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Citation Management Tools, Undergraduate Research Practices, and the Myth of the Digital Native

Julia Glauberman
Binghamton University Libraries
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Origins of “Digital Natives”

- Sometimes attributed to John Perry Barlow (EFF)
- Popularized by Marc Prensky
 - Very experienced w/ technology
 - Inherently tech savvy
 - Think and behave differently
- Overlap with “net generation” and “millennials”
- Refutations
 - Claims about changes in brain function unsupported
 - Homogeneous treatment of technology and people
 - Conflation of social and educational technology

Timeline of “Digital Natives”

Prensky popularizes
“digital natives” as a
generational construct

2001

2006

General and
academic interest in
“digital natives” and
“millennials” peaks

2011

2019

Researchers begin
publishing refutations
of Prensky’s claims

**We’re still talking
about this...?**

Why are we still talking about this?

Because people still
believe it's legit.

Citation Management Tools

- Not the same as citation generators
- Developed by researchers and vendors
- Varied quality, high error rates
- Barriers to adoption (identified by grad students)
 - Time to learn tool, set up database
 - User-unfriendly interfaces, changes to interfaces
 - Lack of training, confidence
 - Lack of interest, awareness
 - Concerns about citation accuracy

Unified Theory of Acceptance & Use of Tech

- Context: managers deciding on tech for employees
- Variables affecting adoption and continued use
 1. Performance expectations or experiences
 2. Effort expectations or experiences
 3. Social influence
 4. Facilitating conditions

Undergrad Research Practices

- Short-term nature
- Expected audience of one (or fewer)
- Highly artificial
- Source types
 - Understanding of distinctions
 - Ability to identify
 - Wider variety needed
- Limited understanding of disciplinary norms

Best Practices – Undergrads & Citation Mgmt

- Consider the current need
- Be aware of cognitive load
- Don't assume much prior knowledge
- Emphasize need to check input/output
- Be clear about resources for support
- Structured assignments

Study Design and Context

- Binghamton University (SUNY)
- Libraries' citation management task force
- Focus groups and semi-structured interviews
 - Demographic questions
 - Open-ended questions
- Study participants

Focus Group Questions

1. What aspects of research do you like/dislike?
2. How do you keep track of your sources?
3. Why did you start keeping track of your sources that way?
4. How do you go about citing your sources?
 - If you use software/online tools to cite sources, expand on that.
 - If you do not use software/online tools to cite sources, have you in the past?
5. How comfortable are you with using the citation styles required for course assignments?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me a bit about your experience doing research for course assignments.
2. How do you keep track of your sources? Walk me through your process from finding the source to citing it.
3. Do you use software/online tools to cite your sources?
4. Do you ever use a source for more than one assignment? Why/why not?
5. Do you think you'll need/want access to sources you used for assignments after you graduate?

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