

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES *on* LITERACY

Mastering

DIGITAL LITERACY

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Introduction

By Heidi Hayes Jacobs

To many of us, the label *21st century* conjures up visions of futuristic scenes from Isaac Asimov's writings. Indeed, labelling global, media and digital literacies as *21st century skills* is a misnomer. In reality, these are *right now* proficiencies – *new literacies*. Even though the future has caught up with us and the 21st century is right now, we continue to serve students in school systems that operate on a 19th century timetable and deliver a 20th century curriculum. To reference another futuristic author, our education system functions like H. G. Wells' time machine, forcing our students to be time travellers between the present and the past.

Nostalgia for the good old days is pervasive in pockets of society, but it is hard to make a convincing case for going backward in the field of education. In my work with schools, I rarely encounter questions about whether or not we should modernise our education system; the pertinent questions are about *how* we should modernise our education system. Grappling with these questions invariably leads to discussion of three new literacies that exponentially empower us to communicate and create with immediacy: global literacy, media literacy and digital literacy. The *Contemporary Perspectives on Literacy* four-book series is a place to cultivate the discussion of these new literacies.

There are five primary purposes of the series:

1. To clarify each new literacy to provide a basis for curriculum and instructional decision making
2. To find the relationship between traditional print and visual literacy and the three new literacies

3. To provide steps and resources to support the cultivation of each literacy in classrooms and virtual learning environments
4. To identify steps and examples of how to lead the transition from older paradigms to the integration of the three literacies in professional development
5. To inform decision makers on the far-reaching effects of policy and organisational structures on the effective modernisation of learning environments

A range of perspectives is essential when examining each literacy and how it interacts with others. To that end, the series includes a cohort of writers from a variety of organisations and disciplines – a classroom teacher, a regional public school information technology director, a leadership team from an international school, researchers, university professors, the director of a not-for-profit organisation devoted to journalism, the founder of an education network, a media critic, a regional service centre professional developer, consultants, the leader of a film- and media-making centre, and the director of an international society supporting global learning. This team has come together to share views and experiences with the central goal of expanding and contributing to the practice of educators. The commitment of each author to this work is commendable and I am grateful for their patience and productivity. Working with them has been a remarkable journey.

The new literacies provide exciting possibilities for classrooms, schools, organisations and social networks. In this series, we consider the distinctive characteristics of each new literacy and how schools can integrate them.

This volume, *Mastering Digital Literacy*, explores the digital whirlwind of abundant applications and tools that our students seem to be caught up in. How can we ensure that our learners use these tools with sophistication?

In chapter 1, “Digital Masters: Becoming a Blogmaster, Annotexter or Web Curator”, Michael L. Fisher and Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano take educators from “cyberdabbling” to authentic mastery and outline the steps to deeper self-expression and academic excellence.

In chapter 2, “Six Curriculum Actions for Developing Digitally Literate Learners”, I build on Fisher and Tolisano’s view of the digital classroom and lay out specific actions to bring curriculum planning into the 21st century. These steps include creating policies that support the use of keyboarding, voice and touch technologies – policies that have direct implications for curriculum planning. Other recommended teacher actions include tagging, creating a clearing house and designing apps.

Social media is a powerful way to employ digital tools. Steve Hargadon, founder of Classroom 2.0, one of the world's largest professional learning networks, shares his extraordinary experiences in chapter 3, "Notes From the Revolution: Peer-Driven Social Learning Communities". Steve has profoundly contributed to the opening of portals for communication, community building and creativity. In this chapter, he shares lessons he has learnt working with educators around the world.

Perhaps one of the most exciting developing arenas in education is gaming. Marie Alcock, in chapter 4, "Gaming as a Literacy: An Invitation", gives the reader a guide for understanding the intention and possibilities of gaming that support positive addictive qualities in learning. Marie provides a background and context for educational game design.

Finally, in chapter 5, "The Classroom Website: A Marketplace for Learning", Bill Sheskey and Marie Alcock show educators how to extend the classroom to a teacher web page. Given that learning is a 24/7 proposition, they provide messaging strategies to students. By posting, sharing and gathering in compelling web-design layouts, our learners will experience the new learning marketplace. This chapter provides rich examples and details for activating digital tools.

We hope this material will bring different perspectives to the dialogue regarding how to support the shift to new types of learning environments that integrate digital, media and global literacy into organisations, teaching practice, administrative styles and ultimately, the lives of learners.

We encourage you to connect *Mastering Digital Literacy* with its companion books in the series for a more complete and detailed examination of the new literacies.



Visit go.hbe.com.au to find direct links to the many tools and resources cited in this book.