

# the **next** digital scholar

a fresh approach to the  
**COMMON CORE**  
**STATE STANDARDS**  
in research and writing



*asis&t*  
ASIST Monograph Series

edited by **JAMES P. PURDY** and **RANDALL McCLURE**

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# The CCSS and the Next Digital Scholar

James P. Purdy and Randall McClure

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have created quite a stir in the educational community. As readers of this volume may likely know, the CCSS are a set of learning outcomes published in 2010 for K–12 schools. The CCSS are designed to enhance students’ “college and career readiness” across a range of subjects, including English Language Arts (ELA), and to afford standardization and easier comparison of student performance across different states (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO] and the National Governors Association [NGA] 2010).<sup>1</sup> At the time of this writing, **[Au: Update if necessary at galley stage.]** the CCSS have been adopted by 45 states, Washington D.C., and four U.S. territories (“In the States” 2012). As a result, they are poised to have a significant impact on American elementary, middle, and secondary education as well as postsecondary training of K–12 teachers. Further, this wide adoption of the CCSS has left many teachers, librarians, instructional designers, and administrators searching for a response.

Our argument in this collection is that librarians, ELA teachers, curriculum designers, writing studies scholars, and writing program

administrators at presecondary, secondary, and postsecondary levels need to collaborate in responding to the demands within the CCSS. We are certainly not the first in calling for increased collaboration between librarians, teachers, and curriculum designers, and we are encouraged by what we see as a swell in the recent literature that grounds collaboration between curriculum experts and library science professionals in the attempt to not only understand and educate the digital scholar, but also understand and educate the teacher faced with the new (and next) digital scholar. From collaborative inquiry projects (McClure and Clink 2009) to co-teaching initiatives (Cullen, Gaskell, Garson, and McGowan 2009), from integrated information literacy and writing programs (Holliday and Fagerheim 2006; Peele, Keith, and Seely 2013) to new approaches to teacher education (McClure forthcoming), we believe that we are bearing witness to changes inside education that we see as a collective and positive response to the ways in which students are collaborating in digital spaces. We believe collaboration here is crucial; therefore, this collection seeks to act out this renewed commitment to partnerships by bringing together contributions from across the diverse educational community.

While the CCSS have been widely adopted, it is clear that teachers, librarians, and curriculum designers, and the school districts within which they work, are not fully prepared to help students achieve the CCSS, particularly given the increased emphasis on digital literacy. Take, for example, the following comment from fourth grade teacher Franki Sibberson, whose post “Digital Writing: The First Six Weeks of School” to her popular blog *A Year of Reading* has been picked up by several prominent news feeds, including the feed from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE):

[S]o much of life as a digital writer is in the behaviors and stances we have as writers, the expectation for participation, for changing our thinking, for conversation. I know this about myself as a writer but I have struggled with making this work for kids. (Sibberson 2012)

Sibberson’s literacy concern for connecting the researching and writing behaviors that occur in digital environments with her students is a concern at the heart of the CCSS, which emphasize the need for K–12 students to demonstrate competency with reading, researching, and writing in digital spaces. This concern is real, not just for teachers and students working in traditional classrooms, but also for those in online venues. In the 2011–2012 academic year, for example, close to 150,000 K–12 students in Florida participated at least part time in the Florida Virtual School program, enrolling in more than 300,000 half-credit courses, a pace that nearly doubles enrollment since the 2008–2009 academic year (Florida Virtual School 2012a, 2012b).

Sibberson’s literacy concern has been echoed by those at the top of the K–12 pyramid as well, such as Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor of New York City Schools. Walcott announced that, with the “rollout of tougher [CCSS] and the need to get students better prepared for college and careers,” his district is teaming up with more than 30 major school districts—including Chicago and Washington, D.C.—to pressure the publishing industry to provide them with materials to meet the CCSS (Fertig 2012). Through what the chancellors are collectively calling the “Publishers’ Criteria,” they have announced that they will “reject any textbooks or other instructional materials that aren’t aligned with the Common Core’s more demanding ... literacy standards.”

These examples of popular press coverage of the CCSS show that teachers are struggling with the CCSS related to digital literacy, that (at least some of) their school districts recognize the lack of resources to support their teachers, and that those districts see the need for—and are calling for—resources to help. Moreover, in his essay on the importance of the CCSS, Richard R. Schramm (2012) affirms that the “rigorous and sophisticated instruction called for by the new standards will, in many cases, require considerable teacher training.” That is where this book seeks to intervene. In this collection, practicing ELA teachers, university English faculty, librarians, and National Writing Project (NWP) administrators offer theoretically informed practical suggestions for helping librarians and ELA teachers achieve and their

districts assess—as well as university administrators and faculty best prepare the next generation of teachers for—the CCSS focused on digital literacy and reading, researching, and writing.

