

# EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN LITERARY AND DIGITAL LITERACY IN SCHOOL

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## Abstract

Two related questions are explored in this paper: What is the motivation for a literary blog activity in a “book-flooding” program? Under what conditions can such a blog activity be successfully implemented in the classroom? In order to answer these questions, we address the relation between literary and digital literacy. We see literary and digital literacy as parts of the overall literacy of the students. These parts of literacy are important in themselves, but we present research to show that they also can interact with each other and with other aspects of literacy in ways that have an accelerating effect on the students’ literacy as a whole. The research reported from serves as motivation for our own blog activity, which we present here in detail to demonstrate how such a digital literacy can be implemented. The presentation is accompanied by a discussion of some important conditions that are important for using digital tools as part of a potentially literacy enhancing “book-flooding” program in class.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper we discuss the potential of enhancing literacy through the use of digital resources as media for writing, publishing, sharing and discussing literature. We examine how students’ motivation for reading and writing may be enhanced by engaging the students in activities connected to digital literacy, more concretely, the activity of literary blogging. The blog activity is seen as a way to develop the students’ writing and also a way to trigger further reading, as the activity accompanies and builds on the students’ reading of literature.

The paper addresses the relation between literary, digital and overall literacy by discussing the didactic potential of a literary blog activity in class. We look at the status of digital literacy enhancement in (the Norwegian) school, and how the importance of developing digital literacy in school is viewed in official (Norwegian) educational political documents and in new reports from the field. We furthermore give an account of a variety of literacy researchers’ views on the role of writing as a pedagogical activity for the enhancement of literacy in general and of learning outcomes in all subjects. We moreover present international research on “book-flooding” programs, focusing on the activities included as part of the programs, and the results reported from the programs.

Finally and crucially in this paper, we report from our own study of a blog project and present some important conditions that should be met when working with digital tools as part of a “book-flooding” program in class.

### 1.1 Research design

The design is a research- and development project. The blog project is part of a bigger, overarching research project, a “book-flooding” program. The overarching project involves a partnership between two primary schools, two teacher education institutions and a public library. The aim of the overarching project is the development of literacy and inclusive education on the basis of providing students with extensive access to reading and the use of the public and school libraries in education.

The project was initiated by us as researchers. Institutional contact and cooperation was established with the leadership of the two schools and the director of the local public library. The project period is four years, from the end of 2007 to the beginning of 2011. The project involves three classes at each school. The project has initiated a teacher-librarian cooperation about educational planning, which involves “book-flooding” in the classroom and extensive use of the school library and the public library. See van der Kooij and Pihl (2009) [1], Pihl (2009) [2] and Tonne and Pihl (manuscript, to be presented) [3], for details and results of this ongoing project.

The blog project we report from in this paper, involves one of the schools, with its three fifth grade classes, their teachers, the school librarian and a librarian from the public library. We apply mixed methods in the blog project. The design includes intervention in the sense that the blog activity was initiated by the librarian from the public library and by us as researchers. In addition it includes participant observation, interviews and a survey about pupils’ reading and use of the public library.

## **1.2 Short description of the research school and the project**

Our research and development project reported from here is undertaken in a public primary school in the outskirts of a medium large Norwegian town. The project includes all the 54 students at the school’s 5<sup>th</sup> level. In this particular project we are trying out an internet tool, the blog, to facilitate digital writing activities to enhance the students’ general literacy and, more specifically, their literary literacy. The project aims at developing the students’ literacy skills by exploring alternative ways of teaching and learning, visiting the library, reading a great amount of literature which appeals to the students and using digital tools and the internet as frames for the students’ literacy activities.

In this project, the library is seen as an interesting place for a natural individual adaption for every student, in terms of teaching and learning. Systematic cooperation between the teachers and the school librarian in planning, facilitating, implementing and evaluating literacy events and learning activities is a central part of the project. “Reading time”, “sharing time”, regular “reading- and book loan time” in the school library, visiting the public library in town, having lessons with a real author of children’s books, writing stories and books themselves, are various literacy events in these project classes.

