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Rethinking Access: Recognizing Privileges and Positionalities in Building Community Literacy

Sweta Baniya

Abstract

This article rethinks digital access and community literacy by sharing aspects of intentional engagement informed by social justice frameworks to establish community partnerships that empower communities both local and global with digital literacy. The article explores access, privileges, and positionalities that the author strategically utilizes to support the communities within her current locality and in her hometown Nepal. By showcasing multiple intentional and equitable partnerships informed via social justice frameworks, the article argues that we require a transnational context to re-define digital literacy and our students need to understand these contexts better given the demands of the current workplace.

Keywords

digital literacy, access, social justice, equitable engagement, international partnerships

Introduction

Story 1: “I spent my lifetime in the kitchen...and educating me was never a priority for my family” said Him Kumari Baniya (“Midlife Education”)

My 70-year-old *fupu* (aunt) said the above in an interview she gave in 2013 when she was taking a *Praud Sikhsya* (adult literacy) class that I enrolled her into. Although my *fupu* only has one eye, she still eagerly pursued her studies until COVID-19 hit. When I moved to the U.S., my *fupu* needed access to a smart phone to call me daily, which meant that she needed to become digitally literate. On good Internet days and when she can find my image on Viber, a phone application, my *fupu* and I engage in fruitful chats. That’s our daily routine.

Story 2: Even before COVID, the Code for Nepal team saw firsthand how teachers in public schools in remote parts of Nepal struggled with digital literacy. Some people, for example, owned laptops but did not know how to use them. (CEO of Code for Nepal)

Ravi Kumar, the CEO of Code for Nepal, has been working since 2014 to enhance digital literacy in remote locations throughout Nepal. As Ravi shared in my class in a lecture, people might have access to computers, but they do not know how

to use them, a fact that shocked the students of my Fall 2020 Creating User Documentation course in the professional and technical writing program at Virginia Tech University who belonged to majorly belonged to computer science and writing majors. On the brighter side, UNSECO reports that the literacy rate of adult females in Nepal has risen from 9.153% in 1981 to 59.724% in 2018, which is a significant jump. This shows that things are changing. Even though literacy is on rise, the digital literacy required to keep up with this century's endless technological advancements is still at 31%, which is a notably low rate (Sen).

Story 3: Basic digital literacy is a necessity in our workplace as many of the resources available to employees are in a digital environment. Our Dining Hall Staff cannot access basic things like emails, W-2s, and the employee portal. (Linda Eaton & Kathrine Radford, Student Affairs, Virginia Tech University)

When Linda Eaton & Kathrine Radford from Student Affairs at Virginia Tech University shared this with my Fall 2021 Creating User Documentation course in the professional and technical writing program, the students were surprised to learn that some people in our community and within our own university do not know how to use their phones or perform daily tasks on digital platforms that are necessary for survival in the United States. A lot of the dining hall and housekeeping staff members who are on daily wages come from lower economic backgrounds within our community or they are immigrants or refugees who are unfamiliar with the English language and most of them have never gone to school. Even though they work and live in a highly advanced and digital space among the tech-savvy students, the community members encounter all sorts of obstacles while living their day to day lives in our communities, one of which includes the hurdle of digital literacy.

In the stories I shared above, five concepts intersect: a) gender, b) privilege, c) access, d) education, and e) digital literacy. All these conceptual intersections are present pedagogically in my classes where students aim to understand these challenges and work towards contributing to the communities near and far to them. In this article, I describe partnerships that I have forged with two different local and global communities. By showcasing intentional and equitable engagement practices informed by social justice framework, I argue that scholars invested in community building can contribute to the global community by rethinking access, by recognizing their own privileges and positionalities, and by challenging the factors that impede access to different forms of literacies in the community we live and work in (Cushman; Mathieu). Such equity-oriented work could focus on establishing partnerships within our localities and across borders.