A number of sources already offer lesson plans for meeting the CCSS for ELA, working from the CCSS to students (e.g., Giouroukakis and Connolly 2012; Heard 2013; Ryan and Frazee 2012).<sup>2</sup> While these sources do productive work, providing concrete activities and assignments for teachers, we might argue they approach working with the standards backward, starting with the CCSS document rather than with student and teacher practices. This volume takes a different approach, working largely from students and technologies to the CCSS, letting students' information behaviors drive the discussion rather than vice versa. Understanding and accounting for what students do online and how they do it brings the CCSS into focus, rather than using the CCSS to bring students' research-writing behaviors into line (or perhaps into submission). Extant research already shows the curriculum and pedagogy of submission doesn't work (e.g., Freire 1970; McClaren 1988). Remember when students were told not to use Google or Wikipedia as research tools?

In ways similar to the response by some educators to the advancements in digital technologies and the literacy practices and information behaviors that have resulted from their use by students in and out of the classroom, the CCSS and their adoption have been surrounded by controversy. Much of this controversy centers on concerns over the stipulated balance of 70 percent nonfiction and 30 percent fiction in reading assignments across subject areas (CCSSO and NGA 2010, 5, footnote 1; Jago 2013; Layton 2012; Ravitch 2013), the economic motivations of the CCSS (Cuban 2010; Flanagan 2011; Ravitch 2013; Zhao 2013), and the CCSS' connection to and support of standardization and/or standardized testing (Cody 2012; Fuller 2011; Matthews 2012; Toppo 2012; Zhao 2010). We recognize that the CCSS, like any national educational standards or outcomes system, are imperfect.

This collection neither wholly endorses nor decries the CCSS. Instead, we and our contributors focus on implications of the CCSS and practical responses to them. Ken Kay and Bob Lenz (2013) point out in their *Education Week* commentary on the CCSS what they see as two paths in response to the CCSS: one path that approaches the CCSS as yet another set of standards that teachers must “map their curricula [to] in a compliance-driven exercise” and another path that takes time to consider what possibilities for productive change the CCSS can bring so that they can “serve as a unique transformational opportunity for our nation’s teaching and learning systems.” While arguably idealistic, we and the contributors to *The Next Digital Scholar* attempt to follow this second path. We seek to move beyond the hand wringing that characterizes much of the response to the CCSS in the popular press and blogosphere and instead offer theoretically rich practical responses from professionals who recognize the realities of the CCSS.

This collection’s approach does not mean that we are blind to the limits and potential problems of the CCSS. In fact, many of the contributors effectively address these flaws, particularly regarding the CCSS’ culturally neutral stance, limited notion of genre, and acontextual treatment of technology. However, we are interested in moving toward action and response. We are focused on what we as teachers, librarians, instructional designers, administrators, and researchers can do given the reality of the CCSS.

Indeed, despite their shortcomings, we find some aspects of the CCSS heartening. For instance, the presence of both digital information literacy and writing in digital environments across the K–12 level outcomes outlined in the CCSS supports a notion of writing as technological and situated, a vision long embraced by information science professionals and writing studies and education scholars, including new literacy studies, postprocess theory, and cultural historical activity theorists. The authors of the CCSS describe the desired student attribute of digital information literacy as the ability to “use technology and digital media strategically and capably” (CCSSO and NGO 2010, 7). Proficiency in gathering, synthesizing, and evaluating digital resources as well as

composing with them in digital spaces are integral to the CCSS. At least five of the 10 Anchor Standards for Writing (CCSSO and NGO 2010, standards 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10), for example, address the role of reading, researching, and/or writing in digital environments. This orientation is at least partly consistent with the recently published Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing, developed collaboratively by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), NCTE, and NWP (2011), and the similarities between the CCSS and Framework are addressed by several contributors to this collection. In a sense, then, the CCSS offer standards that show some theoretical consistency with prevailing thinking in ELA.

Moreover, the CCSS' "integrated model of literacy" situates the processes of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use as inextricably connected with one another and with activities of researching and media/technology use across the disciplines (CCSSO and NGA 2010, 4). The CCSS, then, seek to enact what writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines and research and information skills movements have sought to do: emphasize the crucial role of research-writing in learning and knowledge production in all subject areas, not just writing or ELA classes. As Patricia Dadonna (2013) puts it, in summarizing comments from Bonnie Hain, senior advisor for ELA and literacy for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), "The [CCSS] were created to improve students' ability to translate information and communicate through writing across disciplines—a skill needed for careers beyond college and technical school."