## **1.3 The concept of literacy**

Literacy is a common expression for reading and writing competence. Reading and writing are two of a kind. To be well-functioning in reading and writing today requires other skills and other types of knowledge and competences than reading and writing did 100 years ago. A useful definition of what literacy is today, we find, for example, in the description of the conference *Literacy as World Making - NERA 2009*, which we adopt in our work: “Literacy is (...) understood as communicative practices that shape the world we live in, determine how we read and write the world, how we see, understand and shape the relationship between ourselves, nature and our communal life. Literacy thus means empowerment for the individual and is a precondition for a functioning democracy.” [4]

Our understanding of literacy is furthermore based on Barton (1994/2007) [5]. According to Barton, reading and writing are considered as practices that develop in broad and complex contexts. Writing and reading activities relies on both individual and collective history. In such a framework, literacy can be described as the study of culture and society specific written practices, as embodied in the text, and text usage. It necessitates taking into account the effects of social and cultural situating (see also Barton et al. 2000 [6]). This means that one is aware that all writing and reading occurs at a time and in a place. Among other things, this means that one has to think about how cultural heritage, educational, linguistic and literary traditions support and encourage certain forms of reading and writing skills, but restricts others.

In the following, we discuss important motivations for a blog project. We aim at presenting such a project as the promising didactic activity we believe it to be for the enhancement of the type of literacy we have described in this section.

## 2 MOTIVATIONS FOR A BLOG PROJECT

### 2.1 Motivating a blog project: The importance of developing digital literacy in school

In the present Norwegian national curriculum (from 2006) inclusion and “adapted teaching” are core values. The curriculum points out several “competence goals” that the students’ are supposed to have reached after the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade in primary school. Basic skills in reading and writing and using digital tools are to be integrated in these goals (together with oral presentation and mathematics). In this context a blog project may be seen as a Kinder Egg; it may serve as a means for the enhancement of the three basic skills reading, writing and using digital tools.

In the five-year program: “Program for digital competence 2004-2008, The Norwegian Ministry of Education defines digital literacy as “the competence that bridges the gap between the skills of reading, writing and mathematics and the skills required to use new digital tools and media in a creative and critical way.” One of four specified goals in the program requires that in 2008, digital literacy will be central in education at all levels. All learners, in and outside schools and universities / colleges, shall be able to use information and communication technology (ICT) in a safe, comfortable and creative way to develop the knowledge and skills they need to be full participants in society.

A status description of the five-year program conducted in 2008 (Rambøll Management 2008) [7] shows that several goals are achieved in the field of infrastructure. The overall competence of teachers however, is inadequate. There is no coordinated approach to how ICT should be integrated for educational purposes. That is, compared to other countries, Norway is far ahead as regards the scope of ICT equipment in schools. Despite this, ICT is used for learning purposes to a very limited extent.

The report “Bare bok gjør ingen klok” (‘Only book does noone wise’) - about ICT and education (Haugnæss et.al. 2008) [8], gives a description of how ICT is used in Norwegian schools today, and analyses important change drivers and barriers to adopting ICT in education. The focus is on primary and secondary schools. Among the conclusions, it is pointed out that while teachers’ motivation and competence is a potential barrier to further development, there are indications that students’ general ICT skills and motivation are drivers for development (Haugnæss et.al 2008) [8]. The fact that almost 90 percent of today’s 9 to 19 year old children and young adults in Norway have PC with internet at home, and 85 percent of all 10-year-olds have their own mobile phone, indicates that children and young people growing up today have very good access to, and knowledge about, the use of digital media and utilities. This gives a low user threshold, and a great learning foundation. However, informal use of ICT is different from the use of ICT for learning purposes. Although many of the students are good at using ICT for “recreational purposes”, they may lack the competence to use ICT in a learning situation. This must be a task for the school (see also Skaar (2009) [9] for discussions of these points). The Program for digital competence 2004-2008 emphasizes that there are indicators suggesting that students often become passive consumers in the use of ICT, and do not receive adequate training in, among other things, the critical use of information on the Internet. This is also a crucial issue that has to be dealt with at school.

