



Teaching Digital & Information Literacy to Adult Students

SkilledUp

for Successful College and Career Transitions

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The Rise of Adult Students

When we don't just consider Associate's or Bachelor's degrees, but also workforce training, certificates, apprenticeships:

44%

of students are 25 or older

51%

have income below \$20,000

26%

are parents

31%

are students of color

62%

are employed at least part-time

(Garcia, 2019)

For many, when they were last in school, technology was completely different.

Among the general adult population in the United States, a 2014 study by Horrigan found that nearly one-third (29%) are considered to have low digital skills, and they are far less likely to say the Internet plays a role when they look for work, whether they take a class online, or they visit government websites (p.6).

The Burning Question: How can your library fill in the gaps for adult learners?

Meeting Standards

Much of what adult learners need to learn for digital literacy is what is (theoretically) currently taught at the K-12 level, but the technology did not exist when they were in K-12 classrooms, so we can't assume that they were ever taught about it.

	Low Digital Skills (29% of population)	Medium Digital Skills (42% of population)	High Digital Skills (29% of population)	CCRS	ACRL Frameworks
Visit a state or government website	49%	78%	89%	Anchor 6	Authority is Constructed and Contextual
The Internet was "very" or "somewhat" important to job search	14%	40%	54%	Anchor 6	Information has Value
Take a class online	1%	16%	26%	Anchor 7&8	Information has Value Research as Inquiry Scholarship as a Conversation

(adapted from Horrigan, 2014, p. 6)

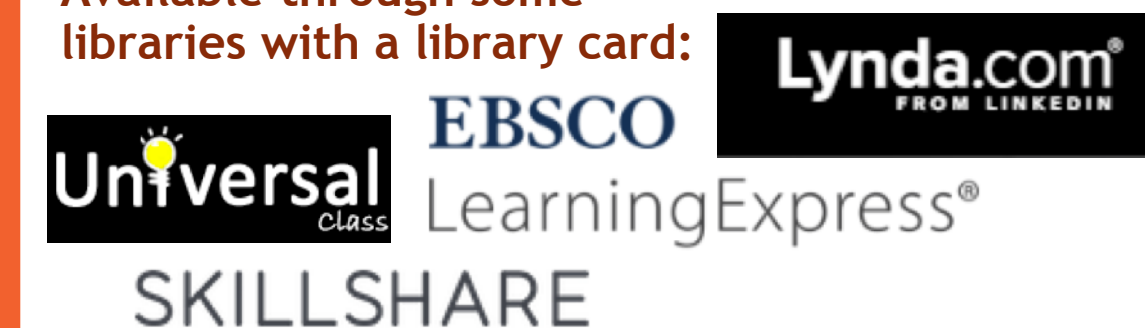
Education: Open and Social

Free Online Learning Resources

Freely available online (some have specific courses that have a fee):



Available through some libraries with a library card:



Open Educational Resources (OER)

OER are openly licensed to: Retain, Reuse, Revise, Remix, and Redistribute



Learning Circles



Peer-to-Peer University, at P2PU.org, is a non-profit organization that has worked with libraries and other community centers for pioneering work with "Learning Circles," free, peer-led study groups for learners who want to take online courses together in a public space. Learning Circle members share a common interest in a particular course, and meet once a week to work through an online course together.

Participants of Learning Circles are 10X more likely to finish a course than learners who work through an online course on their own.

Adults who try an online course through a Learning Circle are provided with a positive transition to online learning and are in a better position to decide if an online degree program is right for them.