Literacy has always been challenged and is easily accessible to a certain class, gender and not accessible to some members. Literacy is also challenged by compounding crises, patriarchal norms, access to education, and how complexities and power imbalances create a lack of access and equity. Community engaged scholars in the field of rhetoric, writing, and technical communication have tried to tactically address these challenges by forging partnerships with community-driven organizations and by making written contributions (Hubrig; Mathieu; Parks; Shah). Such partner-

ships, which Steve Parks describes as “connecting its [partnerships] practices to underrepresented populations via service-learning projects,” are not new in the field of rhetoric, writing, and technical communication (508). Community engaged scholars in the past few decades have been investing their research and teaching time in service-learning work. As argued by Veronica House, “when practitioners tie rhetoric and composition learning objectives to community initiatives that promote social justice, students’ community-based work can offer powerful, active-learning experiences” (12). Such active-learning experiences lead both the community and the students towards a common goal, resulting in an awareness of social justice, privilege, power, and access issues. While active-learning experiences can have helpful outcomes, we must also acknowledge the concerns that emerge when integrating an active-learning course in a university curriculum. Some scholars, for example, worry that service learning only works to promote the university agenda; others share concern that the charity model of service learning reinforces stereotypes and some corporatized and militarized (Stoecker and Tryon 3; Kannan et al. 77). Such dissatisfactory university work and agendas can be and should be challenged with “contemplative work,” which Paula Mathieu defines as antiracist work that puts people together in a variety of practices and can lead to a “realization [that] can support more empathy and compassion” (46). This also requires putting community needs first as well as working together with them to support them without any agenda of gain from that experience. Hence, in this article I rethink digital access and community literacy by sharing aspects of intentional engagement informed by social justice framework to establish community partnerships that empower communities with digital literacy. I explore the access, privileges, and positionalities that I strategically utilize to support the communities within my current locality and in my hometown Nepal. Finally, I argue that we require a transnational context to redefine digital literacy and our students need to understand these contexts better given the demands of current workplace.

Access & Digital Literacy

Issues of access have been a prominent concern for community engaged scholars and practitioners who continue to support the communities who have such needs. Scholars have been engaged in the issues of food literacy (House), second language learning (Swacha), community publishing (Parks), housing (Mathieu and George), adult and young children’s literacy (Kumari), refugee integration (Powell), and technology literacy (Selfe). Most recently, Ada Hubrig has argued for disability justice which demands access and makes a critical point that access issues are more than simply disability (148). Access should be understood from a multidimensional perspective and intersections of gender, able bodies, privileges, and location to name a few. The above examples showcase that gender becomes a barrier to literacy. While owning a laptop or a smart digital phone can be a privilege, not knowing how to turn it on creates another barrier, even when one is educated. And, in the context of highly advanced university people’s lives have been hindered due to lack of digital literacy. Then a question arises, how do we assess who is successful because of literacy or access? Cynthia

Selfe notes that “the definition of literacy determines not only who will succeed in our culture – and the criteria for such success –but also who will fail” (18). While Selfe articulated this in the context of the U.S., this argument seems contextual to other places where literacy and access to literacy hinders one’s personal success. Those who have access have power.

Marginalization and a lack of access to education, food, and digital tools are interrelated and provide a circular argument where marginalization creates a lack of access, and a lack of access marginalizes people. Alondra Kiawitl Espejel et al. share that, “despite this highly successful intervention for amending institutional neglect, the ongoing lack of access and educational inequity at all levels remain fundamental challenges for the Chicano-Latino community in the twenty-first century” (33). Such challenges that stem from a lack of access continue to prevent the success of the marginalized community and their literacy, further deepening the unequal circumstances. Hubrig argues that “crafting spaces that don’t consider the experience of people of color, of women, of poor, LGBTQA, and other body minds considered non-normative is also an issue of access” (148). When the needs of marginalized people are not taken into consideration by the people in power who can make changes, the issue of access arises that needs to be tackled with “strategies [that] demolish the systems which create barriers” (Hubrig 148). In current digital world marginalization happens via multiple contexts and a lack of access and barriers such as language and literacy. Further, a lack of digital literacy significantly hinders one’s capacities of navigating the digital world.

Shifting towards the current world’s situation affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the digital divide, the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), including immigrants and refugees, are left behind due to a lack of access to digital tools, the Internet, and/or digital literacy (Beaunoyer et al.). Such marginalization due to a lack of digital literacy has happened across the world, including in advanced countries such as the United States. The issue of technological literacy was raised in the field by Selfe two decades ago. She states that technology literacy is beyond the basic functional understanding of computers and how they work but “rather, technological literacy refers to a complex set of socially and culturally situated values, practices, and skills involved in operating linguistically within the context of electronic environments, including reading, writing, and communicating” (11). Such literacies support people to navigate various technological apparatuses including the current digital environments. Technology literacy in current world could also be considered as digital literacy while they may not be synonymous. At its simplest definition, digital literacy is “a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that empower learners to engage with their digital lives” (Digital Literacy Framework). Teresa M. Dobson and John Willinsky argue that “the digital aspect of literacy, invisible to the naked eye, is the very currency that drives the global information economy” (286). The digital world requires people to have certain forms of digital literacy in order to be able to consume information, to write, and to be a part of the information economy. Sharma et al. point out that while globalization and technological developments have opened more pathways for digital information flows, knowledge as a competitive asset may not have reached their

