//Literacy education and the postdigital: International perspectives//

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Thurs 20 Nov 2025 | 7pm AEDT, 8am GMT, 9am CET, 10am EET

/Towards postdigital literacies: Our ambivalent dance with screens/ <Jennifer Rowsell, Sheffield>

In a world where digital devices, platforms, and algorithms are constant companions, what are we really seeking when we turn repeatedly to our screens? This presentation explores the emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of our screen-mediated lives—not just the worries/dangers, but also and mostly the comforts. From smartphones to streaming platforms, screens provide escape, structure, connection, and they can imbue a sense of safety. Blending interviewee thoughts and musings with insights from media studies, posthumanism, and cultural analysis, *The Comfort of Screens* invites us to look beyond debates of "too much screen time" and instead ask deeper questions about why these technologies feel indispensable. How do screens shape our sense of self, our relationships, and our understanding of reality? And what does it mean to find comfort in a glowing rectangle? This presentation offers a nuanced ethnographically-grounded exploration of digital life—challenging us to rethink our relationships with the screens we can't seem to live without.

Jennifer Rowsell is Professor of Digital Literacy at the University of Sheffield. Her research seeks to redefine what literacy can be in primary and secondary education through ethnographies that are multimodal with an emphasis on design and making as sensed, material, and lived. Her most recent book is *The Comfort of Screens* (Cambridge University Press).

/Postdigital L1 English education: New theoretical frames for new and old challenges/ <Alex Bacalja, Melbourne>

As neoliberal ideologies continue to dominate L1 English education, shaping curricula and pedagogical practices in ways that often prioritize market-driven outcomes, there is an urgent need for alternative theoretical frameworks that can address the complexities of learning which is inextricably bound up with the digital. This presentation reports findings from a two-year case study at an Australian high school, where digital games were incorporated into a senior school English curriculum. Employing key ideas emerging from postdigital theory, the study examines how the experiences of teachers and students in the study were shaped by complex networks of entanglements, informed by disciplinary expectations, pedagogical practices, materiality and state-mandated curricula. Theorising L1 education through multiple strands of postdigitality is offered as one way to break free from neoliberal logics and take seriously the need to work with our students to explore the complex interplay between humans and digital technologies, and how they shape and co-constitute each other.

Alex Bacalja is a senior lecturer in literacy and English at the University of Melbourne. His research employs qualitative case study approaches, informed by sociocultural literacies and postdigital thinking, to explore the critical digital literacies of young people, both within and beyond formal schooling contexts.