

Digital Fluency Statement

The Mission of Salisbury University states, “Our highest purpose is to empower our students with the knowledge, skills, and core values that contribute to active citizenship, gainful employment, and life-long learning in a democratic society and interdependent world.” In the 21st century, digital technology continues to be a crucial component in that process of empowerment. Therefore, it is the policy of Salisbury University that all students graduating from this institution can demonstrate an appropriate level of digital fluency with regard to discipline-specific requirements within academic departments. The American Library Association’s Digital Literacy Taskforce defines digital literacy as “the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.”[1] Salisbury University recognizes that digital fluency requires three kinds of knowledge: contemporary skills, foundational concepts, and intellectual capabilities. We believe this knowledge is best articulated through information, storytelling, and maker fluencies.

These three fluencies were identified and developed by the Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) instruction technology center at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) in their paper, “A Digital Fluency Framework to Support 21st Century Skills.[2] While recognizing that we follow the USM Board of Regents’ endorsement of the 1999 National Research Council guidelines for technology fluency,[3] we also support the 2021 TLT framework that is adaptable for the ever-changing landscape of technological and digital spaces, and the ways in which they are applied within individual disciplines. The digital Fluency framework below has been modified for Salisbury University but is indebted to the innovation and work of the TLT.

Information Fluency *is the ability to responsibly locate and ethically harness information to ask new questions, formulate new hypotheses, and answer previously unanswerable questions.* Information Fluency recognizes that in a world of information overload, it is critical that students graduate with the ability to find and filter information, to evaluate its validity, and use it appropriately to solve problems.

There are six major learning outcomes for information fluency wherein students should be able to:

- generate questions to fill knowledge gaps;
- identify the appropriate type of information and sources needed to answer a question;
- evaluate the validity and reliability of any source or claim;
- conduct data analysis that is appropriate for the type of data, question being asked, and so on;
- adhere to current best practices for data security and privacy; and
- generate answers grounded in data-credible and/or construct-credible arguments connecting data to claims.

Storytelling Fluency is the ability to analyze and create a digital message that accounts for the attributes of the medium, audience diversity, the ethical representation of subjects, and the intent of the content. Storytelling Fluency recognizes the obligations that derive from the power of the storyteller in shaping understanding and public discourse in a digital media environment.

There are three major learning outcomes for storytelling fluency, wherein students should be able to:

- recognize, select and use the appropriate digital medium to communicate a message or access information;
- use current technology and mediums and learn to adapt to newly developed technologies and mediums to communicate efficiently within the constraints and contexts of the chosen medium and in a manner that is accessible to a diverse audience; and
- develop and clearly express ideas using current technology in relevant and applicable digital spaces. They should be able to recognize the rhetorical context of such spaces and be able to utilize the principles of storytelling (audience connection, showing vs telling, and story structure) to communicate and effectively convey a message.

Maker Fluency is the ability to solve problems by designing physical or digital creations through a thoughtful and ethical process of ideation, prototyping, testing, and implementation. Maker Fluency recognizes that while future technologies and attendant solutions may be unknowns, students must be broadly prepared to meet those challenges.

There are four major learning outcomes for maker fluency, wherein students should be able to:

- analyze situations to define core aspects of a problem or need;
- develop empathy for stakeholders;
- apply principles of design thinking to implement solutions; and
- explain the application of the principles of the design thinking process.

The specific expression of each of these fluencies is to be determined by the individual academic departments and within their discipline-specific guidelines. Therefore, it is the policy of Salisbury University that all students graduating from this institution can demonstrate an appropriate level of digital fluency.

In summary, Salisbury University believes that developing and maintaining digital fluency is crucial for the success of our graduates. We agree with the National Research Council (1999) when they wrote that students, "...should use information technology confidently, should come to work ready to learn new business systems quickly and use them effectively, should be able to apply information technology to personally relevant problems, and should be able to adapt to the inevitable change as information technology evolves over their lifetime." [3, p.5]

By assessing our students' digital fluency, we will be helping to ensure that their college degree is competitive in the marketplace and that they are prepared for a lifetime of learning about ever-changing technological and digital spaces.

[1] American Library Association’s Digital Literacy Taskforce. (2011). *Digital Literacy – Welcome to ALA’s Literacy Clearinghouse*. Retrieved October 15, 2023, from <https://literacy.ala.org/digital-literacy/>

[2] Fleming, E. C., Robert, J., Sparrow, J., Wee, J., Dudas, P., & Slattery, M. J. (2021). A digital fluency framework to support 21st-century skills. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 53(2), 41–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2021.1883977>

[3] National Research Council. (1999). *Being Fluent with Information Technology*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/6482>.

Also: <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/6482/being-fluent-with-information-technology>