The latest report from ITU (*ICT in Education*) (2009) [10] concerning the pedagogical and didactic use of ICT in the Norwegian school concludes that although Norway has one of the most ambitious curriculum goals in the world, in particular the goal that ICT is to be used in all subjects and in all grades, the primary school in Norway has a long way to go to realize these goals. Here, too, it is noted that there has been a great commitment concerning investments in hardware and technical solutions in the schools, but the pedagogical use has not increased as expected.

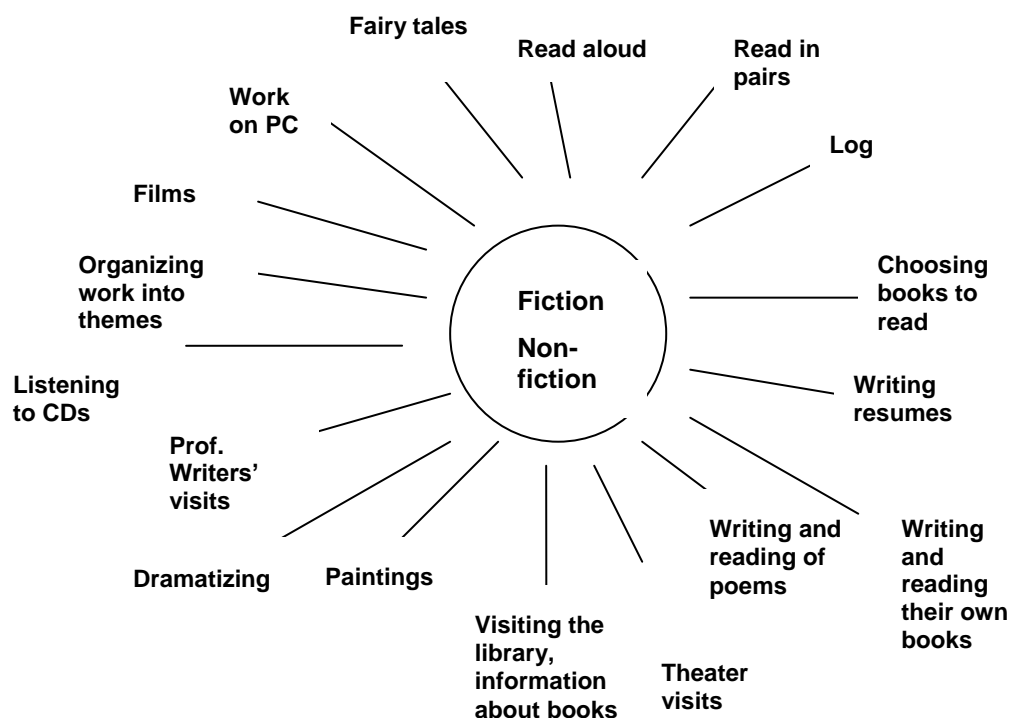
We hold that in the information society, digital skills are presupposed. Therefore the school must provide time and learning support in order to decrease the gap between children with PC and ICT competent parents at home and children without these resources. The school must seek to avoid creating social differences, not strengthening such differences. It is a challenge to develop good pedagogical ways of using ICT, ways that do not blindly import the students’ culture, but provides good situations for learning, with adequate structure and content. A blog project can serve as one way to ensure that all these aspects are taken care of. It may include didactic activities that enable the teacher to balance the role of the school as a provider of a safe digital environment and as a facilitator for exploration of exiting digital resources.

## 2.2 Motivation 2 for a blog project: A valuable part of a “book-flooding” program

“Book-flooding” programs present the students for a vast amount of literature, both fiction literature and also often factual literature. They often involve teacher-librarian cooperation about educational planning, which involves the “flooding” of books in the classroom and extensive use of the public library. Studies of book-flooding programs indicate that students’ voluntary reading of interesting books, and reading books aloud to the students, contribute to motivation for reading and incidental learning of language and content (for an overview of several book flooding programs see Elley 1991 [11], and Axelsson 2000 [12]). The studies indicate that book-flooding programs have strong potential for the development of literacy for all pupils.

