Instructional Technology Strategy for the Adult Migrant English Program

Educators have always used technology as part of the learning process and have reflected on the use of each new technology as it becomes available for use. As new technologies are computer mediated, and the pace of advances in hardware and software increases, there are major implications for the planning and delivery of the education of the future. This study presents a strategy clearly mapping out directions and priorities for the use of various technologies in the AMEP. It suggests that an overall strategy needs to address six main areas — research, standards, skills, training and information, and puts forward suggestions about the focus of strategies within each of these areas.

The research report will be of interest to teachers of English as a second language, policy makers in the field of instructional technology and others with an interest in the use of instructional technologies for learners of English as a second language.

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    Steven Ross, 1998

Chris Corbel is Manager of the Computer Literacy Centre at AMES Victoria. He has lectured and published widely on computers, language and literacy.
Instructional Technology Strategy

for the Adult Migrant English Program

Chris Corbel

National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research
Instructional Technology Strategy for the Adult Migrant English Program

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Series Editor: Geoff Brindley
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Introduction

Instructional technologies

The term ‘instructional technology’ generally refers to the use of Information Technology (IT) for learning purposes. Educators have always used technology as part of the learning process, and have reflected on the use of each new technology that becomes available for use.

Recently instructional technologies have undergone two major changes:

1. new technologies are increasingly computer-mediated;

2. computer-mediated technologies have become a goal of learning as well as a means for learning.

The development of personal computing in the early 1980s supplemented large, mainframe systems with stand-alone, desktop systems, running primarily text-based programs. These remained the mainstay of educational computing in the AMEP and elsewhere for ten years. Recent advancements in hardware and software have brought about two significant areas of change: the use of multimedia, and wider availability of the Internet.

Multimedia computing

Texts presented on the computer screen are composed of electronic impulses or bits. This makes them materially different from texts based on paper, or audiotape, videotape or film, which are objects composed of atoms. Digital texts, such as those on CD ROM, allow for the integration of media types such as video, audio and print, which in the past have been discrete.

Networks and the Internet

Increasingly, computers are connected rather than stand-alone. This connection may be local, global, or somewhere in between. This connectivity allows for the convergence of work and home location, as well as ways of working roles that are independent of physical location.

All educational sectors and programs are having to consider the implications of these changes.
Project goals

This project was commissioned by the National Centre for Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR) on behalf of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) to facilitate research and development work in the use of instructional technology in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) over the next two years.

Rationale

The advent of new technology will have a profound influence on the planning and delivery of the AMEP in the future. It will also affect the way in which materials development and teacher professional development are carried out.

The importance accorded to the current and future role of technology in the AMEP is reflected in the 1997 Special Project proposals, where AMEP providers and NCELTR identified a wide range of areas for proposed project activity. These included:

- the use of multimedia resources to support the AMEP curriculum;
- the use of online technology as a means of facilitating NCELTR's delivery of teacher professional development;
- the use of learning resources and the delivery of language and literacy programs via the Internet;
- the use of computer technology by learners for specific classroom purposes.

AMEP providers are currently addressing these challenges in a variety of ways. However, in order to plan an integrated and future-orientated research and development program for 1997 and beyond, it would be helpful, before proceeding with any of the proposed projects, to develop a strategy which clearly spells out directions and priorities for the use of various technologies in the AMEP and by NCELTR, taking into account those strategies that have been developed in other sectors of education. This would help to ensure that the outcomes of Special Project research would be of maximum benefit to the national Program and to NCELTR.

The full brief is included in Appendix 1.

Methodology

The project began with a brief literature review. The results are presented in Chapter 1.

At the same time a ‘snapshot’ survey was taken of the current state of play nationally with regard to four main areas of technology use:

1. the use of computer technology for specific classroom purposes;
2  the use of multimedia to support the AMEP curriculum;
3  the use of the Internet for resources and delivery;
4  the use of the Internet for NCELTR professional development.

Chapter 2 summarises the results of the survey.

The findings of the literature review were presented to focus groups in Sydney and Melbourne for analysis and discussion. The results of the discussions are summarised in Chapter 3.

Strategies overview

Based on the literature review, the survey and the discussions with focus group members, a six-part strategy was developed. It contains the following elements: research, standards, skills, training, resources and information.

Research

Carry out a research program that investigates the relationship between IT and AMEP client groups.

Standards

Establish a set of ‘best practice’ standards in delivery and infrastructure, based on the research and current DIMA/provider relationships.

Skills

Establish a set of computing competencies relating to IT that reflect the needs of the program, providers and staff.

Training

Ensure provision of a coherent set of training options based on computing competencies, utilising a range of delivery mechanisms that reflect teacher needs and reflect best practice.

Resources

Ensure the provision of timely, flexible resources for teachers and learners, linked to the Certificates of Spoken and Written English.

Information

Establish an AMEP Web site to keep all AMEP stakeholders informed of strategy implementation.

Details of the strategies are found in Chapter 4.
Chapter 1

Background —
the literature review

This chapter begins with an examination of key research in related educational sectors. It goes on to examine previous research in the AMEP and its implications for future IT use.

The wider context of IT

The AMEP is in the fortunate position of being able to learn from the findings of work in other sectors. Findings from representative documents in different sectors are presented below. Four main types of document are considered: reviews and research studies, policy documents, strategy documents, and implementation plans and guidelines. These should be considered in the light of the specific characteristics and needs of the AMEP.

Reviews and research

AMEP providers are subject to both State and Commonwealth initiatives. Providers need to be aware of policy initiatives at State level and their relationship to Commonwealth policies and strategies. The following is a selection of current IT-related documents strongly relevant to the AMEP.

Converging Technology, Work and Learning (NBEET 1995)

This cross-sector report 'addresses the employment and skills ramifications arising from “converging technologies”, the term used to refer to the merging of technologies in the communications (including telecommunications) field and in the computer and information technology field. This is occurring due to the digitisation of text, voice and graphics, enabling these forms of communication, traditionally delivered by distinct modes of transmission, to be treated as digital streams and delivered by a range of modes.' (NBEET 1995: xvii)

The report focuses on the implications of these changes for employment and new work skills. It sees the interactivity offered by these new, converged media as having potential for innovation in teaching and learning. It focuses on the new skills themselves and the use of the skills in learning, and in learning how to learn. These changes are happening within the context of the globalisation of markets and competition and the move from an industrial to a knowledge economy. The use of converging technologies is linked to best practice in work organisation and management.
The report is not able to quantify the direct and indirect effects on employment of converging technologies, though it identifies the need for flexibility and adaptability in training. The report concludes that Australia should become a learning society based on lifelong learners. As far as the education and training sector’s capacity to meet this goal is concerned, it concludes that ‘this process will alter how teachers and trainers relate to their students, to one another, to support staff, to the home environment, to the technology itself and to their workplace’ (NBEET 1995: xxiv).

This change will call for infrastructure improvements, and the report recommends that education sectors analyse their current position with regard to the use of converging technologies. The report also calls for the inclusion of technology skills in all education and training programs. It also recommends professional development and multimedia content production. In developing the present strategy DIMA is addressing these recommendations.

*Education and Technology Convergence (NBEET 1996)*

This report, commissioned for the above project, is a survey of technological infrastructure in education and the professional development and support of educators and trainers in information and communication technologies. Its chapter on the influences of the emerging ‘global knowledge economy’ is particularly relevant for AMEP providers, who are already providers of educational services to international clients.

*New Learning Technologies: A Planning Model for Innovation (OTFE 1997)*

This report surveyed recent literature and a number of case studies in the Vocational Education and Training sector in Victoria. It examined ‘if, and in what circumstances, certain technologies (based on computer-mediated communication and videoconferencing) lead to improved learning outcomes in the vocational education and training sector’ (OTFE 1997: 1).

