

I Defining ICT

The term IT has recently been expanded to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in recognition of the growing significance of communications technology to access the Internet, send email to other institutions, to video conference, and so on. ICT therefore combines telecommunications, computing and broadcasting and covers any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically, including telephones, faxes, computers and televisions.

In May 1999, David Blunkett announced proposed changes to the National Curriculum for England. The resultant document forms the second review of the curriculum with changes having taken effect in schools from September 2000. One of these changes has been the renaming of the subject from Information Technology (IT) to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The change is intended to clarify the use of the two terms and prevent confusion. Clare Johnson, Principal Manager ICT, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, explains the implications of the change:

The new curriculum for ICT proposes that information is at the heart of students' study, of IT skills, knowledge and understanding. This new focus suggests that students might start with using IT to find things out, then develop their ideas and make things happen. There is a new emphasis on students sharing and exchanging their work and ideas that encourage collaboration and publication. Their work is constantly reviewed, evaluated and modified. The result should place more emphasis on IT as a tool for learning, rather than merely using applications.

IT and ICT in the National Curriculum, QCA Newsletter, Issue 2, May 1999

It is a further requirement of the 2000 National Curriculum that the use of ICT should be embedded in the whole curriculum. The National Curriculum for secondary teachers in England (see <http://www.nc.uk.net/>) outlines the importance of Information and Communication Technology by stating that:

Information and communication technology (ICT) prepares students to participate in a rapidly changing world in which work and other activities are increasingly transformed by access to varied and developing technology. Students use ICT tools to find, explore, analyse, exchange and present information responsibly, creatively and with discrimination. They learn how to employ ICT to enable rapid access to ideas and experiences from a wide range of people, communities and cultures. Increased capability in the use of ICT promotes initiative and independent learning, with students being able to make informed judgements about when and where to use ICT to best effect, and to consider its implications for home and work both now and in the future.

Information and Communication Technology, page 143

- remove barriers to learning to ensure quality of access for all, including those in isolated rural areas, those with special educational needs or those in areas of urban deprivation
- provide a resource for teachers to improve their ICT skills.

Substantial funding programmes are being made available to provide networking infrastructure, hardware, software and training to enable UK schools to connect to the Grid. £760 million has been made available through the Standards Fund for schools to spend on ICT and to access the NGfL in the four years up to April 2002, and a further £710 million will be made available from 2002 to 2004. National Lottery monies are providing a further £230 million up to 2002, through the lottery-funded New Opportunities Fund (NOF).

The NOF initiative

This New Opportunities Fund has to be one of the most significant of all the recent Government initiatives with regard to ICT. The initiative is funded by the National Lottery and a vast amount of manpower and effort has been put into its preparation.

Unfortunately, not a lot of teachers are aware of the significance of the initiative nor of the best ways of taking advantage of what it offers. Hence, it is important for you to find out what the initiative could mean for your school.

Basically, the aim of the NOF ICT training programme is to increase the expertise of serving teachers (subject-based) and school librarians in the use of ICT, in order to raise the standards of student achievement. The training programme does not currently include voluntary helpers. Schools must register for the training by spring 2002, and the training itself must take place by spring 2003. Serving teachers who qualified before May 1999 are eligible for training – it is intended that, as a result of the training, these teachers will meet the standards of expertise in the use of ICT expected of all NQTs. (It is assumed that those teachers who qualified after May 1999 already meet these standards.)

To help ensure that the training is appropriately and effectively focused, a list of expected outcomes has been developed for the programme by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). For your school to be able to make use of its grant, you must have the following in place:

- An ICT development plan, validated by your LEA.
- A timetable of when you will send staff on the training.
- Access to the Internet for all staff undertaking the training.

Once the above are in place, you will need to decide how to organise the training in your school and which training provider to use. Every school will have received a copy of the NOF catalogue which gives detailed information about the ICT training programme and lists training providers approved to deliver training under the scheme. This catalogue is also available to download from the NOF site. (See also <http://www.pearsoninformation.co.uk/> for ICT training details.) Note that it is acceptable for different teachers or departments to use different training providers.

Entitlement

How does this policy meet the requirements of entitlement set out in the National Curriculum?

How does this policy address equal opportunity issues and guarantee access for all students?

Implementation

What specific applications are in use by the department?

What is the ICT experience of students studying English at each key stage?

What aspects of ICT are taught?

