

Digital Reading as a Part of Digital Culture: Approach

Stiftung Lesen is committed to promoting the equality of all types of media, taking an open stance particularly in regards to digital media in general and, specifically, to digital reading media. Additionally, we also see digital reading media as offering tremendous potential for the promotion of reading ability.

Stiftung Lesen adopts an opportunity-based approach committed to a differentiated investigation of the individual parameters that guide and shape digital reading practices. We also consider aspects generally addressed by the field of media pedagogy and by the players involved in this area. The objective is to ensure that the positions adopted by Stiftung Lesen on digital reading relate to discussions on media pedagogy and issues frequently raised by disseminators of information.

Stiftung Lesen is convinced that digital media both require and promote reading skills. Approximately 60 percent of the digital media activities pursued by adolescents involve reading, with digital reading being comprised of both reading content in the digital media and reading using digital media. This also means that, today more than ever before, reading fluency is a core competency enabling individuals to partake in education, to evaluate information, to communicate with others, and to take an active part in shaping society. Intent on creating equal opportunities, Stiftung Lesen offers low-threshold consultancy services and project offerings that facilitate competency development for all target groups – at a family level, at school, or outside of school.

Digital Reading for all Target Groups: Procedure

In the eyes of Stiftung Lesen, digital reading is an option for all target groups. However, the suitability of the products, the recommended screen time, the areas of application, and the type of motivational potential associated with reading vary from one target group to the next.

For toddlers two years of age and older, it is recommended that they read children's book apps and interactive stories together with adults and with certain limitations placed on screen time. Children's book apps not only actively engage this age group, but also motivate fathers in particular to read out loud to their children. Moreover, they allow children to enjoy stories in situations in which reading is normally not practised - when travelling by car for example.

For children in preschool and primary school interactive story apps, educational apps, and formats that combine reading and game playing are especially suitable. Their motivational potential comes from the fact that they can present the act of reading in a different light and show that this new way of looking at it affords greater reading pleasure. The use of these apps should be accompanied by media competence training both in school and outside of school, as usage of the offerings designed for this age group requires basic competence in multimedia literacy and the acquisition of multimedia-oriented reading strategies.

For adolescents the main focus is on reading on digital media. This activity is frequently not even perceived as reading, as it is seen as entirely commonplace and far removed from the traditional concept of reading, which is associated with printed books, school, and grading pressures. Developing an awareness of one's own reading practices as an integral part of daily routines offers a valuable opportunity to foster reading skills. Non-readers in particular will suddenly perceive themselves as reading individuals and gain confidence from their own reading abilities.

For elderly readers and cross-generational situations the focus is not so much on reading on and with digital media. For this target group, digital media are primarily used as a link between generations. They are a means of facilitating mutual knowledge exchange, sharing experiences, and engaging in creative recreational activities.

Digital Reading Media for the Promotion of Reading Skills: Instruments

Digital reading media should not be recommended indiscriminately. To qualify for recommendation by Stiftung Lesen, digital reading media must comply with certain requirements and specifications.

Higher-level criteria are, on the one hand, suitability for a specific age group, which includes an age- and gender-appropriate range of subjects, a suitable language level, adequate information content, and an appropriate aesthetic artistic design. On the other hand, further criteria include suitability for a specific situation with variances to allow for independent usage, for sharing reading activities with others, for follow-up communication and action, for reading rituals, etc.

The requirements laid down in youth protection legislation need to be complied with (no external links, no advertisements, no in-app purchasing), and ease of operation and technical reliability should also be ensured.

Interactive elements must be incorporated meaningfully and allow the reader to feel he is actively taking part. Rather than distracting, multimedia capability should support the reading process and involve the reader at an emotional level. The text formats should be adaptable to allow for aspects such as font, volume of information, and audio support to be tailored to individual (reading) levels.

Digital Reading in the Projects of Stiftung Lesen: Credo

Stiftung Lesen takes the view that children and adolescents using digital (reading) media need guidance and instruction from adults. In order to support them in the digital world, however, the main influencers themselves must have the necessary media competency. Stiftung Lesen offers a range of services designed to help main influencers develop an awareness for this issue and to support them with concrete offerings in their efforts to impart media skills.

Stiftung Lesen provides a wide range of service offerings catering to different target groups in order to address the issues associated with digital reading. This includes services in the areas of advanced education, methodological and educational manuals, media recommendations, competitions, campaigns, and research activities. All these offerings are presented online at www.stiftunglesen.de in the section “Digitale Lesewelten” (“Digital Reading Worlds”).