

CE Written Reflection Digital Skills: eBook Edition
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What was the inspiration for the project?

Digital Skills: eBook Edition is a project born out of a shared interest in ebooks and the impression that eBook resources in the Twin Cities were abundant but underutilized. For many members of our communities eBooks offer an efficient, affordable, and versatile way to access information and learning. Libraries are continually developing eBook collections that give patrons access to a wide range of free texts in digital form and many works are available at no cost through web-based resources like Project Gutenberg. In many cases, even purchasing eBooks and using them on an existing device can be a less expensive way to read than buying print copies. Digital versions can be manipulated for easier reading by adjusting font sizes and built-in dictionaries or translation functions can make reading more accessible to language learners. In order to access eBooks via any of these resources (libraries, Project Gutenberg, Amazon, etc.) readers need a set of critical digital skills to create accounts and navigate various platforms

What were you able to accomplish?

Together we learned about eBooks and the sources locally and universally that connect readers and digital texts, and we documented what we learned on our website, readebooksmn.wordpress.com. We began to understand that the complexities of accessing different collections and formats via your local library system meant that it took many steps and often a bit of research to get ahold of the desired text. With this in mind, our project outlined information in a digestible format to familiarize new ebook readers with the landscape of free and for-purchase digital texts.

Website:

- Listed links to video tutorials for Android, iPhone/iPad, and Kindle devices for Ramsey County Library, Hennepin County Library, and St. Paul Public Library.
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- Links to read library books on a Kindle reader. Links to read Amazon eBooks on the Kindle Application.

Handouts:

- Guide to eBook formats
- eBook FAQ
- Read the New York Times for free as a Hennepin County Library patron

As we designed our website and learning guides, we heard about experiences from ABE educators who leverage ebooks in their classrooms and from others who struggle to use eBook resources. Connecting with ABE teachers highlighted the value of eBooks as a tool for English language learners, and helped us to understand the barriers to using ebook resources available through local libraries. We designed our resources to be navigational tools for educators as they explore the many options for accessing digital texts. Our focus on libraries and free ebooks stemmed from the recognition that low-income and teen readers, especially in the suburbs where transportation can be very challenging, are situated to benefit most from no-cost resources.

Project achieved goals? Why or why not? Stumbling blocks? How did we overcome?

As events surrounding COVID-19 unfolded this spring, we found new meaning in our project. Although we were unable to deploy our original plans for community engagement, which centered on a physical presence at large community events during the summer, COVID-19 reinforced the value of being able to access and read long-form digital content from home. Since eBooks don't require a trip to the library or bookstore, they allow readers to self-isolate while still being connected to the books they want to read.

One goal for our project that we set out to accomplish was for the workshop aspect of this project to act as an experimental classroom. We had hoped that the workshops and tabling events would provide feedback and evaluation of the guide, the videos and the downloadable resource guides that are listed on our website as they pertain to those we planned to serve that may need additional in person support.

Lora's investigative inquiries that she intended to explore through in class workshops in Adult Basic Education classes were as follows:

1. What are common challenges and downfalls that inhibit the populations our project intended to serve from using edigital books and resources?

2. What language, computer and digital literacy terms and vocabulary is needed for non-native English language learners to successfully use the English only guides and videos?
3. What prior knowledge or experience would most effectively bridge these gaps in prior knowledge in both language and device usage?
4. What prior digital literacy skills could teachers introduce before this lesson that could build upon English language learners prior digital literacy skills (majority of English language learners have smartphones and use this as their main digital device and have skills that we can activate and build upon as well as computer experiences from their native country).
5. What additional support could be needed for teachers to teach this as a hands-on lesson in an in person classroom?

Unfortunately due to COVID 19 all classrooms were moved to remote instruction this limitation made this investigative research less attainable in an online only classroom. This goal was not achieved and could be explored and expounded upon if this project was continued.

Jeff considered asking the community to share video or audio recordings regarding favorite books but this seemed less relevant after George Floyd's murder so this part of our project was not started.

Opportunities to continue the project in the future?

- Website will be up indefinitely. Future CTEP members can continue to share handouts as resources at their sites.

What did we learn about Civic Engagement?

- There will always be unexpected events outside our control.
- Organize a project with various delivery models. We were able to emphasize the online component of our project after COVID.
- The importance of conducting informational interviews with professionals in the fields you want to engage in and provide innovative additions to. We spoke with librarians and technology specialists and received valuable feedback that guided us to refocus and recalibrate our project to minimize possible downfalls.
- Large organizations often have structured volunteer opportunities. At least one of the library systems we talked to asked us to use their existing volunteer programs rather than create a new project. This makes sense as library systems often have limited staff time and budgets. It can be more efficient to organize

large, structured volunteer programs. Regulatory requirements can make it impractical to ensure smaller, less structured projects follow mandated guidelines.

- Sometimes setbacks can teach us important lessons.

Pictures

Twin Cities eBooks

Twin Cities eBooks

A. Library eBooks

The Twin Cities libraries offer a large collection of free eBooks. Here are some links to help you based on your library system.

1. Ramsey County Library

Link to eBook Resources <https://www.rclreads.org/e-books-e-audiobooks-e-magazines/>

Here's a video tutorial <https://my.nicheacademy.com/rclreads/course/1301>

If you can't remember your Library Pin, you may be able to get help with Ask A Librarian here <https://www.rclreads.org/ask-a-librarian/>

2. Hennepin County Library

When you click on the link below, scroll down to Online Resources and click eBooks and Downloads.

A screenshot from our website readebooksmn.wordpress.com

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A handout about the different eBook file types.

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Where can I find eBooks?

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