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Skim, Dive, Surface

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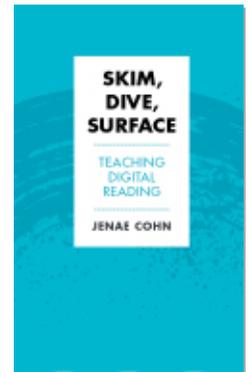
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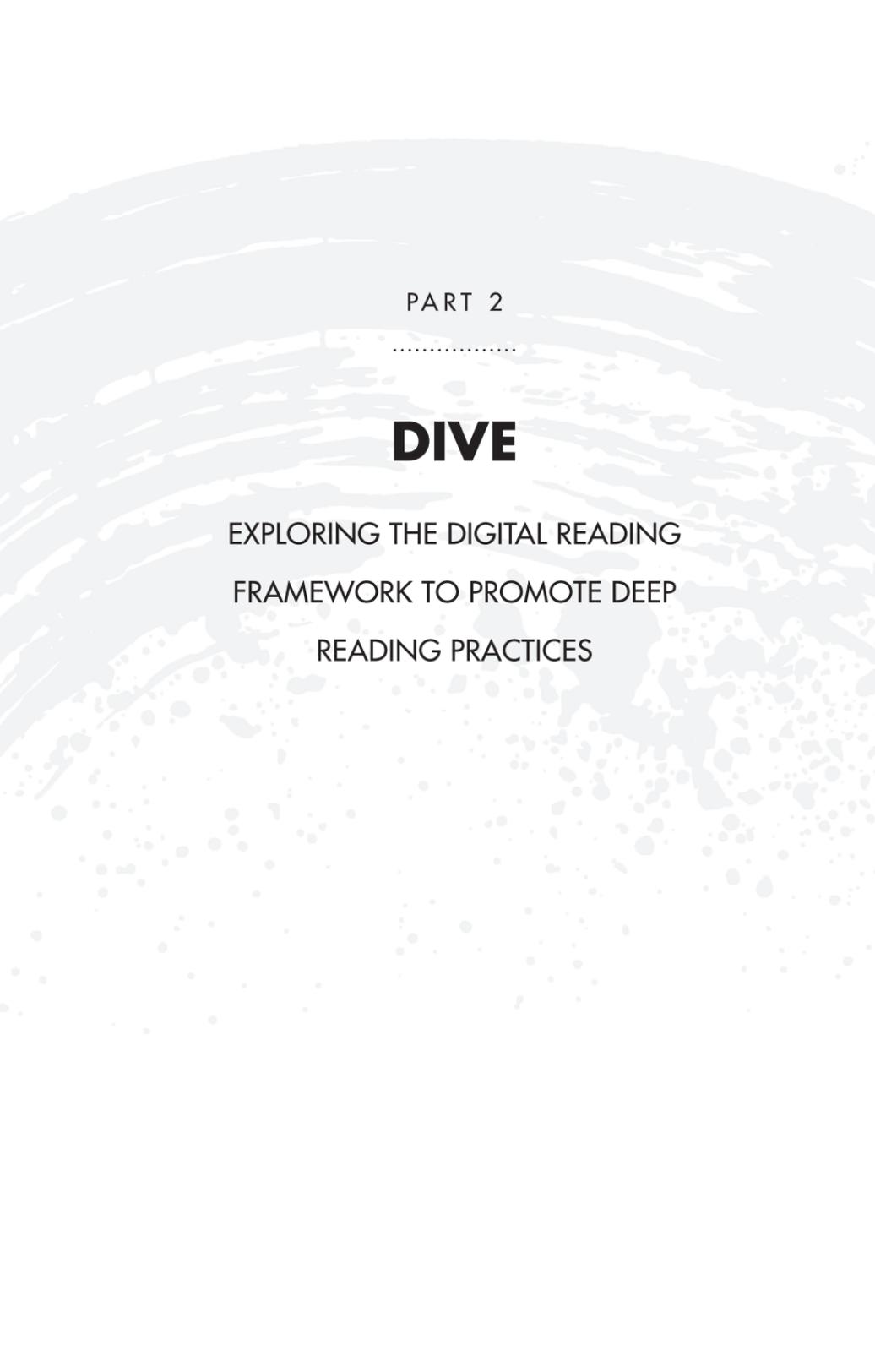
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PART 2

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DIVE

EXPLORING THE DIGITAL READING
FRAMEWORK TO PROMOTE DEEP
READING PRACTICES

.....

