



education review // reseñas educativas

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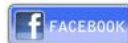
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Churches, Andrew; Crockett, Lee; and Jukes, Ian. (2010). *The Digital Diet: Today's Digital Tools in Small Bytes*. Kelowna BC: Corwin.

Pp: 168 ISBN 1412982367

Reviewed by Joyce Neujahr
University of Nebraska at Omaha

The Digital Diet is delightfully informative, sensibly written, and worth every minute I spent reading it. The authors creatively designed the book to enjoy in “small bytes,” much like a buffet, sampling random morsels as you go or sequentially like a six course meal. Although I intended to nibble, I finished the entire meal in a few hours.

The Digital Diet's authors are all currently involved with education. Jukes is the director of the InfoSavvy Group and has been a teacher, administrator, writer, consultant, university instructor, and keynote speaker. He has traveled to more than 40 countries and made more than 7,000 presentations. Crockett is the director of media for the InfoSavvy Group and the managing partner of the 21st Century Fluency Project. An artist, author, and international keynote speaker, Lee has lived in Kyoto,

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Japan and Florence, Italy. Churches is currently a teacher in Auckland, New Zealand. A self-described “edublogger” he contributes to a number of blogs and his wiki, Educational Origami, was nominated for the Edublogs Best Wiki awards in 2008.

The authors themselves are the embodiment of this book. “Think about this for a moment. This book was written on the Internet. It never existed on anyone’s computer during the writing process. It was never printed out. And it was written by three people, in three different parts of the world, who had never been together physically in the same place, yet virtually sat down in the same room together.” (p. Introduction)

The Digital Diet is co-published by the 21st Century Fluency Project and Corwin, a SAGE company. “The 21st Century Fluency Project is about moving vision into practice through the process of investigating the effect of the last few decades on our society and particularly on our children, learning how we in education must adapt, and, finally, committing to meaningful changes at the classroom level.” (p. ix)

The 21st Century Fluency Project has published a series of books, and related supporting materials, which are “...developed to answer five essential questions that teachers will ask when considering how educators and education must respond to the profound developments that are being experienced in the world at large.” (p. ix) The five questions, and their corresponding material are;

- Why do I have to change?
 - *Living on the Future Edge: The Impact of Global Exponential Trends on Education in the 21st Century*
 - *Understanding the Digital Generation: Teaching and Learning in the New Digital Landscape*
- Where do I start?
 - *The Digital Diet: Today’s Digital Tools in Small Bytes*
- How can I teach differently?
 - *Teaching for Tomorrow: Teaching Content and Problem-Solving Skills*
- What would this teaching look like in my classroom?

- *Literacy Is Not Enough: 21st Century Fluencies for the Digital Age* (in progress)
- *Curriculum Integration Kits* (in progress)
- *The 21st Century Fluency Project* web site (<http://www.committedsardine.com/index.cfm>)
- How can we design effective schools for the 21st century?
 - *Teaching the Digital Generation: No More Cookie Cutter High Schools*

The Digital Diet begins with an excellent chapter on “The Digital Citizen” introducing and explaining guiding principles for being a responsible and ethical digital user. “The Digital Citizen is an ethical and moral individual who considers his or her actions and their consequences. These individuals are aware of the risks and benefits of the unparalleled degree of access we have to information.” (p. 1) The authors propose six tenets of citizenship: Respect yourself, Protect yourself, Respect others, Protect others, Respect intellectual property, Protect intellectual property.

The remainder of this first chapter details each of these tenets with definitions, examples, and recommendations. I have found this crucial, foundational building block often lacking in students, and therefore commend the authors for this focused emphasis as the first step in 21st century digital literacy.

Each of *The Digital Diets*’ ten chapters begin with “Expectations: What Will You Learn?” simply defined objectives for the chapter, followed by “Terminology”, a useful glossary for potentially unfamiliar terms. Although there is a complete glossary located in the back of the book, including vocabulary at the beginning of each chapter gives readers a chance to familiarize themselves with words before they begin reading. It is also helpful to simply flip back to the beginning of a chapter to find definitions, rather than searching the full glossary.

Throughout every chapter, gray boxes highlight key points, making it very easy to skim or to find a quick reference. Concluding every chapter you’ll find; “Classroom Examples that Cultivate the 21st Century Fluencies”, a “Chapter Summary”, “Questions to Ask”, which can be used for individual reflection or a group discussion, and “Web Resources” for further study.

Particularly useful are the examples of how to use the chapters' ideas in your personal life and in the classroom, as well as a rubric for using the 21st century digital literacy competencies developed by the authors.

All of the chapters follow the same organizational blueprint and are an effective method for teaching. The authors demonstrate and explain, walk you through the process, and then give recommendations for future use. After laying the foundation for digital citizenry the remaining chapters cover searching, social bookmarking, collaborative editing, VoIP, Twitter, Blogger, social networking, VoiceThread, and media sharing . Email is discussed separately in the Appendix. While this list may seem too basic, for anyone wanting to relate to the digital generation it is an excellent starter course.

I would be remiss if I did not point out a particularly commendable feature of this book. A frequent irritation of mine, and perhaps others, is reading technical literature and having to flip pages back and forth to look at screen shots, figures, graphs, pictures, etc. While the description and text are on one page the accompanying pictorials are located elsewhere. Refreshingly, this is not the case with *The Digital Diet* and because of this, the book is much easier to read, understand, use, and enjoy.

The 21st Century Fluency Project web site is briefly mentioned, but is an especially useful site for teachers. Pre-made lesson plans, an online writing tool for designing your own lessons, a place for shared resources, and a forum for additional collaboration and support are all found at this well developed and interactive website.

The Digital Diet is an excellent tool for learning and teaching. Written primarily for “Those of us not born into the digital culture...” even the digitally confident would enjoy this book and perhaps even learn a few tips about how to teach, in non-techie terms, others to become digitally fluent in the 21st century. I am impressed with this book and believe K-12 teachers, and even some academics, would find it at least worth sampling, if not consuming entirely.

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