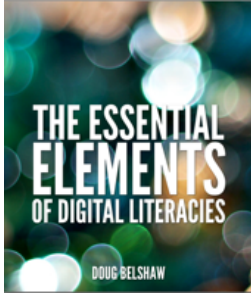


Professionalism in the Digital Environment (PriDE)

A JISC-funded Digital Literacies Project

Making sense of the 8 Elements of Digital Literacy

Posted on [October 1, 2012](#) by [iPodcaster](#)



Over the past few months the Pride Project Team have been exploring how we might make use of Doug Belshaw's framework for understanding digital literacies (outlined in his book [The Essential Elements of Digital Literacies](#) and in his [Ed.D thesis](#)). Following the excellent work undertaken by our researchers Jo and Charlotte in mapping the discipline-specific statements of graduate skills, attributes and practices to the 8 elements outlined in Doug's book, we are now beginning to delve deeper into what these elements might mean for students at the University of Bath. One output from this work will be the creation of a diagnostic skills survey where students are able to self-assess their digital literacies and be given guidance as to the options and pathways available to them to develop their skills, attributes and practices.

We have assumed that a 'digitally literate' individual is someone who has a good balance of the 8 elements in terms of their digital skills, attributes, practices and identity. At the same time we recognise, following Belshaw, that these elements are *contextual*, that is, they depend on the personal, social and cultural context within which they develop. In the case of the PriDE project the primary focus in terms of context for students is the disciplines and faculties that they belong to.

Thus, different disciplines may place a greater or lesser emphasis on certain elements (a useful analogy might be the baking of a cake by different people with the same ingredients but used in different amounts). When we analysed and coded discipline specific definitions of DL and attributes from the Faculty Learning Communities, for example, there was a greater emphasis on the Civic element in Humanities and Social Sciences, while the School of Management had a higher percentage of the Creative element compared to other faculties.

While all graduate students will be expected to have core skills, attributes and identities, discipline-specific literacies will build upon these core elements. They provide a foundation on which more subject/discipline-specific and contextual literacies can flourish.

What might these elements look like from the point of view of students looking to recognise and develop their digital literacies? The following is adapted from Belshaw 2011:

CULTURAL

Developing my cultural component of digital literacy involves being able to move easily between different digital environments and use them to distinguish between using Facebook for my social life and using it for my academic course. I am also aware of the impact of my use of learning technologies on my use of learning technologies.

COGNITIVE

I need to master the 'how-to's' of digital literacies that are important for my development as a graduate, including those which are specific to my subject and how these might be used by engaging with a wide range of operating

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as that I am able to move easily between different varieties of different contexts. For example I know how to use social connections, and using it for my academic course. I am also aware of the impact of my use of learning technologies on my use of learning technologies.

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systems, platforms, devices and software and looking for developmental and training opportunities that expose me to these tools.

CONSTRUCTIVE

To develop the Constructive element I need to understand and demonstrate how to take existing resources and content and re-use/remix it to create something new that benefits my learning. I also need to show awareness of the different ways I can license resources so that others can benefit from the content that I create.

COMMUNICATIVE

I need to understand the importance of networks and communication and the important role they play in developing my digital literacy. This includes understanding the many different ways I can communicate with different devices, including mobile and other digital devices. I also need to develop an understanding of the particular norms, values, protocols and ethics that are appropriate to social networking and other web 2.0 technologies.

CONFIDENT

To be a confident user of digital technologies I need to understand and capitalise upon the differences between the analogue and digital worlds. I need to assess and review my own competence with digital technologies, manage my own digital personal learning environment, and develop a community of practice to help me progress my skills and attributes.

CREATIVE

To develop my Creative element I will use digital technologies to create new things which have value to myself and others. I need to be prepared to take risks and to value randomness and discovery when engaging with digital technologies. I will develop an understanding of the processes, procedures and systems that lie behind digital technologies rather than the specific elements of software/hardware involved.

CRITICAL

I need to be a critical user of digital technologies by becoming aware of the power structures and assumptions behind different digital tools and practices. For example I need to think about my audience and how they might interpret my digital texts in different ways. I also need to develop an understanding of online security, identity and data management in my own literacy practices.