A concrete example is a study reported in detail by Morrow, Pressley, Smith and Smith (1997) [13]. They examined the effect of a literature based program integrated in the science class. They investigated what effect a literature-based program integrated into science teaching had on achievement, attitudes and the use of literature. In one year they followed six 3rd grade classes. Group 1 included an experimental scheme that involved regular science teaching, but the literature that was used was diverse. They therefore complemented the reading of the text book with the reading of other books on the subject. Group 2 included an experimental scheme that integrated the literature in the science class, so that the students could read a wide selection of literature, and they wrote about what they had read. In this way they processed the information for themselves. Some other classes, here referred to as Group 3, constituted a control group who had normal, traditional schemes, with both traditional teaching and the traditional textbook. Morrow et al found that Group 2 scored significantly higher statistically in two of the three content objectives in science. In addition they scored higher on the writing skills and the other literacy skills.

As was noted by Morrow et al., in such book-flooding programs, it is crucial that the students are allowed time in class to do work which is organized in relation to their reading. Such work may amount to a variety of activities, as is illustrated in the sun-shaped figure in Fig. 1:



**Fig.1: Typical activity types included in a book-flooding program. The illustration is based on Alleklev and Lindvall 1998 [14] who describe the activities organized in the *Listiga Råven* ('Smart fox') program in Stockholm, Sweden (Alleklev and Lindvall 1998 [14], 2003 [15])**

A successful collaboration between school and library in Rinkeby in Sweden (Alleklev et.al. 1998 [14] and 2003 [15]) showed that the facilitation of a comprehensive work with literature from the children are young gives very good results when it comes to reading skills. All the children in the class of the project were from linguistic minorities, none of the students had Swedish as their first language, although Swedish was the language of instruction in school.

The Rinkeby project included good access to high quality books in Swedish, it included structured reading education, and it was pointed out that the children were allowed to find books of their own choice, with good advice from the librarian and with a wide selection of quality books to choose from. In addition, structured work after reading was emphasized, activities like those included in Fig. 1.

This way of working in the particular project in Rinkeby resulted in the astounding accomplishment that the nine year old minority-language students after four years of involvement in the project performed better on the reading tests in their second language Swedish than the average student in Stockholm, including the students with Swedish as first language (Taube and Fredriksson 1995 [16]). They also performed better than average in other subjects such as mathematics. One of the explanations for this is that spending time reading and writing, working with activities related to reading in *school*, has been of vital importance, particularly for children who come from homes where there is little culture for reading.

Summing up, studies show that giving students access to a large amount of interesting children's literature, improves the students literacy skills and increases their ability to learn other school subjects. A blog project is a digital writing activity which can be embedded in a broader book-flooding setting like those described above. Such an activity, although not mentioned in the studies above, is likely to have a particular potential in a setting where the students are given the opportunity to read and work with a great amount of quality literature. Furthermore, writing activities connected to the students' reading are pointed out in research as particularly interesting, as reading and writing in some aspects complement each other, and in this way writing in connection with the reading of literature may prove particularly positive for the learning and the enhancement of literacy. A blog project is one such possible writing activity connected to the students' reading. In the following we look closer at the relation between reading, writing and learning.

### **2.3 Motivation 3 for a blog (writing) project: Writing complements reading**

Reading and writing are in many ways similar actions, but researchers who have compared the two, find that they are different with regard to activity, strategy and purpose, and may therefore complement each other cognitively. This is interesting in view of literacy enhancement. Langer (1984) [17] finds that writing and reading are different in that pupils are slightly more concerned with bottom-up issues such as syntax, text and lexical choices when writing than when reading. She also finds that pupils are more aware of the strategies they use in order to get at meaning when writing than when reading. Langer and Flihan (2000) [18] put it this way: "Together, the work on reading and writing processes indicates that writing and reading are deeply related activities of language and thought that are shaped through use. The structures and strategies that writers and readers use to organize, remember, and present their ideas are generally the same in writing and reading. However, the structure of the message and the strategies used to formulate and organize it are driven by purpose and therefore different."