While some teachers may be understandably uncomfortable with the seemingly careerist orientation of the CCSS, the CCSS offer a counterbalance to the STEM push that has characterized much popular media coverage of secondary and postsecondary education (Megan 2013; Tilsley 2013). The CCSS, of course, cover math as well, but particularly noteworthy is that the non-math standards document is written for "English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social

Studies, *Science, and Technical Subjects*” (our emphasis; CCSSO and NGO 2010).

In the CCSS, literacy—grounded in digital literacy practices—is central to humanities fields *as well* as science and technology fields. We see this model of literacy as an opportunity to emphasize and showcase to colleagues across education and to the larger public the tremendous importance of attention to digital literacy practices and the significant value of the work of ELA teachers, librarians, and administrators in developing them.

To this end, the Part One of *The Next Digital Scholar* looks at trends in student and teacher digital literacy practices. Randall McClure and James P. Purdy begin in Chapter 1, “Ever Mindful of the Changes: What More We Know About Student Use of Emerging Technologies as They Move Closer to College and Career,” by synthesizing findings from several recent studies on computer, media, and web use of students and the impact of this use on students’ information behaviors as well as their research, reading, and writing practices. After briefly analyzing how the CCSS acknowledge the digital, they review studies from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, National Literacy Trust (U.K.), and the National Center on Education and the Economy that report teachers’ perceptions of students’ practices do not always match students’ perceptions of their own practices, including their use of and reliance on search engines and mobile technologies. They explain how *The Next Digital Scholar* “widen[s] the lens” offered in their previous edited collection, *The New Digital Scholar*, to elementary and secondary students in order to continue their effort to explore how writing teachers, librarians, instructional designers, and administrators can make productive pedagogical and curricular decisions for NextGen students based on empirical studies of students’ digital behavior, students’ online literacy practices and proficiencies, instructor expertise, and strategic partnerships, rather than misperception and fear (of students, standards, and/or technologies). In Chapter 2, “Learning From Digital Students and Teachers: Reimagining Writing Instruction and Assessment for the 21st Century,” Elizabeth Homan

and Dawn Reed continue this approach of understanding the CCSS by first looking at the practices of those who read, write, and research in digital spaces. By describing the work of one student, Hannah, and two high school ELA teachers, they show that the digital practices of students and teachers in today's schools provide insight into how digital technologies can be used to better understand student writing. They express concern at how trends in writing assessment, particularly approaches by standardized test developers like PARCC and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and trends in student and teacher digital technology use are incompatible. The authors argue that automated assessment tools threaten the role of authentic digital writing in literacy instruction, which the CCSS call for, and suggest that teachers in local contexts are able to glean more from attending to the multimodal, interactive textual creations of students like Hannah.

To understand the broader landscape in which the CCSS intervene, Part Two puts the CCSS into conversation with other pertinent standards, outcomes, and disciplinary statements. In Chapter 3, "Using Library Standards Assessment to Inform Common Core State Standards Instruction," librarians Amanda Nichols Hess and Katie Greer continue the discussion of assessment begun by Homan and Reed, focusing on what insight library standards can provide for our understanding, assessment, and implementation of the CCSS. They analyze the CCSS through the lens of the American Association of School Librarians' Standards for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner and the Association of College and Research Libraries' Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and conclude that "linking and blending these standards" can help students not only achieve the CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, but also prepare them to be digital scholars who are literate in the multiple venues of their secondary and postsecondary lives. In Chapter 4, "Using the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing to Foster Learning," Angela Clark-Oates, Allyson Boggess, and Duane Roen draw attention to another organizational outcomes document, NCTE's Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. They outline how first-year writing students'

use of Google Sites to construct an electronic portfolio in the Writers' Studio at Arizona State University illustrates the eight habits of mind in the Framework, which correspond indirectly with several of the Anchor Standards for Writing in the CCSS. The authors argue for the value of putting the Framework and CCSS into conversation and affirm that this connection can be used as a lens for interpreting and implementing the CCSS for grades 6–12. Like Clark-Oates, Boggess, and Roen in Chapter 4, Rachel Bear, Heidi Estrem, James Fredricksen, and Dawn Shepherd put the CCSS into conversation with the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing. In Chapter 5, "Participation and Collaboration in Digital Spaces: Connecting High School and College Writing Experiences," they apply not only the Framework, but also media scholar Henry Jenkins's ideas for literacy instruction to "connect these educational contexts to a conception of the hope and possibility in online cultures" in order to show "curricular connections" and "instructional gaps" between public secondary English classrooms and university first-year writing courses.

