



Australian
Library and
Information
Association

Feasibility Study for the Development of a National Coalition for Information Literacy Advocacy

Final report

compiled for

Australian Library Information Association

<http://www.alia.org.au>

National Library of Australia

<http://www.nla.gov.au>

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Foreword

Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it.

Samuel Johnson 1709-1784

(I need to check source – Boswell's Life of Johnson? - Marie)

If our society is to be truly democratic perhaps the greatest challenge is to ensure that there is equity of access to learning, knowledge and education for all.

At this time, across the world huge investments are being made in network and computer technology in the expectation of improved education and quality of life as well as economic growth and prosperity. The global information economy is characterised by an ever-increasing volume of information available in print, visual and digital formats.

The extent to which a nation can participate in the global marketplace depends on the degree to which its people are knowledgeable about and skilled in new and emerging technologies and information processes. In such society people are the most valuable resource. Cultural development and economic survival depend on the ability of people to maintain and update their skills on an ongoing basis. Increasingly people need to develop their capabilities in lifelong and career long learning so that their new skills and capabilities can be transferred and adapted to different social, economic and political situations. The global marketplace demands that people are information literate. That is, they are 'able to recognize when information is needed but also able to identify, locate, evaluate and use effectively information needed for a particular decision or issue at work' (American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: final report, 1989). Widespread acceptance of information literacy as a key capability along with communication, interpersonal and problem solving skills comes at a time when the impact of the internet and the information explosion is penetrating businesses, homes and schools.

This report presents the outcomes of a feasibility study for the establishment of broad-based national coalition in Australia to promote and advance the integration of information literacy into business, community, educational and library programs as a way of enhancing awareness of information literacy and its central role in lifelong and career long learning.

The main driving force behind information literacy has come mainly from the library and information services sector. This report demonstrates that there is sufficient support and interest from stakeholders across a range of sectors to establish a national coalition. These stakeholders include all levels of government, local communities, business and industry. A national coalition that is both broad based and sustainable will offer opportunities for developing a comprehensive information literacy strategy relevant in different educational settings, communities and workplaces.

The Steering Committee responsible for the feasibility study has laid the foundation for some exciting developments in information literacy in this country and in doing so it has drawn on a decade or so of experience and research. It has been very successful in creating a community of interest that crosses many boundaries. As President of the Australian Library and Information Association, an association that promotes free access to information for all people and values the role of information in democratic societies, I offer my support to the development of an Australian coalition for the advocacy of information literacy. I look forward to the unfolding of the coalition's plans.

Signature block here.

For further information about the project and establishment of a Coalition for Information Literacy Advocacy e-mail: marie.murphy@alia.org.au.

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ii

1. Introduction	1
Scope.....	1
Purpose	1
Methodology	2
2. Context	2
The knowledge economy	2
Consumer needs	5
Information explosion.....	6
internet usage.....	7
Digital divide.....	8
Literacy rates.....	11
3. Defining information literacy	14
Literacy	14
Original definition	15
ALA definition	15
A new literacy.....	16
Multiple literacies.....	17
Higher order skills	18
Sceptics	18
Towards a definition.....	19
4. The value of a national coalition	19
5. Difficulties	21
6. Initiatives	23
International	24
Africa.....	25
America	26
Asia.....	29
Canada.....	30
Europe.....	30
Australian initiatives.....	34
7. Towards an operational model	39
Audience	39
Goals and desired outcomes.....	40
Governance	42
Funding	43

Non-financial support.....	44
Possible models.....	44
8. Conclusions and recommendations	48
9. Appendices	52
APPENDIX 1: Survey of Australian Organisations	53
APPENDIX 2: List of Organisations Surveyed in the Feasibility Study.....	57
APPENDIX 3: Results of the E-mail Survey.....	60
APPENDIX 4: Consultations with Key Stakeholders	77
ENDNOTES	78

Executive summary

This report is an outcome of a feasibility study carried out during October–December 2001 by the Australian Council for Educational Research. The focus of the study was the proposal to develop a national coalition for information literacy advocacy and it was carried out on behalf of the Australian Library and Information Association, the National Library of Australia and the National Office for the Information Economy.

The main purpose of the study was to develop a strategic framework for a broad-based national coalition 'to promote and advance the integration of information literacy into the community, business, public library, school and tertiary education programs and to ensure an awareness of information literacy for lifelong learning'.

The study confirms the critical importance of information literacy skills in the new millennium. The impetus for the development of a national coalition for information literacy advocacy needs to be seen against a background of several inter-related trends that have profoundly transformed the world. With the creation of a global marketplace, the economic survival of nations is increasingly dependent on how skilled its workers are in the new technologies and information processes. Skills appropriate to a largely manufacturing-based economy are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of a knowledge economy or information society. Human capital has replaced physical capital as the new currency. An information literate workforce updates skills constantly so that these skills are transferable and adaptable to rapidly changing economic, social and political circumstances. It is not only in the interests of governments to actively encourage information literacy in its citizenry to ensure a skilled workforce capable of producing, storing, evaluating, transferring and disseminating knowledge to ensure global economic competitiveness; it is a matter of economic survival. The feasibility study demonstrates unequivocally that investment in human capital and lifelong learning is a key to the future economic well-being of Australia.

Related to the globalisation of world markets is the unprecedented volume of electronic and non-electronic information now being generated, placing new demands on individuals who must negotiate the excess of information in order to make informed choices and decisions in their workplace, studies and personal lives. Information literacy empowers individuals, placing them in a better position to recognise poor, misleading or questionable information. This kind of awareness is often associated with active citizenship or being able to participate more fully in a democracy.

Individuals need to be information literate in order to

negotiate these new challenges being thrown up by the 'information age'. Changes to the ways in which individuals communicate with others, do their shopping and banking, plan their holidays, study, locate information and use their leisure time mean that those without the skills to participate in the range of services and opportunities risk being further marginalised. As more government and allied services are placed online, consumers will need the information skills to be able to identify fraudulent or misleading practices, safeguard their rights and be empowered to engage in transactions or relationships equally with others. Information literacy also sets up an individual for lifelong learning. With these skills people can learn in any situation at any period in their lives.

Access to the new technologies has not been even across or within countries however, and there is evidence worldwide of a significant gap between those with ready access to the new technologies and those with restricted access to the opportunities they embody. Australia is one of the leading countries in terms of per capita internet usage and yet there are significant sub-groups within Australia excluded from such access. The elderly, for example, have been identified as particularly disadvantaged in the information economy. While younger people have been exposed to information and communication technologies through their school or tertiary studies, older generations of Australians have not had these same opportunities to become information literate. A national coalition for information literacy advocacy offers a means of addressing this disparity and inequity.

Studies of adult literacy levels in Australia also point to the need for high level advocacy in literacy more generally, with almost twenty per cent of Australians estimated to have 'very poor' literacy and numeracy skills.

The feasibility study shows the concept of information literacy to be definitionally problematic. Understandings of what information literacy means vary across sectors. Information literacy has been used synonymously with literacy itself, with digital literacy, lifelong learning, critical thinking, knowledge creation, empowerment and active citizenship. Often reduced to computer literacy on the one hand, or invested with almost magical qualities related to the betterment of society on the other, information literacy needs to be recognised as part of a wider literacy.

The working definition adopted for the feasibility study encompassed both technological literacy and conventional literacy, and was in keeping with the 1989 American Library Association definition of information literacy as the ability to locate, select, evaluate and use information. The final report highlights the need, however, for a definition that better

suits the needs of the different stakeholders in the field of information literacy in Australia. Such a definition will be an important first step in the development of a national coalition for information literacy advocacy.

The main driving force behind the push for information literacy in Australia as elsewhere in the world has come from the library sector. One of the tasks of the feasibility study has been to determine the level of support existing in non-library circles, particularly the business sector. Consultation with a diverse range of key stakeholders shows there is sufficient support and interest in the proposal for a national coalition for the concept to be taken to the next level — that of deciding its goals and mission, membership, funding sources and organisational structure. The consultations also indicate that while financial contributions from industry might help offset the operating costs (such as staffing) of a national coalition, for long term viability and sustainability the coalition will most likely need some form of ongoing financial commitment from the government.

The final report includes examples of contemporary information literacy projects that have been carried out both in Australia and overseas. The literature search has not yielded national equivalents of the proposed coalition for information literacy other than the United States National Forum on Information Literacy. While the Forum is useful in some respects, it also has shortcomings as a model when considered in an Australian context. For this reason the final report offers several examples of other alliances, partnerships and coalitions for consideration. While these may be quite different in terms of purpose, goals, membership, and constitution from the proposed national coalition, they may nevertheless provide useful insights or reference points for the coalition in its planning and development phase.

The feasibility study points to the need for a national coalition for information literacy advocacy. Such a body has an important role to play in promoting awareness about the importance of information literacy and ensuring that information literacy is infused through all layers of government, education and across all fields. In particular, the message about the importance of information literacy needs to be disseminated beyond the library profession. Key stakeholders are clear about the need to engage members of the business community in the debate about information literacy.

One of the main advantages of a national coalition is seen to be its role in addressing issues of access and equity. The coalition can advocate on behalf of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in the Australian community. It can lobby for funding for research and project support; disseminate examples of good practice to practitioners; assist with policy

development; provide one agency and voice through which communications can be channelled; and encourage the development of and commitment to information literacy standards.

The national coalition is seen as a body that can ensure information literacy is treated as a genuinely cross-sectoral issue and not the domain of any one group. It can also play a role in ensuring that the Australian workforce is information literate, that businesses are aware of the crucial role that information literacy skills can play in ensuring greater productivity, and that consumer rights are well understood by users of government, community and retail services.

The OECD report *Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society*, advocates a comprehensive strategy for developing literacy that is based on broad-based partnerships of representatives from government, industry, local communities and families. A national coalition for information literacy advocacy offers a vehicle for implementing such a strategy.

The feasibility study reveals both a strong level of in principle support for the concept of a national coalition of information literacy advocacy and a willingness on the part of most of the key stakeholders to help practically in various ways. Those organisations that are unable to be actively involved in the coalition — for example, because they are under-resourced or facing their own internal restructuring — have indicated a desire to be kept informed of the coalition's progress and in some cases have not ruled out involvement at a later date.

As a result of the feedback gained during the course of the feasibility study, it is suggested that the project to develop a national coalition for information literacy advocacy be carried out in three phases. Such a staged approach would enable a strong and clear foundation to be established and would give sufficient time for the concept to gain acceptance within the community.

Recommendations

On the basis of the research and consultations undertaken for the feasibility study, the following recommendations are made:

- That a national coalition for information literacy advocacy be established.
- That the project to develop the national coalition be carried out in three phases:

Stage 1: completion of the feasibility study and final report;

Stage 2: implementation over a two year period of recommendations relating to the proposal to establish an interim body; and

- Stage 3: formation of the coalition at the conclusion of this two-year (Stage 2) period.
- That an interim body consisting of a small group of representatives from the key stakeholders consulted during the feasibility study, and/or other stakeholders considered appropriate by the Information Literacy Steering Group, be formed with a view to implementing the recommendations of this report. This core group:
 - should consist of those who are likely to have a firm commitment to developing the coalition; and
 - should be committed to a timeline that allows Stage 2 of the project to be completed within two years; and
 - should aim to phase out its own existence by the end of this two-year (Stage 2) period.
 - That the interim body, taking into account the information provided in the final report and the expertise of its own members, prepares a mission statement setting out the short and long term goals of the coalition. As part of this process, during the first year of Stage 2, the interim body needs to:
 - agree on a definition of information literacy that is mutually acceptable to the key stakeholders represented in the core group;
 - identify the priorities of the national coalition and how these will be achieved;
 - establish a realistic timeline for implementation of these goals and strategies; and
 - establish contact with other comparable bodies to determine the usefulness and appropriateness of their structures and operational methods for the national coalition.
 - That during the second year of Stage 2, the interim body develops a long term strategy that involves:
 - deciding who will be invited to join the coalition, what benefits members can expect, the costs of membership, and the mechanism(s) by which communication with members will be carried out;
 - exploring funding options, particularly from industry and government, to offset operational costs and provide a more secure source of longer term funding; and
 - addressing physical and legal issues to do with governance (such as incorporation).
 - That the interim body be phased out by the end of the second year (of Stage 2) and that a national coalition for information literacy advocacy be established. The project would then enter its final phase, which involves developing a work program for the coalition.

Feasibility Study for the Development of a National Coalition for Information Literacy Advocacy

1. Introduction

Scope

Following the Round Table on Information Literacy for all Australians in February 2001, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), the National Library of Australia (NLA) and the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) set up an Information Literacy Steering Group to promote the development of information literacy skills through an Information Literacy Project.

This project entailed a feasibility study conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in regard to the development of a national coalition for information literacy advocacy. The intended audience for this final report, an outcome of the feasibility study, is the Information Literacy Steering Group and key stakeholders in the field of information literacy.

The report looks at the contextual background related to information literacy, the concept of information literacy itself, examples of other collaborative models and information literacy projects, the likely benefits of a national coalition and the difficulties such an organisation might need to address. It also explores some of the issues related to developing a strategic plan and operational model and makes several recommendations on the basis of the feasibility study.

Purpose

According to the Expression of Interest documentation, the Information Literacy Project aims to develop 'a full business case and strategic framework for a broad based national coalition and advocacy strategy to promote and advance the integration of information literacy into the community, business, public library, school and tertiary education programs and to ensure an awareness of information literacy for lifelong learning'.

The main purpose of the feasibility study was to:

- identify current projects in information literacy both in Australia and overseas, including collaborative models similar to that of the proposed national coalition for information literacy advocacy;
- report on potential member organisations of a national coalition for information literacy advocacy;
- identify existing and potential networks, stakeholders and partners that could serve as a foundation for future activities;
- develop a business feasibility plan and operational model setting out the advocacy role of such a coal-

tion; and

- report on the perceived value of such a national coalition for information literacy.

An earlier Draft Report highlighted some of the difficulties associated with trying to meet these various expectations. The final report notes these difficulties while also providing some guidelines for moving forward on the proposal to establish a national coalition for information advocacy.

Methodology

In the course of the feasibility study the following methodological approaches were adopted:

- a literature search of both electronic and non-electronic sources to describe and contextualise the concept of information literacy;
- a literature search of overseas and Australian collaborative models and initiatives in the area of information literacy;
- an e-mail survey of identified relevant organisations and individuals within Australia;
- e-mail contact with potentially useful overseas organisations and individuals;
- a draft report and feedback from Steering Group members;
- follow-up consultations by phone and/or e-mail with representatives of nineteen key stakeholders as identified through the initial e-mail survey; and
- feedback from Steering Group members at a presentation of the proposed final report.

2. Context

The proposal for a national coalition for information literacy advocacy needs to be situated within the context of several broad and intersecting trends. These include the development of ever more sophisticated technologies and their steady penetration into the workplace, home and classroom; the proliferation of information — particularly electronically mediated information — that needs to be processed, classified and evaluated; the globalisation of national economies to form a single world market; the new consumer demands created by such a profound economic, technological and cultural transformation; and the emergence of what has been called the ‘knowledge-based economy’ or ‘information society’. Information literacy also needs to be placed in the context of a growing ‘digital divide’ between and within countries, and current adult literacy levels in Australia.

This section of the report teases out some of these threads by offering a brief description of the growing nexus between technology, economics and literacy, the nature of the impact of these changes at both the global/national level and at the level of the individual, and at how these changes translate into a need for a national coalition for information literacy advocacy.

The knowledge economy

One of the strongest imperatives driving the information literacy agenda globally is economic. With governments around the world embracing the concept of an ‘information society’, ‘information economy’ or ‘knowledge-based economy’, information literacy is critically important not only for individuals in terms of employment, education and full participation in the social, political and cultural life of society, but in terms of a nation’s economic viability. A nation’s positioning in the global economy is increasingly tied to the quality and quantity of information literacy among its citizens. Unlike the old economy, which was based largely on physical capital (manual labour, factories, transport of material goods), the new global economy is based on intellectual capital and ‘the production, storage, transfer and dissemination of knowledge or information’.¹ Skills appropriate to a local economy based on manufacturing raw materials have been largely superseded by the demand for new skills more suited to a fluid, technology-driven, global economy. As a 1999 briefing paper on knowledge management skills points out:

For organisations to compete effectively in the knowledge economy they need to change their values and establish a new focus on creating and using intellectual assets ... By stimulating an environment where intellectual assets are created and used efficiently and effectively, organisations can increase their ‘organisational capability’.²

The extent to which a national economy can participate in the global marketplace thus depends on the degree to which its workers are skilled in the new technologies and information processes. In a knowledge society human capital becomes the most valuable resource. Eger makes explicit the convergence between economics and technology and, by implication, information literacy. The common goals of national information strategies in almost every developed country, he suggests, are to mobilise resources and intellectual capital; to attract ‘high tech information-sensitive jobs’; and to create a skilled workforce that can take advantage of the shift towards a global information economy.³

Given the rapidity with which knowledge and information are rendered obsolete in today’s world, individuals need to be able to adapt to new information and to the technological tools that enable access to this information as these emerge. ‘Workers who neglect to invest in their own intellectual capital’, warns one 2000 report, ‘do so at their own peril, as they can no longer rely on a single set of skills for lifetime employ’.⁴ Information literacy thus involves the development of skills that are both transferable and lifelong: transferable in terms of being generic and portable across disciplines, workplaces and jobs; and lifelong in terms of durability and the capacity to learn.

The importance of information literacy in enhancing the profitability of companies, and economic performance nationally, can be seen in the criteria identified by TFPL Ltd. as important to ‘corporate capability’ and success:

- the skills and expertise of the staff;
- their ability to learn and to build knowledge;
- the processes which enable their skills and knowledge to be applied and shared;
- the culture and values which encourage knowledge building and sharing;
- the infrastructure (IT and physical), which supports knowledge building, flow and sharing; and
- the intellectual assets which the organisation builds, maintains, organises and exploits.⁵

In Europe, for example, national policies associated with the use of information and communication technologies are part of a broader European Union strategy aimed at becoming ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’.⁶ The key strategy facilitating this transition to a knowledge-based economy and society, the eEurope initiative, aims to bring ‘every citizen, home and school, every business and administration, into the digital age and online’; create a digitally literate Europe ‘supported by an entrepreneurial culture

ready to finance and develop new ideas'; and ensure 'the whole process is socially inclusive, builds consumer trust and strengthens social cohesion'.⁷ Other countries have defined similar goals and strategies for bringing about the transition to a knowledge economy.

In Australia, the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) *Strategic Framework for the Information Economy* acknowledges that 'it is the role of governments to provide an environment conducive to investment in new technology, to the formation and growth of new enterprises, and to the acquisition of information technology skills and knowledge'.⁸ For Australian industries and businesses to remain competitive in global terms, workers at all levels and across all sectors need to be skilled in the use of the new technologies.

A recent summit in Melbourne on the changing nature of the workplace stressed the importance of skills development in addressing Australia's future economic needs. For Professor Mike Campbell, director of the Policy Research Institute at Leeds University, skills formation 'is what is going to help us adjust quickly and effectively to change. Skills formation, therefore, needs to be considered critical to the national development because increasingly it will drive our national growth'.⁹ Daniel O'Hare, chairman of the Irish Expert Group on Future Skills, using the Irish experience as an example of a dramatic turnaround in a nation's economic fortunes through carefully focused strategies, stressed that 'the future belongs to those who can organise knowledge with increasing efficiency'.¹⁰

According to NOIE's Strategic Framework, the Australian population is amongst 'the most advanced and sophisticated users' of ICTs in the world. Information literacy, if defined as an ability to locate, select, use and evaluate information, is directly tied to our national interest when these information skills are applied in the context of technology. For example, a company that transacts its business electronically needs workers who can not only use the technology involved, but who also have the skills to identify relevant market information, sort and classify this information, critically evaluate it, and apply it in ways that give the company a competitive edge, such as through a more efficient distribution of products. Workers need to be aware of the significance of this information in the context of the company's place in the global marketplace, and to adapt readily to new technology and knowledge as it becomes available in order to maximise the company's ascendancy. A pool of skilled knowledge workers able to develop protocols and conventions for the governance of e-commerce; undertake 'cutting edge' research; and conceptualise strategies for an information economy would also serve the national interest.

