Introduction

Recent scholarship across a range of academic disciplines has started to explore the contours of a media and cultural landscape that is in constant flux because of new information and communication technologies (ICT) that allow for traversal across temporal and spatial boundaries (Leander & McKim, 2003; Leander & Sheehy, 2004), traditional linguistic and cultural borders (Lam, 2000), as well as long-established divisions between producers and consumers of intellectual property (Jenkins, 2006). Such scholarship underscores the importance of attending, not only to the nature of new technologies and tools, but also to the uses within and across networked life spaces to which these new media and tools are being put. A robust understanding of these digital technologies situated in authentic everyday practice is necessary if we, as educators and researchers, aim to successfully engage new generations of students who are entering, currently attending, or indeed are dropping out of schools with “mindsets” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003) that in many ways are in direct opposition to the mindsets underpinning traditional systems of education.

New Literacy Studies scholars (New London Group, 1996) have pointed out that many schools still operate from a mindset rooted in the Industrial Revolution that is “forged in physical space” and organized around the production of material goods (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Whereas, contemporary students are entering classrooms with a mindset that is “forged in cyberspace”
and organized around the production and distribution of information and various texts, including traditional print documents, graphic arts, spoken and embodied language, and other forms of online and posttypographic communication (Castells, 1996; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Most students today are accustomed to active participation in such information-based economies, where graphic art and online publishing software enable new forms of semiotic engagement and symbolic manipulation of media. Many of them are also well versed in new ICTs such as synchronous chatting, webcams, avatars, blogs, and personal Web sites that make possible the sort of public performance of self that provides social and intellectual cachet in today’s multicultural, multilingual, and multertextual networked spaces.

This chapter explores three topical phenomena: (a) anime (Japanese animation), (b) manga (Japanese graphic novels), and (c) fanfiction (texts created by fans that are derived from popular media), in terms of historical background, content, existing research, and related fan practices. These three phenomena provide salient examples of how new ICTs have led to the development of literacy and social practices that traverse accustomed national, cultural, linguistic, and producer-consumer boundaries. Moreover, they illustrate how new ICTs have facilitated the global dispersion of a range of fan-produced cultural and intellectual products via circulation in online communities. The chapter begins with a general introduction to the development and history of anime and manga and an overview of the artistic and generic characteristics of these media. This introduction is followed by a review of anime and manga-related research—research that primarily is guided by historical time lines, focused on generic content and audience reception, and directed at adults. The focus then moves to research devoted to fan activities surrounding these media, ultimately narrowing in scope to emphasize the small amount of work that explicitly addresses how school-age fans are integrating these media into their daily social and literate interactions.

Interestingly enough, as the latter portion of the chapter will detail, one of the most salient ways that anime and manga have been integrated into school-age fans’ lives is through the production of online, anime and manga-based fanfiction. Moreover, research on fanfiction has followed a similar trajectory to that of anime and manga studies—with primary foci being genre, audience reception (and production), and adult fans. Following a review of adult-oriented fanfiction studies, the chapter then turns to work that explores school-age fans’ literacy and social practices surrounding online fanfiction. The chapter concludes with discussion of how anime, manga, and fanfiction have coalesced in various fan communities as a sort of “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) where adolescents engage in meaningful learning and participation that is not dependent on common cultural, historical, or linguistic background, but instead relies on a shared discourse and semiotic repertoire linked to popular media and fan culture. In conclusion, the chapter addresses the need for
hybrid, interdisciplinary perspectives on literacy, popular culture, and learning that acknowledge and can adequately address the multidirectional flows of information, the hybrid, multilingual, and multimodal forms of communication, and the temporal, spatial, and cultural fluidity of these new media and literacy landscapes.

Theoretical Framework

As researchers, our understandings of new ICTs and digital literacies have been and will continue to be shaped extensively by our epistemic frameworks for literacy and the sort of questions that we ask about emerging forms of online, posttypographic communication. My own research, which centers on the literacy and communication practices of adolescent English language learners (ELL) writing online fanfiction, is firmly grounded within a sociocultural or “new” approach to literacy studies. I find a New Literacy Studies (New Literacy Studies) theoretical orientation particularly apt for looking at the everyday use of emerging ICTs in online spaces, and for relating such work to teaching and learning both in and outside of formal-education settings, for many reasons. To begin, sociocultural perspectives have effectively expanded our notions of literacy beyond discrete, rule-governed decoding and encoding skills to include consideration of many shifting forms of semiotic and textual meaning-making practices, such as those that develop in tandem with new technologies, contexts, and the intentions of individual and collective-literacy users (New London Group, 1996).

This notion of literacy as a social practice (Street, 1984) has helped us to move away from “autonomous” models of language and learning. Such models tended to attribute failure to learn standard and academic forms of literacy to individual, cognitive deficits, and/or the deficiencies of entire cultural groups. A social-practice paradigm, on the other hand, facilitates exploration of how an individual or group’s willingness and ability to take on forms of literacy are closely tied to the relevance of various literacies or Discourses (Gee, 1999) to the literacy users’ personal, social, cultural, historical, and economic lives (Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981). In so doing, this paradigm also turns our research view toward the ways in which literacy as a nonneutral entity might carry and transmit a wealth of historical and ideological perspectives that play a part in reproducing certain social and material contexts, and how individuals, as active, agentive literacy users, take up dominant forms of literacy and refashion them to suit the particular needs and perspectives of local contexts. Such a paradigm is crucial to understanding key issues emerging in research related to anime, manga, and fanfiction, including (a) the fact that media such as Japanese anime and manga carry with them certain generic, ideological, cultural, and literate conventions; (b) how, as these media become part of global flows of information and spectacle, they are taken up by fans.
and are revised and recontextualized through local literate and social interactions; and (c) how these reworked texts, in turn, are shared and redisseminated into global networks via new ICTs.

In terms of literacy and learning, there has been a recent push within the New Literacy Studies (Alvermann, 2002; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003) to develop vistas extending beyond traditionally accepted contexts for literacy research — primarily those that are temporally and geographically bounded — in order to gain a clearer view of students’ out-of-school literacy practices and engagement with forms of online and posttypographic communication. A sociocultural framework for literacy is broad enough to allow “literacy pedagogy to be informed and enhanced by models of learning developed within other component “movements” of the “social turn” toward conceptualizing and theorizing literacy (Lankshear, 1999). As such, it allows for a fair measure of theoretical and methodological flexibility in approaching informal, grassroots learning spaces, such as anime and manga-based fanfiction writing sites, in order to best answer key questions that are emerging as a result of the aforementioned push, as well as in response to the growing salience of media, popular culture, and technology in youths’ lives, including such queries as (a) What is so motivating about these media and networked, informal learning sites that youth willingly devote hours to participation around them — even in fanfiction writing spaces where participation involves many school-based literacy practices such as composition, editing, and peer review? (b) How might the patterns of participation in these informal, online learning spaces be linked to larger shifts in our increasingly globalized, networked, and linguistically and culturally diverse society? (c) What are the effective and motivating forms of learning and teaching that are taking place around media and popular culture in these sites? (d) What sorts of identities do these spaces recruit, recognize, and reward? (e) And, given what we have learned so far in answer to these questions, how might we or even should we bring such understandings to bear on literacy pedagogy in classrooms?