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DIGITAL READING FRAMEWORK

CURATION, CONNECTION, CREATIVITY,
CONTEXTUALIZATION, CONTEMPLATION



It's easy to draw a lot of binaries in our thinking about reading. We may be tempted to say that reading is good for us under certain conditions and bad for us under others. But what we've also seen in the chapters up until this point is that these binaries can just as easily be disrupted. We come by our assumptions about good and bad reading honestly. We may be drawing upon our own experiences or relying upon teacher lore to advance our understanding of what good reading should look like. Plus, assumptions tend to lie beneath the surface of our conscious lives. We often don't even think about why we do what we do or why we have particular preferences in our reading practices. We tend to do what we're used to doing, and it's easy to believe that everyone feels the same way. Yet in acting upon these assumptions

about what good reading is or should be, we may dismiss reading practices that don't align with our own expectations or experiences.

When we say that reading can only happen in certain spaces at certain times, we're ignoring all of the students who can't read in those spaces at those times. These concerns bring the key tension of teaching reading directly to the fore: we know that reading well is important to understanding knowledge, but if we don't know exactly how to delimit what reading is, then what teaching reading well looks like can feel slippery and hard to delimit.

Although we defined what reading is in our opening chapter, it's worth revisiting the definition here within the context of teaching. As we move forward, we'll think about reading openly and inclusively as being the processing and acquiring of new knowledge, whether that's through visual or auditory modes or in digital or print spaces. As Maryanne Wolf puts it, "reading is ultimately about an encounter between a reader and another mind that leads to thinking beyond ourselves" (2016, p. 3). When we read actively, we consider not just our own positionalities, but we imagine ourselves applying what we're learning perhaps to ourselves, but also to places beyond us. To that end, when we conceive of teaching reading, we can focus on strategies that encourage students not just to absorb content, but to apply it, question it, and rethink it with the text's audience and purpose in mind.

I am not the first to name digital reading strategies as requiring unique approaches to engaging with text. Reading researchers have been tackling frameworks for reading in the digital age for quite some time. In developing a framework for digital reading in this book, I put several of these ideas in dialogue with each other so that we can fully

unpack what teaching reading well across digital and print spaces and within many different disciplines may look like.

I've developed this framework with the guiding principle that the material constraints and affordances of our reading and writing technology must be central to how we conceptualize learning. We cannot escape the factors that dictate what kind of reading is possible to complete. We cannot ignore, for example, that when we read from printed books, the bindings and our ability to keep the pages flat (from curling up) may change what we're willing to read and how. We cannot ignore that when we read on screens, our eyes may strain from the blue light that projects outward. At the same time, we also cannot escape how the material factors of our reading experience shape our intellectual experience too. In a printed text, the experience of encountering written marginalia puts us in direct contact with past readers, whereas in a digital text, the experience of following a link (or even encountering digital comments or annotations) also launches us directly into a larger network of readers. Although the form of our reading does not necessarily stop us from reading anything, our material ability to access certain kinds of words, sentences, or phrases on particular pages necessarily changes our thinking and responses to that reading.

Acknowledging the material constraints and affordances of reading across print and digital spaces is, at its core, aligned with Universal Design for Learning (UDL). To accommodate the ways in which students may access learning in their classrooms or on the go, a goal of UDL can be, according to Thomas Tobin and Kristen Behling (2018), an opportunity "to reduce barriers to learning for everyone . . . we serve the broadest audience by situating UDL as a way to reach mobile learners through anytime, anywhere

interactions” (p. 9). To that end, institutions have to consider how different students are able to enter into and participate in these growing choices for learning spaces.