The report found difficulty in measuring learning effectiveness, partly because improved learning may not have been a criterion for success, and partly because of the early stages of implementation of the case studies surveyed. Other goals of the case studies included independence, motivation, and research skills. It found that instructional design quality and interactivity, mediated by human intervention, were significant in attaining these goals.

Learner attitudes to and skills with the new technologies vary, though motivation rather than educational background is most significant. This is influenced by ease of access, user friendliness, and support services.

The report concluded from the case studies that new learning technologies can improve access to learning opportunities in terms of place, time and interaction, but so can ‘old’ technologies, such as audioconferencing and print. It also noted that ‘some disadvantaged groups prefer to learn in collaborative, communal contexts, which may be in conflict with the move to independent learning using the new technologies’ (OTFE 1997: 4).
Cost efficiency of new learning technologies is difficult to assess, since such efficiency can depend on student numbers and economies of scale. Investment should not be based on anticipated savings without consideration of benefits. Costing of multimedia projects is complex, with little accurate evidence available about production and distribution costs. Recurrent costs and transmission costs can be greater than startup costs.

There is an important role for sector management, particularly in capital planning and quality assurance. Planning needs to consider all stakeholder views, full initial and recurrent costs, the effect on teachers and disadvantaged groups, and the full delivery cycle.

Decision about use of technology can be assisted by checklists, and professional development for teachers and management related to potential. For effective implementation 'managers will need to provide opportunities and incentives, as well as negotiating a return from them' (OTFE 1997: 6).

'There are many system-wide implications of new learning technologies (NLT), including measurement of workloads and student attendance, capital infrastructure spending, quality and standards' (OTFE 1997: 6). Among issues needing consideration are the use of new technologies for measurement of student-teacher contact hours and number of hours needed to complete a course, and the need for systems to integrate with others. The role of other, non-educational sites, including the home, must be considered, as well as the use of partnerships with other providers and industry.


This report examined the implications of new instructional technologies for the schools sector. It discusses not only convergence in technology but in educational thinking towards a constructivist view of learning. A constructivist approach encourages users to create their own meanings from learning experiences, rather than imposing a predetermined meaning. It sees a potentially powerful synergy between constructivist approaches to teaching and multimedia. It emphasises the 'people' dimension as well as the technology, and calls for structured professional development to address users' affective needs as well as the needs for knowledge and skills. It sees the success of multimedia depending on content and the role of the teacher as facilitator. It emphasises the need for computers to be introduced for specified educational purposes. (However, the experience of the present researcher in technology decision making at a large government secondary technology school is that even though educational grounds may be given, the actual details of use may not be fully thought through.) It also notes the need for technology support for teachers and students.
Policies

Policy documents present governments’ visions and objectives for the use of new technologies. Although they may not address the education sector directly, they tend to see the sector as a natural area of application of the technologies.

Commonwealth

Creative Nation, a policy introduced in 1994, aims to support the development of an Australian multimedia industry, and thus has indirect implications for all government programs. Although there is no detailed statement concerning IT issues in relation to the AMEP, the Coalition Immigration Policy (9 February 1996) states:

We will ensure that the operations and eligibility criteria of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) are sufficiently liberal and flexible to better utilise resources to achieve more effective and long lasting benefits for non-English speaking migrants.

The policy reflects an understanding of the specific needs of the AMEP’s two main groups of participants: refugees and other immigrants.

A Coalition Government will ensure that refugee and humanitarian migrants are not ignored or forgotten by government policies and programs. We recognise their special needs. We will direct resources to overcome their pressing disadvantages and hardships so they can fully participate in our society as equals.

The 1996/97 and 1997/98 Migration Programs have been rebalanced towards skilled entry, with:

• increases in business skills and independent components;

• an increase in the skill requirements that Australian Skills linked (formerly concessional family) members must satisfy; and

• a stronger emphasis on English language ability.

(David Doherty, Director — Adult English Services, DIMA, in NCELTR Forum on Autonomous Learning and Flexible Delivery, November 1997)

Given these requirements, we might expect higher levels of computer skill and expectations for members of the migration program than for the refugee program.

A senior AMEP administrator’s view is that:

An additional government directive to ensure flexible delivery came in the context of the decision to implement a two year wait before migrants can access social security benefits. It was
recognised that many migrants might put getting a job before learning English and so had to have access to the AMEP around the search for a job or around employment — eg there could be a need for more after hours/weekend provision and more distance learning provision. Enhanced use of Instructional Technology fits into this scenario. Expanded use of IT can also be seen simply as using up to date instructional tools.

Julie Beattie, Acting Director, Adult English Services, DIMA, 9 October 1997 (communication with researcher)

State

Some state governments have developed policies in relation to multimedia. In Victoria, for example, the Government’s Interactive Multimedia Policy focuses on developing new markets for multimedia content, which again has indirect implications for AMEP providers, who represent potential users of multimedia educational products. Queensland and South Australia are taking similar initiatives.

Strategies

Strategy documents translate objectives into specific goals, and outline the processes for achieving them, as well as the areas of responsibility. They are typically associated with an educational sector. The present report falls into this category.

Commonwealth

_The New Literacy: A Report on Convergent Technologies in Adult and Community Education_ (October 1996)

This project investigated the implications of convergent technologies for the Adult and Community Education Sector. In setting out goals and strategies for the sector it notes that planning applies at three levels in ACE: national (general guidance, funding and policy); state/territory (administration); and local (implementation and delivery). The local level is particularly in need of strategic planning.

The report suggests goals in five areas:

1. **Planning goals** involve preparing a vision statement through personal and online consultation, and preparing provider plans using a training kit and pilot studies.
2. **Infrastructure goals** involve ensuring provision of equipment through alliances and joint ventures, technical support using facilitators and mentors, funding through performance agreements and specific budget items, and facilities through specific planning.
3. **Skills and knowledge goals** involve increasing sector knowledge through conferences and networks, developing operational skills through training, and developing teaching skills through self-assessment, planning guides and professional development programs.
4 Information goals involve distributing curriculum through a range of mechanisms, providing management information online, and developing standards via a national working party.

5 Access goals involve improving participation by funding innovation and documenting best practice.

State

In Victoria the Office of Technical and Further Education has produced a *Communications and Multimedia Strategy for the State Training System* (OTFE 1996). It states:

*The prime rationale for the use of technology in vocational education and training is to increase the capacity of the State Training System to provide accessible, client-focused education and training and support effective teaching and learning.*

(OTFE 1996: 5).

The strategy reflects State and Commonwealth policies and the strategic directions of the State Training system. It establishes three broad goals — infrastructure development, content development and a State Training system leadership role. For each of these goals three key strategies are identified, as well as supporting strategies in resource allocation, staff development, research and continuous improvement.

Plans and guidelines

Plans and guidelines tend to be sector specific. They assist in the implementation of the strategies identified in strategy documents. Examples include:

- **Getting Wired: Using the New Convergent Technologies in Adult and Community Education** (undated final draft). This is a planning kit for ACE providers in Victoria, based on the strategy document mentioned above. It presents a ten-stage process for local providers to achieve their IT goals.

- **Learning Technologies Planning Guide for Schools: An Overview for School Management** (undated draft). This is a planning guide for schools. It provides an overview of learning technologies, including techniques for their use, planning their introduction, installing a network and using the Internet.

- **New Learning Technology Implementation Plan for Adult and Community Education 1997-99** (ACFE 1997). This plan draws on *Converging Technology, Work and Learning and the Communications and Multimedia Strategy* mentioned earlier, as well as the sector’s overall triennial plan.

Development of such plans and guidelines will be the next step for AMEP providers, based on the present strategy document.
Implications for the AMEP

The policies, strategies and guidelines described above, while by no means inclusive, reflect the issues that need to be addressed by educational sectors seeking to introduce new convergent learning technologies in a coherent and planned way. Strategies need to address the following issues:

- the need for goals in the introduction of instructional technology;
- the development of content;
- the role of central agencies;
- the importance of professional development;
- the development and standards of infrastructure;
- the need for research into the specific needs of client groups;
- information exchange.

