

New Literacies

Second Edition

New Literacies
Everyday Practices
and Classroom Learning
Second Edition

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To JPG
colleague, compañero, friend

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Foreword

The second edition of *New Literacies: Everyday Practices and Classroom Learning* loses no time in establishing itself as the rightful successor to the first edition. Although at first glance this claim might seem an odd, even unnecessary, statement given the fairly common practice of publishing subsequent editions of books that do well initially, I stand by it for several reasons. First and foremost, I want to emphasize that Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel are once again at their best – doing what they do so well as writers – pulling readers effortlessly through complex ideas made understandable by a lively and engaging style of writing. Their deep and abiding interest in developing a viable concept of new literacies is palpable, and it is this interest that keeps their scholarship fresh and their writing credible.

Another reason for stating what might otherwise seem obvious is this: not all second editions measure up when compared to an earlier edition. *New Literacies: Everyday Practices and Classroom Learning* does, however, and it does so in both practical and pedagogically sound ways. In just the few short years since publication of the first edition, new technologies

have appeared that widen the gap between users with insider status and those with relatively little experience in communicating digitally. Rather than leave less experienced users behind, Lankshear and Knobel have taken considerable pains to invite them into the conversation. For example, they pose thoughtful questions throughout each chapter that call for reflection, and they suggest websites where it's possible to experience firsthand a bit of what the new technologies offer.

That the second edition of *New Literacies* does its predecessor proud is due in no small measure to Lankshear and Knobel's ever-increasing visibility globally. Through their travels and invited keynotes, they are in frequent contact with some of the world's other foremost thinkers on new literacies, new technologies, and new social practices involving both. Yet it's not simply a matter of being in touch. What these two authors bring to their work is integrity beyond reproach and an ability to glean insights from new literacy practices worldwide that may (or may not) have applications locally. One of the things I value most about the second edition is that it continues to question the wisdom of change for change's sake. At the same time, it makes clear that changes are afoot – some or all of which will influence how we as educators come to think of, and respond to, new literacies. It is this tension that speaks most provocatively and directly to me, the literacy teacher educator.

But I am more than one kind of person, and hence, more than one kind of reader. As I read and made notes to myself in the margins of the manuscript that would become the second edition of *New Literacies: Everyday Practices and Classroom Learning*, it was clear this was no ordinary professional text. There were just too many interesting topics – written in too engaging a manner – to qualify as such. Thus, with curiosity, I acted on the authors' suggestion to 'have a look' at various web sites featuring fan fiction, a new literacy that heretofore had not appealed to me in the least. In fact, I had on more than one occasion pestered a doctoral advisee to 'let me in' on just what it was that attracted her to writing her own brand of fan fiction. Now, here I was, the person responsible for writing this foreword, engrossed in reading online fan fictions written by authors unknown (to me), while all the time imagining how I might one day soon try my own hand at writing for this new literacy forum.

In a nutshell, this second edition of *New Literacies: Everyday Practices and Classroom Learning* establishes a benchmark against which readers can judge for themselves how prepared they are for a world where relationships – participation, collaboration, and collective intelligence, not information per se – are valued as literate markers; where texts are fluid and subject to change without authoritative mandate; and where productive differences

between in-school and out-of-school literacies are yet to be worked out. Lankshear and Knobel amplify with fresh content the message of the first edition – that is, the ‘new’ in new literacies is with us for the long run. This message, while not for the fainthearted, is one that insiders understand and act on daily. Given that, who among us can afford to be left out?

Donna Alvermann
University of Georgia

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We have also drawn heavily on inspiration from other friends and colleagues with whom we work in different ways and in different contexts. We owe much to Rebecca Black, Kevin Leander, Angela Thomas and, as always, James Paul Gee. In their individual ways they exemplify the critical, inquiring, progressive spirit that seeks to maximize human well-being using the material and non-material resources available to us. Long may they run.

