

Writing Spaces Assignments & Activities Archive

Deep Digital Reading with Google Docs

Ashley R. Ott

This activity guide is a selection from the *Writing Spaces* Assignment and Activity Archive, an open access companion resource to the Writing Spaces open textbook series.

To access additional selections, visit:

<http://writingspaces.org/aaa>.

Assignment and activity selections © 2020 by the respective authors. Unless otherwise stated, these works are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) and are subject to the Writing Spaces Terms of Use. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>, email info@creativecommons.org, or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA. To view the Writing Spaces Terms of Use, visit <http://writingspaces.org/terms-of-use>.

All rights reserved. For permission to reprint, please contact the author(s) of the individual articles, who are the respective copyright owners.

Deep Digital Reading with Google Docs

Ashley R. Ott

Overview

“Books and screens are now bound up with one another whether we like it or not. Only in patiently working through this entanglement will we be able to understand how new technologies will, or will not, change how we read” (Piper ix).

Digital reading offers new challenges and opportunities for the first-year writer whose “entanglement” in books and screens stifle deep reading praxis. Maryanne Wolf, author of *Reader Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World* (2018) protests that increased digital reading reshapes the brain’s circuitry to mimic this medium’s characteristics, primarily efficiency and immediacy, which are at odds with habits of sustained attention and critical thought (Wolf 80). Digital reader characteristics include skimming activities like “browsing, scanning, keyword spotting, one-time reading, nonlinear reading, and reading more selectively, while less time is spent on in-depth reading, concentrated reading, and decreasing sustained attention” (Liu 88). If screen-reading minimizes the tactile and spatial orientations of a physical book and thus how readers approach, process, and understand words, how are instructors to harness deep reading’s generative processes for their reading and writing students in an increasingly eBook, Open Educational Resource (OER), and digital textbook learning culture?

This deep digital reading activity asks instructors of writing to exploit the collaborative possibilities of migrating course readings into Google Docs, an application originally designed for composing and editing online files with others and in real-time. Yet the Google Docs space works well to support mindful reading of course texts especially because of its collaborative function.

Students become readers of shared essays, articles, chapters, and literature, a private environment that encourages a kind of spatial orientation reminiscent of print books and testament to a different kind of learning that can happen through collaborative digital reading. Reading becomes recursive as students and instructors elicit dialogue, react to comments, and leave replies. Please note that to transfer class readings from published books and essays, instructors must comply with U.S. Copyright Office Fair Use (“U.S. Copyright Office Fair Use Index.”). After instructors transfer, compose, or upload course readings as a Google Doc, they may allow anyone with the published link to become an editor of the document. When sharing this link with students, instructors provide guiding questions and instructions on how to read and respond to the text: Should students focus on a particular syntax or rhetorical feature? Should they make note of any repetitions or shifts in person? Students may experiment with both typed responses *and* embedded audio comments throughout the Google Doc.

As students read through the shared text, they make extra-textual connections and gain insight from peer and instructor reactions and responses—an experience that increases empathy and comprehension. Bolstered by peer collaboration, deep digital reading with Google Docs simulates the best practices of close reading alongside newer modes of peer-collaboration, of sharing/exploring together the sense of a sentence.

Time Commitment

1 collaborative reading text per week


Materials

Instructors and students must have a Google account. If a student begins reading and/or commenting upon a document without signing into their Google account, comments appear as Anonymous.