Some instructors may have questions at this point about whose responsibility it is to give students choices about where and how they access their reading experiences, digital or not. Some educators argue that they can’t necessarily anticipate all of the possible students that may enter their classroom spaces and, therefore, they cannot make multiple options for reading available to their students. To this end, I take up Anne-Marie Womack’s (2017) argument that accommodation is “the process of teaching itself” (p. 494). Although a UDL framework is imperfect and risks flattening out disabled perspectives by assuming that any one universal set of pedagogies can work for everyone, Womack’s case that UDL “begins closer to inclusivity than traditional design” is well taken and suggests that the more options we can give to our students, the more agency we can afford them, the more empowerment to learn we engender in them thereafter (p. 500). Inspiring this empowerment to reclaim their own learning through reading can, in turn, motivate students to read in the first place, wherever that reading may happen.

From here, I offer a brief overview of each part of the digital framework, wherein we explore some ways that pedagogical reading practice can be more attentive to the material conditions of reading and writing. I unpack these parts of the digital reading framework in the latter half of this opening chapter where I offer some mapping of the remaining chapters in Part 2.

The rest of the chapters in Part 2 take deeper dives into each portion of the framework, providing a greater understanding of how each strategy was developed and why each

is effective. Each chapter in Part 2 includes examples that align with each of the strategies, too, so that you can test out a couple of these ideas in your own classes to see how they work. Not every strategy is right for each learning situation, but I'm hopeful that you'll find a thing or two here and there that may very well do the trick. You may also find that each portion of the framework may not have equal value to you, so I'd suggest starting with the overview here and then deciding how you want to proceed through the chapters ahead.

The five concepts within this framework capture five categories for engagement for readers to cultivate as they move between digital and nondigital spaces to do the work of deep, sustained, and engaged reading:

- **Curation** refers to readers' ability to collect resources, bring them together, and create new knowledge as a result. When readers are able to curate what that they are currently reading, they can make smart and mindful choices about which readings may help them understand and distinguish between different ideas. Because of the surplus of information available in search engines and online networks, the ability to curate may allow students to counteract the feeling of information overload they may experience as endemic to digital spaces. Curation is often more easily accomplishable in a digital environment than in print because digital texts can be easily copied and pasted to form new single texts. Even if text cannot be manipulated, copied, and pasted, links themselves can be aggregated in ways that allow readers to note cross-conversations in and among different texts. Curation can happen at multiple levels: students can engage in curation at the level of reading one text by culling out key concepts and

creating their own *resource guides*, or interpretations, of particular readings. By encouraging students to engage in acts of curation, we help them recognize which pieces from readings are memorable, unique, and applicable for their learning.

- **Connection** refers to readers' ability to bridge what they are currently reading with prior knowledge or experiences. When readers are able to connect what they are reading with what they've read or experienced in the past, they can make deeper meaning of core content and manage to build a networked understanding of new concepts. By encouraging students to engage in acts of connection between, within, and across the readings they may encounter in digital spaces and in printed spaces, we help them understand the dialogic nature of reading itself and, in so doing, we help them capitalize upon the networks that can be formed through reading online. Digital spaces allow us to engage in connection because affordances like hyper-linking allow us materially to connect one full document to another full document (perhaps in the same way that the world's largest paperclip might). Similarly, opening multiple tabs in a browser or a PDF editor and launching multiple applications on multiple devices may allow us to move between texts to make connections.
- **Creativity** refers to a reader's ability to apply an idea from a reading and create something new as a result. When readers are able to create new knowledge based on something that they've read, they can build on what they've learned and become actively engaged in the reading process. The creation does not have to be anything big, extensive, or high-stakes: the creativity process can simply mean generating an independent thought or impression of the reading that differs from what is literally in the text, such as in

