Digital Literacy Framework

TECH FLUENCY

FIND INFORMATION

DIGITAL RISK MANAGEMENT

SHARE INFORMATION

EVALUATE SOURCES
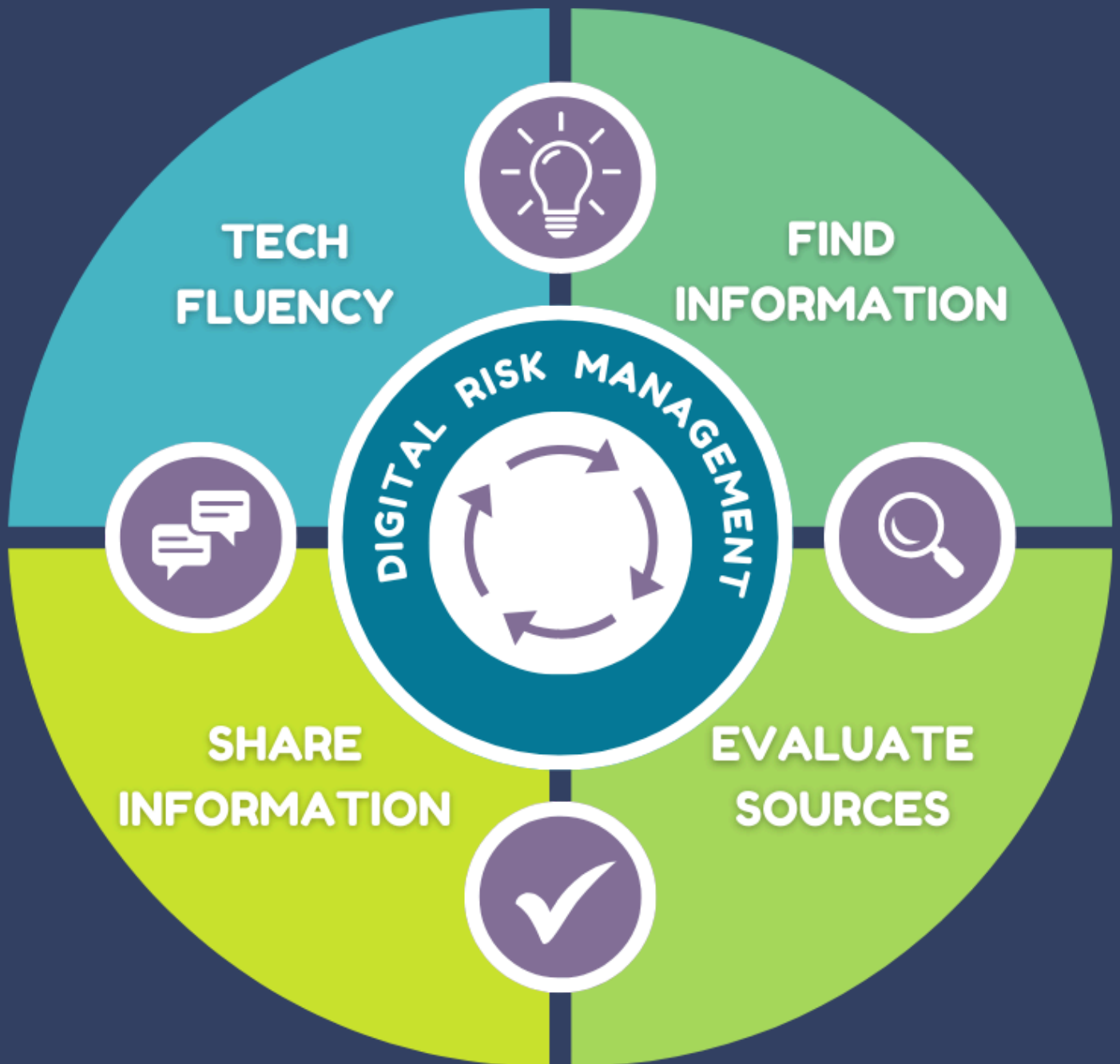
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The **Digital Literacy Framework for Legal Practice** outlines the essential components of digital literacy for legal professionals in Victoria, specifically in the context of legal research.

This framework is under development, in consultation with the Victorian Legal Services Board, the courts, and legal practitioners.

In today's increasingly technology–driven environment, effective legal research relies on the proficient use of digital resources. Digital literacy is a foundational competency that focuses on the digital tools and technologies critical to modern legal practice.

This framework provides a set of guidelines covering key areas of digital literacy, including digital risk management, technology fluency, and the processes of finding, evaluating, and sharing information.

What is digital literacy in the legal context?

