Adolescents’ Engagement with Web 2.0 and Social Media: Research, Theory, and Practice

Donna E. Alvermann and Rhett J. Hutchins
University of Georgia

Rena McDevitt
Triumph Charter Academy
Sylmar, California

Increasingly, digital literacies embedded in an array of social media are finding their way into classrooms. These 21st century literacies have implications for teaching and learning in core content areas, such as science, mathematics, social studies, and the English language arts (Alvermann, 2010; Hagood, 2008). Here, we are referring not just to the literacies associated with text messaging, instant messaging, blogging, writing fan fiction, podcasting, social networking, and crafting game scripts, but also to the shifts in belief systems and practices that accompany these literacies—what Lankshear and Knobel (2011) referred to loosely as new ways of participating and communicating that rely on collaboration, remixed texts, and self-publishing. Adolescents’ participation in online social media has been influential in changing what counts as literacy in digitally mediated spaces. This article focuses on three dimensions of digital literacy practices: audiences and voice; sociality; and challenges to schooled experiences of space and time. Specifically, these dimensions frame a discussion of why fan fiction, video games, podcasts, and digital storytelling are relevant to learning in the core content areas. The relevance of such examples is made practical through introducing the notion of turn-around pedagogies and what they offer educators who are preparing students for jobs and careers certain to be fueled by 21st century texts and literacies yet to be named.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Donna Alvermann, University of Georgia, 309M Aderhold Hall, Athens, GA 30602 Email: dalverma@uga.edu
have implications for teaching and learning. We conclude with a section on turn-around pedagogies, a metaphor that Comber and Kamlar (2005) used to evoke images of the kind of curriculum- and people-work required for connecting Web 2.0 and social media to adolescents’ academic literacies.

**Definitions and Dimensions of Digital Literacy Practices**

Some people think of digital literacy as a new extension of literacy. For others, it is one of the new literacies—not new, as in a replacement metaphor, but new in the sense that social, economic, cultural, intellectual, political, and institutional changes are continually at work (along with technology) changing how we read and write texts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). It is this referencing of the new that makes sense to us, especially given that we experience daily how the ever-expanding field of information communications technology is changing our own literacy practices and the way we think about digital literacy in particular.

We base our use of the term digital literacy on the defining characteristics that set literacy instruction apart from basic reading and writing skills instruction per se, which assumes that technical aspects of literacy can be taught independently of social context for the benefit of all learners. Street (1995) challenged that assumption by providing evidence from his fieldwork in cultural anthropology that showed why the autonomous model of literacy is not as beneficent and objective as it might seem on the surface. In its place, Street offered what he called an ideological model of literacy, which recognizes that all reading and writing occur within larger societal structures of power that position people in different ways, some more favorably than others. As Luke and Freebody (1997) explained:

> There is no neutral position from which a text can be read or written. All language, all text, all discourse thus “refracts” the world; bending, shaping constructing particular versions and visions of the social and natural world that act in the interests of particular class, gender, and cultural groups. (p. 193)

For a comprehensive definition of digital literacies—the framework for this article’s focus on adolescents’ engagement with Web 2.0 and social media practices—we look to Martin (2008), who conceives of digital literacy as consisting of three levels: digital competence (demonstrating appropriate skills and attitudes), digital usage (applying these skills and attitudes in the disciplines), and digital transformation (personally identifying with innovation and creativity). Martin’s (2008) concept of digital literacies of the digital (p. 156), which encompasses computer literacy, technological literacy, information literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, and communication literacy, was heavily influenced by Paul Gilster (1997) who both coined the term digital literacy and insisted on critical thinking rather than technical competence as the key to becoming digitally literate. Gilster’s insistence on making critical thinking the core skill of digital literacy is evident in Martin’s (2008) definition of the term:

> Digital literacy is the awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyze and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process. (pp. 166-167)

In 2008, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) further emphasized the key role of critical thinking in relation to digital literacy when it put forth its position statement on 21st century literacies. In a nutshell, NCTE’s (2008) position on digital literacy instruction stresses that it is the responsibility of educators to develop young people’s proficiency in creating, analyzing, synthesizing, and critically evaluating multimedia texts. Critical thinking figures into Lewis et al.’s (2007) dimensions of digital literacy practices as well.

