

History of Distance Education in Western Australia



1918 - 1993

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Acknowledgements

The Distance Education Centre gratefully acknowledges the assistance and contributions of all persons connected with the production of this magazine. (Cover photograph supplied courtesy of Mrs Joan Major, nee Chapman).



FOREWORD



*Norman Moore, MLC,
Minister for Education*

The achievements and on-going work of the Ministry of Education's Distance Education Centre (DEC) should be highlighted for all Western Australians. All of our children, no matter where they may live, deserve access to the same standard of education, and in a State as vast as ours, the DEC plays a vital role in ensuring this equality of opportunity. The Centre currently has about 150 teachers catering for some 2,000 students, spread across Australia and 42 other countries across the world.

This 75th anniversary commemorative magazine captures the sense of purpose, variety and complexity of the service provided by people working at the DEC. In tracing the development of distance education in Western Australia to the present day, contributors have demonstrated their

extensive historical knowledge and have embraced the unique character of this special aspect of education in Western Australia. This dedication, pride in achievement and sense of belonging has earned the Centre a special place in the history of Western Australian education.

I am sure this commemorative magazine will encourage an increasing appreciation of the essential role played by the DEC in the development of this State. My congratulations go to the contributors for their efforts in ensuring that the history of the DEC is properly recorded. This impressive record highlights the real spirit of those who are dedicated to giving isolated students, in our huge State, the best possible education.

**Norman Moore, MLC,
Minister for Education**



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Mrs E. H Atkinson was the first teacher appointed to teach Correspondence lessons from the Education Department building located at 1 St Georges Terrace, Perth.



PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE



Gail Taylor, Principal

Greetings!

It gives me great pleasure to contribute to this publication commemorating seventy five years of distance education in Western Australia. Such a significant milestone is being marked by the Centre in a number of ways, first and foremost by an Open Day when students, parents and teachers from the present and the past, together with all those who have an interest in the work done by the Centre, will come together to celebrate. This magazine is part of that celebration.

It is with pride that I can announce another important marker – the inauguration of the Clarence Eakins Award which will provide a scholarship for a Year 10 student going on to Years 11 and 12. Clarence Eakins was the first Principal of

what was then the WA Correspondence School and he retained the position for over thirty years. I am sure he would be as proud as I am of the wonderful institution we all know today, when the high standard of achievement of our students is regularly recognised in State and District awards.

This year of celebration was further distinguished when the Minister for Education, the Hon Norman Moore, visited the Centre to meet a student from the 1930s, Mrs Iris Gill (nee Wilson). Together they watched a DECTronic Classroom lesson, presented by means of a technology which didn't exist when Mrs Gill studied by correspondence in the lonely lighthouse where she lived with her family. Today this technology is becoming available to an increasing number of our students.

Thank you to all those, particularly past staff and students, who have contributed to this magazine and to the historical display which will be a highlight of the Open Day. Such contributions have given us today a strong sense of continuity with those who have taught and learned at a distance for the last seventy five years.

Gail Taylor,
Principal



A NEW ERA IN WA EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

1993 marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of "education through correspondence" in Western Australia. Officially established in September 1918, the WA Correspondence School was two years behind the Victorian correspondence school, although instruction through correspondence to young people who were preparing for teaching careers had already been established in the state since 1903. This made WA "a pioneer in this area" (Gordon Worner, Superintendent of Primary Education).

Prior to 1918, parents of isolated students, who had no means of supporting their children in boarding schools or hiring private tutors, were left to their own devices. It was this very unsatisfactory situation that prompted Mr Robert Sandon, of Marne near Goomalling in May, 1917, to apply to the Minister of Education asking that a "correspondence branch" be established similar to those operat-

H. P. Colbatch Esq,

.... remarks upon your statement of Educational Matters. Everyone will agree that your efforts are praiseworthy and necessary in the furtherance of the Education of the city and town children, but what about the children in the country who cannot get to a school on account of distance and bad roads? We pay our share of the taxation for the upkeep of the Educational Department. ... There is a demand for facilities for education in the back country, a crying need for a system that will reach the children of the struggling settlers. These children are growing up almost without education, except what we can give them in our spare time. If you were to start a correspondence branch in the Educational Department you would help us, by putting system and method in our efforts, in fact all we would have to do is to guide the child through the work.

R. S. Sandon

ing successfully elsewhere. After the initial rejection, the Director of Education Mr Andrews, recommended the establishment of the correspondence school in W.A. The main purpose of the newly established school was to provide education to the 'isolated' and the 'outback' students at primary level.

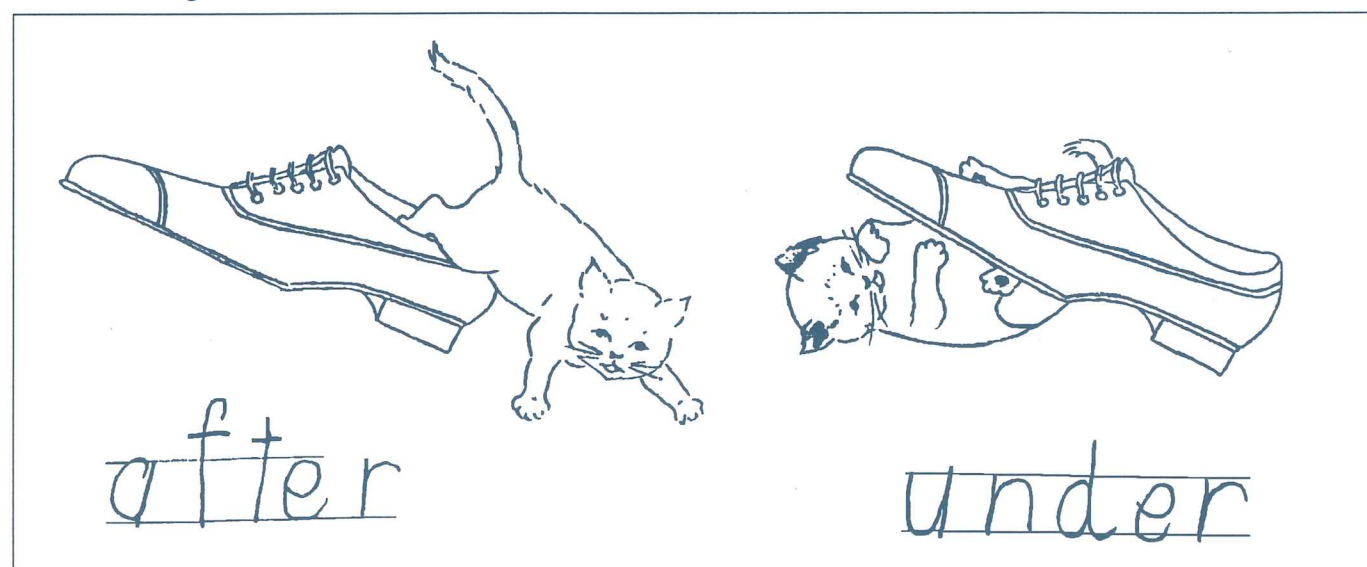
With the passage of time the courses for post-primary education were established including most of the curriculum subjects available to the city students. Other groups, such as physically handicapped children, children whose parents, owing to the transitory nature of their occupation, had no fixed address or those who were temporarily living overseas where schooling was not available, were added to the already diverse 'community' of students enrolled with the Correspondence School. There were also students who were over the compulsory age and who had left school but wanted to continue their studies in a few subjects.

