

## ***The Mandate of Digital Literacy***

Controversy in the U.S. over standards outlined in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has riveted the public and private sector on issues surrounding academic standards. With the expansion of NCLB to cover technology in Title II, Part D, there is increased urgency around technology skills standards. A recent release from the U.S. Technology Administration stated that “America’s competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy depends on the skills and abilities of our workforce...Advanced technologies have the potential to boost the capabilities, productivity, and flexibility of American workers.”\*

In a drive to remain globally competitive, setting and attaining standards for these technology “digital” skills is climbing on the agenda of education priorities in the U.S. and countries worldwide. These issues eventually point to K-12 education where schools play a key role in developing computer skills needed for success. Many school districts are ramping up the discussion around a new initiative – based on the international co-operation and investment of hundreds of subject matter experts in various fields—a truly global, portable, and validated definition of digital literacy.

Digital literacy is a means for ascertaining computer skills competency of an individual to function in the workplace. It will become increasingly necessary to be digitally literate to function in a digital, Internet connected economy.

The Global Digital Literacy Council (GDLC) ([www.gdlcouncil.org](http://www.gdlcouncil.org)) is playing a lead role in the development of desktop application standards and professional competence certifications, and is garnering the collective wisdom of experts worldwide to help drive work towards a general Information Technology (IT) literacy definition. This definition is based on the best practices and requirements of education, test development, and industry, and is based in part on the vendor neutral Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC<sup>3</sup>) ([www.certipoint.com/ic3](http://www.certipoint.com/ic3)) which is now used in over 60 countries.

Endorsed by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) as “[NETS Aligned](#)” for Teachers and Students, IC<sup>3</sup> is the first global Internet and computing literacy measurement that can truly be considered a standard as defined by the GDLC. Other assessment programs have broad geographic reach and market penetration, but their level of psychometrically validated development and delivery processes fail to qualify them as true measurement standards.

IC<sup>3</sup> provides educators a common entry-level qualification that teachers and students can aspire to possess, in a step to foster equal opportunities for those eager to be part of the information revolution and the digital economy.

Complex and rigorous evaluation processes of the IC<sup>3</sup> creator, Certiport ([www.certipoint.com/ic3](http://www.certipoint.com/ic3)), have uniquely positioned IC<sup>3</sup> as a set of measurable, global digital literacy standards. IC<sup>3</sup> was first launched in February 2002. To start with, a comprehensive review and research project was conducted to scope and structure computing and Internet skills and standards domains.

Overseeing and providing input into this process is a standards review board, which is one of the primary roles played by the Global Digital Literacy Council. This process is dynamic and ensures that IC<sup>3</sup> continually evolves to reflect market expectations.

Feedback from the individuals who led the IC<sup>3</sup> process and who have committed to help start the digital literacy process agree that this is the only approach that makes a global digital literacy standard achievable.

“By inviting a group of individuals, whose backgrounds and interests are diverse, there is an excellent distribution of opinions and positions within the world of information and computer technology, both from hardware and software positions, stated Dr. Jeanann Boyce, Professor and Chair of Business and Computer Science, Montgomery College, and member of the Global Digital Literacy Council. “We have a wide representation of educational perspectives also—from the public school, secondary, and post-secondary levels.”

“Testing is not just someone sitting down and writing a bunch of questions,” points out Tom Saterfiel, senior vice president for corporate development, ACT. [ACT now delivers IC<sup>3</sup>](#) through its network of testing centers. “If you are going to measure a standard, then the measurement tool must have a proven capability to measure what you say it measures. Otherwise you’re saying someone has not met the standard – and thus may fail a course or be denied job opportunities - based on nothing but guesswork as to whether we’re measuring the right things.”

No matter the future of NCLB, the message is clear: validation matters. In context of exam development, validation refers to the extent to which an exam measures what it purports to measure. Validation is the essential ingredient in any standards development process, and serves to qualify the integrity of the technology skills standards in question.

Only a process like that behind IC<sup>3</sup> can meet the challenges of the marketplace and help teachers and students interested in becoming truly equipped for the mandate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – digital literacy.

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### **About The Global Literacy Council**

The Global Literacy Council is a global delegation of corporate executives, government officials, academicians, and industry luminaries focused on the identification of issues, definition of best practices, and research and development of programs related to Global Digital Literacy.

[www.gdlcouncil.org](http://www.gdlcouncil.org)

\*Source: <http://www.technology.gov/PReI/pr031023.htm>