Donna Alvermann and Donald Leu have done much to help us understand more clearly who we are trying to write for and why. They have supported our work in the most generous and unobtrusive ways, while at the same time continuing their own tireless and selfless work in the name of

better education for all, and especially for those who have received less than their due share of social benefits from the systems within which they are constrained to live. Despite already having more than enough tasks to complete, Donna generously accepted our invitation to write a foreword for this book. We know what this kind of unsolicited added pressure involves, and treasure the collegiality woven into her text. Don invited us to present the opening Plenary Address at the 2004 National Reading Conference annual meeting in San Antonio, which provided an important motivational opportunity for us to develop material that has been further refined for this book. With Julie Coiro, Don has also extended our range of interest in new literacies through our collaboration in an edited *Handbook of New Literacies Research*, to be published by Erlbaum.

Other colleagues have in various ways made valued contributions to producing this book. As with the people we have already named, they are entitled to enjoy anything in the following pages that may be of educational worth, but share no responsibility for the book's shortcomings. We want especially to thank Neil and Chris Anderson, Dana Cammack, Bill Cope, Christina Davidson, Mary Kalantzis, Chuck Kinzer, Joanne Larson, Lawrence Lessig, Jackie Marsh, Guy Merchant, Michael Peters, and Ilana Snyder. We also thank Johnnycakesdepp and Silver Excel Fox for their contributions to our study of fanfic.

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Some chapters in this book build on work that has been published in journals and conference proceedings. We have benefited from the opportunities we have had to rehearse ideas in other places. Thanks are due here to *The International Journal of Learning*, *Literacy Learning in the Middle Years*, and *The 54th Yearbook of the National Reading Conference*.

During the period in which this book has been conceived and written we have enjoyed strong support from friends, colleagues, and institutions in México, Australia and Canada. Without this, our work during the past four years simply would not have been possible. We want to thank Angela Guzmán, Hilario Rivera Rodríguez, Roberto Lugo Lugo, Ma. del Pilar Avila Guzmán, Gustavo Cabrera López, Ana María Salmerón, Toni Chao, Annette Patterson, Roger Slee, la Coordinación de las Humanidades of the National Autonomous University of México (UNAM), the Faculties of Education at Montclair State University and McGill University, the School of Education at James Cook University, and the Faculty of Education and

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We wish to thank the following for permission to use material for which they hold copyright: Adbusters Media Foundation for permission to reproduce Figure 4.2, ‘The True Colours of Benetton’; Micah Wright for permission to reproduce his image ‘Sorry We’re Late, New Orleans!’ as Figure 4.3; and Lawrence Lessig for permission to reproduce a screen grab of his blog front page as Figure 5.1.

Finally, we wish to thank those anonymous reviewers of the original version of this book who responded to invitations by Open University Press to provide feedback to guide this new edition. We also want to thank the authors of published reviews of the original book for their constructive critical feedback and the boost they gave the original edition of the book in the market place.

Introduction to the Second Edition

When Open University Press mooted a second edition of *New Literacies: Changing Knowledge and Classroom Learning* we welcomed the opportunity to revise and update the original text. Our initial plan was that two or three of the substantive chapters would be replaced by new themes and that the rest of the process would involve smoothing out the original text, bringing key examples up to date, briefly noting some significant recent changes bearing on existing chapter themes, and so on. When it came to actually writing this new edition, however, this scenario changed to such an extent that what we have here is to all intents and purposes a new book. Less than 10 per cent of the content from the 2003 text has made it to this new edition.

The orientation of the book has shifted in ways that have called for a different sub-title. The theme of 'Changing Knowledge' has given way here to 'Everyday Practices', reflecting the way we have taken up the concept of Web 2.0 as a key framing device for our work. Rather than addressing implications for how *knowledge* is understood, approached, generated and evaluated as a result of trends and directions associated with the rise of Web

2 NEW LITERACIES

2.0, we have chosen instead to focus on new literacies as *everyday social practices* and on what these practices might mean for education.

