

Chapter 12

Digital Literacy Activities

Sharell Walker

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8161-6354>

Borough of Manhattan Community College, USA

ABSTRACT

In an increasingly technological-focused environment, it is paramount that library instructors infuse digital literacy skills into their teaching. Librarians as information professionals are in a prime position to impart digital literacy skills into patrons. This not only creates a more exciting lesson plan but also has the potential to teach students necessary digital literacy skills that are transferable beyond their schoolwork. In this chapter, the author examines the position of digital literacy in instruction and as a way to build employable skills. Examples of digital literacy activities' that can be incorporated into information literacy instruction sessions no matter the length of the session are also offered. These activities include digital footprint tracking, games, and website building. The chapter also discusses the assessment of these activities which evaluated the students perceived value of the information and skills learned from the digital literacy activities.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss how digital literacy has been integrated into library instruction. Infusing digital literacy into library instruction is not a new custom. Librarians are in a powerful position to help students navigate digital tools in a beneficial way that encompasses their academic, social, and professional lives. Librarians play a vital role in teaching digital literacy as they are well positioned to guide patrons through the complex issues revolving around digital skills and the digital age. As information experts and professionals, librarians are often aware of the ever changing landscape of information and when new digital technologies are available to make information creation and retrieval easier. Particularly, academic librarians are often tasked with conducting instruction sessions or teaching students various aspects of information literacy which encompass digital literacy. This chapter is meant to operate as a learning guide to those who wish to incorporate digital literacy into their instruction at any level. The discussion will include an examination of select literature highlighting the history of digital literacy and its place in library instruction, offer author-tested examples of activities, and lastly discuss the results of

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an assessment of the discussed activities. The purpose of the chapter is to inform and educate readers on the importance of including digital literacy lessons into library instruction while also offering real world examples of activities that can be tailored to different types of lesson plans. The assessment then shows the impact of the activities on the students' understanding and use of digital media and tools.

In an increasingly technology-focused environment, it is paramount that instructors infuse digital literacy skills into their teaching. The core concept of library instruction has changed as our digital needs and abilities have grown. Teaching patrons various digital literacy skills has become a regular focus of library instruction, whether in a one-shot service or a semester-long course. However, digital literacy has several definitions that have changed over time. Early introductions of the term include Glistler, wherein digital literacy is defined as “the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers” (1997). The California Emerging Technology Fund provides yet another definition of digital literacy as “the ability to use digital technology and communication tools, and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create, and communicate information in order to function in a knowledge society” (2008). ALA defines digital literacy as “skills in locating and using information...involves knowing digital tools and using them in communicative, collaborative ways through social engagement” (2021). The idea of digital literacy has transformed from understanding information from computers to having the ability to understand “digital technology” to create, collaborate, and communicate for social engagement.

BACKGROUND

Digital Literacy in the Workforce

Digital literacy is also a potential marketable tool for students once they attempt to obtain employment. The core value of a college education is to increase the chances of potential employment. The skills gained in a college classroom should be transferable to the workforce. As stated by Suleman (2017), “The core idea is that individuals make investments in education and training, which help endow them with a set of skills that may be rewarded by employers...education and training impart individuals with a stock of marketable skills that increase their productivity and consequential earnings” (264). Investing in education is a strategic venture. It is a venture that individuals hope will pay off when it comes time to enter the workforce. In a workforce that is becoming increasingly technology-focused, digital literacy skills are paramount for students to learn, not only to increase their chances of employment but to increase their earning potential.

The emphasis on digital literacy and technology in the workforce has often been referred to as the “digitalization” of the American workforce. In their 2017 report, Brookings, a nonprofit organization conducting nonpartisan research, details the rapid “digitalization” of the American workforce over a ten-year period. This “digitalization” has reinvented business activity thanks to the power of computers and information sharing. However, this “digitalization” also changes the nature of the individual worker and the labor market. The shift has created hundreds of new occupations that did not exist before but also a need for employees with these digital skills. The report states “nearly 4 million of the nation’s 13 million new jobs created since 2010— (report published in 2017) 30 percent—have required high-level digital skills... Nearly two-thirds of new jobs required either high- or medium-level digital skills (2017). In terms of specific earning power, the report findings conclude that “workers with superior digital skills

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