**Audience Awareness and Voice**

Although as teachers we may be well practiced in instructing students to take audience and voice into account (e.g., who says what, with what authority, and for what end), such instruction may be out of synch with what adolescents experience in the digitally mediated world they encounter when producing texts on their own during after-school hours (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). There, multiple audiences exist and voices can be disguised, even made anonymous. As Lewis et al. (2007) reminded us, “The fluid shifting of tone and stance [in online writing] that has emerged out of the need to address different audiences and discourses almost simultaneously has called into question what it means to have an authentic or personal voice as a writer” (p. 210). Although we agree, our objective here is not to tell teachers how to change their literacy instruction more closely to align with what adolescents might be experiencing online. At best, we can only present what our own observations as teachers, researchers, and the research literature on digital literacy practices have told us. For example, we know from the research literature that an appreciative audience
motivates adolescents to engage in authoring digital texts (Alvermann, 2008, 2010). Having a place to demonstrate skills in using 21st century texts was of key importance in a study of 4,000 sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students in North Carolina who participated in a statewide after-school program (Spires, Lee, Turner, & Johnson, 2008). Based on data collected from surveys and focus-group interviews, Spires et al. (2008) reported that students wanted the successes they were experiencing in the after-school program, recognized and appreciated in school.

Sociality

To our way of thinking, Lewis et al. (2007) identified a major contributor to the changing times and influences on adolescents’ digital literacy practices when they named sociality as one of several key dimensions from the research literature. As they explain,

Being raised in the ‘always on’ world of interactive media, the Internet, digital messaging technologies, and online social networking environments, today’s students value their ability to use the Web to create a self-paced, customized, on-demand learning path that includes multiple forms of interactive, social, and self-publishing media tools. (pp. 212-213)

For youth who have access to the Internet, a learning environment that offers choice and self-paced engagement with texts of all kinds also demands a degree of critical media literacy that students are not likely to develop on their own. It is here that we view ourselves (and perhaps other educators reading this article) as being of primary assistance.

How we envision assisting students to develop critical literacy skills in relation to the texts they see and create online will depend largely on how we define critical media literacy. Just as the word literacy is used differently in various contexts, so too is the term critical media literacy. We have seen it characterized as having the ability and motivation to engage in one or more of the following activities:

- Reflect on the pleasures derived from popular media (e.g., TV, radio, video games, movies, music CDs, the Internet, and cyberpunk culture).
- Analyze how popular media texts shape and are shaped by youth culture.
- Map the ways in which individuals assimilate popular culture texts differently.
- Uncover the codes and practices that privilege some messages and silence others (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000).

Regardless of which activity (or activities) one might consider instruction-worthy, it is important to keep in mind that young people’s drive to create online content is in large part inspired by their penchant for remixing texts—a literacy practice that some (perhaps most) educators would frown on because such authorship is neither a solitary nor completely original endeavor. Yet, as Black (2008) has pointed out, youth who create derivative texts are “far from being ‘mindless consumers’ and reproducers of existing media, as they actively engage with, rework, and appropriate the ideological messages and materials of the original text” (p. xiii). In fact, it could be argued that young people’s engagement with these kinds of ideological messages and materials is central to their developing a critical awareness of how texts position themselves and others.

Challenges to Schooled Experiences of Space and Time

In the United States, schools have primarily favored the linguistic mode as a means of delivering core content in the various subject areas. This has resulted in curriculum development that conditions teachers and students to rely on speaking and reading as the chief means of communicating the ideas they want to express even though there are other modes (moving and still images, sounds, performances and the like) that are equally, if not better, suited for showing rather than simply describing conceptual relationships in complex texts (Kress, 2003). Unfortunately, the tell-not-show syndrome in curriculum development persists, even as 45 states plus Washington, DC (representing 86% of the students in the U. S.) are redefining their curricula to meet the new Common Core State Standards (CCCS; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). The degree to which school leaders in the current CCSS era will be successful in meeting these curricular challenges in space and time has yet to be determined.

However, we are quite confident of one thing: contemporary youth between the ages of 8 and 18, at least those who have access to the Internet, are in the vanguard for change. They are already using free, downloadable software to assist them in constructing and sharing their own digital texts at an unparalleled and growing rate (Rideout et al., 2010). Their texts consist of multimodal content that integrates imagery, gesture, symbol, sound, and the printed word. However, judging from two comprehensive reviews of the research on digital literacies (Alvermann, 2011; Hagood, 2008), there is scant evidence that critical digital literacy instruction is keeping pace. What we do know for certain from the research literature is that the recognition and acceptance of 8- to-18-year-olds’ affinity with multimodal texts (mediated by their everyday digital literacy practices)
will depend in no small part on how schools and higher governing boards define what counts (and does not count) toward academic literacy.