A recent UK study shows the importance of information skills from another perspective, highlighting the adverse consequences for governments of poor information management. A Policy Action Team's report on deprived neighbourhoods identifies the need for a systematic and comprehensive classification of relevant information, including statistical sources. The report gives examples of information being ignored or under-utilised because colleagues do not even know of its existence; money being wasted on collecting new information; relevant information not getting to local service providers; insufficient or poorly collated information leading to inadequate project evaluations; and poor resource allocation arising from poor initial diagnoses.¹¹

Consumer needs

The internet has now penetrated deep into the workplace, home and classroom, bringing with it the need for new information skills and understandings of the way in which technology can enhance our lives. A recent survey of Australian internet users found that the most popular internet activities undertaken by users were, in descending order of popularity, using e-mail/chat sites, browsing, finding information about goods and services, reading news/information, finding information related to work, paying bills and banking, and finding information relating to studies.¹² While only 28 per cent of households indicated that they purchased goods or services through the internet, nearly 60 per cent indicated that they used the internet to 'window shop' or search for goods and services. A larger proportion of households surveyed (46 per cent) indicated that they used the internet to pay bills and conduct banking. The 2000 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Household Use of Information Technology report, for example, shows that the percentage of Australian adults using the internet and other electronic methods (such as EFTPOS and ATMs) increased from 3 per cent in 1999 to more than 9 per cent in 2000.¹³ These trends can only be expected to intensify. In Europe, for example, just over 25 per cent of European consumers with internet access currently bank online.¹⁴

Given the growing popularity of this kind of service, consumers need to be able to make informed judgements about the information provided, use credit cards online, know their legal rights when transacting business, identify fraudulent or misleading practices, and safeguard their privacy. The Commonwealth Government has already taken steps to increase consumer confidence and awareness in this area.¹⁵ The focus of this kind of information literacy is on consumer protection. The Australian Consumer and Competition (ACCC) has drawn attention to the need to ensure that consumers are not placed in positions where, through unequal access to information, or unequal bargaining power, they are unable

to deal fairly with suppliers of goods and services.¹⁶ Such consumer services are not confined to financial transactions but cross a range of fields, including entertainment, the arts and media. In the area of health, for example, the Benton Foundation points out that online health care information 'can be poorly organized, difficult to understand, and impossible to evaluate'. Given that adults with poor basic skills 'are more likely than those with higher skills to have poor health outcomes, problems navigating the health care system and managing chronic illness, and higher health care costs for themselves and their insurers',¹⁷ it could be expected that adults with poor information skills will be disadvantaged further in not being able to negotiate the growing volume of health care information available online. It suggests that ultimately, 'the best protection against inaccurate, misleading, and self-serving sources may be in educating users how to judge information for themselves'.¹⁸

Australia's national strategy for the information economy explicitly recognises the information skills needed by individuals if they are to participate fully in the knowledge society. The Commonwealth Government has embarked on a process of putting 'more and better services online — integrated services that break down barriers of Government structure and jurisdiction, and services that meet the real needs of individuals and business'.¹⁹ NOIE's *Strategic Framework* categorises such online government services into information dissemination, feedback, applications, access to databases, registration, sales of products and services, policy consultation, lodgement of returns and access to personal records.²⁰ Another UK report notes the growing importance of 'information relationships' or transactions that take place online. Such 'deals' can be commercial or non-commercial in nature, in public or in private, between businesses, between businesses and consumers, or between consumer and consumer.²¹

Other government initiatives have raised public awareness about the opportunities and benefits of being online. The Commonwealth Government recognises that it is not enough simply to provide access to online facilities; programs need also 'to encourage and assist people to make use of the technology for their own benefit, whether it be for business, education, communication or recreation'.²² Users of online services need to have the confidence and skills to locate the desired information quickly. Access needs to be affordable and available to those who are economically and socially disadvantaged.

One example of an Australian initiative in the area of information literacy is the development of customer-focused portals. The Customer Focused Portal Framework aims to simplify the process of information retrieval for users. The

Framework offers 'collections of government information and services in ways that are designed around customer groupings and subject matter areas, rather than merely reflecting administrative structures'.²³ These portals assist consumers by providing single entry points to material and information that has already been located and classified. Even with such assistance, however, the consumer must still have the skills necessary to access and negotiate the relevant site.

No matter how carefully designed the portal, it is ultimately the user who must make the decision as to which of the information provided is most relevant and useful. Information literacy in this context, then, refers to the skills needed by consumers to use online government agencies and services confidently and effectively.

The mini case studies offered on page 13 give some indication of the diverse needs of consumers in an information age and of the importance of being information literate.

Information explosion

An October 2000 study by the School of Information Management and Systems at the University of California at Berkeley estimates that the world produces approximately 250 megabytes of information for every man, woman and child in the world or 'the equivalent to the textual content of 250 books'.²⁴ The study also suggests that printed material constitutes less than 0.0003 per cent of the total storage of information, that vast amounts of the total information produced are generated and stored by individuals, and that digital information production is both the largest in total content and the most rapidly growing. 'While unique content on print and film is hardly growing at all, optical and digital magnetic storage shipments are doubling each year. Even today, most textual content is 'born digital', and within a few years this will be true for images as well'.²⁵ Such volumes of material require skills in addition to those associated with conventional literacy.

It is not simply that the quantity of information has increased so dramatically, but that technology now brings this apparently limitless reservoir of content to a user's own desktop. While individuals seeking information in a physical environment may previously have had the assistance of library staff to help them negotiate resources contained in various holdings, now an information seeker in a virtual environment at school, work or home is confronted with potentially huge volumes of material without the mediation of professionals. In such a situation management of information becomes a crucial skill. Users of this information need to have not only the basic reading and writing skills traditionally associated with literacy, but also the skills to adapt to new kinds of information and information delivery systems. They

need to be aware of the range of information retrieval tools available to them, know how to access these, use the computer technology to locate and classify this information, and evaluate the quality of the material to which they are being exposed. One reason for the growing popularity of online portals or gateways is precisely because they act as a kind of electronic intermediary helping users to locate resources that have already been classified and ordered and (often) qualitatively assessed. The Commonwealth Government's portal to cultural and recreational information, for example, organises its resources and information in several different ways. Users can browse by category (such as Indigenous Arts, Culture and Heritage, architecture and design, exhibitions, performing arts, science) location and audience (such as young people, people with disabilities, tourists, women, sports professionals). The aim is to provide 'intelligent searching of listed web sites'.²⁶

internet usage

Another related trend shaping the push for information literacy is the rapid growth of internet usage. Various studies offer different estimates of the extent of internet penetration in particular countries. A recent NUA internet Survey, for example, estimates that there are around 513.41 million internet users worldwide.²⁷ China internet Network Information centre data shows that there were 16.9 million users in China at the end of June 2000.²⁸ Another survey ranks Australia tenth of the top fifteen countries in terms of internet usage with 7.6 million internet users (as at the end of 2000).²⁹ These top fifteen countries accounted for around 78 per cent of internet usage worldwide at the end of 2000.

The United States, with an estimated 143 million users (or around 54 per cent of the population), remains by far the biggest user of the internet.³⁰ A recent report indicates that in September 2001, 174 million people (or 66 per cent of the population) in the United States used computers, with children and teenagers using the computer and the internet more than any other age group. This 2002 report shows that 48 million (or 90 per cent) of children in the United States between the ages of 5 and 17 now use computers.³¹

The ABS Household Use of Information Technology survey indicates that in 2000, 53 per cent of households in Australia had access to a home computer and 33 per cent of Australian households had home internet access, representing a steady increase in both categories since 1998-1999.³² Of the 47 per cent of Australian adults who accessed the internet in the twelve months to November 2000, the largest proportion were found to be young (74 per cent were 18-24 years old), employed (63 per cent), and on incomes of more than \$40 000 (75 per cent).

On the basis of both the ABS survey and an AC Nielsen study, NOIE's *The Current State of Play — June 2001* concludes that 'Australia's performance and growth in terms of uptake of internet technology and internet infrastructure is strong and [poised] to continue in years to come'.³³ The NOIE report indicates a significant increase in the number of Australian businesses with internet access since June 1998. Around 77 per cent of businesses employing 10 or more individuals, for example, had online access in June 2000, comparing favourably with the degree of penetration to be found in the information technology-rich Scandinavian economies. Proportion of population considered, Australia is one of the leading countries in terms of internet usage.

Digital divide

The dramatic increase in internet usage, however, has not been evenly distributed either across countries or within countries. As used in a recent OECD report, the 'digital divide' refers to 'the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the internet for a wide variety of activities'.³⁴

A facts summary by the World Information Technology & Services Alliance suggests that: there are 'more internet hosts in New York City than on the continent of Africa'; industrial countries have 153.5 PCs per 1000 population while developing countries have 6.5 per 1000 population; 80 per cent of the world's population 'lack access to reliable telecommunication systems'; 75 per cent of the world's telephones 'are in just 8 industrial countries'; and the number of internet hosts (in 1000s) in industrial countries is 15,818 compared with 435 in developing countries.³⁵

The OECD report indicates that of the 94 million internet hosts in the world in October 2000, 95.6 per cent were in OECD countries and only 4.4 per cent were in non-OECD countries. Between them, the United States and Europe account for 89 per cent of all internet hosts. By contrast, Africa has only 0.25 per cent of all internet hosts, with the bulk of these located in South Africa.³⁶

However quantified, it is clear that the gulf between the 'information rich' and the 'information poor', typically referred to as the 'digital divide', exists both between and within nations, even though overall access to computers and the internet is growing. While the 1999 United States report *Falling Through the Net* revealed a significant increase (across all demographic groups) in the percentage of American users connected to the internet, the report also noted the gap between the digital 'haves' and the digital 'have-nots' had widened. The 'least connected' groups were found to be

'low-income, Black, Hispanic, or Native American, senior in age, not employed, single-parent (especially female-headed) households, those with little education, and those residing in central cities or especially rural areas'.³⁷

A more recent report, *A Nation Online: How Americans are Expanding their Use of the internet*, based on the September 2001 US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, suggests that while 'broad measures' show internet use in the United States to have become more equitable over time, individuals living in low-income households or having little education remain less likely than others to be internet users.

These findings are consistent with the experiences of other countries and with the OECD report on the digital divide which suggests that the two key variables in relation to household access to information technology are income and education, with other variables such as household size and type, age, gender, racial background, and location also playing a part. As could be expected, mainly through its impact on income, the higher the level of education, the more likely it is that individuals will have ICT access. The OECD report points out that income is a particularly important determinant of computer penetration and internet access 'early in the diffusion of new technology', when higher income groups are more likely to be leading the uptake.³⁸

The importance of income and education as factors facilitating or inhibiting ICT access is borne out in the 2000 ABS *Household Use of Information Technology* survey, which shows that higher levels of internet access occurred in households with higher incomes, with children under eighteen, and among metropolitan households.³⁹ Across the various states and territories, the ACT had the highest percentage of home computer access (71 per cent) and home internet access (48 per cent) while Tasmania had the lowest percentage (45 per cent and 26 per cent respectively).

Households with higher incomes were more likely than those with lower incomes to have computer peripherals such as modem, printer, scanner, CD-ROM drive, DVD drive, CD burner and digital camera. Of those 3.3 million Australian households without a home computer, one quarter reported high costs as the main reason for not having one. Notably, 51 per cent of households with children under eighteen and 50 per cent of single-parent households cited high costs as the main reason for not having a home computer.⁴⁰

A National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) study of barriers to the take-up of new technologies in Australia found the most significant variables to be income and then education.⁴¹ Based on an analysis of statistics from several studies, the NATSEM study found that

in March 2000, 70 per cent of the top income group (over \$84 000) had internet access compared with 22 per cent of the lowest income group (below \$19 000). The report also found that tertiary qualified adults are 2.3 times more likely than adults with primary or secondary school education to have home internet access. Age was also a factor influencing take-up rates with those under the age of 55 twice as likely to have internet access as those older than 55. Location and gender were found to be relatively mild discriminators.

Based on projected home internet connection rates, the NATSEM study calculates that the most disadvantaged groups are retirees, followed by the unemployed and other low-income groups. It is estimated that 63 per cent of retirees, for example, are likely to remain without an internet connection compared with only 8 per cent of high-income people. Overall, the study estimates, 29 per cent of Australian adults are likely to remain without a home internet connection.⁴² The report concludes that 'a large proportion' of Australians do not participate in the knowledge economy because of economic or social circumstances.

The NOIE *Strategic Framework* acknowledges the importance of providing equitable access to 'affordable communications, internet public access points and support and training'.⁴³ Federal and State/Territory funding has been used to support community initiatives aimed at providing access for electronically disadvantaged groups. Funding through the *Networking the Nation* (NTN) program, for example, has enabled telecommunications infrastructure and services to be upgraded in rural and remote areas, while the development of community based access centres brings basic services such as fax, post, phone and online banking to small, rural communities.

A slightly different perspective on the digital divide is offered in the following e-mail correspondence from the European Commission. The writers suggest that there are two major differences between '21st century literacy' and 'traditional' literacy:

Firstly, a large part of it is proprietary. Letters, rules of grammar and vocabulary are free; paper can be produced by anybody. Consequently, it is possible to become literate 'independently', ie. without relying on anybody's authorisation. In contrast, the use of download programs, plug-ins and interface requires the approval of the right-holder.

Secondly, while 20th century literacy is essentially anonymous, 21st century literacy is not. One can buy a book and read it without ever being identified; but when visiting a website a trace is created, even when simply surfing. In addition, registration will become much more common — a newspaper reader online will often register to access the newspaper, whereas [previously the reader] would have bought the paper

in a shop.⁴⁴

This perspective is interesting because it focuses on those aspects of the new technologies that have the potential, for different reasons, to inhibit rather than facilitate the goal of widespread usage of information technology. This is not so much a matter of literacy, although it could impinge on this, as it is of issues to do with privacy and ‘ownership’ of the medium.

Bridging the digital divide requires more than simply providing physical access to infrastructure and hardware in developing countries. Information literacy is about being able to use these new technologies effectively. The non profit international organisation *bridges.org* aims to reduce the digital divide through researching, testing and promoting best practices ‘for sustainable, empowering ICT use’. The organisation makes the point that: ‘Computers and connections are insufficient if the technology is not used effectively because it is not affordable; if people do not understand how to use it or if they are discouraged from using it; or if the local economy cannot sustain its use.’⁴⁵

Based on its work in the field, *bridges.org* has identified the following critical determinants of ‘real access’, that is, access to technology in a way that improves people’s lives:

- *Physical access*: Is technology available and physically accessible?
- *Appropriate technology*: What is the appropriate technology according to local conditions, and how people need and want to put technology to use?
- *Affordability*: Is technology access affordable for people to use?
- *Capacity*: Do people understand how to use technology and its potential uses?
- *Relevant content*: Is there locally relevant content, especially in terms of language?
- *Integration*: Does the technology further burden people’s lives or does it integrate into daily routines?
- *Socio-cultural factors*: Are people limited in their use of technology based on gender, race, or other socio-cultural factors?
- *Trust*: Do people have confidence in and understand the implications of the technology they use, for instance in terms of privacy, security, or cybercrime?
- *Legal and regulatory framework*: How do laws and regulations affect technology use and what changes are needed to create an environment that fosters its use?
- *Local economic environment*: Is there a local economy that can and will sustain technology use?

- *Macro-economic environment*: Is national economic policy conducive to widespread technology use, for example, in terms of transparency, deregulation, investment, and labour issues?
- *Political will*: Is there political will in government to do what is needed to enable the integration of technology throughout society?⁴⁶

While this framework for tackling the digital divide focuses on information technology skills rather than information literacy specifically, the practical issues identified here go to the heart of the rationale for information literacy, highlighting the barriers that prevent significant numbers of people from being able to participate fully in society. The access and equity issues identified here are precisely those that a national coalition for information literacy advocacy could well be concerned with.

Literacy rates

In addition to changing technological, economic and social contexts the proposal for a national coalition for information literacy advocacy needs to be seen within the context of literacy rates more generally. Measurements of literacy tend to focus on prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy. The skills that are commonly associated with the use of online technologies have yet to be measured discretely in such national surveys.⁴⁷ In the absence of quantitative data on *information* literacy levels we need to rely on the standard measurements of literacy.

A 1996 ABS *Survey of Aspects of Literacy* (SAL) report on adult literacy (ages 15 to 74) indicates that approximately one-fifth (19-20 per cent) of the population had ‘very poor skills’ in literacy while a further quarter (27-28 per cent) ‘could be expected to experience some difficulties in using many of the printed materials found in daily life’. Less than one-fifth (16-17 per cent) of the population demonstrated ‘good’ or ‘very good’ literacy skills. Respondents were required to complete tasks assessing prose literacy (‘the ability to understand and use information from various kinds of prose texts, including texts from newspapers, magazines and brochures’), document literacy (‘the ability to locate and use information contained in materials such as tables, schedules, charts, graphs and maps’) and quantitative literacy (‘the ability to perform arithmetic operations using numbers contained in printed texts or documents’). The results were similar for all three types of literacy.⁴⁸

Several factors were identified in the ABS survey as being related to literacy levels. People whose first language was not English, people with lower educational attainment, people with lower incomes, older people, the unemployed, and Indigenous people tended to have poorer skills in literacy

compared with their opposite group.

In its 2001 national position paper, *A Literate Australia*, the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) notes that:

Australia has a particular challenge with almost 20% of the adult population performing at the lowest level across types of literacy and numeracy (quantitative). Even more concerning is that less than 20% have the level of functionality deemed as appropriate for the new knowledge-based economy.⁴⁹

Taking into account performance across the five levels for each of prose, document and quantitative literacy, as indicated in the ABS survey, ACAL concludes that 'in excess of 46 per cent of Australians are in the lowest two levels'. The OECD report, *Literacy in the Information Age*, identifies Australia as one of fourteen countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States, 'with large numbers of citizens at the lowest level of literacy'.⁵⁰ In comparison with other OECD countries, the ACAL report suggests, there is an urgent need for a nationally cohesive adult literacy and numeracy strategy and 'whole-of-government' policy. ACAL suggests that this strategy be implemented through the establishment of a new national co-ordinating body, the Australian Commission for Adult Literacy and Numeracy.⁵¹

While the impetus for raising awareness about the need for a more information literate society has gained strength in Australia in recent years, it is not a new development. A recent issues paper prepared by Alan Bundy for the first national Round Table on Information Literacy by ALIA, notes that even before the first recorded use of the term 'information literacy' in 1974, the rhetoric associated with this concept was evident in debates in the 1960s.⁵² In Australia, librarians and educators have led the push for information skills and information literacy education since the late 1970s and 1980s. Various government reports in the early 1990s drew attention to the need for information skills. Since then there have been five national conferences on information literacy, including the Adelaide conference in November 2001 which focused on how information is used to shape policy and social change.

At the tertiary level the growing interest in information literacy can be seen in such developments as the existence of formal grants awarded through the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching to projects dealing with information literacy, the development of an Information Literacy Blueprint at Griffith University in 1994,⁵³ and more recently, the Council of Australian University Librarians' release of an Australian version of Information Literacy Standards.⁵⁴

This, then, is the context within which a concern for information skills, that is, the literacy skills for a knowledge

economy, has emerged. Given the significance with which such skills are being invested, the proposal for a national coalition for information literacy advocacy is a timely one.

Examples of consumer needs in an information society

The mini case studies offered below give some indication of the diverse needs of consumers in an information age and of the importance of being information literate.

Tony lives on a farm in East Gippsland, Victoria. He recently purchased \$38,000 worth of cattle through an online auction.

Jameela voted for the first time recently and needed to sift through the information sent by the Electoral Commission and various candidates, as well as to make informed judgements about the often contradictory points of view presented in the media.

Malcolm used the internet to find out how to obtain legal aid and what documentation would be needed to support his application.

Max and Lucinda took advantage of the online service provided by local real estate agents to purchase a property with a small acreage. A virtual tour of the house convinced them to contact the agent and visit the house in person.

When Hung wanted to take up rowing, she obtained contact details from the local leisure centre, rang the rowing club and enrolled in a beginner's session.

Phil has helped his students locate multimedia resources for a local history project. His students are using audio recordings, archival film footage of the area, photos, local newspaper articles, and interviews with members of the local historical society.

Hannah was not satisfied with the treatment she was receiving for a medical complaint and used the internet to find out about the disease itself, its causes, likely duration, range of treatments available and side effects. Hannah was then able to discuss her condition with her doctor. She felt less intimidated and more able to ask informed questions.

Alison regularly uses e-mail and online discussion forums to share information and data with colleagues overseas.

When Sam needed to go to northern Italy for a family wedding, he used the internet to book airline tickets, accommodation and hire car. He also looked up information about local sites that would be worth visiting, currency rates and useful local tips for the traveller.

Before enrolling in an online course, Sasha sought information from the institution's web site about credit transfers, enrolment details, fees, and the kind of support available for distance students.

Seventeen year old Candy chose to obtain a hard copy of the Commonwealth Government Job Guide rather than to access it online because she wanted to sit down with her parents at the kitchen table and go through the information together.

Meena lives in a remote rural town. She uses the local community based access centre to carry out basic transaction services, such as banking and accessing Centrelink services.

In researching her family's history, Peta has used a com-

bination of microfiche records, old newspaper cuttings and family records, and the internet to find out how to search archives, the kind of information that might be useful and how to access this information.

Nineteen year old Tran chats online regularly with a group of people with similar interests in film and books, and sends text messages and e-mails to friends.

3. Defining information literacy

While it is beyond the scope of this report to review the history of the information literacy debate, or to explore comprehensively the various attempts to define either literacy or information literacy, there needs to be some consideration of the issues if a national coalition for information literacy advocacy is to be adequately prepared for its role. This matter of definition is important for at least two reasons. On the one hand, an advocacy role demands a common vision or understanding of that which is being advocated if it is to operate effectively on behalf of its constituency. This does not mean that all groups represented within the coalition must have precisely the same attitudes towards information literacy but rather that the coalition is aware of the range of views and able to accommodate these within a mutually accepted framework of common goals. Without a unified framework based on an inclusive understanding of information literacy, it is difficult to see how a national coalition could present a united front when lobbying governments, contributing to policymaking, seeking funding support, or making statements to the media.