Digital literacy refers to the ability to effectively use technology and digital tools to find, evaluate, and communicate information.

For legal professionals, this means being proficient in using digital resources for legal research, managing information securely, and understanding the digital tools that support legal practice.

Continuously updating digital literacy skills will assist you in keeping up with advances in technology, ensuring you are using the best research tools, and managing the risks associated with the digital environment.

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Digital Risk Management

Digital risk management is a critical component that applies at every stage of the legal research process.

Legal professionals should be aware of potential risks associated with digital tools, including data breaches, misinformation, and the ethical implications of using online resources.

Understanding these risks will help you to make informed decisions about technology use.

Key considerations

Adopt sound cyber security habits

- Keep all software, including operating systems, applications, and security tools, up to date. Many cyberattacks exploit vulnerabilities in outdated software, so regular updates help minimise these risks.

- Be cautious of unsolicited emails, messages, or phone calls that request sensitive information. Phishing attacks often appear legitimate but are designed to steal confidential data. Always verify the authenticity of any suspicious communication.

- Use secure methods for sharing and storing client files, such as encrypted cloud services or password-protected storage solutions.

- Before sharing documents, remove any hidden metadata (e.g., comments, authorship details, or editing history) that may inadvertently expose sensitive information.

- Protect your accounts with strong, unique passwords. A strong password should be long, complex, and combine letters, numbers, and symbols. Use multi-factor authentication (MFA) where available to add an additional layer of security.

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Digital Risk Management

Key considerations

Maintain digital hygiene

A critical part of digital hygiene is using multi-factor authentication (MFA), which adds an extra layer of security to your accounts by requiring additional verification (such as a text message code or biometric scan) beyond just a password.

Additionally, regularly reviewing and adjusting the privacy settings on your social media accounts and online platforms is essential to prevent unauthorised access to your personal and professional information.

Understand how technology uses the information you give it

Many platforms collect user data for purposes such as improving services, marketing, or even predictive analytics, which can lead to unintended privacy risks. By familiarising yourself with the data privacy policies and terms of service for the tools you use, you can make informed decisions about what personal or client information is shared.

Practice client confidentiality

Be aware of privacy risks when handling client data. Avoid sharing sensitive information via unsecured channels or public networks. Use encrypted communication methods wherever possible.

Engage in ongoing professional development to stay up to date on technology, trends, and digital risks

Participating in continuing education programs, attending webinars, and reading industry reports can help you understand new tools and potential vulnerabilities, ensuring you can use technology securely and confidently.

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Digital Risk Management

Further resources

- Australian Cyber Security Centre:
  - [Personal Cyber Security: First Steps Guide](#)
  - [Small Businesses](#)
- Business (Australian Government) – [Cyber Security Checklist](#)
- eSafety Commissioner – [Digital Citizens Guide](#)
- EU General Data Protection Regulation – [What is the GDPR?](#)
- Legal Practitioners' Liability Committee – [Cyber Security](#)
- Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner
  - [2024 Risk Outlook](#)
  - [Minimum Cybersecurity Expectations](#)

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The components of legal digital literacy

Legal research has transitioned to digital endeavour, bringing with it the advantages of evolving technology as well as digital risks that legal professionals need to address.

Digital risk management underpins each of the four components of legal research digital literacy:

- Tech fluency
- Find information
- Evaluate sources
- Share information

The framework elaborates on these components and provides links to additional resources in the following sections.

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Tech Fluency

Tech fluency refers to the ability to operate technology efficiently and understand its functionality.

To operate effectively in the modern legal environment, you should develop and continuously refresh your technology skills.

This competency ensures that you can engage with technology confidently, troubleshoot issues, and choose the most suitable solutions for your tasks.

Key skills

Operate common hardware and software

Examples of common software include Microsoft Office, document management systems, cloud storage services (eg, OneDrive, Google Drive, and Dropbox) and email management tools.

Understand the digital risks inherent in the tools you use

Every tool or platform, from document management systems to communication tools, presents potential security and privacy risks, such as data breaches or unauthorised access.

Troubleshoot basic technology issues

Examples of troubleshooting include restarting devices, adjusting settings, or clearing browser cookies and cache. This can save valuable time and prevent disruptions when technical issues arise. Most databases will have a help option to assist.

Ability to explain the technology you use

To fully leverage the technology you use, it's important to deepen your understanding of how it works, so you can explain it clearly to others. This means going beyond basic functionality and gaining a deeper knowledge of key features, security protocols, and potential issues.

