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## Role of Librarians in Promoting Digital Literacy

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### Abstract

*This paper gives a brief outline on how students are addicted to technology but are not aware of its effective use; therefore it becomes a necessity for librarians to assist the students and patrons in promoting digital literacy. The difference between digital skills and digital literacy has been discussed, the skills to be developed through digital literacy has been listed. The role of librarian in promoting digital literacy has been given.*

### Keywords

Digital skills, digital literacy, librarian's role

### Electronic access

The journal is available at [www.jalis.in](http://www.jalis.in)



Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science  
ISSN: 2277-2219 Vol. 7, No.2, 2018, pp.208-211

## Introduction

Research has shown that there is a gap between students' fluency in the use of technology and their ability to use digital tools to further their own learning. Students may spend most of their waking hours 'connected' but the majority of this time is spent socializing and consuming entertainment. They don't necessarily know the best way to use technology for educational purposes, identify authoritative information or recognize fake news from real. They lack what has become called 'digital literacy'.

## Current trend

Many of the students listen to podcasts, but they don't know how to produce a podcast of their own. Giving students the knowledge and resources to sharpen their skills enables them to navigate the line between consumer and producer more adeptly. In turn, "learning how to produce digital content will make them better consumers,"

Today's students must be able to communicate, collaborate and express themselves effectively using digital media if they are to be productive participants in a knowledge-based society. The goal is to empower learners to navigate the complex digital world as both consumers and creators, enabling them to achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals.

This means helping learners to develop digital skills so that they can effectively manage their digital lives, such as monitor their online image, find credible data and information resources online, and use the latest online tools to create something new.

## Definition's

Digital literacy is "The capability to use digital technology and knowing when and how to use it."

Digital literacy, according to the 'American Library Association', is "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills."

Information and digital literacy represents the core capabilities which fit an individual for living,

learning and working in a contemporary society. It is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective use of information, the understanding of how information is produced, valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.

### **Difference between digital skills and digital literacy**

Digital skills mean that one can follow a step-by-step process of creating an email account. Digital literacy means that one can recognize spam, know why it is being sent, and understand how email providers use filters to minimize potential harm. Digital skills mean that one knows how to use Microsoft Word. Digital literacy means that one can use Microsoft Word to clearly and effectively communicate all the key components of an assignment. Digital skills mean one can show someone how to borrow e-books. Digital literacy means that one knows why some e-books aren't available in libraries, even though those same e-books can be purchased online.

Digital skills mean that one knows how to use Face book. Digital literacy means that one knows how to use Face book appropriately for both personal and professional purposes. Digital skills mean that one can show someone how to use a database. Digital literacy means that one can help that person understand how to create effective searches in that database and evaluate the search results.

### **Basic skills to be acquired through digital literacy**

- Understand how computers work, at both the hardware and software levels
- Use a mouse to navigate a graphical user interface effectively
- Type on a keyboard
- Connect to – and access – the Internet
- Find information on the Internet
- Save data, both onto a built-in hard drive and onto portable storage devices (and/or mobile devices)
- Understand how digital devices connect to – and work with – one another
- Troubleshoot basic computer issues
- Navigate through a website in order to access the information they need to find
- Perform an Internet search effectively
- Determine whether or not an online source of information is verifiable and trustworthy

- Manage multiple tasks on the computer at once
- Create an email account
- Use online communication tools, such as social media networks or video conferencing software
- Understand how “cloud computing” works when it comes to storing and retrieving digital data
- Understand basic online safety principles, such as recognizing and avoiding scams and Internet fraud
- Understand when content is sponsored rather than organic
- Know when you must pay to access something online, rather than obtaining it for free
- Access settings for any service/website/application
- Research and compare available services
- Protect their privacy online
- Determine if a website is safe, secure, and encrypted
- Create digital content and share it with others
- Protect devices from viruses and malware
- Explain to others how to gain access to their online content, profiles, etc.

### **Role of librarians in promoting digital literacy**

Librarians are knowledge workers. That means that their professional life and future depend on digital literacy. Ten years ago, digital literacy meant that one knew your way around a computer and could find information on the web. Today it means that one understand how to find and share information both on the computer and on mobile devices.

The ability to locate, organizes, understand, evaluate, and analyze information using digital technology. It involves a working knowledge of current high technology, and an understanding of how it can be used. Further, digital literacy involves a consciousness of the technological forces that affect culture and human behavior. (Wikipedia)

The Beetham and Sharpe heirarchy<sup>(2)</sup> shows the developmental process of acquiring digital literacy, from recognising the technologies (“I have”) through to integrating digital technology in to your presence in a particular field (“I am”).



### The Sources of information

People rely on librarians and pay to know about what's going on in industry right now, not last month. The librarian should look for and share information in these real-time sources:

- **LinkedIn Answers:** You can ask questions and rate the answers you get, which is better than in LinkedIn Groups. If your respondents are just putting up spam or trying to sell, you rate them accordingly.
- **Quora:** This is an entire Q&A system built on the relevance of your previous answers. As more people consider your answers relevant, you become an expert and the answers you post in your area of expertise will outweigh others.
- **Namesake:** Namesake is like Quora, but in real time. You can get hundreds of people to join the conversation and watch their answers come in. It's as if you could see Wikipedia live.
- **Google Alerts:** Set an alert for, say, "ITIL v3" and Google will update your feed or send you email with newly published news, blogs, video, discussions, and books containing that keyword.
- **Facebook Groups:** These are miniature Facebooks within Facebook, organized around a particular interest. You interact with people as if they were friends (like, comment, share links, ask/answer questions, etc.), but all of the activity is separate from their personal profiles.
- **Youopenbook.org:** This "back door" uses the Facebook API to search public updates. You can find posts by anybody who has ever said anything about the things you care about, and if their profile isn't locked down, you can interact with them on Facebook. It's also a good way to see what people are saying about events in real

time (during an industry conference, for instance).

- **Twitter search:** Twitter has tips on using operators and characters to find tweets. It also has an Advanced Search screen similar to the one you find on search engines.

The librarians should also be familiar with

- Understanding how to use web browsers, search engines, email, text, wiki, Photoshop, video creation/editing software, etc. to showcase learning.
- blogging, audio-video sharing, email, chat, discussion groups, RSS feeds
- MS word, PowerPoint, excel
- searching techniques, social bookmarking, social networking
- Evaluating online resources for accuracy/trustworthiness of information.
- Using online classes to enhance learning in the classroom.
- Choosing appropriate media to showcase learning - understand what platforms will best illustrate your message and learning to peers and educators.
- Using an interactive whiteboard in the classroom for lessons and allowing students to use the interactive whiteboard on a daily basis.
- Encouraging students to use technology to showcase their learning.
- Using the web (websites video, music) to enhance the learning of the students.
- Students and teachers to create online content to be utilized both in and out of the classroom.

Digital literacy initiatives within local and academic libraries are imperative in helping students and patrons to create and upload resumes, sign up and use email to communicate with friends and family, download an app to get a ride to the airport, create and edit a presentation to share at work, search for a new doctor online, create a movie, to complete a school project, communicate with a computer technician when their device has issues, and so much more. The minutiae of digital literacy needs are endless and they continue to expand over time. As librarians, it's our job to engage patrons in experiences that promote and improve digital literacy.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of digital literacy provides the fundamental knowledge of managing digital environment that the student requires to succeed in their educational, professional and personal lives. So it becomes imperative for the librarians to assist the students and the patrons of libraries with digital literacy skills.

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