

Current Issues and Research in Digital Literacies and Disabilities

As we expand our educational efforts into the realms of digital literacies, it is critical that we do not unintentionally exclude any group of students. Although gaps in access to technology have historically been delineated by economic class and race, people with disabilities have become an increasingly larger constituent of the digital divide in recent years (Kim, 2005; Lenhart, 2005). For students with disabilities (particularly text-access disabilities like dyslexia and blindness), new computer-based approaches in reading and writing education could be inaccessible. The same computer technologies, however, could also be a rich means of engaging such students in literary activities, particularly if we utilize any technologies they already use (Gomez et al, 2004). However, what digital literacies these students already engage in is an open question at this time (Deibel, 2006).

This thread will be a discussion at the intersection of computers, reading, and writing and students with disabilities. Current knowledge and practices will be included, as well as conversations concerning next steps in research. Participants are highly encouraged to discuss their own research or teaching experiences on this topic.

References:

Deibel, K. (2006). Understanding and Supporting the use of Accommodating Technologies by Adult Learners with Reading Disabilities. *SIGACCESS Accessible Computing*.(86), 32–35.

Gomez, M. L., Stone, J. C., & Hobbel, N. (2004). Textual Tactics of Identity. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*.

Kim, K. (2005). Challenges in HCI: The digital divide. *Crossroads: The ACM Student Magazine*, 12(2), 3–7.

Lenhart, A. (2005). *The Ever-Shifting Internet Population: A New Look at Internet Access and the Digital Divide*. Washington DC, USA: Pew Internet and American Life Project. (Available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/reports_archive.asp)