More than Just Cartoons: Japanese Anime and Manga

Neither anime, which began emerging in Japan in the early 20th century (1915–1917; Clements & McCarthy, 2001; Napier, 2001; Patten, 2004), nor its graphic counterpart manga, which has been traced as far back as the “sequential storytelling” picture scrolls from medieval Japan (K. Ito, 2005; Pandey, 2000) can be held up as novel in terms of the chronological development of “new literacies.” The term manga was coined at the start of the 19th century with Hokusai’s multicolored woodblock prints (K. Ito, 2005), and over time the medium has become ubiquitous in Japanese culture. Contemporary manga genres (these categories apply to anime as well) address markedly diverse target audiences and can be broadly categorized in the following ways: (a) josei/
redikomi manga which are, as a rule, created by female artists and feature the daily aspects of Japanese women’s lives, (b) *seinen*, created by and for men with texts ranging from horror to war stories to mild pornography. Other types include the whimsical and fantasy laden (c) *kodomo*, which is intended mostly for children, (d) *sho-jo* geared toward young females with its romantic themes and strong magical girl characters, and the high-action (e) *sho-nen* for young and teenage boys (K. Ito, 2005; Wikipedia, 2005). In Japan, manga also encompass an array of informative texts ranging from government-produced pamphlets on the economy to instructional texts on how to do home or auto repairs (K. Ito, 2005). Clearly, the relatively low manufacturing costs and flexibility of the medium allow for creative experimentation across myriad landscapes, character styles, and artistic techniques and facilitates the expression of all types of information in a widely accessible format (Napier, 2001).

While short animated films were produced throughout the early 20th century in prewar and postwar Japan, the manga-influenced productions that most of us associate with contemporary anime began decades later with the release of Osamu Tezuka’s *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy*) in Japanese theatres in 1963 (Leonard, 2004). Whereas the cartoon industry in many countries confined the medium mostly to the realm of childfare, comedy, and action-hero adventures, as anime scholar Gilles Poitras (1999) pointed out, “[T]he Japanese have been using anime to cover every literary and cinematic genre imaginable” (p. viii) for years. Prevalent genres of anime vary across the sexually explicit *hentai*, to the highly popular *science-fiction* productions and its subgenres of *mecha* or giant robots, *cyberpunk* with its dystopian representations of the ills of corporate greed and technology, and the quasi-historical *steampunk* (K. Ito, 2005; Wikipedia, 2005). Anime genres also include biting humor, heart-wrenching drama, historical samurai-era productions, and sports-inspired shows to name just a few. Characterized by its vibrant colors, fine lines, and the exaggerated expressions of its characters, Japanese animation has attracted the worldwide attention of fans and researchers alike as an alternative to the sort of commodified and child-oriented narratives that dominate the animation market in other countries (Napier, 2001).

Manga and anime have become some of Japan’s most important cultural exports (Napier, 2001). Achieving international reach, these media have been translated into many languages in countries across the globe, including China, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Spain, and the United States (K. Ito, 2005). Outside of Japan, the United States has one of the largest markets for anime (Napier, 2001; Patten, 2004), as it offers many fans an alternative to American animation monoliths such as Disney. In recent years, Japanese animation and manga have made a conspicuous return to mainstream media space in several countries with popular children’s television *sho-nen* genres such as *Pokémon*, *Yugioh!*, *Ramma 1/2*, and *Dragonball Z*, and *sho-jo* genres such as *Sailor Moon*, *Card Captor Sakura*, and *Inuyasha*. Major
motion pictures such as the blockbuster hit *Spirited Away* and other popular films such as *Princess Mononoke*, *Castle in the Sky*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, and *Kiki's Delivery Service* have brought the stunning graphics, complex themes, and often whimsical nature of kawaii or “cute” culture (Allison, 2004) and the fantasy genre into the 21st-century spotlight.

**Manga and Anime Research**

While often derided for being violent and pornographic or dismissed as being child-fare, manga and anime scholars, aficionados, and fans concur that these media are far more than just cartoons. Anyone who has watched a significant amount of anime or read enough manga must at minimum cede to these media a wealth of complex, believable characters, intricate narrative structures, and many themes that address the light and dark aspects of the human condition. To date, scholarship has examined anime and manga primarily in terms of existing genres and past trends, artistic characteristics, and in relation to the social and historical contexts of production of these media. Identifiable categories of academic writing include introductory works that offer historical, cultural, and thematic overviews of both manga (Mizuno, 1991; Schodt, 1983, 1996; Shimizu, 1991) and anime (Drazen, 2002; Levi, 1996; Poitras, 2001) in relation to specific series and or the work of individual creators/artists (Ledoux, 1997). In addition, the “explosion” of anime in recent years has inspired some scholars to expand readers’ knowledge about anime via exposition on the cultural and historical significance of objects such as “historical personages, organizations, corporations, [and] gestures” that are found in and across different genres of anime (Poitras, 1998), or through broad surveys of and guides to the numerous anime and manga series produced in the last several decades (Pelletier, 2000; Clements & McCarthy, 2001; Ledoux & Ranney, 1997; McCarthy, 1996). Much of this research, interestingly enough, has occurred outside education fields.

Susan Napier (2001), a well-known name in anime research and Japanese studies, used a cultural and literary lens to explore how anime might move audiences to consider contemporary issues in Japanese society in ways that older art forms might not be able to. She explored the unique narrative and aesthetic qualities of contemporary anime in terms of characteristic modes such as the *apocalyptic* (end of the world), *elegiac* (melancholy or nostalgia), and *festival* (play or ritual) that reflect the complex and sometimes conflicting cultural backdrops of historical and modern Japan (Napier, 2001). Other scholars have also examined the apocalyptic in these media in terms of representations of disaster (Napier, 1993), war, and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Crawford, 1996; Freiberg, 1996). Many studies also focus on issues such as ideology (Kinsella, 1999, 2000; Morris-Suzuki & Rimmer, 2002; Napier, 2001, 2002; Newitz, 1995), gender representation (Erino,
1993; Fujimoto, 1991; Grigsby, 1999; K. Ito, 1994, 2003; Ledden & Fejes, 1987; Napier, 1998; Ogi, 2001, 2003; Orbaugh, 2003; Shiokawa, 1999), sex (Buckley, 1991; Napier, 2001; Perper & Cornog, 2002), and the representation of sexuality (Matsui, 1993; McLelland, 2000a, 2000b; Sabucco, 2003) in anime and manga. Recent work also is beginning to address these media in terms of their global spread as pop culture (Grigsby, 1998; Lai & Dixon, 2001), the broader topic of Japan’s place within global flows of information in the 21st century, and the complex and multimodal literacy practices used by college students reading manga (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003).