Examples of Digital Literacies that Youth Find Motivating

In each of three subsections that follow, we offer a rationale for why fan fiction writing, digital video gaming, and other examples of digital literacy practices across the disciplines, respectively, are not all that foreign to a school curriculum that prides itself on incorporating young people’s interests in 21st century texts, at least on an occasional basis. We save our discussion of how these texts invite opportunities for teaching critical media literacy for the last section of the article, titled turn-around-pedagogies.

Fan Fictions as Digital Texts

Spingarn (1917) defined a critic as a “sensitive soul detailing his ‘adventures among masterpieces’” (p. 5). Yet, as an undergraduate in college, Rena was indirectly taught that to be a good critic she must read rants by Harold Bloom (2007) and write an academic paper arriving at Mr. Bloom’s ideas, but in her own words of course. Spingarn’s idea of creative criticism and Rena’s decision to experiment with fan fiction in a graduate-level course shattered earlier assumptions she held about criticism. Fan fiction (2010) is loosely defined as stories about characters or settings written by fans of the original work, rather than by the original creator. When students create fan fiction, they are constructing a piece of art that is, in and of itself, a criticism of the original work; thus, fan fiction provides students a creative and personal outlet to become impressive critics of literature, film, religious texts, and so on.

As a high school student, Rena knew how important it was to have a personal connection with her writing. Missing that connection, she never saw the value of writing in the first place, and without value, she barely had enough motivation to complete the assignment. Thus, when Rena had her own class as a first-year teacher in the fall of 2010, she let her ninth graders fasten their own meaning to their compositions by offering them the choice to write on issues in which they were personally invested. For example, some of her students expressed an interest in writing fan fiction online, and she supported them. She knew from firsthand experience that fan fiction gives its creator the freedom to choose any storyline to manipulate using a variety of communication modes (visual, sound, kinesthetic, language). It also enables English language learners to write their unique stories into the world by drawing on “personal, academic, and community resources to express their ideas and to communicate with others in English” (Black, 2005, p. 127).

For example, the work of fan fiction author, Sonorahugagi, illustrates how creative criticism, in Spingarn’s (1917) sense of the term, enabled her to create a prequel to Of Mice and Men on fanfiction.net (see Figure 1). Instead of simply writing a five-paragraph critical essay on Of Mice and Men, Sonorahugagi took a critical look at Steinbeck’s (1937) original work, saw that something was missing, and took charge to reinvent the story in her own unique way. In Sonorahugagi’s profile, she explains, “I always feel the character thinks or does something the real character, written by the REAL creator, would never do” (Sonorahugagi, 2010). Fan fiction allows writers, such as Sonorahugagi, to create their own stories while critically changing the original into something more intricately connected to themselves.

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SONORAHUGAGI’S PREQUEL TO *OF MICE AND MEN* DETAILS THE ADOLESCENT LIVES AND BEGINNING FRIENDSHIP OF LENNIE AND GEORGE. STAYING TRUE TO THE PERSONALITIES AND DIALECTS OF STEINBECK’S LENNIE AND GEORGE, SONORAHUGAGI INTRODUCES THE STORY OF HOW THE TWO BECOME FRIENDS, WHY THEY STRIVE TO BE COWBOYS, AND THE INCIDENT THAT CAUSES LENNIE’S INFATUATION WITH RABBITS. FAN FICTION GIVES SONORAHUGAGI THE AUTHORITY AND TOOLS TO INTERMINGLE HER OWN VOICE WITH STEINBECK’S (1937) VOICE, WEAVE IN PERSONAL STORIES THAT CRITICALLY EXAMINE AND RUN PARALLEL TO THE ORIGINAL PIECE, AND TO FLOOD THE PREQUEL WITH FOreshadowing THAT WILL KEEP HER AUDiences INTRIGUED AS THEY READ THE ORIGINAL STORY.