By 1926 a new and very important category of students was added to the above mentioned groups, and these were probationers and unclassified teachers preparing for the C Certificate examinations. In 1939 correspondence lessons were made available to crippled and invalid children in the metropolitan area. The correspondence lessons were also made available to native children in pastoral areas, at Native Missions without schools and to post-primary native students in small country schools.



STUDENT WORK

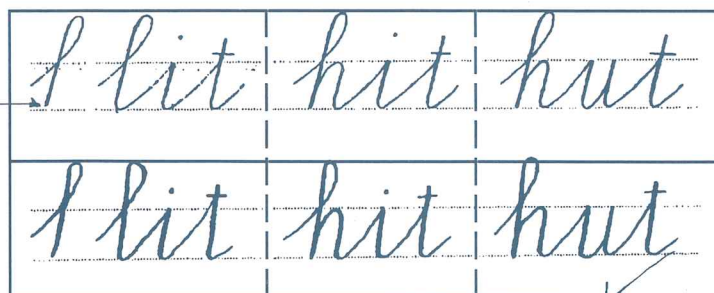
Infants Reading Sheet



Sample of work courtesy of Neva (Smith) Noack.

Practise these words on your pad. When you can make them well write one line below.

Bring all down-strokes almost to the line like this before making the turn.



Joins and loops are made at this line.

Very nicely written.

Sample of work in Writing Set 2, Lesson 5. Courtesy of Sylvia (Gorrie) Blatch.



Arithmetic				
28-4-38 1.	6	2.	5	3.
Ex. 1	3		7	8
	7		9	6
	8		4	9
	4		8	5
	2		3	4
	30 ✓		36 ✓	✓ 39

From a Half Yearly Test. Courtesy of Sylvia (Gorrie) Blatch.

"Our Australian Trees"

Australia is fortunate in having a wide variety of useful timber. Many of the trees are used for building purposes and other essential industries. There are also numerous varieties of ornamental trees such as the Golden and Silver Wattle and In the West-Australian red flowering gum we have one of the finest decorative trees in the world.

English standard IX, Set 12. Courtesy of Neva (Smith) Noack.

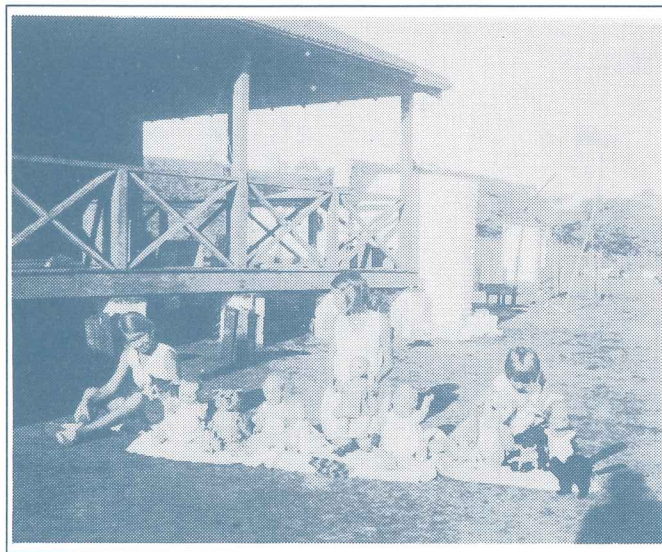


LESSONS AT A LIGHTHOUSE

One part of correspondence lessons that has become only a memory is the education of lighthouse children. These children belonged to the families of lighthouse keepers who manned some of the light-houses around Australia. Originally there were over 300 lighthouses but only 50 were manned.

Two that are part of our teaching history are Cape Leveque and Cape Don. Cape Leveque was built in 1911 on the approaches to the Buccaneer Archipelago north of Broome in Western Australia. Cape Don is in the Northern Territory but was serviced by the navaid ship *Cape Don* from WA. The lighthouse Cape Don was built in 1915 to aid navigation between Melville and Bathurst Islands.

Lighthouse keepers had to assist with maintenance of the lights, act as tourist guides and carry out weather observations. When they had children learning by correspondence they, with their wives, had to act as a teacher or home tutor as they were called.



Iris, Marion and Nancy on the steps of Iris' house.
Cape Leveque Lighthouse, 1940



Cape Don Lighthouse 1940

Although not trained for it, parents in the position of tutor became highly skilled.

Iris Wilson, and Marion and Nancy Knight were three of our students who lived at Cape Leveque during the 1930's while their parents ran the lighthouse. Iris records that life was excellent and fairly carefree with plenty of fishing, swimming and generally beautiful weather. Lessons were delivered by the lighthouse supply vessels when they brought provisions for the families. If lessons missed the boat from Perth the children were quite devastated because two weeks was a long time between visits. On the other hand if something had been done incorrectly it was a nice long time before the reprimand came. Visits to their teachers in Perth were infrequent but they did meet a Miss Eckersley who invited them to her home but no teacher was fortunate enough to visit the children. Handwriting was a valued skill and these students still use a copper-plate cursive which is to be envied today.

Photos courtesy of Iris Gill.



OUR RURAL MAGAZINE

The first issue of the magazine was published in May 1926 for the benefit of students enrolled in the Correspondence School. Its main objective was to inform students in the isolated areas of the national, state and world events - "pupils were brought into touch with the outside world, and the significance of national events was brought home to them" (Clarence Eakins).

