

DIGITAL LITERACY AS A TOOL OF INSIGHT INTO THE UNIVERSE OF INFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

In the past, digital literacy was considered a skill that was advantageous for career readiness, particularly for higher-paying occupations related to technology. However, in recent years, it has come to be recognized as an increasingly important life skill. Digital literacy is still important for professional readiness; but, it is also essential for education and socializing, and it is also becoming more ingrained in day-to-day activities such as having a smart home system and security system, banking, shopping, driving, and using the capabilities of vehicles, among other things. It is possible that the media, information channels, and the pervasiveness of the internet may give the idea that the digital age has transformed everyone into a media user and that the digital can be found everywhere, including in educational institutions. The impression that this is the case is not accurate, and schools are the major exception to this rule. The one and only area where it is vitally necessary to educate future citizens to comprehend, to criticize, and to generate information is in the student's educational institution. In order to actively engage in their community, a digital citizen must initiate and maintain a continuous practice of critical thinking throughout their academic journey. This is the sole method to accomplish this objective.

Keywords: *digital literacy, information literacy, digital services, data, media.*

INTRODUCTION

When the word "literacy" is used by itself, it often refers to the ability to read and write; however, when the word "digital" is added to the word "literacy," the phrase embraces a large number of additional domains.

There is no doubt that reading and writing continue to play a significant role at the core of digital literacy. But because of the new and ever-evolving ways in which people use technology to receive and convey information, digital literacy also involves a wider variety of skills. These skills include anything from reading on a Kindle to determining the credibility of a website to making and uploading films on YouTube. Because the phrase encompasses such a wide range of talents, some professionals choose to avoid using it altogether. Instead, they choose to focus their attention on specific abilities that lie at the confluence of technology and literacy.

According to the definition provided by the task force on digital literacy that is part of the American Library Association, "Digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, which requires both cognitive and technical skills."

To put it another way, Hiller Spires, a professor of literacy and technology at North Carolina State University, considers digital literacy to be comprised of three distinct categories: 1) the ability to locate and consume digital content; 2) the ability to create digital content; and 3) the ability to communicate or share digital content.

FINDING INFORMATION

The ability to identify information demands and to locate and obtain digital data, information, and content is what we mean when we talk about information and data literacy. to evaluate the significance of the source and the information it contains. for the purpose of storing, managing, and organizing digital stuff, such as data and information.

Communication and collaboration: Making use of digital technology to engage, communicate, and work with one another while maintaining an awareness of the cultural and generational variety that exists. through the use of public and private digital services as well as participatory citizenship, to take part in the functioning of society. in order to have control over one's identity, reputation, and digital presence.

To produce and modify digital content is referred to as "digital content creation." The goal is to enhance and incorporate information and content into an existing body of knowledge while also gaining a grasp of how copyright and licenses should be applicable. possessing the ability to provide instructions for a computer system that are easily understood (Smith, Chipley, 2015).

When it comes to digital environments, safety refers to the protection of devices, content, personal data, and privacy. in order to safeguard both one's physical and mental health, as well as to be conscious of the ways in which digital technology might contribute to social well-being and social inclusion. must have an awareness of the influence that digital technology and their applications have on the environment (Smith, Chipley, 2015).

Identifying demands and challenges, as well as finding solutions to conceptual issues and troublesome circumstances in digital settings, is what we mean when we talk about problem solving. to reinvent processes and goods through the utilization of digital tools. to stay current with the progression of digital technology.

The concept of media and information literacy, much like the concept of digital citizenship, has been articulated using a variety of concepts and terminology variations. Literacy covers the ability to connect meaningfully with many forms of media and information channels, regardless of whether we use the terms "digital media literacy," "information literacy," "internet literacy," or any of the other various expressions. The basic premise is that literacy is the ability to do so (Hong, Cho, 2017).

IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL LITERACY

Enhancing literacy in media and information is a challenging goal in the 21st century due to the complexities involved in educating people to effectively analyze, contemplate, and utilize the vast array of media content that is accessible. Users must acquire media literacy not only in relation to traditional media and visual representation, but also in relation to the plethora of emerging technologies and the creation of innovative applications that enable novel forms of information exchange.

The responsibility for teaching our children media and information literacy across various media platforms has not been assigned yet. Deprived of this, our offspring will be incapable of exhibiting responsible citizenship, irrespective of whether they are utilizing digital or conventional media.

If schools are often the institutions where critical thinking, analysis, and judgment making are developed, it is logical to anticipate that media and information literacy would be fundamental components of the educational curriculum.

The fast growth and integration of information and communication technology (ICT) across a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to education, business, health, agriculture, and other areas, has ushered in a dramatic transformation of society. In the current digital environment, humans are confronted with a vast amount of information that has been digitalized, which results in an increased level of complexity in the process of identifying and selecting information. The development of information literacy (IL) has become an absolute necessity in this day and age due to the consequences of the digital revolution. Competence in the use of computers has become an all-encompassing necessity across a wide range of work opportunities as a result of the fact that computers have become an integral part of modern civilization (Moisala, 2017). The concept of information literacy is applicable across all fields of study,

learning contexts, and educational levels since it serves as the foundation for learning that continues throughout one's life and the acquisition of knowledge independently.

At its heart, information literacy encompasses a set of competencies that enable individuals to proficiently seek out, locate, harness, and appropriately attribute high-quality information in a timely and efficient manner. The process of seeking information is a manifestation of the cognitive journey that individuals undertake in order to advance and possibly modify their area of knowledge (Moisala, 2017). Knowledge acquisition, the ability to solve problems, and the mastery of techniques are all inextricably linked to this cognitive activity.

A new breed of people is emerging in the ever-changing terrain of the digital era. These individuals are positioned to navigate the complex web of technology, information, and connectivity with dexterity and self-assurance using their skills and knowledge. The persons that possess this skill set are referred to as digital literates, and they are able to harness the potential of the digital domain with dexterity since they possess a multiple-faceted skill set. In an era in which digital interactions are intertwined into everyday life, those who are digitally literate stand out as pioneers. They are able to navigate the immense expanse of information that is available online, communicate effectively across virtual spaces, and critically detect the nuances that are present in the digital world. Their expertise goes much beyond simple technological competence; it encompasses a comprehensive awareness of digital media, the ability to engage in ethical behavior, and the capacity to make educated decisions among the cacophony of digital voices. Digitally literate individuals are emerging as trailblazers as the digital landscape continues to grow (Ralph et al., 2015). These individuals are illuminating the route toward a future in which technology and human intellect will happily unite.

At the core of digital literacy competencies is the ability to navigate the digital realm in a way that is both efficient and effective. In order to accomplish this, in order to effectively communicate in the digital realm, it is essential to have a high level of skill in many modes of online communication, such as instant messaging, email, video conferencing, and social networking. (Ralph et al., 2015). The capacity to communicate ideas in a digital format in a manner that is both clear and courteous is a fundamental component of successful virtual interactions. This ability enables individuals to connect with one another, work together, and share information regardless of their physical location.