We return to these issues in Chapter 4 of the report.

Previous AMEP initiatives

The present strategy document builds on earlier AMEP work on the use of IT in adult ESL.

IT related surveys and research

The Computing Practices of Language and Literacy Teachers (Corbel 1996)

This project described the computing practices of teachers in the AMEP and outlined the policies and practices needed to meet emerging educational computing needs. It found that the computing practices of language and literacy teachers in the AMEP have until now focused on two main areas — the use of computers to teach language (CALL), and the use of computers as a tool by both teacher and learners. Teachers have not only had to learn how to use the computer to create texts, but have had to teach learners to do so as well.

The report highlighted the continually-developing multimedia capacity in all three areas — computer assisted (language) learning, the computer as office tool, and now the computer as networked communications medium. Although the computing practices project was not directly concerned with the issues in this strategy, some of the findings from the report — to do with Internet use, program authoring and professional development needs — are relevant to the present strategy.
Other surveys and research

Anderton and Nicholson (1995) investigated technological, including computer-mediated, support for synchronous (real-time) interaction at a distance.

Simpson (1994) surveyed a small number of AMEP staff on computer-mediated communication practices and found very limited use.

Corbel (1993) surveyed AMEP locations nationally, with the focus on the potential of computer enhanced language assessment. The report considered activities, behaviour, practices, beliefs and understandings of respondents. It found interest but limited uptake, due to funding constraints and a lack of policy support.

Kaufmann (1992) surveyed AMES Victoria centres and various other AMEP sites nationally. Her report focuses on literacy teaching, with sections on hardware, uses, software, support, attitudes. It has a strong teaching workplace focus. The report found a need for training and specialist support.

Curriculum and resources

The AMEP has a well established record in the support and development of curriculum resources, with It’s Over to You (NCELTR 1994) representing the most complex and well developed example. However, the Computing Practices report (Corbel 1996) identified no software developed by the AMEP in use in 1995. The only multimedia products mentioned that had links to the AMEP were those developed by AMES NSW (Skillshift) or ex AMES staff (Protea software products). Likewise, although the current NCELTR catalogue contains software products developed by AMESs or ex AMES staff, none of them were developed under AMEP auspices. There is now renewed interest in IT products, and the present strategy is intended to provide guidance in these developments.

The AMEP has supported two curriculum initiatives in this area in the past, one focusing on multimedia and the other on networks. It will be instructive to consider the strengths and weaknesses of these prior to further developments.

Interactive videodisk

During the 1980s three IVDs were developed. The Aussie Barbie, Hello Australia, and Communicating. These represented a substantial investment in time and money (Peppard 1986, Field 1988, Anderson and Field 1988). However, despite the perceived potential (Flynn and Murray 1990) they have not become established in the mainstream of teachers’ work. Some possible reasons for the lack of uptake are provided in ‘Instructional Technology and the Mainstream: The Risks of Success’ (Geoghegan 1996). This paper presents some useful insights into the type of instructional technology likely to be taken up and the rate at which certain technologies are taken up.
Geoghegan draws on the field of diffusion studies to account for the rate and extent of uptake of different computer-mediated instructional technologies. He notes that the diffusion of any innovation in a standard distribution curve, with the innovators and early adopters followed by the mainstream (early and late majority) and the later adopters. However, in order to account for the failure of some technologies to reach the mainstream he posits a gap, or a ‘chasm’ as he calls it, between early adopters and the mainstream, a chasm that many innovations fail to cross. Diffusion studies can also account for the ones that do, such as email and the World Wide Web, and the ones that do not.

Rogers (1995) pointed out five characteristics of innovations that influence their rate of adoption as well as their eventual success or failure in a community. These include:

- the relative advantage of the innovation over what it replaces or supplements (in time, cost, effectiveness, quality of results, etc);
- the innovation’s compatibility with existing practices, values, needs, ‘culture’, etc or, conversely, its disruptiveness to existing practices, values and other ‘cultural’ factors;
- the complexity of the innovation: how difficult it is to learn, to understand, and to use effectively;
- the innovation’s trialability: how easy is it to experiment with the new way of doing things before making an adoption decision; and
- the observability or visibility to other potential adopters of the results achieved by using the innovation.

An innovation that performs well on these attributes — with good relative advantage, excellent compatibility with existing practices and norms, a low level of complexity, ease of use on a trial basis, easily observed results — would be susceptible to rapid adoption; while another innovation, one that does poorly on some or all of these characteristics, would be adopted much more slowly, or would fail to achieve any significant penetration into the community.

(Geoghegan 1996:8–9)

Using Geoghegan’s analysis we can account for the failure of the IVD to enter mainstream use. Although its relative advantage was high (a point constantly made in the literature), it was weak in the other four areas: compatibility (with other hardware as well as practices), complexity, trialability and observability.
ELSINET/ELSIWEB

As part of its services to AMEP providers the NCELTR Resource Centre has established DELTAA (Database of English Language Teaching for Adults in Australia). Originally distributed on disk, by the end of 1993 it was available online via ELSINET. The growth of the Internet, and in particular the World Wide Web, as the favoured online distribution mechanism led to the ELSIWEB project in 1995. Its goal was to deliver ‘three levels of information service:

- marketing information about the National Centre and its affiliates;
- ELSIWEB services (library, bulletin board and database services);
- distance learning courses and self access learning services.’

(Simpson 1996)

Project staff wanted to ensure that AMEP staff would turn to this site rather than one of the many others for language teachers. As the Resources Coordinator put it:

What then will make Virtual NCELTR different from other similar sites? What can we offer that will entice people to visit our site and come back again? We plan to offer a range of services as well as information that will be of interest to the ESL professional, teacher, researcher and student. These will include:

- access to databases and resources;
- information request and searching service;
- document delivery service;
- information about NCELTR activities, research projects, courses, publications;
- opportunities to discuss topics of interest with other professionals in the field through email and discussion lists;
- links to all the major current sources of relevant (related to ESL or Applied Linguistics) information on the Web;
- access to software, courseware, self access resources and materials for distance learning in ESL or Applied Linguistics.

(Simpson 1996)

The fourth question in the present survey (Chapter 2) will give an indication of the success of these goals.
Chapter 2

Current situation — the AMEP snapshot

The survey

A letter was sent to all AMEP provider heads requesting their responses to a four-page questionnaire about their current activity in relation to the four areas of interest for the strategy. Responses were received from all states and territories except Western Australia. The survey was based on five broad categories of programs used in language teaching.

The following tables summarise responses from each state. (In Victoria separate responses were received from different AMES centres; these were combined into one state response.) In some of the questions, two different types of examples of programs were given. Some respondents have responded to both and these are separated in the table. Where one response only was given, it is put in the first cell. However, it should not be concluded that examples of the second type of activity did not take place, since a lack of a separate response may be a result of interpreting the question as needing only one answer.

Results

Text-based programs

In the use of computer technology for specific classroom purposes, we can see that a range of relatively simple, text-based instructional, informational and text manipulation programs are in widespread use, though there is little use of a major CALL trend in the nineties towards concordancing programs, which identify patterns in text, probably because AMEP language levels are not high enough. There is more interest in than use of communication-oriented programs, probably reflecting a desire for, but relatively little access to, Internet services. Business applications appear to have become part of teachers’ work, and four states made explicit mention of teaching such applications, suggesting that computer use is at least implicitly seen as part of settlement. These findings are consistent with those of earlier AMEP reports.