So much had happened in the five-year period between when we began writing the original book (in 2001) and when we began writing this one that we thought it appropriate to tackle a new suite of themes. Some practices that were mere ‘side bars’ in the first edition – like ‘memes’ and weblogs – have become the focus for entire chapters here. Other phenomena – like mobile computing and communicating – that were barely on the horizon in 2001 have since become widespread and hugely influential and, accordingly, are taken up at length here.

This is not to say that we think the content of the original book is passé, because we don’t. ‘Ratings’, for example, are more pervasive, pertinent, and diverse today than they were when we looked at participation in ratings systems within spaces like eBay and Plastic.com. Similarly, the points we made about ‘schooled’ appropriations of new technologies in the chapter on the National Grid for Learning hold with equal force today. On one hand, then, we think there is still plenty in the original book that is current and educationally pertinent and, indeed, that would be worth updating. At the same time, there are many other important matters to talk about. We have chosen the latter option here. We think the original book is still sufficiently current to stand alone as a text, and that the two books can most usefully be read in conjunction with each other. For those reasons we have liaised with Open University Press to keep as much of the first edition available in electronic form as copyright arrangements permit. Substantial portions of the original text can be accessed at <http://www.newliteracies.com>

Besides these substantive differences in the topics addressed, this new book differs from the first edition in two further ways, both of which we hope will prove useful. First, it develops more fully our views of when it is appropriate to refer to a particular literacy as being a *new* literacy and why the category of *new literacies* may be a useful one. In the first edition we used two main devices for conceptualizing ‘new’ literacies and distinguishing them from ‘conventional’ or ‘established’ literacies. One was a distinction between ‘the *ontologically* new’ and ‘the *chronologically* new’. The other was an account of the difference between what we called ‘newcomer’ (or ‘immigrant’) and ‘insider’ (or ‘native’) *mindsets*. Each of these devices is developed in much greater conceptual, theoretical, and historical depth here than in the original text. This new work takes up much of Chapters 2 and 3, and is accompanied by a detailed discussion of literacy as social practice. Our account of ‘literacy as social practice’ draws on pioneering work in sociocultural literacy studies by Silvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981). It also draws on what we think is an especially

fruitful account of 'Discourses' provided by Jim Gee (1997). The net result is a much more *robust* account of new literacies than the original one.

Second, this new edition provides reflection and discussion activities at regular intervals. These suggest ways the text might be used in academic courses as well as by 'private' readers for thinking about new literacies in relation to literacy education in classrooms, and also for reflecting critically upon our own concepts and arguments. We have tried to present these activities as unobtrusively as possible by boxing them off from the rest of the text. Those readers who are not interested in the suggested activities can simply bypass the boxes containing the activities and read on.

One reviewer of the original text recommended that a new edition contain a glossary of terms related to aspects of digital technologies and related social practices that may be unfamiliar to readers with limited experience of new technologies and technocultures. We thought this was a good idea and began to compile a glossary. We abandoned the enterprise, however, because in doing the work we found ourselves returning time and time again to two especially useful resources: *Wikipedia* and *How Stuff Works*. Moreover, when we produced glossary items, they always seemed to offer so much 'less' that could be gained from going directly to these sources. We realized that the convenience of having 'to hand' definitions of terms provided at the end of this book would be greatly outweighed by the rewards to be gained from going online and keying the terms in question into the sites' respective search engines (or, alternatively, into a powerful search tool like Google.com). Indeed, making use of such resources is precisely the kind of initiative this book seeks to encourage.

Consequently, in terms of both enhancing reader understandings and of achieving our own aims, providing a glossary would have subtracted rather than added value. Therefore, at points where readers feel they want clarification of techno terminology and specific aspects of techno culture, we recommend going in the first instance to the following URLs:

- <http://en.wikipedia.org>
 - <http://www.howstuffworks.com>
- ;-)

Finally, we are genuinely interested in reader responses to the text: to the argument and position advanced in general, as well as to any experiences readers have of using the reflection and discussion activities. We warmly invite anyone who wants to feed back to us directly to forward their ideas, suggestions, and comments to us at: newliteracies@yahoo.co.uk

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