rightful beneficiaries (628). Access to digital literacy is often hindered by educational literacy, financial ability to purchase digital tools, or Internet access. Moreover, the accessibility and design of digital tools can also lead to lack of digital literacy.

A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education on Digital literacy estimates that 31.8 million Americans do not have sufficient competence with digital technologies, especially computers. Those who are not digitally literate are most likely to be Black, Hispanic, or foreign-born (Kavensky). While unequal circumstances persist and worsen due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a culture of global community care and equity should be established by rethinking what it means to have access. The digitally literate population was able to adjust and adapt to the digital challenges brought on by the pandemic, however, many were left behind. The global pandemic has shown us that access is determined by privileges and positionalities because the most vulnerable in the world continue to suffer from a lack of access to necessities such as vaccines. This form of injustice, vaccine inequity, and the continuing struggle of underserved and marginalized communities across the globe should be discussed in classrooms and other spaces. Hence, it is prime time for community engaged scholars to rethink access by exploring the exclusionary practices and systems of oppression (Collins; Crenshaw) that make someone visible and invisible (Cedillo) and determine what one can and cannot access.

We need to think of access and digital literacy through a critical lens because digital literacy is an issue of equity and justice. The Digital Literacy Framework created by the Virginia Tech University Library suggests that there are four layers of digital literacy: learner; competencies; key values which include curiosity, reflection, equity and social justice, creativity, and participation; and multiple literacies which considers digital literacy as a metaliteracy that includes information, data, media, and invention literacies (See fig 1). Scholars of community engaged research might need to dig deeper into how various issues of access are intertwined with digital literacy. Carmen Kynard argues that “Connectivity, the nature of technological pedagogies, and racist schooling all intersect to reproduce the savage inequalities in which white wealthy schools prepares students for managerial roles [...] and poorer schools of color get computerized keyboarding and drill for the service industry” (332). Access to digital literacy is also determined by race and wealth, which further deepens the inequalities. Therefore, it is important to think of such literacies through a critical lens. Elaine Richardson reminds us that “Critical literacy is the search for truth through interrogating what we’ve been fed. We must ask ourselves who told us that and why? Who is empowered or disempowered by certain knowledge and social arrangements?” (11). Hence, critically thinking about digital technology and literacy from the perspective of access is not only important but also necessary. We need to continue to understand what roles we can play in the community where access to multiple elements of survival is limited. Hence, we need to continue questioning and challenging such forms of systems such that it allows us to critically think about the contexts in which digital access intertwines with multiple literacies.