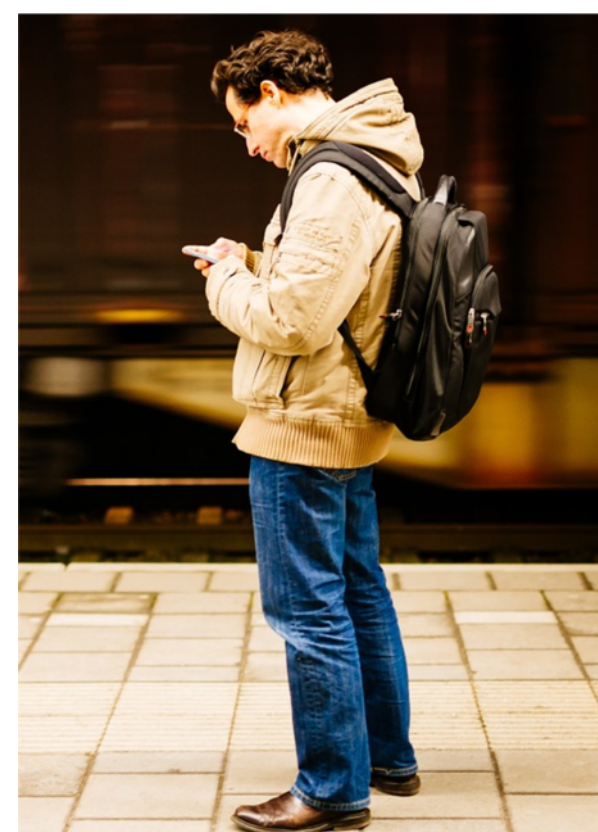
Image from P2PU.org: Learning circle focused on entrepreneurship, Detroit Public Library, 2017. (CC-BY-SA)

Digital Use Divide

You may think an adult student doing homework looks like this:



But in fact, it looks more like this:



How adult students interact with technology in their personal lives	How adult students use technology in their roles as students	How some instructors think students use technology
Use smartphones rather than computers for online access	Don't know how to use smartphone properly with LMS - App is always an abbreviated version of the LMS	Access class materials using a computer
Use texts, Facebook, Instagram to communicate	Only check school email once a week or so, use personal gmail	Use email for communication
Have some comfort with digital tools on phones for leisure activities	Aren't sure what tool to use for what task, or how to learn how to use a tool	Have had training in Microsoft Office Suite
Are satisfied with first result of a Google search	Have a lack of understanding of how to search the internet beyond using Google as the only search engine	Use library portals and databases for research, not popular search engines

Smartphones

In a study of 1500 online college students from across the country, representing a cross-section of different demographics:

79%

of students did some of their coursework on a mobile device, or wish they could

20%

of students did ALL of their online coursework on a mobile device

(Magda and Aslanian, 2018, p. 38)

