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# The new literacy practice of young Taiwanese writers, illustrators, social innovators, and makers

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New literacy is not to be taken as merely a change in how we understand and present information because of newly-developed technologies, but as a way of transforming how we interact with texts and with the world as a whole. This study aims to report an empirical study on how four types of digital natives, all born in the 1980s, access information and create content. Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 28 writers, illustrators, social innovators, and makers in total, seven in each category. The data were then processed as follows: First, we employed qualitative analysis and interpretation through close readings and meaning-making. Second, we quantitatively deconstructed the text by atomizing the discourse with Chinese Knowledge and Information Processing (CKIP) and filtering out units that are irrelevant to the analysis. Finally, we generated comparisons among the four contemporary groups and their new literacy practices.

## Writers

In contrast to their counterparts from the older generation who were devoted to a single identity such

as being a novelist, columnist, or essayist, young creative writers who have won literature awards and published top-ranking books grew up within a social environment of PTT, blogs, and Facebook. They are accustomed to managing their primary literate role while at the same time enjoying multi-tasking by being active across new media platforms and acting as popular commentators for social issues related to their academic training such as education, sociology, gender study, and philosophy. They obtain a vast quantity of high quality information from their social media stratosphere and they share opinions and ideas through social media services with their followers as a form of self-presentation, or “performance” in Goffman’s term.

## Illustrators

Internet and social media has brought changes to people’s reading habits in many ways; for example, “Picture Reading” and illustrated creative blogs have become very popular in Taiwan over the last decade. Therefore, illustrators who devote effort to character creation and social media fan page management are increasing in number. They obtain inspiration from daily life and can transform their observations into creative content. These illustrators integrate their interests and capacities to share their artwork on the Internet, and they attempt to develop a business model that involves a multivariate form of production.

## Social innovators

Social innovators attempt to employ strategies and actions to solve community or city problems through teamwork with the goal of making the world a better place. They use technology as a means of connecting resources in the process. Their goal is to penetrate social problems and issues, identify the needs of communities they target, develop innovative solutions, and take action. One of their primary strategies for achieving this goal is to collaborate with local people to create stories for the public, who thus can understand the value and meaning behind these stories. Their storytelling is multimodal in nature to accommodate the needs of the general public.

## Makers

The “maker movement” has emerged in Taiwan over the last several years, and under the social environment of learning by doing, makers create a small amount of delicate products and are very open regarding sharing their ideas and creative processes. They suggest that traditional education in Taiwan neglects the significance of DIY and are enthusiastic about the

culture of makers, who emphasize learning, doing, and sharing. They are very persistent about their own interests, and empower themselves with knowledge and skills through self-directed learning, pursuing an ideal living style and working arrangement.

### **Insight from word clouds and the co-occurrence of key words**

The word clouds of writers illuminate a central focus is on words, articles and literature. The literacy practice of these writers is to express feelings and provide arguments about issues. By contrast, illustrators are interest-driven; they enjoy sharing life stories and ideas with their friends, and are followed by social media fans who adore the characters they have created. The central focus of social innovators is on society, community, and local issues and needs; and their resources and contributions include teamwork, space, activities, cultural artifacts, and communication between people and the government. Finally, makers are interest-driven and they enjoy sharing life experiences through their creations and products like illustrators. Much like social innovators, makers access information and create content in both the cyber world and in the physical world.