



Interview with Jackie, a Belgian Facilitator

Tell us a bit about yourself and your job

I am a librarian working in a little, rural community, with less than 10,000 inhabitants. I am what is called a digital dinosaur (technophobe) because I am a sixties child. I grew up with computers, but they were these huge things in air-conditioned rooms.



Why did you want to become a facilitator for digital skills workshops?

I think it is in the DNA of librarians to help people get access to information. In 2021, the only way to get access to information is through a computer or a smartphone or something like that. A whole bunch of people just don't know how to use this stuff and they get completely lost, so they come to us. So basically, that's how we, my colleague and I, got into it - we wanted to help people. It is more than a mission to get all these people tech savvy - it relates to the fact that before librarians gave access to books and the ability to read to help people to be more mobile in society and to be better educated. Now technology is just another type of book in that sense, but you have to know how to use it, in order to be able to function in today's society. It can be very limiting if you don't have those skills.

How has your technophobia impacted on your experience as a facilitator?

It made the participants feel less like they were being judged and less stupid because here is the librarian (we are still in a society where librarians are considered as very intellectual) who struggles with technology. They think if she can do it, I can do it too. That's what really helped to facilitate things. I told participants, "If I can do it, you can do it - don't worry about it".

When a problem would come up, somebody wouldn't be able to login or something like that, we would go through it together. Sometimes I would click on something, and it wouldn't work and I would say, "Opps, I have a problem" and they would say, "Don't worry, you can do it" and we would just talk through it together. It was more fun than anxiety inducing.

It is also an advantage because you know how to speak to workshop participants - that is important in itself. If you know how the system works and know all the fancy words, you tell them, "Go click this, you do a double click... lalala". And they are going, "What? What? What?". But if you say, "You take the little mouse, take the little mouse, click with your figure on the right side, there you are", they are okay.





What do you think has been the best thing about being involved in the Digital Travellers project and, more particularly, being a facilitator?

For me, it has been very liberating. It is very empowering to know that you have all this stuff, and you can use it, you can finally use it without being afraid to mess up the whole system, causing smoke to start coming out of the computer and stuff like that.

It has also helped workshop participants feel more secure with themselves - they tell me after our meetings, "I went on and went to see that... because you had said something, and I wanted to have more information. I was able to go on that website and then I used the browser for this...". So, I know that it is doing good for my readers and that makes me feel a great sense of satisfaction.

For someone considering becoming a facilitator, what advice do you have?

To take their time. You have to do it step by step in order for it to become natural. Don't do all the modules and say now, "I'm a facilitator. Bam - it is done" because if you don't apply them for yourself little by little, it doesn't become automatic. Little steps are important, I think, because it can sometimes be overwhelming - all these things that you have to take in.

What are your plans to continue digital education in the future?

We have a lot of great projects now because we've just taken that step and opened the door to everything that is digital. We have seen that it, the digital sphere, is not a 'be all and end all'. We want it to co-exist - we want the digital world to live alongside the real world. If you use the digital stuff in a good way, it is really great - it can be very liberating, I'll be working here in September on how to get the correct information, the right information, and not just take everything, because it is on the net, as true.

What is the most surprising thing that has come out of this project for you?

On a personal level, the way that now I have no qualms whatsoever about using anything digital. And on a professional level the fact that I have been able to make some people feel empowered, who felt disenfranchised towards everything digital.

