“I can Google and use a smartphone:” Design Strategies for Digital Literacy

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“The distinction between social media skills and information literacy skills is often confused. There is a marked difference between these ‘skills’ and being information literate. Today’s students may be skilled at texting and social media, but many are unable to perform online research and distinguish accurate information on the web.”

DiNisco, 2015
At the beginning of Information Literacy, we ask two questions:

- Why do we need information?
- What sources do you use on a daily basis to find the information you need?
Their responses include:

- "I got my parents and my boyfriend and my phone to answer all my questions and give me the information I need."
- "Google is a major encyclopedia that everybody has used at least once."
- "I just use Google and won't use anything else."
- "I don't want to use these other things I want to use Yahoo and google and in real life I do."
- "Internet is best"
- "ugh, this is not what I expected, I want to use Google."
- "Most of the time if I am researching a specific thing, I will resort to social media such as face book for answers."
- "Information Literacy is the ability to identify what information you need, understanding how the information is organized, identifying the best sources of information for your needs, locating sources, evaluating sources critically, and sharing that information. It is one of the most important set of skills needed to successfully get through college. there are 5 source, 1. The internet 2.Google 3.Wikipedia 4. My cell phone."
“A recent study entitled ‘The New Literacies of Online Research and Comprehension: Rethinking the Reading Achievement Gap’ conducted by the New Literacies Research Lab at the University of Connecticut shows that many students are well-versed in social media, but lack the necessary online research and reading ability that helps them succeed in school and the workplace.”

DiNisco, 2015
“Faster technology, access to online information, and the exponential growth of knowledge trigger the need to explore new pedagogical approaches for helping students navigate and select sources of reliable information.”

Casari, Henderson and Nunez-Rodriguez, 2011
ENG103: Information Literacy

- Builds and expands on student’s existing research methods
- Helps students to develop academic research skills.
  - Library
  - Databases
  - Internet
- Focuses on evaluation of sources and responsible use.
  - Types of sources
  - Plagiarism and academic honesty
  - Citation and documentation
Collaboratively designed

Delivered in Lecotra, a computer-based instruction program (CBI)

Credit-bearing (ACE, DEAC, Middle-States accredited)

Three lessons focus on

1. Quality digital and traditional resources available to students in the PF library and on the internet
2. Critical reading and reviewing of digital resources
3. Ethical use of digital resources
Multiple Literacies in IL

- **Technological**
  - Navigation of a CBI-designed course
  - Requires use of various search engines and databases
  - Multiple Choice Exams are taken on all digital LMS
  - Discussion board posts on all digital LMS

- **Social**
  - Six discussion boards that appropriate “netiquette”
  - Ability to interact with peers and the instructor in a socially appropriate way
  - Various social media applications and their appropriate use

- **Communication**
  - Ability to communicate in a digital environment with peers and instructor
  - Discussion posts must be three to six well written sentences and show ability to clearly make point
The Librarian’s Role

- Completely digital and primarily remote
- Collaborative partnerships with faculty and other departments
- Primary instructor for Information Literacy course
- Holds weekly live information literacy and library webinars
- Monitors all social communication tools and social media channels and Penn Foster’s Community
- Responds to student queries via telephone, email, social media channels and Penn Foster’s Community
- Embedded in courses
ACRL Framework Alignment for Information Literacy Course

- **Authority is Constructed and Contextual**
  - Critically review information and its sources.
  - Selecting the appropriate process for information delivery for students’ needs.

- **Information Creation as Process**
  - Why information is needed.

- **Information has Value**
  - The value of information to students’ courses and careers.

- **Research as Inquiry**
  - Steps of the research process.
  - Use appropriate tools.

- **Scholarship as Conversation**
  - Properly cite sources
  - Understand of academic integrity.
  - Discuss the quality of resources and how they fit students’ needs.

- **Searching as Strategic Exploration**
  - Search strategies for refining searches in search engines and databases.
Digital Literacy at Penn Foster

- Penn Foster is an online, distance education institution therefore digital literacy is an absolute necessity for student success.
- The institution (as all institutions) now has accreditation mandates to prove preparedness of students to enter the work force with usable and marketable skills.
- Many of those skills require a basic digital literacy beyond the use of a smart phone and Google.
“The internet is a top resource for many of today’s job hunters: Among Americans who have looked for work in the last two years, 79% utilized online resources in their most recent job search.”

Smith, 2015
Four Hierarchical Components of Digital Literacy

In general, workplace digital literacy is comprised of four hierarchical components. The first three focus on basic knowledge and understanding, as well as organizational and individual applications. The fourth component focuses on related skills and the ability to leverage digital technology effectively.

Hunt and Miller, 2015
Digital era concepts: Focus primarily on job-related communication and collaboration, such as platforms, channels, content creation and curation, crowdsourcing, cloud computing, and cybersecurity.