All of these studies, while focused primarily on adult anime and manga, highlight the sophistication and complexity of these “cartoons” and work toward establishing their legitimacy as media productions that are worthy of increased academic attention as their popularity and mainstream visibility grows. Additionally, such broad surveys and in-depth explorations of these increasingly popular media genres have relevance for literacy education in that they provide insight into the sort of generic conventions and narrative structures with which students are becoming familiar. Moreover, such work details the various representations of sexuality, gender, culture, and history—representations that often present a stark contrast to those of mainstream U.S. animation—that are becoming part of many youth’s pop-cultural repertoires and may influence the possibilities for social and narrative action that they envision for themselves.

Otaku Fandom

Otaku is a much contested term that appears frequently in conversations around Japanese media and is used in Japan as a derisive label to describe a fan who is “so involved with a particular type of fan subculture that he or she becomes obsessed, even insane” (Newitz, 1994, p. 1). The meaning of otaku has shifted, over time and space, to a more positive connotation for anime and manga fans outside of Japan (Eng, 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Grassmuck, 1990). The genesis of organized anime and manga fandom in the United States has been located in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the grassroots establishment of science-fiction/fantasy fan clubs and conventions (Patten, 2004). While these fan clubs were created with the purpose of promoting preexisting anime media in the United States, they also centered on the production and distribution of a wide range of fan-created texts. Such fan texts engage an array of sophisticated literacy practices such as fansubbing, which is when fans synchronize the video signals from the television, a VCR, and computer to write and inscribe their own subtitles onto anime videos with a Japanese soundtrack, or digisubbing, which essentially describes the modern version of fansubs that are created entirely on the computer (Leonard, 2004). Fan practices also include creating fanzines and producing dojinshi, or amateur works such as manga, fan-art
collections, and fan guides, and writing fanfiction that, in spite of their present-day prominence and widespread dissemination on the Web, remain largely unexplored in academic research. The following section will include a brief introduction to the ways that anime and manga have been taken up within fan communities and then will discuss how academic research has approached such fannish activities.

Many self-identified otaku or aficionados have entered the global flows of information surrounding anime and manga by forming Web sites and mailing lists devoted to metadiscussion of the artistic, thematic, and social elements of these media. These sites include articles and commentary by the Web site or list administrators and links to scholarship, which is published and disseminated via fan networks, on the Web, and in online journals. These sites also serve as clearingsouses or guides for finding the aforementioned sorts of fan texts such as digisubs and do-jinshi. Some of the more prominent sites include AnimeResearch.com, the Anime Manga Research Circle, (groups.yahoo.com/group/amrc-l), the Anime Manga Web Essay Archive (cornelldangel.com/amwess), Matt Thorne’s encyclopedic Web site (matt-thorn.com), and Anime Fandom.org. Such spaces should not be overlooked by researchers, as the fans running and participating in these sites provide a unique brand of metacommentary and nuanced perspectives that are informed by years of devoted consideration and appreciation of anime and manga. Moreover, if we are truly to understand how students use new literacies and operate from a mindset rooted in digital space, then we must begin to think about the online proliferation of networked, participatory “centers of learning” (Purves, 1998) and to understand the roles they might play in global flows of information surrounding media and popular culture. In addition, in terms of education, perhaps it is time to address how such prolific, networked, and interactive sources of information may influence students’ attitudes toward and facility with more traditional, structured, and enclosed “centers of learning” such as books, encyclopedias, classrooms, and even libraries.

Sean Leonard (2004) took a unique perspective on fan-produced texts in terms of globalization. Leonard analyzed the aforementioned practice of fansubbing as a driving force in the licensed distribution of subtitled anime in the U.S. market, essentially positing that fan practices “pulled” licensed copies of these media to the West. While Leonard provided a thorough discussion and overview of fansubs, from their debut in American fandom in 1989 through subsequent eras of anime production and distribution both in Japan and the United States, his primary focus was on the historical, legal, and global, rather than literacy-related aspects of fansubbing. Albeit outside the scope of Leonard’s article, fansubbing and its contemporary online counterparts, such as digisubs and Web sites that provide translations and/or “cliffnotes” (i.e., succinct summaries of storylines) for various anime and manga, are complex new literacy practices involving sophisticated processes of “translation,
reconstitution, and reproduction” of the original texts (Leonard, 2004) and are worthy of exploration in their own right. Moreover, such practices have much to offer in understanding the role of such literacy practices in Western youths’ understandings and perceptions of Japanese history, culture, and society.

Once a fandom dominated primarily by over-30-something males, the contemporary otaku demographic has shifted to include a substantial base of young school-age males and females alike, and a limited amount of research is beginning to follow suit. For example, popular anime series such as Pokémon, Digimon, and Yu-Gi-Oh! have received a fair amount of academic attention for their unique status as media mixes (M. Ito, 2001), media franchises (Lemke, 2004), or as sets of cultural practices (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2004) that, combined with technological advances and new ICTs, make it possible for children to integrate fandom into multiple aspects of their daily lives. Over the course of a day, or in some cases simultaneously, children can eat Pokémon candy, play Digimon games on handhelds as they ride in the family car, sleep with a Pikachu stuffed animal, watch Yu-Gi-Oh! on a laptop, and or IM with their friends about what might happen on the next Pokémon episode. As Lemke pointed out, such media franchises facilitate and, in the interest of profit, encourage fans’ engagement with the worlds of popular culture across “multiple timescales” and a range of networked social spaces. Such networks and confluence of media also enable fans to engage in a range of productive activities through which the division between producer and consumer is blurred. For instance, fans can actively participate in a pop-cultural imaginary while they trade paper playing cards with their friends on the playground (just as the Yu-Gi-Oh! characters do in the series), gather online in fan Web rings to discuss discrete characteristics of different Pokémon, create and post fan art, design personal Web pages, and publish their own anime-based fanfictions online for other fans to read and respond to.

In response to the widespread visibility of the Pokémon craze, the University of Hawaii sponsored a conference in 2002 devoted entirely to the consideration of this anime phenomenon and emphasized school-age children’s interactions with the series. J. Tobin (2000, 2004), an authority on children’s engagement with media and popular culture, edited a volume of proceedings from the conference that features discussion from teachers and researchers across fields including anthropology, sociology, cultural, and media studies. Individual essays addressed such diverse topics as the implications for cultural identity as anime and manga are increasingly consumed by nonJapanese audiences (Iwabuchi, 2004; Katsuno & Maret, 2004; Yano, 2004), how children productively engage with Pokémon in local cultural contexts (Brougere, 2004; Lemish & Bloch, 2004) and use their interactions around these media to construct and enact multiple identities through narrative play (Bromley, 2004; S. Tobin, 2004) and through writing (Willett, 2004) in schools. As a whole, this
work addressed issues that have clear implications for education, such as how children actively navigate, make use of, and at times resist the pedagogical structures built into many of the Pokémon products (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 2004); what children acquire in terms of learning skills and strategies through their engagement with these media across multiple sites; how this might carry over into academic contexts; and how such media mixes have fostered a sort of community that enables students to develop self-extending learning skills, facility in negotiation, and self-confidence as teachers and as experts on this globally circulating media.

