

# Human Rights in the Digital Age: Placing Digital Rights, Digital Citizenship and Digital Literacy in Context

## A Guided Reading List

Marin Beijerbacht

[Wish Will Way Foundation](#) and [Digital Rights House](#)

10 December 2022

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December every year it is human rights day. In 1948 on this day the universal declaration of human rights was signed. Since then many things have changed, the biggest change since then is that now in the 21st century an era of technology has started. Though technology undoubtedly has improved living conditions for many people across the globe and has helped the human rights movement, new threats to human rights have arisen. In this piece some of the problems that the digital world has created for human rights will be laid out and further reading suggested. This shall be done at the hand of these concepts: digital rights, digital citizenship, and digital literacy. The inspiration for using these concepts comes from the 2021 paper [Digital Rights, Digital Citizenship and Digital Literacy: What's the Difference?](#) [1].

This piece is also the start of exploring the ties between article 1 and article 12 of the declaration of human rights. Article 1 concerns itself with human dignity and article 12 with privacy, concepts which today may be more relevant than ever. The exploration of the wider picture, placing human rights in the framework of the digital age presented here, is meant to provide a basis of understanding digital human rights, issues and views which ultimately influence how the relation between article 1 and 12 can be conceptualised. Without further ado, enjoy the reading!

### Digital Rights

Why is the digital world relevant for human rights? Well, the short answer is that digital technologies have found their way into every aspect of social, economic, political and personal life. You can imagine that because of this these technologies hold a lot of influence over us.

Here are 2 articles that lay out in general what kinds of problems have arisen for human rights in the digital age. They stress the importance of the subject and why anyone should care about it.

- [So Software Has Eaten the World: What Does It Mean for Human Rights, Security & Governance? - Part 1](#) from Human Rights Watch.

- [Digital Disruption of Human Rights - Part 2](#) from Human Rights Watch.

Digital rights are based on human rights and the concept of human dignity in the context of digital technologies.

The next 2 articles are about how human rights can be thought of in the digital age, what they in the context of our time could mean. The third article is about how human dignity can be thought of in the current era and how this relates to digital human rights with a focus on privacy.

- [Human Rights for the Digital Age](#) by K. Mathiesen [2]. The link directs to google scholar, the fourth result is an open access pdf. Due to some technical problems it is linked in this manner.
- [Digital Rights are Human Rights](#) by the Digital Freedom Fund. Which shows how many of the original human rights as defined in 1948 can be thought of in the current digital age.
- [On Human Dignity as a Foundation for the Right to Privacy](#) by L. Floridi [3].

Some interesting articles relating to privacy in particular can be found below:

- [Keys under doormats: mandating insecurity by requiring government access to all data and communications](#) by H. Abelson et al. [4].
- [The Right to Privacy in a Digital Age: Reinterpreting the Concept of Personal Privacy](#) by A.M. Brumis.

For children and young people, who are growing up in an age where every little bit of information is recorded, digital rights are an important matter. All of their data that is recorded, on its own but especially when combined, gives away a lot of detailed private information. It makes it easy to, for example, through behavioural data to influence them. Two articles on why this is a very important issue are below. The third article shows how the digital rights of citizens of African countries are being violated.

- [Children and young people's rights in the digital age: An emerging agenda](#) by S Livingstone et al. [5]
- [The datafied child: The dataveillance of children and implications for their rights](#) by D. Lupton and B. Williamson [6].
- [The Algorithmic Colonization of Africa](#) by A. Birhane.

## Digital Citizenship

When talking about digital rights, the concept of digital citizenship should be considered. What digital citizenship entails is explained in the first two articles below. The third goes more into depth how different 'regimes' of digital citizenship can be conceptualised.

- [Digital Citizenship: Meaning, Elements And Importance](#) Is a short read that introduces the concept of digital citizenship and the 9 elements of digital citizenship.
- [Digital citizenship and surveillance— digital citizenship and surveillance society — introduction](#) by A. Hintz et al. [7]. It nicely introduces a way of conceptualising digital citizenship.
- [Taxonomy for Emerging Digital Citizenship Regimes](#) by I. Calzada [8]. This paper is only available through an institution/university. However, the abstract already introduces the main concepts of interest.

