that we use affects our society and our society affects our means of communication
- the advantages and limitations of the various information communication technologies
- the connections between communication, culture and making meaning
- how literacy needs are developing with the growth in the new technologies.

You will also have the opportunity to improve your skills related to:

- referencing
- brainstorming
- negotiating
- reading for meaning
- note-taking
- searching the World Wide Web
- sentence construction and paragraphing.

PROJECT

This chapter has many activities that you can do in order to learn about communication and the new technologies. You can also learn by undertaking a lengthy project, perhaps over 3 or 4 weeks, or by doing both. Here is a suggested project you could undertake.

Changes in communication and culture

Forms of communication have changed a lot over the past 70 years, and culture has also changed, though a little more slowly. (Later in this chapter you will learn more about culture.)

One way of finding out about these changes is to talk with those who have lived through the changes, people like your grandparents, their friends or those in your street who have been around for a long time. When you collect their stories – the small and big things in their lives – these changes will become apparent.

To collect the stories of these people you will need to develop interview skills, negotiating skills, become a good listener and learn how to ask questions that follow up good leads. Working as a group will help you to collect different types of information. It will also give you the chance to practise your skills on each other before you use them on others.

Various types of information can be collected. Audio tape interviews, video interviews, old photographs, perhaps even old film footage can be a starting point for the stories that you collect. Remember it is the little stories that will tell a lot about communication and culture. Someone describing their first day at school is more likely to say something about the culture of the time than a five-minute description of the Second World War.

Your task in this project is to collect some stories from older people, to sift through them to identify any changes in communication and culture over that time, then to present your findings to others. Your presentation could be a PowerPoint, a digital story that includes photos and voice, an audio, a written article, a verbal presentation or a combination of these.

The information in this chapter will help you get started and provide clues for things to look for.



Figure 1.1 There are various ways of collecting and expressing the stories that people have to tell.

ACTIVITY
1.1

Your journal **

Your teacher may need to guide you in this task.

To help you work through the ideas and tasks in this book you will need to create your own Information and Communications Technology Journal. It will help you keep a record of what you have learned, the progress you are making, and will be a handy reference source for you. Your journal could be on a computer file or a written document in a looseleaf file. Even if your journal is on computer, you will also need a handwritten workbook because you will not have your computer with you every time you learn something new.

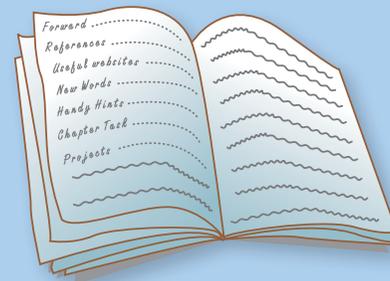


Figure 1.2
Your journal.

Divide your journal into sections namely:

- A page for a contents table. This will be completed when you have finished writing your journal.
- Two pages for a foreword. At the end of Chapter 3 of this book, when the purpose of your journal and its development are clearer to you, it will be time to write your foreword. Chapter 3 also provides some help on writing a foreword.
- New words, abbreviations and acronyms. This is your web words dictionary for new words that you encounter as you learn about new technologies. It should be subdivided alphabetically. You will need to write the meaning of the new words, abbreviations and acronyms and provide an example sentence illustrating how they are used.
- Useful websites. If you are working from a computer, you could store the websites in the 'favourites' section of your internet explorer but you should record useful websites in your written workbook until you get access to your computer. Do not forget to describe why each website is useful. The websites below are a starting point for your collection.
- You will also need a reference section for books, articles and other reference materials you use as you investigate new topics. Record these in alphabetical order so that you can find them again later if you need them. It also helps to have a standard way of recording the information.
- Handy hints. These may be to do with operating computers or other new technologies or may be hints about aspects of literacy such as spelling rules like, 'i before e except after c'. (You may also like to record exceptions to rules such as this.)
- Tasks from each of the chapters. Each chapter in this book has several tasks for you to complete. The tasks involve written responses, illustrations or graphs. You are not expected to complete every task but rather, with the guidance of your teacher, selected tasks. This section of your journal will be named 'Chapter 1', 'Chapter 2' and so on.
- Project work. Each chapter has suggested project work which may stretch over a few weeks. Undertaking the projects will help you learn more about using the new technologies in communication and also improve your English language skills. The approach that you take could be a project approach or you could concentrate on some of the tasks that are set, or both.

Referencing

SKILLS

Here is a standard presentation for references that is widely used.

Name of author/s, Title of the book [in italics], (Name of the publisher, place of publication, date – [in brackets])

Some of this information can be found on the title page of the book (not the front cover). The date usually appears shortly after where the printing history is recorded. An example is this book:

McMahon B and Quin R, *Insight: Advancing English Skills with Multimedia*, (Science Press, Marrickville, 2009)

If you go to a web server and enter 'referencing works' you will obtain plenty of information about how to reference other materials but you will need to choose carefully because many of the sites are for academics and university students, not school students. Your teacher can help with this as there are advantages in having standard referencing across the school.



SKILLS

Some handy websites for obtaining information

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Wikipedia is a free encyclopedia that has been constructed by those who use it. Some checks are made on the accuracy of the information but it is important to remember that there are many contributors and in many cases what is accurate is not clear-cut. More information on wikis can be found in Chapter 5.

<http://www.webopedia.com/>

This website explains technical terms so if you come across a term that you do not understand, check it out on this website.

Communication and technology

Ancient technology

When early humans began to stand upright the first technologies they used involved sticks, pieces of rock, and fire. Rocks and sticks could be shaped into weapons and used for hunting, digging and making shelters. Fire could be used for warmth and later it was discovered that some foods were improved when they were heated in the fire.

