

**INDEPENDENT STUDY
(SMM 850)**

**Internet Literacy As Catalyst to Digital Literacy Among Users of Penang
State Public Library**

By

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ABSTRACT

Digital Literacy, one of 'functional literacy' aspect, is a relatively new concept that first emerged in the 1990's. The tremendous growths in the technological world where many things have been digitized need a new kind of literacy. Internet literacy and digital literacy are two distinctive things but digital literacy is best exemplified through Internet. The issue that wanted to be highlighted is whether Internet literacy or competency does make a person digitally literate. This study looks at the resemblance of an Internet literate user with digital literacy. As assumed by many studies, this studies revealed that those who are Internet literate does not necessarily become digitally literate when the main ingredient, critical thinking, is not applied in all area of Internet tools usage.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is defined in The New Oxford Dictionary of English as "the ability to read, write, and comprehend." It means that those literate people must be able to understand what he or she read or write. This is the simplest definition of literacy. This ability is supposed to be use to gain or create knowledge, and also spreading it. The Universal Dictionary further described literacy as "A basic understanding of or ability in a specified discipline." This indicates that literacy is not restricted to the ability to read and write only but competency in a particular subject is also a form of literacy. Various forms of literacy emerged with the advancement of knowledge. Among them is digital literacy. Gilster (1997) describes digital literacy as "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide variety of sources when it is presented via the computers." He placed emphasis on information retrieval and information management capability, particularly about evaluating information content. Bawden (2001) in his review on digital literacy concepts indicated that "The term 'digital literacy' has been used by a number of authors throughout the 1990s, to refer to an ability to read and understand hypertextual and multimedia text."

Internet literacy, on the other hand, has not been appearing quite extensively in printed format. The main reason perhaps relates to the subject as being discussed in alignment to "digital divide." Franklin F. Kuo in his draft paper entitled "Investing In Internet Literacy" indicated Internet as the manifestation of the ongoing information revolution. He said that Internet literacy could narrowly be defined as "the ability to deal effectively with the information that is on the Internet." He further added that an Internet literate person must know how to navigate through the network and to find the needed