The main contributors to the magazine were Mr Clarence Eakins, the Correspondence School headmaster, and his staff. One of the early, and much valued, contributors was Mr Miles, the then superintendent of the Correspondence School.

A special topic was introduced each year in each issue. In the 1926 issue, under the heading "Current Events and Recent Happenings", the story of the iron deposits in the north west of W.A. were discussed in great detail.

In the 1927 July issue, under the heading, Interesting Topics From Far And Near, a story "A visit to the Netherlands" focussed on the geography and land use of the country, as well as giving a brief history. It contained not only academic, historical and world events but was enriched by articles concerning gardening, needlework and other practical activities that were of great interest to the outback students and their parents. Cultural aspects, such as poetry and art were also included. Western Australian authors, such as J.K. Ewers and James Pollard made contributions to the magazine. The magazine was also a great forum for the students to display their talents in story and poetry writing. The magazine was subtly used as another teaching tool by the Correspondence staff.

The magazine was not only popular among the Correspondence School students but was also avidly read and was in a great demand by the State and private schools. Its great popularity may be judged

by the fact that by 1935 the circulation of the Rural Magazine reached 10 000.

The magazine was published up to 1945 and was discontinued due to the shortage of paper caused by shipping difficulties as a result of World War II. After a few years, when paper was again available, the Education Department decided to publish *W.A. School Paper*, with the result that re-publication of *Our Rural Magazine* was abandoned.

In order to keep the students informed of the school happenings and activities a Quarterly Circular was introduced. This was a much smaller publication which informed pupils about coming events and important dates.

Our Rural Magazine.

Written specially for Correspondence Pupils.

Vol. I., No. 9. PERTH. October, 1926.

AFTER studying the articles on "Current Events and Recent Happenings" below, you should mark on a blank map of the world all the places that appear in capital letters. Keep an atlas by you as you read, and refer to it from time to time. If you have trouble in locating a place use the index at the back of the atlas. This will tell you the page to which you should refer, and will also give you the approximate position of a locality by mentioning the nearest parallel and meridian. It is where these two lines cross on your map that the place will be found. Be sure to forward the map with your next set of papers for correction.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC ICE PATROL.

GUARDIAN OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST TRADE ROUTE.

Shipping has altered almost beyond recognition since the day, a little over a century ago, when Byron wrote—

"Roll on thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain:
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stays with the shore—upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed."

And yet to a remarkably great degree these words are as true now as they were then. The graceful clipper, with its wide-spread sails, has been superseded by the steamer, leaving the sailor no longer the sport of every wind that blows. Every precaution that the ingenuity of man can devise has been taken to render the modern liner safe for passenger service. The seas are mapped and charted so that the captain runs much less danger of shipwreck on some unknown rock or coast. The invention of wireless telegraphy has made it possible for a vessel in mid-ocean to keep in constant communication with other ships and with the outside world. So it very rarely happens now that a vessel disappears leaving no trace of the time or cause of its fate; yet a century ago ships were frequently lost, and men often vanished, sinking into the ocean's depths—

"Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown."

But even at the present day the reader not infrequently meets the heading "Marine Disaster," when scanning the daily papers. During the last fortnight eight shipwrecks were recorded. Two vessels were stranded on the BARRIER REEF, off the east coast of Australia; an oil boat was burnt; four vessels of varying sizes capsized in rough weather; one schooner ran ashore in a storm; and, finally, a Japanese steamer en route from VANCOUVER to her home port struck a rock off the coast of the ALEUTIAN ISLANDS.

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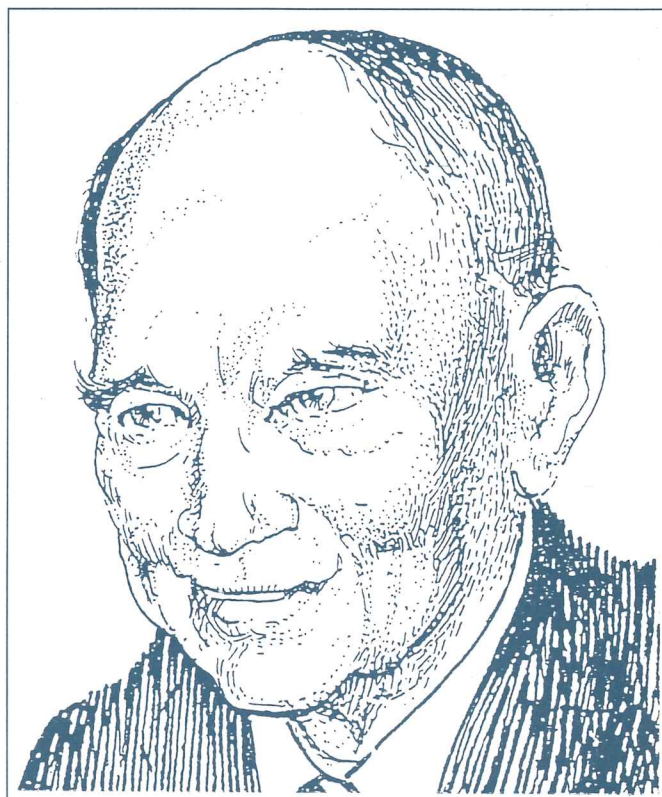
CLARENCE EAKINS

Clarence Eakins was involved with correspondence learning in Western Australia from its inception. He was one of two staff who established the Correspondence School in 1918 and was appointed its first Head Master in May, 1920, the position he held until his retirement 31 years later.

Geraldton-born, Mr Eakins suffered a riding accident when a teenager which resulted in him having an artificial leg. However, this did not stop his active involvement in many varied activities. As a headmaster in small country schools he showed great ability. So it was no surprise when he was selected to begin the innovative Correspondence School and was later appointed its first Head Master.

During his term as the Head of the Correspondence School many developments occurred. A comprehensive curriculum was developed covering Infants to Junior Certificate and offered to many different categories of students. Radio broadcasts were used for instruction and the school was able to use this medium for special occasions such as end of year concerts. Itinerant teachers were appointed to visit and work with isolated students and many new innovations and philosophies were employed.

Mr Eakins showed a keen interest in natural history. He wrote and encouraged many articles in this field in *Our Rural Magazine*, the monthly magazine for the correspondence students first compiled in 1926. In 1939 he was a Foundation Member of the W.A. Gould League and continued participating in this organisation until his death. Mr Eakins edited the League's annual magazine for 22 years and introduced *The Gould Leaguer* (which was first called *The Bird Lover*), as an information magazine. He organised the first Gould League Camp at Bickley in 1951 and helped plan the arbor and memorial at that camp site. His interest also extended to the displays at the Wildlife Show and the Royal Agricultural Show.