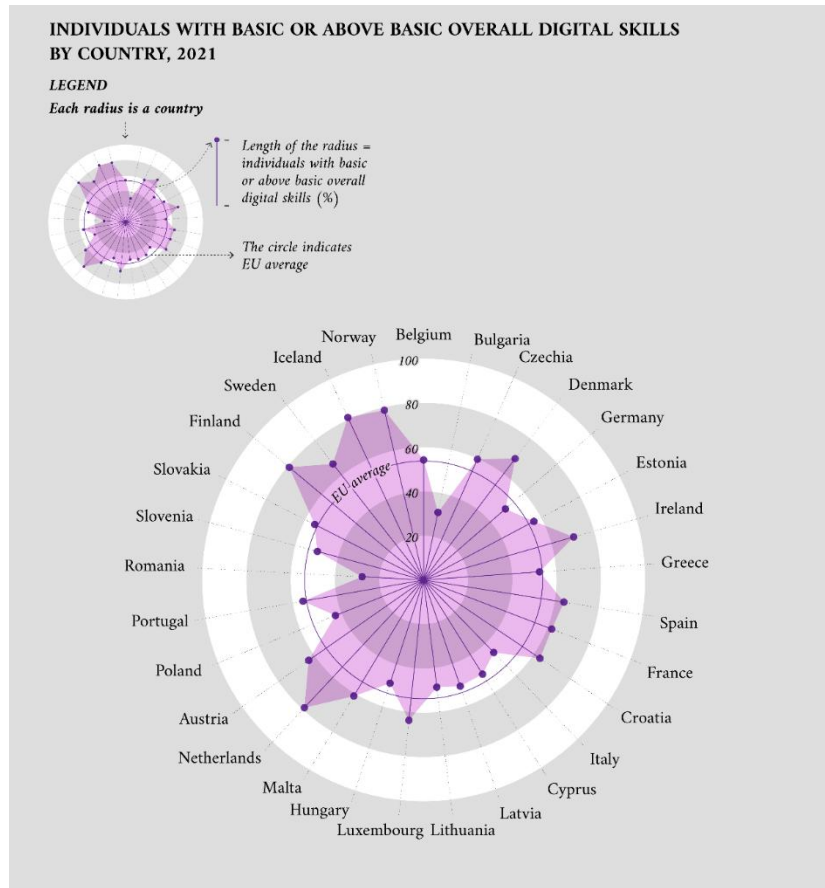


Fig 1 By the year 2021, the percentage of people in EU Member States who have digital abilities that are at least somewhat above basic (Source: Eurostat)

UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL INFORMATION

The ability to evaluate information is a crucial component of digital literacy competencies, and it is also one of the most important aspects. Having the ability to critically evaluate the dependability, credibility, and authenticity of digital information is of the utmost importance in this day and age, when information is flooded from a wide variety of sources. In order to sift through the wide expanse of content that can be found online, those who are strong in digital literacy competencies are able to differentiate between legitimate sources and those that may spread misinformation. The capacity for discernment protects individuals from falling prey to false information and fosters a culture that promotes the sharing of information in a responsible manner.

In addition, the area of digital content creation is included within the scope of digital literacy competencies. People who have a strong understanding of these competences are able to manipulate digital tools and software in order to create appealing narratives through the use of text, photos, videos, and presentations. This expertise extends beyond the realm of personal expression and encompasses professional endeavors as well as educational endeavors. The ability to create digital content that is captivating helps both communication and learning experiences.

Conduct that is ethical is a fundamental component of the competences required for digital literacy. Having a solid understanding of digital etiquette, copyright rules, and appropriate citation procedures is absolutely necessary in order to preserve one's integrity in the digital realm. Those who possess these competences exhibit a respect for intellectual property and contribute to the development of a digital environment that is founded on trust and ethical interaction. The nature of technology, which is constantly changing, is one of the most important challenges that digital literacy competencies aim to address. Individuals that exhibit these competences are able to adjust to new circumstances and have a curiosity-driven attitude to learning about new digital tools, platforms, and trends. By demonstrating this capacity for adaptation, they are able to maintain their position at the forefront of technical innovations and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Smythe, Breshears, 2017).

Skills in digital literacy encompass more than just technical abilities; rather, they encompass an all-encompassing strategy for interacting with the digital environment. To equip individuals with the skills necessary to survive in the digital world, these abilities are crucial. These competencies include the capacity to communicate effectively, evaluate critical information, create digital content, behave ethically, and adapt to changing circumstances. As the digital world continues to undergo transformations, it is becoming increasingly important to cultivate and improve these abilities in order to guarantee that individuals will continue to be self-assured, responsible, and empowered participants in the digital era (Smythe, Breshears, 2017).