CD ROMs

A new generation of instructional programs, incorporating multimedia on CD ROM, is emerging in the global CALL marketplace, but is yet to make
a major impact on the AMEP. Informational programs, which provide learning resources, such as those supplied by Protea Software, are in widespread use, possibly due to the appropriacy of their (low) levels, and their Australian content. Text manipulation, by definition, is unlikely to be much influenced by multimedia, though a new suite of products from the developers of the well-established Storyboard has multimedia capacity. (As their representative put it during a recent visit, ‘If it hasn't got multimedia, it won't sell in South America’.) Because of their nature, computer-mediated communications programs and business programs are unlikely to be influenced by multimedia, other than in presentations.

The Internet for teaching

Not surprisingly, the use of the Internet in teaching has grown since earlier surveys, with the majority of states having started to use online versions of what have previously been disk or CD ROM-based resources. The use of computer-mediated communication reflects genuinely new ways of interacting via new text types, and the growth here reflects global trends. The phenomenon is noted by Geoghegan (1996) (see Chapter 1), and can be accounted for by Rogers’ rate of adoption variables as being high in relative advantage, computability, simplicity, trialability and observability of results.

The Internet for professional development

There has been less growth in the use of the Internet for formal professional development, although there is likely to have been informal professional growth arising from networking and online reading that has begun in some places. It is not clear whether or not this is via the NCELTR web site or via the many others available from other institutions. There was no indication of formal professional development activities online, though the responses to the Instructional category question suggests the interest is there.

In the following tables, the results of the AMEP ‘snapshot’ survey are presented.
## 1 The use of computer technology for specific classroom purposes

This question is concerned with stand-alone, largely print-based programs, possibly using some sound and images, probably disk-based, possibly on a small local network.

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<th>PROGRAM TYPES AND USES</th>
<th>YOUR USAGE</th>
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<td><strong>Instructional</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs that take on a tutorial role</td>
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<td><em>eg Tense Buster, Choice Master</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Informational</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Programs that operate as a reference <em>eg The Alphabet</em></td>
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<td>2 Information sources <em>eg PC Globe</em></td>
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<td><strong>Text manipulation</strong></td>
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<td>1 Programs that allow for text reconstruction, often in a game format <em>eg Storyboard</em></td>
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<td>2 Programs that allow text analysis, such as Concordances <em>eg MicroConcord</em></td>
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<td><strong>Computer-mediated communication</strong></td>
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<td>Programs that allow for real time or delayed time communication, between individuals and/or groups. <em>eg Chat in Office 95</em></td>
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<td><strong>Business applications</strong></td>
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<td><em>eg word processing, spreadsheets, presentations</em></td>
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<td>1 Used by teachers in their regular work, <em>eg to create teaching materials</em></td>
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<td>2 Teaching the use of these applications</td>
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2 The use of multimedia to support the AMEP curriculum

This question is concerned with programs that combine images, sound, video, animation and print, probably on CD-ROM.

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<td>eg <em>Longman Interactive Dictionary</em></td>
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<td>eg Presentations using multimedia</td>
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3 The use of the Internet for resources and delivery

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We have not encountered this use before.

N = Not interested
We have considered this and decided not to use it.

I = Interested
We would like to use this.

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<td>Informational</td>
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<td>Programs that operate as a reference</td>
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<td>eg grammars, dictionaries</td>
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<td>Programs that allow text analysis, such as Concordances</td>
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<td>2 Information sources such as journals, specific to ESL or general</td>
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<td>Business applications</td>
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<td>eg Presentations using multimedia</td>
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4 The use of the Internet for NCELTR professional development

This question is concerned with staff professional development resources and programs delivered via the Internet. Please include all activity, not just that involving NCELTR. Also include the exchange of organisational information via intranets.

U = Unaware
We have not encountered this use before.

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<td><strong>Business applications</strong></td>
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Chapter 3

Needs and plans — the focus groups

There were four focus group meetings, and a total of eight separate collections of comments. The first meeting was in Victoria where a group of 25 AMES specialist CALL teachers discussed a set of Focus Issues in four groups. In New South Wales three groups met: a group of senior administrators and curriculum staff at AMES; staff at NCELTR together with a representative of Queensland and South Australia; and a small group of staff at the Institute of Language, UNSW (UNSWIL). Written responses were received from Tasmania and the Northern Territory. In Victoria the groups provided written answers. Notes were taken by the researcher at the other three meetings. Actual extracts from the notes or written submissions appear in italics.

Background

Instructional technologies

Participants were asked what the AMEP’s broad goals regarding the use of new instructional technologies should be. The responses often went beyond the immediate question to the broader context in which the AMEP is operating.

Program goals

The broad goal should be the appropriate and relevant use of instructional technologies for AMEP students. They should have a choice.

There is a hope of improved outcomes, linked to a desire to reduce costs, and an improvement in reach. There is a need and opportunity to learn from existing projects and work in other sectors.

DIMA’s role

DIMA is seen to be responding to policy pressure for flexible delivery (though flexible delivery is not synonymous with instructional technology). All educational sectors are addressing the issue of instructional technologies. It is bringing the AMEP into line with other sectors.

It was noted that there is a change in DIMA’s relationship with AMEP providers. In keeping with trends throughout the world, DIMA has moved from being a provider of services to a purchaser of services. The current tendering of delivery reflects this change. Government agencies still have a responsibility for ensuring the quality of the services they purchase.
Computer use

The increased use of computers is leading to new literacies. These may well be seen as part of settlement. The reaccreditation of the CSWE is including computer use in range statements and evidence. It includes graphic texts.

With the demise of labour market programs, the content of the AMEP curriculum may need to include aspects of vocational, and therefore computing, skills. However, all CSWE strands involve computing. Labour market skills should be developed within the framework of the CSWE rather than being separate from it.

Current context

Participants were asked what policies, strategies and plans relating to IT use are in place already. What are their implications for AMEP goals? Providers had addressed these questions in a variety of ways.

In Queensland the TAFE system has developed a broad IT strategy, Strategy 21. Training in instructional design is available to all staff through the Virtual Staff College.

The New South Wales Government has a blueprint for getting computers into schools, though this does not extend to the adult sector.

New South Wales AMES has developed three draft papers — a technology policy, an organisational position paper and a strategy for educational computing.

Previous AMEP initiatives

Participants were asked about the implications for future projects of previous AMEP initiatives, in particular the Interactive Videodisk series, and ELSINET and the NCELTR Web site. Respondents indicated that we need to make sound predictions and realistic evaluations, and consider:

- issues of access (location and numbers);
- continuing support beyond the development of the product;
- the potential for integration and uptake;
- the timeframe of the medium (CD ROM is still realistic in the mid-term);
- multimedia development involves many stakeholders. It is necessary to understand all perspectives.

It was noted that ELSINET use is restricted largely to Distance Learning teachers. There is not enough AMEP information at the NCELTR Web site. There needs to be a more specific AMEP site with links to DIMA and providers. This raises a number of issues to do with development, audience and maintenance which we return to below.
Summary of state of the art in the AMEP

Participants were asked to summarise the current and planned positions in their organisation. Most information concerns the current situation. However, both Victoria and New South Wales have internal planning documents setting out short- and mid-term goals.

The use of computer technology for specific classroom purposes

Most providers continue to use well-established text-based products.

CALL products include Storyboard, Choicemaster, Gapmaster, Testmaster, Matchmaster, CALIS, Fun With Texts, Pinpoint and Crossword Genius.

Generic products include PC Globe, Maps and Facts and Typequick.

Business applications include Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Access and MYOB.

Other vocationally oriented products include OzJAC and Job Guide.

Settings of use vary. In New South Wales most computing is done by individuals in ILCs rather than in classrooms. It supplements classroom work. In Victoria, most is done as a class in a computer room.

The use of multimedia to support the AMEP curriculum

Several Australian ESL products are well established. These include The Alphabet, Issues in English and The Interactive Picture Dictionary. Other CALL products include Euro Plus and Measuring Up. Generic titles include Encarta and The Australian Encyclopedia.

