

Edited transcript: Richard Beach's discussant responses to Doug Belshaw's Invited Speaker presentation: LRA 2014 conference, Marco Island, Florida.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11Q4vohEevknk9x6sRt7uCFR7Z0k78YqBZ3F7vJe9I48/edit?usp=sharing>

As a discussant for this session organized by Ian and Gregg for the Area 10, let me first thank them for setting up this session because I think certainly the topic of web literacies is extremely important one for LRA members to consider. Understanding the nature of these web literacies is central to literacy research and we need for more research on this topic. Let me also thank Doug Belshaw for being the invited speaker and for providing us with some insightful comments and perspectives on how people acquire these different web literacies and the need for a more research on this topic, as well as the role of the Mozilla foundation in supporting instruction related to the use of the web.

I think understanding some of the Doug's comment requires some background associated with his book for download [Correction: the book is not free as stated in the recording], *The Essential Elements of Digital Literacies*. In that book he notes that it's important to think about the skills associated with use of the web as occurring in a context of how users are purposefully responding to and using the web. He also notes that these literacies are plural and not neutral and that it's important to think about how differences in power, identity, and political ideology influence use of these literacies as well as the fact that there is really a continuum-it's not an either/or matter, of different competencies associated with uses of the web. And, finally that these literacies are best taught when the learner sees the bigger picture of how why they are using the web for learning.

He also in his book talks about the essential digital literacies involved in web literacies and those include the:

- *cultural*: certainly the ways in which local cultures shape differences in uses of the web.
- *cognitive*: the ways in which the metacognitive processes involved in using the web is really important.
- *constructivist or constructive* ways of creating text on the web, for example digital storytelling.
- *communicative* functions of the web--how people use the web to communicate to not only local but also global audiences.
- *confident*: the importance of the being confident in acquiring agency through the use of the web.
- *creative*: aspects of the web evident in some of the interesting creative videos that appear on the web
- *critical*: aspects of use of the web where it's important to stand back and critique of the kinds of assumptions on the web.
- *civic*: aspects of use of the web how the web can foster civic engagement.

In thinking about these different aspects of the web is important to think about how we are contextualizing or recontextualizing uses of the web. I want a note here the work of Van Leeuwen's concept of a recontextualization where we are constantly recontextualizing text on the web and in doing so were of seeing connections between the web content. This reflects an activist notion of learning that Stephen Downes notes:

that knowledge is a network phenomenon so that to know something is to be organize a certain way and to exhibit patterns of conductivity so to learn is to acquire patterns this is true for the community as it is for the individual.

What this is saying is that we need to be thinking about the ways in which learning occurs through on the web as a connectivist this process. For example seeing how through "nexus analysis" certain memes pop-up on the web search images as in the case of the "I hate Sandcastle" success kid who was a set of web image that served as a meme that would cut across text. So people then take these images and recontextualize them in different ways that reflects the current creative aspects of what Doug was talking about as well as the ways it communicates in interesting ways.

I think another important thing on a say about web literacies is that we need to think about the relationship between the use of apps and the web, because I think the use of apps and it is a whole other area that is emerging and how it relates to the web is an interesting question. These apps have certain affordances associated with the activities that are involved in use of apps such as Voicethread, screencasting apps, or collaborative writing apps. These affordances include multimodality, collaboration/interactivity, ubiquity, authenticity, shared productivity, portability, and personalization. These different affordances are very much tied to certain literacy practices that themselves may also be tied to certain web literacies.

I thinking about these app affordances, we need to also think about the fact that a lot of these apps, as McLain [in Miller & Doering, Eds., 2014] argues, replicate the status quo textbook, worksheet, or flash card kinds of learning as opposed to the ways in which they may extend learning in unique ways what McLain calls "extender apps" that "extend the learning in ways that are not otherwise possible without technology."

I think this distinction also applies to uses of the web in which the question is whether you can use the web to replace use the traditional print literacies to foster certain kinds of learning—what are the ways in which the web literacies have their own unique affordances that foster certain kinds of learning that would not occur otherwise. One example of this kind of learning in terms of collaboration this is this image of the discussion about the Mauna Lao Observatory in Hawaii. This is a sticky note discussion by some students about the observatory; you note here there is a interesting back and forth in this discussion of the Observatory mediated by the use of this sticky note sticky note tool on Diigo that fosters this kind of interaction. You also find this with annotations on websites like Rap Genius were you might have a annotation of Kurt Cobain letter. You also find this on tools such as Voicethread where you have collaborative annotations about the same image.

I think that this leads to another important aspect of this the ways in which the web can be used to remix or again, recontextualize, images. On the Mozilla “teaching kit” site there is a remix tool for critiquing gendered where the students would remix traditional hegemonic, gendered ads in new ways. Another example of this would be the use of collaborative responses to a text on a wiki; this image is from Teresa Dobson's research where the students created wiki annotations to the Alice Munro story in each of these little blue annotation notes reflect the sub stories that they embedded into the main story.

Let me now shift to what I think is needed in terms of some research in understanding the web and web literacies. This involves the use of digital “big data” analysis tools such as those available on voyeurtools.org where people can analyze the ways in which users respond to create text on the web looking at not only certain word choices but also word choices over time in this case how certain words in *Moby Dick* are used in frequency. You can certainly create a word cloud but you could also look at changes over time in the use of words such as the “whale” and “Ahab.” I think that the way this is relevant and useful is that it helps us understand text and uses of texts through web analysis--here's example of the changes in the use of the word “whale” and “Ahab” used.

There is also a need to understand how readers or users make connections. This is a study from the Stanford literacy lab where they studied our readers making connections on Amazon in response to *Infinite Jest* the David Foster Wallace novel, also a new movie, about how readers make connections with certain topics, themes, or other texts and so this is a way the web may facilitate and mediate intertextual connections. This is an example of analysis of reviewer's connections with *Infinite Jest* to other texts and I think again this kind of analysis helps us understand the intertextuality of learning and having an understanding of this then helps us understand how would readers are using the web another topic.

This brings up here the ways in which there is now an interesting potential shift from Web 2.0 learning in this is some work by Iranian researchers [Aghaei, Nematbakhsh. & Farsani, *IJWesTn*, 2012] who were looking into web primarily now's web 2.0 which involves HTML texts linked together as documents. We see these links a lot of this has to do with thinking about the web primarily as a repository of documents that are sitting out there however they recommend that when we think about now shift to web 3.0. In web 3.0 the connections between different things or topics are tied more to individual uses of the web that becomes what Aghaei defines as a “portable personal web” by individuals creating their own digital repository whose content have their own personal meaning and use. While we don't know what or how this web 3.0 will emerge, we do need to consider future research to focus on these uses.