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Research on Cultivating Digital Reading Literacy among Students in Local Universities in the New Media Environment

Authors: Hu Yan, Lu Haodong, Hu Yan

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The widespread adoption of new media has triggered changes in reading modalities, thereby drawing attention to and emphasizing the issue of digital reading literacy. The digital reading literacy of local university students influences their acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as the enhancement of personal qualities. [Method/Process] By analyzing and exploring the current status of digital reading literacy among local university students in the new media environment and the influencing factors of new media on digital reading literacy, this study employs literature research and field investigation methods to propose targeted strategies and measures: emphasizing digital reading content and quality, leveraging the information literacy education functions of local university libraries, orienting toward in-depth reflective reading, and selectively and rationally utilizing new media to enhance the digital reading literacy of local university students; [Result/Conclusion] Enhancing the digital reading literacy of local university students through approaches such as improving reading willingness, reading aesthetics, and reading efficacy; deepening and expanding digital reading among local university students from points to surfaces, clarifying talent cultivation objectives of local universities, emphasizing humanistic literacy, and cultivating applied undergraduates with professional erudition.

Full Text

Cultivating Digital Reading Literacy Among Local University Students in New Media Environments

Hu Yan, Lu Haodong

Library of Hezhou University, Hezhou, Guangxi 542899

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The widespread adoption of new media has transformed reading practices, drawing increased attention to digital reading literacy. The digital reading literacy of local university students directly influences their acquisition of knowledge and skills, as well as their overall personal development.

[Method/Process] Through analysis of the current state of digital reading literacy among local university students in new media environments and the factors influencing it, this study employs literature research and field investigation methods to propose targeted strategies: emphasizing digital reading content and quality, leveraging the information literacy education functions of local university libraries, and selectively utilizing new media to enhance digital reading literacy with a focus on deep, reflective reading.

[Result/Conclusion] Digital reading literacy among local university students can be enhanced by improving reading intention, aesthetic appreciation, and reading efficacy. Digital reading practices should be deepened and expanded systematically, with clear talent cultivation objectives that emphasize humanistic qualities to develop professionally knowledgeable and applied talents.

Keywords: new media environment; local university students; digital reading literacy; cultivation

According to the sixteenth National Reading Survey conducted by the China Press and Publication Research Institute, the comprehensive reading rate of Chinese adults in 2018 reached 80.8%, an increase from 2017. The engagement rate with digital reading methods (including online reading, mobile reading, e-reader reading, and tablet reading) reached 76.2%, representing a 3.2 percentage point increase from 2017 [1]4. These figures demonstrate a clear shift toward digital reading, with rising digital media engagement and an expanding digital readership. University students constitute the main force of digital readers [2]8, and their demand for digital reading continues to grow. Digital reading has become the primary means for contemporary university students to acquire knowledge, obtain information, and engage in interpersonal communication.

Local universities possess distinctive characteristics of regionalism, ethnicity, limitations, and developmental orientation, which render their students' digital reading practices both universally similar to and distinctively different from those at conventional universities. In response to the transformation and development needs of local universities in the new era, these institutions must cultivate a new generation of students with enhanced distinctive and applied professional qualities. The digital reading literacy of local university students directly impacts their acquisition of applied professional knowledge and improvement of humanistic qualities. Therefore, researching the cultivation and enhancement of digital reading literacy among local university students in the new media era holds practical significance—not only for developing new-generation applied tal-

ents but also for advancing the service capabilities of local university libraries and promoting regional economic, scientific, educational, and cultural development.

1. The Meaning and Main Content of Digital Reading Literacy

1.1 The Meaning of Digital Reading Literacy

Literacy encompasses both the cultivation and refinement acquired through regular practice and the skills and abilities obtained through training and practice. Digital literacy refers to the integrated scientific skills and cultural qualities through which individuals, within their digital environment, employ information technology tools and methods to efficiently discover and obtain effective information resources, and subsequently evaluate, integrate, communicate, and apply these resources.

Digital reading refers to the process by which readers utilize various online digital media platforms (including computers, e-readers, mobile phones, iPads, etc.) to read, browse, acquire knowledge, and develop skills. Digital reading is characterized by rapid refresh rates, diverse formats, large information volumes, easy replication, and strong interactivity [3].

Reading literacy represents a broad-based competency constructed upon the concept of lifelong learning. It is a developmental process through which readers employ various reading techniques and strategies to engage in a series of dynamic reading activities (such as facilitating, controlling, comprehending, and acquiring).

Digital reading literacy integrates the dimensions of digital literacy, digital reading, and reading literacy. It refers to the abilities and cultivation demonstrated by individuals during digital reading activities through practice, organization, and training—encompassing respect for knowledge, acquisition of high-quality information through reading, efficient and rational application of knowledge, adherence to sound digital reading behavioral norms, and the development of sustained good reading habits.

