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The Use of Digital and Non-Digital Learning Resources to Improve Students' Literacy in History Class

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Abstract: The development of digital technology has expanded the availability of learning resources in history education. However, the increasing availability of digital information does not automatically improve students' historical literacy because students still need the ability to evaluate sources, understand historical contexts, and interpret evidence critically. This study aims to examine the utilization of digital and non-digital learning resources in history education and analyze their potential contribution to improving students' historical literacy. This study employed a literature review method by examining relevant scholarly publications concerning digital history, historical learning resources, historical thinking, historical literacy, museums, historical sources, and technology-supported history learning. The selected literature was analyzed thematically based on the role of digital resources, the role of non-digital resources, the development of historical literacy and historical thinking, the integration of different learning resources, and the challenges of their implementation. The review indicates that digital resources can provide broad access to historical information through digital archives, educational videos, digital maps, virtual museums, digital storytelling, and online historical sources. Meanwhile, non-digital resources such as textbooks, historical documents, photographs, artifacts, museums, and historical sites provide authentic and contextual experiences with historical evidence. The findings suggest that integrating digital and non-digital learning resources can create a more comprehensive history learning experience by encouraging students to access, compare, evaluate, and interpret historical sources. The effective implementation of these resources requires teacher guidance, source evaluation skills, adequate learning facilities, and learning activities that emphasize historical inquiry and critical thinking.

Keywords: Digital Learning Resources, Non-Digital Learning Resources, History Education, Historical Literacy, Historical Thinking.

INTRODUCTION

History education has an important position in developing students' understanding of the past, historical thinking, and awareness of the relationship between past events and contemporary life. History learning is not merely concerned with memorizing names, dates, and events, but also requires students to interpret evidence, analyze historical sources, understand chronological relationships, evaluate different perspectives, and construct meaningful interpretations of historical events. Therefore, the quality of history learning is strongly influenced by the availability and appropriate use of learning resources that can support students in developing these historical literacy skills. In this context, learning resources should not be limited to textbooks but should include various materials and learning environments that provide students with opportunities to interact with historical information critically and meaningfully (Anis et al., 2022; Widiadi et al., 2022).

The development of information and communication technology has changed the way students access and interact with learning materials. Digital learning resources provide broader access to historical information through digital archives, educational videos, virtual museums, historical maps, podcasts, online databases, and interactive learning platforms. The use of digital technology can make historical events more visual, accessible, and engaging for students, particularly when learning materials contain events, places, and historical contexts that are difficult to observe directly. Digital history has consequently become an important part of contemporary history education because it allows learners to access diverse historical representations and resources beyond the physical classroom (Anis et al., 2022). The integration of technology in education also provides opportunities for teachers to design learning activities that encourage students to explore, compare, and evaluate information obtained from different digital sources.

However, the increasing availability of digital resources does not automatically guarantee the development of students' historical literacy. The large amount of information available on the internet requires students to possess the ability to evaluate the credibility, relevance, context, and reliability of historical information. Students may encounter information that is incomplete, biased, inaccurate, or presented without adequate historical context. Therefore, the use of digital resources needs to be accompanied by appropriate pedagogical guidance from teachers. History learning should encourage students not only to access information but also to question the origin of sources, compare evidence, identify differences in historical interpretations, and formulate conclusions based on evidence. The development of historical thinking therefore remains an essential component of history education in the digital era (Widiadi et al., 2022).

Although digital resources offer important advantages, conventional or non-digital learning resources remain relevant in history education. Textbooks, printed historical documents, newspapers, photographs, maps, artifacts, monuments, museums, and oral history can provide students with direct and contextual encounters with historical evidence. Museums, for example, can function as meaningful learning environments because students can observe historical objects and cultural heritage while connecting them with the historical narratives studied in the classroom. Such experiences can strengthen students' understanding of historical context and encourage them to develop a closer relationship with local and national history. Consequently, non-digital resources should not be regarded as obsolete but should be integrated with digital resources according to the learning objectives and characteristics of the students.

The integration of digital and non-digital learning resources is particularly important because each type of resource has different strengths. Digital resources provide accessibility, flexibility, visualization, and opportunities for students to explore diverse historical information, whereas non-digital resources can provide authenticity, contextual experiences, and direct interaction with historical objects and sources. When these resources are combined systematically, students can obtain broader opportunities to develop historical literacy through

reading, observing, comparing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating historical evidence. Such integration is also consistent with the development of contemporary learning approaches that emphasize active, student-centered, contextual, and technology-supported learning.

