Digital Citizenship, Digital Legacy, and School Librarians

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School librarians have often been seen as obvious choices for educating children and teens about information literacy. Digital citizenship and digital literacy are one component of the larger topic of information literacy. Much of the literature about digital citizenship as a type of information literacy is highlighted in practitioner articles that emphasize inclusion of the topic as part of technology or media literacy curricula (Greenhow 2010; Hollandsworth, Donovan, and Welch 2017). As many school librarians are wearing the dual hats of school librarianship and technology facilitators in their schools, the decision that they will be teaching about digital citizenship is not unexpected.

As more attention is being paid to the issue of false and misleading information in social media and news reporting, the emphasis on information literacy, and specifically digital citizenship, has increased. In July 2019, Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced a Senate bill to address the issue: Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy Act (S. 2240, 116th Cong. (2019)). The companion bill was introduced by Representative Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) in the House in October 2019 (Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy Act, H.R. 4668, 116th Cong. (2019)). The two bills would provide grants totaling $20 million to help schools develop digital citizenship and media literacy curricula and education for grades K–12. In the press release about the bill, Senator Klobuchar's office emphasized, "This bill will help teachers across the United States develop curricula and pedagogical tools that will boost our population's digital literacy to a high level. We must become a digitally literate nation" (US Senator Amy Klobuchar 2019).

Digital legacy is an especially difficult topic to introduce to school-age children. Digital legacy is what a person leaves behind in the digital world after their death. Instead of discussing the very difficult topic of death with young children and teens, most digital citizenship and literacy curricula instead focus on digital footprints and the importance of understanding the permanence of sharing information in the online environment. This chapter examines the role of the school librarian in digital literacy and citizenship education as well as the content included in that curriculum. Additionally, the chapter provides ideas for appropriate inclusion of digital legacy topics for different ages.

Role of the School Librarian in Digital Literacy and Citizenship Education

The role of school librarians in digital literacy and citizenship education might seem obvious to school librarians; however, it isn't always obvious to legislators when legislation on digital citizenship education is proposed. In many states where legislation has been adopted, school librarians are left out of the conversation. Those laws mention the development of curriculum by districts and classroom instruction but fail to include school librarians who are literacy experts. One of the few exceptions to this is a law passed in the state of Washington in 2015, which specifically lists digital citizenship as one role of the school librarian (K–12 Education—Library Information and Technology Programs, Washington State Laws of 2015, ch. 27).

Confusion and uncertainty remain about the role and responsibilities of school librarians in teaching about digital citizenship. In a recent study published in *School Library Research*, Phillips and Lee (2019) examined perceptions that Utah school librarians

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had about their role. The study was conducted after the state of Utah passed legislation mandating that K–12 schools provide digital citizenship instruction. The responses showed that the responsibility for planning digital citizenship instruction was often held by school librarians, the school's technology specialist, or a combination of school librarians and teachers. The researchers indicated they were surprised that almost 13 percent of survey participants indicated that someone other than those professionals was responsible for planning the instruction and explained that the open-ended responses to that question indicated uncertainty: school librarians didn't know who provided the instruction, didn't know who had responsibility, or were even unaware of the state mandate for digital citizenship instruction. Another interesting finding from the survey was that school librarians believed that digital citizenship instruction should be collaboratively taught by school librarians and classroom teachers.

Many states are proposing legislation that requires digital citizenship or at the minimum media literacy instruction for K–12 students. Media Literacy Now, a national advocacy organization for media literacy education policy, advocates for and tracks media literacy and digital citizenship education policy initiatives at both the state and national levels. Its website provides detailed state-by-state information about proposed legislation that could impact curriculum and teaching initiatives. School librarians can use the site to track proposed bills in their own states and nationwide.

