

EDUCATING THE DIGITAL NATIVE OF THE FUTURE

The idea that Generation Y or the Net Generation (children born after 1985) have an in-depth grasp and almost 'intuitive' knowledge of how to use technology, simply because they have never known a world without the internet and technological change, first appeared in 1998 in the popular press in Donald Tapscott's, *Growing up digital: The rise of the Net Generation*. This idea was expanded further in 2001 by Marc Prensky who first coined the terms digital native and digital immigrant. These ideas and the terms continue to have resonance, have become part of the popular media landscape, and now determine how society perceives young people and their use of technology. The idea of a digital native has also led to a large body of popular and practitioner literature in education in particular, that assigns a set of skills and attributes to young people. The digital native idea persists in the general public, political, and educational domains, despite a growing body of research literature during the last ten years that indicates there is no such person.

A major issue for education is that the digital native label has also appeared in major educational policy documents worldwide. In these systemic documents, today's students are assumed to have a level of proficiency when seeking and using information found on the internet and via electronic resources. However, research has reported a different scenario and initiatives by both government and educational policy makers have been described as part of the "digital rhetoric" where information and communication technologies (ICTs) are defined as the main driver for innovative education and training systems. The continued focus by education systems to get technology into schools and universities has been described as a "moral panic that restricts critical and rational debate" (*The 'Digital Natives' Debate: A Critical Review of the Evidence*, 2008), while the labels and attributes assigned to young people have resulted in the marginalisation of teachers and provides an excuse to ignore the teaching of technology in the classroom. Consequently, the uptake of technologies in universities and schools by many educators has been relatively slow due to lack of support, resources, and teacher expertise. As a result, educators at all levels of education often make assumptions about students' technology skill levels and fail to embed the teaching of technologies and information skills within the context of the curriculum.

Research indicates that members of Gen Y are teaching themselves how to use the internet at a relatively young age (average of 10 years) which has led to the development of an entrenched culture of use based on habit. As a result students exhibit poor understandings of how to use technology effectively, efficiently, and appropriately. If schools are committed to educating an information literate citizen, the inclusion of information specialists (teacher librarians) in school libraries to assist teachers in the development of curriculum programs that embed information literacy skills and attributes, is an essential first step in graduating the digital natives of the future.

Barbara Combes

Lecturer, School of Information Studies, Charles Sturt University
bcombes@csu.edu.au

EVENTS

This is just a taste of the events on offer across the library and information sector. For a comprehensive and up-to-date list, check the website at www.alia.org.au/events.

Want to list your event on the ALIA website? Group members and office bearers – don't forget to upload your event at www.alia.org.au/events/add. Not an ALIA event? Your LIS event may also be eligible to be added to our non-ALIA events. Contact events@alia.org.au for more information.

International

2 APR INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK DAY

www.ibby.org

National

20 – 26 MAY LIBRARY AND INFORMATION WEEK

'Share your story' during this year's Library and Information Week. www.alia.org.au/liw

21 MAY NATIONAL NATIONAL LIBRARY TECHNICIANS DAY

22 MAY NATIONAL SIMULTANEOUS STORYTIME 2013

30 OCT – 1 NOV ALIA NATIONAL LIBRARY TECHNICIAN SYMPOSIUM

alialibtech2013.wordpress.com

VIC

10 APR LIBRARY FOLK CRAFT EVENING

Join the Victorian ALIA New Grads Group for a night of craft. www.facebook.com/ALIANewGraduatesGroup. For more information, contact Nyssa Parkes, nyssa.parkes@gmail.com

Free LIS events NSW

29 APR "I'D RATHER NOT KNOW": WAYS OF THINKING AND TALKING ABOUT INFORMATION AVOIDANCE.

Free public lecture presented by Dr. Donald O. Case, Professor, University of Kentucky College of Communication and Information Studies, NSW State Library, Macquarie Street, Metcalf Auditorium 5:30 pm. RSVP: bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au. Please note: this was previously advertised in INCITE with a different date.