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Tech Fluency

Key skills

Recognise conventional icons and understand common terminology

This will assist in the navigation of digital tools, and help you quickly adapt to new platforms. Here are some examples of common icons:

Icon	Function
🏠 Home	Takes users back to the main page or dashboard of a website or app. Often represents the "home" or starting point of the platform.
👤 Profile	Provides access to a user's personal profile or account settings, where they can view or edit their information, preferences, and account details.
🔍 Search	Opens a search bar or search function, allowing users to look for specific content or data within an app, website, or platform.
⚙️ Settings	Opens the settings menu where users can adjust preferences, privacy options, account settings, and other configurations.
🔔 Bell/ Notification	Displays recent notifications or alerts, such as messages, updates, or system warnings.
☰ Menu	Opens a navigation menu, often referred to as a "hamburger menu," providing access to additional options, pages, or sections of the website or app, especially on mobile devices.
🛒 Shopping Cart	Represents the user's shopping cart in e-commerce sites or apps, where they can review selected items before proceeding to checkout.
⬇️ Download	Signifies the option to download documents, images, software, or other media.
🔒 / 🔓 Lock/Unlock	Indicates security or privacy settings. A closed lock (🔒) signifies something that is secure or private, while an open lock (🔓) indicates accessibility or an unlocked status.

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Tech Fluency

Key skills

Select technology solutions based on needs and critical evaluation

Legal professionals should be able to critically evaluate and select the right technology tools that best meet the specific needs of your practice.

Whether it's a legal research database, a case management system, or a collaboration tool, understanding the features, security protocols, and compatibility of these technologies is crucial to choosing the best product for you.

Key factors to consider include ease of use, cost-effectiveness, and scalability, to ensure that the technology integrates seamlessly into your workflow.

Further resources

- BeConnected (Australian Government)
  - Icon Glossary
  - Articles, courses, and tips on using technology
- Data and Digital Government Strategy – Glossary (digital terms)
- Department of Industry, Science, and Resources – Artificial Intelligence
- Digital NSW – AI and cyber security
- EU Artificial Intelligence Act – What is the EU AI Act?
- Law Library Victoria – AI in the Courts Research Guide
- UNESCO – Artificial Intelligence
- Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner – Generative AI and Lawyers

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Tech Fluency

Traditional vs Digital legal research tools

Characteristics	Traditional Tools	Digital Tools
Sources	Print journals, law reports, textbooks	Online databases, eJournals, eBooks, websites
Accessibility	Limited by physical location and availability	Accessible anywhere, anytime with internet connection
Search Functionality	Manual searching, indexing, and cross-referencing	Advanced search algorithms, keyword searching
Updates	Periodic updates, supplements, and new editions	Real-time updates, automated alerts
Storage	Physical storage space required	Cloud storage, minimal physical space
Collaboration	Limited collaboration capabilities	Easy sharing, collaboration, and annotation tools

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Tech Fluency

AI tools from major legal publishers

Legal research products available in 2025 that feature AI have varying levels of sophistication and functionality.

The most common AI applications are:

- **Document analysis**: Case and document summaries, document comparison, and citation analysis.
- **Intelligent search**: Conversational search, predictive search, and automatic identification of relevant case law and legislation.
- **Predictive insights**: Predictive analytics to forecast case outcomes and potential risks based on historical data and current trends.
- **Contextual understanding**: Identification of relevant commentary based on the specific context of a legal query.

It is important to note the following applies even to AI tools from major legal publishers:

- All products using AI can produce hallucinations. The rate of hallucination is lower in the products accessible through Law Library Victoria, but it is still possible.
- Search results may include irrelevant cases, and neglect to include relevant cases.
- Summaries are produced by the AI tool, and are not reviewed by a human.

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AI legal research tools

Tool	Region	Key Features
Lexis+ AI (Protege)	International	AI-driven natural language processing, predictive analytics for case outcomes, efficient case law & statute retrieval.
Westlaw Precision	International	AI-enhanced search accuracy, machine learning for personalised results, visualisation tools for complex legal concepts.
Jade Jasmine	Australia	Natural language search, case analysis features, insights into judicial reasoning and trends.
Vlex Vincent	UK	AI-driven document analysis, suggestions for improvements, contextual insights linking cases & statutes.
ICLR Case Genie	UK	AI analysis of uploaded legal documents, case suggestions, similar paragraph function to connect related case paragraphs.
Lawlex Premium	Australia	AI-assisted legislative document analysis, document summary.

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Tech Fluency

Free legal productivity AI tools

Tool	Region	Key Features
ChatGPT Australia Law	Australia	Limited free use.
Court Aid	Australia	Limited free use.
descrybe.ai	US	Free.
Legal Assistant	Australia	Limited free use.
Legal Genie	Australia	Free.

