

LITERACY OF THE FUTURE

FROM OUR COLLECTION:

Transliteracy: Crossing divides by Sue Thomas, Chris Joseph, Jess Laccetti, Bruce Mason, Simon Mills, Simon Perril, and Kate Pullinger. *First Monday*, Volume 12 Number 12 - 3 December 2007
journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2060/1908

Reframing information literacy as a metaliteracy by Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi E. Jacobson *Research Libraries*, 72.1 (January 2011), 62-78.

Multisensory experiences, collaboration, a range of media and shifting cultural contexts are all part of everyday living. There is a growing recognition in different professional circles that people will increasingly require an ability to work in multiple contexts with a variety of media and, most importantly, in collaboration.

A proliferation of literacy models in recent years arises from a need to capture the complexity of skills required in new environments. A number of LIS authors feel that a well-established and important framework of information literacy needs to explicitly include skills relevant for online collaboration and communication.

'Transliteracy' has become a bit of a buzz word among LIS professionals in the recent years. Alan Liu, an English Professor, initiated the idea of transliteracies at the University of California, in relation to online reading. The concept was adopted and taken into a new direction by Sue Thomas, at the time Professor of New Media at De Montfort University in Leicester. Thomas started the Production and Research in Transliteracy (PART) group in 2006. The group discussions resulted in the seminal paper, *Transliteracy: Crossing Divides*, a year later. In the article, the concept of transliteracy was presented as "a unifying perspective on what it means to be literate in the twenty-first century" and defined as "the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks".

The behaviour is old, but it has become particularly complex and important in new media environments with collaboration as its most prominent feature. The authors consider 'media literacy' and the space where different experiences and formats meet and mix. In order to understand new cultural production, a transliterate analysis is needed to consider the usual 'how' and 'why' as well as

"...the shift in emphasis from static monologue to dynamic dialogue suggested by participatory narratives; the practices and politics of collaboration, particularly when many geographically and linguistically spread authors

collaborate simultaneously; and the existence of a "group creativity" or "intelligence", perhaps as an emergent property of individual creativities or intelligences."

An ability to shift between different modes and media is central to the concept of transliteracy, which pushes us to see new behaviours and practices holistically. The authors see transliteracy as a work in progress and conclude the article with an invitation to join the discussions. LIS professionals have responded enthusiastically and extended the discussions in our own field. The hashtag #transliteracy is a good way to join some of the discussions on Twitter.

Metaliteracy is another closely-related concept, promoted by Thomas P. Mackey and Trudi E. Jacobson. In their paper, *Reframing Information Literacy As A Metaliteracy*, Mackey and Jacobson discuss a need to extend the information literacy framework to explicitly address skills needed for collaborative online environments. A range of 'literacy frameworks' such as information, media, digital and visual literacies capture various skill sets. The authors argue "that a comprehensive understanding of information and related competencies are central to these literacy concepts. This approach is grounded in the idea that emerging technologies are inherently different from print and require active engagement with multiple information formats through different media modalities".

Information literacy is central to the understanding of metaliteracy, which "provides the integral foundation for additional literacy types, recognising social media environments as active collaborative spaces for accessing and sharing one's findings". The authors analyse some specific information skills needed for evaluation, use, creation and publication online. They acknowledge and briefly describe the concept of transliteracy, but they don't consider the points of difference. It seems that the distinction lies in the focus rather than the substance. Transliteracy and metaliteracy both arise from the realisation that current and future information environments require fluency in skills and a unifying perspective in understanding these skills.

DR SUZANA SUKOVIC

Co-Chair, ALIA Research Advisory Committee
suzana.sukovic@gmail.com