In order to better understand the distinctions between information literacy and technology literacy, the following is stated:

Table 1. Information vs. Technology literacy

	Information Literacy	Technology Literacy
Definition	In the context of information literacy, the ability to recognize, locate, analyze, and make efficient use of information obtained from a variety of sources is referred to. In addition to the ability to analyze and comprehend information, it requires critical thinking, research abilities, and research methodologies.	When we talk about technological literacy, we are referring to the knowledge and abilities that are necessary to use digital tools and resources in an efficient and responsible manner. It includes having a fundamental understanding of computer operations, digital communication, software applications, and digital citizenship.
Scope	Literacy in information comprises a wider range of abilities that are related to the process of locating, assessing, and making use of information that is presented in a variety of formats, including but not limited to books, articles, databases, websites, and other sources. The process of information seeking, appraisal, and	In particular, technological literacy focuses on comprehending and making use of the various tools and resources that are associated with technology. The ability to use computers, operating systems, software programs, digital devices, online platforms, and to navigate the digital landscape are all included in this skill set.

	application as a whole is the concentration of this approach.	
Objectives	Developing critical thinking and research abilities that enable individuals to effectively locate, assess, and use information to fulfill their needs is the fundamental goal of information literacy. This is accomplished through the ability to develop information literacy skills. The goal is to encourage intellectual development, decision-making skills, and learning that continues throughout one's life.	Individuals should be equipped with the skills necessary to use technology in an ethical and successful manner, which is the primary goal of technology literacy. Its primary objective is to equip individuals with the information and skills necessary to navigate the digital world, communicate effectively, and make effective use of technological resources for personal, educational, and professional goals.
Focus	The concept of information literacy places an emphasis on skills concerned with the evaluation, synthesis, and application of information. Understanding the authenticity, dependability, and relevance of information sources, as well as the capacity to incorporate information into one's knowledge base, are the primary emphases of this course.	The acquisition of technical skills, comprehension of digital tools and platforms, and effective utilization of technology are the primary focuses of technology literacy. It places an emphasis on learning how to handle hardware and software, navigate interfaces, solve common faults, and keep up with the latest technological breakthroughs.

Despite the fact that they are two separate ideas, they frequently involve one another and compliment one another. With the advent of the digital age, individuals are required to navigate digital platforms and tools in order to efficiently access and assess information. As a result, technology has become an essential component of information literacy. In a similar vein, information literacy skills are beneficial to technology literacy since they enable individuals to locate information that is correct and pertinent through the applications of digital resources.

Employers need to make sure they are hiring workers who possess the appropriate skills in order to keep up with the latest technology breakthroughs. On the other hand, workforces are not always equipped with the necessary digital skills, and organizations frequently struggle to acquire competent labor. Competencies in digital technology are in high demand, even in developed economies. One example is the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) that was developed by the European Union. This index reveals that around 42 percent of Europeans do not possess fundamental digital skills, including 37 percent of those who are already employed. Women are disproportionately underrepresented in professions that are associated with technology; only one in six individuals who specialize in information and communications technology (ICT) and one in three individuals who graduate with a degree in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are women (Smythe, Breshears, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Having the appropriate set of digital skills is not only crucial for learning and being prepared for the employment; digital skills are also essential for the development of societies that are more open, inclusive, and safe. Individuals who engage with digital infrastructure have a responsibility to be aware of the risks to their privacy and data, as well as the issues that they face in terms of cybersecurity (such as ransomware and phishing attempts). Therefore, digital literacy also includes the ability to handle the issues that technology presents in terms of security and safety. At the same time, it is equally crucial to retain a values framework for digital transformation as the emergence of digital authoritarianism, misinformation, and disinformation, as well as constraints on personal liberties, are all factors that have contributed to the current state of affairs.

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