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Tech Fluency

Considerations when adopting AI technology

Issue	Description
Explainable AI (Black Box Problem)	AI algorithms operate opaquely, making it hard to observe what inputs are used, and how information is processed. This in turn makes it difficult to interpret conclusions and outputs. This lack of transparency raises concerns about trust and accountability.
Access to Justice	High costs of implementing AI tools could create barriers to justice for individuals and organisations with limited resources.
Court Rules & Practice Rules	Disclosure requirements, protocols, and standards for using AI can vary between jurisdictions, or may not yet be published.
Ethics	AI in legal research can be biased, leading to discriminatory outcomes. Lawyers should consider the ethical implications of using AI in their practice.
Liability	Who is liable when AI gets it wrong?
Regulation	Rapidly evolving technology makes predicting future AI risks and applications difficult, leading to varying global regulatory approaches.

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Find Information

The ability to locate relevant and authoritative legal resources, both on the web and in specialised databases, is fundamental to effective legal research.

The challenge is not just finding information, but finding the right information efficiently.

Key skills

Understand the invisible web

Not all information is indexed by search engines, there is content that is hidden behind paywalls or on private intranets – the 'invisible web'.

Understanding there is more beyond an initial web search ensures that you're not limited to surface-level results and can find critical information, leading to more thorough and informed legal analysis.

Utilise specialised databases

Platforms like LexisNexis and Westlaw provide access to a wealth of legal information. Understanding their features and functions can lead to more efficient research.

Identify key sources

Identify key sources of information in the area of law being researched, the jurisdiction, if you need primary law or secondary law, and the resource format. This will help you quickly target your research to on-point information.

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Find Information

Key skills

Understand algorithms

Understand how algorithms in research tools select and rank information. Many databases and search engines use algorithms to sort through vast amounts of content, prioritising results based on relevance, currency, authority, and other factors.

By gaining insight into how these algorithms function you can refine your search strategies to achieve more accurate and efficient results.

Employ advanced search strategies

Advanced search strategies can improve results and reduce the time it takes to search.

Before planning your search strategy, identify the key legal issues, and extract keywords and synonyms to search on. Online dictionaries and generative AI can assist with this process.

Improve search results by utilising Boolean logic (AND, OR, NOT), applying limits/filters, using advanced search templates, and optimising natural language queries. Citation managers like EndNote or Zotero can help evaluate resources by tracking source information and assisting with proper attribution.

Efficient online navigation

Understand how to quickly navigate websites. Most websites will follow standardised structures, such as top or side navigation bars, dropdown menus, and search functions.

On desktop sites, these menus are often more expansive and visible, while mobile versions typically condense navigation into icons or collapsible menus to save space. Understanding these differences helps you quickly adjust, whether you're doing a deep dive on a desktop, or navigating touch interfaces on mobile devices.

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Find Information

Key skills

Manage information overload

Manage information overload by adopting digital tools and workflows that help filter, organise, and prioritise information. Tools like document management systems, citation managers, note-taking and project management tools allow you to automate repetitive tasks so you can stay focused on the most critical aspects of your research.

Further resources

- Law Library Victoria:
    - [Webinar Recordings](#)
    - [Research Guides](#)
    - [Legal Research eLearning](#)
- [Nemes' and Cross Effective Legal Research](#) (textbook, available to view onsite at the Supreme Court Library)

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Evaluate Sources

Once information is gathered, evaluating your sources is an essential step. It involves critically assessing the credibility, verifying the accuracy, and checking for the original source of the information. Build time for evaluation and verification into your workflow, and make sure to document the steps you take.

Key skills

Evaluation criteria

Authority and timeliness

It is important to assess whether the source is credible and up-to-date. This means checking if the material is written by a recognised expert or published by a reputable entity, and that it is current (or matches the period you are researching). Relying on outdated or untrustworthy sources can jeopardize the accuracy of your research and impact client outcomes.

Bias recognition

Bias recognition involves identifying and understanding the inherent biases present in various tools, resources, and personal interpretations.

Algorithmic Bias: Search engines and legal databases use algorithms to rank and present information. These algorithms can favour certain sources or types of content, potentially skewing the information presented.

Author Bias: Every author has their own perspectives and experiences, which can influence how they present information. Recognising the author's background and potential biases can help in critically assessing their arguments.

Interpretation Bias: Personal biases can affect how one interprets information. Being aware of your own biases is crucial for objective analysis.

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Evaluate Sources

Key skills

Cross-referencing

Cross-referencing information against multiple credible sources is a critical technique to verify accuracy and reliability. In legal research, where facts must be precise and evidence must be substantiated, comparing information from different databases, peer-reviewed journals, and authoritative legal websites can help confirm the validity of the data.