1.2 The Main Content of Digital Reading Literacy

Digital reading literacy encompasses three components: digital literacy, digital reading, and reading literacy. It requires readers to possess three capabilities: knowledge skills, digital skills, and reading skills. In fact, digital reading literacy is also a component of information literacy, representing either a branch of information literacy or a particular dimension of its manifestation, through which readers obtain and apply information to serve themselves via digital reading methods.

The overlapping area between digital literacy and reading literacy constitutes

digital reading literacy. This includes not only readers' educational attainment but also the ethical norms they must observe in digital reading, their approaches and attitudes, and the humanistic environment they encounter. It further includes the digital skills and knowledge skills required in digital reading environments, as well as the reading competencies necessitated by environmental and technological changes [4]55-61.

[Figure 1: see original paper] The Main Components of Digital Reading Literacy

2. The Significance of Enhancing Digital Reading Literacy Among Local University Students

In today's internet culture, university students' use of mobile phones, computers, and other electronic devices for online reading has increased dramatically. However, the quality of digital reading materials varies widely, resulting in mixed-quality information acquisition. As a special social group and the reserve force for societal development, university students' information intake represents their knowledge reserves and acquired skills. Contemporary local university students obtain vast amounts of information through digital means, yet they remain relatively deficient in efficiently extracting effective resources and useful knowledge from the overwhelming array of digital information.

One crucial aspect of enhancing local university students' reading literacy involves improving their ability to effectively evaluate electronic digital reading materials in network culture, fostering a positive reading atmosphere that promotes learning, work, and life. Local universities' transformation and development strategies emphasize "applied" education as their primary characteristic. Local university students focus on practice and application, possessing professionally strong, practically oriented, and application-focused knowledge structures. Cultivating good digital reading literacy can help them acquire more effective and practically valuable resources, increase their knowledge reserves, and enhance their competitiveness in the new media era.

Moreover, cultivating and improving local university students' digital reading literacy can promote the service level of local university libraries and improve institutional educational quality, while simultaneously advancing regional economic and cultural development and overall social progress.

3. Current Status and Influencing Factors of Digital Reading Literacy Among Local University Students

3.1 Current Status of Digital Reading Literacy Among Local University Students

The new media era has significantly transformed reading forms and environments for university students. Unlike traditional paper-based reading, modern students primarily engage with digital reading, which enables faster and more

convenient access to greater information resources without geographical limitations.

An IDC (Internet Data Center) report indicates that global data volume will expand 50-fold by 2020 [5], demonstrating the continuously expanding digital reading environment. However, this expansion has also triggered undesirable reading phenomena such as “shallow reading,” “extensive reading,” “recreational reading,” and “utilitarian reading.” These manifest as fragmented, fast-food, and skip-reading approaches lacking information discernment, with weak systematic professionalism and knowledge depth, and potential exposure to misinformation. Local university students are no exception to this impact, pursuing digital reading for convenience rather than quality. Their growing dependence on common digital media platforms leads to superficial problem-solving approaches—preferring to “ask Baidu” directly rather than engaging in deep thinking. Such strongly goal-oriented reading motivations, detached from genuine interest, result in fragmented, incomplete, and biased knowledge acquisition.

When students blindly collect information in digital environments lacking systematic thinking integration, they may achieve quantitative gains without qualitative improvement. Over time, this hinders the development of systematic, professional, and erudite qualities, and undermines the cultivation of imagination, creativity, and lifelong learning abilities.

3.2 Influencing Factors of Digital Reading Literacy Among Local University Students

Information literacy, reading intention, and reading attitude constitute three important factors that influence digital reading literacy. Information literacy is a conventional library service and a standard topic in Library and Information Science (LIS) [6]4-19. It refers to readers’ fundamental learning abilities to absorb, obtain, and apply information, including innovative thinking, cooperative spirit, and practical application skills.

In the pathways through which information literacy influences digital reading literacy, the routes “information literacy → reading intention → digital reading literacy” and “information literacy → reading attitude → reading intention → digital reading literacy” demonstrate particularly significant effects [7]97-104. This chain reveals that both reading attitude and reading intention mediate information literacy, directly and positively affecting digital reading literacy. Consequently, information literacy emerges as the key factor influencing local university students’ digital reading literacy levels. Therefore, improving students’ information literacy must precede enhancement of their digital reading literacy.