Anime, Manga, and Literacy Research

In his new book Situated Language and Learning: A Critique of Traditional Schooling, James Paul Gee (2004b) drew from a case study to demonstrate how Pokémon was a motivating factor in one young boy’s experience of learning to read. Gee argued that this child’s desire to participate in the Pokémon fan community spurred his literacy development, as successful participation required him to decode and encode complex game and character guides. Vivian Vasquez (2003), a well-known researcher of children’s literacy practices, drew on Gee’s work with video games and popular culture to discuss another case study of a youth’s participation in what she called “Pokediscourse.” In a similar vein, Julian Sefton-Green (2004) provided a thorough account of a young boy who, through an autodidactic process of trial and error, employed various learning strategies in mastering the Pokémon video game and, in the process, acquired new forms of literacy and numeracy required for successful participation in the Pokémon fan community.

Such work underscored the point that attending to children’s engagement with popular culture can help us understand the “new symbolic and discursive practices” (Vasquez, 2003, p. 121) that youth are engaging with, in which print is only one mode of many within the complex semiotic systems they are mastering in order to successfully participate in fan communities. These pieces also underscored how language in these spaces is not simplified, decontextualized, and “separated from value-laden action, interaction, and dialogue, as it is for so many children in school” (Gee, 2004, p. 48). But rather, “Pokediscourse” is complex, authentic, and wholly relevant to meaningful activity, and is tied to these students’ identities as anime fans and experts on the media. Moreover, both Sefton-Green and Gee raised crucial questions about how the sort of informal styles of learning and the types of knowledge bases surrounding popular culture may complement or indeed may conflict with dominant pedagogies and forms of learning found in most Western educational systems and how this might impact students’ performance in and/or attitudes toward traditional schooling.
A relatively small number of ethnographic studies of school-age youths’ productive fan activities around anime and manga are becoming visible in literacy-related research (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a, 2003b; Black, 2005a, 2005b; Lam, 2004; Thomas, 2005). Interestingly enough, a common theme emerging across this work is the production of Web-based writing and/or fanfiction based on various anime and manga series. The following section introduces the phenomenon of fanfiction in terms of history and several decades of existing research centering primarily on adult fans. It concludes by focusing on the small amount of research that has been done with school-age fans’ practices of reading, writing, and reviewing online fanfiction and discusses how further research has the potential to shed light on a range of emerging literacy practices that are aligned with issues that literacy educators grapple with in their pedagogy.

(Tech)tual Poaching

Fanfiction, aptly defined by Rebecca Tushnet (1997), is “any kind of written creativity that is based on an identifiable segment of popular culture, such as a television show, and is not produced as ‘professional’ writing” (p. 655). In fanfiction, authors artfully draw from their favorite media, such as books, movies, video games, and television shows, to create alternate plotlines, introduce new characters or refocus attention on peripheral characters, transfer the action of the series to different settings, develop prequels and sequels, and extend or realize relationships between various characters. While perhaps not generally recognized as fanfics, such derivative texts can be traced back to the 1400s with John Lydgate’s extensions of Geoffrey Chaucer’s work (Burnley & Tajima, 1994; Super Cat, 1999), “uncommissioned sequels” to novels such as Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice (Super Cat, 1999), and plot suggestions that were sent to serial writers such as Charles Dickens by avid followers (Jenkins, 1992). The genesis of contemporary fanfiction can be traced from the 1930s pulp fiction amateur fan magazines known as fanzines (Thomas, 2005) to the better known textual productions of Trekkers, or devotees of Star Trek, that were discussed and distributed at annual sci-fi conventions, regional fan clubs, and via mail in the 1960s (Jenkins, 1992).

The advent of online publishing has brought about changes in fanfiction across several significant fronts. First, the demographics of fanfiction have shifted from a majority of adults producing hard-copy print zines to large numbers of tech-savvy adolescents who are writing and publishing fics on fan and personal Web sites as well as in online archives. Also, the proliferation of online sites has opened fanfiction up to a global and multilingual population of writers and readers, while the number of canons—that is, the original media that the fictions are based on—has increased exponentially, with
fictions appearing based on almost every book, television show, anime series, or movie imaginable. Additionally, with the relative ease of online communication and circulation, the genre has become much more evident as a social, cultural, and intellectual practice, as evidenced by the research and metacommentary on fanfic that has started appearing online on personal fan sites as well as in academic texts and journals. These shifts, brought about by new advances in media and communication technologies, have placed fanfiction squarely within the flows of information and social exchange that are being passed between new generations of adolescents across national, cultural, and linguistic spaces.

Academic attention to fanfiction has varied widely in terms of disciplinary approach and focus, with studies stemming primarily from cultural, communication, media, and literature studies. Also, because fanfiction is derivative work based on copyrighted intellectual property, the genre has also been looked at from legal (McCardle, 2003; Tushnet, 1997) and ethical standpoints (Pugh, 2004), with such studies serving as references for fans who wish to defend their right to continue producing fictions. Early academic writers on fanfiction such as Joanna Russ, (1985), Patricia Frazier Lamb and Diana L. Veith (1986), and Camille Bacon-Smith (1992) centered their feminist-inflected work primarily on fanzines and the genre of slash fiction—that is, fiction depicting noncanonical homosexual relationships, such as pairing the Star Trek characters Kirk/Spock—with the slash between the names denoting romantic pairing. When these studies were conducted, the majority of fanfiction, including slash, was produced by middle-aged females. Thus, their works conceive of slash primarily as female erotica or “pornography by women, for women” (Jenkins, 1992; Russ, 1985) and a means by which these fans are able to project their own feminine romantic and sexual fantasies/desires onto the masculine bodies of the series characters (Jenkins, 1992). Constance Penley (1991) added an interesting dimension to research on Star Trek slash with her piece on “Brownian Motion” in which she focused on the genre as a site of debate about male domination in the arenas of technology as well as sex.

Without a doubt, Henry Jenkins’ ethnographic work Textual Poachers (1992) continues to be the authoritative text on fan culture. In this text, Jenkins, writing as a self-identified fan, drew on Michel de Certeau’s notion of “poaching” to liken fans’ interpretive and productive practices to a form of “cultural bricolage through which readers fragment texts and reassemble the broken shards according to their own blueprints, salvaging bits and pieces of the found material in making sense of their own social experience” (de Certeau, as cited in Jenkins, 1992, p. 26). Through case studies, interviews, and the voiced impressions of numerous fans, Jenkins provided an empathetic and nuanced perspective of fan culture that challenges short-sighted stereotypes of fans as “cultural dupes” who passively ingest the messages of mainstream media or as obsessive followers who need to “get a life.” In so doing,
Jenkins consciously sought to redefine public conceptions of fandom and raised seminal questions about the nature of fan culture and audience reception that have spurred years of subsequent fan-related research.