Fan fiction writers are interweaving their own voices and the voices of others to reconfigure original works in critical, creative, and personal ways (Spingarn, 1917). Lastly, by publishing and sharing their fan fiction online, students have opportunities to move their work into a self-paced, customized social world that is not inhibited by the space and time constraints of a traditional classroom.

**Video Games as Digital Texts**

The concept of game literacy as defined by Buckingham and Burn (2007b) and implemented in classrooms (e.g., see Dezuanni, 2010; Dubbels, 2011) would suggest the viability of teachers connecting adolescents’ identities, creative production, and learning about video games. To many of today’s youth and teachers of the Net Generation, video games are not viewed with fear and trepidation because they have had exposure to the system consoles of Nintendo, Sega, Sony, and Microsoft (or computer-based video games for home PCs and Macs) from a very young age. Still, using digital texts associated with computer games for instruction is best accomplished by first teaching students and
teachers how to engage with them for educational purposes (Buckingham & Burn, 2007b). Although Rhett (a co-author) admits that the idea of using video games for such purposes carries a certain connotation (boring) for many in his generation, he does not fault the game designers. Rather, he attributes the boredom factor to programmers’ generally mistaken belief that Rhett and others like him simply yearned for games that presented a new and digitized version of schoolwork. Routine and monotonous classroom work is not exactly the idea of fun that comes to mind when Rhett thinks of enjoying a video game. For example, Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego (1990), a content-rich geography/history mystery game, is as much fun as an educational video game was during the 1990s. It did not speak to game literacy, and school-learned content knowledge was all that was required to win.

Had Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego (1990) required digital literacy skills to navigate the game environment (e.g., character control, game flow, integration of background story, interplay among previous game versions or installments, and game narration), it would have had what players call game fluency or game play. Rhett suggests that a question to ask when checking for game fluency is this: Does the game make sense and have cohesiveness as one moves through it? Computer games are generally multimodal texts that involve significant effort in terms of comprehension and analysis in order to understand, play, and succeed (Buckingham & Burn, 2007a). Not surprisingly, those are the same skills needed for success in formal educational settings.

Misconceptions about video games, derived largely through the media, have caused people to view them as being solitary and confining. However, based on Rhett’s personal experiences, video games have always been social in nature. True, digital gaming did not exist during his adolescent years; thus, he and other players had to gather in person at each other’s homes. Although such face-to-face contact is unnecessary in today’s digital world, Rhett maintains that online sociality still exists during game play that brings players together across vast distances, as represented in online gaming communities. Moreover, a new social dynamic is often observable in the current era of multiplayer, real-time games that do not embrace the idea of an ending or winning. In these instances, the game is played in a universe unto itself, where an avatar represents whatever persona an individual may choose to embrace.

An example of video game literacy associated with the study of biology that we provide here suggests its possible use in a high school science classroom. As Rhett, a former classroom biology teacher knows, a fundamental understanding of the principles of evolution by natural selection, as provided by the National Science Content Standard C (Council, 1997), is expected of all students who complete a course in general biology. Although no video game can substitute for the content learned in a biology course, Rhett believes all science teachers will attest to the impossibility of doing a practical laboratory experiment that demonstrates both micro and macro evolution in a feasible amount of time (micro by days, macro by thousands of years). On the other hand, the computer game Spore (2008) takes a player from a single-celled organism to a civilization of multicultural organisms in the relatively short time it takes to play the game. In game play, users design organisms to complete tasks that enable global conquest through population numbers. Failure, like in evolutionary biology, results in quick extinction. Because Spore goes far beyond basic evolutionary biology principles, a player is forced to find ways to survive in the game world that incorporates sound ecological principles, also found in the National Science Standards.

Had Rhett been fortunate enough while teaching high school biology to have access to Spore on as few as three or four classroom computers, he would have been able to run a year-long course competition that would have enabled his students to demonstrate their knowledge of evolutionary, biological, and ecological principles. Engaging students’ interests in such sustained learning is often thought impossible, if not impractical, for many classroom teachers. However, Spore provides at least one such possibility for overcoming the constraining challenges of space and time in traditional school learning.

