
In the past 2-3 decades, societal change and research in education, psychology, sociology and linguistics have placed considerable pressure on traditional education systems and methods. The articles in this issue examine the implications of this context for the use of computers in education. The contributors invite us to rethink the assumptions which underlie our theory and practice and challenge the use of computers to perpetuate or reinforce traditional schooling and traditional world views.

The first article by Jim Ridgway and Don Passey sets the scene by reviewing recent theories and teasing out their implications for teacher education and the way we use computers in education. They offer the proposition that knowledge is socially constructed as the starting point for bridging the gap between our aspirations and the reality of the use of IT in our classrooms.

Alistair Inglis challenges the logical-scientific tradition and announces a new tradition where the computer is seen as the mediator of experience rather than a substitute for a book, a patient tutor or a model maker.

In his article describing the use of graphics with autistic children, Roger Coldwell identifies 'inappropriate professional ideologies' as obstacles to the use of technology to solve the problem of communicating with and between autistic people. He describes his exciting research where autistic children are showing the symptoms of developing a rudimentary language.

We have three articles reporting on different aspects of the use of expert systems in education (Goran Nydahl, Bent B. Andresen, Les Watson and Bill Tocknell).

The 'big picture' is explored further in the contributions of Phil Callen, Chet Bowers and Alfred Bork. Phil Callen presents his vision of education based on current research and his classroom experience. We are reminded by Chet Bowers that the use of computers by students is a cultural process framed by the master or root metaphors of our culture and he explains how computers amplify the cultural myth of the autonomous individual.

Alfred Bork covers a wide field in his article 'Computers and educational systems'. He suggests a range of areas where attention needs to be focused if we are to reap the benefits of the effective use of computers in education.

Carolyn Dowling's article 'Writing with computers — a metaphor?' traces research which establishes the difference between writing with a computer and more traditional means of text creation, and challenges our use of the term 'writing' to describe composition of text using a computer.

This edition is a very stimulating and rich collection of ideas with many recurring motifs. It is the beginning of what will be, in future editions, an ongoing exploration of the complex and dynamic issues facing educators in the nineties. Readers are encouraged to respond to these articles and fuel our understanding with perspectives from all levels of education — classroom to tertiary research.

In 1992, the May edition will continue the current theme, and the September edition will focus on 'Computers and the right brain'. We hope to hear from educators using computers to facilitate creative expression and visual, holistic and interpersonal ways of knowing. Teachers using computers in the Arts and design are invited to share their experiences. The September 1992 edition may provide some stimulating visual representations building on the ideas presented in this issue.

Australian Educational Computing will include a refereed section next year. Contributors to this section should provide three copies of their manuscript at least two weeks before deadlines. If you have ideas for special editions or themes, or ways to improve the journal please contact us.

The Ninth Australian Computers in Education Conference is being held at the Gold Coast, Queensland this month. The conference proceedings will explore further, many of the issues touched on in this edition. Contact the Computer Education Group in your state or territory to order a copy.

Editorial Team