The matter of definition is also important because how information literacy is conceptualised goes to the very heart of the rationale for the creation of a national coalition. If information literacy is defined in terms of traditional literacy but within a new cultural context, for example, then it could be asked: how would such a coalition differ from other national federations in the area of literacy, such as the Australian Council for Adult Literacy or the Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIL)? What unique role might a national coalition for information literacy advocacy offer that other peak organisations in the field currently cannot or do not offer?

This section of the report looks briefly at different understandings of information literacy and at the relationship between information literacy and literacy itself.

Literacy

As a joint project by the Victorian Department of School Education and the Catholic Education Office of Victoria highlighted in 1994:

Definitions of literacy are notoriously difficult to compose. Literacy is a social construct, a complex idea that means different things to different cultural groups at different times. Therefore literacy is a relative term and dynamic.⁵⁵

Literacy has been viewed as an identifiable set of skills, an independent tool that is in itself neutral; it has also been seen as a product of particular cultural contexts and thus

necessarily ideological. It has been defined in terms of a literate/illiterate dichotomy. More recently it has been conceptualised as a continuum with 'alphabet literacy' (that is, minimal print decoding skills) at one end, and higher order cognitive skills and cultural literacy at the other.⁵⁶ The 1996 ABS survey of adult literacy, for example, defines literacy not in terms of a threshold above or below which a person can be considered literate or illiterate, but as a continuum for three different types of literacy. Progression is characterised by 'increased ability to "process" information ... and to draw correct inferences based on the information being used'.⁵⁷

A commonly accepted definition of literacy in an Australian context is that offered by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training in 1991: 'Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing'.⁵⁸ More recently, it has been suggested that literacy has taken on a 'more prosaic' meaning as the ability to use information effectively has been added to the suite of skills loosely encompassed by the term.⁵⁹

It has even been suggested that 'literacy can never be an end in itself. It is always for use.' Thus if a person is able to read and write but does not do so then 'there is no literacy'.⁶⁰ What is crucial to this view is the practical application of the skills that have been learnt. 'The reader must go beyond having reading and writing knowledge to using this knowledge for personal, social, economic, political, religious, or other purposes'.⁶¹ Most definitions of information literacy go beyond mere acquisition of information retrieval skills to entail some form of purposive intent and metacognitive reflection.

Original definition

The concept of 'information literacy' appears to have been first used in 1974 when Paul Zurkowski, president of the US Information Industries Association, suggested that:

People trained in the application of information resources to their work can be called information literates. They have learned techniques and skills for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information-solutions to their problems.⁶²

Information literacy is here located in a problem-solving and corporate context. Subsequent definitions have offered variations on this theme, with a greater or lesser emphasis on skills acquisition, citizenship, reasoning, decision-making, problem solving and empowerment. For example, the Ocotillo Information Literacy Group has defined information literacy in terms of specific competencies grounded in academic discourse:

Information literacy is the ability to identify what information is needed and the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information in solving problems and composing discourse. It encompasses a set of competencies that will provide for survival and success in an information technology environment.⁶³

In general, librarians in the higher education sector have adopted this kind of approach with its focus on the identification, selection, evaluation, and application of information.

ALA definition

Perhaps the most oft-cited definition of information literacy is that contained in the 1989 final report of the American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy. Here it is suggested that to be information literate 'a person must be able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information'.⁶⁴ Most subsequent accounts of information literacy have used this definition as a starting point for discussion of the concept, either accepting its components as they are or extending the definition to include more complex skills.

While some experts choose to try and define the concept itself, others prefer to describe at a generalised level the characteristics of an information literate.⁶⁵ There is also diversity in terms of the weighting given to content knowledge and skill retrieval of this content. Healey, for example, suggests that information literacy 'is more concerned with the processes involved rather than the solutions'.⁶⁶ Ford argues that, as new technologies increasingly mediate information, 'information control of a discipline will not be as important as understanding the structure of the information'.⁶⁷

A new literacy

The authors of a 1997 DETYA study, which looks at the nexus between literacy, technology and learning, argue that literacy has been 'revolutionised' by information and communication technologies and thus needs to be reconceptualised to better meet the demands of an information age and 'an increasingly competitive global economy'.⁶⁸ The study conceptualises literacy in terms of its operational, cultural and critical aspects. The operational dimension is closer to conventional definitions of literacy, involving 'being able to read and write within a range of contexts in an adequate and appropriate manner employing conventional print and electronic media'. The cultural dimension involves understanding texts and information in relation to the contexts 'in which they are produced, received and used'. The critical dimension entails 'being able to innovate, transform, improve, and add value to social practices and the literacies associated with them'. The DETYA study talks of a new literacy that is relevant to the particular features of contemporary society

rather than of information literacy. The latter is subsumed under the former.

In general, there appear to be two discernible trends in the definition of information literacy. On the one hand, information literacy is conceptualised as a competency or set of skills separate from but allied with other sets of skills, such as other literacies. In this view information literacy is subsumed under the traditional broad umbrella of literacy alongside print, visual, computer, cultural, scientific, media, multimedia, and library literacies. On the other hand, the term information literacy is equated with a more generic literacy, similar to traditional literacy but adapted to the new circumstances of the digital age. The former interpretation of information literacy surfaces in popular usage as 'information technology skills'; the latter is closer to the ALA view of a broader kind of literacy associated with the work of the National Forum on Information Literacy.

Yet another conceptualisation of what is called the 'new literacy' can be found on the 21st Century Literacy Summit web site.⁶⁹ Here, 21st century literacy is said to incorporate technology literacy (defined as the ability to use new media such as the internet to access and communicate information effectively); contextual literacy (the ability to gather, organise and evaluate information 'and to form valid opinions based on the results'); media creativity (the capacity to produce and distribute content to audiences); and social competence and responsibility (the capacity to consider the social consequences of an online publication and the responsibility in relation to children and minors). These abilities extend beyond the traditional ones associated with reading, writing and mathematics to encompass familiarity with and confidence in using the new tools of the 21st century as well as the ability to think critically about the use and management of information.

Multiple literacies

The concept of 'multiple literacies' entails a range of discrete, discipline-specific skills, each of which has its own language and conventions. The following terms have all at various times been used in relation to information literacy: computer literacy, electronic information literacy, technological literacy, e-literacy, library literacy, media literacy, network literacy, internet-literacy, hyper-literacy, digital literacy and digital information literacy.

Another variant is corporate information literacy, which is about using information creatively in a management environment. 'An understanding of the influences that may lie behind the interpretation or presentation by the information creator' and of how data is collected and information created is here considered to be an information literacy competence.⁷⁰

In attempting to distinguish between information literacy and other forms of literacy, Nishimuro suggests that the key difference is this: traditional literacy is concerned with the ability to read, write and calculate; computer literacy is concerned with the use of computers and computer tools; and information literacy is concerned with 'how to make decisions, create values or solve problems', taking advantage of information technology and networks.⁷¹ This distinction, while useful in that it attempts to identify what is particular to each concept, nevertheless assumes information literacy to be a form of technological literacy, the problem-solving and decision-making taking place largely within the context of the new technologies. At the same time, this definition of information literacy runs the risk of making the concept so broad as to become almost meaningless. If information literacy is defined only, or even primarily, in terms of its problem-solving and decision-making capacities, then what is unique to this concept? How does it differ, for example, from critical thinking?

Anecdotal evidence suggests that in popular usage information literacy tends to be conflated with computer literacy, digital literacy, network literacy or technological literacy. Information literacy in this sense refers to such capacities as the ability to use computers, negotiate the World Wide Web, use e-mail, videoconference, or use online banking facilities.

And yet the new technologies that are being used increasingly in the education and corporate sectors are simply tools in the same way that library catalogues or encyclopedias are tools. Information literacy not only encompasses all of the skills associated with information retrieval and use, but also the capacity to think about the quality of the tools and the information generated/created by these tools. In its broadest sense information literacy means to be able to locate, critically reflect upon, adapt and apply the full range of tools, both electronic and non-electronic, that currently exist, and to adapt to new tools as these emerge. Information literacy, then, is both a set of skills and metacognitive; it is the capacity to know what to do and to reflect upon the knowing and doing. The information literate person will be able to access the information and to reflect upon his/her own searching in terms of the quality of the processes being used and the quality of the information yielded.

Information literacy, it has been suggested, 'crosses' all of the other domain-specific literacies, being potentially empowering for all learners,⁷² but there is also a sense in which information literacy can be said to *encompass* these other literacies, including traditional literacy. As Siitonen points out, the concept of literacy 'has been expanded into information literacy which goes beyond traditional literacy'.⁷³

Higher order skills

Perhaps the most conceptually elaborated definition of information literacy is that formulated by Bruce. Using a phenomenological approach, Bruce has identified seven qualitatively different 'experiences' or facets of information literacy which, taken together, 'show that information literacy cannot be equated with library skills, information skills or computer skills. Information literacy is fundamentally about conceptual skills, ways of experiencing or working with information'.⁷⁴ Like Bruce, Lavery also sees information literacy as more than a set of technical skills, defining it as 'a means to express personal ideas, develop arguments, refute the opinions of others, learn new things, or simply identify the truth or factual evidence about a topic'.⁷⁵ An information literate person, Lavery suggests, will use metacognition to monitor and revise search strategies.

An even more ambitious claim for information literacy is that it should be conceptualised as:

...a new liberal art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact — as essential to the mental framework of the educated information-age citizen as the trivium of basic liberal arts (grammar, logic and rhetoric) was to the educated person in medieval society.⁷⁶

Sceptics

Not all commentators in the field of information literacy are enamoured with the concept. Foster, for example, claims that information literacy 'is a phrase in quest of a meaning' and goes on to challenge various components of the concept, such as the notion that an information literate person is one who knows how knowledge is organized. 'Knowledge', he points out, 'is organized in many different ways, and any organizational scheme is to a large extent arbitrary depending on the purposes and perspectives of the organizer'.⁷⁷ While traditional literacy can be measured tangibly and addressed with appropriate remedies, he suggests, how is information literacy to be identified and measured? Snavely and Cooper, too, suggest that information literacy is 'empty of content', and after examining the arguments for and against the concept conclude that the term needs to be 'reconsidered' by librarians. In particular, librarians 'need to reinforce the idea that information literacy does not only refer to acquisition of computer skills (or computer literacy)'.⁷⁸ The claim that information literacy is an empty or meaningless term would seem to have some substance when some of the definitions that verge on 'motherhood' statements are examined more closely. The claims currently being made for information literacy range from the relatively modest, which generally

focus on efficient information seeking and using, to the more ambitious scenarios that see information literacy as a form of reasoning and/or a means of negotiating life's uncertainties.⁷⁹ A review of the literature suggests that the original ALA definition offered in 1989, which focuses on the capacity to know when information is needed and to find, evaluate and use this information effectively, remains a useful conceptualisation.

Towards a definition

However information literacy is defined, its conceptualisation has implications for how a national coalition might carry out its advocacy role. The literature and anecdotal evidence suggests that while librarians, who have been in the forefront of thinking about information literacy, see information literacy mainly in the context of the range of skills needed by higher education students, those working in community groups regard what they are doing as more akin to computer or technological literacy. In the corporate field, information literacy becomes 'information awareness' in a knowledge management context. For governments information literacy is tied to the notion of economic productivity. While NOIE does not specifically talk about 'information literacy' in its Strategic Framework or in its Save@Home publication, the kinds of skills highlighted — banking, paying bills and shopping online; finding information about goods and services; finding information related to work, study, government allowances — can be said to represent the new face of literacy in an information economy.⁸⁰

In its 2000 national position paper, *A Literate Australia*, the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) refers to 'the new basic skills' of the twenty-first century such as 'using automatic teller machines, the internet, e-mail, filling in taxation forms or understanding supermarket checkout procedures'.⁸¹ Information literacy in this context means the ability to handle day-to-day activities and transactions and to be able to adapt to change. Similarly, the European Commission's *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* defines 'the new basic skills' as those needed to function in a knowledge economy, such as digital literacy, learning how to learn, and making sense of information flows. Such skills, the Memorandum suggests, are now generic and are essential for both active citizenship and employability.⁸²

Given the range of views about information literacy, one of the first tasks of a national coalition will be to determine the various ways in which potential stakeholders understand the concept and to arrive at a mutually defined and accepted concept.

4. The value of a national coalition

The feasibility study confirms the efficacy of collaborative partnerships in advocacy. NebGuide, a publication of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, suggests that a coalition is needed when an organization recognizes it alone 'does not have the technical capability or people power to have a real impact on an issue'.⁸³ In its guide to coalition building, NebGuide suggests that a coalition can assist in the promotion of an issue by:

- setting priorities for action,
- helping to identify specific data and informational needs from other groups and agencies,
- carrying out the educational plan,
- broadening the development of new audiences,
- reporting the results of coalition activities through media, [and]
- improving the educator's capacity for providing information to citizens, interest group, and policy-makers.⁸⁴

The American Library Association's Information Literacy Community Partnerships Initiative suggests a coalition is necessary when there appears to be 'no one person or group responsible for an issue but many are or can be affected or can benefit from a solution'; when the issue to be addressed is too large, unwieldy, problematic or costly for just one group; and when a large number of people is needed to give the issue credibility and prominence or to educate people.⁸⁵ The proposal for a national coalition for information advocacy appears to meet all of these criteria.

In calling for the setting up of a national coalition in America, the ALA in 1989 gave as its rationale the need to raise public awareness about the problems associated with being information illiterate:

The need for increased information literacy in all aspects of people's lives — in business, in family matters, and civic responsibilities — must be brought to the public's attention in a forceful way.⁸⁶

The ALA envisaged a body that would be able to exploit the media in the interests of public consciousness-raising and that would also promote research and good practice models.

Many of those consulted in the course of the feasibility study recognised the potential value of having a national information literacy body. One of the fears expressed in relation to information literacy has been that 'discourses about the digital age will be dominated by technical experts who go on endlessly about bandwidth or transmission speeds, or

by advocates of e-commerce who overlook the social, intellectual and cultural aspects of the digital revolution'.⁸⁷ One of the benefits of having a national coalition for information literacy advocacy was thus seen to be its advocacy role on behalf of the educational and cultural communities, and thus its role in providing more marginalised groups and individuals with an authoritative voice. A coalition would not allow the debate about information tools, systems and delivery to be dominated by more powerful interest groups but ensure an inclusive debate that recognises a broad range of needs.

An Australian version of the National Forum on Information Literacy could adopt similar objectives to its American counterpart, such as monitoring and initiating research and projects, encouraging commitment to guidelines or standards, promoting teacher education. It could lobby governments and push for more structured, sustained and ongoing professional development, particularly in relation to academics and librarians. UK information literacy expert Sheila Webber suggests that information literacy needs to be embedded into the higher education curriculum to ensure it is taken seriously.⁸⁸ A national advocacy body could work towards ensuring information literacy is given a greater role in the curricula of librarianship.

A coalition would play a valuable role in disseminating information about the kinds of activities and initiatives being undertaken by member organisations. Like the National Forum, an Australian coalition could also encourage the dissemination of views and studies as well as initiating and commissioning research in the field.

Other correspondents have suggested that a national coalition might be able to bring some influence to bear on higher education bodies to adopt a more unified approach to encouraging academics to teach generic skills.

One of the difficulties Australia faces with its multiple tiers of government is the effective coordination and delivery of activities and programs. A national coalition could provide a united stance on issues associated with information literacy. There are existing models of national peak bodies that have successfully achieved this, such as the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Council for Social Services, and the Australian Association for the Teaching of English. These bodies cross state/territory borders and encompass other peak organizations, and have managed to represent their constituencies effectively at the national level.

There can be an advantage for government bodies in interfacing with one main body rather than having to work with several organisations in the same field. This situation would need careful handling though so that peak organisa-

tions who are being represented by the national coalition would not feel aggrieved at having their own avenues to government bodies diminished.

A national coalition could help the cause of information literacy by being in a stronger position to lobby for more funding. Projects such as the Victorian Government's Skills.net, for example, need to be able to attract good teachers, pay for technical support, purchase/maintain hardware and cover administrative costs. A national body could act as an authoritative voice in putting across these needs.

For Patricia Senn Breivik, Chair of the National Forum on Information Literacy, the main value of the American coalition has been 'the credibility and respectability that such a diverse group brings to discussions to people and organisations outside the field of librarianship'. Information literacy is not wholly the province of librarians, even though this group is responsible for much of the 'consciousness-raising' that has occurred in tertiary institutions around the world. As Breivik points out, a national coalition is not about selling libraries; it is about 'selling the importance of an information literate citizenry and workforce'.⁸⁹

Information literacy advocacy is important not only because it helps promote awareness of the need for an information literate society but, in doing so, helps ensure that the gap between the 'information rich' and the 'information poor' in Australia is steadily reduced. Those groups identified as most disadvantaged can only benefit from a national agenda that stresses the importance of all its citizens being literate and able to participate fully in the life of the nation.

5. Difficulties

Overseas and local experience points to several factors that could potentially be problematic for a national coalition for information literacy advocacy in this country unless addressed during the developmental phase.

The concept of information literacy itself does not necessarily resonate with those working in community projects in the field. Not all practitioners are familiar with the term, use the term even when aware of it, or see it as a description of what they do. The literature suggests there may be a gulf between library-focused information literacy and the kind of information literacy that is practised by community groups. One correspondent, for example, reports that when a group of community networking practitioners was asked what they thought of the concept of information literacy, the responses ranged from ‘What’s “information literacy?”’ to ‘It’s a job creation scheme for librarians.’ No one saw any intersection with their own concerns.⁹⁰ Others working in community online initiatives have also indicated a tendency to see what they do as something other than ‘information literacy’.

One initiative in Brazil that started out as a ‘consortium’ is now an ‘alliance’. The aim of the project was to help schools cope with internet technology and to work collaboratively so that costs and expertise could be shared. The business model now adopted involves developing individual agreements with schools instead of working together collaboratively because ‘it was impossible to get them all to agree on basic things’. The main difficulty of the original consortium idea, however, was identified not as an inability to work co-operatively, but as ‘setting up and operating in a sustainable way’.⁹¹

At a simple level the Brazilian example highlights both the need to establish common ground with diverse bodies whose organisational structure and goals may be quite different, and the need to secure ongoing funding arrangements to ensure sustainability. Forming an umbrella agency that embraces peak organisations needs careful negotiation. Peak organisations have their own avenues for funding and to other agencies, including government bodies and may not welcome another ‘level’ superimposed. It is important that stakeholders feel a strong sense of ‘ownership’ of the national coalition project.

Information literacy crosses jurisdictional boundaries at state/federal levels, government departments, education sectors (VET providers, Universities, TAFEs, ACEs, schools, employers, telecommunications industries), business and community sectors. The potential for demarcation disputes in terms of ‘ownership’ of information literacy is a distinct possibility. Even if responsibility is not in dispute much work will need to go into ensuring the views of all stakeholders in

the field are given adequate attention and advocacy.

There is also the question of how a national coalition for information literacy would interact with other peak organisations or large bodies that already have a role in information literacy (or literacy more generally), such as the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL), ANZIL, and even ALIA. It would be important to ensure as little duplication of effort as possible and a smooth working relationship with other representative bodies in the field. Given the set of goals listed on the ANZIL web site, for example, it is not clear how a national coalition for information literacy advocacy would differ in practical terms from the work of ANZIL, which is still in its planning phase.⁹² Several correspondents have expressed this concern, with the ANZIL example being mentioned specifically.

Much of the education agenda both in America and Australia is driven by economic imperatives. One Australian correspondent has suggested that an economic rationalist understanding of information literacy rather than ‘a transformative or emancipatory one’ could be an obstacle to the advocacy role of a national coalition for information literacy.

The vastness of Australia’s geographic landscape means travel (and accommodation) can be prohibitive when endeavouring to establish a national body based in one city. Cost may thus be a factor in determining the regularity, duration and location of meetings among coalition members.

The absence of a ‘charismatic and credible leader who can transcend sectional differences and get people to come together for the common good’ has also been identified as a possible obstacle in the way of a national advocacy group. The appointment of a full time professional officer has been highlighted by some as a means of helping to ensure the coalition’s longevity.

6. Initiatives

One example of literacy advocacy occurring at the global level is the proposed United Nations Literacy Decade initiative to be debated in late 2001. The Director-General of UNESCO, which anticipates being the lead agency for this development, notes that information and communication, including the technologies that are transforming them, 'are central to the practice of literacy'. Initiatives such as International Literacy Day or the proposed International Literacy Decade, he suggests, recognise 'that literacy is not just about the mechanics of reading and writing but is about personal dignity, the right to participate, the empowerment of the marginalised and the excluded, and the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways and settings, both formal and nonformal'.⁹³

Another global initiative is the proposed World Summit on the Information Society to be held in 2003 under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union, a United Nations agency. The ITU is responsible for telecommunications regulation and development globally. The Summit stems from a recognition that 'the inherently global nature of knowledge-based societies makes it vital that international dialogue takes place and that worldwide approaches be considered in order to narrow the digital divide and forestall the emergence of conflicting frameworks'.⁹⁴

It is expected that the Summit will bring together leaders at the highest levels of government, industry, civil society and non-government organisations globally to address and influence the development of the Information Society. The first phase of the Summit will take place at Geneva in December 2003 and the second phase will be in Tunis 2005. The main outcomes are expected to be a Declaration of Principles and an Action Plan for achieving the identified goals of the Information Society.