Writing thus complements the students' reading, and motivates the students to read more. It drives the students forward in their search for meaningful knowledge. When writing with the aim of finding out something that they wonder about, the students are eager to read more, then write more and read more again, being creative and active, accelerating literacy development and learning in general. Armbruster, McCarthy and Cummins (2005) [19] explicate this connection between writing, creativity and learning. They hold that the act of composing promotes thinking and learning. They furthermore maintain that writing can be a tool for developing concepts and generalizations, promote critical thinking and problem solving, analyze and reflect on their thinking and understanding, gain new insights, and contribute to learning and remembering content information.

I.e. they hold that the input processing of ideas and lessons promote learning. Various tasks involving writing provide good chances of developing both academic knowledge, reasoning and literacy skills.

This was also seen in the mentioned study by Morrow, Pressley, Smith and Smith (1997) [13], where they examined the effect of a literature based program integrated in the science class. It was shown that the group that included a lot of writing in their organized activities scored higher on two of three content measures, on writing skills and other literacy skills.

In other words, writing as part of the work with academic subjects is a win-win situation; the acquisition of academic knowledge and literacy skills will win in the approach where writing is a part of the work with academic subjects, since students learn subject matter better than they otherwise would have done, and because they exercise to read and write in meaningful situations. Trøite Lorentzen and Smidt (2008) [20] also emphasize precisely this when discussing the Norwegian national curriculum and the basic skills reading, writing, mathematical skills, oral skills and digital skills, mentioned above. These skills are to be included in all subjects in school, according to the national curriculum. Trøite Lorentzen and Smidt argue that students should write in all subjects because it gives a meaning to their writing. Students write to learn, which enables them to achieve the academic goals in school (Trøite Lorentzen and Smidt 2008 [20]).

In other contexts we also find evidence that a treatment of the subject matter through an interaction of writing and reading provides an additional positive effect on literacy-related skills. The results from PIRLS 2006 – stating the main conclusion for Norway, shows for example, that teachers in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in 2006 more often facilitates work with the texts after reading – tasks that often involve writing – than in 2001. And, importantly, the more they do this, the better the students' literacy (Begnum et al. 2007, the PIRLS report [21]). Teachers who report that they engage students in more activities after reading, have students who have better reading skills, and students who say that they often participate in these activities, generally have better reading skills.

We now go on to describe and discuss our blog project, in the light of its potential for enhancing both digital literacy and other fields of literacy as laid out above. We view the use of our blog as a writing activity, which therefore may have the positive effects described above, i.e. the positive effect of writing activities embedded in a book-flooding project, and the positive effect of writing complementing the students' reading and motivating them to further reading, creativity and learning.

### **3 THE BLOG**

An important development of the World Wide Web during the past few years is the development of several simple Internet publishing tools which have made the World Wide Web into a “read and write” web (Richardson 2009 [22]). One of these publishing tools is the blog. A blog (weblog) is an updated web site where one or more authors can publish posts. Posts are often dated in reverse chronological order, where the last post automatically is added at the top of the blog's front page. The front page contains a certain number of posts. Previous posts are archived and can be found again by clicking on a headline in the left or right field. There are different publishing tools for blogging, and one of these is blogspot.com, which we are using for our literary blog in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

A significant factor in the research we have referred to above is the discovery that schools succeeding in enhancing students' reading and writing skills, have teachers who facilitates and leads both oral and written work in connection with the reading of texts in different genres. Teachers in the referenced studies also motivate students to read by way of presenting the books to others. Teachers, librarians or students presenting and talking about the books play a major role for the students' motivation.

The blog is a good way for combining different activities connected to the reading. Writing blog posts is a way of presenting books, but the blog also gives the opportunity to discuss books. A blog is interactive; the readers can respond to the posts they read. In this way, the blog can engage discussions about reading. Writing a blog also combines reading and writing, and you can write for an audience outside the classroom. The blogging starts with reading. Knowing that they are going to write about the book after reading, the students will be aware of things to write about while they read. In this way, the blogging might develop more conscious and critical readers.

