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Barcodes bring Bard to Life

(From 'Bits and Bytes', *The Sunday Times*, 24 Oct 1993)

The BBC and Pioneer, the Japanese consumer-electronics company, will launch a new video-disc technology on Friday that uses barcodes to teach Shakespeare in schools. A teacher using the barcode pen and a special book, will be able to play a video sequence of any scene within a Shakespeare play to show pupils how it ought to be acted or spoken. Initially three plays will be on offer: Macbeth; Romeo and Juliet; and A Midsummer Night's Dream. The special player and discs will have a retail price of under £1,000. Telephone 0800 480480.

Puerto Rico bilingual

(From *The Monterey County Herald*, Friday, 29 Jan 1993)

Bayamon, Puerto Rico – Shrugging off the protests of cultural purists and opponents of statehood, Gov. Pedro Rossello signed a law yesterday making both English and Spanish official languages of this U.S. territory.

"Now we have two hymns, two flags, two languages," Rossello declared to hundreds of cheering supporters at a signing ceremony in the western San Juan suburb of Bayamon.

He dismissed as "a rhetorical storm" the arguments of critics who sought to safeguard Spanish's 21-month-old status as the island's sole official tongue.

Information highways

(From the *International Publishers Bulletin*, X:1, 1994, editorial)

We have been living in the Multi-Media age for quite some time, but all the media remain unconnected so far. When will all media be able to communicate with each other? *When millions of US\$ will have been spent to replace copper phone lines by fiber optic network.* The first rewiring will start in USA, probably in

California. It will take 15 years and 1.6 billion of US\$ to rewire the 9 million California customers until the year 2010. This was announced by PACTEL (Pacific Telesis); earlier Bell Atlantic and US West had announced the building up of similar highways, all digital highways. Bell Atlantic announced early November 1993 that they will invest \$20 billion on its network. Other phone companies are rushing to follow suit.

The smart home will then be at hand and become a reality. All customers will have a new cable box in their homes. This will allow connecting televisions, phones and computer equipment to the box and transmit information, phone calls and video programming to and from their homes.

Email lexicography

(From Newsletter No. 7, 1993, the Australian National Dictionary Centre)

One of the joys of email is the readiness with which it assuages the loneliness of the long-distance lexicographer. The Centre has been in frequent touch with Penny Silva, of the Dictionary of South African English and Harry Orsman, of the Dictionary of New Zealand English. We have most recently established contact with Katherine Barber in Canada. The Centre has for some years been offering OWLS (the Oxford Word and Language Service). Queries come in at the rate of 3 or 4 a week. Most of them can be answered 'in-house', but a few require checking in Oxford, or in the other regional English dictionaries. This checking is done by email and is quick and efficient, providing a unique service.

EFL for escape

(From an article by Liz Newmark in the *EFL Gazette*, June 1993)

English is compulsory for all children over 10 in Jerusalem, but in East Jerusalem, troubled by occupation and travel restrictions, this international language is arguably more important: "Israelis learn English for their

work here. Palestinians learn English as an escape route, offering educational and work opportunities," says Helen Hawari, Director of the British Council English Language Centre in East Jerusalem.

According to Hawari, 80 per cent of courses are for general English and a third of English available is ESP. "We specialise in ESP in medicine as Israelis do not allow Palestinians to set up schools for medicine in Jerusalem. Our main contracts are with the UN and individual medical aid agencies."

BBC WSTV in Japan

(From *Newsworld*, the newsletter of BBC World Service Television, No. 2, Oct/Nov 1993)

BBC World Service Television is to launch its 24 hour news and information channel into Japan in the Spring of 1994 in partnership with the worldwide trading group Nissho Iwai, Japan's seventh largest company.

The decision to proceed with the joint venture – British broadcasting's biggest ever deal in Japan – won praise from British Prime Minister John Major when it was announced during his four day stay in Japan in late September.

"The introduction of this 24 hour world news and information channel will bring a new dimension to broadcasting in Japan," Mr Major told journalists. "From next Spring, Japanese viewers will be able to experience for themselves the excellence of BBC programmes specifically tailored to their own interests."

The channel will be translated into Japanese at peak audience times. It will be available in English on a 24 hour per day basis and in Japanese from 8pm till midnight from Monday to Saturday, and from 7pm till 11pm on Sundays. A translation team of 19 people will be based in London at BBC World Service Television's TV Centre facilities.

Where is it?

(From Meg Greenfield, 'Intervention Fatigue', *Newsweek*, 25 Oct 1993)

Let me share a paragraph I read in the paper the other day in a story that was warning of yet another terrible danger spot about which I

was meant to worry: "Thousands of jubilant supporters lined the route of Gamsakhurdia's motorcade into Zugdidi, the regional capital of the western province of Mingrelia ... More than 100 civilians have been killed in Sukhumi in the past 10 days in shelling by Abkhazian forces." I am always as prepared to worry as the next person, but maybe the next person knows something I don't. For except for formerly Soviet Georgia, where all this was said to be taking place, there was not a single proper noun in sight that meant anything to me.

We Americans are weak on geography and even rudimentary knowledge of many of the great cultures around the world, blissfully distant from most of the world's continuously churning conflicts and a little bit complacent in our ignorance. Bosnia-Herzegovina, until very recently, was merely a joke phrase in our language, the example of some silly, antique jurisdiction. I can still remember the day in the early 1950s when I started reading screaming headlines that Dien Bien Phu was about to fall. That was the presumably impregnable French military redoubt in Vietnam. We all immediately went around saying how terrible this was, having never heard of it till that very day.

Global usage

(From Eileen Reinhard, 'Shrinking the world to a global village', *The Times*, 19 Mar 1993)

One company embracing technology is Asea Brown Boveri, ABB, the giant Swiss-Swedish builder of transportation and electric generation systems.

Percy Barnevik, the president and chief executive of ABB, is viewed by industry analysts as a maverick who is moving more aggressively than any one else in Europe, to create an enterprise which combines global scale and world-class technology, but keeps in touch with local markets.

"I have no illusions about how hard it is to communicate clearly and quickly to tens of thousands of people around the world. ABB has about 15,000 middle managers prowling around markets all over the world," he says.

Apart from conducting all its high-level discussions in English, ABB uses a range of two-party and multi-party video conferences, personal pagers, electronic and voice mail to keep employees in contact.