More Examples of Digital Literacies Across Disciplines

If science is not the forte of a practicing teacher, digital games such as the newer variations of Sid Meir’s Civilization III (2001), IV (2005), or V (2010) in history or The Sims (2007) (possibly for resource classrooms) would be good alternatives. Older students might research a particular historical figure and create a video biography of this person’s life, Lego-style. For example, a YouTube user named LegoBrickStud (2009) created a stop-motion digital story detailing the historical life and adventures of Guion Bluford, the first African American in space (see Figure 3). Another idea might be for groups of students to each tell their own versions of what happened at a particular time in history (e.g., the 9/11 destruction of the World Trade Center) by creating digital stories that weave in personal perspectives and bring out connections to other students’ stories. For instance, Merchant’s (2010) ideas for how teachers can use take-offs on social networking sites, such as
Twitter’s www.twhistory.com, for educational purposes might become a part of someone’s digital story about the 9/11 event.

Podcasts can be used in innovative ways in the history classroom as well. Some people may think podcasts are simply for teachers to use when recording their lectures or mini-lessons, but students are eager to use podcasts to assist in their learning as well. For example, after students have studied a culture, time period, or historical event, they can create a podcast that they can then update and continue to use throughout a unit or term. Another possibility involves a field trip to a local museum. As one group of students listens to docents talk about the history and stories of particular artifacts, another group of students can be podcasting the event. In that way, all students will have access to the talks at a later time—one in which they may choose to record personal thoughts and comments or return to the museum for a guided tour that will enable them to supplement their original podcasts. The recorded notes and comments in audio format allow for a robust set of data for different learning styles. Such recordings also encourage students to create a real-time narrative of the museum visit by taking more detailed notes on the docent’s talk after returning to the classroom, by interweaving their voices with the docent’s, and by entering into a self-paced collaborative learning environment that puts the student in charge.

Figure 2. Spore Video Game Example.
As with English, science, and history/social studies, the mathematics classroom can easily be transformed into a multitasking, on-demand, social learning environment. Building on the digital literacy practices that students already possess and bring to class, a teacher can encourage students to create digital stories of how mathematics is used and valued in businesses, hospitals, schools, libraries, churches, and other places around their town. Digital images that capture how mathematical concepts make up a specialized vocabulary list and provide writing prompts for poetry sessions that include languages other than English are but a few of the ways that digital literacy figures into the mathematics curriculum. Through online blogging sites, students can write, publish, and distribute their mathematics autobiographies or even post annotated links to sites that offer assistance in solving difficult word problems. Courtney (2010) explained that “blogging marries kids’ technological tendencies with peer communication and forces the students to put their thoughts into words” (n.p.)—an activity that can be quite rewarding in a class that deals mostly with numbers instead of words. Integrating digital literacy practices into the mathematics classroom moves students beyond the textbook and into real-world applications that they can see and use in their everyday lives. When teachers approach the study of mathematics as a language immersed in a variety of digital literacy practices, students begin to see and hear subject matter come alive in personal and real-world ways.

In short, these examples of digital literacy practices across disciplines are but one more reminder that print-centric texts and the linguistic mode for communicating ideas through reading, writing, speaking, and listening, although still pertinent, are insufficient for teaching and learning in the 21st century. Multimodal texts that combine language, imagery, sounds, performance, and the like are what students deserve and expect, coming as they are from a world rich in multimedia. This push for multimodal texts also reflects what Kist’s (2005) classroom research demonstrated nearly a decade ago—namely, that young people can communicate as effectively through moving and still images, dance, theatre, music, and the visual arts as they can through print-centric texts.

![Figure 3](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-RbjYDNEJo)

*Figure 3.* A Lego Digital Story of Guion Bluford (Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-RbjYDNEJo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-RbjYDNEJo)).
Restructuring a school’s traditional curriculum into one that embraces adolescents’ engagement with Web 2.0 and social media is best accomplished, we believe, through images that evoke “the kind of pedagogic, curriculum and people work required for connecting and reconnecting students with literacy” (Comber & Kamler, 2005, p. 7). The term turn-around pedagogies was coined by Barbara Comber and Barbara Kamler to describe the impact of five teams of teachers’ redesigns of their literacy programs over a 3-year period of time. As such, it stands in direct contrast to the type of professional development approaches that force technological upgrades on teachers and students in the name of change when no change is actually forthcoming. We know too well the fruitlessness of simply upgrading from a Whiteboard to a Smart Board. The latter can be used in the same tradition as a chalkboard or Whiteboard, with no new digital literacy practices enabled among teachers or students. In our opinion, if adolescents’ laptops or mobile phones are to provide access to digital learning, then it would be preferable to focus on turn-around pedagogies that address their interests in text messaging, music, videos, comics, graphic novels, games, personal web pages, podcasts, and virtual environments that foster social networking.

