

Title: Learning literacies for a digital age

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- define attributes of the '21st century graduate' for their own communities of learning
- define 'digital literacies' in terms that would support action to improve the student experience in their own communities of learning
- describe how the situated practices of digital literacy are supported in their own communities of learning, using a framework introduced during the session
- develop an action plan for enhancing digital literacies in their own contexts of work, using a reflective tool introduced during the session

Session Outline

Despite their pervasive use of social technologies, few learners make effective use of digital technology to support their learning, or graduate with the skills necessary for lifelong learning in a digital age, without targeted support.

Our recent digital literacies audit of UK HEIs (JISC 2009) revealed that few institutions are addressing these issues in a joined-up way. We argue that institutions have a responsibility to develop digitally literate learners, and that this extends beyond what is usually understood by information literacy to a wider set of critical practices and attitudes. In our report we summarise evidence that learners can only develop these practices in relation to authentic tasks, whose meaning is negotiated in communities of learning both small (e.g. cohorts, groupwork situations) and large (e.g. disciplinary and professional communities).

Participants will be invited to explore the propositions that:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of knowledge practices, embedded in different situations (including digital environments) and cultures (e.g. disciplinary, peer and family cultures) (Street; Ivanic; Brown, Collins & Duguid)
- Literacies are '*social practices of using codes for making and exchanging meanings*': new literacies come about in response to changes in the technical, epistemological and cultural order (Lankshear & Nobel; Goodfellow & Lea)
- Literacies for the 21st century are constitutively multimedia and multi-modal (Kress)
- Conceptions of 'graduate attributes' include both high-level 'stances' (scholarship, citizenship and lifelong learning) and 'personal skills and aptitudes': they are realised differently in different subject areas (Barrie)

- Learners' personal and social digital skills may be extensive (Jones & Lea) but transferring them to the domain of learning may still be problematic (Eraut; Bennet et al)
- Learners' digital skills are strongly influenced by tutor skills and attitudes towards the digital in their own scholarship and teaching (Sharpe & Beetham)

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

5 mins: We introduce the topic of digital literacies and some issues in definition

10 mins: Participants define 'digital literacies' and '21st century graduate skills' for their own communities of learning, inspired by quotes from students talking about their own development

15 mins: We respond to definitions and ideas, introducing the evidence above using responsive presentation

15 mins: We discuss the findings of our study and introduce a developmental framework for supporting digital literacy development

15 mins: Participants use the framework to identify how 'digital literacies' are currently being supported by their own communities of learning, and discuss in pairs

15 mins: We introduce case studies in effective practice from a range of learning communities

10 mins: Participants share ideas about the development of digital literacies in practice, through facilitated discussion

5 mins: Finally, participants reflect on positive actions that could be taken in their own context to support a greater understanding of digital literacy and better opportunities for students to develop their practices of learning in a digital age.

The session will be supported using a responsive presentation tool (prezi), live wiki, paper-based hand-outs, and a live twitter feed to support discussion

References

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