Both Victoria and South Australia are encouraging people to see these as new electronic text types, that is, to take a literacy perspective on CALL.

The use of the Internet for resources and delivery

This varies considerably. Some states have established use because of links with TAFE. In New South Wales the Distance Learning Program uses email, but more often faxes. There is emerging use of the Internet to support the CSWE. An AMES Victoria project with the working title CSWE Online (now The Virtual ILC) was the only specific product mentioned (see Corbel 1997 for details). In Victoria six centres are connected, with the rest to follow in 1998.

The use of the Internet for NCELTR professional development

There is limited use of the Internet for professional development, although this has been encouraged in Queensland TAFE. In New South Wales there is limited teacher use for access to information about conferences. New South Wales Distance Learning uses ELSINET rather than the Internet. NCELTR staff have provided good training.

Individual staff members are doing online professional development, but not via NCELTR.
In 1996 and 1997 the publishers of the course book, *Words Will Travel* (Clemens 1994) piloted an online accompaniment to the print material. Some teachers involved in the online pilot have continued interacting with students online. The feared inundation of email has not occurred, except initially.

NCELTR is considering use for reporting project outcomes, delivery of professional development, and delivery of formal subjects (for example, the MA in Applied Linguistics by distance learning), as well as support for online projects. There are implications for links to provider pages. There has been a suggestion put to NCELTR that some TESOL professional development might be offered online.

**Future needs**

Participants were asked about the implications of current and planned activity for the following areas.

**Infrastructure**

There are two major issues here: standards and responsibility. The changed relationship between DIMA and providers means that responsibility for hardware increasingly lies with providers. Standards are implicitly set in a tendered environment, inasmuch as the successful tender will in effect set the minimum standard for the contract period. DIMA has a responsibility to ensure that this, and all elements of contracts, are being adhered to.

Although many respondents called for upgrades, these seem more appropriately directed towards providers, who may or may not seek to maintain a position of market leadership in the IT area.

Information about best practice in other sectors was seen as useful. Learning from problems as well as successes would also be valuable.

The role of ARMS (the AMEP Reporting and Management System) had mixed responses, from those who sought its expansion to cover a wider range of provider needs, to others who sought to keep it completely separate from all educational matters.

**Roles and skills**

**Roles**

There are two main groups needing changes in educational computing skills: teachers and learners. Respondents suggested that teachers had a definite role to play.

- *[There’s a] strong learner preference for the teacher — in class, supporting online, in ILC.*

- *[Teachers need] pedagogic and technical skills to match client needs. Teacher presence is very important. DIMA clients are very*
dependent. They need to follow instructions, they are not independent learners. They need training.

In-person essential as teacher and trainer. Supplement this with on-paper and online. Teachers need to be both teacher and trainer/facilitator.

Specialist and generalist staff
Another issue is the mix between improving the skills of all staff and the use of specialists, either more highly skilled staff members, or outsiders. There is a problem of attracting specialists and replacing them when they move. Some enthusiasts can take on the role of specialist, but they may end up doing large amounts of unpaid work, which may or may not accord with organisational standards.

Increasingly, projects are to be done by teams, including teachers, technicians and instructional designers. It is unrealistic to expect provider staff to develop a full range of skills, but they need to understand the roles of others in the development process.

Teacher skills
There is a need to be more specific about what the skills are. It was suggested that there be different levels of teacher competency described, with a link to TESOL teacher competencies.

[There needs to be] a required hierarchy of skills for all teachers eg [as in the Victorian] Key Curriculum Areas.

Reintroduce levels of achievement for teachers. Set upskilling levels according to a set course pathway.

A percentage increase over time could be targeted. It is not just a matter of skills — teachers need a good understanding of how technology can support other learning modes.

Learner skills
Learner skills may also need to be specified. A number of suggestions were made in this regard.

Baseline computer skills could be mapped against CSWE levels. Learners need greater independence to progress at their own rate.

Student use depends on level and bands of students.

At-home access is not a reality for AMEP clients at present. Online materials could be developed but would still need to be supported by teacher contact.

Teacher/instructor needs to always be present when students have use of computers.
Content

There was general support for resources with content that is able to be linked to the CSWE but is not necessarily based on it. One group felt that the main focus should be the CSWE, though other settlement issues should be included. Another group stated that there should be links to the CSWE, but not too tight.

A central reference function was seen to be useful, as well as a review of existing software, possibly posted to a central location by different providers.

Central responsibility was seen to be to review and recommend, to be supplemented locally according to specific needs, especially since local providers may change over time. There was also a central role in defining the scope of content.

Content depends on how far DIMA ‘widens its net’. If you’re teaching word processing, have you gone past ‘settlement ESL’?

Web and CD ROM were preferred delivery modes.

The Web should be considered because it can be very cost effective.

The teacher still has a crucial role. [Integration comes from] adapting existing materials and developing new materials.

Priorities for development

Participants were asked, on the basis of the future needs identified above, what were the priorities for development in the following areas.

Program delivery

There was a limited response to this question, perhaps because of the lack of knowledge about client resources, though these were assumed to be minimal. The CSWE Online was mentioned by Victorian participants.

One respondent summarised the goal as follows:

Structured, instructed use of online learning to encourage individual learning in a safe environment.

Professional development

Participants identified a need for:

• a stated hierarchy of skills for all teachers;
• a minimum level of skill for carrying out certain duties;
• an identifiable training pathway through the levels;
• training that would include multimedia, instructional design and a perspective on electronic text types;
• professional development in line with the hardware available;
• CSWE as a primary or secondary focus;
• training in the use of shells;
• moderation and assessment activities online.

Materials development

There was a strong need for content linked to the CSWE, with the CSWE as a primary or secondary focus.

*Self-sustaining programs — ie clients can follow because of simplicity and logic of screen directions, which assist language development especially in areas of current language use.*

Programs need not be created from the ground up, as several respondents commented:

*Update current CALL favourites. We need a balance in both professional and materials development between the good old workhorses (Storyboard etc.) and the new stuff. It all boils down to resources and our students’ ability to access them. It’s all useless if the hardware isn’t there.*

*Some ideas could be introduced from Aussie Barbie if anyone can remember it.*

Several suggestions involved shell programs that teachers could easily author — a shell for the current curriculum. This would standardise design according to good design principles.

There was a need for a professional development package for all of these. One group suggested practice exercises in manuals of the kind received in mainstream computer training.

Other issues related to the development of IT resources included the following:

• NCELTR has traditionally filled gaps in materials, or developed materials that might not otherwise be developed. Is this appropriate when some participants are asking in effect for more of the same type of product eg *Issues in English?*
• How can development time be reduced? Can resources be smaller and modular, and available during development?
• Should NCELTR commission products or respond to proposals?
• How attractive are CD ROM programs to AMEP learners?
• How can AMEP-supported products be made widely available across the AMEP? (Commercial issues now complicate this issue.)
• Should a licensing system be developed, whereby purchasers of expensive products get a training and update service?

There is a potential role for a Web site in relation to resources. Features could include downloadable worksheets, CSWE assessment tasks or lesson plans, as well as a chat line and materials reviews.

Key areas for research, development or evaluation

Participants were asked, on the basis of the priorities for development identified above, what were the key areas for research or evaluation. The following points were made:

A central agency

There was continuing support for research into educational computing, as it applies to the AMEP, and for a central mechanism for its organisation and the dissemination of its results, as well as information about existing resources.

*The results of research apply to all providers, so there is clearly a role for a central agency.*

*What is already available? Central responsibility to review and recommend, to be supplemented locally according to specific needs.*

Clients

Respondents were constantly concerned with the clients themselves, and the extent to which they had characteristics or needs which made them different from others using technology both as a means of learning and as a goal of learning. Yet clients are not all the same either:

*The nature of DIMA students (ie newly arrived people). Are there differences between people in the two programs — refugee/humanitarian and migration?*
Access

Another major concern was access for both teachers and students. This is a constant issue, and although some respondents saw this as the responsibility of DIMA or the provider, most saw that extensive hardware expenditure was unlikely from either source, and that alternatives needed investigating.