Thus, a teacher’s first step, or first turn-around pedagogy, would be to become acquainted with the digital literacy practices that her or his students already possess (or lack, as the case may be, for those who do not have access to high-speed Internet). It is a step that might be easier to talk about than do, given the relative invisibility of young people’s online literate identities (Alvermann, 2011). Knowledge of such information is limited, as is information about how students learn, socialize, and identify with certain literacy practices that reflect the ongoing shift from page to screen. Although sufficient research exists to support students’ use of multimodal digital texts in constructing meaning (e.g., Kress, 2003; Unsworth & Cléirigh, 2009), schools in the United States have been slow to make these texts part of their regular curricula. We believe this is unfortunate, especially given the various affordances they provide in teaching critical media literacy. As Lemke (2009) reminds us, “Media mediate not just among us as we play with our identities, but also between us and the interests of large-scale producers” (p. 150).

Opportunities for teaching critical media literacy aside, the prevailing sentiment in many secondary schools and schools of teacher education in the United States is to ignore what adolescents are doing with 21st century texts outside of school in their spare time (Alvermann, 2011). The rationale for ignoring this important element in young people’s everyday digital literacy practices goes something like this: The curriculum and school day are already crowded. Young people are already immersed in using multimodal digital texts in their free time. Thus, why invite them to bring in distractions from the outside?

We contend that a rationale of that kind is best countered by taking a second step, a second turn-around pedagogy, if you will. It might look something like the following: a self-inquiry into the growing body of research that describes factors affecting successful integration of digital literacy practices (Marsh, 2008) and strategies for interpreting the three dimensions of digital literacy practices (Beach & O’Brien, 2008). The results of one’s self-inquiry could then be compiled in a format resembling that of Table 1. Information in the first column would be useful for developing an awareness of what one’s school culture supports presently as well as which elements are emerging. Likewise, what elements are missing but could be brought along? Who are the movers and shakers in the school, in the community, in one’s professional network?
Table 1

Factors and Strategies for Enacting “Turn-Around” Pedagogies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors affecting successful integration of digital literacy practices (adapted from Marsh, 2008)</th>
<th>Strategies for interpreting the three dimensions of digital literacy practices (adapted from Beach &amp; O’Brien, 2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building on students’ interests</td>
<td>Linking knowledge-construction to digital literacy texts, standards, and the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with administrators and parents</td>
<td>Constructing identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting networks of stake holders (teachers, school library media specialists, students, administrators, families, professional organizations)</td>
<td>Linking, connecting, and revising texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining “turn-around” pedagogies over time</td>
<td>Interpreting and using genre features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including multiple modes and media</td>
<td>Searching for and organizing text material based on critical inquiry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Critiquing digital literacy texts</td>
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</table>

Information gleaned from one’s self-inquiry could be added to the second column of Table 1 and used for communicating the three dimensions of digital literacy practices described in the introduction to this article. Likely audiences would be one’s building-level colleagues, district-level administrators and support staff, community leaders, and parents. Making certain that the latter group is duly informed about the three dimensions of digital literacy practices and why such practices are essential to their children’s growth and well-being in the future is vital, especially because that future will likely include jobs and careers fueled by 21st century texts and literacies that are yet to be named.

As Alvermann and Hinchman (2012) have pointed out in their third edition of *Reconceptualizing the Literacies in Adolescents’ Lives*, it is essential that young people’s digital literacy practices be made visible to teachers and school library/media specialists, especially those who are open to connecting adolescents’ everyday digital literacies to academic learning. Ensuring that this kind of work gets undertaken in undergraduate- and graduate-level classes, or in district-level professional development courses, will require that literacy teacher educators and other literacy leaders do more than develop an awareness among preservice and inservice teachers. Awareness building is one thing; acting on that awareness is quite another. We know this from our own experiences as adolescent literacy educators. Acting on what we are advocating in this article will equate to modifying some of our own pedagogical approaches—to letting go of tired practices, to exploring the potential of turn-around pedagogies, and to reaching out to classroom teachers and school library/media specialists whose motivations for engaging adolescents’ interests in Web 2.0 and social media are as strong as our own.

References