Identifying red flags

Legal professionals should be able to distinguish between high-quality, authoritative sources, such as peer-reviewed journals, government publications, and reputable legal databases, and unreliable sources, such as personal blogs or unsourced content.

Recognising indicators of unreliable information is essential for avoiding misinformation. Indicators such as poor website design, content errors, broken links, requests for payment, or excessive sensationalism may signal that a source is not credible.

Other red flags include generic or vague reasoning, unusual phrasing or grammar, and inconsistencies in citations.

Verification checklist

Regardless of the source, always check if information is:

- ✅ Complete
- ✅ Accurate
- ✅ Relevant
- ✅ Current
- ✅ Compliant (research process meets legal and confidentiality obligations)

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Evaluate Sources

The TRAAP Test

The TRAAP test is a helpful tool to evaluate the reliability and credibility of digital information. By assessing timeliness, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose, you can quickly check that the information is trustworthy and relevant.

Timeliness	When was the information published or last updated? Has it been superseded or overruled? Are you looking for current or historical information?
Relevance	How relevant is the source to your research purpose or area of law? Is it appropriate for the jurisdiction/country you are working in?
Authority	Who is the author or publisher, and what are their qualifications?
Accuracy	Is the information accurate, supported by evidence, and free from errors and biases? Have you read the full text?
Purpose	What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, persuade, entertain, or sell something?

Further resources

- Australian National University – Evaluating Sources
- Law Library Victoria – Digital Literacy Framework
- NSW Government – Spotting Fake News
- Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner – Red Flags and Good Practices

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Share Information

Sharing information effectively is a continuous process throughout the research cycle. Legal professionals communicate, collaborate, and attribute sources while ensuring ethical practices are followed.

In a digital context, this includes using secure platforms, ensuring proper citation, and maintaining ethical standards.

Key skills

Best practices for sharing

Proper attribution

Legal professionals should be able to properly cite sources using the [Australian Guide to Legal Citation (AGLC)](#), ensuring that plagiarism is avoided and intellectual property rights are respected.

Ethical considerations

Maintaining client confidentiality and adhering to ethical standards is critical in legal practice. This includes safeguarding sensitive data, respecting Indigenous cultural knowledge with appropriate advisories, and preventing the spread of misinformation.

Lawyers should also practice transparency in digital communications to ensure trust and uphold professional integrity.

Secure file storage and sharing

Ensuring the security of legal documents and client data when sharing files is paramount. Using encrypted cloud storage, password-protected files, and secure file transfer protocols helps mitigate digital risks.

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Share Information

Key skills

Digital tools for sharing

Collaboration

Utilising tools like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Slack, and smartboards for communication enhances information sharing. Improving your skills with this technology will allow you to confidently collaborate with partners and clients, no matter where you are working.

AI and data visualisation

Legal professionals can leverage tools like ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Meta AI, Canva, and other software to summarise, transcribe, visualise, and report information. These tools can save time and enhance research outcomes. They are regularly updated with new features, and most have free accounts allowing you to 'try before you buy'.

Email and social media for professional communication

Email is ideal for formal, confidential communication, allowing for clear documentation and secure exchanges. When using social media for professional purposes, it's important to maintain a professional tone, protect client confidentiality, and be mindful of privacy settings. Lawyers should also recognise the risks of exposure when using public forums.

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Share Information

Further resources

- eSafety Commissioner – [The eSafety Guide](#) (includes links to privacy settings for social media and apps)
- Federal Court of Australia – [Guide to Redacting Documents](#)
- Federal Court of Australia – [Guide to Anonymisation](#)
- Legal Practitioners' Liability Committee – [Write tech, wrong text](#)
- Microsoft – [Collaborating with Teams, SharePoint, and OneDrive](#)
- Supreme Court of Victoria – [Technology and the Court](#)

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The **Digital Literacy Framework for Legal Practice** aims to improve awareness of the knowledge and tools legal professionals need to conduct thorough, accurate, and efficient legal research in the digital environment.

By building up your digital literacy skills, you can enhance your research capabilities, and streamline workflows, whilst ensuring you are adhering to ethical standards.

Please forward your feedback on the framework to the Law Library via the [online form](#).

Professional Development with Law Library Victoria

Legal practitioners and law firms can book tailored CPD training delivered by Law Library Victoria online or in person.

Learn how to efficiently navigate specialised databases, where to access critical digital resources, and enhance research capabilities—all essential for today's modern lawyer.

Invest in your professional growth and [contact the Law Library](#) to book a training session.

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