To consider how the CCSS fulfill their goal of making students "college ready," Chapter 6, "College-(Writing) Ready: Aligning the Common Core State Standards With the WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition," explores ways in which another relevant document, the CWPA's Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition, aligns with the CCSS for ELA grades 11–12. Director of First-Year Writing at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Clancy Ratliff argues that while there is overlap between the WPA Outcomes and the CCSS, there are important differences regarding context and genre, with the CCSS offering a limited view of genre in the ELA classroom. She concludes by explaining what she sees as a "valuable challenge offered by the CCSS to writing classrooms at the high school and college level: to distinguish civic goals from academic goals through a focus on genre." The final chapter in Part Two, "Media Literacy Principles and the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts Teacher Education" further addresses how principles of media literacy help us better understand the CCSS. James Cercone and David Bruce put

the disciplines of media studies and ELA into conversation, exploring how media literacy standards can inform instruction in the CCSS. In particular, they address how media literacy principles “provide English teachers ... a theoretical base from which to address the demands of the CCSS while at the same time engaging students in meaningful literacy practices.” Taken together, the chapters in Part Two remind us that the CCSS do not work in isolation but rather as part of a larger framework of texts that seek to shape and inform how we approach and understand literacy instruction in the digital age.

Part Three brings the conversation about the CCSS to the classroom, presenting assignments that ELA teachers can use (and have used) to meet particular standards in the CCSS. To follow the approach laid out in Part One, chapters in this section ground their assignment suggestions in student practices with digital technologies. To begin the section, Laura Davies, in Chapter 8, “Browsing With Intent: Digital Information Literacy and Distant Reading Practices,” explores students’ web browsing behaviors and how, rather than providing evidence of detached disengagement that thwarts achievement of the CCSS, they can serve as a precursor to distant reading, a practice she argues can cultivate the ability to choose better sources for academic research-writing projects. This chapter offers assignments that capitalize on this digital reading practice of students, including analyses of search results from different search engines and databases. In Chapter 9, “Blogging as Public Writing: Meeting the Common Core State Standards Through Community-Centered Writing,” Christina Saily and Mark Hannah turn to another student practice, public writing using blogs, and how this approach can be used to meet the CCSS. They discuss a ninth-grade curricular unit that arose from a secondary school-university partnership and include assignments where students use blogs to “produce, publish, and update writing about public issues.” Saily and Hannah argue that such public writing positions students as “advocates in a variety of public spaces, including schools, communities, and workplaces.” High school ELA teacher R. Spencer Atkinson, in Chapter 10, “Wherefore Art Thou Not Updating Thy Status?: Facebook, the Common Core

State Standards, and the Power of Meaningful Work,” explores another common student digital writing practice: writing for social networking sites. Throughout this chapter, Atkinson addresses how to leverage students’ proclivity for social networking sites like Facebook and shares an assignment utilizing Facebook to help students meet the CCSS. Atkinson analyzes two student responses to the assignment, which asked them to create Facebook profiles for characters in *Romeo and Juliet*, in order to illustrate how Facebook helped ninth-grade English students develop critical thinking and metacognition skills. The final chapter in Part Three considers the economic realities of preparing the digitally literate students called for in the CCSS. In particular, Chapter 11, “Technology, the Common Core State Standards, and School Budgets: A Recipe for Necessary Innovation” addresses the challenges these realities pose for less affluent school districts. To assist in overcoming these challenges, Amanda Stearns-Pfeiffer overviews several free web-based writing and researching tool options and offers specific suggestions for how teachers and librarians can use them.

Part Four looks beyond the individual classroom to offer a variety of curricular initiatives to meet the CCSS. To begin the section, Antero Garcia and Cindy O’Donnell-Allen, university faculty and former high school ELA teachers, explain the “Saving Our Stories (SOS) Project,” a summer digital-storytelling program for elementary school English Language Learners, as a means to achieve the CCSS while valuing cultural difference. Chapter 12, “The Saving Our Stories Project: Pushing Beyond the Culturally Neutral Digital Literacies of the Common Core State Standards,” provides a critical analysis of the CCSS’ culturally neutral approach to digital tools. In making this analysis and sharing the SOS Project, Garcia and O’Donnell-Allen argue that “culturally-enabled explorations of digital tools need not preclude the more traditional conceptions of college readiness skills and 21st-century literacies development the CCSS seek to promote.” In Chapter 13, “UnCommon Connections: How Building a Grass-Roots Curriculum Helped Reframe Common Core State Standards for Teachers and Students in a High-Need Public High School,” Stephanie