How does this policy aim to ensure the inclusion of all students in ICT?

How does this policy address issues of health and safety?

Is there a specific procedure that needs to be followed in planning access to ICT?

Are legal requirements relating to copyright satisfied?

International awareness

Through the communication facility of ICT, students can explore the global impact of ICT and begin to interact with the world around them. Students can choose to become actively engaged in aspects of the life and culture of peoples throughout the world rather than remaining passive spectators. Students can publish work on the World Wide Web so that the world becomes their audience, providing the means for inviting feedback from around the globe. Work by students in other countries can also be commented upon.

Access to information

The world of ICT, and in particular the World Wide Web, has replaced the traditional trip to the library, although that is not to say that the school library is redundant – far from it – although its role may change. Access to this vast ‘cyber-library’ means that more information than could ever be stored in one school library is available onscreen, at home, in schools or in libraries themselves. A computer connected to the Internet can access information from all over the world. However, this vast amount of information, and the fact that there are no restrictions on who may post information on the Web, means that staff and students need to learn how to skim and scan texts, and select according to relevance and reliability.

Motivation

Students respond very positively to the self-directed learning opportunities afforded by emerging technology. Their education is enriched by working at their own pace. Active engagement with their work provides the concentration required for effective exercises that would otherwise be quickly abandoned because of their lack of appeal in printed text form. For example, the word processing of writing tasks is now commonplace but should be regarded as more than just prettyfying the text. With the right approach, the whole process of writing, from drafting, to editing and the preparation and printing of the finished piece can be performed to a much higher and more satisfying level using the facilities offered by the word processor.

Communication

Information stored on one computer can be viewed or downloaded on another, whether it is in the same room or on the other side of the world. Global communication has become faster and more efficient than ever before. Messages can be sent to one person, or to hundreds of thousands, at the click of a button. It only takes seconds to transfer information, the cost is minimal, and the transferred information is immediately useable. This information can be adapted, modified and processed to suit another audience or another purpose. For example, the opportunities offered by this facility go far beyond the ‘electronic pen-friend’ and might include collaborative work with other schools on particular language projects (eg work on dialect), role-play scenarios, exchanging information with schools in other countries by comparing expectations, social attitudes, ways of life, tastes and preferences, etc. This is a facility that has yet to be fully appreciated and exploited by most schools.

Modernising Shakespeare can be a way of understanding both the shifts in culture that make Shakespeare sometime seem alien to the modern reader and the issues that, remarkably, unite us across the centuries, thus making him feel like a contemporary. The 'Seven Ages of Man' speech from *As You Like It* offers a good start.

5 Using Web resources and the Internet in English

This section presents a range of activities which might be used with a class, each making use of a particular aspect of the Internet or using resources from specific Web sites. See also *Using the Internet – English* (Pearson Publishing, 2000) for student sheets and many useful Web addresses.

Firstly, a few general points about accessing material from the Internet in a classroom situation.

Much of the material on the Internet comes from America, hence the culture on which it is based, the assumptions it makes and the language it uses is US- rather than UK-orientated, and it is well to bear this in mind. However, the number of UK Web sites is growing very fast, and there are a great many sites which will keep English Studies sufficiently busy with excellent home-grown material.

The other serious problem which schools should address before giving students access to the Internet is, of course, the danger of them viewing inappropriate material. Although it might be difficult to avoid this material altogether, there are certain strategies which might keep it to a minimum. There are, for instance, a number of ways of filtering material by using programs such as 'net-nannies' or 'walled-garden' sites, but the best and most effective way is intelligent supervision by staff. It is vital that the school devises some kind of practical policy for Internet access in order to safeguard staff and students from possible difficulties which might arise from such access. English department staff should discuss this with the ICT coordinator to find out what the whole school policy is.

What does the Internet have to offer English Studies?

The World Wide Web offers teachers, students and departments very pragmatic alternatives to traditional ways of approaching English Studies. How well English departments adapt to and utilise the new media may be the determining factor in their success as language education providers in the digital future.

However, amongst teachers there is an understandable fear about student access to uncensored information and an uneasiness about the use of electronic media in the classroom. There is a great deal that the Web cannot do, and we should be critical of its shortcomings. But the medium will become easier to access, better organised, safer and friendlier, and will have the power to deliver a wealth of material. It will create opportunities for extending English Studies into areas hitherto unreachable.