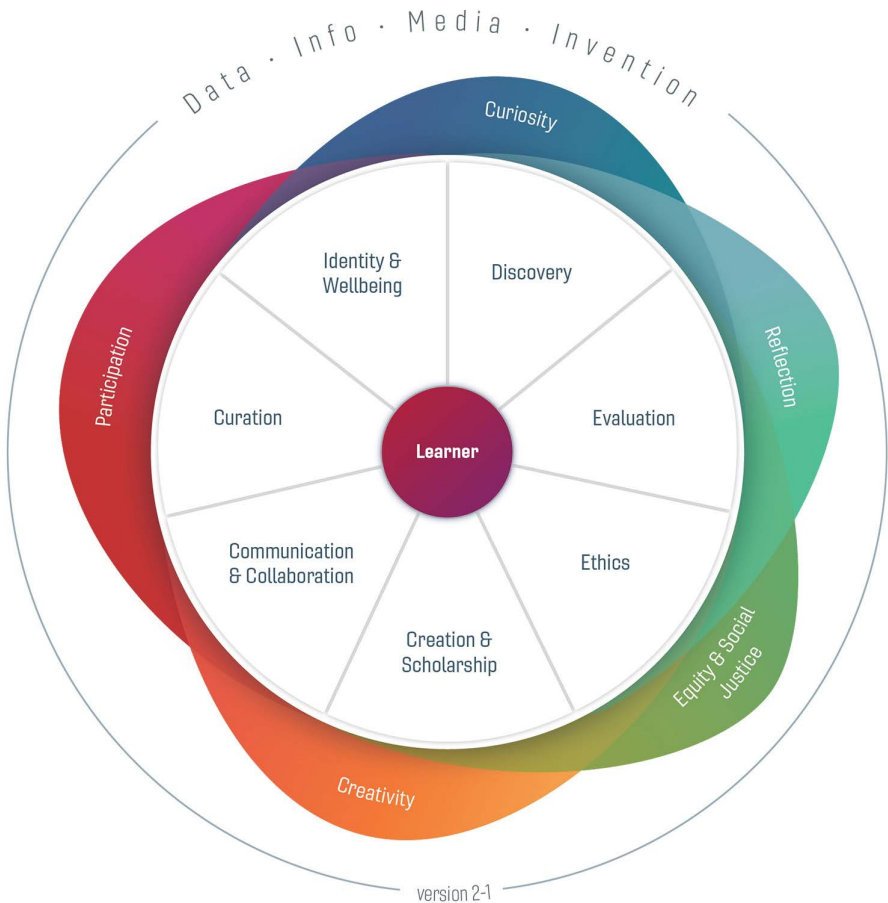


Figure 1 Digital Literacy Framework adapted from Virginia Tech Library’s Digital Literacy Framework document

Building Equitable Partnerships Against Digital Divide

Scholars invested in the field of service learning and community engagement argue for intentionality, respect, serving the community and building equitable and sustainable partnerships with commitment to build communities (Bay and Swacha; Bernardo and Monberg; S. Parks). Such commitment of scholars according to Eric Hartman needs “enhanced intentionality with respect to what we claim, what we attempt, and how we speak about our various, related approaches to producing civic, student, community, institutional, and broadly public outcomes” (97). Such enhanced intentionality should be not only necessary but also required when we want to support communities who lack access to digital literacy. As universities advance innovation, technology, and reach beyond their physical and virtual boundaries, there is a need of

consideration of who is denied access to literacies of such technological innovations and who is denied opportunity as a result of lack of access leading towards digital divide. Jan van Dijk notes that digital divide is framed primarily in terms of inequality of capabilities or skills which is often linked to the concept of literacy (6). Access in this context can refer to technological devices, connections, applications including the ability and digital literacy to use these devices (Dijk). Moreover, understanding digital literacy requires a transnational context as digital inclusion and participation are deeply entwined (Sharma et al.) and those who lack digital literacy and are excluded often represent historically and traditionally marginalized BIPOC communities that include immigrants and refugees. Hence, we need commitments towards building equitable partnerships that focus on providing accessibility to intentionally excluded populations within and beyond the university.

Tackling digital divide needs intentional partnership with the community that puts the need of the community's access, digital literacy, and the socio-economic aspects at the center. Community engaged scholars have focused on equitable partnerships as being reciprocal. Such reciprocity has been argued for more give-and-take format in university-community partnership (Cushman) which focuses more on negotiating power structures. Hence, it is a prime time to move towards a "social justice framework" that calls for ongoing reciprocity beyond the immediate partnerships that disrupts the conscious negotiations of power between academic institutions and community members (Bernardo and Monberg). Putting social justice frameworks at the front will allow scholars to think deeply about building equitable partnerships where intentionally excluded community are given space and their knowledge is valued and cared for. Bernardo and Monberg both argue that they see reciprocity as situated within a much longer timeframe that recognizes legacies of struggle, survival, collective resistance, and commitment (85). In the context of digitally excluded populations, digital literacy can't be achieved without socially just and equitable practices and partnerships that understands the lives, survival praxis, and resistance the excluded communities' practices. The equitable partnerships can be forged with grounding of intercultural communication that allows two different communities (for example students and excluded communities) and understand the differences and similarities. This will also go beyond the deficit perspective which is detrimental to building the equitable partnerships.