Some of the benefits of using a blogging tool to publish book reviews and literary conversations, we find in the availability, usability and the nicety of the design, which is a motivating factor for students. The fact that the students' texts are published as soon as they have written them may be an additional motivating factor. The blog is also a space where the students can collaborate and by this learn from each other. The students, the teachers and librarians can work side by side, even though the librarian from the public library physically is situated in another place.

At the blog, the students can edit their posts immediately or later, also from a home computer connected to the Internet. In David Barton's (2007) [5] terminology, writing about a book you have read is characterized in what he refers to as various "literacy practices". It is a "literary event", among several "literary events" students participate in at school. The activities included in the literary blog, are thus literary events and examples of literacy practices that add to the students' overall literacy.

### 3.1 The literary blog activity in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the project school

The teachers in the three classes in 5<sup>th</sup> grade integrate the literary blog as "ordinary" academic work on reading, writing, listening and conversation in their Norwegian class. They ensure that the work with the blog is related to the goals of the national and local curriculum, and they find time to work on the blog at school. Teachers provide training and guidance of students. One of the genres the students work with in their own writing in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, in accordance with the curriculum, is *book review*. The students have a template in the text book in the subject Norwegian, and they had prior to the blog activity written book reviews by hand. They were also familiar with the use of PC, and the step towards publishing on the blog was not a big one, neither regarding the content nor the technical issues, although there are normal differences within the student group when it comes to both academic and technical skills.

To succeed with a literary blog it is crucial that the work with the blog is included in the annual plans for the class. It is clear, as we pointed out earlier in the paper, that publishing on the blog maintains several of the basic skills in the curriculum; reading, writing and digital skills. Also more specific academic content areas in the mother tongue (or second language) subject can be covered.

Starting a blog project can be difficult in the beginning, both for teacher and students. There are some potential practical problem areas, for instance the access to computers and the Internet. The access to computers for our students in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade we studied is relatively good; they retrieve a portable computer from a trolley. The Internet access is also good. A factor for the success of a blog activity in class, is that it must be easy to administrate. In our case, for example, everybody logs in with the same password and username. Students, teachers and librarians can read the blog, create posts, write comments, edit and change the texts. By using a common username and password, all the users have the possibility to change and delete each others posts, and in the worst case remove the whole blog. This was one of our concerns in the beginning of the blog project, but it turned out not to be a problem; none of the students have been changing or removing the other students' texts in the project. This is, however, a potential danger.

Using blogs in class, one must consider the children's safety and privacy. In connection with the publishing, it is important to focus on what is appropriate and acceptable to publish and what is not. In our blog project, the children only sign their posts with their first name. We have also discussed ways of communication with the children: What is acceptable to say in a comment, and what is not acceptable? It is a question whether we should have rules for the comments or not. In a blog used in a school setting, it is particularly important to avoid comments that may hurt others. We have therefore talked with the students about what aspects of other students' posts they were supposed to comment on and what they were not supposed to comment on. The comments should for example focus on the books, and not on errors in the other students' writing.

Another question to be considered is how public the blog should be. Blogs are normally public – everyone can read them. But the blog tools also allow certain access limitations. In our project, we have for now decided to keep the blog open for all readers. When one has such an open access, it is particularly important to protect the children's privacy, as mentioned above.

To keep the blog well organized, we encouraged the students from the start to put a category or tag on their posts. This has so far lead to a great amount of categories, and the overview is therefore not as good as we wanted. An improvement in this respect could be to label the categories before starting publishing, and to discuss with the students some simple rules for categorizing books in order to keep the blog "tidy".

Looking a bit ahead in time, we consider another tool for our project. This tool is Wikispaces. It may prove to be better with regard to some of the aspects discussed above. Wikispaces, or wikis, is a "social software" that enables users to cooperate, publish, update and share information on the Internet. Like in a blog, in wikis you have the ability to create multimodal texts. Again, all users can edit, and thus also delete the published material. However, all published material is saved so that it can be retrieved if necessary. In this respect wikis has an advantage compared to the blog. The wiki

also has the opportunity to combine different subjects in the same wiki in a clear manner. If the students use the wiki in several subjects, it will be easier to learn and remember how to use, and it will be possible to work more interdisciplinary. Last, but not least the wiki maintains the students' safety and privacy better than the blog, since every user must ask the administrator for permission to join.

