

## IJIDI: Book Review

Reedy, K., & Parker, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Digital literacy unpacked*. London: Facet Publishing. ISBN 9781783301973. 240 pp. \$59.95 US.

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What do we mean when we talk about digital literacy? Most of the chapters in *Digital Literacy Unpacked* offer a definition or framework through which they discuss digital literacy (or literacies, or digital skills, or digital competencies, and even information literacy). The multiple definitions and frameworks could be useful to many in their research, and the book provides a lot of fodder for anyone hoping to make an argument for work around digital literacy at their institution. The definitions provided vary, but most include the idea that digital literacy is more than just computer skills—it is a broader ability to navigate and interact with information digitally; to find it, evaluate it, and use it as part of school, work, and life. Secker’s opening chapter nicely begins the book by discussing the differences in terms and the challenges presented by the overlap in definitions and a lack of clear understanding of terms.

The book touches on digital literacy in a wide range of contexts and is not limited solely to education settings. The diverse considerations of the topic are appreciated. Several chapters discuss digital literacy for employees rather than students (Nicholls; Killen; Inskip; Fraser with Reedy; Cheuk & Reedy), with one chapter (Cheuk & Reedy) even focusing on staff digital literacy in a non-academic workplace, which is a perspective that is not often discussed in conversations about digital literacy, but is no less important. This chapter reinforces the idea that digital literacy is a life skill and not just an academic skill.

The case studies, research, and discussions contained in the book are organized into four parts, which provide limited structure to the collection, but the organization is loose at best. For example, Part II, “Learning in a digital world”, contains chapters discussing digital literacy in educational contexts—but that is true for many of the chapters in the book outside of Part II as well. Part III, “Developing staff digital literacies”, contains what one would expect, but several of the chapters in Parts I and IV also discuss staff.

The chapters range widely in their coverage, which is a strength of the book, and perhaps explains the slight lack of organization. Outside of the given structure, there are common themes that run throughout the book. One theme is integrating digital tools and skills in “authentic and meaningful ways,” (p. 203) be it in a single course, embedded throughout the curriculum, into professional development, or into office workflows (Walton, Childs, Estatiev, Hetherington & Jugo; Groom & O’Connell; Secker; Bennett, & Folley; Nerantzi & Jackson; Cheuk & Reedy; Micklethwaite). This important idea runs throughout these chapters and offers

several examples and options for incorporating digital literacy. There is also an emphasis on partnerships, collaborations, and relationships woven throughout the text (Nicholls; Killen; Secker; Nerantzi & Jackson; Fraser with Reedy; Cheuk & Reedy; Micklethwaite). Integrating digital literacy in these meaningful ways cannot happen in silos, and there is frequent discussion of potential collaborators and allies. In the 21st century digital society, digital literacy is a powerful tool for inclusion, and this case is made repeatedly throughout the book in many different contexts.

This, however, assumes access. Issues of access to technology and the internet are only peripherally included within the book. Speaking from an American context, access to technology is generally stratified by socioeconomic status and assumptions about access, especially among students, which can lead to incomplete conversations around digital literacy. For a truly inclusive examination of digital literacy, access must be a part of the conversation.

One chapter of note is Walton, Childs, Estatiev, Hetherington and Jugo's discussion of using an online platform to have students make artifacts (comics) to retell a particular story or text. As a result, students developed digital skills while creating engagement with the text and ensuring reading comprehension. It is an excellent case study of integrating digital literacy into the curriculum to engage students and support classroom content, rather than separating digital skills into a standalone lesson.

Bennett and Folley as well as Nerantzi and Jackson discuss engaging instructors with digital literacy. Bennett and Folley highlight their curriculum development workshop to help faculty think about where and how to incorporate digital literacy. Nerantzi and Jackson detail a Google Plus professional development community that allowed faculty to explore and experiment with new technologies in order to expand their own digital literacy, and then expand their pedagogy to include not only new tools, but also opportunities for students to develop their digital literacy.

Fraser and Reedy's work discuss any staff that work with students, not just instructors. They address a major redevelopment of technology in schools in Leicester, writing that "one of the key determinants of students' exposure to the use of technology in the classroom is the skills and confidence of educators" (p. 157), so staff development was a major aspect of the project. Nicholls's chapter also discusses the role that non-academic staff can play in supporting digital literacy, arguing that service staff (such as librarian staff and IT staff) is particularly well-placed to provide support for students and instructors around digital literacy.

Lastly, it is important to mention Morrison's chapter on copyright and digital literacy. A discussion of copyright in the digital age is not something I expected to find in this book. But understanding copyright implications of digital content, and the sharing of that content, is an important aspect of digital literacy, so it is a welcome and necessary inclusion in this text.

While there is diversity in the approaches to digital literacy discussed, from elementary students to higher education to faculty to non-academic staff, all of the chapters are from a U.K. perspective. The text assumes familiarity with the structure and language of U.K. educational institutions, and while the content is still applicable to a Canadian and/or American audience, it does not provide a broader international perspective. Furthermore, throughout the book, there is little discussion of lack of access to a computer or the internet, and the role access plays in conversations about digital literacy. From an American

perspective, this is a large gap in the discussion; readers from areas with less technology penetration may find this to be a significant limitation.

The target audience seems to be primarily librarians, but I would argue that this book might be useful to those outside the discipline as well. With the emphasis on collaboration and relationship building, instructors could read and benefit from some of the case studies included and find willing partners in their libraries. Additionally, several of the chapters could provide inspiration for anyone seeking to increase digital literacy in their workplace.

This compilation of writings on digital literacy has something for everyone, but it is unlikely that everyone will want everything in this book. Editors Katherine Reedy and Jo Parker acknowledge this, stating that the “book is intended to be used flexibly according to need” (p. xxvii). It covers a lot of ground, but does not have much holding it together, thus I believe most readers will find more value in seeking out the chapters that are most relevant to them and their work.

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