We need to build equitable partnerships with the community members who are denied access because of their geographical locations, language abilities, educational exposure, and socio-economic conditions. Such equity oriented social justice practices should help in getting deeper understanding of rhetorical situations, politics, cultural traditions, and listening to the community members on what has pushed them and their communities towards lack of digital literacy, access, and thus creating social inequity and injustice. Furthermore, by intentional partnerships building that incorporates social justice while working with an excluded community is very important for our students to understand how lack of access and digital literacy creates exclusion in the society. As the students prepare for their role especially in technical communication, they need to know and understand how they themselves with writing,

research, and communication can impact communities in need. While building intentional partnerships, it is important for the students to understand that they need to engage without any preconceived notions about the community and going beyond the charity or deficit model of service learning. While they are engaged in such issue of equity and justice in mostly excluded communities, students need to develop intercultural awareness and know their audience by developing relationships and by reflecting on their own privileges as students in a land-grant institution. In the case of digital divide, students need a grounding on their own digital literacies and think deeper on their own privileges. This reflection will allow the students to ask uncomfortable questions with respect and providing promotion of cultural awareness that will be beneficial for the students in their future careers (Collopy).

Intentional Engagements: Local and Global Partnerships

In this section, I share the multidimensional aspects of access and digital literacy and how they intersect with each other and how intentional and equitable partnerships can be built by arguing for digital literacy as an issue of social justice. My journey of engaging with the community started back when I was in Nepal working as a communication practitioner via various non-profit based organizations. After a catastrophic earthquake, I engaged with many grassroots workers and activists as a disaster responder. During such experiences, I learned three things that would shape my identity as a community engagement scholar in my academic career: a) access and literacy are affected by deeply rooted social inequalities; b) partnerships can be built across time and space by putting the needs of the community first; and c) local and global resources could be sought and used via writing and communication for the benefit of the community. Later as a graduate student, I was introduced to community-based partnerships and work as a scholar and how such meaningful partnerships can support the communities. I learned that there are endless ways for a graduate student to be engaged within the community (Kumari; Hubrig). Engaging with the community by establishing partnerships allowed me as an international graduate student to become familiar with the community I was living in and it allowed me to connect my work with the social issues of that community such as food insecurity, ageing, and digital literacy (Hubrig et al.). I had limitless possibilities and endless exposure to community work and that created a ground for me to learn, work, and grow as a community engaged scholar. During this time, I learned how establishing a network with administration and being a liaison for the community is important to being an agent of change (Cushman). Below I share two different cases, a) partnership with Code for Nepal and b) partnership with Student Affairs at Virginia Tech University. Both partnerships focus on the issue of digital literacy and are intentional engagements.

Case #1

In the Spring of 2019, I met the CEO of Code for Nepal for an interview for my research, and when I learned about the organization's needs, I proposed a partner-

ship between Code for Nepal and my business writing class that semester where the work that the students produced would be grounded in service learning and digital literacy. Code for Nepal's major goal is to enhance digital literacy among the rural and marginalized population in Nepal. Hence, digital literacy was at the core of this partnership and the major theme of my course. In this international service learning work, students supported the Code for Nepal's communication needs by developing a contextual understanding of how digital literacy intersects with issues such as gender, class, and caste in the case of Nepal. The students in the class and I applied for a grant and received \$1,500 for Code for Nepal. The students not only engaged in understanding about the issue of digital literacy and issue of accessibility in Nepal but also to support the organization wrote grants and produced a plethora of items that I personally delivered to Nepal. This class took place in pre-Zoom era, but we used Skype in our class to organize virtual sessions from Nepal as well as from another state where the CEO lived. One of the students, Parul Chaube wrote, "one of the underlying goals of this class was global social justice [...] and without physically being in Nepal, were able to impact the organizations' workshops and goals. This was probably the best learning experience we could obtain from semester-long class" (pg. 25). Therefore, the students' assignments constituted impactful work. This partnership illuminated the issues of access, power, and digital literacy and opened the endless possibilities for me as a scholar showing how a small work can be impactful. Thus, this partnership continued during the pandemic at Virginia Tech University. I have written about this partnership experience elsewhere (Baniya, Call, et al.; Baniya, Brein, et al.)

