5 Things: Learning about Digital Reading

THE SERIES
The resources recommended in this series are intended to be eclectic and thought-provoking. They may be journal articles, blog posts, podcasts, interviews, reports, or just about anything else that we think is important to read, watch, or hear about this topic. For the general concept, this series is deeply indebted to the EDUCAUSE “7 Things You Should Know About...” reports.

THE TOPIC
Students read on screen all the time. They engage in a lot of browsing and scrolling. As fast-paced skimming becomes the new norm in reading, students spend less time on in-depth, concentrated reading (Liu 2005; Liu and Huang 2016; Wolf 2018). Researchers have cautioned the impact such reading behavior has on the deep reading processes—including inference, critical analysis, reflection, and empathy (Greenfield 2009). Studies have noted the decrease in students’ comprehension capacities when reading on-screen. A study of fifth and sixth graders in Israel (Dahan Golan, Barzillai, and Katzir 2018) showed that students performed better on paper than on screen. The meta-analysis of reading comprehension research between 2000 and 2017 by Delgado et al (2018) also confirmed that paper-based reading yields greater comprehension results than digital-based reading. Furthermore, the advantage of paper-based reading has increased over the years since 2000. However, as Ackerman and Lauterman (2012) observed in their study, students often equated fast reading with understanding and better performance. The wealth of research underscores the need for “a new literacy for the digital age” (Wolf 2018). Recent discussions have focused on the implications of teaching and how to better guide and support students in their digital reading. The five sources presented here are a sampling of these conversations, ranging from teaching strategies to information evaluation through lateral reading.


This podcast highlights ways current practices of teaching how to read digitally are detrimental to students, including the stereotype that students have an innate understanding of technology compared to older generations. Lauren Trakhman and Patricia Alexander, both professors in the College of Education at the University of Maryland, have been researching underlying reading comprehension methods. Some of their early studies indicated that while students found reading digitally easier and faster, their comprehension was lower compared to reading in print. In the podcast, Trakhman and Alexander discuss some of the theories related to how and why students treat reading digitally differently, ranging from the concept of scrolling through digital materials, to the theory of the intimacy in the physical act of bedtime reading. They also offer suggestions for improving reading comprehension, such as modeling best reading behavior to students and having students annotate their readings.

This book provides a thorough overview of the importance of and strategies for teaching digital reading to students. In the Introduction, Cohn argues for educators to understand the nature of digital reading and to be adaptable in their teaching. She provides context about student reading experiences and student use of digital devices. Throughout this discussion, she approaches students through asset-based learning, encouraging instructors to view students’ digital reading experiences as an opportunity to teach them about personal learning choices and empowerment. The book is divided into three sections. The first section further contextualizes the rationale for exploring digital reading through the different lenses of history, neuroscience, and learning science. The second section introduces and provides strategies for teaching digital reading through the Digital Reading Framework. The final section examines ethical considerations of digital reading like archiving and privacy. Although the book’s audience is primarily academic course instructors, librarians can easily translate the challenges and strategies that Cohn proposes to their own teaching practices.

Approximate reading time: Introduction, 45 minutes


Drawing on prior literature, this article provides a taxonomy of skills, knowledge, and awareness necessary for effective digital reading. It asserts that students need: (1) basic critical information skills, like selecting, integrating and evaluating texts; (2) linear and deep reading strategies, like drawing inferences, constructing complex arguments, and making connections to their own experiences; and (3) multimodal semiotic awareness, in other words, being able to extract meaning from pictures, videos, and audio that are included in digital texts. The article further recommends ways that teachers can support students in developing the skill, knowledge, and awareness sets. For example, teachers can help students build deep reading strategies by teaching students to ask critical questions and to question and verify the reliability of assertions through cross-referencing with other texts. Similarly, they can raise students’ multimodal semiotic awareness by teaching students to recognize semiotic choices made in text and to understand the purposes of those choices.

Approximate reading time: 20 minutes

This chapter explores design and implementation of a scaffolded web source evaluation instruction tutorial piloted in fall 2020 to teach lateral reading and critical reading strategies to undergraduate students. The tutorial begins with a pre-activity to test student’s initial level of understanding before diving into key concepts including click restraint and SIFT. Modeling concepts and practices occur throughout via written instruction and video demonstrations. Toward the end of the tutorial, students have opportunities to practice their new skills, provide feedback, and reflect. Preliminary results from the pilot indicate that students begin to engage with lateral reading following the completion of the tutorial. Additionally, the chapter shares best practices and recommendations for future pedagogical approaches including scaffolding learning experiences to support lateral reading; encouraging metacognition; moving beyond checklist approaches into more critical thinking; and reducing content shared in order to avoid overwhelming students.

Approximate reading time: 30 minutes

https://libguides.rowan.edu/EvaluatingOnlineSources/closer_reading

This lateral reading toolkit from Rowan University provides guidelines and evidence-based evaluation strategies for determining a source’s credibility and reliability. It focuses on lateral reading, commonly known as SIFT. This evaluation strategy emphasizes the use of other internet sources to learn about the reputation of the original website, find other sources of the same information, and trace the information back to its original source. Also included in the toolkit are lesson plans for instructors, along with student activities to practice newly introduced skills.

Approximate interaction time: 60 minutes
WORKS CITED


This publication was compiled and created in Spring 2023 by members of the 2022-2023 ACRL Instruction Section Research and Scholarship Committee: Natalia Estrada, Holly Herndon, Elena Soltau, April Schweikhard, Jessica Szempruch, and Lijuan Xu.

If you have comments or questions about the “5 Things” publications, please contact the current IS Research and Scholarship Committee Chair: http://www.alaa.org/acrl/is/acr-insressch.