Previous studies have discussed the use of digital technology in history education and demonstrated its potential to support students' learning experiences and access to historical information (Anis et al., 2022). Other studies have emphasized the importance of museums and historical objects as learning resources that can strengthen students' understanding of history and cultural heritage. However, previous discussions have often focused separately on either digital or non-digital learning resources. The integration of both types of resources as a comprehensive strategy for developing students' historical literacy has received comparatively less attention, particularly in the context of history education in Indonesia. This creates a research gap concerning how digital and non-digital resources can complement one another rather than being treated as competing alternatives.

The state of the art of this study therefore lies in its focus on the integration of digital and non-digital learning resources as a complementary approach to improving students' historical literacy. Digital resources can provide extensive access to information and multimedia representations, while non-digital resources can strengthen authenticity, contextual understanding, and direct engagement with historical evidence. The combination of these resources is expected to provide a more comprehensive learning experience in which students are encouraged not only to obtain historical information but also to critically analyze sources, understand historical contexts, compare evidence, develop chronological thinking, and interpret the meaning of historical events. This perspective places learning resources as an important component of history learning design rather than merely as supplementary teaching materials.

Based on the identified research gap, this study aims to examine the utilization of digital and non-digital learning resources in history education and to analyze their potential contribution to improving students' historical literacy. The study specifically seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How can digital learning resources be utilized to support students' historical literacy? (2) How can non-digital learning resources contribute to the development of students' historical literacy? and (3) How can digital and non-digital learning resources be integrated to create a more comprehensive history learning experience? Through a literature review, this study synthesizes findings from relevant scholarly sources to develop an understanding of the complementary role of digital and non-digital learning resources in history education.

METHODS

This study employed a literature review method to examine the utilization of digital and non-digital learning resources in history education and their contribution to improving students' historical literacy. A literature review was selected because the study focused on identifying, comparing, and synthesizing findings from previous studies concerning learning resources, digital history, historical thinking, historical literacy, and the use of historical objects and environments as learning resources. The study did not involve direct observation, interviews, questionnaires, experiments, or the collection of primary data from students and teachers. Instead, the analysis was based on relevant scholarly publications that discuss the relationship between learning resources and history learning.

The literature search focused on scientific articles published in academic journals that were relevant to the main themes of the study. The sources were identified through academic databases and journal websites using combinations of keywords such as "digital learning resources," "non-digital learning resources," "history education," "historical literacy," "historical thinking," "digital history," "history learning media," "museum as learning

resource,” and “historical sources.” Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles that directly discussed the use of digital or non-digital resources in history education and their relationship with students’ learning, historical thinking, or historical literacy. Recent publications were prioritized to reflect developments in history education in the digital era, while earlier relevant studies were retained when they provided important theoretical or conceptual foundations.

The selection of literature was conducted based on several criteria. First, the publication had to address history education, historical learning, learning resources, historical thinking, or historical literacy. Second, the study had to provide a clear discussion of the use, potential, or educational value of digital or non-digital learning resources. Third, priority was given to publications that were published in reputable academic journals and provided sufficient bibliographic information, including a DOI when available. Publications that were not directly related to the research topic, did not provide adequate information about their academic source, or could not be verified were excluded from the main analysis. This selection process was intended to ensure that the discussion was based on academically traceable sources rather than unsupported information.

The data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis. The selected literature was first reviewed to identify information concerning the characteristics and educational functions of digital and non-digital learning resources. The findings were then grouped into several themes, namely: (1) the role of digital resources in history learning; (2) the role of non-digital resources and historical objects; (3) the development of historical literacy and historical thinking; (4) the challenges of using digital historical sources; and (5) the integration of digital and non-digital resources in history learning. Findings from different studies were compared to identify similarities, differences, strengths, limitations, and complementary functions between the two types of resources.

The synthesis process was subsequently used to develop an integrated interpretation of how digital and non-digital learning resources can support students’ historical literacy. Digital resources were analyzed in relation to their accessibility, variety, visualization, and opportunities for independent exploration, while non-digital resources were examined in relation to authenticity, contextual learning, direct observation, and students’ engagement with historical evidence. The analysis did not calculate statistical effect sizes because the study was not a quantitative systematic review. Instead, the findings were synthesized descriptively and interpretatively to identify patterns across the selected literature.