Activity Process

- Students must first access the Google Docs link which their instructor has shared and made editable.
- Next, students must click the Open with Google Docs option in the top center of this file.
- Students should read the assigned text with purpose, focusing on an impression that is uniquely theirs (i.e. initially skip reading peer-comments).
- Upon re-reading the document, students will read along with peer-comments and make their own contributions, a response that may take many different forms:
 - Students may manipulate the text in a way that mimics traditional print methods (highlight, underline, strike through, italicize, make bold, cross-out);
 - students may right click on a specific text selection and contribute a written, spoken, and/or hyperlinked response to that selection;
 - students may use the Dictionary function to define;
 - students may reply to peers by either commenting directly below a peer's initial writing, or by tagging others elsewhere using the @ symbol in a comment or reply;
 - students may respond to specific tasks or questions posed by peers or instructors (assign task);
 - students may embed audio comments within the Google Doc.
- Finally students will return to this document during the week to read replies. Students may also elect to receive notification in their email whenever someone replies to their initial comment.
- Students can return to this document at any time in either electronic or print forms—the Doc may be saved to a student's computer and/or printed from home or

school inclusive of collaborative reading notes.

- Instructors may access comments/replies by reading through the comments in-text or view a comments summary by clicking the  icon in the upper right menu.

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity will:

- Increase their ability to sustain attention to longer, more demanding digital texts
- Increase the quality of insight, reflection, and thought to digital readings
- Become comfortable annotators whose engagement with reading is thoughtful and recursive
- Understand the process of reading and writing as dialogic and collaborative

Learning Accommodations

- To maximize engagement and comprehension, students participate as a deep digital reader who leaves comments and as a collaborator who leaves peer-responses.
- Comments may be elicited in multiple formats to include visual and oral means of communication about the text to accommodate different forms of reflection and insight.
- Students may read through the Google Doc and/or hear it read to them using the Speak function.
- Students may be split into two or three groups across two or three Google Docs to create ample space for personal reflection and comments when classes include 20+ students.

Works Cited

Liu, Ziming. "Digital Reading." *Chinese Journal of Library and*

- Information Science*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2012, pp. 85-94.
- Piper, Andrew. *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- "U.S. Copyright Office Fair Use Index." *Copyright.gov*, 2020, <https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/>.
- Wolf, Maryanne. *Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World*. HarperCollins, 2018.

Further Reading

- Ackerman, Rakefet and Morris Goldsmith. "Metacognition Regulation of Text Learning: On Screen Versus on Paper." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2011, pp. 18-32.
- Baron, Naomi. *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World*. Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Bruffee, Kenneth. *A Short Course in Writing: Composition, Collaborative Learning, and Constructive Reading*. Pearson Longman, 2012.
- Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- Dehaene, Stanislas. *Reading in the Brain: The New Science of How We Read*. Viking, 2009.
- Eden, Sigal and Yoram Eshet-Alkalai. "The Effect of Format on Performance: Editing Text in Print Versus Digital Formats." *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2015, pp. 166-81.
- Edmundson, Mark. *Why Reading?* Bloomsbury, 2004.
- Eisenstein, Elizabeth L. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge University Press, 1979. 2 vols.
- Helmets, Marguerite H. *Intertexts: Reading Pedagogy in College Writing Classrooms*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003.
- Johns, Adrian. *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in*

- the Making*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Levitin, Daniel. *The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload*. Dutton, 2014.
- Manarin, Karen, et al. *Critical Reading in Higher Education: Academic Goals and Social Engagement*. Indiana University Press, 2015.
- Mangen, Anne, and Adriaan van der Weel. "The Evolution of Reading in the Age of Digitisation: An Integrative Framework for Reading Research." *Literacy*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2016, pp. 116-24.
- Ong, Walter. *Interfaces of the Word*. Cornell University Press, 1977.
- . *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. Methuen, 1982.
- Steward, Garrett. *The Deed of Reading: Literature * Writing * Language * Philosophy*. Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Sullivan, Patrick, et al. *Deep Reading: Teaching Reading in the Writing Classroom*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2017.
- Ulin, David L. *The Lost art of Reading: Why Books Matter in a Distracted Time*. Sasquatch Books, 2010.
- Wolf, Maryanne. *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*. HarperCollins, 2007.
- Wolf, Maryanne and Mirit Barzillai. "The Importance of Deep Reading." *Educational Leadership*, vol. 66, no. 6, 2009, pp. 32-37.