Case #2

The partnership with Code for Nepal led towards meaningful work as well as creating space in community engagement scholarship regarding access and issue of digital literacy as an issue of social justice. With enriched discussions and reflections in the class on digital literacy allowed a space to think about access from a multidimensional perspective. The lack of access to digital literacy and the ability to use digital devices has hindered the success of many individuals in not only Nepal but also within my new community in Blacksburg. After one semester long partnership and after curating a lot of digital products that are publicly accessible, it was time to think about partnerships in the local community in Blacksburg. Eventually, I came across the Literacy Volunteers of New River Valley which has been working towards community literacy in the New River Valley area in Southwest Virginia. The initial conversation about potential partnership led to some insightful conversation about the digital needs of the community where the organization needed more specific volunteers rather than a class partnership. Although the partnership didn't happen, I volunteered and supported the community partner. During the same meeting, I was informed about the daily struggles and digital needs of the staff at Virginia Tech who are pay band 1 or below which means that they are on the lowest pay standard or are working on wages without benefits and insurance. As a new member of this university and community, it was eye opening to know that a lot of immigrants and refugee popu-

lation who have differing levels of literacies serve this university by doing jobs in the housekeeping department or the dining halls. Additionally, their struggle with language and digital literacy creates barrier to their success in their career. Smith argues that “the stakes of accessibility are therefore much higher than including disabled users or enabling aging-in-place: directing attention to the ways that socio-cultural and structural factors can limit access to technology is also critical” (153). Access of digital literacy in this population is determined by the socio-cultural, political, economic factors. Some members who have been part of reintegration to this community and specifically women were barred from education in their home countries and in the United States are dependent on either their husband or children to use technologies.

Listening to these struggles from the immigrant community, I shared what I had previously done with Code for Nepal. I was connected to the Student Affairs at Virginia Tech who was on board with a partnership to create user-based documentation targeting this specific population. My Fall 2021 Creating User Documentation class was great for this partnership which was different as the students were learning about and supporting the community members whom they might interact but may not know deeply. The community of people the class was targeting represented the marginalized community within this area, people from lower economic backgrounds, people who have immigrated to the U.S., and people who came to U.S. as refugees. In this class, our goal was to learn about the university staff that did not include administrators or professors. To reach this goal, students studied and explored that there is a plethora of information that one needs to consume as a university staff member and there are even more devices and digital technologies that one needs to know how to access to get that information. Moreover, the student affairs employees shared that due to language barriers, disability, education, and the economic status of the people who work these jobs (mostly the dining hall staff and the housekeeping staff), the staff members are often left behind when it comes to digital literacy. This information was shocking for the students who are majorly from a computer engineering background. The most uncomfortable was that there are plenty of resources that are available to these staff members, but due to their lack of digital literacy, education, or digital devices, these resources remain inaccessible among these community members. The question of who gets to access these resources and how continues to be problematic.

The Fall 2021 class started with direct communication with the staff from the dining halls at Virginia Tech. Due to their proximity to the community, the students conducted user-analysis by administering one-on-one interviews with the dining hall staff members. These interviews were challenging for the students and the staff both because of the language and technology barriers. It was important for the course that the students face these challenges which are the day to day for a lot of population who have lack of access. The assignment was not targeted towards getting perfect interview and perfect interview quotes but was to interact with the employees and really be in their shoes. For many students this was something that they have never done, and for many employees this was intimidating as they have never been interviewed about digital literacy capacities. As they reflected, the students admitted that

they had a cross-cultural experience because they realized that the community they interviewed was completely different than the one they were from and thus had varied digital abilities. The information that someone is not able to perform tasks like opening email or opening up a browser was very shocking for students who grew up with technology. The students after this interview spent the entire semester curating user documentation and digital materials for the student affairs employees. This documentation aimed at providing the employees with resources that will allow them to utilize various digital products that are available to them on campus and that will help them navigate their daily life more easily. At the end of the semester, the students curated a public website which curated all the materials produced in the class. This class really pushed their boundaries towards understanding what access is, what their digital responsibility is, and how they can support these and similar communities. Students and I both have realized how digital literacy is so important to having access and how digitally literate community engaged scholars have a responsibility to tackle these issues.

