

Digital Literacy
By LeRoy Nosker Tanner
Programming & Technology Services Librarian

Libraries are champions of literacy. We provide resources, a space, and encouragement for individuals of all ages to connect with the joys of reading. Literacy encompasses not just an understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Literacy is about getting people to think, to question, to engage, extrapolate, experiment, empathize, and experience. We want to help unlock and refine those opportunities for as many people as we can, as frequently as we can.

The current situation with COVID-19 has created challenges for all of us in that regard. Happily, we are now offering curbside pickup during the week, and we hope to be able to provide other in-person (though still at a distance) services soon. For more details on our services available each week, check out our Facebook page for the latest updates or give us a call at 359-8331. That being said, we are also trying to improve our ability to serve you at home through our digital resources and through virtual programming like our virtual book discussions and story times.

With the rapid changes in technology, literacy has taken on an added component. Access to information is no longer limited to the printed page or the directly spoken word. In just my life time, we have gone from Apple IIe computers that offered memory storage of 64 kilobytes to home computers with easily 1 terabyte of memory- that's over 15 and half million times more storage. We've gone from dial-up internet via phone cable that sent digital information at the speed of 45 kilobytes per second to wireless internet sent by microwaves at the speed of 36 megabytes per second- that's 800 times faster.

Information, both helpful and harmful, is created and made available at astonishing speeds. In my last article, I shared some tips about how to tell the difference between the two, but what about even accessing that information? Some people don't adapt quickly, and technology changes fast enough that a person can finally get comfortable with a technology only to find out it is already being replaced by something newer. How about interacting with technology safely? Cyber crime is on the rise with both scammers and hackers looking to steal money, information, and even identity. All of these are components of digital literacy, and we're just as committed to helping you improve your digital literacy as we are your literacy with the written word.

Even without COVID-19, we had plans to improve upon our ability to inform and engage the community about digital trends, using technology safely and responsibly, and many other topics. Going forward, we hope that you will take advantage of our programs and resources both virtually and in person to stay ahead of the curve on your own digital literacy.