

Chapter 13

The Net Generation and E-Textbooks

Arlene J. Nicholas

Salve Regina University, USA

John K. Lewis

Salve Regina University, USA

ABSTRACT

The traditional college student of today is part of the Net Generation who has been raised in an era of instant access. Their communication and learning is complemented by the Internet, a major influence on this cohort. The regular method of contact is text messaging, instant messaging and cell phones. Learning methods for the Net Generation include Internet tools such as Web-CT, Blackboard, online courses, online journals and i-pod downloads. Are they ready to also change from print textbooks to Internet based textbooks? This paper describes the attitudes of some Net Generation students towards the usage of electronic textbooks. Three case studies were conducted: one class used an online textbook and two other classes used e-chapter supplements. Students were questioned on their perceptions of using and learning with e-textbooks. Their views describe some changing thoughts towards network connected media that is the mantra of this generation.

INTRODUCTION

The Net Generation, also known as Generation Y, born between 1981 and 1999, have been called, entitled and empowered as they have been included in decision making since childhood (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). They have been influenced by their closest cohort, the skeptical Generation X, and their idealistic Baby

Boomer parents, resulting in being described as “realistic” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). They are from more diverse families of various forms of structures and ethnicities and account for 36% of the seven million multiracial populace of the United States (New Strategist, 2004). This diversity adds to their more global orientation and understanding for the need of interconnectivity in the worldwide market (Alch, 2000).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-1882-4.ch013

TECHNO-LITERATE NET GENERATION

This generation has been described as techno-literate, techno-savvy, technologically fluent and even dependent on technology (McGhee, 2006; Lewis, 2003). A nationwide survey of 1,171 Net Generation college students reported that 97% owned cell phones and over two-thirds used them for text-messages. Over half of the students in the study said that “instant messaging was their top choice of communication” (McCasland, 2005, p. 8). They download podcasts and music, can take photos with their phones and text message one another in their created messaging language (McCasland, 2005). Their learning methods for include Internet tools such as Web-CT, Blackboard, online courses, online journals and i-pod downloads (Nicholas, 2008).

The Net Generation has a “curious blend of collaboration, interdependence and networking to achieve their ends” (Alch, 2000, p. 4) and their technology seems to bring them and keep them together. Instant messaging, text messaging and chat rooms may be essential to urban and suburban Net Generation connectivity (Cox, 2004). Their creativity and investigation with electronic media, free expressions, strong views and the need for independence without restraint are noted facets of their generation (Alch, 2000). The connectivity of this techno-literate generation is through text messaging, instant messaging, blogging (Web logs, My Space, Facebook) and video gaming. They have been described as self-reliant and independent, and are known for their ability to create with technology as well as use it to gather and share information (Marston, 2005; Martin, 2005). They expect communication via technology and “may be intolerant of those who are technologically challenged” (Murray, 2004, p. 106). They are multi-tasking as “many young people today are accustomed to watching TV, talking on the phone, doing homework, eating, and interacting with their parents all at the same time” (Frاند,

2000). Digital technology and “peer-driven learning” is very familiar to this generational cohort as “young people are way ahead of the adults in understanding how to use these tools” (Trei, 2006, p. 2). The usage of e-textbooks would seem to be a likely fit for this Internet generation.

E-BOOKS

Electronic monographs have been exchanged between scholars since the early years of the Internet, before Windows software and the mouse became the norm. They evolved through UNIX, gopher, FTP (file transfer), and, finally, hypertext transfer (HTTP) protocols (Snowhill, 2001). Despite some negative reviews, e-books have several important advantages over their print counterparts. Most important is the off-campus, 24 X 7 availability of e-books. This is the single most distinct advantage e-books have over print titles. E-books can also be helpful for those with disabilities: “digital text can be enlarged, read via specialized devices, or easily converted into audio format” (Dillon, 2001, p. 123). Another advantage over print is the searching capabilities provided by e-books. The ability to keyword search through the full-text of a manuscript is a big advantage over a table of contents or even the best index.

At present, the future of the e-book is at a crossroads. Although e-book sales have steadily risen over the last five years, they have not met the expectations of publishers. According to the Association of American Publishers (AAP), e-books sales were estimated to be 123 million in 2004 and 179 million in 2005 (AAP, 2006). Sales were far below what had been forecasted in the late 1990s. Digitization projects by Google and other companies could have a big impact on e-book use. The Google Print Library Project is working with major libraries to digitize a large body of literature in the public domain.

7 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/net-generation-textbooks/67921

Related Content

A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Media Multitasking in American and Malaysian College Students

Laura L. Bowman, Bradley M. Waite and Laura E. Levine (2014). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning* (pp. 1-16).

www.irma-international.org/article/a-cross-cultural-comparison-of-media-multitasking-in-american-and-malaysian-college-students/118269

The Prevalence of Online Violence Against Female Students at a Private University in Malawi

Donald Flywell Malanga (2022). *Handbook of Research on Digital Violence and Discrimination Studies* (pp. 451-465).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-prevalence-of-online-violence-against-female-students-at-a-private-university-in-malawi/296095

Digital Natives

Sue Bennett (2012). *Encyclopedia of Cyber Behavior* (pp. 212-219).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/digital-natives/64755

Predicting Dysfunctional Internet Use: The Role of Age, Conscientiousness, and Internet Literacy in Internet Addiction and Cyberbullying

Benjamin Stodt, Elisa Wegmann and Matthias Brand (2016). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning* (pp. 28-43).

www.irma-international.org/article/predicting-dysfunctional-internet-use/173741

Comparing the Characteristics of Text-Speak Used by English and Japanese Students

Jean Underwood and Taiichiro Okubayashi (2011). *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning* (pp. 45-57).

www.irma-international.org/article/comparing-characteristics-text-speak-used/54063