Contemporary work has turned to the multiplicity of online fanfiction archives and discussion boards as data for exploring assorted fandoms, new canons, and different genres of fanfiction. Many such studies are canon-specific investigations of the genre of shipper or relationship-based fictions that explore issues such as how women use these fictions to take a counter-hegemonic stance against “producers’ commercial imperatives, a separate spheres dichotomy, devaluation of the feminine/private sphere, and masculine generic conventions” on series such as the X-files (Scodari & Felder, 2000, p. 238). Other studies explore why some women write bet, or fictions with heterosexual pairings of certain couples, within canons such as Star Trek Voyager that generally inspire slash fiction (Somogyi, 2000). Or, in a similar vein, Rosemary Coombe (1998) looked at shipper fanzines as forms of social critique and satire that enable women to explore their position in patriarchal society.

Over the years, expanding canons of slash fiction, ranging from Xena the Warrior Princess and Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Cicioni, 1998) to more obscure manga series (McClelland, 2000a, 2000b) have continued to draw the attention of researchers and fans alike. Anne Kustritz (2003) looked at slash from a literary perspective and posited that as a genre, slash “offers its own particular challenge to normative constructions of gender and romance, as it allows women to construct narratives that subvert patriarchy by reappropriating those prototypical hero characters who usually reproduce women’s position of social disempowerment” (p. 371). Additionally, new forms of hybrid academic texts created by fanfiction authors who are also academic researchers are emerging with explorations of female/female or femmeslash as a means of contesting and dialoging with hegemonic mass culture and a way of challenging the primacy of representations of heterosexuality in the media (Busse, 2005; Russo, 2002).

For the most part, what these studies all share is continuous movement toward some understanding of the many ways in which fans are taking up elements of pop culture and then redistributing them in new forms that are imbued with meanings that are grounded in the lived realities and social worlds of fans. However, considering how the demographics of fanfiction have shifted with the advent of online publishing—from a base primarily made up of adult science fiction and daytime soap-opera fans to a transnational and multilingual population that is dominated by adolescents from across the globe—it is somewhat surprising that more academic attention to fanfiction has not followed suit. As evidenced by the aforementioned studies, the vast majority of the research corpus to date has focused on adult-authored fictions within certain genres and centers on a largely English-speaking population. In contrast, prominent archival fanfiction sites as well as the vast numbers of personal fan
sites on the Web feature fictions based on a range of culturally diverse canons, composed of multiple languages, and posted mostly by fans between the ages of 13 and 18. The following section will introduce the small amount of research that has looked at literacy-related aspects of youths’ engagement with fanfiction. It also identifies some key elements of on and offline fan writing and fan culture that have great potential to shed light on how adolescents are using technology to simultaneously learn from and contribute to global flows of information and to meaningfully participate in discourses that are steeped in culturally, linguistically, and semiotically diverse forms of literacy.

Fanfiction, Literacy, and Research

Interestingly enough, the relatively few studies examining adolescents’ literacy and social practices surrounding fanfiction mostly center on canons related to anime and manga (Black, 2004, in press; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a, 2003b). For example, Kelly Chandler-Olcott and Donna Mahar (2003a, 2003b), a university researcher and educator team, recently conducted a classroom-based ethnographic inquiry into adolescent girls’ use of digital technologies in which they found pop-cultural texts, particularly anime and manga, to be central to participants’ literacy practices. The authors drew from work in the New Literacy Studies tradition (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996) as analytic lenses for viewing focal participants’ creative-design practices of crafting amateur manga, developing anime-based Web sites, and writing fanfiction. Design is a particularly apt construct for looking at adolescents’ engagement with media texts, as it emphasizes the relationships between source texts, the often hybrid and intertextual forms that redesigned texts take, as well as the creative and potentially transformative process of reworking and reshaping existing modes of meaning (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a, 2003b; New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Chandler-Olcott and Mahar (2003a, 2003b) used the notion of design to explore multimodal aspects of one participant’s development of anime-inspired Web pages and fanfiction, and another’s creation of manga and participation in an online amateur manga mailing list, focusing on the visual, spatial, and embodied aspects of their engagement with these technology-mediated activities. The authors made a valuable contribution to fanfiction research in that they are among the first to apply a literacy-related and educational lens to examining anime, manga, and fanfiction. Additionally, their analyses provided insight into the ways in which some adolescent girls may draw from “conflicting discourses about gender and relationships” in both media and print texts to explore and possibly expand female spaces in a patriarchal society, such as through the construction of fanfictions that feature strong female characters in roles generally reserved for men. Their analyses also provided insight into how these youth used popular culture as a resource in their ongoing social
interactions and conversations about “issues such as friendship, loyalty, power, and sexuality” (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a).

In terms of academic value, Chandler-Olcott and Mahar (2003a) depicted fanfiction as a possible entry point for discussions about differences between fanfiction genres and traditional academic text. They also discussed fanfiction’s potential value as a diagnostic measure that might help teachers understand students’ composition capabilities in nonacademic genres. While the authors saw the value of fanfiction in terms of motivation for and engagement with writing, they constructed the genre as both separate and dissimilar from school-based literacy practices. This may be a result of the authors’ limited exploration of or exposure to the larger fanfiction writing community that exists online, as their data consisted of one focal participant’s fictions that were created primarily for her friends and family or were posted on a personal Web site and intended for a limited audience. Thus, while this piece is consonant with many of the emerging perspectives on the role that digital and fanfiction often plays in helping young adolescent girls to construct and enact powerful, online identities (Thomas, 2004, 2006; see also Thomas, this volume), it takes a different stance on fanfiction’s relevance to school-based literacies (Black, 2005b, 2005; Jenkins, 2004, in press).

For instance, Jenkins (2006) provided an overview of one home-schooled student’s experiences creating and editing The Daily Phoenix, an online “school newspaper” for the fictional Hogwarts Academy from Harry Potter. In this work, he explained why the focal student, Heather, and many other fanfiction authors can write—pointing to their participation as Daily Phoenix staff and in various online affinity spaces, such as the archival site Fanfiction Alley, as a formative part of their writing and literacy development. In these affinity spaces, members have the opportunity to take on identities as writers, editors, reporters, proofreaders, and columnists. Additionally, Jenkins pointed out that “through online discussions of fan writing, the teen writers develop a vocabulary for talking about writing and learn strategies for rewriting and improving their own work” (pp. XX–XX). Moreover, when they talk about the original Harry Potter text, “[T]hey make comparisons with other literary works or draw connections with philosophical and theological traditions; they debate gender stereotyping of the female characters; they cite interviews with the writer or read critical analysis of the works” (pp. XX–XX) and essentially engage in literate and analytical activities that they normally would not encounter until college.