The New South Wales AMES teachers who piloted an online accompaniment to the print material for *Words Will Travel* commented that students needed to have hands-on access to the Internet to be able to explore this medium further. According to respondents, this raises funding and equity issues for AMEP.

What is the reality of access among different groups? (How should groups be chosen?)

Alternatively, offer access and see which groups take it up.

Although computers are suggested as improving access, they may actually restrict access. We need to know more about access points, by the provider, at home, or at points in between like libraries. Do learners know about what’s available?

How many students have online access at the centre, at home, or both?

Attitudes

Respondents were concerned with what might be called psychological access — the extent to which learners were able to use the technology. An earlier survey (Corbel 1995) suggested that teachers may be projecting their personal concerns onto their learners. Nevertheless, it is also the case that flexible delivery arrangements are imposed without consultation, yet success is as likely to be a result of attitude as an issue of technology.

What are their attitudes to different learning arrangements? This could be done via a survey, focus groups or action research.

What do we know about uptake? What makes a difference?

What’s the role of instructional technologies in reach, retention and withdrawals?

Is computer [based] learning a kind of learning that is not threatening?

Market research on offshore clients — possibility of accessing pre-paid classes before arrival.

Survey distance learning students to see if they would use online materials.
Approaches

The survey was organised into categories which reflected a number of different broad approaches to software development. Although one approach might appeal more to some teachers, respondents considered that another approach might appeal more to some learners.

What models of delivery are appropriate for different groups?

Research into learning styles — is independent learning a realistic goal?

Outcomes

Respondents were concerned that a realistic rationale and outcomes for computer use should be established. As was seen in the literature review, such goals are often vague, making conclusions difficult. Respondents wanted more specific information about the returns on costs and efforts involved. They suggested a range of issues.

Research the benefits of technology in learning online literacy for low level clients.

Compare language gains in two groups, those using and those not using CSWE Online.

Can’t imagine how you’d do it, but how helpful computers are in the development of language proficiency.

Change in speed of proficiency with introduction of computer.

Use of language in real situations as a result of computer use.

Teaching

Respondents were keen for an active role for teachers in mediating computer use. The idea of intervention points emerged, in which teachers actively mediate between learners and electronic texts, just as they do with paper-based or audio-based texts. This was a reaction to teachers simply ‘facilitating’ computer use or even ‘child-minding’ learners in computer labs.

There is also a need to research teachers’ use of online resources, and their capacity to teach autonomous learning skills.

How can existing products be used to improve interaction?

How can teachers encourage appropriate strategy use?

What are the appropriate ‘intervention points’ for teachers in CALL use?

Time on task as affected by computer use.
Impact on classroom work ie what needs to be the focus, what tasks could be shifted to computers, how classroom instruction could be narrowed down to assist students language development.

Key elements of special projects

Participants were asked, in the light of the key areas identified above, what elements NCELTR Special Projects should include. Responses included:

*National collaboration has always been a feature of AMEP projects. This should continue, particularly in the light of changed intrastate arrangements.*

*All technology projects should maintain a curriculum focus.*

*Project outcomes should be digital to allow them to cross platforms and technologies.*

*Consortium approaches that acknowledge the complexity of multimedia production (as in tenders).*

*Speed — we can’t wait for expensive long-term projects.*

Other comments

A number of participants took the opportunity to make some broader points as well. There was support for the AMEP itself and the concept of an Instructional Technology Strategy, which was seen as something that would have a real impact. It was considered important that it build on existing program strengths, as well as acknowledging the changes in the DIMA-provider relationship and in the providers themselves. Above all was the desire to put the students first.
Chapter 4

Strategies

The literature review, the survey and the focus group discussions show that an overall guiding strategy for IT in the AMEP needs to address six main areas — research, standards, skills, training, resources, and information. In effect, this implies six strategies, one for each area. In this section a strategy is presented for each area, together with suggested implementation activities to meet the strategy. These are presented as draft project briefs in Appendix 2. Strategies are presented in priority order.

Each strategy is presented as a summary statement followed by a rationale from the survey. Details of the strategy appear as dot points. These strategies are the basis of the project briefs in Appendix 2.

Resources

Ensure the provision of timely, flexible, CSWE-oriented resources for teachers and learners.

Although all providers want more resources, this area is perhaps the most problematic. The development of multimedia resources calls for a complex, potentially time-consuming and expensive team effort. The capacity to produce such resources is beyond individual providers or NCELTR. Providers are increasingly members of consortiums with complicated commercial interests to consider, much as is the case with the tendering arrangements in general. At the same time, AMEP providers expect DIMA supported resources to be widely and easily available.

There was general agreement on the need for content to have links to the CSWE.

- Encourage the development of a range of CD ROMs, linked to the CSWE, particularly in levels and focus, and reflecting the needs of AMEP clients in their approach.

These may be based on existing successful products in the marketplace. They do not need to break new ground in the way that the Aussie Barbie did. This is an established market that needs a wider range of products.

Such products must have certain characteristics.

- Preference for development support should be given to proposals that meet the key elements identified in this survey. Proposals should be:
  - collaborative, both between providers and with other expert groups;
  - curriculum focused;
Proposals should be further considered in the light of the attributes mentioned in Chapter 3:

• the *relative advantage* of the innovation over what it replaces or supplements (in time, cost, effectiveness, quality of results etc);

• the innovation’s *compatibility* with existing practices, values, needs, ‘culture’, etc, or, conversely its disruptiveness to existing practices, values and other ‘cultural’ factors;

• the *complexity* of the innovation (how difficult it is to learn, to understand, and to use effectively);

• the innovation’s *trialability* (how easy is it to experiment with the new way of doing things before making an adoption decision); and

• the *observability* or visibility to other potential adopters of the results achieved by using the innovation.

Not all resources need to be complex multimedia products. One of the problems with such products is that they may be less amenable to modification once they are completed than disk or Web-based products. There were several requests for shell products, which provide a template into which teachers can insert their own content. In fact, many of the text-based products already in use have such a capacity but, according to an earlier survey (Corbel 1996), it is little used. This may be because teachers do not see that existing print-based programs do the kind of thing they would like programs to do, and which they see multimedia products doing: that is, provide a rich, complex learning environment.

However, the reality is that the more complex the program, the more complex its modification. Such modification may be beyond all but the most dedicated enthusiast. There is no reason to believe that the development from the ground up of a new shell program would satisfy needs that the wide range of existing shells cannot. At the same time, changing provider/teacher relationships make the expectation of extensive additional work by teachers unrealistic.

• Identify shell programs that offer providers the capacity to modify content in ways considered useful by staff, which are within staff capacities to learn easily, and which are relevant to and compatible with the CSWE frameworks.

• Encourage the use of the authoring components though professional development and distribution among providers.
NCELTR has an important role to play, but it may need to operate more like Victoria’s Telematics Trust, which gives small grants to projects which have hopes of commercial success, rather than as a university press, which publishes works that a commercial publisher would not take on.

Research

*Carry out a research program that investigates the relationship between IT and AMEP client groups.*

This proposal reflects the overriding concern for the clients that emerged from the survey and discussions. There is certainly more concern for the clients than there is for the technology, even among the most enthusiastic CALL supporters.

Some respondents assumed homogeneity among the client group: others saw differences. This needs further investigation. DIMA itself acknowledges two main groups — refugee/humanitarian and migrant — with differential funding reflecting their different needs. The CALL research literature rarely deals with group differences such as these.

- Identify the AMEP client groups as specifically as possible and investigate existing CALL research on similar groups, and identify research on similar groups to AMEP clients that may be relevant.