The purpose of this section of the report is to give a brief outline of some of the current and/or recent projects and initiatives carried out in Australia and overseas in relation to information literacy. The literature search has not yielded national equivalents of the proposed coalition for information literacy other than the United States National Forum on Information Literacy. Examples abound of peak national advocacy bodies but these organisations are generally situated within a particular domain, such as library/information management or literacy, rather than operating as part of a broader cross-sectoral alliance.⁹⁵

In line with the consultation, brief examples of other initiatives in the field have been provided. Some are simply workshops or courses; others are nation-wide projects. While many tend to focus on only one aspect of information literacy

(such as assessing the teaching of computer skills in tertiary institutions, teaching librarians information technology skills, or setting up online access points in remote communities) collectively, they demonstrate the breadth and richness of the field. Those behind the conceptualisation and/or implementation of these initiatives may not necessarily describe what they do in terms of 'information literacy' but each in its own way is making a contribution to raising awareness of its importance. Given the time constraints of the feasibility study only a sample of initiatives is included, enough to give the Steering Group and key stakeholders an idea of the scope and variety of projects that exist. Most of the information has been gleaned from e-mail contact with project personnel and from project web sites.

International

Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey

<http://www.ets.org/all/> (accessed 7 January 2002)

Originally known as the International Life Skills Survey (ILSS), and modelled on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL Survey) is being developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) on behalf of the OECD. Initially it was intended that this new study would cover prose and document literacy, redevelop quantitative literacy as numeracy and add several other categories including ICT literacy. Subsequently the aims of ILSS were scaled back and the ALL survey represents a more modest version of the proposed new study. Initial plans for a direct measurement of ICT literacy have given way to the inclusion of an ICT literacy component in the background questionnaire. Seven dimensions of ICT literacy have been recognised in the Information and Communication Technology Literacy Assessment Framework for the ALL study: general ICT use; computer and internet use; computer use and skills in work contexts; computer use in non-work contexts; development of computer skills; personal benefits of computer use; and receptivity to computer use among current non-users.⁹⁶ ICT literacy itself is defined as 'the skills and abilities that will enable the use of computers and related information technologies to meet personal, educational and labour market goals', a skills-based definition that is consistent with other forms of literacy.⁹⁷ The purpose of the survey is to gain an idea of the level of computer literacy in an international adult population as well as information about the incidence, frequency, complexity and usefulness of ICT in daily life.

bridges.org

<http://www.bridges.org/> (accessed 14 November 2001)

A non-profit international organisation, bridges.org aims

'to help people in developing countries use information and communication technology to improve their lives'. The organisation is about empowering people rather than supplying infrastructure or hardware. It recognises that 'e-literacy' is about more than simply physical access to technology: there is a strong commitment to accessibility, reducing the dimensions of the 'digital divide', and developing sustainable models for effective ICT use in communities. While its projects are discrete the group adopts a holistic approach to the problems associated with the 'digital divide'. Its services include providing information and resources; advising decision-makers on key issues; supporting grass-roots projects, local businesses and e-government efforts; and offering an e-literacy tool for basic computer use in the form of its bridges.tech.guide. This toolkit offers advice regarding telecentre resources, guidelines for assessing the 'e-readiness' of a community or a country, e-literacy materials and a database of online resources.

Global Knowledge Partnerships

<http://www.globalknowledge.org/> (accessed 12 November 2001)

This network of private and non-profit organisations from around the world has evolved from an initial collaborative sponsorship arrangement when a number of organisations jointly funded the 1997 conference 'Knowledge of Development in the Information Age'. Since then the GKP has been involved with a range of projects designed to ensure the inclusion of the most disadvantaged in the global information economy. The central focus is on 'the use of information and communications technologies to expand participation of all stakeholders in the production, dissemination, and use of knowledge and information so as to achieve sustainable development'. The web site provides examples of some of the initiatives undertaken to improve the information, communications and knowledge resources of developing countries.

Readiness for the Networked World: A Guide for Developing Countries

<http://www.readinessguide.org/> (accessed 14 November 2001)

The Guide describes itself as both an education resource and a diagnostic tool. Its main function is to assist developing countries to assess their readiness for joining global information networks and as such is a first step in developing a strategic approach to planning for this readiness. E-readiness is assessed according to criteria developed for each of the following categories: access, learning, society, economy, and policy. The Information Technologies Group in the Centre for International Development at Harvard University produce the Guide.

UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education

<http://iite.artstyle.net/iite/about> (accessed 9 October 2001)

Set up recently in Moscow, the Institute's goals include monitoring and supporting the use of information technologies in education, conducting research in the field of ICT in education, training educators in these skills, developing a strategy or policy of development of information technology education, providing an information clearinghouse, and encouraging the dissemination of ideas and views amongst practitioners.

Africa

Some indication of current ICT projects being carried out in Africa can be found in a recent report from a meeting of Partners for Information and Communication Technologies in Africa (*PICTA*) in Ethiopia held in early September 2001.⁹⁸

The five-year long *INFOLIT* project was launched in July 1995. Funded by the Readers Digest, the project's main aim was to promote information literacy in the higher education sector in the Western Cape Region of South Africa. Infolit was committed to 'an information literacy framework which ensures that learners have the skills, capacity, confidence and fluency to operate productively in the information age'.⁹⁹ Learners were encouraged to both use and critically evaluate the information they access. The largest co-operative project was *CALICO*, the Cape Library Co-operative, which aimed at developing a regional network of information services. The strategic plan adopted by Infolit included an audit and needs analysis to identify examples of good practice in the region.

The Khanya Technology in Education project

This national pilot project aims 'to deliver curriculum and to establish a more efficient administrative communication system' within the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) using ICT and audio-visual technology. The project is described as endeavouring 'to give all learners and teachers access to appropriate ICT-based and AVT-based learning and teaching resources in all learning areas. Besides enabling learners and teachers to become ICT/AVT literate, proficiency in information skills are accepted as crucial for the advancement of lifelong learning'. A remarkable feature of the program is that it is seeking to achieve these goals in a situation of 'overwhelming economic and social disadvantage'.¹⁰⁰

America

Best Practices and Assessment of Information Literacy Programs (US)

This 37 month long project is an initiative of the Institute for Information Literacy (IIL) on behalf of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (a division of the ALA). The aim of the project is to develop criteria for assessing information literacy programs, identifying exemplary models that fit these criteria and disseminating information about the criteria and models via a national conference and other avenues.

Community Technology Center's Network (CTCNet)

<http://www.ctcnet.org/> (accessed 29 October 2001)

This national network of over 500 community technology centres encourages collaborative approaches to information technology and provides greater access to computers and the internet for electronically disadvantaged groups. A wide range of useful links can be found at the CTCNet site, including a detailed practical guide to establishing a CTC complete with business plan. The CTCs are similar to Australia's telecentres (see below).

Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (Association of College & Research Libraries, United States)

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/ilcomstan.html> (accessed 2 November 2001)

These standards were approved in January 2000 and have since formed the basis for information literacy standards in other organisations and nations around the world. They are outlined in terms of the standards, performance indicators and outcomes and are stated in these terms:

- The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed.
- The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.
- The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.
- The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
- The information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information

ethically and legally.

The Institute for Information Literacy (IIL)

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/nili/nilih.html> (accessed 30 October 2001)

The IIL reports to the ACRL Board and aims to promote information literacy largely through professional development. Its stated goals are to 'prepare librarians to become effective teachers in information literacy programs'; 'support librarians, other educators and administrators in playing a leadership role in the development and implementation of information literacy programs'; and 'forge new relationships throughout the educational community to work towards information literacy curriculum development'. It carries out these aims through such initiatives as *Annual Immersion Programs*, in which librarians receive intensive information literacy training; *Institutional Strategies: Best Practices*, which involves identifying exemplary information literacy programs and encouraging the dissemination of information about them at a national conference; *Community Partnerships*, which encourages collaborative approaches to information literacy; and *Web Resources*, which provides hyperlinks to a range of information literacy sites.

Internet Navigator

<http://www-navigator.utah.edu/> (accessed 30 October 2001)

This web-based instructional module created by the Utah Academic Library Consortium is an online, self-paced and independent study course that is intended to assist tertiary students with using information resources.

Information Power

http://www.ala.org/aasl/ip_nine.html (accessed 30 October 2001)

This 1998 document by the ALA and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology outlines Nine Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning that are centred around information literacy, independent learning and social responsibility.

Information Skills Tutorial

<http://www.kyvl.org/> (accessed 29 October 2001)

An initiative of the Kentucky Virtual Library, the Information Skills Tutorial is the result of a collaborative effort among librarians in the state. It is currently being revised and a version for young people is also being developed. The tutorial is designed to help students formulate research questions, develop effective research strategies, identify appropriate information sources, search electronic databases, evaluate the information found, and use the information responsibly and ethically.

National Forum on Information Literacy

<http://www.infolit.org/> (accessed 20 October 2001)

The Forum was established as a result of a 1989 recommendation contained in the final report of the American Library Association's Presidential Committee. The report recognised that the major barrier to people becoming information literate was a lack of public awareness about the problems created by information illiteracy. Representatives of member organisations meet three times a year, and are encouraged to integrate information literacy awareness and strategies in their practices. The Forum initiates and supports projects and research, actively encourages regulatory bodies to adopt information literacy guidelines, assists educators to incorporate information skills into their teaching and encourages the dissemination of ideas and examples of good practice in this field.

National Institute for Literacy

<http://www.nifl.gov/> (accessed 29 October 2001)

The NIFL was officially set up in 1991 to provide a focal point for 'public and private activities that support the development

of high-quality regional, state, and national literacy services'. While the NIFL does not specifically target information literacy, it does recognise the importance of lifelong learning and the need to raise literacy skills to ensure individuals can take full advantage of lifelong opportunities. The NIFL uses LINCS, an internet-based information retrieval and communication system, to provide access to electronic resources to do with literacy and to the National Literacy Advocacy (NLA) List. The NIFL service provides an online forum for users to discuss public policy issues that affect stakeholders in the field of adult literacy. List members are also able to inform policy makers about strategies that would benefit adult learners in literacy programs.

Project JSTOR (Journal Storage Project)

<http://www.mellon.org/jstor.html> (accessed 29 October 2001)

Project JSTOR in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota is a three-year initiative that aims to promote 'digital library use and scholarly research'. Currently there are 35 colleges and universities in the JSTOR network. <http://www.mn-colleges.org/projectjstor/index.html> (accessed 29 October 2001)

Another source of grants is the Faculty/Librarian Instructional Partnership (FLIP) grants which are used 'to encourage partnerships that will be models for strengthening teaching methods and student learning with information resources and digital tools'. One funded initiative is the Collaboration for Program Enrichment: Exploring JSTOR and Nursing project at the South Dakota State University. One of the aims of this project is 'to establish a uniform framework for insuring that information literacy competencies are attained. The Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education will be the framework used to incorporate the essentials throughout the program to insure outcomes related to information literacy'.

Another FLIP funded initiative is the *Improving the Lab Report: The Biology Program & Information Literacy project, at Southwest State University* which aims to improve students' information literacy skills by getting students to locate and evaluate academic resources for biology projects. *This represents a collaborative effort between biology staff (who have introduced a new course requiring students to improve their literacy skill) and librarians (who have developed an online tutorial to supplement the biology course presentations)*. It was anticipated that by autumn 2001, biology students would be using 'electronic databases, interlibrary loan service, evaluated web sources, plus the library's periodical and reference collection continually throughout the Biology courses'.

Uwired (University of Washington)

<http://www.washington.edu/uwired/projects/index.shtml> (accessed 31 October 2001)

Its goals are to provide access to the tools and resources needed to use technology to enhance teaching and learning; promote fluency with information and information technology (for example, by offering workshops for students offered on a drop-in basis and by encouraging teachers to share teaching ideas and approaches); and to foster innovation in technology-enabled teaching and learning;

VIVA workshop (Virtual Library of Virginia)

VIVA recently sponsored a workshop 'Information literacy Now! Collaboration, Best Practices, and Strategy' for librarians across the state. For a summary of the talk see <http://www.viva.lib.va.us/viva/outreach/promotions/curzon-talk-7-27-2001.html> (accessed 9 November 2001). A further three regional conferences are planned following on from recommendations at the July workshop.

Asia

Asia Pacific Summit on Information Society

<http://www.aptsec.org/ict/summit-summary.ppt> (accessed 12 November 2001)

This summit was organised by the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and the ministers in attendance adopted the *Tokyo Declaration* which addresses the issues of bridging the digital divide, developing ICT infrastructures, enhancing information literacy and articulating a common vision in the Asia Pacific region. The Declaration affirms the high priority that needs to be given to 'ICT literacy' and sets the goal of having as many people in the region with access to the internet by 2005, including access from schools and post offices. Member administrations have been asked to set up internet access points, implement pilot projects to improve literacy in rural areas, promote the development of ICT technology for the elderly and those who have social needs. There are currently 31 pilot projects being implemented in APT member countries (such as *Tele-education* in Iran, *Virtual Post Office on the Net* in the Republic of Korea, and *Community Access of Shared Healthcare Information* in Hong Kong). There is a strong focus on knowledge and information sharing.

Digital Partners' South Asia Initiatives

<http://www.digitalpartners.org/sai.html> (accessed 12 November 2001)

Digital Partners is a non profit organisation based in the United States. It is an example of using IT expertise for the social good, such as for alleviating poverty. It is not so much about promoting awareness of information literacy as about using information technology and entrepreneurial expertise in practical ways to reduce poverty in South Asia. One initiative involves the setting up of a 'Brain Trust' to look at ways in which digital technologies are being integrated into projects designed to benefit the poor. Digital Partners encourages IT experimentation, for example, and is working towards making government controlled information more accessible to the public through the internet. The organisation hopes to 'understand the key issues surrounding the control and dissemination of such information and determine the most appropriate and effective means of public-private partnerships for its dissemination'. In late November 2000, Digital Partners is hosting a two-day consultation to discuss IT access in India and to develop an Action Plan for implementing innovative strategies to enhance access.

ICT Use in Education Project (Korea)

[http://aemm.moe.edu.sg/asp/asp_aemmpaper/paper/9\)_IT_Case_Study_ROK_4_Mar_00.PDF](http://aemm.moe.edu.sg/asp/asp_aemmpaper/paper/9)_IT_Case_Study_ROK_4_Mar_00.PDF) (accessed 13 November 2001)

In keeping with the Korean Government's 1999 'Cyber Korea 21' strategy, which aims to make Koreans 'the most proficient and knowledgeable computer users in the world', this project aims to prepare students at both school and tertiary levels for the knowledge-based society 'by realizing lifelong learning via a cyber-education system'. The initiative recognises the importance not only of providing access to computers for all students but of ensuring teachers have the necessary ICT skills to teach students. The government has also offered free ICT training to 500,000 economically disadvantaged students. Educational and multimedia software is provided for students, teachers and parents via a Networked Educational Information System (EDUNET) which was set up in 1996. The priority given to computer skills is evident in the fact that from 2001 all Korean students will be taking ICT education as a compulsory course. On completing this course every middle and high school student receives a *Student Information Literacy Certificate*.¹⁰¹

Workshop on Public Awareness about Information Technology (Cambodia)

<http://www.apdip.net/> (accessed 13 November 2001)

This three-day seminar was held in September 2001 and was aimed at raising public awareness of the benefits of IT. One of the key elements in the long-term strategy outlined by Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, in his opening address was the need to promote computer literacy to Cambodians and to include it in the curriculum of schools, faculties and universities in the country.

Canada

Building Information Literacy (Province of Prince Edward Island)

<http://www.edu.pe.ca/bil/bil.asp?ch0.s1.gdtx> (accessed 22 October 2001)

This document is described as being for and by educators. Its focus is resource-based learning and the document provides information for educators about such things as student learning outcomes for information literacy, relevant resources, and the development of information skills and strategies critical to student achievement.

Canada SchoolNet

<http://www.schoolnet.ca/home/e/> (accessed 1 September 2001)

This online service is similar to other initiatives that countries have taken to link schools electronically and to encourage collaborative online partnerships. The aim of the service is to support the use of ICT technologies in learning. Over 5000 evaluated web sites are offered through the portal, with links to a wide range of resources including curriculum areas, educational support services and federal institutions. It offers specific initiatives to encourage ICT use in the classroom (such as LibraryNet, Network of Innovative Schools, Youth Employment Initiative) and services designed to keep students and teachers up to date with what is happening in ICT.

Europe

In 1999 the European Commission launched its eEurope initiative, part of a broader strategy 'to bring the benefits of the Information Society within reach of all Europeans'.¹⁰² The key objectives of eEurope: An Information Society For All are to bring 'every citizen, home and school, every business and administration online and into the digital age', create a 'digitally literate' Europe, and ensure a socially inclusive process in doing so. A number of priority areas have been identified, including putting government and health care services online, providing internet connectivity in schools, and facilitating collaborative partnerships among researchers and students through high speed access to the internet. The 2001 Eurydice publication ICT@Europe.edu: Information and Communication Technology in European Education Systems, gives an overview of national strategies for introducing ICT into education systems.¹⁰³

While these policies and initiatives focus on the implementation of information technologies by national governments in the European Union rather than on information literacy more broadly, they offer a valuable 'snapshot' of current practices in ICT throughout European Commission countries. Many involve collaborative partnerships and/or exchanges of expertise via computer networking. The range of initiatives includes the establishment of virtual universities, centres of expertise, online distance education courses, independent research and development centres, networked school systems, training courses for teachers, multimedia resources and web sites. France, for example, has instituted a computer science and internet certificate that formally recognises the ability of students to use multimedia tools effectively; in Spain, more than 30,000 teachers have been trained in the use of ICT during the period 1996 to December 2000 through the *Formación de Profesores a través de internet* Programme (Teacher Training over the internet); Austria is in the process of setting up ICT scientific centres that will enable ICT to be more fully integrated into universities; and in the United Kingdom the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) provides both a gateway web site to a diverse range of qualitative information and learning resources, and the technological infrastructure for schools and other educational institutions. While some of the projects mentioned below predate the e-initiative, most are being carried out within its broad 'digital literacy' framework.

Beyond the Online Tutorial (University of Edinburgh)

This initiative was a Joint Systems Information Committee (JSIC) funded workshop in which information literacy issues were discussed with colleagues working on other JISC-funded projects around the UK and with interested library

and academic staff. The SCOUNL Seven Pillars model¹⁰⁴ was discussed as were the issues relating to information literacy and the academic influences on the information literacy debate in the UK. A report on this tutorial — 'Beyond the Online Tutorial: the Relevance of Information Literacy and Pedagogy to DNER Learning and Teaching Projects', held 30 August 2001 — will be placed online soon at the EDINA web site <http://edina.ac.uk> (accessed 30 October 2001)

The Big Blue (UK)

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/bigblue> (accessed 30 October 2001)

This project, funded by JISC and managed by the Manchester Metropolitan Library and Leeds University Library, is looking at current practice in information skills training for students in higher and further education in the UK. While the initial aim of the project was 'to establish a blueprint for the future, ensuring a coherent approach to the development of an information literate student population in the UK', it is now acknowledged that the aim was 'rather naïve in its conception'. The project now aims 'to promote and advocate a mixed bag of good practice which colleagues from a wide variety of institutions can pick'n'mix to suit their individual circumstances'. Anticipated outcomes include a final report with recommendations for future action, a series of case studies focusing on a wide range of information literacy initiatives in the UK HE/FE sector, and a series of models designed to help colleagues with the development of information literacy programs. The dissemination phase of the project will begin in April/May 2002.

CITSCAPES (C&IT Skills: Current situations, Avenues of Possibility, Emerging Solutions, Scotland)

<http://www.citscapes.ac.uk> (accessed 6 November 2001)

Funded by the JISC, CITSCAPES is looking at the current situation in student communications and information technologies (C&IT) training/induction at tertiary institutions in the UK. The goal is to determine 'the level and nature of support that students might need in the future' to enhance their existing skills in this area. The project is based at Glasgow University. The term C&IT refers to 'the whole process of providing students with learning, teaching, support or training to equip them with C&IT skills, whenever they are delivered'. Outcomes so far include a general overview of current practice; an outline of relevant case studies; the development of a 'reflective tool' to assist institutions to evaluate their progress in C&IT induction provision; and the identification of key factors that will help improve the current system.

The DEDICATE Project (Distance Education Information Courses with Access Through Networks)

<http://educate.lib.chalmers.se/DEDICATE/object.html> (accessed 22 October 2001)

This project, a spin-off of the EDUCATE project (see below), involving Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary and the UK, has developed cost-effective distance education courses and information literacy courses. While the DEDICATE project has now ended, Elisabeth Saalman of the Chalmers Library at Chalmers University of Technology has indicated that the ideas generated by this successful information literacy initiative are still being 'worked on'.

