



Conversations into images – participants at the 2015 digital literacies seminar in Melbourne.

A DIGITAL LITERACIES COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR AUSTRALIA

What does digital literacy mean and why does it matter? Everyone can answer these questions from their own experience and from the concepts of digital literacies that they carry into their professional practice. **FIONA SALISBURY, MICHAEL ARNDELL and KIM LEWIN** tell us more.

For librarians, educators and other professionals across a wide range of sectors, it seems as if there is hardly a minute in the working day where our practice is not being touched by digital technologies and issues. It's therefore essential that we keep asking ourselves how we can best respond to changes in the digital environment. Unfortunately, there is no one answer to digital challenges and opportunities. We need a broad range of capabilities to stay abreast of how different domains of knowledge are discovered, created, managed, valued and communicated in the digital world. Even more importantly, we need opportunities to discuss ideas and to imagine our digital future and how we are going to participate and thrive in that future.

In 2015 the library at La Trobe University (LTU) led a project to take the digital literacies agenda forward through the development of a Digital Literacies

Framework for the university. Discussion of digital issues and the questions prompted by these issues were fundamental to the project and, unsurprisingly, no-one tired of talking about them. At the end of 2015, the discussion was broadened to include other institutions by hosting a digital literacies seminar in Melbourne. Helen Beetham, a UK expert in digital literacies (and the project consultant for LTU), was the guest speaker at the seminar, and she facilitated discussion with participants from 20 institutions across Australia. Everyone enthusiastically debated the required digital attributes and practices of university staff and students. Conversations were then translated into images, and one of the most common elements of these pictures was that staff and students need to be 'purposeful and discriminating' in how they use technology to achieve their goals.

Digital literacies were also discussed across Australia at the well-attended and successful webinar on digital literacies hosted by the Council of Australian University Librarians Learning and Teaching Advisory Committee in 2015. As a result of these two separate events, participants started to consider the value of continuing conversations about digital literacies across institutions. We discussed the need to build a digital literacies community of practice (CoP) in Australia and explored whether there was interest in evolving the seminar and webinar into a sustainable community of practice around digital literacies. There was enthusiasm for the idea among those participants from 2015 and in our institutions.

The new digital literacies CoP for Australia is a space for sharing and discussing digital issues. It picks up from where we left off in 2015. Our digital literacies CoP is for librarians, educators and professionals from all sectors who are interested in discussing digital literacies. The aim of this CoP is to build a self-sustaining community of practice that includes digital practitioners from a range of professional settings. The discussions enabled by this CoP will create connections across different areas of professional practice and open up opportunities for collaboration across educational sectors. Our CoP will




Students working collaboratively on an assignment with digital literacies.

create a space for practitioners to collaborate, share and brainstorm issues and initiatives around digital literacies and in doing so will promote lifelong learning in our institutions and workplaces.

At the centre of the Australian digital literacies CoP is the Digital Literacies Australia blog and a webinar series. The webinar series includes a range of speakers from across Australia and internationally. To find out

about upcoming webinars, visit the Digital Literacies Australia blog at dlaustralia.wordpress.com. Comments and questions about webinar topics can be posted on the blog, and these will be followed up as needed during the relevant webinar. You can also follow the ongoing digital literacies discussion on Twitter using the hashtag #DLAustralia.

Digital practice is constantly evolving, and regardless of the type of workplace, librarians and other digital practitioners have digital issues in common around culture, personal and professional development, technology and resourcing. The new Digital Literacies CoP for Australia is a space where practitioners can discuss and share views about these common issues. 

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