Clarence Eakins

In association with Mr A.E. Williams, Mr Eakins wrote a comprehensive set of Social Studies text books for use in Australian schools. He was also responsible for the writing of a short history of the W.A. Correspondence School, a most detailed and interesting book.

The story of correspondence learning in Western Australia is really the story of Mr Clarence Eakins, and his inspiration, doggedness and thoroughness should not be lost to us.

Clarence Eakins Award

In honour of the contributions Mr Eakins made to distance education from 1919-51, the Distance Education Centre will provide a scholarship for a Year 10 distance education student going on to Years 11 and 12. The first recipient for this award will be selected later this year.



WA GOULD LEAGUE

The organization was originally known as The Gould League of Bird Lovers of Western Australia and was formed in 1939. It was closely associated with the Correspondence School for almost forty years. At the inaugural meeting Mr Clarence Eakins, Headmaster of the correspondence classes, offered the assistance of our *Rural Magazine* in conveying literature to country schools.

The League was administered from the Correspondence School largely through the efforts of Mr Eakins and Miss Olive Seymour, who was appointed secretary in 1941.

For twenty two years Mr Eakins edited the League's annual magazine, then known as the *Gould League Notes*. Later, in 1951, he introduced a publication called *The Bird Lover*, which came out every two months as a guide to League work and as an aid to general nature study.

In 1956 it was decided to widen the scope of the organization to include the study of other forms of nature, with particular emphasis on birds, and the name of the League was changed to The Western Australian Gould League. *The Bird Lover* then became known as *The Gould Leaguer*.

With the establishment of the Nature Advisory Service in 1958, Miss Seymour became the full-time secretary of The W A Gould League, attached to the Nature Advisory Service. Until this time her position as secretary was only a part-time job and was performed in conjunction with ordinary school duties.

In 1965 Mr David Sieber was appointed advisory teacher in charge of the Nature Advisory Service. As his section grew, the advisory teachers moved to a pre-fabricated room away from the main building of the Correspondence School.

The Nature Advisory Service and the WA Gould League remained with the WA Correspondence School at premises in Thomas Street, Subiaco until the mid seventies.

HAKEA LAURINA

The Sea Urchin Hakea
by A.D. SIEBER

FLOWER
(Actual size)



Illustration by A.D. Sieber for the WA Gould League



CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL BROADCASTS

In 1940 lessons were broadcast to students as an adjunct to the normal teaching work. Prior to this time students listened to the general school broadcasts, but this new session was especially directed towards them.

In the broadcasts students were able to hear some of their teachers' voices and were given instructions on their correspondence work. Subjects included craft work, pattern reading, nature study and social studies.

Here is a typical broadcast script for craft, given in 1963.

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING COMMISSION - CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL BROADCAST CRAFT, GRADES 6 & 7, THURSDAY, 16TH APRIL 1963 AT 9.20 - 9.30 a.m. BY MR A. D. SIEBER

Mr Sieber:

Good morning girls and boys.

Well - yesterday we made a duck and so today we make a fish. This Origami fish will be easier to make. You should have the instruction sheet and your six inch square of paper in front of you. Are you ready to start?

Place the paper on the table so that it forms a diamond, with one point pointing at you.

Take hold of the top point of the diamond and fold it down to the bottom point and crease along the fold. We did this for the duck.

.....Ad Lib

Open out again so that your paper is flat.

Take the top corner and fold it to the left along the centre crease. See diagram marked 1, 2, 3.

Now fold the bottom point along the centre crease so that your paper now looks like the drawing marked 1, 2, 3.

.....Ad Lib

Now open paper out flat. We continue as we did for the duck.

Take top corner and fold to centre crease to the right (last time we did it to the left). Fold it to the right.

.....Ad Lib

Now fold the bottom point to the right - just as we did for the duck.

.....Ad Lib

Open out flat again. With your left and right hands pull the top section down to form the peak as with the duck. Crease the peak so that it is standing up. Turn your paper around.

The crease peak should be near you and the flat away from you.

With both hands bring the top piece down to form a peak. Crease.

.....Ad Lib

Now look at the diagram marked Steps 4 & 5. You should have a long diamond shape with two peaks. Fold both these peaks to the left as in diagram 6 & 7.

.....Ad Lib

Hold the paper by these peaks and fold points A & B together.

Fold points A & B together. See figure 4 on the right hand side of paper.

.....Ad Lib

We now have the basic fish shape. Look at figure 5. You can see we have to form the tail. This is easy to do. Fold point B over as in figure 5. Crease.

Fold point A over as in figure 5.

Now you have your fish. Use your coloured pencils or paints to decorate your fish as you can see in figure 6.

.....Ad Lib

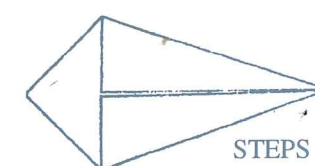
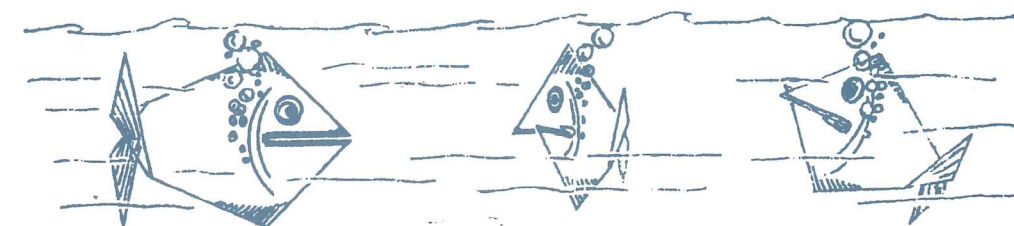
To make your fish "talk" hold him by the tail and move the tail piece gently in an up and down direction. Figure 7 shows you how.

.....Ad Lib

Good morning boys and girls.



GRADES 4 5 6 & 7 BROADCAST Thursday, April 16th, 1963. Mr A.D. Sieber. "ORIGAMI" PAPER CRAFT "The Talking Fish"



STEPS 1, 2 & 3.



STEPS 4 & 5.



STEPS 6 & 7.

