

Digital literacy: What is it? What proficiencies do students say they have? and What else can educators do to develop these important skills?

Ruth Sibson & Ashlee Morgan
Edith Cowan University

Digital literacy is centred on sourcing, critiquing, understanding and disseminating information in a digital world. A recent report by the Foundation for Young Australians (2016) indicated that employer demand for digital skills has already gone up by more than 200% in the past three years and within the next five years this is anticipated to rapidly increase. Moreover, this report also reported that young people aren't ready for such changes. Given the ubiquity of digital media and data, developing students' skills and knowledge in these areas is paramount to enhance graduates' employability and work readiness. In recent international testing by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment around 1 in 4 Australian 15 year-olds (27%) demonstrated low proficiency in digital literacy. Currently, little is known about university students' capabilities in digital literacy, and what their perceptions are in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. There is likely also gaps in the knowledge of academic staff in regards how digital literacy is defined and what this broad concept means for their teaching and learning processes and practices. As Murray and Perez (2014) have argued, many higher education institutions take digital literacy for granted.

The purpose of this showcase presentation is twofold. First, is to 'unpack' the key dimensions of digital literacy to raise awareness and knowledge of all aspects of the concept and demonstrate its relevance for higher education teaching and learning practice. Second, is to outline the key findings from a research project which used an online, self-completed survey to examine undergraduate business student (n = 316) perceptions of their digital literacy capabilities. Students were asked to assign ratings on their perceived competence against statements which focused on their technical, cognitive and socio-emotional skills (see Ng, 2012). Presenting these findings and having this conversation about digital literacy will allow educators from all disciplines to better understand what it means for their students, and for them to consider if, and how, digital literacy is being adequately addressed in their degree programs.

Foundation for Young Australians. (2016). *The New Basics: Big data reveals the skills young people need for the New Work Order*. Available at: https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/The-New-Basics_Update_Web.pdf

Murray, M. C., & Pérez, J. (2014). Unraveling the digital literacy paradox: How higher education fails at the fourth literacy. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*, 11, 85.

Ng, W. (2012). Can we teach digital natives digital literacy? *Computers & Education*, 59(3), 1065-1078