In an international gathering, such as the EduSummitIT 2013, with so many researchers, educators and policymakers from across the world, it would be natural to assume a global perspective when addressing digital citizenship and literacies. In other words, what are the universal characteristics and features that would define a digital citizenship and literacy across the globe?

However, before attempting to outline a global citizenship and literacy, one might reasonably ask if a locus for digital citizenship and literacies even exists? A cursory review of the literature on global citizenship could better frame the issue. In other words, if scholars are divided on the very existence of global citizenship, how can we approach discourse on digital global citizenship and literacy?

As Green (citation) has pointed out,

National citizenship is an accident of birth; global citizenship is different. It is a voluntary association with a concept that signifies "ways of thinking and living within multiple cross-cutting communities—cities, regions, states, nations, and international collectives..." (Schattle 2007, 9).

Does the same hold with global digital citizenship and literacies? Is our digital “citizenry” largely an accident of birth? We are born into societies whose technical infrastructures and government policies frame our digital experiences. How much do these external factors shape the extent and quality of our digital citizenship? How much is our development as digital citizens (and growth in digital literacy) empowered or limited by factors related to nation-state identity, gender, regionalism, religion and religious tolerance, socio-economic status? Is it even possible for all individuals across the world to achieve the same levels of digital citizenship and literacy?

On the other hand, there are clearly aspirational characteristics of digital citizenship and literacy that we hold as goal for all people to achieve. For some, they must reflect the realities of a contemporary, 21st century society, which will likely see an increasing presence of social media, across all sectors, from business, to education to health care. For example, Mossberger and colleagues (2007) see a clear link between digital citizenship and a participatory culture. Many recognize certain cultural and socioeconomic limitations on full acceptance into a digital society, often referred to as “digital divide” (Bimber, 2012; Kularski, et. al, 2012), and treated extensively at the EduSummitIT 2011 (Resta, et al, 2012). And some (Ohler, 2010) directly address the intricate relationship among youth, a digitally mediated society, and formal educational structures, i.e., schools. The interrelationship among
schooling, virtual spaces, formal and informal learning has been a consistent theme at EduSummITs 2009, 2011, and, now 2013.

Another model is articulated by the non-profit iKeepSafe organization, which works across the world with public and private schools, school districts, corporations and governments. In this model, citizenship in the 21st century is not confined to country or geographical location. Adopting a "global citizen approach, iKeepSafe contends that modern technologies like telephones, television, and most of all, the Internet, allow for a global society where individuals can access information from around the world--in real time--despite being thousands of miles away. Significantly, these technologies do not simply allow for the transmission of information, but also facilitate two-way communication and participation. For example, entire communities thrive on social media platforms (chat groups, blogs, twitter, Facebook, etc.), founded on mutual interest rather than proximity. For iKeepSafe and others, an individual's ability to participate as a citizen in this new global society is contingent on a few key factors. For example, some of these factors include

**Access:** One must have convenient technology/internet access.

**Bandwidth:** One’s ability to participate on various online platforms may be determined by whether or not their technology allows for streaming, real-time updates, etc.

**Right to freely to communicate:** One will be hesitant to voice opinions or participate if doing so is against their government's laws.

**Victimization:** One’s participation may be hindered by cybercrime, identity theft, harassment or other threats that arise from using an unsecure network.

Assuming that these (and other) factors do not hinder an individual’s ability to participate as a citizen in the global digital society, there are some necessary but not sufficient concepts to consider. Developed by iKeepSafe in 2012, the BEaPRO index (http://www.ikeepsafe.org/bea-pro/info/) addresses these core competencies and skills that must be addressed for successful digital citizenship. A “six pillar” model is offered, which includes

**B- Balance:** Balancing Digital Usage

**E- Ethics:** Practicing Ethical Digital Usage

**P- Privacy:** Protecting Personal Information

**R- Relationships:** Maintaining Healthy & Safe Relationships

**R- Reputation:** Building a Positive Reputation

**O- Online Security:** Achieving Digital Security

These concepts materialized as iKeepSafe extensively reviewed existing research and measures regarding digital safety, security, privacy and health (citation(s)). Once identified, iKeepSafe designed an online questionnaire to assess and measure digital safety attitudes and competence in each of the six areas. The findings indicate that although many individuals want to foster good digital citizenship practices, most have limited knowledge about how to do so. It is important to identify areas of concerns for youth and families because some countries use these challenges, like children’s access to pornography, as
their public reason for filtering and restricting web access. This restriction significantly impacts the opportunity for full digital citizenship.