To maintain the credibility of the review, the study emphasized the traceability of references and consistency between the claims presented in the manuscript and the findings reported in the cited publications. Each major argument concerning the benefits or limitations of digital and non-digital learning resources was connected to relevant scholarly literature. The synthesis was also conducted by comparing findings from multiple studies rather than relying on a single source. Through this approach, the study sought to provide a balanced explanation of the complementary roles of digital and non-digital learning resources in supporting historical literacy in history education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Learning Resources in History Education

The literature reviewed indicates that digital learning resources have expanded the opportunities available to students in history education. Digital resources include online historical archives, digital documents, educational videos, digital maps, virtual museums, digital storytelling, online databases, and other technology-supported learning materials. These resources allow students to access historical information beyond the limitations of printed

textbooks and classroom materials. Anis et al. (2022) explain that the development of digital history has created new opportunities for history learning because students can access historical information through digital media and interact with various forms of historical representation. The availability of digital resources also provides flexibility because students can access learning materials at different times and locations according to their learning needs.

One important advantage of digital resources is their ability to present historical information in various forms. Historical events that may be difficult for students to imagine through conventional explanations can be represented through photographs, maps, videos, timelines, digital exhibitions, and interactive media. Such representations can help students connect historical events with geographical locations, chronological sequences, and social contexts. Digital storytelling is one example of an approach that can combine historical information with narrative and multimedia elements. Research by Peñalba et al. (2020) demonstrates the potential of digital storytelling as a tool for supporting historical understanding by presenting historical content through a more engaging and meaningful format. Therefore, digital resources can support history learning when they are selected and used according to appropriate learning objectives.

Digital resources can also support students' historical inquiry by providing access to various historical sources. Widiadi et al. (2022) emphasize the potential of web-based historical sources for developing students' historical thinking skills. Through online sources, students can be encouraged to examine historical evidence, compare different accounts, identify differences between sources, and formulate interpretations based on available evidence. This means that digital resources should not only be used as a means of delivering information from teachers to students. They can also function as sources of inquiry that encourage students to actively investigate historical questions.

However, the availability of digital information also creates challenges. The large volume of information available online does not guarantee that all information is historically accurate or academically reliable. Students may encounter sources that contain factual errors, incomplete information, personal opinions, or interpretations that lack sufficient evidence. Consequently, digital history learning requires students to develop source-evaluation skills. Students need to consider who produced a source, when it was produced, what evidence it contains, what perspective it represents, and whether its claims can be supported by other sources. In this respect, digital literacy and historical literacy are closely related because students need both technological competence and the ability to critically evaluate historical information.

Non-Digital Learning Resources in History Education

Although digital learning resources are increasingly important, non-digital resources continue to have a significant role in history education. Non-digital resources include printed textbooks, historical documents, photographs, newspapers, maps, artifacts, monuments, museums, local historical sites, and oral history. These resources can provide students with opportunities to interact with historical evidence in a more concrete and contextual manner. Rather than receiving historical information only through digital representations, students can examine physical objects, historical documents, and heritage sites that are directly connected to the historical past.

Museums are particularly valuable as non-digital learning resources because they provide collections of historical objects within a specific spatial and narrative context. Marovaha and Ncube (2024) explain that museums can contribute to history education by providing opportunities for students to engage with historical objects and develop historical thinking from a historical perspective. Through museum-based learning, students can observe objects, ask questions about their origins and functions, and connect material evidence with historical

narratives. This type of learning can strengthen students' understanding that history is constructed from evidence rather than simply from memorized information.

Historical sites and cultural heritage can also provide contextual learning experiences. When students interact with historical places, they can connect information obtained from classroom instruction with the physical environment in which historical events or processes occurred. Such experiences may help students understand that history is connected to places, communities, cultural practices, and material remains. Recent studies on museum and heritage-based learning also demonstrate the continuing relevance of physical historical resources in contemporary history education (Azizah, 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025).

Printed sources also remain important because they provide structured and relatively stable learning materials. Textbooks, historical documents, and printed photographs can be used to develop reading, interpretation, and comparison skills. Students can compare information from textbooks with primary historical documents or other historical accounts. Therefore, non-digital resources should not be considered alternatives that need to be replaced by digital technology. Instead, they can complement digital resources by providing forms of historical evidence and learning experiences that digital media cannot always reproduce completely.

Digital and Non-Digital Resources for Developing Historical Literacy

Historical literacy involves more than the ability to remember historical facts. It requires students to understand historical context, interpret evidence, recognize chronology, evaluate sources, compare perspectives, and construct reasoned interpretations of the past. Rivero Gracia et al. (2023) demonstrate the importance of historical sources and critical thinking in the progression of students' historical thinking. This suggests that the selection of learning resources needs to be directed toward activities that require students to interact critically with evidence.

