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How has digital literacy changed over the last year because of artificial intelligence?

Over the past year, digital literacy has expanded beyond basic computer navigation and traditional internet search to require **AI literacy**—the ability to evaluate, collaborate with, and govern artificial intelligence tools. Rather than just knowing how to find information online, being digitally literate now centers on verifying synthetic content, directing AI agents, and maintaining critical thinking skills. National AI Literacy Day + 1

## 1. From "Finding" to "Auditing" Information

Traditional digital literacy focused on keyword searches and evaluating static websites. Because generative AI tools now synthesize answers directly—and frequently produce plausible-sounding inaccuracies—the core skill has shifted toward **output verification and bias detection**. Users must routinely cross-check AI-generated claims against primary sources, recognize "hallucinations," and identify synthetic media (deepfakes, AI-written articles, and cloned audio). National AI Literacy Day

## 2. Working in "Human-Agent" Workflows

In both education and the workplace, digital literacy increasingly means collaborating with autonomous or semi-autonomous AI agents rather than just typing prompts into a chatbot. National AI Literacy Day

- **Workplace Expectations:** Employers increasingly treat AI fluency as a baseline requirement, expecting workers to delegate multi-step workflows to AI tools, troubleshoot their outputs, and integrate them into daily software suites. National AI Literacy Day
- **Instructional & Learning Support:** In classrooms, digital tools have evolved from static platforms into dialogue-based tutors and feedback engines. Literacy now involves knowing *when* to use AI as a brainstorming or tutoring partner versus when outsourcing a task undermines actual skill retention.

## 3. The Widening "Usage-Training Gap"

A defining trend over the last year is the sharp disconnect between **adoption** and **formal training**. While the vast majority of students, educators, and professionals use AI tools daily, fewer than half have received structured guidance on privacy, copyright, data security, or ethical boundaries. Consequently, modern digital literacy now heavily emphasizes data hygiene—understanding what sensitive personal or proprietary information should never be fed into public models. National AI Literacy Day + 1

## 4. Compounding the Digital Divide

Access to devices and high-speed broadband has always been the foundation of digital literacy, but AI has raised the baseline. Those without reliable connectivity or modern hardware are no longer just missing out on basic web access; they are locked out of an AI-powered learning and productivity ecosystem. At the same time, regions and school districts vary wildly in whether they prioritize foundational computer skills or jump straight to AI tools, creating uneven skill gaps across demographics. Human-I-T

## 5. Growing Pushback and "Cognitive Friction"

As AI tools have become effortless to use, a counter-trend has emerged within digital literacy: **intentional restraint**. Research and global surveys show rising concern—particularly among educators and humanities students—that over-reliance on AI erodes independent critical thinking, writing voice, and peer-to-peer collaboration. Knowing when *not* to use AI, and practicing independent problem-solving before consulting an algorithm, is now recognized as a vital part of healthy digital habits. Digital Education Council

## To explore specific angles of this shift:

Compare traditional digital literacy vs. modern AI literacy ↪

Explore frameworks schools use to teach AI literacy ↪