



## **New Literacies: Preparing Today's Youth for Advancement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

By Dr. Laurie A. Henry, University of Kentucky

Engagement in literacy activities is being transformed today like at no other time in history. As students turn to the Internet and other information communication technologies (ICTs) at increasing rates to read, write, and interact with texts, they must develop new skills and strategies, or *new literacies*, to be successful in these multimodal, intertextual, and interactive environments.

The Internet has become the defining technology for today's youth and may be the most important ICT for students to learn how to manipulate successfully. The Internet requires new skills and strategies that must be acquired in order to explore it effectively. These new skills and strategies are part of a new literacy's framework to develop online literacy (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). These new literacies include:

- Identifying a purpose or important question to be answered
- Locating information through an interactive search process
- Making inferences about information housed behind hyperlinks
- Evaluating information for accuracy and bias
- Evaluating authors and/or sources for reliability and trustworthiness
- Synthesizing disparate information across a multitude of media formats
- Clearly and concisely communicating information that is obtained

Many of our students, and teachers, do not possess the new literacies required when reading and writing on the Internet (Henry, 2007). Even basic techniques, such as copying and pasting information, identifying keywords for a search task, or locating the author of a Web site, separates novice from more advanced Internet connoisseurs.

Professional development opportunities for in-service teachers and preparation programs for beginning teachers need to provide acquisition of the new literacies of the Internet so that these skills can be passed on to our youth and better prepare them for advancement in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2005). Teachers need help integrating learning activities that use the Internet into daily lessons. Innovative lessons can include Webquests, Internet projects, Internet

scavenger hunts, Internet-based research, or interactive writing tools from ReadWriteThink.org (Henry, 2006; Leu, Leu, & Coiro, 2004).

As increasing numbers of computers are placed in the hands of teachers and students, whether in school or outside of school, and it is becoming increasingly important for teachers to focus instruction on the new literacies of the Internet. A number of Web sites have been designed to help teachers find ways that technology can fit into the curriculum they are teaching. Some of these include:

- **ReadWriteThink.org** ([www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org)) is a repository of standards-based literacy lessons that offer K-12 teachers instructional ideas for Internet integration.
- **The WebQuest Page** ([www.webquest.org](http://www.webquest.org)) provides Webquests on an array of topics across grade levels and content areas along with a template for creating your own Webquest. Over 2500 Webquests are available in seven languages.
- **The Literacy Web** (<http://www.literacy.uconn.edu>) is an online portal hosted at the University of Connecticut and includes a large number of new literacy's resources for K-12 educators.

As literacy engagements change over time, teaching and learning must also evolve to better prepare our youth for an innovative future in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## References

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*Dr. Laurie Henry is an assistant professor of early adolescent literacy in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Kentucky.*