Digital and non-digital learning resources can support different dimensions of historical literacy. Digital resources provide extensive access to historical information and allow students to explore multiple sources relatively quickly. Students can, for example, compare digital newspaper archives, historical photographs, maps, videos, and online documents. Meanwhile, non-digital resources provide opportunities to examine physical evidence, printed documents, museum collections, historical buildings, and heritage sites. When these resources are integrated, students can compare digital representations with physical or material evidence and develop a more comprehensive understanding of historical events.

The integration of multiple sources can also encourage students to recognize that historical narratives may be constructed from different perspectives. Students can compare two accounts of the same historical event and examine differences in emphasis, evidence, and interpretation. This process is important because historical literacy requires students to understand that historical knowledge is based on evidence and interpretation rather than simply accepting a single narrative as unquestionably correct. Bae et al. (2021) demonstrate the value of inquiry-based learning supported by scaffolding in developing students' historical thinking. Such an approach can be adapted to the use of both digital and non-digital sources in history classrooms.

Digital storytelling provides another example of how different forms of resources can be combined. Historical photographs, documents, maps, narration, and other visual materials can be organized into a coherent historical narrative. Peñalba et al. (2020) found that digital storytelling can support historical understanding by combining narrative structures with digital media. Similarly, Petousi et al. (2022) show that collaborative interactive digital storytelling can provide an alternative approach to history education by encouraging learners to engage with historical content through interactive and collaborative activities.

Integration of Digital and Non-Digital Learning Resources

The findings from the reviewed literature indicate that digital and non-digital learning resources should be viewed as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Digital resources are particularly useful for providing broad access to information, visualization, multimedia representation, and opportunities for independent exploration. Non-digital resources, on the other hand, provide authenticity, physical evidence, contextual experience, and direct engagement with historical objects and environments. Their integration can therefore create a more comprehensive learning experience.

The integration can be implemented through several learning activities. For example, teachers can begin a lesson by introducing a historical topic through a digital video or online historical source. Students can then examine printed documents, photographs, maps, or textbook materials to identify additional evidence. If possible, students can visit a museum or historical site to observe relevant objects or locations directly. After these activities, students can return to digital resources to compare their observations with online historical information and construct a final interpretation. This sequence allows students to move between digital information, printed sources, and direct historical evidence.

Another possible integration model is source comparison. Students can be provided with a digital historical article, a textbook explanation, a historical photograph, and a physical or reproduced primary document. They are then asked to compare the sources based on their origin, purpose, content, perspective, and reliability. The activity can be followed by a discussion or written assignment in which students construct an interpretation based on evidence. Such activities can develop not only students' ability to find information but also their capacity to evaluate and interpret historical sources.

Research concerning museum education and digital learning also supports the possibility of combining physical and digital experiences. Virtual museum tours, for example, can provide access to museum collections when physical visits are difficult, while direct museum visits can provide experiences that virtual environments cannot completely reproduce. Nurhasanah et al. (2026) found that virtual museum tours can be used as a learning medium related to students' historical thinking. This demonstrates that digital representations can extend access to historical environments, while physical museums remain valuable as spaces for direct engagement with historical objects.

The Role of Teachers in Utilizing Learning Resources

The effectiveness of digital and non-digital learning resources depends not only on the availability of the resources but also on how teachers design and facilitate learning activities. Teachers have an important role in selecting appropriate resources, determining learning objectives, providing questions or tasks, guiding students in evaluating sources, and helping students construct historical interpretations. Technology should therefore be understood as a tool that supports pedagogical objectives rather than as a replacement for teachers.

In digital history learning, teachers need to provide students with guidance on how to identify credible sources. Students should be taught to examine the author or institution responsible for a source, the date of publication, the evidence provided, the purpose of the source, and the perspective represented in the content. This guidance is particularly important because students can easily access information from sources with different levels of credibility. The development of historical thinking requires students to move beyond simply locating information toward questioning and evaluating the information they encounter (Widiadi et al., 2022).

Teachers also need to consider students' learning characteristics and the availability of technological facilities. Not all students have equal access to devices, stable internet connections, or digital platforms. Therefore, relying entirely on digital resources may create learning inequalities. The continued use of printed materials, historical documents, and locally

available historical resources can provide alternatives for students who experience limitations in accessing digital resources. A balanced combination of digital and non-digital resources can consequently make history learning more flexible and inclusive.

Challenges in the Utilization of Digital and Non-Digital Resources

Despite their potential, the integration of digital and non-digital learning resources faces several challenges. In digital learning, major challenges include the credibility of online information, unequal access to technology, teachers' digital competencies, and students' ability to evaluate sources. The rapid development of digital technology also requires teachers to continually adapt their instructional strategies. Yusni et al. (2026) identify challenges faced by history teachers in the digital era, indicating that technological changes require teachers to develop competencies that support the effective implementation of history learning.