Digital tools and systems: Digital tools include the obvious—email, chatting/instant messaging, the Microsoft Office suite of products (and equivalents), as well as tools like photo and video editors. Systems include software applications developed for specific purposes, such as accounting, business intelligence, and learning management.

Hunt and Miller, 2015
Social technology features, platforms, and tools: A sampling of social technology features include blogs, customized aggregators, dashboards and portals, discussion forums/threads, media sharing features, user-generated profiles, and wikis. Platforms and tools include obvious public networks like LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube, but also tools like Disqus, ShareThis, and privately oriented offerings such as Yammer, Jive, and Interact Intranet.

Digital engagement skills and tactics: This component focuses on the skills required to use social and digital technologies efficiently, as well as the necessary judgment to use them effectively. Examples include knowing the right channel to use for a given communication, using email productively, creating and engaging productively in discussion threads and forums, curating and validating content, contributing to a wiki, and understanding HTML basics.

Hunt and Miller, 2015
Digital Literacy Initiatives

- Student Success and Career Fair
  - A week-long program of webinars focused on job search and career success skills
- Student Meet Up and Graduation
  - PF’s annual open house that includes presentations and info booths for all students and the graduation ceremony
Students’ Needs

Basic Computer and Technology Skills Needed to be a Successful Online Student and in the Workplace

Focused on the basic digital skills needed to be successful in online courses at Penn Foster as well as in the workplace.

Skills included:

- Setting up and using email in a professional way
- Differentiating between search engines and web browsers
- Using the Microsoft Office Suite productively
  - Word processing programs (focus on Word)
  - Spreadsheet basics (focus on Excel)
- Hardware basics
- Etiquette, viruses and privacy issues
Employers’ Needs

In a recent focus group, The Chartered Institute of IT found that

The current perception that standards of digital skills in society are potentially going to drive up standards within employment. It was strongly felt that this was not the case.

In fact it was highlighted that in a lot of cases the (not exclusively) younger generation were ‘device savvy’ rather than confident users of digital technology. The group felt that while a lot of employees are growing in confidence with the use of smart devices socially they are still in some cases not aware of the potential benefits of using them in a corporate world on behalf of their employers. (BCS, 2014)

Yes, students CAN Google and use a smartphone but they cannot connect those skills to a viable marketplace ability. They need to understand that technology is not just a social activity.
Job Searching Made Easy: Locating that Dream Job

Focused on using online tools and research methods to locate and apply for jobs.

Skills included:

- Writing resumes and cover letters using digital templates.
- Using digital job search tools such as Indeed, classifieds, professional organization websites and Craigslist.
- Using social media tools such as LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Wiping of social media to present the best possible profile to prospective employers.
- In-house digital tools Penn Foster provides to students for career success.
“Recruiting platform Jobvite stated in its 2014 edition of its annual Social Recruiting Survey that 93% of hiring managers will review a candidate’s social profile before making a hiring decision. And 55% have reconsidered a candidate based on what they find.”

Davidson, 2014
ACRL Framework Alignment for Student Success and Career Fair and Student Meet Up

» Authority is Constructed and Contextual
  » Select appropriate modes of creating information and delivering it to prospective employers

» Information Creation as Process
  » Use digital resources such as templates and resume builders to create a resume and cover letter.

» Information has Value
  » Value of correct information and its use for competitive job search skills
  » Critically evaluate search engines and databases for individual use

» Research as Inquiry
  » Understand that job searching requires research skills that categorize information of the individual’s needs

» Scholarship as Conversation
  » Understand ethical use of information in creation of resumes and cover letters

» Searching as Strategic Exploration
  » Understand tools needed for job searching and matching tools to individual needs
Future DL Initiatives

Career Boot Camp

- Collaborative process
- Focuses on students 18-24 who are entry level employees (High School, Career and College)
- Focuses on soft and hard skills to be a successful employee
- Created in CBI platform
- Able to stand alone or be incorporated into existing programs and course content
- Pilot launch for this Mod is set for July 2016
ACRL Framework Alignment for Career Boot Camp

- **Authority is Constructed and Contextual**
  - Importance of origin of information.

- **Information Creation as Process**
  - Determining scope of information needed

- **Information has Value**
  - Evaluation of information supplied in email, texts, social media and via web browsers.
  - Evaluation of information created in various formats to best suit employer and customer needs.

- **Research as Inquiry**
  - Researching and questioning to better serve employer and customer needs.

- **Searching as Strategic Exploration**
  - Understanding various information systems
“Technology has changed how we read and write, how we transmit and interpret knowledge—how we communicate. Given that literacy is communication, it’s essential to broaden the term to account for the varied universal modes of written, oral and visual literacy used online to convey and construe information across disciplines.”

Lowey, 2015
References

- Chartered Institute for IT. (2014). Digital skills from the employers perspective. BSC.