

Digital Badges: The Essential Accessory

Saskatchewan School Library Association

THE MEDIUM – WINTER 2015

Carla Katerynych



Digital Badges: The Essential Accessory

Saskatchewan School Library Association

Digital badges are the essential accessory for today's educators. Digital badges are statements of accomplishment and affirmation of status – a style statement of one's learning which otherwise might have been hidden. The Saskatchewan School Library Association is an educator's essential style guide. SSLA's Digital Badging pairs technology with instructional ideas – a design perfect for ready to wear in the classroom or in the office.

SSLA Digital Fluency Badges, launched in the fall of 2014, is a self-directed professional learning opportunity in which participants earn digital badges through learning about technology tools and applications, and then applying their learnings purposefully within their teaching practices in order to deepen student understanding of learning outcomes. As a new special project initiative, SSLA's Digital Fluency Badges provide all educators, particularly teacher librarians, the means to document and showcase skills gained while putting professional learning into practice in the classroom.

What is Digital Badging?

A badge is a credential that represents an interest or an achievement, such as acquiring a new skill, knowledge competency, participation, project completion or a professional credential. Digital badges are images and evidence regarding one's achievements. They can be shared through websites, resumes and portfolios as a detailed record of skills and accomplishments. SSLA's Digital Fluency Badges were developed to facilitate professional growth opportunities that purposefully integrate technology in the actualization of curricula, while empowering teacher librarians as instructional leaders within an environment of digital fluency.

Why Digital Badging?

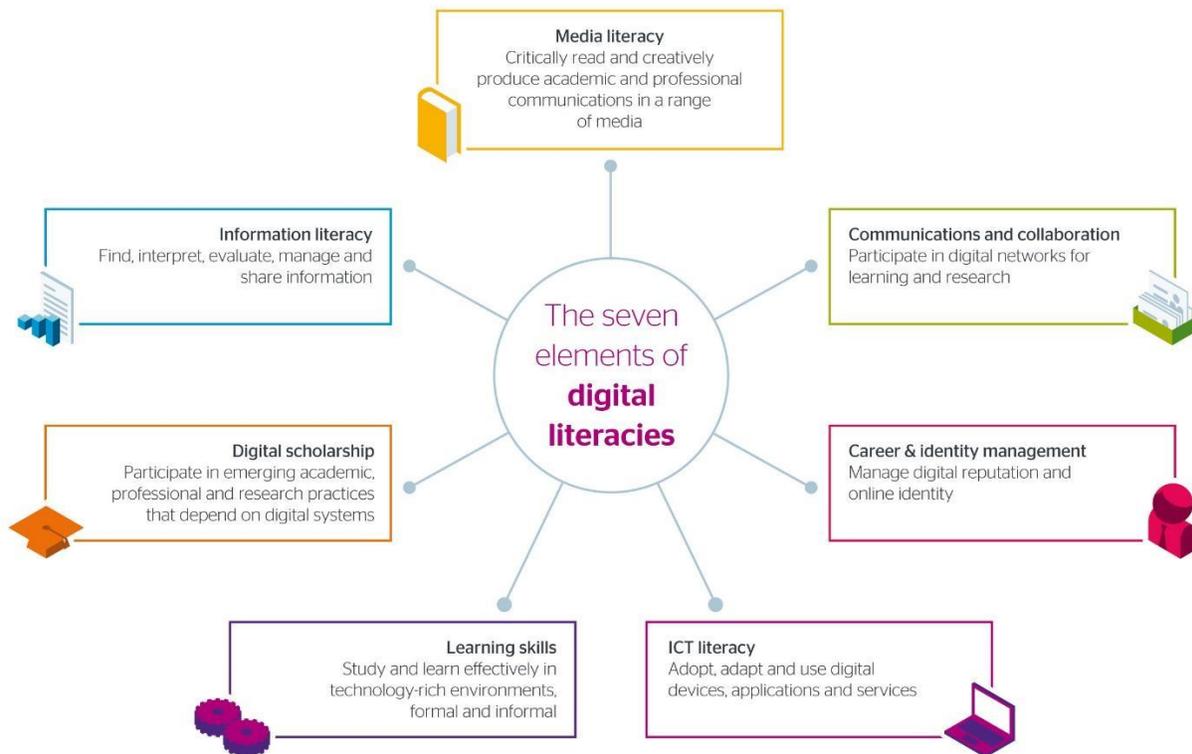
Today, learning takes place everywhere, anytime, in a myriad of formats and at varying paces. This instantaneous, personal learning environment has changed the traditional confines of the library, classroom and school hours. Technology affords opportunities for collaboration, critical thinking and communicating about content knowledge with peers outside the classroom. Teacher librarians are challenged to incorporate digital technologies, support digital literacy development, and, provide opportunities for students to forge their own pathways to further understandings within a digital world. SSLA's Digital Fluency Badges provide teacher librarians with professional development that will enhance their understanding of digital literacy skills as they learn about and purposefully use digital technologies within their teaching practice. Once skills are acquired, teacher librarians are then in a position to mentor others in using the technologies and applications to support students' digital literacy development.

