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Richard Kern

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Language, Literacy, and Technology

From the origins of writing to today's computer-mediated communication, material technologies shape how we read and write, how we construe and share knowledge, and ultimately how we understand ourselves in relation to the world. But communication technologies are themselves designed in particular social and cultural contexts and their use is adapted in creative ways by individuals. In this book, Richard Kern explores how technology matters to language and the ways in which we use it. Kern reveals how material, social, and individual resources interact in the design of textual meaning, and how that interaction plays out across contexts of communication, different situations of technological mediation, and different moments in time. Showing how people have adapted visual forms to various media as well as to social needs, this study culminates in five fundamental principles to guide language and literacy education in a period of rapid technological and social change.

RICHARD KERN is Professor of French and Director of the Berkeley Language Center at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Literacy and Language Teaching* (2000), co-editor of *Décrire la conversation en ligne* (2011), and co-editor of *Network-based Language Teaching* (Cambridge, 2000). He is Associate Editor of the journal *Language Learning & Technology* and has published many articles and chapters related to language, literacy, and technology.

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Preface and acknowledgments

This book has been a very long time coming. I began thinking about this project when writing the technology chapter of my book *Literacy and Language Teaching* (2000) and I realized how important the material medium (paper, screen, and so on) is to reading and writing processes and practices. That chapter turned out to be one that many readers said they particularly liked, which encouraged me to pursue this project. Since then I have periodically taught seminars (one for graduate students, another for first-year undergraduates) on language and technology. I have also been involved in a multi-year research project on cross-cultural communication via desktop videoconferencing (with colleagues Christine Develotte and Nicolas Guichon) that has raised many questions concerning the role of the material medium in language use and communication. This book, then, is partly a distillation of my empirical explorations of computer-mediated communication in educational contexts, but it is informed by a very broad historical context, which hopefully will bring to light the remarkable commonalities that we in the computer age share with people using other communication technologies in the past.

I am indebted to many people who helped me think through ideas and organize what turned out to be a far more daunting project than I had initially anticipated. Mark Nelson, Youki Terada, David Malinowski, and Billy Heidenfeldt worked at different times as research assistants, and their input was critically important, especially in thinking of ways to keep the scope of the project focused and manageable. I am also grateful to the undergraduate and graduate students taking my courses who provided a reality check on my ideas and shared their own fascinating language-technology anecdotes (some of which are included in this book). Four particularly thoughtful students were Adam Mendelson, Cindy Lee, Maggie Dunbar, and Jing-Ting Poon. Several cohorts of very talented undergraduate research apprentices explored a wide range of ideas with me, and I am particularly grateful to Adam Parrish, Alice Tsui, Chris Skok, Carlton Fong, John Chipman, and Katie Krotz for informing me about ways that language and technology interact that I had never thought about. Jerrold Cooper, Niek Veldhuis, and Laurie Pearce were invaluable guides as I explored cuneiform writing. Lihua Zhang helped me with Chinese, Junghee

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