STEPS AS FOR ROCKING DUCK

METHOD

1. Take a 6" square of paper and make the basic folds as in the 'Rocking Duck' Steps 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.
2. Fold triangular flaps to the left as in Steps 6 and 7 for the Duck.
3. Fold in half DOWN the centre so that point A folds UNDER point B. (see Fig. 4)
4. Fold flap B up. Turn over, fold flap A down. (see Fig. 5)
5. Draw in eyes, gill-line, fins and tail. (See suggested markings in Fig. 6)
6. To work, move flaps A & B in opposite directions, up and down when the jaws will be seen to move sideways. See Fig. 7.

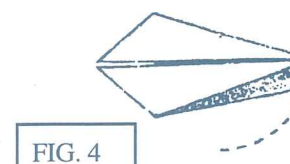


FIG. 4



FIG. 5

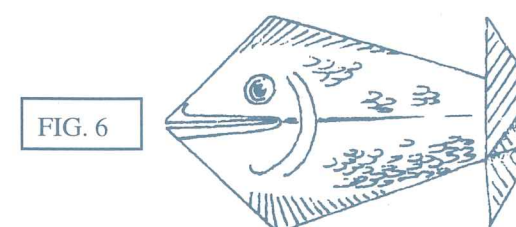


FIG. 6

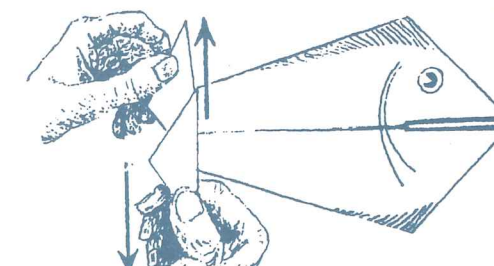


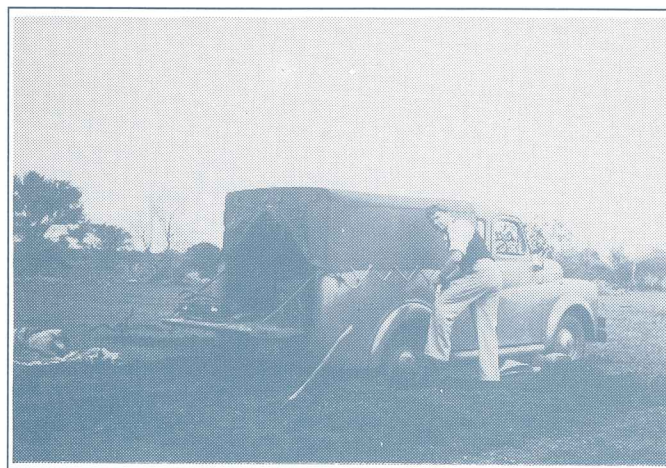
FIG. 7



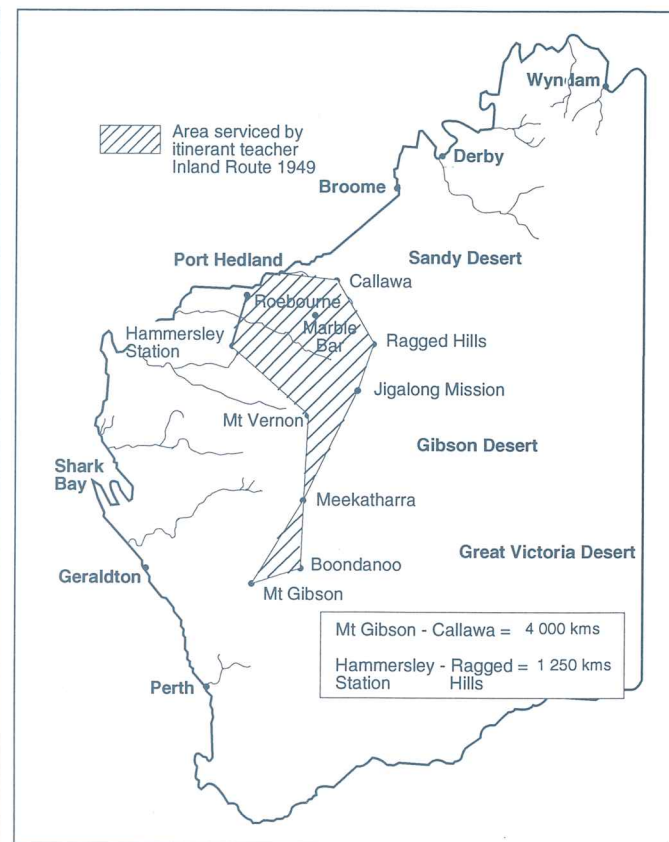
INLAND ROUTE 1949 - 1950

A second Itinerant Teacher's district was established in 1949 encompassing the lower Murchinson, Upper Ashburton and the Pilbara as far east as the Great Sandy Desert. I had the task of establishing what was the World's largest "schoolroom" even though I had only just over 40 pupils.

I spent 2 years servicing the area, paying each family 3 visits per year and working 5 days a week exclusive of travelling which was done at night to avoid the heat and conserve the tyres. In retrospect those who took on this task were a little crazy, I believe. We had petrol guzzling 2 wheel drive utilities, no 2-way radios and relied on the RFDS in station homesteads for communication, that is if they were in working order. I carried water and provisions for at least a fortnight in case I became stranded as was the case when intermittent storms bogged the vehicle for 11 days near Three Rivers.



*Bogged at Three Springs
(photograph taken with delayed action on a tripod)*



Inland teacher's route 1949 - 50

There were dangers. Once my vehicle broke a glass fuel filter bowl, and I was stranded 50 kms from either Mulgool or Mt Vernon Stations. I had been unable to tell Mt Vernon when I was coming. A leaking water tank meant that I could not sit it out until help came. The likelihood of covering 50 kms in the searing heat of summer was remote and the prospect of perishing - as so many others had done - from dehydration and thirst was a real threat. Taking what water I could I set out around sundown intending to walk only at night and rest up during the day, but I had only gone a few hundred yards when I found an old zinc ointment bottle near a long deserted camp site. It fitted the fuel filter assembly perfectly. This was the miracle I had prayed for!!

Hardly a week passed without some excitement outside of my work, but the following condensed information from my diary will give you some idea of what could involve the itinerant teacher.



Monday, 20 April

Left Meekatharra for Cardawan Station. Place appeared deserted but I heard a small child crying. Mrs Dawson, the Station owner's wife, was desperately ill. The pedal radio (RFDS) was out of action and likewise the truck. Located Mick Dawson, put a mattress in the utility for Mrs Dawson, and rushed her 256 kms to Meekatharra Hospital.