Supporting Digital Literacy Development

Digital technologies provide new opportunities to enhance instruction and to meet diverse student expectations and needs through enhanced learning experiences that support digital literacy development. Teacher librarians work with teachers to cooperatively showcase exemplary teaching and learning practices, including the thoughtful integration of technology, which:

- demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products
- use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively
- gather, evaluate, use, and share information ethically
- plan and conduct inquiries, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources.

Digital literacies are those capabilities which fit an individual for living, learning and working in a digital society. (<http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/digital-literacies>) Digital literacy looks beyond the functional IT skills, it is more than just using technology tools. It is the development of a rich set of capabilities including digital behaviors, practices and identities as represented in the following model:



<http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/digital-literacies>

Earning Digital Fluency Badges



Once registered participants have the opportunity to earn Digital Fluency Badges as they develop the following digital literacy capacities:

- Career and Citizenship Fluency Champion
- Collaborative and Connected Fluency Crusader
- Creative and Innovative Fluency Campaigner
- Information Fluency Impresario
- Media Fluency Mover
- Solution Fluency Superstar

Each badge has a variety of corresponding technology tools and applications, identified by task, which can be explored and incorporated into instructional practices. Over 50 technological tools have been included providing participants a wide selection of options and the ability to tailor their professional development based on personal wants and needs. Options include tasks for conducting effective searches, using graphic organizers, using note taking tools, annotating web pages, screen capturing, content curation, collaborative tools, digital portfolios, understanding copyright and fair use, photo editing, visual representation tools, gaming, creating innovative presentations, digital assessments tools and many more.

After completing the registration form, participants are directed to login to Credly, SSLA's digital badging partner, and select a task. A brief description of the tool, a video tutorial, and the required steps to earn the badge are provided with each task. Tasks are submitted directly

through the task area on the site and may include an attachment or a link submission. Once the criteria for a badge has been met, an email is forwarded to the participant letting them know the badge has been awarded and is available to view and accept through their Credly account. Participants can then showcase their achievements and earned badges on any of their social media sites, personal web site or blogs.

Thus far, participants have registered from across Saskatchewan and various parts of Canada. Teacher librarians and educators from varying capacities, including teachers and administrators, have expressed an interest and begun acquiring digital badges. Excitement about this professional learning opportunity and engagement in the tasks is growing. In addition to the professional learning opportunity available through the ssla.ca/Badges, style segments - videos detailing up-to-the-minute coverage of technologies and instructional ideas - are presented by Carlene Walter on the [SSLA](https://ssla.ca) web site.

Don't miss a fashion moment. Register today for this essential accessory.

Choose the technologies of interest to you, complete the simple tasks in a time frame suitable to you, and earn digital badges. Showcase digital badge accessories on your social media sites as a style statement of your accomplishments. How can you learn about current technologies and its applications to instructional practice? Visit us at www.ssla.ca/Badges