

Chapter 16

Methods and Strategies in Using Digital Literacy in Media and the Arts

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ABSTRACT

The marriage of media and the arts has been a long and fruitful one, and the advent of digital resources has changed the face of these disciplines immeasurably. Digital literacy has gone from a virtually non-existent entity to an incredibly useful, and sometimes absolutely essential, skill set. In various settings, it has changed the way artists both inside and outside the digital realm work, collaborate, teach and train educators.

INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Problems have always faced those involved in the arts. Some issues have merely persisted, and some have gotten worse in today's environment. The pressures on those involved in the production of all types of media and training those interested in the same have increased, and a myriad of issues has piled heightened challenges onto an already beleaguered field.

The problem that has had the most impact has been the decrease of (or elimination of) financial resources. Administrators and legislators continue to cut funding for the arts across the board. These cuts present obstacles for those directly involved in production, education, and other related activities. As resources dwindle, students are increasingly pressured, both financially and in terms of time constraints, as they take on more of the burden through work to support their education and artistic activities.

As a result, distance also becomes a more pressing issue. With less time for study and face-to-face contact, educators struggle with the task of maintaining quality in the classroom. Geography (combined with the financial issues) presents challenges for those wishing to study with musicians and artists who are prominent in their field, and educators search for ways to reach out to students who have less and less time during traditional working hours to maintain productive contact. Collaborators are increasingly

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3417-4.ch016

called upon to work on numerous projects with people in different regions, making the completion of work difficult, and in some cases, nearly impossible.

As these problems are addressed, the needs and processes of those involved in teacher training are, in turn, transformed in increasingly rapid ways. Simply keeping up with these creates problems and challenges that face those in our field.

The advent of digital resources has changed the face of media and the arts immeasurably. Digital literacy has gone from a virtually non-existent entity to an incredibly useful, and sometimes absolutely essential, part of the skill set. In various settings, it has changed the way musicians and artists work, collaborate, teach and train educators.

Numerous tools harnessing distance-based collaboration and learning have enhanced the creation and analysis of works, and these serve as a model in the classroom for students and teachers alike. Other advances, such as distance learning in music and the arts—previously dismissed as impossible—are now widespread, enabling educators to reach students across the globe. Informed by technological tools for collaboration, various methods of one-on-one instruction are increasingly becoming common in music and arts education. From the perspective of teacher training, this requires knowledge of a different mode of learning enhanced through technological tools. Teacher training for such digital literacy requires thinking outside a box previously governed by archetypes centered on traditional modes of learning.

These tools can also enhance the realization of curricular goals and student learning outcomes as they relate to media and the arts. The inclusion of digital literacy has led to new and exciting opportunities for students to author their own curricula, establish broader networks, collaborate, and display their work through electronic portfolios and other means.

Those involved in event planning, curating, organization of performance groups and institutions and fundraising for the arts are now finding social networking an essential part of their skill set; even the dissemination of works involves digital media on an unprecedented scale. Even the very definition of what constitutes a “performance” has been reconsidered, with the advent of simulcasts of artistic events and exhibits, as well as interactive participation in virtual performances.

The methodology and examples of the above are discussed. Specific applications and tools are included, although the focus will be on the manner in which these are implemented. One of the goals of the chapter is to enable educators and those who train educators to utilize the strategies, regardless of the changes to specific applications, resources and platforms.

What follows focuses on various media, both within the digital realm and in the more traditional paradigm. The applications, techniques and websites listed below are merely mentioned as examples; due to the nature of technology, they quickly become obsolete. The examples also favor resources that are free or inexpensive, as the aforementioned financial restraints in these disciplines continue to preclude more expensive technology. This chapter is designed to give the reader ideas as to how to utilize such tools in various situations. Even those outside the specific disciplines will find that the examples discussed can be easily applied to other disciplines. It is the hope of the author that the reader will borrow, modify and/or adapt the strategies herein.

As such, this chapter is intended for a wide range of educators and professionals. Certain concepts and terms that might be obvious to the specialist in these areas are briefly defined so as to make the subjects more accessible to those in different or tangentially related disciplines.

It is important to note that when best practices are applied, clear goals exist for the application of technology; that is, the technology enhances pedagogy, it does not replace it; nor is technology being

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