West-Puckett and William Banks take up the approach offered in Part One of looking first at students' (and teachers') existing practices in considering ways in which to teach and design curricula to achieve the CCSS. They review an initiative of the Tar River Writing Project to redesign writing curricula at a local "high needs" high school in order to meet the CCSS—particularly by focusing on participatory learning. West-Puckett and Banks provide useful practical advice for how "to implement a teacher-centered professional learning program to support a teacher-generated digital writing curriculum." In Chapter 14, "Multimedia Composers, Digital Curators: Examining the Common Core State Standards for Nonprint Texts Through the Digital Expository Writing (DEW) Program," Lisa Litterio offers an additional curricular initiative—this one focused on the CCSS' call for more multimodal and nonprint textual products. Litterio provides a case study of the Digital Expository Writing Program at the College of Saint Rose and how the program uses digital technologies to teach students to produce multimodal texts. Litterio argues for teaching the digital research process as curation and explains two specific example assignments—a remix video and a multimodal final project—that illustrate this approach.

The final portion of the collection, Part Five, offers approaches to teacher training, considering how future teachers can learn to enact the classroom and curricular approaches presented in Parts Three and Four with the awareness of student practice and multiple interconnected ELA standards and outcomes addressed in Parts One and Two. Part Five opens with Christine Tulley's model for how university instructors can teach pre-service ELA teachers to provide instruction that meets the CCSS. Chapter 15, "Preparing Pre-Service Writing Teachers to Enact the (Digital) Common Core State Standards in Secondary Writing Classrooms," explores how a curriculum that asks pre-service teachers to conduct and publish action research with digital technologies can prepare them to assess students' achievement of the CCSS. Noting how "writing teachers are caught in a cycle of having less time to devote to writing instruction while being held more accountable for how students

write in ways that often work against students' out of class literacies," Tulley suggests pre-service teachers get practice themselves using digital technologies to meet the elements in the CCSS Anchor Standards for Writing related to digital literacy.

After explaining ways in which the language of the CCSS begins to bridge the gap between students' technological skills and their need for digital literacy, Tawnya Lubbes and Heidi Harris advance two models for pre-service teaching and faculty professional development that provide project-based learning experiences designed to merge technology skills and digital literacy. In Chapter 16, "From Do as We Say to Do as We (Digitally) Do: Modeling the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards," the authors affirm that pre-service teacher training (and experienced faculty professional development programs) should provide opportunities for project-based learning. Like Tulley, the authors stress that pre-service teachers should be asked to use digital technologies to complete assignments that meet the CCSS regarding digital literacy. Specifically, Lubbes and Harris suggest pre-service teachers work with Web 2.0 technologies to design "inquiry-based projects" that require using digital technologies "to gather, assess, and implement" digital sources and "to produce, publish, and update" textual products, skills articulated in the CCSS. Part Five closes with Chapter 17, "Moving Beyond Transmission to Practice: Training Teachers to Be Digital Writers." By discussing a digital writing institute taught for K-University teachers, Keri Franklin, a university professor and director of the local site of the NWP, and Kathy Gibson, a middle school and high school teacher, argue that "we need to encourage teachers to write digitally themselves . . . to release [their] reliance on the transmission model." This final chapter echoes the call of both Tulley and Lubbes and Harris for pre-service teachers to gain experience using the digital technologies their students will be using (and already use). It provides assignment ideas and suggestions for teacher and librarian training to prepare the next generation of instructors to help students achieve the learning goals outlined in the CCSS.

Our hope is that this collection, with an eye toward the practices

of the next digital scholar and the realities of the CCSS, will assist the multiple constituencies grappling with these new standards, particularly those standards related to digital research, reading, and writing. The CCSS remind us of the skills—and, perhaps more importantly, the approach to literacy—that the next digital scholar will need to negotiate his or her college and career life. We believe that ELA teachers and librarians, with the flexibility to implement the CCSS in ways that allow them to capitalize on their experience and expertise, are uniquely positioned to work together to help students succeed in attaining the outcomes outlined in the CCSS document.

## Endnotes

1. Included with the ELA standards are Literacy standards in “History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects” (CCSSO and NGA 2010, 1). This collection focuses on the ELA standards.
2. ASCD, Common Core, NCTE, and Teacher’s Life all have book series devoted to the CCSS.

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