The issue of access to computers came up many times. More information is needed about this before commitments can be made to more computer-mediated approaches, particularly the Internet.

- Survey sample groups to identify knowledge of and access to computers at provider locations, at home, and in community settings.

Client attitudes are not always clear. Is computer use seen as useful or threatening? Do different groups have different attitudes? Are there connections to retention and withdrawal rates?

- Survey sample groups to identify attitudes to computer use and expectations of computer use.

Client skills are significant in successful computer use. What assumptions can be made about learner skill levels? Does computer use demand unrealistic learner autonomy?

- Investigate the relationship between language competencies and computing competencies, particularly in the context of the CSWE. Identify existing skill levels.

There is very little knowledge even among CALL users about the research on CALL in general. Much of the effectiveness research suggested in the focus groups has been carried out elsewhere, though usually with different groups and, in common with much method comparison research, is
inconclusive. Nevertheless, it would be useful for teachers to have an overview of this research, particularly if it was applied to the AMEP.

- Survey and summarise the field of the CALL effectiveness research as it applies to the AMEP. Focus particularly on work based on groups similar to AMEP clients.

There were many suggestions about software development, and these are taken up below. However, there was not widespread knowledge about existing software that may already meet AMEP needs.

- Survey and evaluate existing software for its relevance to the AMEP curriculum.

Participants were strong in their claims that teachers were integral to the computer-mediated learning environment, yet some of the general discourse of educational computing relegates the teacher to learner or facilitator role. It is increasingly hard in some circles to argue for a strong teaching presence while learners are using computers — the need must be shown, not simply asserted.

- Document key intervention points at which teachers mediate computer-mediated materials. This may include how teachers work intensively with a group of learners on electronic texts, much as teachers would do with print texts.
- Document effective models of in-person, on-paper and online approaches which meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Standards

*Establish a set of best practice standards in delivery and infrastructure, based on the research and current DIMA/provider relationships.*

As with all government departments now buying rather than providing services, DIMA has a responsibility to ensure that its increasing range of providers are providing a quality service. This has been built in to the tendering process, which in effect will be establishing standards for the use of IT in delivery for the contract period. While allowing for commercial sensitivities, it would be valuable to extend the AMEP’s established culture of collaboration to IT use.

- Document and describe best practice in IT use in the AMEP by benchmarking between providers and with outside organisations.
- Use best practice benchmarks as part of future tendering processes, including minimum skill levels of staff (see Skills, below).

It should be noted that while this does not commit DIMA to provision of infrastructure as it might have done in the past, it does imply recognition of the costs that a provider incurs through a commitment to best practice.
Skills

Establish a set of computing competencies relating to IT that reflect the needs of the program, providers and staff.

This strategy is similar to the previous one in that it is about setting standards, but in this case it goes further by making them explicit and compulsory.

- Identify roles and tasks carried out by generalist and specialist staff in the best practice settings identified in the previous strategy.

- Identify the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out the roles and tasks. These should include the suggestions in this survey. Describe these in competency terms. These competencies must recognise the larger context within which teachers work, and be linked to other generic competencies.

Training

Ensure provision of a coherent set of training options based on computing competencies, utilising a range of delivery mechanisms that reflect teacher needs and reflect best practice.

This strategy operationalises the competencies identified in the previous strategy. It needs to address content and delivery.

- Identify a developmental pathway based on competencies that can be the basis for training programs. The pathway should also lead to some form of credential. Investigate the applicability of existing IT courses for use in the AMEP, customised if necessary.

- Ensure the availability of training that develops the competencies and matches the pathways and credentialing requirements if any.

- Ensure the delivery of training that offers a mix of in-person, on-paper and online activities and resources.
Information

Establish an AMEP Web site to keep all AMEP stakeholders informed of strategy implementation.

The Web was a constant theme running through the responses to this survey, as both a delivery mechanism and a communication mechanism. The situation is complex here as well. Most stakeholders — DIMA, NCELTR, and providers — have their own Web sites. Individuals interested in the AMEP will find information about it at each of these sites, but there is no central reference point for the AMEP itself. In the past the AMEP was distinguished by the intercollegiality of its national providers, but an increase in the number of small providers and tightening of funds means that the old mechanisms may no longer be able to exist. The need for information and communication, however, remains.

- Establish and maintain an AMEP Web site that reflects the needs of all stakeholders.

The launch of such a site could be a highlight of the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1998.
Conclusion

The present survey of AMEP provider plans and the use of instructional technology in ESL has reinforced the conclusions reached in an earlier survey of AMEP teachers’ computing practices. Many teachers are interested in and capable of using the technology. However, there remain questions about the application of the technology in relation to the specific characteristics of the AMEP itself, particularly in relation to its clients, but also in relation to the changing relationship between providers and DIMA. At a time of competitive tendering of the AMEP, it is more important than ever that the tendering agency ensure that standards are set, that the skills and resources are available to meet them, and that they are indeed met. The strategies and the projects based on them that are set out here will help ensure that the quality for which the AMEP is renowned will be retained.

Providers themselves may wish to take the next step and develop plans and guidelines, based on the strategy, that will enable them to benefit immediately from the outcomes of the projects. This process may already be under way. If so, this strategy will assist the work in progress. If not, it will provide a solid basis upon which work can begin.
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Glossary of acronyms

**ACFE** . . . . Adult Community and Further Education

**AMEP** . . . . Adult Migrant English Program

**AMES** . . . . Adult Migrant English Services
               Adult Multicultural Education Services (Victoria)

**ARMS** . . . . AMEP Reporting and Management System

**CALL** . . . . Computer Assisted Language Learning

**CSWE** . . . . Certificates in Spoken and Written English

**DELTAA** . . Database for English Language Teaching for Adults in Australia

**DIMA** . . . . Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

**DSE** . . . . . Directorate of School Education

**ELSNET** . . English Language Services Information Network
ELSIWEB . English Language Services Information on the Web

ESL . . . . . English as a Second Language

ILC . . . . . Independent Learning Centre

IT . . . . . Information Technology/Instructional Technologies

IVD . . . . Interactive Videodisk

NBEET . . National Board of Employment, Education and Training

NCELTR . National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research

NLT . . . . New Learning Technologies

OTFE . . . . Office of Training and Further Education, Victoria

TESOL . . . Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages

UNSWIL . . University of New South Wales Institute of Language
Appendix 1

Project brief

NCELTR SPECIAL PROJECTS 1997

PROPOSER(S): NCELTR/AMES Vic

TITLE OF PROPOSAL
The use of instructional technology in the AMEP: strategic directions

THEMATIC AREA
Technology / flexible delivery

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE
The advent of new technology will have a profound influence on the planning and delivery of the AMEP in the future. It will also affect the way in which materials development and teacher professional development are carried out.

The importance accorded to the current and future role of technology in the AMEP is reflected in the 1997 Special Project proposals, where AMEP providers and NCELTR identified a wide range of areas for proposed project activity. These included:

- the use of multimedia resources to support the AMEP curriculum;
- the use of online technology as a means of facilitating NCELTR's delivery of teacher professional development;
- the use of learning resources and the delivery of language and literacy programs via the Internet;
- the use of computer technology by learners for specific classroom purposes.

AMEP providers are currently addressing these challenges in a variety of ways. However, in order to plan an integrated and future-orientated research and development program for 1997 and beyond, it would be helpful, before proceeding with any of the proposed projects, to develop a strategy clearly spelling out directions and priorities for the use of various technologies in the AMEP and by NCELTR, taking into account those strategies that have been developed in other sectors of education. This would help to ensure that the outcomes of special project research would be of maximum benefit to the national program and to NCELTR.
AIMS

Using available data, to briefly survey the extent to which the various technologies outlined above are used in the AMEP for the purposes identified.

To evaluate current capability platforms and identify significant gaps.