A more philosophical view of citizenship in general and its modern implications can be found in the paper below. This article also discussed how dignity plays a role in citizenship.

- [Citizenship and Dignity](#) by J. Waldron [9].

## Digital Literacy

In the digital era inequalities exist, as not everyone has access or the skills to interact with digital technologies. This can prevent them from being digital citizens, something that is important to actualize their human rights today. Through increasing digital literacy the people that do not have the skills to participate in the digital world can be helped to find their voice there. For younger people, even though they may have the skills to interact online in media and commerce, obtaining digital literacy on other parts of being a digital citizen is important for the future. In the first article below an explanation is given of what digital literacy is and how it can be conceptualised. The next article is a proposal for revision of the previous model presented.

- [Towards a Theory of Digital Literacy: Three Scenarios for the Next Steps](#) by A. Aviram et al. [10]
- [Thinking in the Digital Era: A Revised Model for Digital Literacy](#) by Y. Eshet [11].

Because not everyone has the skills to participate online, a digital divide or participation gap has arisen. Why and how digital literacy is important for (digital) equity is discussed in the first article below. The second link is an info-graphic of modern day examples of the digital divide. The third article discusses a potential new digital divide around the understanding of algorithms.

- [The uses of \(digital\) literacy](#) by J. McDougall et al. [12]
- [Examples of the Digital Divide in the Modern Day](#) by students from Maryville University's Science in Management Information Systems program.
- [To be or not to be algorithm aware: a question of a new digital divide?](#) by A.B. Gran et al. [13]

## References

- [1] L. Pangrazio and J. Sefton-Green, “Digital rights, digital citizenship and digital literacy: what’s the difference?,” *Journal of new approaches in educational research*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 15–27, 2021.
- [2] K. Mathiesen, “Human rights for the digital age,” *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 2–18, 2014.
- [3] L. Floridi, “On human dignity as a foundation for the right to privacy,” *Philosophy & Technology*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 307–312, 2016.
- [4] H. Abelson, R. Anderson, S. M. Bellovin, J. Benaloh, M. Blaze, W. W. Diffie, J. Gilmore, M. Green, S. Landau, P. G. Neumann, *et al.*, “Keys under doormats,” *Communications of the ACM*, vol. 58, no. 10, pp. 24–26, 2015.
- [5] S. Livingstone and A. Third, “Children and young people’s rights in the digital age: An emerging agenda,” 2017.
- [6] D. Lupton and B. Williamson, “The datafied child: The dataveillance of children and implications for their rights,” *New Media & Society*, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 780–794, 2017.
- [7] A. Hintz, L. Dencik, and K. Wahl-Jorgensen, “Digital citizenship and surveillance—digital citizenship and surveillance society—introduction,” *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 11, p. 9, 2017.
- [8] I. Calzada, “Taxonomy for emerging digital citizenship regimes,” in *Emerging Digital Citizenship Regimes*, pp. 57–97, Emerald Publishing Limited, 2022.
- [9] J. Waldron, “Citizenship and dignity,” *NYU School of Law, Public Law Research Paper*, no. 12-74, 2013.
- [10] A. Aviram and Y. Eshet-Alkalai, “Towards a theory of digital literacy: three scenarios for the next steps,” *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2006.
- [11] Y. Eshet, “Thinking in the digital era: A revised model for digital literacy,” *Issues in informing science and information technology*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 267–276, 2012.
- [12] J. McDougall, M. Readman, and P. Wilkinson, “The uses of (digital) literacy,” *Learning, Media and Technology*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 263–279, 2018.
- [13] A.-B. Gran, P. Booth, and T. Bucher, “To be or not to be algorithm aware: a question of a new digital divide?,” *Information, Communication & Society*, vol. 24, no. 12, pp. 1779–1796, 2021.