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Developing competent users of digital technologies: An affordance analysis of technology's enduring features for literacy learning

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Developing competent users of digital technologies is not easy. Know-how is scarce. Support is costly. Technologies change. Goals shift. And effort veers. How then do we develop competence with digital media? Especially when critical and creative literacies are the sine qua non?

In short, the answer is to focus on the affordances of technology that endure. Devices come and go, apps upgrade, and startups merge. But the affordances that endure support literacy practices regardless of device, app, or site.

By conducting an 'affordance analysis' on a representative sample of digital technologies, we identify 10 enduring affordances that support critical and creative literacy practices: multimodality, simultaneity, comparability, zoomability, preservability, immersivity, searchability, filterability, layerability, and lacunarity.

To illustrate, simultaneity permits a reader to see all the pages of a book on a wall screen as small multiples (i.e., thumbnails) within one eye-span (i.e., a single gaze), thereby reducing the carry-forward load on working memory and facilitating gap-filling inferences. Examples of each affordance, and its competence-developing potential, will be shared.