In these two partnerships, over multiple semesters at two different institutions, the students have always found the concept of digital literacy as something new or not heard of until they themselves are posed with questions related with that. When the students get the firsthand information from the community members about and dig down deeper on the issue of digital divide, it has always been what the students call as an eye-opening issue. Most of the students in my class represent technologically advanced students who grew up with technology. Hence, something they always refer back to when they learn about digital divide is their own family and community where they have known their grandparents, neighbors, or people at church who struggle with digital issues. For students to get exposure to an international community lacking access, not knowing how to use computers changes their perspective about how unjust a society can be. In contrast to international community, visually seeing and talking about digital struggles of the community members within their own university is another opportunity for them to dig deeper on the unjust practices. The transnational context in both cases is important for the students to learn how digital divide is something that affects the most marginalized and even in the US. Students, who see first hand experience of struggles later mention that they have gained understanding of denial of access and opportunity based on digital literacy and why such divide should end. Some students have expressed desire to continue helping and supporting their own communities in their hometown or virtually volunteer and support communities across the world. These two classes have shown two things to the students, how it is also their responsibility to work towards the digital divide and ways that they can be helpful. While I don't claim that a few semesters worth of classes will end the systemic digital divide, these classes have helped in understanding digital literacy, access as an issue of social justice.

Digital Literacy, Accessibility & collective responsibility

The issue of digital literacy intersects with accessibility and various other issues of social justice including food, aging, and gender, and thus it is important to consider digital literacy from the lens of access and intersectionality. Likewise, people's abilities to access literacy is determined by various intersecting factors such as gender, economic status, and privilege. The systemic inequalities further restrict people's abilities to access literacy. The special issue editors, Hubrig & Cedillo, share in their call, "justice is impossible without our attunement to intersectionality." Intersectionality brings together ideas from disparate places, times, and perspectives, enabling people to share points of view that formerly were forbidden, outlawed, or simply obscured (Collins). Hence, it is our collective responsibility to think, research, and create space for discussing access and digital literacy. Furthermore, as Tabita Adkins argues, methodologies for studying community literacy should be reexamined considering advancements in technology and the research community's relationship to those technologies. Community engaged scholars need to consider digital literacy because the advancement, relationship, and access to technology and digital literacy will expose the context, realities, and ways one could participate in the community. In this way, the scholars can make gaps in the resources and access to those resources more visible and understand areas where their awareness and advocacy is most needed, further revealing the hidden resources or aspects (Fox). Adkins, whose research was within the Amish community, shares that, "In my world, the ability to produce and consume digital texts is at least normative if not expected. For the Amish, though, digital texts and the technology that creates and displays those texts are foreign, odd, and perhaps even dangerous" (1). Digital access and literacy are contextual to socio-cultural, political, and cultural identities and it is an issue that is often overlooked and taken for granted.

Digital literacy and access are a collective responsibility. Such collective responsibilities can be enacted by building intentional equitable partnerships with the community members. In the above sections, I have shown a multitude of issues of access that community engaged work can address and one of those is the issue of digital literacy as it is tied with how people access various elements in their life. As community engaged scholars, we have the ability to develop partnerships within our localities and beyond and many scholars have been creating an impact through their work. Scholars can create access and justice-oriented community literacy work which can support the marginalized populations and support them to gain various literacies including digital. As the world continues to go digital, there are higher chances of the digital divide creating gaps and inequities. We must rethink what access and literacy in community writing are and we must understand what our collective responsibilities are in this regard. Our positionalities as scholars of community engaged work provides us with certain privileges and positionalities that help us identify a variety of issues of access that are interconnected with race, gender, and identities. With this positionalities and critical thinking, we can develop intentional engagements and forge an equitable partnership that unravel the issue of digital literacy and accessibility other interconnected issues along with this issue. Rather than a give and take reciprocal en-

gements, intentional engagement regarding digital literacy allows to embrace social justice framework and helps to understand and tackle this issue in a multidimensional way.

Conclusion: Rethinking Access and Literacy in Community Writing

The concept of digital literacy in rhetoric and writing isn't new as scholars have worked towards thinking about how such literacies can improve classroom teaching. By centering our work around access and digital literacy, community engaged scholars can rethink about how inequalities and digital divide persists in the current contexts. The demands of digital literacies are so high in the current context that one to complete small daily task need to constantly engage with the digital environment. The lack of engagement in the digital environment creates hindrances in the success of the community people who are marginalized, who already have lack of access to the resources. Adhering to the current needs of the community, community engaged scholars need to think how multiple issues of access intersect with digital literacy. By rethinking access and literacy from the perspective of digital literacy allows community engaged scholars to think about access in a multidimensional way and how lack of access to digital literacy hinders multiple other literacies. Grounding access and literacy within the concepts of digital literacy allows scholars to think about identity, well-being, and ethics. Investment in digital literacy to explore what could be the ways to enhance multiple literacies via digital literacy will help in enhancing access and other forms of literacies.

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