To develop a position paper outlining a strategy for research and development into the use of new technology by AMEP providers and NCELTR. This strategy would:

1. provide a summary of the ‘state of the art’ in the AMEP with regard to current use of technology and future needs;

2. indicate priorities for a program of collaborative research and development over a two-year period into the use of technology in program delivery, professional development and materials development, taking into account the differing needs and resources of AMEP providers and the future needs of NCELTR. This program would aim to:
   - identify key areas for research, development or evaluation;
   - outline the key elements of special project proposals which could then be further developed for funding and undertaken in an integrated fashion in 1997–99.

PROCEDURES

1. Literature review (two weeks). This would include recent investigations into the use of technology in the AMEP as well as other relevant educational sources, both in Australia and internationally.

2. Consultations with providers (two days). This would involve telephone consultations and/or meetings with key personnel in AMEP provider organisations and NCELTR.

3. Preparation of strategy paper (three weeks). It is envisaged that this would be approximately 20–30 pages long and would address the use of new forms of instructional technology (including World Wide Web, multimedia and email) in teacher professional development, materials development and program delivery.

PROPOSED OUTCOMES/DISSEMINATION

Strategy paper
NCELTR Forum presentation
Prospect article
Appendix 2

Draft project briefs

DRAFT PROJECT BRIEF 1

CSWE software

THEMATIC AREA

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

One of the strategies of the AMEP’s Instructional Technology Strategy is to ensure the provision of timely, flexible, CSWE-oriented resources for teachers and learners.

Although all providers want more resources, this area is perhaps the most problematic. The development of multimedia resources calls for a complex, potentially time-consuming and expensive team effort. The capacity to produce such resources is beyond individual providers or NCELTR. Providers are increasingly members of consortiums with complicated commercial interests to consider, much as is the case with the tendering arrangements in general. At the same time, AMEP providers expect DIMA-supported resources to be widely and easily available.

Resource development needs to be:

• collaborative, both between providers and with other expert groups;

• curriculum focused;

• fast to produce;

• modifiable by teachers.

AIMS

1 Identification of shell programs that offer providers the capacity to modify content in ways considered useful by staff, which are within staff capacities to learn easily, and which are relevant to and compatible with the CSWE frameworks.
2 Development of software, probably CD ROM-based, linked to the CSWE, particularly in levels and focus, and reflecting the needs of AMEP clients in their approach. This may be based on existing successful products in the marketplace. Ideally the product will be created using one of the shell program.

3 Encourage the continuing modification of the program, if possible, through the use of the authoring components and through professional development and distribution among providers.

PROPOSED OUTCOME/DISSEMINATION
A range of CSWE-oriented software.
DRAFT PROJECT BRIEF 2

The effectiveness of CALL in the AMEP

THEMATIC AREA

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

One of the strategies of DIMA’s Instructional Technology Strategy is to carry out a research program that investigates the relationship between IT and AMEP client groups.

There is an overriding concern for the clients in the use of technology in the AMEP. Some people assume homogeneity among the client group; others see differences. DIMA acknowledges two main groups — refugee/humanitarian and migrant — with differential funding reflecting their different needs.

The issue of access is important. More information is needed about this before commitments can be made to more computer-mediated approaches, particularly the Internet. Client attitudes are not always clear. Is computer use seen as useful or threatening? Do different groups have different attitudes? Are there connections to retention and withdrawal rates? Client skills are significant in successful computer use. What assumptions can be made about learner skill levels? Does computer use demand unrealistic learner autonomy?

There is very little knowledge even among CALL users about the research on CALL in general. Although many people want new software for the AMEP, there is not widespread knowledge about existing software that may already meet AMEP needs. Much of the effectiveness research suggested in the focus groups has been carried out elsewhere, though usually with different groups and, in common with much method comparison research, is inconclusive. Nevertheless, it would be useful for teachers to have an overview of this research and of the available software, particularly as it applies to the AMEP.

AIMS

Stage 1

• Survey and summarise the field of the CALL effectiveness research as it applies to the AMEP. Focus particularly on work based on groups similar to AMEP clients (based on the findings of the previous project).

• Survey and evaluate existing software for its relevance to the AMEP curriculum.

• Document effective models of in-person, on-paper and online approaches which meet the needs of all stakeholders.
• Identify the AMEP client groups as specifically as possible and investigate existing CALL research on similar groups; and identify research on similar groups to AMEP clients that may be relevant.

Stage 2

The findings of Stage 1 may well provide adequate information for AMEP providers to make appropriate decisions concerning educational computing. If this is not the case, further research may be appropriate to address outstanding issues. Further work might, if necessary:

• survey sample groups to identify knowledge of and access to computers at provider locations, at home, and in community settings;

• survey sample groups to identify attitudes to computer use and expectations of computer use;

• investigate the relationship between language competencies and computing competencies, particularly in the context of the CSWE. Identify existing skill levels.
DRAFT PROJECT BRIEF 3

Standards and skills in the use of Instructional Technology in the AMEP

THEMATIC AREA

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

One of the strategies of DIMA’s Instructional Technology Strategy is to establish a set of best practice standards in delivery and infrastructure based on research and current DIMA/provider relationships.

As with all government departments now buying rather than providing services, DIMA has a responsibility to ensure that its increasing range of providers are providing a quality service. This has been built in to the tendering process, which in effect will be establishing standards for the use of IT in delivery for the contract period. While allowing for commercial sensitivities, it would be valuable to extend the AMEP’s established culture of collaboration to IT use.

Another of the strategies of DIMA’s Instructional Technology Strategy is to ensure provision of a coherent set of training options based on computing competencies, utilising a range of delivery mechanisms that reflect teacher needs and reflect best practice. This strategy develops and operationalises a set of educational computing competencies. It establishes a set of computing competencies relating to IT that reflect the needs of the program, providers and staff. This not only sets standards but makes them explicit and compulsory. It addresses both the content and delivery of training.

Teachers believe they are integral to the computer-mediated learning environment, yet the general discourse of educational computing sometimes relegates the teacher to a learner or facilitator role. It is increasingly hard in some circles to argue for a strong teaching presence while learners are using computers — the need must be shown, not simply asserted.

AIMS

- Document and describe best practice in IT use in the AMEP by benchmarking between providers and with outside organisations.

- Identify roles and tasks carried out by generalist and specialist staff in the best practice settings.

- Document key intervention points at which teachers mediate computer-mediated materials. This may include how teachers work intensively with a group of learners on electronic texts, much as teachers would do with print texts.

- Identify the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out the roles and tasks. These should include the suggestions in this survey. Describe these in competency terms. These competencies must recognise the
larger context within which teachers work, and be linked to other generic competencies.

- Identify a developmental pathway based on the competencies that can be the basis for training programs. The pathway should also lead to some form of credential. Investigate the applicability of existing IT courses for use in the AMEP, customised if necessary.

- Ensure the availability of training that develops the competencies and matches the pathways and credentialing requirements if any.

- Ensure the delivery of training that offers a mix of in-person, on-paper and online activities and resources.
DRAFT PROJECT BRIEF 4

Development of an AMEP Web site

THEMATIC AREA

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE

One of the strategies of DIMA’s Instructional Technology Strategy is to establish an AMEP Web site to keep all AMEP stakeholders informed of strategy implementation.

The Web was a constant theme running through the responses to this survey, as both a delivery mechanism and as a communication mechanism. The situation is complex here as well. Most stakeholders — DIMA, NCELTR, and providers — have their own Web sites. Individuals interested in the AMEP will find information about it at each of these sites, but there is no central reference point for the AMEP itself. In the past the AMEP was distinguished by the intercollegiality of its national providers, but an increase in the number of small providers and tightening of funds means that the old mechanisms may no longer be able to exist as they have done in the past. The need for information and communication, however, remains.

AIMS

• Establish and maintain an AMEP Web site that reflects the needs of all stakeholders.

• The launch of such a site could be a highlight of the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1998.