Digital Technology: What is Digital Literacy?

1. LEARNING OUTCOME

Students will become aware of the career-readiness competency Digital Technology and connect this competency and the skills associated with it to the assignment topic.

2. OBJECTIVE

The following exercises are designed to help you identify your digital technology skills and put them into practice. As you move through them, reflect on what you believe are your most significant strengths and weaknesses when it comes to digital technology.

3. DIGITAL LITERACY DEFINED

When was the last time you read an article in a printed newspaper, or the last time you used a printed map for navigation?

We have all heard the word “literacy.” However, digital literacy is a relatively new concept. Although there is no universal agreement on the definition of this term, it is generally understood to mean literacy that extends beyond words.

Increasingly, we consume information digitally rather than via print sources. We are reading content that appears online. Being digitally literate means that we understand how to access and process these materials effectively and efficiently.

Being digitally literate means being able to comprehend different types of information including textual and numerical. Digital literacy includes basic computer skills as well as the ability to understand charts, graphs, and other representations of data. Digital literacy also involves an ability to discern among different sources of digital information.
4. EXERCISE ONE

I. Read the Online Article

“Growth of Online Reading Fuels New Achievement Gap, Researchers Say”

Sociologists were among the first to recognize the presence of a “digital divide.” This refers to a gap in access to technology among persons of varying socio-economic backgrounds.

While gaps in access to technology itself (i.e., hardware) appear to have narrowed in recent years, gaps in technical skills and efficient usage may be increasing (Dijk & Hacker, 2003). Please read the following online article regarding the growth of online reading and possible achievement gaps among students.


II. Reflect on the Digital Divide

An important aspect of critical thinking is to examine the credibility and reputation of information sources.

1. What were the major findings of the Leu, et al. study?

2. What are the implications of this research for students from different backgrounds?

3. How can schools address this challenge?

4. How easy was it for you to read this article? How was reading it different from reading a print article?

5. What step(s) did you have to take to read it?
5. EXERCISE TWO

I. Reflect on Your Digital Involvement

Do You Use Your Mobile Device At Night?

Adolescents as well as many adults spend a sizable proportion of their day directly engaged with technology. This could involve time spent with a computer, tablet, Kindle, smartphone, or some other device. In fact, one study found that about a third of teenagers keep their mobile devices with them in bed at night. While only 12% of parents kept their mobile devices in bed, 62% of them kept their devices within reach of the bed. Among teens, 39% kept them within reach. This same report, released by Common Sense Media, found that a significant proportion of both adolescents and parents wake up at least once during the night to check their devices. Among teens, 36% check their devices at least once during the night. Among parents, 26% do so.

II. Track Your Technology Use for 24 Hours

Engaging With Technology

- Since most of us use our digital devices for record keeping, you probably will not need a pen and paper for this activity! Using whatever form you prefer, record how much time you spend engaged with technology (computer use, cell phone use, reading on a Kindle, etc.).

- You may wish to notate different levels of engagement. For instance, sitting in a room or having lunch while the computer is open is different from typing on a computer or watching a video online. They are both examples of engagement, albeit different degrees.
III. Answer the Following Questions on Your Digital Engagement:

1. How many hours in a typical day do you spend engaged with some form of technology?
2. What is the major purpose of your engagement – education, work, entertainment?
3. What devices are you “in front of” for the largest portion of the day?
4. Do you access technology at night? When you are normally sleeping, for example?

6. EXERCISE THREE

I. Evaluate News Sources

Perform your own informal research on the following online news sources:

- CNN
- Fox News
- New York Times
- Breitbart
- Slate
- Huffington Post
- USA Today
- The Guardian
- Mother Jones
- Wall Street Journal

Of course, there are many other resources to consider on this subject. A strong, critical thinking approach would most likely lead us to want to explore this question further.

What’s most important, perhaps, is not the conclusion or answer to which we arrive, but how we arrive at it. Are we thinking critically? Evaluating the credibility of sources? Are we accepting what is presented to us at face value without reflecting on it carefully and analytically?
II. Read the Following Articles About Fake News and Respond to the Questions Below:

Fake news and how it relates to digital literacy

Journalists, policy makers, and others have recently expressed concerns about “fake news,” stories which are presented as legitimate accounts but which lack a substantial basis in fact. Let us consider the question of fake news and how it relates to digital literacy.

Article about the spread of fake news within online media outlets:

TED Talk “How Fake News Does Real Harm”
https://www.ted.com/talks/stephanie_busari_how_fake_news_does_real_harm?language=en#t-322479

1. How many hours in a typical day do you spend engaged with some form of technology?

2. What is the major purpose of your engagement – education, work, entertainment?

3. What devices are you “in front of” for the largest portion of the day?

4. Do you access technology at night? When you are normally sleeping, for example?

5. Would you say that your involvement with technology has an impact on your interpersonal relationships? If so, how?