These technologies had limited value for communicating. Perhaps brandishing a stick spear could communicate anger but most communication probably occurred through the sounds the early humans made – grunts, gurgles and laughs. The need to communicate was important for the survival of the species. Without improved communication skills they would be overrun by other bigger species of animals. They needed to alert each other of danger, hunt in groups and to be able to pass on information that was important for the survival of the species.

The grunts and gurgles developed into distinct sounds, into a language that could be used to convey more effective and detailed meaning. This was possible because human survival depended in part on the development of its brain. Brainpower was applied to improve communication and to devise ways in which the boundaries of verbal communication could be stretched.

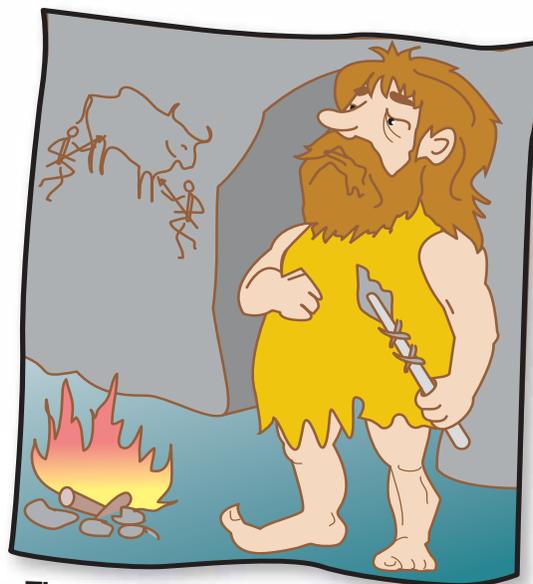


Figure 1.3 An illustration of a caveman.

DID YOU KNOW...

Abbreviations and acronyms

An acronym is a word formed from several words or parts of words. For example, TAFE is an acronym for Technical and Further Education.

Email is an abbreviation of electronic mail. It is a new word, one of thousands that get added to the English language each year. Words are sometimes spelt differently in different countries and new words or words that are acronyms sometimes have different spellings. Other spellings of email are e-mail or even e-Mail. Organisations like consistency in the way that words are spelt. One way of obtaining consistency is to develop what is called a style manual that not only outlines preferred spelling but other matters such as grammar and communication layout. Another way is to adopt the spelling that is mentioned first in the dictionary of choice. For Australians, this is often *The Macquarie Dictionary*.

ICT is an abbreviation for Information and Communication Technologies. This is an expression that is used to group the new technologies such as computers, mobile phones and their various offshoots such as emails and digital cameras.

**ACTIVITY
1.2****Onomatopoeia***

Some of the early words that were developed were probably derived from the sounds of nature, those of the animals and the elements. Some of these sounds are still in our language today, for example the word hiss resembles the sound that a snake makes. These are called onomatopoeias.

As a group:

- Make a list of words that are to some degree onomatopoeias.

In your journal:

- Create your own paragraph, which has to make sense, using as many onomatopoeias as possible.
- Compare your paragraph with others.

Early communication technologies

Perhaps the earliest technologies used for communication were the hard flint rocks that were used to carve symbols on rocks or trees. Some of these rock carvings, many thousands of years old, still exist today.

**ACTIVITY
1.3****Recording**
information**

Figure 1.4 shows an example of a rock painting. Over the years many of the images have been lost but those who carved them and those in their community would have known what the images meant. It was a way of communicating information to present and future generations. Here is some information:

Below these rocks there is a waterhole. Many animals use this place to drink so it is a good hunting place. It is important not to disturb the spirits by fouling the waterhole.

In your journal:

- Draw up to six images or symbols that could form your rock painting 'language' to convey the above message.
- Discuss your symbols with others and compare your efforts.

As a group:

- Compile a dictionary of symbols that have been used. Add to your dictionary symbols for fish, baby, fire, danger. Label your symbols.

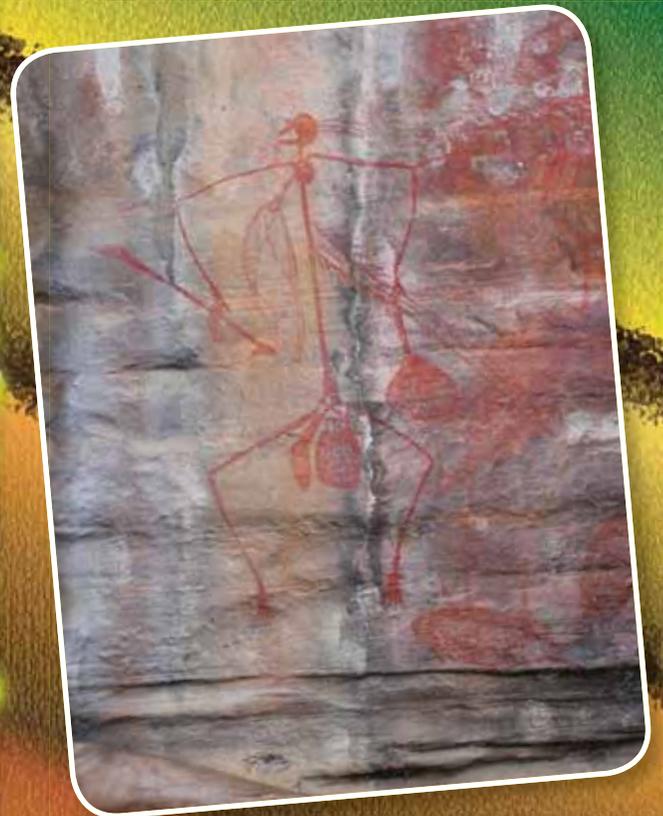


Figure 1.4 A photograph of a rock painting.