Additionally, local university students’ digital reading literacy is constrained by regional conditions, local economic and cultural levels, and openness awareness. Local attitudes toward digital reading literacy also influence students’ digital reading attitudes and intentions. Given the transformation needs of lo-

cal universities, their talent cultivation objectives primarily emphasize applied skills, guiding disciplinary knowledge and information resources toward practical applications. Meanwhile, students' prior knowledge bases and subject choices also influence their reading attitudes and intentions. Taking Hezhou University students as an example, analysis reveals that their educational backgrounds and cultural knowledge levels affect their digital reading attitudes and intentions—liberal arts students tend to prefer literary content, while science students lean toward mathematical and scientific materials. Furthermore, differences in knowledge construction levels among junior college, undergraduate, and graduate students correspond to varying levels of digital reading literacy.

4. Strategies for Cultivating Digital Reading Literacy Among Local University Students

4.1 Clarifying the Characteristics of Local University Students and Enhancing Reading Experience Through Modern Network Technology

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has issued documents including “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction and Management of Online Open Courses in Higher Education Institutions,” “Education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan,” and “Education Modernization 2035,” vigorously promoting online learning among university students. This inevitably increases time spent completing online courses, consulting materials, and finishing assignments, making digital reading ability and literacy profoundly influential. Local university students' digital reading behavioral characteristics critically determine their success in online learning and their efficiency in obtaining information resources.

Observational research indicates that contemporary local university students are generally proficient in using smartphones, tablets, computers, and other smart electronic devices, and readily accept digital reading as a learning mode. However, most tend toward “shallow reading” and “extensive reading” without systematic or in-depth content selection, prioritizing convenience over quality. This clearly hinders knowledge expansion and deeper cognitive exploration.

Based on these characteristics, digital reading cultivation for local university students must be targeted, with clear objectives focusing on disciplinary application, professionalism, and systematic knowledge. First, improper digital reading behaviors should be corrected; second, students should be guided to obtain effective information resources through systematic and professional channels. Taking Hezhou University Library as an example, the library website regularly updates and trials various databases and provides numerous quality learning platforms for student use. These databases and platforms are highly professional and beneficial for learning and research. Furthermore, modern network technologies (such as virtual display technology, audiobook technology, and augmented reality technology) can enhance students' digital reading experiences. Developing more systematic and professional reading platforms and smart read-

ing devices enables students to access higher-quality reading resources, thereby improving their digital reading literacy.

4.2 Addressing Actual Conditions and Focusing on Digital Reading Forms and Content Among Local University Students

In new media environments, reading forms have shifted from paper-based to electronic reading as the primary mode, with reading tools transitioning from books to various electronic devices. Content carriers are no longer limited to paper but increasingly displayed through electronic instruments and smart devices such as computers, MP4 players, tablets, mobile phones, and e-readers. Text, images, videos, and e-books can all be digitally stored and accessed by these devices, making digital reading more convenient, efficient, information-rich, and visually engaging.

Considering the actual reading conditions of local university students, institutions can intervene in and guide student reading content to some extent by developing work plans aligned with teaching programs and developmental trends. Approaches include: (1) collecting digital reading content needs from different schools and majors through questionnaires, interviews, and reading data analysis, then establishing categorized digital reading promotion services; (2) introducing professional and knowledge-oriented databases that align with various disciplines' learning progress, recommending quality learning resources, and enhancing digital reading interface aesthetics based on student interests to improve reading intention and efficacy; (3) helping and guiding students to select knowledge-based, practical, and professional digital content that encourages reflection during learning, leading them toward deep, thoughtful reading and avoiding ineffective or shallow reading.

By creating favorable reading environments, local university libraries can safeguard students' digital reading practices, prevent undesirable reading states, and use positive energy to promote the development of sound digital reading literacy.

4.3 Strengthening the Information Literacy Education Function of Local University Libraries

Libraries serve as primary venues for reading activities and information resource transmission, with functions including preserving cultural heritage, developing information resources, and participating in social education [8]5-13. As crucial auxiliary teaching departments, local university libraries also bear important responsibilities for establishing information connections with academic departments, serving and coordinating teaching, maintaining resource databases, and expanding business scope. They are further tasked with guiding students in effective reading and cultivating their information and digital reading literacy.

Local university libraries can offer training on digital media reading, focusing on digital reading skills, ethical norms, and content selection to help students en-

engage in more efficient independent digital reading while enhancing their control over and critical thinking about content choices. Students should be encouraged to actively trial new databases and various learning platforms to improve independent learning and innovation capabilities. As electronic products continuously evolve and students possess strong adaptability, they should be guided to use new electronic tools for digital reading, directing them toward knowledge-based, professional, systematic, and applied reading.

Taking Hezhou University Library as an example, the library continuously strengthens the introduction and trial of various digital reading-related academic resource platforms and digital reading platforms, including CNKI databases and various Chinese and foreign databases, Superstar Digital Books and China Digital Local Chronicles Library e-book platforms, data science resource platforms, Baidu Wenku University Edition for self-directed learning and examinations, and Dangdang Reading Campus Edition for professional digital reading and audiobooks. These platforms enhance students' digital reading experiences, effectively promote digital information resources, and further improve their digital reading literacy.