Jenkin’s (2006) work with these fan sites helps to illustrate how popular culture and media technologies are often the crux of interaction in such affinity spaces where new generations of adolescents are spending more and more time. Jenkins drew on Gee’s (2004b) work to point out that online affinity spaces represent the cutting edge of effective learning environments in several respects. First, they are organized around a common endeavor or interest
rather than temporal or spatial proximity, and therefore are able to span differences in gender, race, class, age, and education level. Also, because knowledge is both intensive, with some members bringing specialized information about discrete aspects of a site, and extensive, with other members understanding the site at a broader level, leadership turns out to be “porous” in such spaces, as different activities and functions provide multiple opportunities for all members to both teach and learn (Gee, 2004b, p. 87). Thus, multiple forms of participation, knowledge, and experience are valued, and knowledge is both distributed across various “people, tools, and technologies, not held in any one person or thing” (Gee, as cited in Jenkins, 2006, p. 177) within the space, and dispersed, meaning that ICTs provide access to other “centers of knowledge” (Purves, 1998) that can be linked to outside of the space.

Other affinity spaces, such as fanfiction help and beta-reading sites have also started to attract some academic attention (Black, 2005a, 2005b; Jenkins, 2006). In the fanfiction community, a person who edits or proofs a fiction is known as a beta-reader. To submit a fiction to many beta-reading sites, authors must fill out a form specifying the genre (e.g., poetry, adventure, romance) and canon (e.g., Harry Potter, Pokémon) for the fiction and indicate which elements of the fiction they would like feedback on (e.g., plot development, characterization, adherence to genre, or grammar and spelling). Thus, a situation is set up in which a beta-reader is qualified to read fictions from the genre, and can provide the sort of focused feedback that the author wants. Moreover, many fanfiction help sites, such as the now defunct Writer’s University feature metadiscussion on elements of fanfiction, writing, and reviewing that mirror school-based composition practices, such as peer review, giving constructive feedback, editing, proofreading, effective plot development, robust characterization, and constructing effective rhetorical structures, to name just a few (Black, 2005a, 2005b; Jenkins, 2004, 2006).

My own work extends fanfiction and anime research into a different but related arena with a focus on ELLs’ literate and social practices on Fanfiction.net, the largest multifandom archive on the Web. Fanfiction.net is a prime example of the prevalence and popularity of online fanfiction, as it currently houses well over a million pieces of fanfiction spanning 2,000 different media. Canons such as Harry Potter seem to grow exponentially overnight, with over 175,000 fictions at last count. The site also hosts an impressive collection of over 350,000 anime-inspired fanfictions stemming from 300 different series. Due to the widespread popularity of these media, the anime canons attract great many adolescents. And, while English is the primary language of the site, the interface supports the posting of fictions in seven different languages, thus offering many nonnative English speakers the opportunity to post fictions and interact in their first languages. Moreover, primary foci of the site are writer/reader interaction, peer-review, and improving writing skills, thus providing a context for in-depth inquiry into many fan activities that are aligned
with school-based literacy practices (Black, 2005, in press). Drawing primarily from case studies and ethnographic data collected over 2 years of participant observation, I have been exploring online fanfiction both as a genre and as a social practice, situated in relation to the context of Fanfiction.net, networked technology, and the broader fan community. Such explorations have enabled me to characterize aspects of this online community that promote the development of collaborative, meaningful forms of language and learning over time, as well as to understand how such spaces both enable and motivate adolescent ELLs to enact identities as successful and critical writers, readers, and users of English (Black, 2006).

As can be seen through this review, currently there is very little research on school-age students who are engaging with online fanfiction. This may be due in part to a general tendency in educational settings to dismiss or even outlaw popular culture, deriding it and the media as frivolous pursuits that distract students and take time away from more worthy pursuits such as reading literature, studying, and learning about “high culture” (Jenkins, McPherson, & Shattuc, 2002). While fanfictions are derivative in the sense that their design is mediated through fans’ interpretations of media and popular culture, as can be seen from this small amount of scholarly work, the genre lends itself to a great deal of literate innovation that is intimately tied to issues of literacy, learning, and identity that certainly call for further exploration.

New Research Vistas

The notion of a “third space” (Bhabha, 1990) entails a meeting place or a convergence of sorts where diverse mindsets, perspectives, and materialities can come together and be articulated into new interconnected and hybrid frames of mind. New forms of communication and media increasingly offer opportunities for the articulation of hybrid perspectives, the synergy of multiple modes of representation, and the development of pluralistic forms of literacy and identity. Affinity spaces such as online fanfiction communities provide a wealth of such articulations for study. However, inquiry into such sites calls not only for hybrid approaches to research, but also for researchers that will approach these spaces with mindsets that enable them to selectively cull from established methodologies and traditions that are best suited for exploring multiple and shifting terrains. Moreover, culling with such a mindset necessarily requires that researchers themselves are able to effectively navigate ICTs and these third spaces that they are investigating (Steinkuehler, Black, & Clinton, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

As research described within this chapter has shown, modern social shifts and technological advances have led to the development of many third spaces where school-age youth are doing a great deal of learning and “identity work” that is mediated through their online, literate interactions, various forms of
semiotic meaning making, and their activities surrounding popular culture. The New Literacy Studies is based on a tradition of interdisciplinary inquiry, traversing fields such as social cognition, anthropology, and sociolinguistics. As such, a New Literacy Studies lens provides the sort of theoretical and methodological flexibility needed for gaining more nuanced perspectives of such activities in relation to broader social, political, historical, and educational climates, and also for judiciously drawing from diverse traditions in order to best answer the critical “next” questions in the areas of anime, manga, and fanfiction research.

Anime-based fanfiction sites are a clear example of such third spaces in which cultural, historical, ideological, and semiotic elements of available media often simultaneously converge, are redesigned, and then redistributed via various ICTs. Thus, traditional offline, single-site approaches to ethnography may prove inadequate for capturing the geographical, temporal, and semiotic fluidity of these networked, online spaces. However, recent work within literacy (Leander & McKim, 2003), communication (Hine, 2000), and anthropological studies have put forth a more connective approach to inquiry that moves beyond “the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (Marcus, 1995, p. 96). As George Marcus (1995) pointed out, this sort of research necessarily “arises in response to empirical changes in the world and therefore to transformed locations of cultural production” (p. 97) where the computer is not only an object of, but also a context for study (Hine, 2000). Such an approach enables the researcher to follow “cultural products” such as Japanese anime and manga texts from inception to uptake to redistribution in order to better understand issues raised in previous research related to media producers’ structure and promotion of dominant messages versus consumers’ or fans’ agency, uptake, and/or lack thereof. With the ever-reaching spread of mass media, such issues have been a cause of concern for parents, educators, and policymakers and such research has crucial implications for the development of curriculum and pedagogy in critical media literacy.