Media Literacy Now: Your State Legislation
https://medialiteracynow.org/your-state-legislation

Digital Citizenship Instruction Today—Standards

Digital citizenship and literacy are topics that are included in the most recent developments in student learning standards that are being used by school librarians for their instruction. The curriculum and standards that school librarians use are sometimes determined by what districts or states require. However, school librarians sometimes can make a personal decision about which curriculum and standards they wish to use. The American Association of School Librarians released its newest standards in 2018—*The National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* (AASL 2018). The competencies for learners and school librarians address digital citizenship and digital literacy within the Engage foundation. The emphasis in this set of standards is on engaging with sources and technology

in an ethical manner. In preparing school librarians for practice, Standard 3 of the new *School Librarian Preparation Standards* requires school librarians to be able to "foster the development of ethical digital citizens" (AASL 2019, 10).

Some school librarians opt to follow the Future Ready Librarian Framework. Digital citizenship is addressed specifically under the Personalized Professional Learning gear, which encourages the development of skills that "comprise success in a digital age" (Alliance for Excellent Education 2018). The gear goes on to mention digital citizenship as an example of one of the skills that is necessary for that success. The Data and Privacy gear addresses additional areas of digital literacy, including teaching and promoting student privacy.

The standards that most explicitly address digital literacy and citizenship are from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Some school librarians are using the *ISTE Standards for Students* in developing their curriculum. Standard 2 is titled Digital Citizen and includes four subcomponents:

> 2—Digital Citizen—Students recognize the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of living, learning and working in an interconnected digital world, and they act and model in ways that are safe, legal and ethical.
>
> 2a—Students cultivate and manage their digital identity and reputation and are aware of the permanence of their actions in the digital world.
>
> 2b—Students engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behavior when using technology, including social interactions online or when using networked devices.
>
> 2c—Students demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.
>
> 2d—Students manage their personal data to maintain digital privacy and security and are aware of data-collection technology used to track their navigation online. (ISTE 2016)

Omission of Digital Legacy in Standards and Curriculum

Unfortunately, in most of these sets of standards, digital legacy is omitted. Only ISTE's standards obliquely refer to digital legacy in 2a, "permanence of their actions in

the digital world" (ISTE 2016). All of these standards address digital citizenship and include in their commentary discussion of ethics, media literacy, and safety. Some even go so far as to specifically mention a digital footprint or a student's online digital identity. However, the two are not the same. Digital legacy is more than just a digital footprint. A person's digital legacy is what a person leaves behind in the digital realm after their death. This is not something educators are comfortable in discussing with children of any age.

Digital legacy continues to be omitted in digital citizenship instruction and even in discussion of the elements of digital citizenship. Ribble's Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship were introduced in 2017 and adopted by many schools; however, the updated version released in 2019 continues to leave out digital legacy. The Nine Elements are as follows:

- **Digital Access:** The equitable distribution of technology and online resources.
- **Digital Commerce:** The electronic buying and selling of goods in the digital space.
- **Digital Communication and Collaboration:** The electronic exchange of information.
- **Digital Etiquette:** Electronic standards of conduct or procedures when using digital devices.
- **Digital Fluency:** Understanding technology and its use.
- **Digital Health and Welfare:** Physical and psychological well-being in a digital world.
- **Digital Law:** The electronic responsibility for actions and deeds in the online world.
- **Digital Rights and Responsibility:** Requirements and freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world.
- **Digital Security and Privacy:** Electronic precautions to guarantee safety. (Ribble and Park 2019)

Digital legacy continues to be ignored by the K–12 world. Three commonly used resources on digital citizenship are InCtrl, Common Sense Education, and Be Internet Awesome. Unfortunately, they omit digital legacy and address only a student's digital footprint and its impact on future success and admission to college.

1. *InCtrl:* Videos and lessons on digital citizenship for grades 4–8; aligned with AASL and English standards; addresses digital footprint and privacy but does NOT address digital legacy.
2. *Common Sense Education:* Videos and lessons on digital citizenship for grades K–12; digital footprint introduced in the third grade but does NOT address digital legacy. High school curriculum looks at the impact of student social media posts on college admissions and building a brand.