The EDUCATE Project (End-user Courses in Information Access through Communication Technology)

<http://educate.lib.chalmers.se/eduinfo.html> (accessed 29 October 2001)

Funded under the European Union Telematics for Libraries Programme (Third Framework) from January 1994 to February 1997, the specific aim of this three-year project was to produce 'a new type of model self-paced user education course in the selection and use of information tools'. The project involved six institutions from France, the UK, Spain, Sweden, and Ireland. Chalmers University of Technology Library has since assumed responsibility for developing the EDUCATE programs under the name Into Info. These subject-specific online programs are mainly for students, researchers, teachers and academics. Other spin-offs have included MEDUCATE, DEDICATE and EXPLORINFO.

Educational Taskforce Multimedia Project

The Multimedia Task Force Projects began in 1998 and offer a wide range of initiatives aimed at integrating new media into education. For example, SMILE (Austria) has produced a prototype multimedia and multilingual training course on CD-ROM for deaf people learning written language; EXE (Italy) uses extranets to train educators in the use of technologies in learning; and In-TELE (Germany) aims to 'create, apply and test the organisational, technological, pedagogical and psychological conditions for the development of media competence of students and teachers in a modern Europe'. These and other Educational Multimedia Task Force projects can be accessed at <http://www.ecotec.com./mes/projects.html> (accessed 14 November 2001).

European Schoolnet

<http://www.eun.org/> (accessed 1 September 2001)

European Schoolnet was officially launched in September 1998. It represents an international partnership of European

Ministries of Education and provides a gateway or portal to a wide range of online resources. It also encourages a collaborative approach to innovation and information exchange on ICT in education. One of its initiatives is the week-long virtual eSchola event, which is about 'learning online from each other, working together and celebrating success using new technologies in Europe's classrooms'. Teachers can use this opportunity to showcase their skills and achievements. There were nearly 1000 entries for the 2001 eSchola event.

Library Public Information Services Program (Czech Republic)

The LPIS Program includes among its aims the 'provision of public access ICT sites with skilled assistance guaranteeing equal access to information sources and networks for all groups of citizens, support for life-long education and meeting the cultural needs of citizens, and training librarians from all types of libraries in ICT skills enabling them to provide for qualified assistance to all library users in utilising information sources and networks'. The LPIS Program is divided into nine cross-linked subprograms. A priority of the first phase of the program is to provide at least one employee in each public library with training in ICT skills so they can provide other township/community inhabitants with skilled assistance and basic ICT instruction and also fellow library staff with instruction. The importance of getting these skills to 'special groups of inhabitants (e.g. the elderly, housewives, ethnic and social minorities, youth)' is recognised.

Network Library Program – Open Society Institute (Bulgaria)

Information literacy projects are hampered in Bulgaria because libraries are still in the process of being transformed into electronic libraries. A loan from the World Bank will finance computer centres with internet access in four hundred schools in Bulgaria and thus create a network of schools.

Nevertheless some initiatives have been undertaken. The Open Society Institute-Budapest is sponsoring a project that trains librarians 'in all aspects of modern librarianship, including computer literacy, and techniques for searching databases and collections'. The School Libraries Project, (which is a collaborative venture by the municipality of Blagoevgrad, five high schools and the regional public library), aims to provide a catalogue of the school libraries' collections to facilitate resource sharing and to provide internet access and training in internet skills and navigation techniques to high school students.

Union of Associations of Slovene Librarians

Under a new Act of Librarianship that has just been passed, information literacy is to be developed in 'all types of libraries (school, public, academic, special and the national library)' as an 'integral part of their library activities'. Previously there had been a compulsory information literacy program for primary and secondary schools. Development in other libraries had been unsystematic and incomplete. Now there is to be a general program with 'goals, contents and recommendations' for giving librarians the skills to promote information literacy skills among library users.

Virtual University Projects (Finland)

The Undergraduate Library of the University of Helsinki has developed support services for students, including information skills courses and information retrieval training. There have been seminars for university librarians and the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education have been discussed and promoted. The University of Helsinki library is currently working towards a test for evaluating the information skills of new students. The Standards have been welcomed because they 'give a common basis for the libraries in teaching and they strengthen collaboration between teachers and librarians'.

Australian initiatives

Many of the information literacy initiatives in Australia aim to increase computer literacy, focus on rural and remote areas and target the most technologically disadvantaged groups. One of the more effective initiatives has been the development of *Tele-Service Centres* (also known as Rural Transaction Centres, Online Access Centres, internet Cafes, Community Technology Centres, Telecentres, Public Access Locations, Network Centres and Resource Centres). These Centres are similar to the United States CTCs (identified earlier) for people in small communities.

Community Technology Centres (CTCs) in New South Wales are based in small towns and provide access to a range of technological tools such as computers, printers, video and teleconferencing facilities, scanners, fax machines, photocopiers, and 'e-commerce incubator facilities'.¹⁰⁵ They may also offer services such as banking, ticket sales, post office, Centrelink, Medicare, database design and development, online education and training access, room hire for meetings, desk top publishing, e-mail, secretarial services, laminating, equipment hire (data projector, digital camera, scanner), ICT tutorials, web site design and development, access to government services, and software programming.

The CTCs are based on the success of existing telecentres that were set up in regional NSW during the 1990s. NSW Telecentres have now joined the CTC@NSW network.

CTCs can be Stand Alone Centres with a single site and single managing community organisation, or Multi-site Centres with a main centre (hub) managed by a single community organisation and multiple outreach centres with members of each town included in the network. The target audience includes students, individuals, groups, community organisations and local businesses. The towns generally have less than 3,000 inhabitants.

Western Australia also has a strong background in tel-services. There are telecentres in nearly 100 rural towns. As in NSW these centres are not-for-profit, community owned and shaped. Core services include access to a phone, fax, internet, photocopier, laminating machine, scanner, and Microsoft Office. Two-way digital videoconferencing is currently being installed in all centres 'opening up possibilities for tutorials, training, telelaw, telehealth and telebanking (with one bank manager serving all telecentre banks and communicating with customers via videoconference as well as via the internet)'.¹⁰⁶ These facilities act as shop fronts for Registered Training Providers rather than providing the training themselves, although telecentres in WA also provide their own non-accredited courses. State and federal funding helps set up the Centres and goes towards the wage of a

Coordinator. The Telecentre Access Points (TAPs) have coin-operated machines for users. The co-ordinator of the WA Telecentre Support Unit suggests that 'the telecentre network has been a critical component in bringing an understanding of technology to small rural towns'.¹⁰⁷

More recently, the WA government has established a \$1 million *First Click* fund (<http://www.training.wa.gov.au/training/content-firstclick.asp>) for projects that increase basic literacy skills by providing free learning resource packages for people wanting to experiment with computers and the internet in their own time. The learning resource package contains a CD, video and print-based materials. The aim of the initiative is to increase computer literacy amongst those adults in WA who have no computing or internet skills and no desire to enrol in a formal course.¹⁰⁸ In particular this initiative is aimed at indigenous Australians, women between 40 and 54 who are not in paid employment, the unemployed, seniors, people for whom English is a second language, low income households and people in regional areas.

One community project funded under the First Click initiative, for example, aims at helping women learn skills that will enable them to electronically access health information, bill paying, banking and other internet services as well as e-mail family members overseas. Another project, which targets indigenous people in a remote community without access to a doctor, chemist or an affordable place selling basic food items, aims to introduce basic computer skills and to help build confidence with the internet amongst participants.

Anecdotally, e-mail feedback from project participants to the Department of Training indicates a high level of enjoyment and appreciation for the skills gained. The most appealing aspects of the initiative appear to be the free training non-threatening environment.

Similarly, the *Community Skills Development Program in ICT* (CSDP) in Queensland (<http://www.iie.qld.gov.au/comminfo/csdp.html>) aims to reduce the digital divide in regional, rural and remote communities. CSDP funding enables community service organisations in areas with populations of less than 10,000 to provide onsite ICT training to their members and to develop databases, web sites and CD-ROMs for their organisations. Current projects include developing a historical CD-ROM to preserve local historical resources; developing a community web portal; training local people to use ICT to promote sport and recreation in their area; assisting a community to store copies of its photographic collection digitally; assisting participants to use digital cameras and scanners as well as building a web site and marketing their community's services; and developing ICT skills to enable local industry to develop closer ties with a sister city.

In South Australia, *Networks For You* (<http://www.iepo.sa.gov.au/networks/networks/>) provides a free introduction to the internet (such as how to use e-mail, how to search the Web, how to get online at home, how to access local ISP services) in rural and regional areas. The program is a project of the South Australian Information Economy Policy Office and is jointly funded by the Commonwealth (through the Networking the Nation initiative) and South Australian Governments. These 'internet awareness and facilitation programs' are carried out in Network Centres, which are located in existing community venues such as libraries, schools, council offices, telecentres and neighbourhood centres. The Network Centres are staffed by co-ordinators, project staff and volunteers.

The Victorian government *Connecting Communities* initiative has provided funding for hundreds of locally based providers to deliver internet access and training to Victorians who have been identified as ICT disadvantaged. Through its Skills.net program (<http://www.skills.net.au/>) (accessed 28 October 2001), it is estimated that by mid 2003, 80,000 people will have received internet training and access through the Skills.net projects in Victoria. Skills.net provides free or low-cost training to individuals and groups. This training has taken place in libraries, schools, community centres, Aboriginal co-operatives, aged care facilities, day care centres, churches, disability organisations, and employment organisations. Skills.net is funded by Multimedia Victoria and co-ordinated by VICNET. Some of the courses run by VICNET include learning how to design a web site, learning basic skills such as negotiating the internet and using e-mail, evaluating web resources and learning how to train others in these skills. VICNET is a business owned by the State Library of Victoria.

One correspondent gave an example of how Skills.net works in practice at the grassroots level. A network of schools in the La Trobe Valley, Victoria, make available the physical facilities for tutors to provide free internet training to members of the community. The target audience in this particular project is parents and older members of the community. The skills taught range from 'safe parenting' which helps parents monitor their children's use of the internet, to looking up a family history, accessing online resources such as newspapers, and learning how to do online banking. While there is a generic course, it can also be customised to the particular needs of participants.

The Northeastern Online Network (NEON) (<http://www.neon.net.au/>) has set up a number of public access locations (PALs) in the north-east of Victoria in partnership with local community organisations. Like other Skills.net projects, NEON aims to 'provide internet access to rural communities,

as a focus for information sharing, and technological awareness, as well as internet training and services'. NEON also provides web publishing opportunities.

The Skills.Net Association Cooperative (SNAC), with a membership of around 200 organisations across Victoria, was established in February 2000 and has developed from the skills.net program. Its main function is to 'promote and facilitate best practice in the use of Information and Communication Technology in community development'. SNAC is interested in practical ways of addressing social justice and access issues through its advocacy role and support services.

The *Tasmanian Communities Online Project* (<http://www.tco.asn.au>) has been similarly successful in bringing information technology skills to small communities. There are 64 community owned and managed Online Access Centres in rural and regional Tasmania, most of which have access to rent-free premises and telecommunications at no cost to the Centre and can offer low-cost access to computers and the internet, as well as one-to-one assistance in the use of these. According to the manager of the TCO initiative 'the great achievement of these Centres is that the communities see them now as being essential infrastructure', with many individuals contributing significant amounts of unpaid time to ensure the ongoing operation of the Centres. The manager suggests that those involved are 'increasingly providing leadership by demonstrating ways in which ICT can be used to enable a range of community projects that assist in small town renewal and the creation of vibrant and healthy communities.'¹⁰⁹

In 2000 a peak body was set up, *Community Tele-Services Australia Inc* (CTSA), to provide a coordinated national support base and network for these services. CTSA's primary focus is on rural rather than urban telecentres. It has received funding to establish a National Teleservices Support Unit and to work (in partnership with NOIE) on a mapping exercise that will identify the availability of suitable internet/extranet and one-way video locations that could provide access to Telecentre Services.

Adult Learners Week

Based on similar initiatives overseas, Adult Learners Week is co-ordinated by Adult Learning Australia (ALA) and funded by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). While not specifically focused on information literacy, the initiative is intended to celebrate and promote lifelong opportunities. Its stated aims include reaching out 'to those who are marginalised from learning', increasing the profile of lifelong learning in Australia, promoting the diversity of lifelong opportunities for adults and promoting the value of learning

for the community. See <http://www.adultlearnersweek.org/about.html> (accessed 30 November 2001).

Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC)

<http://www.aitect.edu.au/default.htm> (accessed 31 October 2001)

This Advisory Committee of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) represents all States and Territories and is the national forum for policy advice on issues relating to the educational uses of information and communication technologies. As the only cross-sectoral national committee in its field, responsible to all Australian Ministers of Education and Training, AICTEC is able to 'act as the authoritative national forum providing coordinated policy advice relating to the use of online technologies in education and training; be an effective vehicle for cooperative and collaborative policy development work; and encourage cross-fertilisation and shared access to ICT research and resources between systems and sectors'.¹¹⁰

Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZIIL)

<http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/about/anziil.htm> (accessed 29 October 2001)

This organisation is still evolving under the auspices of the University of South Australia. It is based on the US Institute of Information Literacy model and aims to promote information literacy and 'integrate information literacy within the total educational process'.

Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL)

<http://www.anu.edu.au/caul/> (accessed 28 October 2001)

CAUL's 2001 *Literacy Information Standards* document is based on the United States model and provides a framework 'for embedding information literacy in the design and teaching of educational programs, and for assessing the information literate individual'. The standards provide the opportunity for a continuum to be established from secondary to tertiary educational levels. They also encourage students to become more aware 'of the need for a metacognitive approach to learning, making them conscious of the explicit actions required for recognition of need, gathering, analysing, and using information'.

More recently, CAUL has initiated the *Information Literacy Assessment Research Project* which aims to develop a performance measure for information literacy. Anticipated outcomes include criteria for evaluating information literacy

programs at the tertiary level, a selection of benchmark programs and examples of good practice 'to inform institutional information literacy improvement and development'.

Information Literacy Blueprint (Griffith University)

<http://www.gu.edu.au/text/ins/lils/infolit/resources/blueprint/home.html> (accessed 31 October 2001)

Prepared in 1994 after consultation with 'a range of stakeholders' on the various campuses of the university, the Information Literacy Blueprint aims 'to provide a framework that facilitates the development of innovative partnerships between academic and Divisional staff in order to deliver challenging and well coordinated information literacy opportunities for the University community'. The Blueprint offers both a theoretical context and a strategic plan to enhance the professional development of staff and the information literacy of students.

Information Technology Literacy Project

<http://www.caudit.edu.au/>

http://www.caudit.edu.au/caudit/information/projects/itlit_2001.html (accessed 22 October 2001)

The Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT) commissioned this project. A survey of university practices in regard to information technology literacy has led to several characteristics of good practice being identified in relation to organisations, students and general staff. For example, the report suggests that 'best practice' at the organisational level might be characterised by: having one senior manager responsible for overall information technology literacy; a collaborative approach among stakeholders; a university level policy including the rationale for information technology literacy, its definition and 'ownership' at the senior level; and an implementation strategy. It also discusses the *International Computer Driving Licence* (ICDL), an internationally recognised certificate that attests to the standard of competence in the area of computer applications.¹¹¹

International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)

<http://www.acs.org.au/icdl/index1.htm> (accessed 25 March 2002)

The ICDL is based on the European model known as the *European Computer Driving Licence* (ECDL) (<http://www.ecdl.co.uk/>) and is run by the Australian Computer Society. The aim of the ICDL is 'to raise the general level of computer competence, improve productivity in the workplace and reduce user support costs'. The ICDL offers a testing

framework for ICT literacy and targets groups such as people in rural and remote areas, women returning to the workforce, mature aged people and the unemployed. The ICDL assumes no prior knowledge. The seven modules include using word files, spreadsheets, word processing, databases and filing systems, presentations and general information and communication skills. After taking the 'driving test' individuals can then move on to further training or work or simply use the skills for day-to-day transactions and activities.

NetAlert

<http://www.netalert.net.au/> (accessed 25 March 2002)

NetAlert is an independent community advisory body set up by the federal Government initially to make the internet a safer place for users. Netalert's brief has since expanded to promote the use of technology in enhancing people's lives. The new-look NetAlert provides a 'community gateway to the internet' and aims to help people use the internet confidently as a tool for communication, collaboration and education. The target audience is divided into 'under 12', 'teen', 'under 30', 'under 55' and 'senior', each with its own resources and links. The portal is still in its early stages.

7. Towards an operational model

The critical questions to be addressed in formulating a strategic plan for the development of a national coalition for information literacy advocacy are:

- what is the anticipated audience that it wishes to influence?
- what are its goals and desired outcomes?
- what form of governance would best suit its purpose? and
- what scale of operation is anticipated and what methods are envisaged?

This section of the final report considers these questions in the light of the research undertaken for the feasibility study, including consultations with key stakeholders.

Audience

Given the diversity and breadth of the field of information literacy, a national coalition for information literacy advocacy needs to have a clear sense of its intended audience. Consultations with key stakeholders indicate a range of views as to the main audience that a national coalition should be seeking to target. Not surprisingly, most suggestions tended to reflect the organisation's own target audience. Key stakeholders identified the target audience as being the general public, members of the education sector, librarians, industry leaders, those working in the community sector, and government officials. The most commonly identified groups within the category 'general public' were described as those with poor literacy skills, the unemployed, the elderly, those with disabilities and those adults who have experienced barriers to their learning. It is on behalf of these groups that much of the advocacy work would presumably be done by the coalition.

Most key stakeholders also highlighted the importance of targeting high level administrators with power to influence public policy and funding decisions, such as government ministers, senior managers, and leaders in the education, community and business sectors. This group was seen as critical to the success of the coalition if such an organisation is to be effective in representing the information needs of the most vulnerable Australians.

The identified audience in the education sector included administrators, principals and academics as well as teachers and tutors (in primary, secondary, tertiary, continuing and further education, adult and community education, vocational education and training, distance education, and special education). In a library context, those who work in, make use of and fund libraries were seen as potential mem-

bers of a national coalition's constituency. Business leaders were perceived to be important both as potential sources of support for initiatives aimed at improving information skills, and as members of a sector whose workers need to be information literate if the country is to remain globally competitive. Those already working in an advocacy role on behalf of particular disadvantaged groups were also seen as a legitimate target for the national coalition.

While several media groups were included in the feasibility study, this sector was not identified by key stakeholders as part of the intended audience for a national coalition; rather the media was seen as an adjunct in the promotion and dissemination strategies used to target key groups.

Identifying a target audience is one thing; attracting and holding the interest of the various groups within this audience is another. The National Forum on Information Literacy, the nearest equivalent to the proposed national coalition describes itself as a coalition of education, business and the community. While the list of member organisations is impressive, the overwhelming majority of members are drawn from within the education sector. Those that might be categorised as 'business' include Dow Chemical (Business Intelligence Centre), the Information Industry Association, and the United States Small Business Administration. Community groups include the National Hispanic Council on Aging and the National Consumers League. Government is represented through the Department of Commerce and the Department of Education. American Broadcasting Company News Interactive is the main media organisation in the Forum. Even an otherwise successful advocacy body such as the National Forum has not been able to achieve a genuine balance across sectors. Yet such an alliance is critical if the national coalition is to attract and hold the interest of its diverse constituent groups.

Some stakeholders warned that the involvement of business/industry could undermine the coalition's independence. This was seen to be more of a risk if individual corporations rather than peak business bodies were invited to join. A greater problem, however, is likely to be that the business community itself will need to be convinced of the potential benefits to be derived from becoming partners in a national information literacy initiative of this kind.

Goals and desired outcomes

For the national coalition to be effective in its advocacy role, the issue of terminology and a more precisely defined mission for the coalition need to be addressed and accepted by the key stakeholders. Feedback given in response to the Draft Report suggested that 'the clearest statement of the coalition's mission and goals is based on the project brief

for this report:

Mission Statement: The challenge in a democratic society is to ensure that all people have the right to access and use the vast amount of information that is available in order to enhance their lives. A thriving national and global culture, economy and democracy will be best advanced by people who recognise their need for information, and identify, locate, access, evaluate and apply the needed information.

Goals: Promoting and encouraging the development of information literacy skills in all individuals by promoting and advancing the integration of information literacy into community, business, government, public library, school and tertiary education programs; ensuring an awareness of information literacy for lifelong learning; and identifying and promoting existing best practice in information literacy, targeting key sectors and program areas.¹¹²

While these statements serve as a useful starting point for debate about the proposed goals and outcomes of a national coalition, it is important that the mission statement evolves from the coalition itself — that is, from those members who form the nucleus of the initial organisation — rather than being 'imposed'. A sense of ownership in terms of focus and direction is likely to be a critical factor in determining the degree of practical support that is given to the coalition. Several key stakeholders emphasised the need for 'dialogue' and for 'developing agreement' about the direction and content of the coalition's field of interest. For some, membership of the coalition was conditional on the coalition adopting as part of its mission a particular issue (such as equity of access or lifelong learning).

The mission statement needs to articulate and promote a sufficiently broad vision to encompass the diverse interests and concerns of stakeholders. As indicated earlier in the report, information literacy has been defined in a variety of ways. For some it forms part of a broader suite of conventional literacy skills; for others it is defined in terms of active citizenship or consumer protection; others equate information literacy with computer literacy or lifelong learning or critical thinking; it has also been invested with almost miraculous attributes associated with the betterment of society.