A New Literacy Studies theoretical framework is also particularly helpful as I return to the questions from the start of the chapter in order to parse out some compelling new research vistas in these areas. First, it seems crucial to begin with questions such as, What is so engaging about these media and networked, informal learning sites that youth willingly devote hours to participation around them—even in fanfiction writing spaces where participation involves school-based literacy practices such as composition, editing, and peer review? In my own research, I have found it helpful to understand motivation in these spaces by looking at the sorts of powerful identities that adolescents, particularly ELLs, are able to take on and successfully enact through their literacy and social practices surrounding fanfiction and popular
culture. James Gee’s (1999) big-D Discourse—defined as “ways of behaving, interacting, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles (or ‘types of people’ by specific groups of people)” (p. viii)—is highly applicable to such research in that it foregrounds literacy and identity as crucially interrelated components of social practice and interaction. A big-D discourse approach provides an analytic lens through which to examine how adolescents use language and other modes of meaning making to “pull off” certain socially situated identities in anime-based fanfiction sites.

The New London Group’s (1996) notion of hybridity—defined as “rearticulating conventionally accepted modes of meaning such as discourses, genres in order to create new meanings”—would also be useful for such analysis in looking at how diversity and multiple forms of expertise are valued rather than marginalized in anime-based fan communities, thus helping fans to pull off desirable identities that are not necessarily open to them in classrooms. For instance, as Black (2005a) pointed out, because anime is a Japanese cultural production, Japanese language and cultural elements are highly valued in these fictions; thus, ELLs with Asian backgrounds often have insider or expert status in this regard and will integrate such knowledge into their fictions to create linguistically and culturally hybrid texts. Moreover, it is not uncommon for authors to ask other fans with a great deal of knowledge about anime or Japanese language or culture to beta-read their fictions or help them integrate culturally congruent elements into their texts (Black, 2005a). This creates a situation where ELLs who are often at a disadvantage in English-based writing and reading activities in classrooms have the opportunity to take on powerful, identities as experts on anime, manga, and Asian language or culture within this social space.

In addition, it is worthwhile to look at how such spaces offer options for ELLs and struggling writers to display talents in areas other than print-based literacy. Because the nature of online publishing allows for hybrid and multimodal forms of meaning making, performance does not wholly depend on facility with written language, as tech-savvy fans can often supplement their writing with images, sound, and/or other digital elements in order to create fictions that are valued within the community or create personal Web sites to display their artistic talents or Web-publishing skills (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a, 2003b; Black, 2005a, 2005b). So, while interaction in online fanfiction sites centers on writing and improving composition skills, successful participation is not determined solely by traditional, print-based literacy skills, and there are multiple opportunities for members to take on powerful identities as technical experts, artists, designers, and webmasters, and to help other fans in ways that are recognized and valued within the community.

Another crucial question emerging in this area is How might the patterns of participation in these informal, online learning spaces be linked to larger
shifts in our increasingly globalized, networked, and linguistically and culturally diverse society? A great deal of work within the New Literacy Studies has foregrounded the relationship between literacy and context in terms of how economic and social changes are linked to new global capitalism and a “knowledge economy” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). However, work within critical cultural studies can also be particularly helpful for locating such practices within larger patterns in an increasingly globalized, networked, and information-oriented context. As an example, Eva Lam’s (2005) innovative work on diasporic populations of adolescent, Chinese-American ELLs draws from work in the New Literacy Studies as well as from cultural studies to examine how “trans-border social networking” and cultural flows of information via new ICTs enable immigrant youth to create online “imagined worlds” or mediascapes that serve as “new contexts for language learning, literacy development, and socialization” (p. 1).

What work within cultural studies enables us to more clearly see is how youths’ online literacy practices are related to emerging economic and social patterns of globalized participation and communication that carry across national borders. And, as Lam (2005) argued, within literacy and second-language studies, such connections make us aware of larger patterns of movement away from strict nationalism and compel us to consider how approaching language instruction in terms of acculturation or assimilation to the culture of one’s adopted country perhaps should be replaced with one of transculturation or socialization into multiple languages, modes of meaning making, and of belonging. Moreover, work within cultural studies that theorizes the new formations of our globalized, networked society (Appadurai, 2001; Castells, 1996) can also help us to more clearly apprehend the parallels and discrepancies between the sort of learning and participation taking place in informal learning sites and the sort of learning and participation valued in contemporary global workplaces as well as social spaces. Ideally, this knowledge could then be applied to the development of curriculum and pedagogy in formal learning sites such as schools that would also mirror and offer students options for successful participation in transnational society.

Another worthwhile direction for future inquiry that is clearly indicated by earlier research involves exploring the question, What are the effective and motivating forms of learning and teaching that are taking place around media and popular culture in these sites? Of late, there has been a push for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to account for “matters of learning” (Rogers, 2004, p. 14) in educational research. In response, Gee (2004a) expanded the CDA framework and drew from a range of social theories of cognition to posit that learning is “changing patterns of participation in specific social practices” (p. 38). Coupled with such a social perspective on learning, CDA applied to texts from the fanfiction community, such as fanfictions, peer reviews of fictions, interactions between writers and beta-readers, and columns featuring...
metacommentary about composition, can serve as information-rich artifacts of analysis, providing insight into how and why adolescents voluntarily engage in such patterns of participation in online affinity spaces, as well as how such social and self-directed patterns of participation aid in learning.

In terms of application to education, Gee (2004a) pointed out that notions from learning sciences and social cognition “like ‘distributed cognition’, ‘collaborative practice’, ‘networked intelligence’ and ‘communities of practice’” (p. 165) have yet to be taken up in any serious way in schools, in spite of the fact that such forms of learning are related to the needs of modern workplaces and the value system of fast capitalism and a knowledge economy. Interestingly enough, as evidenced by the earlier review of research, such forms of learning are readily apparent in many informal fan spaces and activities. For example, while fanfiction authors and anime fans engage in a range of school-related literacy practices (e.g., reading, reviewing, providing feedback, editing, writing, and proofreading), they are all part of authentic social and communicative activities that are meaningful and contribute positively to powerful identities in these shared learning spaces. Fanfiction writers also draw from knowledge that is distributed across the Web and other offline sites. Moreover, they solicit help in thinking through their ideas and collaborate with other authors and actively participate in a space that is organized around common affinity for anime where many different forms of expertise are recognized and valued within the community. This can be juxtaposed with many classrooms, where literacy is often viewed as a mere tool for content-area learning; research is often confined to textbooks and materials in the library; learning is viewed as an individual process; there are established standards for what counts as expertise and successful participation; such standards are determined by administrators and policy makers outside of classroom community; and failure to achieve such standards often has negative effects on students’ identities.