Yet, for others, international digital citizenship is highly contextualized. For example, in a StarTalk program, designed to develop proficiency in Hindi and Urdu, students were paired between US and Indian (for Hindi) and US and Pakistan (for Urdu) schools. Rich discourse using social media tools, and supported through mobile devices and laptops, became the forum for which language (and ideas and thoughts) were negotiated. The resulting “projects” were shared by students and faculty through the target languages, a major objective of the Startalk program. While there could be general consensus on the use of social media and mobile devices to leverage student interest, participation, and language proficiency, the identification and context of tool use was never too far from the project’s successful implementation. For example, investigations of the use of Facebook versus Orkut, Skype vs Oovoo, were initiated at the project’s beginning; yet, final decisions on optimum tool use could only be fully understood once the project had actually commenced, and communications among students and faculty, from across the participating countries, was launched. Beyond the technical intricacies of fostering communications among young people (mostly minors) from various countries, cultural dynamics demanded contextually based experiences. For example, one summer’s programming occurred during the Muslim Ramadan holiday, requiring great flexibility and sensitivity for those in the Urdu program. Additionally, there were cases a salient distrust by some families of faculty and staff perceived to be extensions of government based institutions.

Likewise, a project where a US university was being established on Chinese soil, featuring web-based, and social media supported. Such interaction were designed to take place not only at the Chinese campus, but also among faculty, staff and students at both the US and Chinese locations. While young people in US and Chinese societies can be seen staring at their mobile devices and texting endless messages to each other, the tools they use are largely mediated by certain bandwidth and policy issues. Thus, participating students, faculty, and staff learned to develop contextual digital literacies, reflecting technical, bandwidth and policy issues, e.g., when to use a VPN (virtual private network) vs. a public network; when to switch from Facebook to QQ; Twitter vs. WeChat; YouTube vs. Youku; the features of their mobile devices that worked best, depending on where they were being used.

Recognizing that development of global digital citizenship and literacy may be contextually based, it is reasonable to ask what are the baseline characteristics and features necessary to achieve any level in this membership? Once such a baseline is established, one could then begin to identify aspirational elements of digital citizenship and literacy, i.e., under ideal conditions—unlimited by technology barriers and policies constraints—how would optimal membership manifest itself? What would the full global digital citizen look like? How would s/he behave? What do educators; researchers and policy makers need to do to support such development? What can they do to maximum development in digital citizenship and literacy in any context?

**Issues/unresolved questions/concerns**

During the EduSummIT 2013, participants of the “thematic working group” addressing global digital citizenship and literacy will take the following steps:

1. Discuss a contextually based approach to digital citizenship and literacy.
2. Identify the characteristics that would establish both baseline and optimal development of digital citizens.
3. Delineate the steps that the educators, policymakers, and researcher can take to support optimal development of digital citizenship and literacy, within the context and scope of their work.

4. Consider the development of a survey, to be administered as broadly as possible to the international community of educators, policy-makers and researchers, to assess the relational development of baseline and aspirational digital membership.

5. Discuss ways in which the work of this thematic working group and the general EDuSummIT can be disseminated in the countries and organizations that they represent.

6. Determine outreach strategies to multiple stakeholder group practitioners most likely to benefit from EDuSummIT’s work.

**Recommended additional reading**

AboutBeAPro [http://www.ikeepsafe.org/be-a-pro/info/](http://www.ikeepsafe.org/be-a-pro/info/)


iKeepSafe, [iKeepSafe.org](http://www.ikeepsafe.org)