Key stakeholders talk about information literacy in terms of 'navigating knowledge', 'creating knowledge', active citizenship, technological literacy, using the internet effectively, and the possession of lifelong skills. If the coalition is to use the term 'information literacy' within its title, there must be a common understanding of the scope that is intended, or at least an agreement that the term retains a degree of

flexibility in its interpretation to allow for the broad range of organisations that may wish to participate. Government bodies were more likely to define information literacy in terms of its role in wealth creation and global competitiveness. Both the definition and the mission statement must recognise the diversity of the coalition's intended constituency.

Consultations with key stakeholders suggest relatively harmonious and common understandings of what the main focus or task of the national coalition should be. The most commonly expressed goal related to the question of access and equity. Access was talked about in terms of 'empowering' people, and of reducing the digital divide in an Australian context, and ranged from ensuring access to broadband infrastructure and training opportunities to publicising the adverse impact of the digital divide and creating public debate about the issue.

Other tasks seen to be within the scope of the coalition's mission included coming to an agreed understanding about information literacy (including how it relates to lifelong learning and critical thinking); raising awareness about the importance of information literacy; promoting the concept of learning networks/communities; linking information literacy to active citizenship; identifying key issues for debate (such as the digital divide); and lobbying for greater funding for information literacy initiatives, including professional development.

One issue that did not attract much attention from stakeholders was that of ensuring consumers are adequately protected. Only one organisation identified consumer protection as a priority, citing as an example the need for individuals to be able to make an informed choice about the best electricity provider to meet their needs. Yet the feasibility study makes clear the growing importance of this component of information literacy, particularly as more people gain home internet access and choose to conduct financial transactions or business online. The mission statement will need to recognise the critical importance of information literacy for consumers.

The coalition's mission will also need to provide sufficient uniqueness of purpose to substantiate its establishment when there are other national peak bodies that have elements in common with the coalition. As indicated earlier, some key stakeholders have expressed concern that the proposed coalition might cut across advocacy work already being done by other peak bodies. For example, a possible overlap was seen to exist between the roles of ANZIIL and the coalition at the national level. Uniqueness need not rely on the coalition assuming a role that others do not have however. It may be sufficient and appropriate for the coalition

to provide a common focus of action for organisations that are otherwise diverse but overlap only in their vested interest to promote and advance information literacy.

In this regard, the coalition could act as a rallying point and instrument of leverage that offers its member organisations an ability to achieve substantially improved advocacy for information literacy through unity of purpose. To be useful to its members, the coalition must achieve a collective outcome greater than the sum of the investments (in time, effort or resources) that its members are required to contribute.

Consultation with key stakeholders confirms that initial interest in the proposal for a national coalition is likely to be greatest within the education and library sectors. The coalition's long-term viability, however, will depend on its ability to attract and hold the interest of the wider stakeholder community, particularly those in the government and business sectors.

Governance

This issue, together with the question of how such a body might be funded, has proved to be the most problematic aspect of developing a strategic plan. Before the coalition can begin to operate, it is necessary to consider what might be the most effective form of governance. To determine the most appropriate structure, it is necessary to consider the most likely members of the coalition, how those members and the coalition might want to interact, and the jurisdiction in which its main actions are accomplished.

The formation of the coalition will need to address the formal structure (or determine that only an informal structure is necessary), the initial membership, a model for governance and the processes for including new members. Each of these items is mutually interdependent and also affected by the decision about the coalition's purpose. The structure must provide mechanisms that allow members to participate in the decision-making processes of the coalition and to engage in coalition activities to the extent that each member chooses for itself.

The need for a formal structure increases in relation to the level of resources that the coalition could be expected to administer. This formal structure does not necessarily require dedicated staffing but would need to provide accountability for the application of resources to projects even in situations where the human resources are provided on a casual or volunteer basis. If the coalition is likely to engage in projects requiring funds to be administered directly by the coalition, or it is potentially contracted to provide services related to its purpose, then a formal incorporation is advisable. In that case, governing documents such as a constitution should

be created.

An initial consideration in determining the structure is the question of whether the coalition operates at a national level only or has both national and state-based activity. This question would not arise if all the member organisations were themselves national bodies as it would be assumed that the coalition would operate only at a national level in that case. In many cases, peak bodies are formed to focus national representation on behalf of a collection of state/territory-based organisations. This often occurs where the state bodies have been formed over time and then seek nationally coordinated activity or representation.

If the state/territory-based organisations are unique or only one organisation from each state is affiliated with the national body, then the development of a formal structure for the national body and representation of the state/territories is an uncomplicated process. This in part is aided by the relatively small number of states/territories that need to be represented in Australian peak bodies that are based on a geographically representative structure. Within such bodies the interaction between national and state/territory is frequently a process of multilateral support across all member organisations. Benefits are often bi-directional between the national organisation and the state/territory member organisations.

Consultation with key stakeholders has done little to further the strategic plan in respect to the issues of governance and funding mainly because there were so many variant models. It was suggested, for example, that the coalition might be a formally constituted body with salaried officials; a Round Table to a clearinghouse; an informal network of organisations with a memorandum of understanding; and an initially loose coalition that would gradually become a more formal organisation. Several stakeholders suggested that the coalition would need to be affiliated with a prominent body — such as NOIE, the NLA or ALIA — in order to ensure credibility, a high profile and the necessary public and political influence.

Funding

Key stakeholders agreed overwhelmingly on the importance of obtaining government funding to ensure long-term sustainability. Information literacy is a national issue that goes to the heart of the federal government's economic strategy. In the Joint Ministerial Statement on Education and Training in the Information Economy, issued by MCEETYA ministers in December 2000, for example, the following 'highest priorities' for co-operation were identified:

- ensuring that the education and training sector is able to provide all learners with opportunities to

develop their ability to use technology confidently and creatively, and to develop the specialist skills needed to service the needs of the information economy;

- supporting education and training workers, especially teachers, to acquire and maintain the skills needed to take full advantage of the potential of ICT to transform learning;
- providing effective and affordable access to the internet for all learners, regardless of their geographic location;
- promoting collaboration in the development and dissemination of high quality digital educational content, services and applications that enable Australian learners to gain maximum education benefits from the online revolution, while also developing a market and generating export income;
- sharing leading practice and research on ICT issues; and
- working across agencies at all levels of government to ensure the development of a policy and regulatory framework that supports the uptake of ICT in education and training'.¹¹³

This declaration recognises the importance of having an information literate country and commits the various governments in Australia to working collaboratively to achieve these ends. As one stakeholder suggested, the Joint Statement 'can be used to provide leverage' in the funding of programs associated with MCEETYA's priorities.

NOIE was also identified as a possible source of funding given the compatibility of NOIE's work on the information economy and information literate consumers and the kinds of issues most likely to be of interest to a national coalition.

Other suggestions for funding options were to obtain industry sponsorship for the position of Executive Officer, to collect fees from membership organisations, and to approach business groups for support for specific projects. For example, it was suggested that it would be in the interests of IT companies to support an organisation that could lead to more people purchasing computers and software packages; at the same time these IT corporations would be assisting the community in practical ways. It would also be in the interests of the major banks to support an initiative that assists people to take greater advantage of online transaction services. As part of its financial strategy the coalition would need to target those groups whose interests they are serving through their advocacy role.

Non-financial support

Key stakeholders were more willing to commit to practical

forms of assistance that did not involve a financial contribution. The main kinds of support offered were 'goodwill', access to a substantial membership base, dissemination of information, publicity through publications, infrastructure to contact schools, time, advice in regard to operational matters. Most key stakeholders indicated they would be prepared to join the coalition although for some this was conditional on whether the coalition's mission statement was linked to particular goals identified by the organisation.

Possible models

The structure for cooperation between multiple national bodies occurs in many forms. This sub-section of the report looks at several models that could provide useful insights and information for a national coalition. The *National Education Forum* (NEF), for example, is a coalition of 34 national associations of practising educators and parents created in 1992 with a view to enhancing their individual and collective capacity to respond to national education policy, issues, initiatives and directions.¹¹⁴ Membership of the NEF is a broad community consisting of professional associations in many specific curriculum areas and educational administration, teacher educator organisations, unions and parent and student organisations. The membership fee is \$150 per annum. The NEF operates with a small elected executive of President, Secretary, Treasurer and one member without portfolio. Secretariat services are provided by one of the member associations with funding from NEF.

The organisation meets three times a year, twice in Canberra and once at an alternative location. Its ability to operate effectively, to represent a wide range of viewpoints on educational issues and to actively participate in national activity is evidence of the value that broad-based coalitions can have.

An alternative model for a coalition of national interests, and one that has been mentioned several times already in this report, is that of the *National Forum on Information Literacy* in the USA.¹¹⁵ It has no membership fees but was established with modest funding from the American Library Association (ALA) and continues to receive a small annual fund from ALA. The Forum has no formal organisational structure other than the appointment of a voluntary Chair. It relies on in-kind support for minor administrative functions and appears to operate as an information-sharing forum and opportunity for collaborative action with subsets of its membership. That assessment is substantiated by the comments from its Chair, Patricia Senn Breivik, during the first Australian national conference on information literacy:

We thought in very traditional terms of setting a national agenda initially, but we soon realised the right approach was to permeate and infuse these

national organisations with the concepts of information literacy and where appropriate, resource based learning, in ways that were meaningful to their very diverse memberships.¹¹⁶

The Forum has therefore tended to 'progress' its interests through member organisations rather than in its own right. Projects have been funded and staffed by individual member organisations or have arisen through interaction between a small group of members with initial prompting by the Forum.

Hence it is possible to discern a distinction between the model of action by the National Forum on behalf of its members and the model of individual action by Forum members fostered through interaction within the Forum community.

Given that the National Forum seems to be the only model of a broadly based national coalition for information literacy available, it is useful to consider whether the Forum model is feasible and/or desirable within an Australian context. Several features of the National Forum are influenced by the American context in which it operates. Professor Philip Candy has identified three such features that make the United States experience different: 'the scale of the American economy, their tradition of establishing special interest groups and the concentration of major national bodies', especially in Washington D.C. itself.¹¹⁷ Patricia Senn Breivik has also pointed to the fact that most of the organisations that make up the Forum are based in the country's capital. In addition, she has indicated some scepticism that the Forum's 'nonfinancing model would work anywhere else'.¹¹⁸ There is a strong voluntary element and much of the vision, drive and energy comes from the Chair herself.

Another overseas group that may provide a useful model for the national coalition is the Irish *Expert Group on Future Skills Needs* (EGFSN).¹¹⁹ Initially established in 1997 as an (Interim) Skills Group by the Irish Government, its main purpose is to identify the existing and future skills needs of key sectors of the economy and to provide advice as to how these needs can best be met. Its usefulness as a model for a national coalition of information literacy is in the successful partnership it has been able to maintain across industry, trade unions, government and education sectors. It has an independent Chair appointed by Government and its members include business people, educationalists, policy makers, public servants and 'members of the industrial promotion agencies'. The group's objectives are specific and its agreed focus is the IT sector. Its work is carried out largely through cross-sectoral Working Groups. Its five reports to date have made a significant impact on government policies and the Irish economy, to an extent where the Government has determined its strategic and operational direction until October

2004. It operates under the aegis of the Industrial Policy and Science & Technology Policy Board (Forfás). One reason for the success of this partnership model has undoubtedly been the level of support provided by the Irish Government.

An example of a successful trans-national peak body is the **European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (encatc)**, which currently has 101 members from 31 countries. Logistically it is an interesting example of how an alliance of culturally diverse groups can function as a united advocacy body in the field of cultural management. One of its stated goals is 'to be an independent and effective umbrella organisation which supports its members and lobbies on their behalf on a national and international level, addressing their needs to opinion leaders and decision makers who can exert influence on research and development activities in the field of cultural management'.¹²⁰

Its aim is to be as financially self-supporting as possible. It offers three categories of membership with a sliding scale of fees: *full membership* with the right to vote, mainly for institutions playing a strategic role in the field; *associate membership*, which includes professional associations and research institutes; and *supporting members*, which includes individual and corporate donors, trusts and foundations. It has a seven-member board elected by an annual General Assembly and has operational links with UNESCO, the European Commission and the European Cultural Foundation.

The **National Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers**, an advocacy group in the United States, operates with a formally constituted Executive Board, Advisory Board and an Office Manager. Its main usefulness as a model for an Australian coalition lies in the breadth of experience board members bring to the organisation and the type of advocacy work the coalition has undertaken.¹²¹ The coalition offers eleven categories of financial membership although payment is ultimately a matter of what the individual or organisation can afford. It advocates on behalf of both customers and practitioners.

Community Tele-Services Australia (CTSA) provides a useful model of a recently formed rural advocacy body. Established in its current form in late 1999, CTSA's main focus is to provide a co-ordinated national service for rural Tele-service Centres. It has obtained funding of \$100,000 over two years from Regional Solutions to enable the initial establishment of the organisation. The federal government has provided a further \$21,000 through the *Networking the Nation* program for CTSA to work with NOIE on Part 1 of a proposed Network Plan. As of July 2001 there were 167 members and this membership base was expected to increase significantly over the next few months as the

organisation becomes more established. CSTA operates with a voluntary Board made up of representatives from different states and territories, a paid Executive Officer and paid support staff ('as determined by needs, available funding and grants held'). It also has 'special interest chapters which are the focus of the grassroots participation and are co-ordinated by interested individuals on a voluntary basis'. A clear outline of the Executive Officer's responsibilities, and the draft strategic objectives and operating plan are available on the CTSA web site.¹²² CTSA's main usefulness as a model for the proposed national coalition for information literacy advocacy is its online account of how it has gone about the process of setting up this advocacy partnership, including the kind of thinking that has been done about its possible operational structure.

Another useful model in an Australian context is the **Australian Digital Alliance** which is hosted by the National Library of Australia.¹²³ The main focus of this national body is on issues to do with copyright law. Structurally, the ADA has a Chair and Board, which meets twice a year. Day to day decisions are made by a full time Executive Officer whose position is funded jointly by the library sector and members. The NLA provides an office for the Executive Officer and, until recently, also did the bookkeeping. The ADA has recently become incorporated. Members of the alliance include 'schools, universities, consumer groups, major cultural institutions, IT companies, scientific and other research organisations, libraries and individuals'. Fees for individuals are \$55 and for organisations \$550, with some members paying substantially more in order to support the organisation's advocacy work. As an alliance of private and non-profit bodies presenting a single and effective voice for a particular issue, the ADA may offer a possible model of governance and funding, particularly in its attachment to the NLA, although most stakeholders have indicated they would want to see a stronger financial base for the proposed national coalition for information literacy advocacy.

A different kind of model is offered by the **Business/Higher Education Round Table (B-HERT)**. Established in 1990, this forum for the academic, research and business communities pursues 'initiatives that will advance the goals and improve the performance of both business and higher education for the benefit of Australian society'.¹²⁴ Membership is by invitation and consists of the vice chancellors of Australian universities and the chief executives of major Australian corporations and research organisations. Corporate member organisations include BOC Gases Australia Limited, Ernst & Young, Hewlett Packard Australasia Limited, Shell Australia, ANZ Banking comprises eleven members who meet face to face three times a year.

The 70 members of B-HERT meet twice a year in May and November and the location of these meetings alternates between Melbourne and Sydney. B-HERT has an Executive Director and a full time Executive Assistant. Communication with members is done via mailouts and the B-HERT web site. Members pay an annual subscription and this is B-HERT's primary source of funding.

The **Australian Literacy Federation** no longer exists although its web site is still operational at the time of writing.¹²⁵ Initially set up in 1990 as a federation of the five peak English and Literacy education professional associations in Australia, it represented over 30,000 academics and teachers in the fields of English and literacy. Two of these peak bodies, the Australian Literacy Educators' Association and the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) have also been identified as key stakeholders in the national coalition consultations. While ALF's demise was the product of a number of factors, the experience of this relatively short-lived national peak body highlights the need for a national coalition to have a secure source of funding, a paid Executive Officer in the job over a sustained period, and a sensitive handling of member organisations' own spheres of influence. In this sense the ALF is useful more as a cautionary tale than as a possible role model.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Compelling reasons exist for promoting the skills and understandings associated with information literacy amongst Australians. Both nationally, to enable Australia to compete effectively as a knowledge economy in a global marketplace and personally, to enable individuals full access to the benefits of citizenship and consumer services in an information society, information literacy is crucial in this age of information and high technology.

In this context, a national coalition for information literacy advocacy has an important role to play. The feasibility study indicates that the main value of a national coalition is in the role it might take in:

- promoting awareness of the importance of information literacy;
- lobbying for funding for research and project support;
- disseminating examples of good practice to practitioners;
- assisting with policy development in this area;
- ensuring that information literacy is infused through all layers of government, education and across all fields;
- advocating on behalf of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society to ensure they are brought in from the margins;
- representing all sectors and not simply the business or education communities;
- formation of partnerships and alliances across the business, community, education and government sectors;
- providing one agency and voice through which communications can be channelled;
- ensuring that the message about the importance of information literacy is disseminated beyond the library profession; and
- encouraging the development of and commitment to information literacy standards.

Several factors have been identified as potentially problematic unless given due consideration by those developing the model for a national coalition. These include:

- the possibility of autonomous peak bodies with their own funding and other arrangements feeling aggrieved at another level of 'intervention' or authority above them;
- a diverse range of views about the meaning of infor-

mation literacy that are not easily reconciled;

- potential demarcation disputes about which tier of government (local, state or federal) or which sector 'owns' information literacy;
- a possible overlap with peak bodies in literacy;
- the need to ensure the ongoing interest and involvement of nonlibrary groups, in particular the business sector;
- the need for securing dependable sources of funding to ensure sustainability and planning; and
- Australia's geography which means travel and accommodation costs are expensive overheads.

The feasibility study raises questions to do with the role of the national coalition in relation to other peak bodies. Thought needs to be given as to what will be unique about the national coalition. What can it offer that other peak organisations in the literacy and/or information technology fields are not currently offering? The Australian Council for Adult Literacy's recent paper, *A Literate Australia*, for example, calls for a coordinated approach to ensuring digital literacy among Australians. It suggests that one strategy for breaking down the digital divide is the 'comprehensive provision of training in information and communication technologies in tandem with foundational literacy and numeracy skills'. In addition, ACAL also recommends that a National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Summit be held in 2002 and that a co-ordinated National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Policy be adopted, one that takes a 'whole-of-government approach' to literacy.¹²⁶ It is not clear to what extent a national coalition for information literacy would be concerning itself with similar strategies and initiatives and to what extent it could be offering a distinctive agenda of its own. It is also not clear how a national coalition would complement or replicate the work of ACAL's proposed Australian Commission for Adult Literacy and Numeracy. Once established would the national coalition embrace ACAL and assume responsibility for the issues currently seen as the sphere of ACAL? If so subsumed, what role would ACAL then have in relation to its traditional constituency and to the new umbrella body?

Perhaps the most problematic area highlighted in the feasibility study is the question of how the coalition might be structured and organised. While the National Forum provides a useful model for a similar coalition of interested groups, it also has some features that suggest it may not be entirely suitable. For example, it was originally hoped that such a body would become redundant once information literacy awareness had been 'infused' in the various member organisations.¹²⁷ It is difficult to imagine a national coalition in Australia contemplating redundancy as an objective,

particularly when the wellbeing of so many disadvantaged groups is at stake. Advocacy would seem to entail, almost by definition, speaking out in a sustained way on behalf of those who do not have a voice. Similarly, while the National Forum appears to have no ongoing source of funding, an Australian coalition would need to secure reliable funding to enable a strong and effective advocacy role.

As indicated earlier in the report, there was a difference of opinion among stakeholders in regard to the type of governance that a national coalition should adopt. While a sample of possible models has been provided, it is difficult to see how decisions can be made in this regard until the coalition's target audience, goals and mission have been clarified.

It is clear from the feasibility study that a mutually acceptable understanding of information literacy by key stakeholders needs to be developed if advocacy at a national level is to be effective. This definition needs to be broad enough to encompass, but not be reduced to, the skills and attributes required by the new technologies; at the same time it cannot be so broad that it becomes empty of meaning or platitudinous.

The United Kingdom information literacy expert Sheila Webber also cautions against 'a tendency to spend a lot of time drawing up lists and definitions amongst members, rather than communicating with/researching target groups' conceptions, practice and needs'.¹²⁸ Fortunately, while the literature review suggests a wide range of definitional views, feedback from the key stakeholders suggests a good basis for reaching consensus about the fundamental attributes of information literacy, whether this is ultimately defined in terms of a person's attributes ('Information literate individuals can ...') or the concept itself ('Information literacy is ...').

The national coalition needs to recognise that information literacy is broader than technology skills. Even though most of the initiatives highlighted earlier in the report, and much of the conceptual work that has been done in the field, tend to focus on literacy in a technological context, information literacy embraces all kinds of information: electronic, non-electronic and verbal. It should not be reduced simply to ICT skills but also encompass those skills traditionally associated with literacy. Information literacy may be thought of as a 'new literacy' for a new age but should also encompass the basic skills that enable a person to read, write and speak about this new age.