Finally, the baseline question that likely hinges on answers to all the preceding queries is, How might, could, or even should we integrate such forms of learning into formal school curriculum and pedagogy? I believe our answers to this question, like our approaches to new literacies research, will depend largely on our epistemic frameworks for what counts as literacy and learning. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) pointed out that with the advent of new ICTs and the widespread movement toward globalization, there perhaps have been profound changes, not only in the world of literacies to be known but also in how to know the literacies of world. Moreover, they pointed out that as literacy educators and researchers, at minimum, we ought to take note of these changes, and optimally, learn from these changes and integrate them into our understandings of literacy instruction in schools. Based on the implications emerging from much of the research in the chapter, this would most likely involve movement away from the current emphasis in classrooms on
Propositional knowledge, which primarily involves the learning of content-area facts and figures, toward a greater emphasis on procedural knowledge, which involves the acquisition of skills and strategies for how to learn and continue learning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 158).

Such procedural, self-extending learning skills are very much in evidence in many of the fan spaces mentioned in this chapter. However, such forms of learning require a measure of time and intellectual freedom that may be difficult to find with the current emphasis on content-based factual knowledge and basic-skills instruction used to meet the requirements of standardized tests. Thus, our answers to such questions may also depend on the future role that we anticipate for schools in society. Specifically, it will depend on whether we envision a future where schools are enclosed institutions that weed out students according to predetermined standards of ability or as spaces that extend outside of school walls where students are allowed to build on and extend the various abilities that they bring into the classroom, and in ways that will also afford them opportunities for successful participation in modern work and social spaces that value self-extending learning skills, facility with new ICTs, as well as a broad semiotic and cultural repertoire.

To clarify, I am not suggesting that educators adopt the new pop-cultural literacies emerging in relation to anime, manga, and fanfiction wholesale into their curriculum, as this would be a surefire way to quash its popularity with students. Creating a curriculum based on media and popular culture alone would be missing the point, in that it still relies on a framework prioritizing propositional knowledge—that of pop-cultural content. Nonetheless, I do think there is a vital need for educators (as well as students) to critically engage with media and popular culture that are central to adolescents’ lives and to recognize how such symbolic, cultural, and semiotic materials shape the literacies, worlds, and narrative possibilities that youth identify with and envision for themselves. Moreover, as Anne Haas-Dyson (1997) pointed out, to ignore materials that students themselves find motivating, accessible, and meaningful is to risk reinscribing societal divisions along the lines of age, language, culture, race, gender, and socioeconomic background.

What I am suggesting, though, is that many aspects of anime, manga, and fanfiction have the potential to expand our understandings of how new generations of school-age fans make use and make sense of new media and ICTs across shifting linguistic, cultural, and semiotic contexts. Moreover, it is not merely the pop-cultural content in these spaces that youth find so motivating. Teachers and educational researchers alike might be well served by paying close attention to the procedural forms of both teaching and learning that are going on in these spaces, as they also represent the ways of being and knowing that adolescents find accessible and consequential for their lives. However, in order to adequately find footing within these landscapes—as researchers, it is vital to abandon the notion of having our theoretical feet exclusively grounded
in specific research traditions or disciplines or sites—just as educators must be able to “change shoes” in order to address the challenges of using an array of methods and approaches to teaching within contexts of increasingly pluralistic forms of literacy and changing student demographics. Moreover, it may be time to move away from dated perspectives and autonomous models of learning toward mindsets that will enable us to understand and build on new literacy practices that are emerging (and old literacy practices that are shifting), that is, if we are to find ways to make literacy instruction meaningful and motivating for new generations of learners, as well as an integral part of how they envision and enact powerful identities for themselves in both on and offline spaces.

References


COMMENTS

Q1 AU: Why is this in parentheses? Did you mean to include an acronym for this?
Q2 CA: Please supply full reference for “Lankshear, 1999” or delete this citation from the text.
Q3 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q4 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q5 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q6 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q7 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q8 CA: Please supply full reference for “Poitras, 1998” or delete this citation from the text.
Q9 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q10 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q11 CA: Please supply full reference for “Kinsella, 1999” or delete this citation from the text.
Q12 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q13 CA: Please supply full reference for “Napier, 2002” or delete this citation from the text.
Q14 CA: Please supply full reference for “Grigsby, 1999” or delete this citation from the text.
Q15 CA: Please supply full reference for “Ogi, 2003” or delete this citation from the text.
Q16 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q17 CA: Please supply full reference for “Grasmuck, 1990” or delete this citation from the text.
Q18 CA: Please supply full reference for “Lemke, 2004” or delete this citation from the text.
Q19 CA: Please supply full reference for “Sefton-Green, 2004” or delete this citation from the text.
Q20 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2004a” or “2004b.”
Q21 CA: Please supply full reference for “Somogyi, 2000” or delete this citation from the text.
Q22 CA: Please supply full reference for “Black, 2004” or delete this citation from the text.
Q23 CA: Please supply full reference for “Black, in press” or delete this citation from the text.
Q24 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2005a” or “2005b.”
Q25 CA: Please supply full reference for “Jenkins, in press” or delete this citation from the text.
Q26 CA: Please supply page numbers for this quote. A: Please supply pMahar, 2003a;
Q27 CA: Please supply page numbers for this quote.
Q28 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2005a” or “2005b.”
Q29 CA: Please supply full reference for “Black, in press” or delete this citation from the text.
Q30 CA: Please supply full reference for “Jenkins, McPherson, & Shattuc, 2002” or delete this citation from the text.
Q31 CA: Please supply full reference for “Bhabha, 1990” or delete this citation from the text.
Q32 CA: Please cite “Alvermann & Hagood, 2000” in the text or delete this reference.
Q33 CA: Please supply page numbers for this reference.
Q34 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q35 CA: Please cite “Jenkins, McPherson, & Shattuc, 2003” in the text or delete this reference.
Q36 CA: Please cite “Kinsella, 1998” or delete this reference.
Q37 CA: Please supply the location of this event for this reference.
Q38 CA: Please cite “Lave & Wenger, 1991” or delete this reference.
Q39 CA: Please cite “Leander, 2003” or delete this reference.
Q40 CA: Please supply page numbers for this reference.
Q41 CA: Please cite “Lemke, 2005” or delete this reference.
Q42 CA: Please specify to which reference in-text citations refer by using “2001a” or “2001b.”
Q43 CA: Please supply page numbers for this reference.
Q44 CA: Please cite “Schodt, 1996” in the text or delete this reference.
Q45 CA: Please cite “Somogyi, 2002” in the text or delete this reference.
Q46 CA: Please supply the location of this meeting. See APA 4.16, p. 260.
Q47 CA: Please cite “Verba, 1996” in the text or delete this reference.
Q48 CA: Please cite “Volker, 1990” in the text or delete this reference.
Q49 CA: Please cite “Vrooman, 2000” in the text or delete this reference.