THE MILLENNIAL MYTHOLOGY: PUTTING SUPPOSITIONS TO THE TEST IN AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

Questions:

- What percentage of students own PDA’s?
- What percentage of students use their cell phones to access the Internet?
- What percentage of students participate in a virtual world, such as Second Life?

Questions:

- What percentage of students use online social networks such as MySpace or Facebook?
- Do students use these tools for academic purposes?
- Where is the first place that students would go to find resources for their research assignments?
Problems with the literature

- Sweeping generalizations
- Focus on the Millennial generation as a whole, rather than on university students
- Local differences

Problems with the literature (con’t)

- Gender issues
- Comfort level with technology is often equated to skill level
- Makes too many assumptions about Millennials’ use of technology

Background

About the University of Guelph

- 19,316 Full-time Undergraduate and Graduate Enrolments
- Research intensive, learner-centered university
### Methodology: survey

- Reviewed by student groups
- Pre-tested
- Sent out via mass e-mail

### Methodology: focus groups

- Conducted after the survey
- Designed to answer questions not addressed in the survey
- Used an outside facilitator
- 4 groups

### The Respondents
The Respondents:

- Total Respondents:
  - 2706 respondents out of 19,316 total students
  - 14% response rate

- Average Age of Respondents:
  - 21.6 Years of Age

  [Link to UOGuelph website](http://www.uoguelph.ca/info/facts/index.shtml)

The Respondents: Gender

- Gender:
  - Survey Respondents:
    - Male
    - Female
  - Campus Population:
    - Male
    - Female

The Respondents: Academic Status

- Academic Status:
  - Survey Respondents:
    - Undergraduate
    - Master
    - Doctorate
  - Campus Population:
    - Undergraduate
    - Master
    - Doctorate
Hardware Ownership & Usage

Hardware: PDAs
- Do you own a PDA (PalmPilot, Treo, IPAQ etc)?
  - Yes: 69% (1787)
  - No: 31%

Hardware: cellphones
- Do you own a cellphone?
  - Yes: 69% (1787)
    - 79% (1390) use their phones for text messaging
    - 72% (1264) of these phones can browse the internet
      - However, only 17% ever had
    - 19% (331) of these phones are able to play videos
      - However, only 6% ever had
Instant Messaging & Online Social Networks

Instant Messaging

- Do you use a chat application, like MSN, Gtalk?
  - Yes: 93% (2348)

Instant Messaging (cont’)

- Chat use for academic group projects:
  - Never: 25%
  - Once a Month or Less: 36%
  - Several Times a Month: 20%
  - Several Times a Week: 16%
  - Several Times Per Day: 3%
Online Social Networks:

- How often do you participate in OSNs (like facebook, MSN spaces, myspace)?

OSNs Cont’:

- How frequently have you used OSNs for academic group work:

Focus groups: OSNs

- Prefer to use Facebook & OSN sites for social purposes
- Prefer to use e-mail to communicate with group project members
- Respondents were willing to share their work with friends, but not just anyone
Online Activities (con’t)

How often do you play online games:

- Several Times Per Day: 5.2%
- Several Times a Week: 4%
- Several Times a Month: 1.9%
- Once a Month or Less: 42%
- Never: 26%
- Once: 2%

Online Activities (con’t)

Participate in online virtual worlds such as Second Life:

- Yes: 41%
- No: 59%
Online Research

Information finding:

- Where is the first place you go to find information and sources for your research assignments?
  - UG Library or library website (n=915)
  - Google (n=661)
  - Academic journals or journal indexes (n=399)
  - Online Library Catalogue (n=136)
  - Google Scholar (n=126)
  - Name of a particular journal index

Information finding (con’t):

- Combined Library-related answers (website, journal indexes, online catalogue, etc.) account for more than 80% of the answers provided to this open-ended question.
Focus groups: research tools

- Students claim to use “library sites” as often as, & in conjunction with Google
- Students seem to realize that library has the best information for research projects, but it is also the most complicated & frustrating option

Discussion Points

- Technology and gadgets: students may not use them the way we expect them to
Discussion points:

- Student culture is reluctant to mix personal & academic computing
- Uptake on OSNs for academic use has been slow, but will likely increase
- Investment of resources to develop services for OSNs may be premature at this point

Discussion points:

- Priorities: Improving what we offer now
  - More user-friendly websites
  - More efficient search tools
  - Technology in the classroom

Discussion points:

- Rather than looking at technologies & trying to find a use for them in our environment, we should determine what our students need & seek solutions to meet those needs
- Development needs to originate with students
Thank You!

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