Tuesday, 21 April

Left Meekatharra early and drove straight through to Limestone Station, north of Marble Bar.



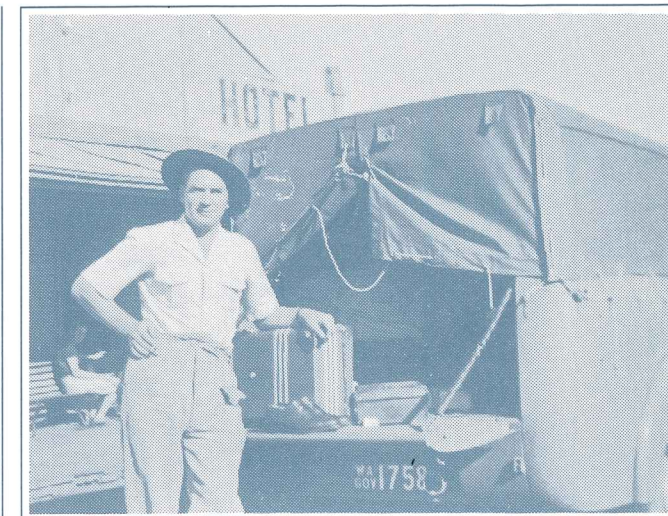
Mercy trip to Meekatharra hospital with Mrs Dawson

Wednesday, 22 April

While teaching the two Mallet children on the verandah, Mrs Mallet started to wash her husband's jacket in a bucket of petrol. Friction caused an explosion in the bucket and spraying petrol doused Mrs Mallet, who caught fire. Wrapped her in a blanket from a bed nearby, extinguished the fire in the bucket and rushed to Marble Bar Hospital.

Thursday, 23 April

Bought tubes and tyres and had vehicle serviced in Marble Bar. Mrs Mallet OK.



John Kenney, Meekatharra

Friday, 24 April

Drove 65 kms to Bamboo Creek mining centre. (No bamboos and no creek). Had no sooner arrived than Glen Gibson, a parent, stumbled in, blood pouring down his face. A sliver of steel had broken off one of his tools and entered his eye. An hour later was back at Marble Bar Hospital.

A week lost in education but a real gain in goodwill.

Article and photographs supplied courtesy of J.R.M. Kenney



ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

Aboriginal students enrolled with the WA Correspondence School lived in pastoral areas, on native missions or attended small country schools and completed either their primary education before attending government high schools in Perth or completed post primary courses through to the Junior Certificate.



Michael Spring and playmates at Roy Hill Station 1950



Sunday Service, Jigalong Mission creek bed, 1950
(Photos courtesy of J. Kenney.)

Clarence Eakins, Headmaster of the Correspondence School (1920-51) was very proud of the achievements of his students, and in his book *The WA Correspondence School Perth, It's Pioneer Years* he recorded the hardships and success of these students. The following anecdotes may recall memories for some of the past and present distance education students over the past seventy five years in Western Australia.

"The father ...was a 'dogger' (dingo trapper), and his family accompanied him when he moved from one camp to another. There were two children doing lessons - a boy in Class 3, and a girl in Class 5. In spite of their frequent moves, and the fact that they lived in a tent, kept up very well with their lessons, usually working under a tree as shelter from the hot, tropical sun, and with papers held down by stones when the winds blew". (Clarence Eakins)

Many of the students who studied with the Correspondence School became teachers, welfare officers, nursing aids and nurses.

Sadie Canning (nee Corner) studied with the WA Correspondence School from Class 5 (Grade 6) through to the Junior Certificate at Mt Margaret Mission. She then trained to be a nurse at the Bethesda hospital in Melbourne because at that time there were no nursing courses for Aboriginal girls in Western Australia. Sadie Canning returned to nurse in Western Australian country hospitals after gaining very high qualifications. In 1956 Sadie was appointed to the position of Sister at the Leonora District Hospital and was subsequently promoted to the position of Matron which she held until her retirement late in 1990.

Sadie Canning's outstanding contribution and devoted service to nursing in Western Australia was recognised in the Birthday Honours in 1964 when she was awarded an M.B.E. (Member of the British Empire). Sadie Canning is a Justice of the Peace and has also served on many committees. In 1977 Sadie received a Silver Jubilee Medal for her service to country nursing in Western Australia.

When asked about her memories of correspondence lessons Sadie said she most remembers "receiving her work back together with lovely letters from her teacher, Mrs Bowman". Sadie most of all enjoyed studying Physiology and Hygiene because she wanted to be a nurse.

Sadie Canning believes that education is very important. It is the reason why she has enjoyed her life and been successful in her chosen career. "Education is the key to success because it enables you to determine your own future, because you know what is happening and you can think for yourself and represent yourself and others in your community" (Sadie Canning).



SCHOOLS OF THE AIR

To supplement the work of the Correspondence School, daily broadcasts were introduced in 1940. Prior to that students listened to general school broadcasts as part of their weekly work. These new lessons were given by the teachers and were directly on the work being covered. This gave a greater feeling of cohesion to the school and levels of work improved dramatically.

Further use of radio in correspondence teaching was the establishment of the first official radio school in Western Australia at Meekatharra in 1959. The school utilised the Royal Flying Doctor Service's direct, two-way radio network for up to three hours a day, transmitting from a simple classroom in the town. A small, simply-operated transceiver was developed for the students' use. Mr J.Smedley was the first teacher, with control of 27 students.



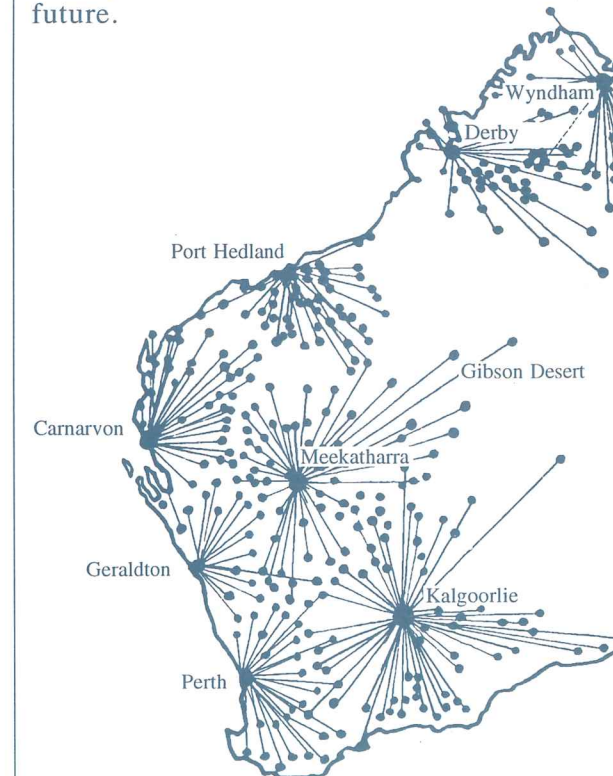
Students participating in School of the Air radio lessons on the RFDS communications service networks.

