



## Understanding transliteracy

“Transliteracy” describes the interaction of traditional literacies, such as the ability to read, with new literacies, such as the ability to use digital media. Our increasingly digital culture is changing the way we learn these literacies. In classrooms, students can know more technology than the teachers. In newsrooms, community members can know more about the story than the journalists.

Journalists, teachers and communicators of all stripes need to be transliterate. They must know how to align message, media and timing in ways that engage their communities. How do we begin to go about learning this?

The following articles explore how journalists and scholars see transliteracy:

- [What is Transliteracy, and How Does it Fit at Empire College? – Diane Longley](#)
- [It's Not Nothing – Diane Cordell](#)
- [Transliteracy, reading in the digital age, by Sue Thomas](#)
- [Internet Learning Creates a Digital Divide – Ron Barnett](#)

**Class discussion questions:** Are there people in your school or community who are unable to participate in the digital exchange of information? Research shows the poor, the elderly and rural residents are less likely to have access to broadband Internet services. What does this “digital divide” mean to the evolution of journalism? Are mobile devices closing this divide?

**Classroom activity:** Select a message and a target audience. Develop and convey that message in three different ways. You might, for example, use a Tweet, a blog and a photo, or perhaps e-mail, video and word of mouth. Compare and contrast. Was one tool or platform more effective than another in terms of reach, understanding and engagement? Why? Would your efforts have had more success had you investigated the interests of your community before sending the message?

**Extra credit:** The Pew-Knight Information in the Digital Age Project is a series of studies of the changing news ecosystem. Check out the Pew study about [social media and news](#). Are some social media platforms better suited for news? Do you consume more news incidentally (seeing a friend’s shared post) or deliberately (following a news organization or journalist)? What news topics are present in your social media?