

DIGITAL LITERACY

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SITUATION

Trained volunteers help organizations provide essential programs in the community. Volunteers receive training on core curriculum or skills, in exchange for sharing what they know with the community. Increasingly, volunteer coordinators teach volunteers how to use computers and web-based resources in their volunteer role. A secondary outcome of volunteer training is digital literacy.

Digital literacy is defined as “the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills” (American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy, p. 2).

“The gap in technical experience – and general understanding of the internet – between online adults and offline adults is increasing” (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Digital literacy helps volunteers utilize technology to learn new things, assess and interpret valid information, increase efficacy, and share information with others.

Digital literacy skills learned in volunteer training may transfer outside an individual’s volunteer role to daily life such as home, social situations, and work.

METHODS

Volunteers learn digital literacy skills through experiential, hands-on training to include:

- Using computers and smart devices to conduct internet searches for presentations and electronic messages.
- Knowledge of online etiquette and computer safety.
- Appropriate use of copyright and fair use concepts.

- Ability to create and digitally transfer documents and images.
- Ability to consider factors that influence the design of a message, such as the intended audience, medium, purpose, and nature of the message.
- Evaluating the quality and reliability of digital resources by considering accuracy, relevance, comprehensiveness, appropriateness, and bias.
- Communicating key concepts in a variety of situations and to a non-technical audience using digital tools.
- Personal, academic, and community-based problem-solving.
- Building positive relationships with peers and the community.
- Demonstrating cooperation and understanding with persons who are ethnically and culturally diverse.

CONCLUSIONS

Why is digital literacy important? Computer and internet skills are vital competencies in today’s digital world. There is a greater responsibility placed on individuals to manage daily tasks using technology.

Examples of technology use for everyday tasks:

- Personal communications
- Job applications
- Online banking and shopping
- Government services
- Public safety and emergency services
- Directions and navigation
- How-to instructions
- Online health related activities (OHRA)
- Health self-efficacy (HSE)
- Education or schoolwork
- Work from home

The Learner Network (2019), identified the “changing purposes of education and the future of the university to workers, citizenship and personal identities.” Digital literacy skills benefit volunteers and the community through increased civic engagement, effective organizational leadership, and learning that can make a difference in society.

Resilient communities, increased trust in local government, and civic engagement are important components of volunteer programs and public-private partnerships.

CITATIONS

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<http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/09/25/whos-not-online-and-why>

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RESULTS

During 2018, 101 volunteers (N=134) participated in a Qualtrics survey to measure personal wellness benefit(s) of their service, providing a 75% response rate.

Volunteers indicated the following benefits of participation in the UF/IFAS Extension Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Hillsborough County program:

DIGITAL LITERACY RESULTS

Internet anxiety decreases with experience and there is a positive association with the internet which includes **civic engagement**, social and **community involvement**, **connectivity** with others, and **social trust** (Moy, Manosevitch, Stamm, and Dunsmore, 2005).

99%

INCREASED ABILITY
to research information

98%

ENABLED THEM TO HELP OTHERS

97%

LEARNED NEW THINGS

98%

HELPED THEM MEET AND INTERACT
with other people

93%

ENABLED THEM TO BE
PART OF A GROUP

71%

GAINED CONFIDENCE
in using new technology
(such as the internet, webinars, social media,
e-mail, mobile apps, etc.)

42%

HELPED THEM MAKE NEW CONTACTS
that might help with business,
career, and/or paid work

PERSONAL WELLNESS BENEFITS

Formal volunteering is highly correlated with **indicators of well-being** and the more frequently a person volunteers, the greater is the increase in the probability that such person will report being **healthy and happy** (Borgonovi, 2008).

91%

IMPROVED THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

88%

INCREASED SELF ESTEEM

83%

HELPED THEM STAY
PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

77%

FELT PHYSICALLY HEALTHIER

66%

REDUCED THEIR STRESS LEVEL