This cannot be stressed too strongly. Even key stakeholders who were adamant that information literacy means something more than computer literacy often collapsed the two in conversation.

While information literacy projects are generally initiatives

in technology, the sample of initiatives and projects included in the final report indicate the richness and breadth of the work that is currently being done in this area of information literacy. A national coalition could initiate further research to determine what constitutes good and not-so-good practice in the field, help disseminate models of good practice and initiate new projects.

While the feasibility study has perhaps raised more questions than it can answer, there is sufficient support for the concept of a national coalition for the idea to be pursued further and taken to the next stage. What is still not clear though is how such a body might be constituted. The only other overseas model that exists currently is not entirely suitable for an Australian context. While it may be useful to look at models in allied fields such as health or education, it seems that there are still many issues to be worked through before deciding which direction would be most appropriate.

As a result of the feedback gained during the course of the feasibility study, it is suggested that the project to develop a national coalition for information literacy advocacy be carried out in three phases. Such a staged approach would enable a strong and clear foundation to be established and would give sufficient time for the concept to gain acceptance within the community.

Recommendations

- That a national coalition for information literacy advocacy be established.
- That the project to develop the national coalition be carried out in three phases:
 - Stage 1: completion of the feasibility study and final report;
 - Stage 2: implementation over a two year period of recommendations relating to the proposal to establish an interim body; and
 - Stage 3: formation of the coalition at the conclusion of this two-year (Stage 2) period.
- That an interim body consisting of a small group of representatives from the key stakeholders consulted during the feasibility study, and/or other stakeholders considered appropriate by the Information Literacy Steering Group, be formed with a view to implementing the recommendations of this report. This core group:
 - should consist of those who are likely to have a firm commitment to developing the coalition; and
 - should be committed to a timeline that allows Stage 2 of the project to be completed within two

- years; and
- should aim to phase out its own existence by the end of this two-year (Stage 2) period.
- That the interim body, taking into account the information provided in the final report and the expertise of its own members, prepares a mission statement setting out the short and long term goals of the coalition. As part of this process, during the first year of Stage 2, the interim body needs to:
 - agree on a definition of information literacy that is mutually acceptable to the key stakeholders represented in the core group;
 - identify the priorities of the national coalition and how these will be achieved;
 - establish a realistic timeline for implementation of these goals and strategies; and
 - establish contact with other comparable bodies to determine the usefulness and appropriateness of their structures and operational methods for the national coalition.
- That during the second year of Stage 2, the interim body develops a long term strategy that involves:
 - deciding who will be invited to join the coalition, what benefits members can expect, the costs of membership, and the mechanism(s) by which communication with members will be carried out;
 - exploring funding options, particularly from industry and government, to offset operational costs and provide a more secure source of longer term funding; and
 - addressing physical and legal issues to do with governance (such as incorporation).
- That the interim body be phased out by the end of the second year (of Stage 2) and that a national coalition for information literacy advocacy be established. The project would then enter its final phase, which involves developing a work program for the coalition.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey of Australian organisations

Appendix 2: List of organisations surveyed in the feasibility study

Appendix 3: Results of the initial e-mail survey of organisations

Appendix 4: Survey of key stakeholders

APPENDIX 1: Survey of Australian Organisations

As part of the National Coalition for Information Literacy Advocacy Feasibility Study, a survey of relevant organisations within Australia was conducted by e-mail (or fax where no e-mail address was available) to ascertain interest in joining the proposed coalition. Ninety organisations (see Appendix 2) were contacted in total, with new organisations being suggested by respondents and the steering group members during the time of the survey. Follow-up e-mails were sent on two occasions. This resulted in 44 responses of which three were negative. Appendix 3 provides a list of the 41 organisations, which were interested in joining such a coalition or would like more information before making their decision. It also provides contact details and a short summary of the organisation.

It is suggested that organisations which have responded with an affirmative or 'would like more information' response be regarded as the 'critical mass'. When there is further information about the proposed national coalition, a definitive commitment can be requested, in addition to suggestions for further potential members. The feasibility study has identified some gaps in the categories of society. Thus, for example, there are few organisations in the business and media categories. It is recommended that relevant organisations in these areas be pursued further.

The survey sent by e-mail to potential members of a national coalition follows:

Australian Council for Educational Research

National Coalition for Information Literacy Advocacy

Feasibility Study

ACER is conducting a feasibility study for the development of a national coalition for information literacy advocacy. The study is being carried out on behalf of the Australian Library and Information Association, the National Library of Australia, the National Office for the Information Economy and the Information Literacy Steering Group. The deadline for completion of the project is November 2001.

The purpose of the coalition will be to promote the integration of information literacy skills into community, business, public library, school and tertiary education programs. The model will be based on America's National Forum on Information Literacy (<http://www.infolit.org/>).

Information literacy as used in the study refers to an understanding and set of abilities that recognise when information is needed and that have the capacity to identify, locate, evaluate and use effectively this information. Information literacy is considered to be a prerequisite for participative citizenship; social inclusion; the creation of new knowledge; personal; corporate and organisational empowerment; and learning for life.

As part of the feasibility study ACER is gathering information about relevant Australian organisations. This information is required in order to plan the coalition. It will be used only for the project and will form the basis of a published report. Your organisation has been identified as a potential member of the proposed coalition and we invite you to complete the attached short survey.

The survey needs to be returned by Friday 5 October 2001.

If you have any queries or would like to know more about the project please contact

Marianne Fleming
Research Officer
ACER
Private Bag 55
Camberwell 3124 Victoria

Tel: 03 9277 5608, Fax: 03 9277 5500, fleming@acer.edu.au

Information Literacy Survey

Name of institution:

Contact person and details of how to contact:

1. Would your organisation be interested in participating in the proposed national coalition for information literacy advocacy?

i.e. Do you see this as a legitimate role for your organisation to be engaged in?

Yes/No/Need more information before we can decide

2. What strengths do you think your organisation could bring to a national coalition for information literacy advocacy?

3. How many members does your organisation have?

4. What is your organisation currently doing to promote awareness of information literacy among your members?

5. We need to know more about your organisation in terms of its structure, objectives, services and programs. If this information is available on the internet what is the website address?

If this is not available electronically could you please send an organisational profile to Marianne Fleming at the address given above.

6. Would you be happy for us to contact you again to discuss the proposed national coalition idea further? If so, could you please supply the relevant contact details below.

Name

Phone

E-mail

Thank you for your assistance.

APPENDIX 2: List of Organisations Surveyed in the Feasibility Study

The following organisations were invited to respond to the National Coalition for Information Literacy Advocacy Feasibility Study Survey:

Note: Categories are a rough guide only. Organisations may fit into other categories, eg. libraries in education sectors.

Business

Australian Business Foundation
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)
Australian Human Resource Institute (AHRI)
Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA)
Business Council of Australia
Internet Industry Association
Small Business Victoria

Community

Australian Consumers Association
Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL)
Australian Council for the Arts
Australian Council for Social Services (ACOSS)
Australian Parents Council
Council on the Ageing
Internet Society of Australia
Multimedia Victoria
National Seniors Association

Education

Adult Learning Australia
Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE)
Australian Council for Education through Technology
Australian Literacy Educators' Association
Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council
Australian Teachers Education Association
Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
Business/Higher Education Round Table
Council of Adult Education
Education.au limited
Education Network Australia (EdNA)
Institute of Adult Education and Community Services
International Adelaide Institute of TAFE
Lifelong Learning Network, University of Canberra
NSW Board of Adult and Community Education
New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER)
Open Learning Australia

Professional Teachers' Council
Queensland University of Technology, Faculty of Information Technology
TAFE Frontiers
Technology Education Federation of Australia
University of Ballarat
University of Melbourne
University of Technology – Sydney
Workers Educational Association of South Australia

Government

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee
Australian National Training Authority
Brisbane City Council
City of Greater Dandenong
Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business
Department of Family and Community Services
Department of Health and Aged Care
Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Human Rights Commission and Equal Opportunity Commission
National Centre for Vocational Education (NCVER)
National Office for the Information Economy
NetAlert
VICNET (Skills.net)

Libraries

Australian Public Libraries Forum
Council of Australian Universities Librarians (CAUL)
National Library of Australia
National Working Group for TAFE Library Services
State Library of New South Wales (CASL)
State Library of the Northern Territory (CASL)
State Library of South Australia (CASL)
State Library of Tasmania (CASL)

State Library of Victoria (CASL)

Media

Australian Broadcasting Authority
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Australian Children's Television Foundation
Australian Press Council
Fairfax
News Limited
Publishing and Broadcasting Limited [fax]
SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) [fax]
Young Media Australia

Professional Organisations

Association of Professional Teachers
Australian Association of TAFE Managers
Australian Computer Society
Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE)
Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
Australian Library and Information Association, National
TAFE Section
Australian Library and Information Association, School
Libraries Section
Australian Primary Principals' Association (APPA)
Australian School Library Association (ASLA)
Australian Society of Authors (ASA)
Australian Writers Guild
Victorian Information Technology Teachers Association
(VITTA)

Unions

Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)
Australian Education Union (AEU)
Australian Higher Education Industrial Association
(AHEIA)

APPENDIX 3: Results of the E-mail Survey

Of the organisations listed in Appendix 2, responses were received from 44 organisations. Three organisations declined the invitation. The following 41 organisations indicated that they were either interested in joining a National Coalition for Information Literacy Advocacy, or would like further information about the nature of the proposed coalition:

Adult Learning Australia (ALA)
Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE)
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)
Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF)
Australian Computer Society
Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL)
Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE)
Australian Education Union (AEU)
Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee
Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA)
Australian Library and Information Association – Schools (Victoria)
Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA)
Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)
Australian Parents Council (APC)
Australian Primary Principals Association Inc (APPA)
Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC)
Australian School Library Association (ASLA)
Australian Society of Authors (ASA)
Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)
Business Council of Australia
Council of Adult Education (CAE)
Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL)
Council on the Ageing (Australia) (COTA)
Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA)
Education.au Limited
Internet Society of Australia
National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
National Library of Australia
National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE)
National Working Group for TAFE Library Services
NetAlert

Queensland University of Technology
SBS (Special Broadcasting Service)
State Library of New South Wales
State Library of South Australia
State Library of Victoria
University of Melbourne
University of Technology, Sydney
VICNET
Victorian Information Technology Teachers' Association (VITTA)
Young Media Australia (YMA)

Potential Member Organisations – Summaries

The following summaries provide a brief overview of potential member organisations of the national coalition including some brief statements about their structure and objectives, and contributions where relevant in the area of information literacy. Further information about these organisations can be found on their websites. (Please note that not all organisations are committed to joining such a coalition, but all have expressed an interest and wish to be kept informed.)

Adult Learning Australia

<http://www.ala.asn.au>
Contact person: Mr Tony Brown
Phone: 02 6251 9918
E-mail: tony.brown@ala.asn.au

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) is the peak body for adult and community education providers and for those interested in adult learning. Its membership includes both organisational (210) and individual (410) members. There are branches in every State and Territory, with an elected representative from each Branch being part of the National Executive. The members of ALA work in the provision of education and learning in community-based settings.

ALA's four objectives are concerned with promoting a democratic, nurturing, productive and learning society. Thus life-long learning is a key feature. ALA publishes a newsletter and a journal, in addition to statements and discussion papers, and holds a national conference. It represents the field of adult and community education internationally.

Australian Association For The Teaching Of English (AATE)

<http://www.aate.org.au>
Contact person: Ms Robyn Cations, Executive Officer
Phone: 08 8332 2845
E-mail: aate@aate.org.au

The Australian Association for the Teaching of English is the

national 'umbrella' organisation for all Australian state and territory associations for the teaching of English. Members of the state and territory associations are automatically members of AATE. There are some 5000 members. The services provided by AATE to its members include: publication and distribution of resources for teachers and student use, assisting with the organisation of national conferences and seminars (their next conference in September 2002 is titled 'e-Volving Literacies'), publication of a quarterly journal, providing funds for research projects and reviewing and responding to educational initiatives at both state and national levels.

AATE fosters the use of information communication technology in the English classroom and keeps members aware of the latest developments which may be useful in their teaching. The organisation has recently published a book on the use of ICT in the English classroom and produces articles for journals. This also occurs at the State level.

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)

<http://www.acci.asn.au>

Contact person: Mr Steve Balzary, Director Employment and Education or Ms Mary Nicolson, National Manager Business Education Projects

Phone: 02 6270 8028 (Steve); 02 6270 8066 (Mary)

E-mail: nicolsonm@acci.asn.au

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has forty member organisations, involving Chambers of Commerce in each State and Territory and a nationwide network of industry associations. It is the peak body for Australian business associations and through its members represents more than 350 000 employers. Its role is to represent the views of employers to government and to the community. It also plays an advocacy role.

ACCI publishes a range of publications including issues and discussion papers and reports. Among other areas, ACCI has an interest in a broad range of education and training issues through its holistic schools industry strategy. ACCI's strength in relation to a national coalition for information literacy advocacy is its role in representing the views of employers and its network of contacts with business and industry associations.

Australian Children's Television Foundation

<http://www.actf.com.au>

Contact person: Ms Charmaine Taylor

Phone: 03 9419 8800

E-mail: charmaine.taylor@actf.com.au

The Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) is a national not-for profit organisation. Its role is to 'encourage

development, production and dissemination of high quality television programs, films and other audiovisual media for children'. The availability of quality programs that are educational, entertaining and that reflect the multicultural diversity and heritage of Australia are of immense value, as many children spend considerable amounts of time watching television. The ACTF also provides books and teaching materials for all their programs, offers free lesson plans on their website and conducts educational workshops. It has a resource centre open to the public and works with community groups across Australia.

The ACTF has strong expertise in production in the multimedia area as well as in writing educational materials for students from Prep to Year 12. It promotes information literacy through the production of videos, software and educational packages. The ACTF newsletter, Education News, which is distributed to educational institutions, draws attention to the use of ACTF products to teach visual literacy. The organisation also provides speakers to conferences and workshops to talk about visual literacy and the use of film and television in the classroom.

Australian Computer Society

<http://www.acs.org.au>

Contact person: Mr Dennis Furini, Chief Executive

Phone: 02 9299 3666

E-mail: dennis.furini@acs.org.au

The Australian Computer Society is the largest body of IT professionals in Australia, with more than 16 000 members. Its mission is to 'advance professional excellence in information technology'. The ACS runs the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) and promotes this widely as a Base Level Certification. It has recently established the ACS Foundation. Its role is to promote better education and research in IT.

In addition to being the public voice of IT professionals, it has a commitment to the community at large to ensure the positive use of IT. One of its objectives is 'to extend the knowledge and understanding of IT in the community'.

Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL)

<http://www.acal.edu.au>

Contact person: Dr Geraldine Castleton, President

Phone: 07 3875 5925

E-mail: G.Castleton@mailbox.gu.edu.au

The ACAL is a national advocacy group for adult literacy. The national network operates through affiliated state councils. Although ACAL has approximately 320 members in its own right, it has a wider membership, as membership of the state affiliated councils gives access to ACAL membership rights. The ACAL Vision Statement signals an intention 'to lead Australia in the development and promotion of literacy

practice and policy’.

ACAL is actively engaged in promoting adult literacy issues through its bi-monthly newsletters, national forums and annual conferences. The organisation is also actively involved in steering committees of national projects (such as the current Access and Equity On-line Project funded by ANTA), and is often invited to respond to draft national policy/ discussion papers in the area of adult literacy. ACAL is very concerned about ‘the growing divide between the information rich and information poor’ and ‘the impact and demands of information and communication technologies’ for those it represents.

Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE)

<http://www.acce.edu.au>

Contact person: Ms Michelle Williams, President

Phone: 07 3281 3491 [Mobile: 0414 813 491]

E-mail: Shellyw@gil.com.au

The Australian Council for Computers in Education (ACCE) is the national professional organisation for people who are involved in the use of learning technologies in education. It operates under management of a Board, which has representatives from each State and Territory Computer Education Groups and the Australian Computer Society. There are approximately 3000 members through the state and territory branches.

ACCE’s core business is to help teachers to adopt information and communications technology approaches to teaching. Information literacy is part of this. ACCE has been involved in a number of DETYA-funded projects about learning technology, and is actively engaged in advising its members on learning technology competencies and standards for teachers. Awareness of information literacy is disseminated to the members of ACCE through professional development, journals, conferences and through the core business of the association and its branches.

Australian Education Union (AEU)

<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/About/index2.html>

Contact person: Mr Roy Martin, Federal Research Officer

Phone: 03 9254 1800

E-mail: rmartin@aeufederal.org.au

The Australian Education Union (AEU) represents members in the teaching profession across Australia. Its membership of 155 000 consists of teachers and allied educational staff in schools, colleges, early childhood and vocational settings mainly in government school and TAFE systems. The AEU is governed through the Federal Conference.

The AEU is involved in a wide range of activities including

research, negotiation and advocacy on behalf of its members. Activities include reflecting their views at forums, publicising relevant issues to its members and publishing occasional articles and discussion papers.

Australian Information And Communications Technology In Education Committee (AICTEC)

<http://www.aictec.edu.au>

Contact person: Ms Cath Parker

Phone: 03 6233 8976

E-mail: Cath.Parker@aictec.tas.gov.au

The Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC) is an advisory committee of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). It is recognised by both MCEETYA and the Ministerial Council for the Information Economy (MCIE) as the national forum for policy advice on issues relation to education and the use of ICT. AICTEC represents all states and territories and all sectors pertaining to education and training. AICTEC is made up of thirty plenary members with a broader sub-membership represented by formal working groups, advisory groups and contacts.

AICTEC’s mission is ‘to encourage the advancement of teaching and learning in Australia through the effective and efficient use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and online services and thereby to enable all sectors of education and training to contribute to the growth and vitality of Australia’s society and economy’. Its core business is therefore to improve the computer literacy of students through its role and activities.

Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA)

<http://www.aiia.com.au>

Contact person: Michel Hedley, AIIA National Education Manager, and AIIA NSW Executive Officer

Phone: (02) 9568 6601

E-mail: m.hedley@aiia.com.au

The Australian Information Industry Association is a company-based association of about 400 IT&T companies, which together employ approximately 200 000 people. Its mission is ‘leading and representing the information industry to maximise the potential of the Australian economy’. The focus of its work, through its mission, is in areas such as: industry development, tax and the business climate, e-Commerce, and education and skills.

The AIIA has considerable interest in issues associated with education and the digital divide. It has been advising governments to consider information literacy as part of the digital divide issue. Through its work it has expertise in policy formulation and advocacy.

ALIA Schools (Victoria)

<http://groups.alia.org.au/schoolsvic/>

Contact person: Ms Sandra Ryan, President, or Kris Johnstone

Phone: 03 9489 7644 (Sandra), 03 9596 6099 (Kris)

E-mail: ryansan@santamaria.melb.catholic.edu.au or krisj@oze-mail.com.au

ALIA Schools Victoria is a sub-group of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), and its membership of approximately 300 consists mainly of teacher librarians. The primary role of teacher librarians is to teach information skills and promote information literacy to students in schools. Teacher librarians also work collaboratively with other school staff in the teaching of students.

ALIA Schools Victoria provides professional development to its members, with a focus on the promotion of awareness and teaching of information literacy in schools. It also liaises with other groups and identifies and analyses current trends and issues relevant to teacher librarians.

Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA)

<http://www.alea.edu.au>

Contact person: Robyn Cations, Business Manager

Phone: 08 8332 2845

E-mail: alea@netspace.net.au

ALEA is a professional organisation for educators and others interested in literacy, and is committed to the improvement of literacy development and language learning. It has some 2500 members nationally. Professional development and support are provided to members through workshops, seminars and conferences. The organisation publishes several journals, plus position papers and other publications.

ALEA sees itself as playing a key advocacy role in areas of importance in literacy. It does this through member participation in forums concerning literacy at local, state and national level, through responses to government documents and through participation in major policy initiatives.

Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)

<http://www.anta.gov.au/>

Contact person: Robert Bluer, Principal Project Officer or Louise Wignall, Senior Project Officer

Phone: 03 9630 9828 (Robert) or 03 9630 9857 (Louise)

E-mail: rbluer@anta.gov.au or lwignall@anta.gov.au

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) is a Commonwealth statutory authority which provides a national focus for vocational education and training. ANTA's mission is to 'ensure that the skills of the Australian labour force are sufficient to support internationally competitive commerce and industry and to provide individuals with opportunities

to optimise their potential'. Its roles are as adviser to the ANTA Ministerial Council (MINCO) and as administrator of national programs and the Commonwealth funding of the national VET system.

Information literacy is part of the set of transferable skills that are contained in the national workplace/industry standards. These standards are nationally endorsed and form part of the Training Packages developed by national industry bodies and enterprises. Information literacy features in the work of ANTA through research, investigation into Key Competencies and generic skills, and projects concerning e-learning and e-commerce.

Australian Parents Council (APC)

<http://www.austparents.edu.au>

Contact person: Jo Lonergan, Director

Phone: 02 9955 7091

E-mail: director@austparents.edu.au

The Australian Parents Council is a national federation of eleven state-wide parents' organisations involving every State and Territory. The APC represents parents of children attending non-government schools. Its mission is 'to promote choice and quality in schooling and to achieve for all students an equitable distribution of government funds'. In the area of information literacy it is interested in providing a parent perspective on IT and providing information to parents about this issue. The APC is a member of the Board of Netalet, a Commonwealth company that seeks to foster the safe use of the internet for all Australians and especially for families and children.