4.4 Utilizing New Media to Guide Students Toward Deep, Reflective Digital Reading

Digital reading is ubiquitous, especially since smartphone proliferation enables people to browse information anytime and anywhere, often resulting in casual recreational reading that leaves little lasting impression. Only through effective reading that consumes time and energy, combined with deep reflection, can readers extract valuable information and acquire knowledge and skills.

In today's rapidly evolving digital new media landscape, not all local university students can make correct choices. Attitude determines the direction and goals of action, directly affecting ultimate outcomes. Local university libraries can help students select appropriate new media, correct improper behavioral habits regarding reading attitude and intention, establish proper digital reading attitudes, promote quality new media applications, provide sound digital reading platforms, and reduce the influence of harmful information. Through information refinement, organization, and discernment, libraries can help students develop systematic and professional knowledge structures, thereby enhancing their learning, research, and practical application abilities.

Effective approaches include: engaging visual design, clean and refreshing interfaces, rich cultural connotations, well-designed reading layouts, and balanced dynamic-static reading media spaces. For instance, the "Dangdang Reading - Campus Edition" digital reading and audiobook platform exemplifies this approach. Conveniently accessible via mobile download, it is professionally oriented toward university faculty and students, offering extensive content including online literature, e-books, and audiobooks—all legitimate digital publications. By introducing such platforms, local university libraries can enhance stu-

dents' digital reading experiences, strengthen their digital reading skills through new media, stimulate their reading interest, touch their inner thoughts, and deepen their reflective and associative capacities, thereby guiding them toward deep, thoughtful digital reading.

4.5 Emphasizing the Cultivation of Applied Competencies and Humanistic Qualities in Digital Reading Literacy

Local universities possess unique characteristics of regionalism, ethnicity, limitations, and developmental orientation, facing realistic transformation needs with a primary goal of cultivating applied talents. In developing digital reading literacy, local university students should cultivate habits of applying knowledge, recognizing that digital reading serves to acquire valuable knowledge and improve professional skills, and that enhanced digital reading literacy itself demonstrates improved applied capabilities.

Furthermore, cultivating humanistic qualities represents a crucial aspect of digital reading literacy development for local university students. Humanistic quality cultivation is a people-centered process of competency development involving recognition and sublimation of self-worth, moral emotions, and ideological consciousness. The cultivation of digital reading literacy among new-era university students reflects a holistic process of shaping overall reading competency and humanistic qualities, including self-regulation, social responsibility, moral sentiment, sense of honor and disgrace, cultural quality, and improved reading and search skills. Digital reading ethics constitute an important dimension of digital reading literacy and a key manifestation of humanistic quality. Individuals with high humanistic qualities demonstrate civilized digital reading practices, compliance with digital information regulations, lawful use of computer networks and digital reading media, and effective acquisition, discrimination, analysis, and utilization of digital information content.

A people-centered approach that creates a favorable humanistic quality environment is fundamental to enhancing local university students' digital reading literacy.

Conclusion

The cultivation and enhancement of digital reading literacy among local university students depend on proper guidance and promotion from universities and libraries. Considering the relevant influencing factors and actual conditions of local university students, this paper proposes strategies including: clarifying the characteristics of local university students and utilizing modern information technology for tailored instruction; emphasizing the selection of digital reading forms and content; leveraging the educational functions of local university libraries to intervene in students' digital reading; promoting deep, thoughtful reading through selective use of new media; and deepening the cultivation of digital reading literacy with emphasis on both applied competencies and human-

istic qualities. It is hoped that these strategies will provide reference value for research on improving digital reading literacy among local university students, enhancing their competitiveness in the contemporary era, and offering guidance for improving local university library service management and promoting regional cultural and economic development.

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[Author Biographies]

Hu Yan (born May 1986), female, librarian, master’s degree. Primary research direction: modern library management and library development.

Correspondence address: Library, West Campus, Hezhou University, Babu District, Hezhou, Guangxi (542899)

Mobile: 13978442625

E-mail: 348635980@qq.com

Lu Haodong (born March 1968), female, research librarian, master’s degree. Primary research direction: modern libraries and library management. Has published over 50 papers.

Correspondence address: Library, West Campus, Hezhou University, Babu District, Hezhou, Guangxi (542899)

Mobile: 13978448315

E-mail: 271911970@qq.com

[Note]

IDC (Internet Data Center) is an organization that has rapidly developed alongside the continuous evolution of internet demands, becoming an indispensable component of China’s internet industry in the new century.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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