Following the success of the initial school at Meekatharra other schools were established:

Derby, 1960
Kalgoorlie, 1962
Port Hedland, 1960
Carnarvon, 1968.

Since the inception of the Schools of the Air there has been a steady growth in numbers of pupils and materials available. Each school has established a resource centre to provide books and other materials for its students. Parents and Citizens' Associations have also been set up to fund-raise for school and student requirements. They have been instrumental in organising camps to give students an opportunity of working and playing under ordinary conditions, and seminars to enable parents and tutors to learn more about lesson organisation and supervision.

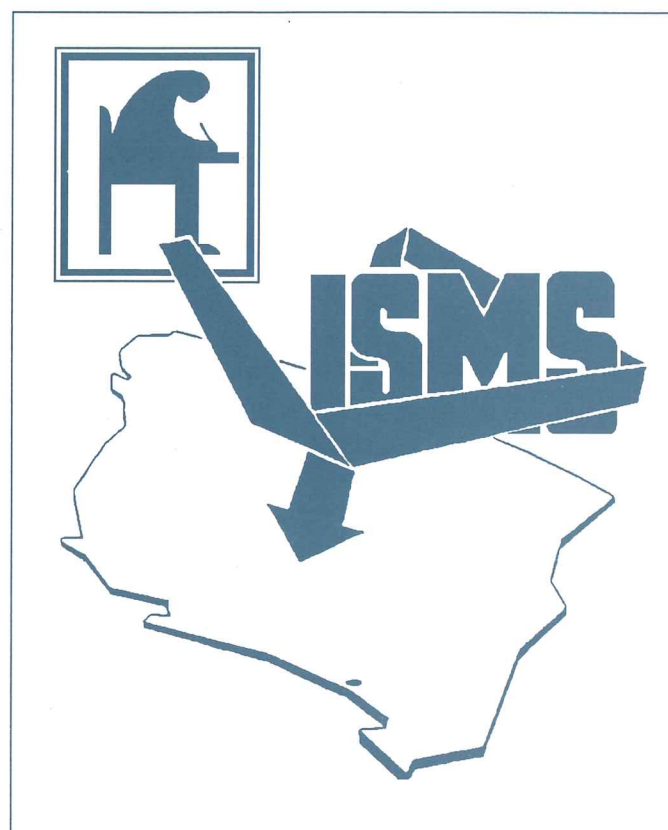
Schools of the Air still use materials written by the Distance Education Centre, although the work is marked directly at the school by each student's specific teacher. A recent innovation has been the introduction of computers (Carnarvon School of the Air) whereby students can send work directly to the teacher via modem, and it is marked and returned the next day. This faster method of correction will surely be expanded for the benefit of all students in the future.



Location of the Flying Doctor bases and the Schools of the Air.
(Map and photo courtesy of Royal Flying Doctor Service.)



CORRESPONDENCE FOR YEARS 11 AND 12



Isolated Students Matriculation Project (ISMP) and Open Learning Matriculation Studies (OLMS)

The Isolated Students Matriculation Project (ISMP) was established in July 1974 to develop a school-based correspondence course for Year 11 and 12 students. The student lesson materials were known as the Open Learning Matriculation Studies (OLMS). The OLMS courses were based on the Resource Centre facilities of local schools and the student could either work at the Centres or at home.

Students could study English, biology, human biology, mathematics I, mathematics IV, history, art or technical drawing. These courses used printed and audio visual materials such as cassette players and film strips together with textbooks.

Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme (ISMS)

The ISMP organisation and the OLMS lesson materials' names were changed to become the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme (ISMS) in 1976. In 1983 ISMS became part of the Distance Education Centre.

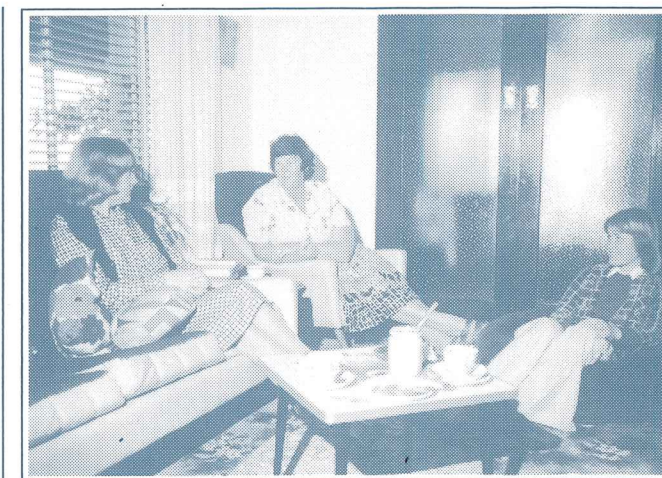
The ISMS teachers visited their students in the Resource Centre or at home during a Regional Visit to assist the students with their courses. The students attended two camps, one in Year 11 and one in Year 12, to participate in practical course work such as biological and geographical field studies, retrographic technical drawing methods and English discussions.



An ISMS student working at Bullsbrook District High School 1977



ISMS Students completing chemistry experiment



*Regional visit to ISMS students in 1979
Photos and extract courtesy of B. White*

Extract from a letter written to ISMS, Mimosa Avenue, Graylands, 2nd July 1982, by Jennifer Clough Kansou Gcudai, 333 Ogura, Hirikota City, Japan 573

Dear ISMS,

.....
Have you moved into a new building, Sharon mentioned a camp which was to be held in the 'old' ISMS site at Graylands, in which case I hope this letter gets where it's going. Where are you now, in the new K-12 building? How are Peter and Sharon going anyway, Peter especially, I'm a little worried about him I guess, will he finish everything in time for the TAE? I hope so, I keep offering to send him Shinto and Buddhist charms for success in study but as yet my offer hasn't been accepted, does anyone else need them?

Well ganbate kudasai!

SAYONARA.



