

Introduction

The students read a book. They read in the United States and Canada, while others read in Australia and in Korea. They discussed the story, and they wrote about it. What's the big deal, you may wonder; it's certainly not unusual for students to read in school. Perhaps not, but what makes these students unique is that they read and discussed the same book at the same time collaboratively, from classrooms scattered across thousands of miles of land and sea, as part of the Global Read Aloud Project. Not so long ago, the distance between these children would have been an impenetrable barrier. In today's digital world, however, distance and cultural differences are inconsequential. In the right environment, with appropriate tools, under the tutelage of properly trained guides, the 21st-century global learner can connect with billions of teachers anytime from any classroom from all corners of the world. And projects like the Global Read Aloud provide the backdrop for revolutionary acquisition and sharing of knowledge and skills. Most important, projects such as this spark a virtual dialogue that unites learners. Global Read Aloud creator Pernille Ripp describes the power of the project this way:

The sheer act of reading is intimate; yet when you use the power of a read aloud to connect students globally, we recreate that cocoon of safety all across the world. When we let the strangers in, when we allow others through our armor, we let the moment create a way to

start a discussion. So reading aloud the same book to students around the world ignites a global conversation. One that starts in a safe place for all these children, one that can lead to deeper connections, more empathy, and definitely more sharing of a love of books. (2014)

THE GLOBAL LEARNER

Students in elementary schools, middle and high schools, and many in colleges participate in the Global Read Aloud Project each year. These children, young adults and educators are perfect models of the global learner—someone who collaborates with other teachers and learners across all borders and barriers, using 21st-century digital tools to start and join powerful conversations about learning. The global learner is not a student in the strictest interpretation of the word (we tend to think of students as children, teenagers, and young adults in their twenties who may be pursuing advanced degrees). Global learning is not restricted by age or experience. The ubiquity of mobile devices has placed the Internet in the palm of our hands. This also puts literally billions of teachers and resources a finger swipe or voice command away.

So, global learners are pre-K–12 students. They are college students, but they are also schoolteachers and professors; they are firefighters, bankers, and landscapers. The global learner is a lifelong learner, who uses every available resource to create, maintain, and share content in a classroom or work place and with people around the world. The global learner is a content curator, who understands that with every word she reads and writes and with each picture or video she tweets or likes, she is both a teacher and a student. When we read a book or draw a picture, we grow; we learn. The second we interact with content and share it in person or online, we become global students and, in essence, global teachers. In the digital world, these two people are the same. The remainder of this book will examine and illustrate this concept.

LEAVING A DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Whether you realize it or not, you most likely have a digital footprint. Skeptical? Grab the closest mobile device, open Google, type your name in the search box and locate your footprint. Even if just a handful of tweets represent the bedrock of your social media activity, you will find yourself some place in that Google search. Once you become part of any digital record—a local news story, a blog post, part of a public report, such as school board minutes or, gasp, the police blotter—you exist online and you leave a digital footprint. People who are relatively inactive Internet users leave a passive footprint, but as social networks and mobile devices expand, active footprints are becoming commonplace. With the evolution of technology, students and teachers will undoubtedly create active digital footprints—indentations made online by the web pages, blogs, social media activity and emails they post. As social learning and content curation grow, students' digital footprints will also expand.

Understanding its meaning and the importance of this footprint is essential for global learners. College admissions deans and job recruiters will scrutinize what students are curating and how they are using the abundant information that the Internet provides. Your digital footprint tells a story about you. This is one more piece of a growing responsibility for teachers to educate students about the impact that social media and the digital world have on both their present and their future lives. “We want to ensure that our voices are the ones telling our story—we cannot let anyone else tell our story for us” (Sinanis & Sanfelippo, 2014, p. 7). The five global learning skills outlined in this book all contribute to one's digital footprint. As you learn these skills and consider how you might teach them to others, also consider how they impact the creation of a digital footprint.

MOBILE DEVICES

It can be argued that at one time pencil and paper were a student's most useful tools. However, it's difficult to deny that the mobile

device powers most activity in the daily life of the global learner. Understanding the impact that smartphones, tablets, eReaders, and other mobile devices have on learning is critical to not only all of today's students but also to all educators. "It is plausible that before this decade ends, all students, even many in elementary schools, will have a smartphone or a similar Internet-ready device" (Barnes, 2014, p. 22). Knowing that they are working with global learners, teachers must do all they can to harness the magnificent power of mobile devices for learning. There will be more on how this is done throughout the book, because as mobile tools evolve, how these devices influence global learning evolves, too.

CONNECTED MOMENT

The effective global learner is always considering the power of technology to reach a worldwide audience. When global learners create or share content, they are always mindful of how it molds their digital footprint. They are keenly aware of how the content crosses digital divides.

AN OCEAN OF RESOURCES

Global learners understand that Apple and Google offer millions of applications—most of which can be used for learning. In fact, both technology giants offer a massive suite of education tools, and software magnate Microsoft is joining this growing industry. In its infant stage of development, this book's working title was *5 Tools for the Global Learner*. My goal was to identify the five most important digital learning and content curation tools that intelligent teachers and students use. Thankfully, I realized just how dubious this notion was. The Internet contains an ocean of resources. Ask any connected educator to name the most important ones and, while there are sure to be some similar answers, their responses would likely compose a litany of important web tools. Some of these will be shared in later chapters. The idea that there is one go-to list of

tools for global learners is unrealistic. Mainly because the tools that students and teachers choose are a matter of preference (you may like Pinterest for website curation, while I may prefer Feedly). Plus, the constant evolution of the Internet brings with it an ephemeral quality; in other words, as new websites, software, and social networks crop up, they make many of their predecessors obsolete. Twitter would most certainly have made my top 5 list, and while I believe Twitter is here to stay, it's not unreasonable to believe that it may one day be replaced by something that doesn't currently exist. This is why digital skills are far more important than tools. The best global learners can adapt their skills to any device, website, or application, as long as global learners have attained the skills that are necessary to navigate the digital divide.

5 CRUCIAL SKILLS

As naming the five most important web tools or apps may be impossible, singling out the skills necessary for effective global learning is also challenging. Let me be completely transparent here. While I am widely regarded as an expert in education technology, mobile learning, and social media, I don't believe that any one person has the experience to say that a particular list of skills is the only worthwhile list of skills for global learning. This list was composed after much contemplation and discussion with friends, colleagues, and luminary connected educators. My hope is that this list will serve as a discussion starter. Perhaps in time, all of us will collaborate on an updated list of skills. In the meantime, here are five skills that I believe every global learner should have:

1. Creating and Sharing Digital Information
2. Using Social Media for Worldwide Sharing
3. Digital Publishing
4. Building a Personal Learning Network
5. Using Aggregators to Create, Maintain, and Share Content

Subsequent chapters will examine each of these skills and provide anecdotes and examples of various web tools that someone might use to demonstrate what everyone needs to navigate the digital world.

● ● ● ● **REFLECTION**

Have you considered your own digital footprint? What would a student or your own child find if he or she Googled you? How does your digital footprint define you? Do you embrace mobile learning and web tools in your classroom or at your school? Consider the impact of mobile devices, applications, and each of the 5 global learning skills introduced here. Are you maximizing these tools and skills, so you can become a global learner and a global teacher? Are there critical skills that are not mentioned here? The discussion continues on Twitter at hashtag #CorwinCE. Add your thoughts there as you read this book, and when you finish it.