In any event, for any such social software used in class, a relevant question is how much of the scheduled school time should be used to keep the blog or wiki "alive". Writing on the blog is only one of several activities connected to reading in this project. In spring 2009 the students published book reviews on the blog about once a month. One of our experiences in the project is that the longer time there is between each time the students worked with the blog, the more they had forgotten about the technical processes of blogging. We therefore believe that one should try to work with the blog or wiki in class on a regular and relatively frequent basis.

### **3.2 Content and structure of the texts**

The posts on a blog can take many forms. Before our project started, we discussed if there should be a common structure for the book reviews. The students had, as mentioned before, already written book reviews after a structure in the text book. We therefore decided to suggest this model as a common structure: 1) Presentation of the book, 2) Other books written by the author, 3) Brief summary, 4) "Something I liked about the book", 5) Do I recommend the book? A book review model text was published for the students on the blog.

A question concerning content and structure of the published texts is whether the texts should be assessed. Even though the students had access to a model text showing a good structure, it turned out that everybody did not use this structure in their posts. Wanting this blog to be a motivating space for writing in connection to reading, we decided not to make the texts on the blog subject to assessment. The students were guided in their writing, but the published posts were not formally assessed.

Looking at the quality of the published book reviews, we find a great variety both regarding the text content, the text length and the students' writing skills. Some students write texts that follow the suggested structure, with correct spelling and a certain length. Other students write more incomplete texts. Most of the texts in our project focus on the book summary. Some of the texts only contain a short summary of the book. Some texts also contain a short recommendation or assessment of the book. To develop the students' competence in writing book reviews, we find that it is important to develop the awareness of the book review genre, and gradually increase the demands of the published texts. This can be done in the form of process writing with supervision and guidance from the teachers. Also, the students must have clear knowledge of the criteria that the teachers use when they guide, evaluate or assess the texts.

### **3.3 Collaboration**

To facilitate the blog activity, it is crucial that the teachers and librarians collaborate in a structured way. The activity is in our case part of the overall book-flooding project with organized visits to the library and borrowings of book cases of library books to be used in the class rooms, etc. For this blog activity, the librarian at the public library created the blog for the class, she also regularly presents new books in the classroom and on the blog. She is a person who the students know and relate to in a personal manner. In the fall semester she was present at the school library two hours a week after school to keep the library open for students who wanted to read, borrow books and write on the blog. The librarian supervised students in choosing books and in publishing on the blog.

The school librarian does many of the same tasks as the librarian from the public library in the collaboration with the teachers in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In addition she has authored a manual for the blog, and she accepts students once a week in the school library during the school hours, and she is then often prepared for reading sessions and book conversations with the students.

We find, from our experience with the blog activity as part of the book-flooding program, that it is of utmost importance that the librarian's literary and presentational competence is acknowledged and appreciated by the teachers. Furthermore, it is important to be aware that there are crucial structural differences between schools and libraries which have implications for the professional roles of teachers and librarians. The teaching profession is obligated, not only to qualify pupils and students, but to assess them as well. Librarians, however, seem to have a less ambivalent professional task

compared to the teachers. Librarians are obliged to assist and qualify people who visit the library on the basis of the wishes of the person in question. It is not the professional task of librarians to assess or control the people who use the library. It is crucial, however, that the librarians acknowledge the assessment obligations of the teachers. For the teachers to involve themselves in an activity like the literary blog, they must feel convinced of the activity's potential for enhancing the students' literary, digital and overall literacy, or other fields in which the students are assessed. Only when they are convinced of this potential, the teachers will feel that they can plan to let the students spend valuable school time on a project.