CIVIC

I need to make use of digital technologies in order to prepare myself to participate as fully as possible in society. I will develop an awareness of how my digital environment can help me self-organise and foster links with local, national and global organisations. I will look for opportunities for public engagement, global citizenship and the enhancement of democracy through my use of digital technologies.

Reference:

Doug Belshaw (2011) *The Essential Elements of Digital Literacies*. Available from <http://doubelshaw.com/ebooks/digilit/> under a CC BY license.

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Goodbye!

Posted on [July 10, 2012](#) by [charlottemtucker](#)

This journey has certainly been a fast one! Jo and I have sped through the different stages of the project at high speed, having to make quick decisions with confidence at every turn. A point in fact though, is that this

method has provided us with a project that was not held back or hindered at any point. In fact, I am convinced that had we spent hours jointly discussing the pros and cons of each move, we would have, without a doubt, made the same final decisions that we made in reality.

I am incredibly proud of the work that we have done and feel that its grounding in theory from Doug Belshaw's 8 elements of digital literacies have underpinned our project. These 8 elements were at first a little difficult to understand coming to the project in our first week with no prior knowledge of what the project was about or which direction we should take, but as soon as we took them away to apply to our data, the mist cleared. I have to say that our colour coding method to identify each element in our raw data was extremely successful and having spent so much time working with the statements, could talk about our pie charts without even having a colour index to hand. Even though we made the quick decision to assign colours to elements, whenever I now see the word confidence it is blue, the word creative it is purple, the word culture it is red....well, I think you get the picture.

This time I can finally tell you about how my final mapping of our data onto the SCONUL framework turned out. After completing Humanities and Social Sciences and Science, I began to see definite patterns in the kind of statements that did not only quite fit into the model, but also with those that could not fit in at all. The same types of statements were appearing across all of the faculties- for one, this was a sure sign that even though we were using a different lens to look at the data than Doug's 8 elements, there were certain aspects of digital literacies that all FLCs expected. Secondly though, and most interestingly, it was possible to group at least some of these gaps in the framework to fit Doug's 8 elements- unfortunately, the other remaining statements were at times quite specific. Nonetheless, at least for SCONUL, this draft framework could definitely benefit from our findings.

The fact that similar projects have been developing in other Universities around the UK has been incredibly exciting and the idea that our work could actually have an impact somewhere has certainly been a drive. Being part of this project has actually improved *my* digital literacies- I had never heard of a wiki before or posted a blog. I am really looking forward to learning how this project moves forward and following the rest of its journey: keep blogging! All the best!

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And, it's good-bye from me...

Posted on [July 9, 2012](#) by [jilli7m5](#)

Wow, what a roller-coaster of a month we've had!

From the up-hill challenge of the literature review and absorbing ourselves with the data, to the high-speed adrenaline free-fall application of Doug Belshaw's fantastic 8 element conceptual model, to the loop-the loop of colour coding, pie-chart building, frequency chart analysis, teasing out institutional and faculty patterns, and then finally to the considered mapping of our pyramid data to SCONUL and VITAE competency frameworks as a grounding moment with our feet well and truly back on firm soil again.

The highlight? It must be the success of applying the 8 Element model to our data for analysis – outcomes of which have already been shared in the research community, and will continue to be, as the results of our analysis are rolled-out over the summer and beyond. The challenges? Well, nothing more than any piece of analysis work – knowing limitations, applying these to our outcomes.

This short-term piece of analysis has been a bit like doing 'extreme research'. Not being tied to the rigor of pure academic research, we have been able, and at times it has been necessary, to make quick decisions, run

with ideas, take ‘what feels’ like the best approach. Obviously there are drawbacks to a lack of grounding in pure research, however the freedoms allowed in this alternative institutional research approach have resulted in some rather creative, insightful and innovative work to be done.

So, its goodbye from me for now. It’s been great working with PriDE on this very exciting project. I wish the team all the very best, and I look forward to keeping in touch with progress as it develops into the Autumn and Winter. Good luck too, to all the other Digital Literacy projects around the UK...it feels great to have been part of this UK-wide movement – thanks for having me, it’s been a blast!

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