3. *Be Internet Awesome from Google:* Lessons and an interactive game designed for second through sixth grades; aligned with AASL and ISTE standards; includes digital footprint (or presence) in lessons on privacy but does NOT address digital legacy.

Introducing Digital Legacy to Children

How can school librarians and other educators introduce the topic of digital legacy to students? Often educators are hesitant to address the subject of death and grief with children, especially those who are in elementary school. Depending on the age of children, digital legacy can be introduced as a component of digital citizenship. School librarians should build upon the topics of digital footprints, online identity, and privacy to discuss the permanence of information in the online world.

In elementary grades, children should be introduced to the ideas of protecting their privacy online and the permanence (or persistence) of what they share. While it might be distressing for young children to learn much about death, they do experience it in a variety of ways: the loss of a pet, a grandparent, a teacher, a friend, or even a parent. When these occasions occur, school librarians are often asked to find books and activities to help young children process their grief and understand death. This is the appropriate moment to talk with them about what happens online when someone passes away. Older elementary students (fourth to fifth grade) can be asked about obituaries and online memorial pages that are often created by funeral homes where people can post memories and condolences. This discussion could then be expanded into a talk about what happens to deceased loved ones' social media pages.

As they enter middle school, tweens and early teens are exploring their personal identity, often in

an online environment. Continued discussion of the impact of what they are sharing, the impact it has on their privacy and safety, and the potential for information they post to be accessed for the foreseeable future is extremely important. At this age, many children are creating their own social media accounts. School librarians should take this opportunity to talk about the terms of service and what they mean. Too often students (and really everyone of all ages) just TL;DR (too long; didn't read) and click to accept. A great activity to do with students is a comparison of the terms of service for multiple social media sites. Here is the chance to include digital legacy: What do the terms of service say about how accounts can be closed and what happens to data when an account holder dies? How easy is it to find this information?

Beginning in middle school, school librarians should take advantage of collaborations with guidance counselors and athletic coaches to further discuss how students' digital lives are used by admissions counselors and university level coaches in choosing which students are admitted to college or receive athletic scholarships. This will continue to build on earlier lessons on the digital footprint, privacy, and safety.

As students move into high school, school librarians can help them become better managers of their online presence and digital life. One great activity is to help students create a record of all of their online accounts and digital assets—social media, banking, digital tools, photo storage, streaming services, and so on. School librarians can provide students with a spreadsheet template to gather all of their online account information and lists of digital assets (cloud-stored media) in one location. Students should be encouraged to NOT keep this digital record in an online or cloud location. This digital record should include the digital account, username, password, what type of service this account provides, if it is fee-based or free, and a link to the sign-in page. Once students have brainstormed all of their online accounts, school librarians should take the opportunity to talk about closing (and possibly deleting) unused or outdated accounts. This is a perfect time to examine account policies about closing and deleting accounts when a person is deceased. They will find that many sites have little or no guidance about the process involved. Some of the big social media sites (Facebook, for example) now have guidelines about this process, but they often require a family member to request an account be closed and present a death certificate. An alternative to presenting a death certificate is to make sure that family members have access to all of our accounts. For teenagers, this may be a lot to ask. They wish to guard their privacy. However, school librarians can encourage them to look at a password management system that provides emergency access to designated individuals. Keeper Password Manager is one system that allows for emergency access (Keeper 2017). Keeper isn't free, but students can get a 50 percent discount on the annual fee, which currently runs $29.99.

Conclusion

The absence of digital legacy as part of the digital citizenship instruction in K–12 education is troubling. Understandably, educators are hesitant to discuss death and dying with children. However, it is vitally important that we expand on the topic of the digital footprint, privacy, and the enduring presence of our social media lives to include what happens to our digital life after we have died. The currently available standards and curricula need to be expanded to include this important aspect of digital literacy.

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