As we have seen, Section 2 of this paper is entirely devoted to presenting motivations for a blog activity. Our experience in our particular book-flooding program is that such motivational factors are important to convey to the teachers, in order for them to let the students take part in the activities during planned sessions in class. We have experienced in our project that the most convincing and motivating way to convey the good potential of literacy enhancing activities is that the teachers see for themselves that it works, i.e. that it is clear that the activities accelerate the literacy development of the students (see van der Kooij and Pihl 2009 [1]). One must therefore take into account that establishing an activity like the literary blogging in class may be a gradual and collaborative task.

Some practical questions regarding the cooperation concern how much time the librarians can spend with the students. The blog represent a new dimension in book flooding programs, because the blog is an additional arena for presenting and discussing books independent of time and space. It therefore gives the librarians opportunity to work with the students without physically being in class.

#### **4 SUMMING UP AND LOOKING AHEAD**

In this paper we have presented several studies that show that schools that succeeded in their work on literacy, tend to have teachers that initiate discussions about the texts and motivate the pupils to read by presenting a great amount of books of different kinds. In addition they engage the pupils in a vast amount of activities connected to the reading. In our experiences, blog publishing is a well suited activity connected to reading. By blog publishing students can discuss the books they read. In addition, it is a way to develop the student's writing and digital literacy, and it can be a way to trigger further reading. The blog can easily be integrated in the "ordinary" work at school, and it can be related to several goals of the national curriculum. The blog also is a way to bring students, teachers and librarians closer in a practical way. This gives "book-flooding" programs a new dimension for structured work connected to the students' reading.

What seems to be needed for a literary blog project to be successful, is that the teachers collaborate well with the librarians. There should be concrete, planned and structured collaboration between the teachers and the school librarian or the public librarian. The teachers must yield time to the activity and they must acknowledge the activity's potential for enhancing literary, digital and the overall literacy of the students. Also the technicalities with log-in procedures and other accessing issues at school should be kept to a minimum in order to minimize practical problems. Finally, it is important that the activity is done on a regular basis, for the students and teachers to be as ease with the technology and the features of the blog.

Our literary blog project started in October 2008. In cooperation with the teachers and the librarians, we are now trying to develop the blog into a tool that both teachers and students will find useful and motivating in their work. We look at the benefits of interaction, seeing neither literary literacy nor digital literacy as primary in relation to the other. Both are important parts of the education. The blog project can turn out to be a win-win situation where enhanced literary and digital literacy, and improvement in other aspects of literacy may be the result. Our hypothesis is that in addition to the strengthening of the overall reading skills that increased focus on reading can lead to, the blog can help to increase students' literary competence, their writing competence, and their digital competence. In this paper we have been arguing for this point of view by looking at these aspects in these ways:

##### *A. Enhancing reading skills and literary skills*

Through the blogging, the students read more or they read as least as much as before. They gain knowledge of far more books than before, through their classmates', teachers' and librarians' written book reviews on the blog. Through the book reviews on the blog the students may be motivated to read more, also in their spare time. Through the categorization of the blog, they become aware of and get knowledge of the different (fiction) literary genres, and they must consider how to categorize the book they have read and written about (with the help of peers and / or teacher / librarian).

### B. *Enhancing writing skills*

To be good at writing, you have to read much and write often. It is also important to have good models. There are various ways to compose a book review, but for students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, it may be advantageous to have a template. The crucial thing about the literary blog is that the students find the writing meaningful and communicative, that their pieces of writing are actual "literary events", embedded in a large collection of "literacy practices" (Barton 2000 [6]).

### C. *Enhancing digital competence*

To become a competent user of digital tools, instruction and training is necessary, and schools must ensure that students regularly use digital tools under supervision at school.

In the subject curricula the five basic skills are integrated in a way that is adapted to each subject (being able to read, being able to express oneself orally, being able to express oneself in writing, being able to develop numeracy and being able to use digital tools). In the subject Norwegian this implies that students should be able to use digital tools in writing processes, in the search for information, and by producing interactive and complex texts. In addition to their own writing about books they have read, students can comment on each other's book reviews on the blog, and they can discuss the books further. This is one of many ways to integrate the development of digital competence in academic work: Digital media - literary content.

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