EARLY CHILDHOOD CORRESPONDENCE SCHEME

Two important events occurred in 1979 in the history of early childhood education in Western Australia.

The first was the celebration of 150 years of early childhood education and the second was the establishment of the Early Childhood Scheme for 5 year old children of isolated families.

The program comprised three introductory resource books:

- ☐ *Thinking About Children*
- ☐ *Children's Literature*
- ☐ *Children's Art.*

The program also included ten folders, each containing a variety of materials giving suggestions and ideas for isolated Home Tutors. The general objectives of the Early Childhood Correspondence program were to develop social awareness of the child through:

- ☐ self awareness
- ☐ family relationships
- ☐ the child in the community.

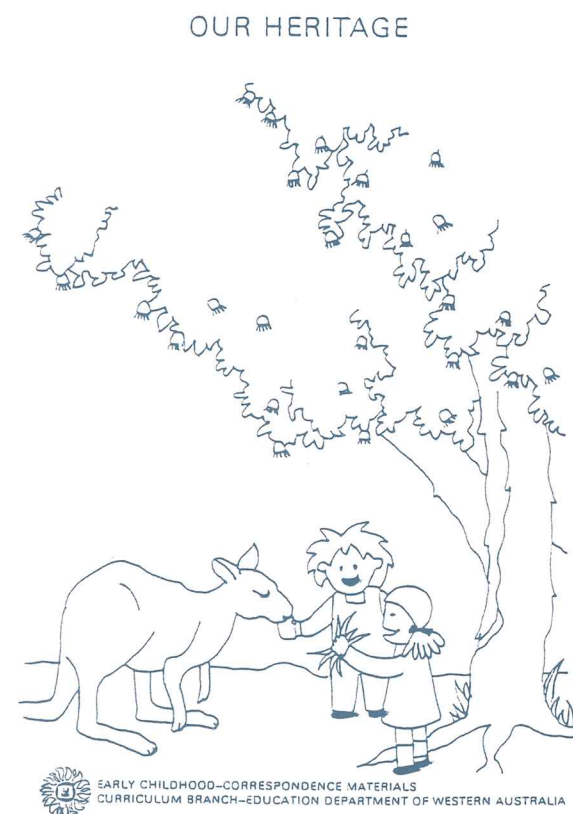
The aims were to prepare the child for life academically and culturally.

An Art/Craft kit was also included in the program, allowing the child to explore the wonders of colour and texture.

Some of the early teachers were Trish Smith, Maureen Nicholas, Nancy Cross, Marie McCook and Janice Edwards, who helped write the first lesson materials.

It is interesting to note that today our materials are presented in four student files, issued throughout the year. A thematic integrated approach is used to

ISOLATED FAMILIES—EARLY CHILDHOOD CORRESPONDENCE SCHEME



encourage language, physical, social, emotional, cognition and creative growth. Activities are written for use on a daily basis and in a separate developmentally appropriate program.

Art kits and a resource satchel comprising books, games, puzzles and cassettes are available.

The underlying philosophy that play is the work of childhood and the importance of learning by exploring, creating, discovering, experimenting and experiencing remains relevant today.



DISTANCE EDUCATION CENTRE (DEC)

The Distance Education Centre was officially opened in 1983 by the Minister for Education Robert Pearce MLC, when the WA Correspondence School, the Isolated Families Early Childhood Correspondence Scheme and the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme were amalgamated to cater for Kindergarten to Year 12 distance education.

Today the DEC is a centre for distance learning within the Ministry of Education. The DEC has a large and diverse student population ranging from pre primary to Year 12, from 5 year olds to adults. The DEC provides an essential service, delivering education to students who, for one reason or another, are unable to attend regular schools as a result of isolation, medical or psychological reasons, or travelling either in Australia or overseas.

Distance Education students today receive a lot of personal support through letters, telephone calls, audio tapes, regular visits by Regional Coordinators and school camps in Perth and country centres. Students visiting Perth are encouraged to drop in and see their teachers.



Opening of DEC 1983



TELECOMMUNICATIONS

THE GATEWAY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The physical size and vastness of Western Australia, and the relatively small population with its concentration around the coast, creates some problems of economies of scale for the delivery of education and training to remote areas. Access and equity for all students has in recent years formed part of the state educational agenda designed to meet the needs of a small number of Australians who, either by choice or because of necessity, must live in very isolated conditions.

The introduction of telecommunications for teaching and learning purposes has enabled the Distance Education Centre (DEC) to expand the quality of services offered to isolated students.

The Distance Education Centre and the five Schools of the Air (SOTAs) cater for approximately 2 500 students. Primarily their students receive correspondence or correspondence/air lessons with supplementary tutorial support via the telephone, but over the past four years the DEC and the SOTAs have been particularly proactive in introducing modern communication technologies to deliver a more effective and interactive service.

In general the new technologies are being used to reduce the distance aspect of distance education so that students are learning in a teaching environment similar to the classroom. In addition, these technologies can provide access to information services and support research and inquiry from any remote location that has a computer, modem and a telephone connection. Alternative delivery systems involve the transmission of voice, data or images using a satellite, microwave or terrestrial mechanism. Generally there is no particular technology that is eminently suited for educational purposes, and a mix of telephone, electronic and voice mail,

audio teleconferencing, teletext, radio, audio graphics, television, facsimile and videoconferencing is used according to location and circumstances.

The DEC has tended to focus on a form of audiographic communication known as the DECtronic Classroom. It is best described as an extension of audio teleconferencing using conventional telephone lines and computers to connect the teacher and the students. The DEC teacher and groups of students (at up to 5 centres at a time) see, and can manipulate, instantaneously the same graphic representations on their computer screens, and at the same time interact verbally on the conference style, open telephone line. This scenario is close to the classroom face to face teaching situation in which the blackboard presentations, the visual aids, interactivity and immediate feedback are all salient features.

Other innovations include the production of materials on electronic disks, the development of a number of quality videos for such subjects as physical education and the highly acclaimed DEC *Live Science* program which is regularly broadcast via GWN throughout regional Western Australia.

The DEC is therefore very much to the forefront in the use of telecommunications for lesson delivery, and, with the future relocation to the Leederville Centre, even further opportunities to cater for the needs of isolated students will be possible by trialing new and emerging communications technologies such as the VONE - a videophone, and a range of personal videoconferencing systems that are already available on the market. These technologies are exciting and show how innovative the Distance Education Centre has been and will continue to be in the future.

Julie Bowden,
Superintendent

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