APC is involved in regular consultations with relevant members of Parliament on education policy issues and is represented on Government task forces and committees. It also consults with other national groups and stakeholders across the schooling sectors, and conducts research and projects on issues that affect parents and their role in their children's education. Parents are informed on schooling issues through a quarterly magazine. Articles about information literacy have been included in this magazine.

Australian Primary Principals Association Inc (APPA)

<http://www.appa.asn.au>

Contact person: John Turner, Executive Officer

Phone: 03 9746 3254 or 0419 388 620

E-mail: (not given) Information was obtained through Tony Misich, President

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) represents Principals in Government, Catholic and Independent primary and middle schools across Australia. Over 7000 Principals are members of this organisation. APPA's mission is to 'promote the best possible outcomes and support for

primary and middle school principals and their schools'. APPA has eight key principals that guide its operations. Among these are the importance of literacy and numeracy for life long learning and the use of information technology to support and promote high levels of learning.

APPA provides its members with forums for exchange, professional networking and professional development opportunities. It is also involved in the initiation, participation, gathering and dissemination of important educational research and provides a collective voice for Principals at both local and national levels.

Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC)

<http://www.apapdc.edu.au>

Contact person: Ms Susan Boucher, Education Development Centre

Phone: 08 8463 5860

E-mail: sboucher@oze-mail.com.au

The Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC) has links to all school principals in Australia through the four peak principals' associations covering government, Catholic and Independent sectors. Its mission is to 'ensure that all Australian Principals have knowledge of, and access to, high quality, appropriate professional development activities, regardless of the type, size, location or affiliation of their school'.

One of the organisation's objectives is to contribute towards improved learning outcomes for students through its focus on professional development for principals. An element in this is to ensure that Information and Communication Technology is taken into consideration by school principals. The organisation uses a range of strategies in the professional development work that it provides for school leaders across Australia.

Australian School Library Association (ASLA)

<http://www.asla.org.au>

Contact person: Ms June Wall, President

Phone: 0419 606645

E-mail: junewall@pnc.com.au

The Australian School Library Association (ASLA) is a federation of the state and territory school library associations. The membership of approximately 2500 is through the relevant state or territory association. ASLA's aim is to 'maximise opportunities for students to obtain independent lifelong learning and decision-making skills'. ASLA members have considerable experience in the teaching of information literacy skills from Prep to Year 12. They are therefore knowledgeable about how this works in a learning environment.

ASLA has produced a variety of materials including a video and CD ROM. It is also co-author of a book about information literacy (Learning in the Future). ASLA conducts a biennial conference and produces a quarterly journal that provides a forum for educators about issues concerning information literacy. Professional development for teacher and teacher librarians in the area of information literacy is provided regularly by each of the state and territory associations for their members.

Australian Society of Authors

<http://www.asauthors.org>

Contact person: José Borghino

Phone: (02) 9318 0877

E-mail: jose@asauthors.org

The Australian Society of Authors (ASA) is a professional organisation formed to provide advocacy in the area of authors' rights and professional standards. It has a national membership of 3000 that includes authors and book illustrators. It is involved in a range of activities such as: disseminating information through its journal and newsletter as well as through information sessions and seminars; providing mentoring for emerging writers and Indigenous writers; and representing members on policy-making bodies and copyright-related industries.

Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)

<http://www.atea.schools.net.au/ATEA/atea/html>

Contact person: Mr Graeme Hall

Phone: 07 4364 8055

E-mail: graeme.hall@eatohillss.qld.edu.au

The Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA) is the major professional association for teacher educators in Australia. It has approximately 100 members. Its mission is threefold:

- To promote 'the preservice and continuing education of teachers in all forms and contexts';
- To promote 'teacher education as central in the educational enterprise of the nation'; and
- To promote 'research on teacher education as a core endeavour'.

While information literacy is not a high priority of ATEA at the moment, many members of the organisation have much expertise in the area as it is an important part of their work.

Business Council of Australia (BCA)

<http://www.bca.com.au>

Contact person: Ms Maria Tarrant

Phone: 03 9610 4211

E-mail: maria.tarrant@bca.com.au

Council of Adult Education

<http://www.cae.edu.au>

Contact person: Ms Philippa McLean

Phone: 03 9652 0717 or 03 9652 0719

E-mail: philippa@cae.edu.au

The Literacy and ESL department at the Council for Adult Education is government funded, and has approximately forty staff. It has a long history of provision and advocacy in the area of adult literacy and ESL.

VALBEC (Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council) is the peak Victorian body for the adult literacy area in Victoria. Its mission is to 'lead the adult literacy field through identifying issues and facilitating positive change'. It does this through the following avenues: networking, professional development, sharing information and promoting best practice.

Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL)

<http://www.caul.edu.au/>

Contact person: Diane Costello, Executive Officer

Phone: 02 6125 2990

E-mail: diane.costello@caul.edu.au

The Council of Australian University Librarians has as its members the library directors of the thirty-eight university libraries and their staff. Its mission is to improve 'access by the students and staff of Australian universities to the scholarly information resources that are fundamental to the advancement of teaching, learning and research'. CAUL strives to ensure representation for all of its member libraries. It provides a forum for discussion and promotes the common interests of its members.

Many of the staff in member libraries of CAUL are presently working in the area of information literacy. These activities include development of standards, benchmarks and performance measures in information literacy.

Council on the Ageing (Australia) (COTA)

<http://www.cota.org.au>

Contact person: Ms Helen Scott

Phone: 03 8820 2655 (Tues – Thurs)

E-mail: hscott@cota.org.au

Council on the Ageing (COTA) is the peak body for people over the age of 50. Its mission is 'to protect and promote the well-being of all older people'. There are Councils on the Ageing in all states and territories, and a National Council which is called Council on the Ageing (Australia). People over the age of fifty are eligible to join the State and Territory COTAs. Membership of the national body includes key national organisations representing consumers and service providers. There is thus a broad membership base. COTA's

role includes provision of information and advice both to older people about Commonwealth government policies and programs, and to the Commonwealth government concerning issues of importance to older people. It is also engaged in policy analysis and development.

COTA is interested in issues of ICT access and best practice information provision as it relates to older people, and has been active in policy work in this area. It has an Information Manager who has expertise in this area, and who sits on various relevant forums. COTA's publishing program includes a quarterly journal, bimonthly parliamentary and policy bulletins, occasional papers and more. 'What's new at COTA' (on the COTA website) lists a variety of recent media releases, articles and papers of relevance to older people. 'Banking, E-commerce and Technology Access' and 'Seniors in Cyberspace – Older People and Information' are examples of areas covered.

Department Of Education, Training And Youth Affairs (DETYA)

<http://www.detya.gov.au/edu/> (/edactplan.htm for Action Plan)

Contact person: Margaret Foster, Online Education and Training Section

Phone: 02 6240 7271

E-mail: margaret.foster@detya.gov.au

The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs has developed an action plan called 'Learning for the knowledge society: An education and training action plan for the information economy'. It was developed in consultation with all parts of the education and training sector, and outlines key strategic priorities for education and training in the information economy.

education.au Limited

<http://www.educationau.edu.au/>

Contact person: Mr Gerry White, CEO

Phone: 08 8334 3210

E-mail: gwhite@educationau.edu.au

education.au limited is a not-for-profit company which is owned by all the Australian Ministers of Education and Training. It covers all the education and training sectors: primary and secondary schooling, vocational education and training and the universities. It thus has a large constituency, and membership is not applicable. Its core business is to develop and manage online services for the education and training sector nationally. It does this through fostering collaboration and cooperation in the use of the internet and by undertaking and managing projects such as EdNA Online. EdNA Online operates as a communications and information service and is a service provider to the education and training sectors. It

seeks to support and encourage the use of the internet for learning, education and training. Resources include information about information literacy.

Internet Society Of Australia

<http://www.isoc-au.org.au/>

Contact person: Tony Hill, President

Phone: 02 6257 5544

E-mail: ed@isoc-au.org.au

The internet Society of Australia, a Chapter of the non-profit international organisation, the internet Society, was founded in 1996. Its objective is to 'promote development of the internet based upon the needs of Australian end-users'. In Australia more than 30 000 internet users are members of the Society.

The internet Society has considerable knowledge and understanding of aspects of the internet such as internet technology, standards, governance, issues and policy particularly as they relate to the information society. It is actively involved in addressing policy issues that relate to the development of the internet, and issues concerning the 'digital divide'.

National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

<http://www.ncver.edu.au>

Contact person: Sarah Hayman, Manager, Information Services and Clearinghouse

Phone: (08) 8333 8443

E-mail: sarah@ncver.edu.au

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) Ltd is the principal research and development organisation for the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia. It is an independent, not-for-profit company owned by the state, territory and federal ministers who are responsible for vocational education and training in Australia. NCVER's main areas of activities are in research, development and evaluation in the VET area, collection of VET statistics, and in the dissemination of information concerning vocational education and training. NCVER has approximately 70 staff.

Information literacy is recognised as one of the key competencies (generic skills) in vocational education and training. NCVER is at present undertaking, promoting, supporting and disseminating relevant research in this area. NCVER's large collection of research information includes aspects of learning relevant to information literacy, and staff members are involved in many professional networks, both in Australia and overseas, which are interested in this issue. Dissemination of information is an important part of the work of NCVER, and is carried out through a variety of formats, such as its

website, publications, databases, forums, etc.

National Library of Australia

<http://www.nla.gov.au>

Contact person: Fran Wilson

Phone: 02 6262 1606

E-mail: fwilson@nla.gov.au

The National Library of Australia is situated in Canberra and employs approximately 500 staff. It provides a research and information service to all Australians. It has as one of its objectives to 'foster a broad understanding of the importance of libraries'. To achieve this a key priority is to 'promote knowledge and use of the Library's resources'.

It is actively involved in promoting awareness of information literacy among the Australian community and at all levels. Activities include: information sessions to secondary school students and tertiary students; hands on training of electronic resources; guides to the collections; regular contact and liaison with teacher librarians in the ACT; and public talks on the collections, facilities and services.

National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE)

<http://www.noie.gov.au>

Contact person: Peter Huta, Manager Community Connectivity, Access Branch

Phone: 02 6271 1047

E-mail: Peter.Huta@noie.gov.au

The National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) is an Executive Agency in the Commonwealth Portfolio of Communications, IT and the Arts. Its clients include other government agencies, industry associations, ICT companies and community organisations. Its role is to develop, oversee and coordinate Commonwealth Government policy on electronic commerce, online services and the internet.

NOIE has expertise in the area of online information and online services. It also has contacts and networks in this area. Although NOIE hasn't had a particular focus on information literacy up to now, it has been involved in work on consumer information concerning the use of online services. It is also involved in raising awareness of the benefits of the internet.

National Working Group for TAFE Library Services

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/library/natlib/natlib.htm>

Contact person: Ms Helena Zobec, Convenor

Phone: 02 6207 3378

E-mail: helena.zobec@cit.act.edu.au

Membership of the National Working Group for TAFE Library Services (NWGTLs) consists of one representative from each of the States, the ACT and the National Centre

for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). Members are endorsed by the appropriate TAFE bodies in their State. Its terms of reference state that the 'National Working Group for TAFE Library Services actively promotes an integrated approach to the delivery of library and information services which advances and supports national VET outcomes and the emerging changes in learning and teaching'.

One of the current issues that NWGTL is looking at is information literacy. The Group has written an issues paper on the topic of information literacy for the VET sector which was distributed to TAFE Directors Australia. Online information literacy programs are currently being developed by TAFE libraries for the national VET market. Another area of interest is the development of an instrument to measure information literacy for VET learners which will be based on the Council of Australian Universities Librarians information literacy standards.

NetAlert

<http://www.netalert.net.au>

Contact person: Lara MacDonell, Office Manager

Phone: 03 6234 3327

E-mail: lmacdonell@netalert.net.au

NetAlert was established recently by the Australian government as an independent community advisory body on internet content. NetAlert has a Board of Directors which provides representation from all States and Territories across Australia, and diversity in a range of fields.

NetAlert's primary objective is to 'encourage and promote the use of the internet by all Australians, particularly young people and their families'. It does this through national awareness campaigns, research into new access management technologies and the provision of programs which explain the online content regime to the internet industry. The establishment of NetAlert was part of the Commonwealth government's commitment to educating communities throughout Australia about managing access to online content.

Queensland University of Technology (Faculty of Information Technology — Information Systems Management Research Centre)

<http://www2.fit.qut.edu.au/InfoSys/ism/>

Contact person: Dr Christine Bruce, Associate Professor

Phone: 07 3864 2780

E-mail: c.bruce@qut.edu.au

The Information Systems Management Research Centre is part of the Faculty of Information Technology at the Queensland University of Technology. It has approximately 25 staff plus many research students. The centre is very involved in research which involves information literacy/ information

management and knowledge management. Some of the research students are working on information literacy-related projects. In addition, staff at the centre have important contacts with a wide range of industry bodies involving consultancy, research and implementation of information literacy in academic and corporate environment. The centre has published many articles and reviews on the issue.

SBS (Special Broadcasting Service)

<http://www.sbs.com.au>

Contact person: Geoff Abbott

Telephone: 02 9430 3193

SBS is an independent statutory authority which provides multicultural and multilingual radio and television services across Australia. Its principal function is to 'provide multilingual and multicultural radio and television services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians, and, in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society'. More than sixty languages are broadcast ensuring that it reaches a large and ethnic diverse audience. It is actively engaged in providing community service announcements through its broadcasting services.

State Library of New South Wales

<http://www.slnsw.gov.au>

Contact person: Niki Kallenberger, Manager, Education and Training

Telephone: 02 9273 1632

E-mail: nkallenberger@slnsw.gov.au

The State Library of New South Wales is a major reference and research library, with strong links to school libraries and the public library network across NSW. It also has strong connections to other state libraries, the National Library and a range of overseas libraries.

The library provides client education services to all sectors of the community, which includes principles of information literacy. These services include a range of courses, workshops and seminars. In addition, the library provides leadership and professional support for the public libraries in the state.

State Library of South Australia

<http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au>

Contact person: Karen Brandwood, Education Programs Librarian, Training and Educational Services

Phone: 08 8207 7533

E-mail: Brandwood.Karen@slsa.sa.gov.au

The State Library of South Australia's mission statement reads: 'The State Library of SA will, as the key node in the State's public library network, deliver high quality information, preservation, collection and public library services which contribute to the cultural, social, educational and

economic well-being of the South Australian community and beyond’.

The library liaises with a range of educational institutions. It also offers education programs which include provision of information and research skills to school, tertiary and vocational education students.

State Library of Victoria

<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au>

Contact person: Ms Prue Mercer

Phone: 03 8664 7179

E-mail: pmercer@slv.vic.gov.au

The State Library of Victoria is the premier research and reference library for the state. Through the Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) it has links with the public library network and state governments. Awareness of information literacy is promoted through a variety of courses focussing on lifelong learning.

University of Melbourne (Information Division. Teaching, Learning and Research Support Department)

<http://www.infodiv.unimelb.edu.au>

Contact person: Susan Bray, Head of Learning Resources Services, and Dr Angela Bridgland

Phone: 03 8344 8322 (Angela at 03 8344 5368)

E-mail: susaneb@unimelb.edu.au and a.bridgland@unimelb.edu.au

The University of Melbourne’s Teaching, Learning and Research Support Department (TeLaRS) is involved in working with departments and faculties at the university to incorporate multimedia and related educational technologies in teaching and learning. This includes the development of innovative courseware, research and evaluation of ICT, and information literacy.

The Learning Resources Services section was formed early in 2001. It has sixteen staff. One of the main goals in setting up this section was to promote information literacy. It does this through, for example, running classes, producing written guides (on paper and on the web), and providing support to other Division staff. Staff are actively involved in persuading the University at a senior level to accept the Australian Information Literacy Standards as one of its endorsed policies and therefore support the incorporation of information literacy into the curriculum. Being a fairly new group, staff are trialling strategies and new ideas, and attempting to develop better evaluation methods in the area of information literacy.

University of Technology, Sydney

<http://www.uts.edu.au>

Contact person: Ms Kate Vale, BELL Program Coordinator,
Phone: 02 9514 3390

E-mail: kate.vale@uts.edu.au

OR, to contact the University Library’s Information Literacy Program: Pamela Leuzinger, Director (Information Services Unit), (02) 9514 3336, Pamela.Leuzinger@uts.edu.au

The University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) has established the BELL (Being an Effective Lifelong Learner) Program, which offers a range of modules to students throughout the university, one of which concerns information literacy. The university library was responsible for developing this module as part of its goal to integrate information literacy into the curriculum. The BELL program promotes its activities to students and staff through the university’s website, printed literature and through fora such as the Academic Board. The library also provides workshops, integrated courses and online tutorials that promote information literacy through its information skill programs.

The university is committed to the development of generic capabilities, including information literacy in its students. The establishment of the BELL Program, and tracking and researching outcomes to ensure these capabilities are of real benefit to students and graduates, are part of that commitment. Its experience, then, in establishing such a framework may be of benefit particularly to those in the tertiary education sector.

VICNET (State Library of Victoria)

<http://www.vicnet.net.au>

Contact person: Stuart Hall, Manager

Phone: 03 8664 7001 (direct 7417)

E-mail: stuart@vicnet.net.au

VICNET is a community network which delivers internet services throughout Victoria. It is a Division of the State Library of Victoria. It has strong links to the community through the ISP business (approximately 2500 access customers), and through the Skills.net projects (ongoing contact with a network of some 350 community training organisations in more than 750 locations) which it coordinates.

VICNET aims to encourage people across Victoria to use the internet by providing internet access, training and support. Through Skills.net, access and training in the use of the internet is made available to those people who may otherwise not have this opportunity. A very important aspect of VICNET is, therefore, the development of technological literacy in the community. Although the focus of VICNET’s work was originally to do with technology literacy, with increasing technical skills in the community the focus is moving towards information literacy. It does this through programs such as Skills.net, My Connected Community and GO Vic. Libraries

Online and VICNET itself also make contributions. These programs are consistent with the broad objective concerning community capacity building held by the government.

Victorian Information Technology Teachers' Association (VITTA)

<http://www.vitta.org.au>

Contact person: Ms Claudia Graham, President

Phone: 03 9334 0033 (Home because VITTA is voluntary)

E-mail: claudia.graham@overnewton.vic.edu.au

The Victorian Information Technology Teachers' Association (VITTA) is an independent, non-profit organisation for educators at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in the area of Information Technology. The organisation has over 900 members throughout Victoria. It provides leadership and support for its members, including a range of professional development for teachers in the area of Information Technology and information literacy. Members of the Board of VITTA are involved in state-wide curriculum development with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. VITTA also organises an annual conference which covers broad literacy and knowledge concerns.

Young Media Australia (YMA)

<http://www.youngmedia.org.au>

Contact person: Ms Barbara Biggins, Honorary Executive Director

Phone: (not provided)

E-mail: bbiggins@dove.net.au

Young Media Australia (YMA) is the registered business name of the Australian Council for Children's Films and Television (ACCFT). It is a national not-for-profit advocacy organisation, whose primary objective is to 'stimulate and maintain public interest in the provision of suitable print, electronic and small screen entertainment for children and young people'. Some of its activities include: fostering 'informed public opinion and debate on children's media issues'; providing 'up-to-date information and education on issues of violence, advertising, classification codes, self regulatory codes and the maintenance of quality quotas for children's programs'; and acting as 'consultants to government, health authorities, and the media in relation to classification, standards, codes, programming and the social health impact of mass media, including the internet'.

Its strengths lie in the recognition of its significant advocacy role in relation to print, electronic and screen-based media for children and young people, and its broad set of information networks both within Australia and overseas.

APPENDIX 4: Consultations with Key Stakeholders

Consultations were carried out with nineteen key stakeholders, most of whom were identified from the original e-mail survey as having expressed interest in the proposed national coalition for information literacy advocacy.

The organisations contacted were:

Adult Learning Australia (ALA)

Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC)

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)

Australian College of Education

Australian Computer Society

Australian Consumers Association

Australian Education Union

Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC)

Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA)

Australian Public Libraries Network

Australian School Library Association (ASLA)

Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL)

Council on the Ageing (COTA)

Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)

Indigenous Online Network (ION)

Internet Society of Australia

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Website (NATSIEW)

National Centre for Vocational Educational Research (NCVER)

National Working Group for TAFE Library Services (NWGTLS)

ENDNOTES

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- ² TFPL Ltd., 'Skills for Knowledge Management', a briefing paper undertaken on behalf of the Library and Information Commission, June 1999, London, <http://www.lic.gov.uk/publications/executivesummaries/kmskills.html> (accessed 9 November 2001).
- ³ Eger, J., 'Asia in the Global Information Economy: The Rise of Region-States, the Role of Telecommunications', Address to the International Conference on Satellite and Cable Television in Chinese and Asian Regions', 4–6 July 1996, Taiwan, <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/intlcomm/taiwan.html> (accessed 7 November 2001).
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