an annotation. In digital spaces, readers can easily create derivative content based on digital texts. Because digital texts can be easily remixed, readers may be able to take portions of reading and move them to new places to create a response. Plus, images, videos, and even music can be integrated into text to build an understanding of reading grounded in conversation with multimedia. Beyond all of that, digital readers can quickly create diagrams, and even if they prefer to draw those diagrams by hand, those diagrams can then easily be scanned and transferred to a digital document so that the text and the image appear in one place. Although not all digital readers may want to engage in these kinds of practices, these options all exist in accessible ways to reach different readers where they are. By encouraging students to engage in acts of creativity, we help them understand that reading compels acts of writing and problem solving and that readings do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are intended to inspire further creative thinking.

- **Contextualization** refers to readers' abilities to understand both the text's literal meaning and why the text was composed in a particular way. When readers are able to contextualize something that they've read, they consider both the content itself and the form that content takes. Readers who engage in contextualization have an awareness of the conditions and histories that shape the texts they've encountered. As more of our knowledge becomes algorithmically generated or produced by bad actors, we need to have a clearer understanding than ever of the contexts and situations for how knowledge is made and disseminated in digital environments. Without that ability to contextualize where information comes from and how information is designed and received, we may

render invisible the environments that make particular kinds of writing possible. A key habit of mind for digital readers, therefore, may be to name exactly how their media impacts their messaging and what about the author's (or algorithm's) positionality and context might change what they are understanding in their texts and why.

- **Contemplation** refers both to readers' abilities to allocate attentional resources appropriately and to articulate a clear vision for why they are reading in the first place. Whatever we read (and wherever we read), we identify moments when we need to spend a greater amount of time on a single text rather than navigating or moving across multiple texts. The reasons for a single text requiring greater attentional focus vary (it may be due to text complexity, text density, or simply a text in a new discourse community or genre), but by engaging in contemplation, readers are able to discern when this attention is necessary and to practice expending that attention accordingly. Although engaging in metacognitive reflection is not unique to digital reading, it is important to identify contemplation as a strategy within our digital reading framework. Given the competing demands for attention within connected digital spaces, digital readers must develop insight into what kinds of spaces, materials, and practices are best for them to use to focus and engage with the digital text they are reading.

As educators, one of our major goals may be to help our students develop agency to make choices for their learning for themselves. Composition scholar Paul Corrigan (2013) puts it well when he expresses how he wants students to read both with depth and with distance: "We want students to distance themselves from the text in order to contextualize it, analyze it, and understand its difficulties. We also

want students to be drawn into the text in order to be changed through the encounter” (p. 150). To engage in all of these processes at once, and to move across them with ease and flexibility, we may want to foster students’ abilities to come to their own conclusions about what reading means for them and how to navigate the various reading situations that they are bound to encounter. After all, reading as a process is iterative; it requires that students comprehend what they’ve read, apply the new information they’ve learned, and then circle back to the reading again to see what else they may need to pick up to accomplish whatever their goals may be. As rhetorician Tanya Rodrigue (2017a) puts it: “Comprehension depends on a dialogical relationship between three sites of meaning: the meaning the reader brings to the text, the meaning embedded in the text, and the meaning the reader makes from interaction and engagement with the text. Meaning making and the triad of meaning interaction are fluid and recursive; new meaning is continuously made as the reader engages with the text” (p. 242). Reading comprehension, therefore, is not a one-and-done process; it is a challenge precisely because it demands continuously returning to the text.

It can be hard to make space to talk about reading in higher education, but if it has not yet been made clear, the stakes for doing this work are high, as they can influence how our students orient to and access learning core information critical to deepening their understanding of particular subject areas. I often tell my students as they’re doing research for the first time to take what’s useful and leave the rest. I offer you the same invitation as you make your way through the following chapters; read selectively for what strikes you as appropriate for how reading functions in your particular class or other context.