

DIGITAL LITERACY FOR ALL LEARNERS

We learn best when we are doing things that matter to us



Project PI: Martin Wolske, Senior Research Scientist, Center for Digital Inclusion & Adjunct Faculty, Graduate School of Library and Information Science
We are grateful to the funding support from the Office of the Provost and College of ACES' Illinois Extension & Outreach Initiative;
The Illinois Student Sustainability Committee and Illinois Sustainability Technology Center; The Office of Public Engagement; and
The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Eliminate the Digital Divide Program
<http://dl4all.illinois.edu>

The Digital Literacy for ALL Learners project uses our **Demystifying Technology** approach to encourage movement from passive use of technologies to co-creation of innovations-in-use by community, in community, for community. It is being implemented with 2nd graders and graduate students; in digital literacy workshops and one-on-one technical support sessions; and with those interacting directly with digital technologies for the first time and those who have years of experience with the nuts and bolts.

Strategies

- Meet with stakeholders to understand what creative works participants would like to do and what digital technologies might be needed to do them
- Incorporate digital literacy training as infill into projects as needed
- Include exercises exploring all dimensions of socio-technical artifacts
- Intersperse discussion and critical reflection with hands-on activities to bring to the fore participant's human and social expertise to complement physical and software skills development

Goals

- Achieve the creative works as determined by participants during stakeholder meetings
- Advance participant's capability set – the increased existence, sense, exercise, & achievement of choice
- Increase participant's ability to select & appropriate strategies/technologies that align with their values and goals
- Counter the dehumanizing impacts of digital technologies
- Work towards the essential outcome of more resilient, inclusive, and just communities

Values

- Technology is shaped by and shapes society. From this starting point, we posit that:
- The social, cultural, historical, economic, and political values and practices of stakeholders at each point in an artifact's life-cycle tend to become embedded within that artifact
 - There are exclusionary social structures, some of which we actively — even if unintentionally — reinforce through our choices and actions regarding technology creation and use
 - Digital literacy without a critical and sociotechnical perspective is at risk of fostering magical thinking and technological utopianism
 - A liberative approach to technology requires lived and academic expertise within multiple domains, including hardware, software, human, community, social, cultural, historical, political, & economic

Key Takeaways

Those of us with technology expertise may enter into an engagement as digital literacy instructors, but we also need to be willing learners if we are to understand the exclusionary social structures embedded within sociotechnical artifacts and thereby better champion justice

The digitally excluded and participants from the margins of society may enter into digital literacy training as learners, but also bring essential sociotechnical expertise and teaching to communities of inquiry

Difference is not just a nicety, but an essential resource in building more resilient, inclusive, and just communities