Non-digital learning resources also have limitations. Access to museums, historical sites, archives, and historical objects may be restricted by geographical distance, financial considerations, institutional regulations, or limited collections. Physical visits may also require additional planning and time. However, these limitations do not eliminate the educational value of non-digital resources. Instead, teachers can combine available local resources with digital materials. For example, photographs and digital documentation of a historical site can be used before or after a direct visit, allowing students to connect physical experiences with additional historical information.

The main challenge, therefore, is not choosing between digital and non-digital resources but determining how each resource can be used most effectively according to the learning objectives. Digital resources are highly useful for accessibility, visualization, and source exploration, whereas non-digital resources are valuable for authenticity and contextual engagement. A well-designed learning activity can connect the advantages of both resources while reducing their respective limitations.

Implications for History Learning

Based on the synthesis of the reviewed literature, the utilization of digital and non-digital learning resources has important implications for the development of history learning. First, history learning should provide students with opportunities to interact with multiple forms of historical evidence. Second, students should be encouraged to evaluate and compare sources rather than simply consume historical information. Third, learning activities should connect historical knowledge with contexts that are meaningful to students, including local history, museums, cultural heritage, and historical environments.

The integration of resources can also support more active and inquiry-oriented history learning. Instead of positioning students as passive recipients of historical information, teachers can involve them in investigating historical questions. Students can search for sources, examine evidence, compare accounts, discuss interpretations, and communicate their conclusions through written, oral, or digital products. Such activities are consistent with the development of historical thinking and can make learning more meaningful.

Overall, the literature suggests that digital and non-digital learning resources have complementary functions in history education. Digital resources expand students' access to information and provide diverse forms of historical representation, while non-digital resources provide authenticity and contextual engagement with historical evidence. Their integration, when accompanied by teacher guidance and source-evaluation activities, can create learning environments that support students' historical literacy and historical thinking.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature reviewed, digital and non-digital learning resources have complementary roles in supporting students' historical literacy. Digital resources provide broader access to historical information through online archives, digital documents, videos, digital maps, virtual museums, digital storytelling, and other multimedia resources. These resources can increase accessibility and provide students with opportunities to explore historical information in various forms. However, the use of digital resources also requires students to develop the ability to evaluate the credibility, relevance, context, and perspective of historical information. Therefore, digital access alone is not sufficient to develop historical literacy without appropriate guidance and critical source analysis.

Non-digital learning resources remain important because they provide students with opportunities to interact with historical evidence in physical and contextual forms. Textbooks, historical documents, photographs, maps, museums, artifacts, monuments, and historical sites can help students understand the relationship between historical events, places, objects, and communities. These resources provide experiences that complement the accessibility and visualization offered by digital media. The literature therefore indicates that digital and non-digital resources should not be viewed as competing alternatives but as complementary components of history learning.

The integration of digital and non-digital resources can support a more comprehensive history learning experience. Students can use digital resources to search for and compare information, while non-digital resources can be used to examine historical evidence and contextualize the information obtained digitally. Through source comparison, inquiry activities, discussion, and interpretation, students can develop historical thinking skills that include analyzing evidence, understanding chronology and context, evaluating perspectives, and constructing interpretations of the past. The teacher remains essential in designing learning activities, selecting credible resources, guiding source evaluation, and connecting different resources with the intended learning outcomes.

This study has limitations because it is based on a literature review and does not involve direct empirical data from students, teachers, or schools. Therefore, the conclusions describe patterns and implications identified in previous studies rather than demonstrating a direct causal effect of a particular learning resource on students' historical literacy. Future research should conduct empirical studies to examine the effectiveness of specific combinations of digital and non-digital resources in different educational contexts. Experimental, classroom action research, qualitative case studies, and mixed-method research could be conducted to examine changes in students' historical literacy, historical thinking, learning engagement, and source-evaluation skills.

For teachers, it is recommended that digital and non-digital resources be selected according to learning objectives rather than based solely on technological novelty. Teachers can combine digital sources with textbooks, primary documents, photographs, museums, local historical sites, and other available resources. Students should also be explicitly taught how to evaluate historical sources and distinguish reliable historical evidence from unsupported information. For schools, support should be provided through adequate digital infrastructure, access to learning materials, professional development for teachers, and opportunities to utilize local historical and cultural resources. Through these efforts, the integration of digital and non-digital resources can contribute to history learning that is more critical, contextual, meaningful, and relevant to students' learning needs.

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