Potential Upside of Literacy: Writing is a technology that has had huge ramifications for society.

“...Writing heightens Consciousness.”

Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*.

Writing and Literacy

• Rigorous
  – Deductive Logic
    • All men are mortal.
    • Socrates is a man.
    • Socrates is mortal.
  – Inferential Logic
    • If then logic
  – Propositional Calculus
    • P and Q
Writing and Literacy

- Organization of knowledge
  - Tables
  - Graphs
- Searching for Knowledge
Literacy

• Predictor
  – Child writing letters and name
• Silent Reading
  – St. Augustine was amazed by his mentor when he discovered St. Ambrose reading without moving his lips.
  • he was reading so-called *scriptura continua*, a text without spaces or other defining marks between words or sentences
    – Feeltheairandtellmewhatyouthink
Literacy

• Sweden in the 17th and 18th centuries (Graff, 1991).
  – every soul should read the word of God
    • According to Lutheran doctrine
    • movement focused on universal literacy. and test
  – Yet most of congregation who passed the literacy test did not know how to write or even sign their name
    • many Swedes, especially women, could not write but could read
Literacy

• Alberto Manguel
  – Argentine-born writer, translator, and editor describes how he learned to read several years before he learned to write
  – “I could perhaps live without writing. I don’t think I could live with reading” (Manguel, 1996, p. 7)
  – many existing societies have reading without writing
Factoid on Spreading Literacy

- 1930’s Scarcity of Books
  - Just 500 bookstores
  - 2.50 a book, $40 in today’s dollars

- 1939 Paperbacks
  - Pocket Books
  - Robert Fair de Graff
  - for 25 cents
Evolution of Consciousness

• Orality
  – Spoken language dialog fosters sense of self

• Literacy
  – Written language helps establish individual in her or his world
They love to be amused, but they also want to be challenged.
Orthography

• **Surface or Transparent**
  – Written language mirrors spoken language
    • Mark Twain’s suggested system
    • Korean, Finnish, and others

• **Deep**
  – Written language has less relationship with spoken language
    • Japanese Kanji
    • English
  – Might reflect some meaning
    • Chinese characters
Chinese and Japanese are not alphabetic and are very difficult to learn.

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<th>Characters</th>
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和
平
安

英
朋友
贵
神

命
恩
爱
星
智

BEAUTY
FLOWER
HAPPINESS
MOON
SUNRISE

CLARITY
FORGIVENESS
HARMONY
PEACE
TRANQUILITY

COURAGE
FRIEND
HONOR
SPIRIT
TRUTH

DESTINY
GRACE
LOVE
STAR
WISDOM
日本 東京 大阪 北海道
山川日雨水分火田
米魚寿司肉酒茶
車電気自転車飛行機
一二三四五六七八
男 女 松井秀喜 黒沢明
食べる 行く 小 大 多少
Japan  Tokyo  Osaka  Hokkaido
mountain  river  sun  rain  water  fire  rice field
rice  fish  sushi  meat  alcohol  tea
car  electricity  bicycle  airplane
one  two  three  four  five  six  seven
man  woman  Matsui Hideki  Kurosawa Akira
to eat  to go  small  big  many  few
Children learning to Japanese usually begin with a syllabary and learn the Kanji later. Syllabic Characters Printed in Katakana.
Examples of Egyptian hieroglyphs. The First Three Hieroglyphs Represent General Concepts, Whereas the Last Three Belong to the Egyptian Alphabet.
English has Deep Orthography

• Different etymologies
  – Chef, French
  – Church, Old English

• pronunciation has changed over the centuries but the spelling has not
  – Tough, Cough, gh was pronounced /x/

• Words borrowed from other languages, but their spelling either
  – Pronounced as in original language
  – pronounced like English
English has Deep Orthography

• 1,100 different ways to spell its 44 separate sounds

• Homophones
  – Words that have the same sounds but are spelled differently
  – too, two

• Letters that don’t indicate how the words are pronounced
  – chef, church

• Words that contain silent letters
  – love

• Simple exceptions
  – psychology
A Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling
by Mark Twain
For example, in Year 1 that useless letter "c" would be dropped to be replaced either by "k" or "s", and likewise "x" would no longer be part of the alphabet. The only case in which "c" would be retained would be the "ch" formation, which will be dealt with later. Year 2 might reform "w" spelling, so that "which" and "one" would take the same consonant, while Year 3 might well abolish "y" replacing it with "i" and Year 4 might fix the "g/j" anomaly once and for all. Generally, then, the improvement would continue year by year with Year 5 doing away with useless double consonants, and Years 6-12 or so modifying vowels and the remaining voiced and unvoiced consonants. By year 15 or so, it would finally be possible to make use of the redundant letters "c", "y", and "x"--by now just a memory in the minds of old daughters--to replace "ch", "sh", and "th" respectively. Finally, then, after some 20 years of orthographical reform, we would have a logical coherent spelling in use throughout the English-speaking world.
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Add New Letters

I think dat I sal never si A poem luvi az a tri.

15% fewer keystrokes with NuSpel. A 15% saving of time, electricity, paper (largely from trees), etc.

Sëv ðə triz, wiθ NuSpel!

When the distance between speech and spelling becomes too great, even a brain-dead troll doll knows it's time for change.

through ↔ θru
though ↔ do
sure ↔ for
dove ↔ dov
dove ↔ dəv
dough ↔ do
do ↔ du
slough ↔ slu
slough ↔ slaf
who ↔ hu
busy ↔ bizi

Er... uh... mmm... Yep. You bet. Can't be none too soon for me, ya know. None too soon. No. Ya know. Like the fella said. You bet, ya know. Well, let's git on with it. Yeah. You bet. Ya know.

Let's close the gap, NOW! In NuSpel, each letter or combination of letters ALWAYS represents the same sound.

LAV that NuSpel!
Modify Existing Alphabet

Increase correspondence between spoken and written language
Transfers readily to normal alphabet