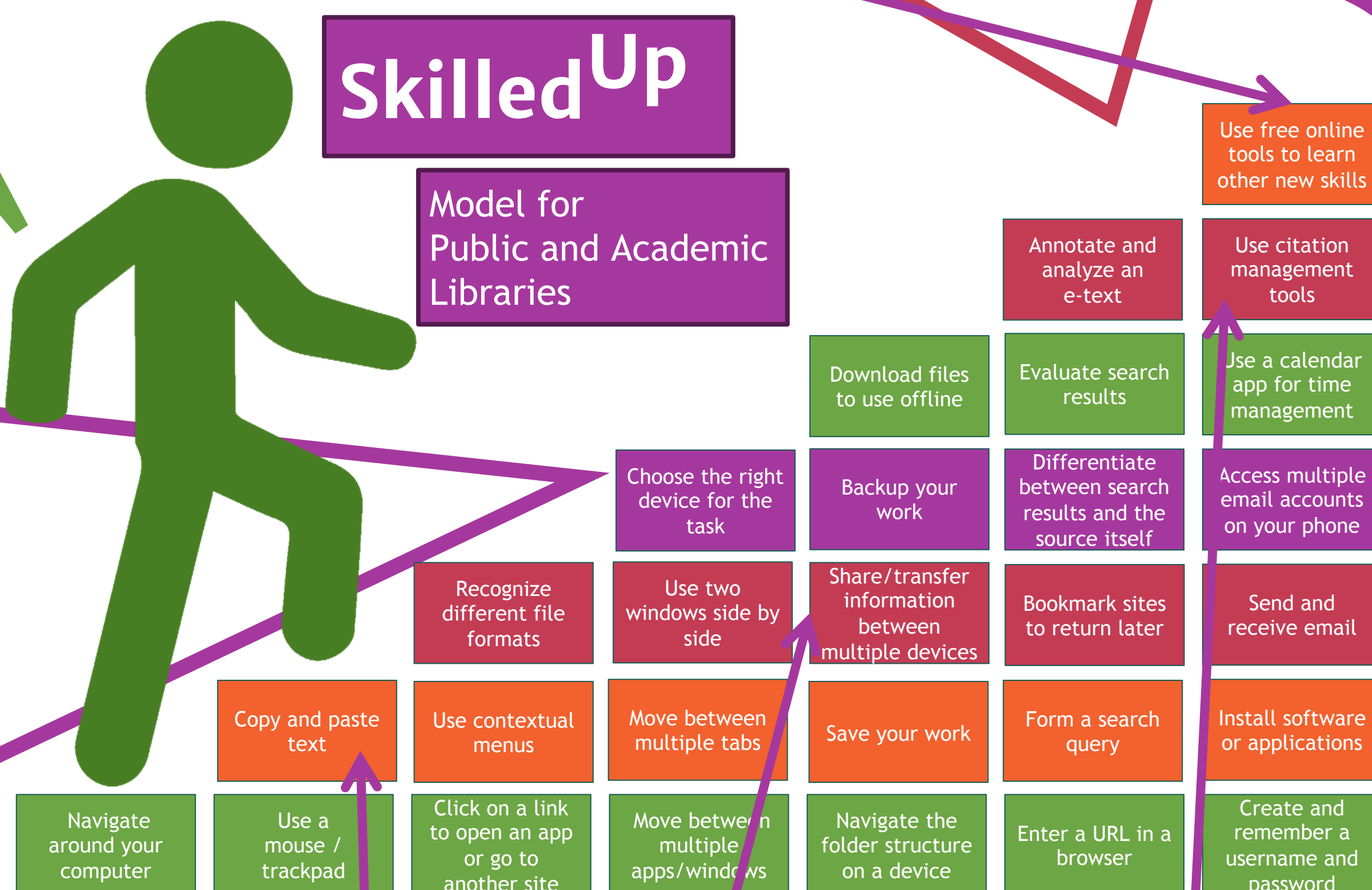
You may have concerns about the Digital Divide, but have you thought about the Digital Use Divide?

As noted in the National Education Technology Plan (NETP), this is the divide between learners who are using technology in active, creative ways to support their learning and those who predominantly use technology for passive content consumption (Office of Educational Technology, 2017, p. 21)

Adult learners need support to move from passive to active digital learners.

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Model for Public and Academic Libraries



A (K-1)	B (2-3)	C (4-5)	D (6-8)	E (9-12)
CCR Anchor 6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.				
With guidance and support, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers. (W.1.6)	With guidance and support, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others. (W.3.6)	With some guidance and support, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting. (W.4.6)	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources. (W.7.6)	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically. (W.9-10.6)

(U.S. Department of Education, 2017, p. 27)

In New York State, for example, in the Benchmark Skills for Grades K-12 that are a part of the Empire State Information Fluency Continuum, students are expected to start working with digital content as early as grades K-2. How can we introduce adult students to this content without being condescending?

The College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) map adult learning to K-12 Common Core Standards, reminding us that adult students who have been out of school for a while need remediation. It uses 5 levels A-E (A (K-1), B (2-3), C (4-5), D (6-8), and E (9-12)) to map the skills from Common Core to a context that is more appropriate for adults.

Challenges for Adults

Challenges for adult learners	In our work teaching adult students, we have found that many:
computer, internet, and printer access	Have older slower computers, or prefer using smartphones Have slow or intermittent internet access at home Don't have a printer at home Are reluctant to go to a public or academic library for access
digital literacy	Are not aware of how to do many simple digital tasks, because they were not taught when they were last in school, and they have not needed to for leisure activities
information literacy	Were taught how to evaluate information using limited print materials (if at all), and are not prepared for the overwhelm of information on the internet
time management	Do not understand the amount of time that may be needed for "homework" Need help to develop methods for planning their time around work and family commitments

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