Chapter 8
University Libraries are Supporters of Digital Literacy in Universities:
An Analysis Study Through University Rankings

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ABSTRACT

Developments in information technology and internet technology are also shaping the educational needs and expectations of new generations. Therefore, digital literacy, defined as "the ability to understand and use information from various sources in multiple formats" (Gilster, 1997), has become a fundamental part of higher education. This is because higher education institutions have the responsibility to teach, present, ensure understanding, and promote the use of information. In this regard, digital literacy has facilitated a transition to a new model based on computers and technology in universities, leading to a transformation of traditional education (Mavutha & Mabotja, 2024). Digital literacy in universities has positive effects on education, research, and employment. University libraries have the capacity and leadership strength to best support digital literacy in collaboration with other units through their available resources. Therefore, in this section, the impact of university libraries on digital literacy is examined through THE World University Rankings.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology encourages universities to adopt new teaching methods and to facilitate learning through modern technological means. In this context, digital competencies have made it mandatory to know DL, defined as the ability to find, understand, use, manage, evaluate, and communicate information in digital formats across all fields in today's world (Levine-Clark & Dean, 2013). DL encompasses not only finding, understanding, and using computer-based resources but also enables individuals to benefit from the new opportunities offered by the Internet while simultaneously protecting their privacy, security, and autonomy (Greene & Crompton, 2024; Kammer, Cherner & Hays, 2021). Supporting this, Buckingham (2015) states that DL includes a specific set of skills. This skill set allows individuals to work effectively with software tools or to perform basic information-gathering tasks, extending beyond effectively using a computer or conducting online searches; it encompasses the searching, finding, transforming, disseminating, and using information in digital environments in an effective, efficient, and ethically compliant manner (Green, 2020; Koltay, 2011)

Bond et al. (2020) suggest that DL is a skill that comprises a combination of technologies, attitudes, and capabilities. As can be understood from all definitions, DL has three fundamental dimensions: using, understanding, and creating. When these three fundamental dimensions of DL are elaborated, it is observed that they also include skills such as understanding the relationships between digital information, establishing connections between information, testing the reliability of information, evaluating its validity and purpose, as well as digital competence (Martínez-Bravo, Chalezquer & Serrano-Puche, 2022). Curtarelli et al. (2016) identify three main categories of digital skills for assessing or developing digital competence: basic DL skills, workplace IT skills including ICT applications, and advanced ICT professions requiring innovative and creative digital skills.

Due to advancements in telecommunications and informatics, the transition from the electronic age to the digital age was completed in the late 1980s (Odubiyi, Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2021). Consequently, since then, the global utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has significantly increased, with computers assuming an integral role in various aspects of life.

Today, they are intensively present in educational institutions, workplaces, public service areas, and homes. This situation has led individuals to realize that knowing how to use computers and other digital tools is an important life skill necessary for effectively benefiting from and providing digital services as a worker (Asamoah–Hassan, 2022). With the proliferation of the internet in the 1990s, the importance of digital skills has increased. Meridha (2024) noted in his research that 14.58% of the seven articles he examined highlighted that deficiencies in DL directly affect career,