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Digital Literacy in My Family

The potential of technology to grow since the invention of computers came out has been a consistent improving factor in our lives today. Technology has evolved from only being available to those few who understood the use of codes to search and network; to more and more users that did not necessarily understand the entering of codes but the use of icons to search. Convenience is an important concept when the scale of growth of digital technology really has no limit. Making access to internet and information in the virtual world easier to navigate and reach has played a huge role in our ever growing digital world. (Kathleen Hall) To many this new trend has not only drawn in more users’ interests, but also has conformed new users to become more and more digitally literate and up to speed to the modern ways up to today. Technology went from benefiting only certain groups based on skill level, economic opportunity, or democratic skills; to reaching anyone that has a smart phone, laptop, computer, or any other device that has access to the internet. (Tolbert p. 209) This concept was mentioned by Mossberger and Tolbert under ‘virtual inequality’ on multiple divides. Unlimited accesses to social media and new technologies in the digital world are still not a part of everyone’s lives today. The research and local discoveries prove that conscious choices are made to purposefully not interact with these technologies given social preference, age, and differentiating lifestyles and particular statuses.

Discovered in my research, the digital world of evolving technology has progressed, many groups of people have not with it. No matter how much easier it is to send an email, shoot a text, or stay connected to social networks; there are still people that have chosen not to utilize these sources that allow us to interact and be a part of the virtual world. For example Emily, a 91 year old senior, chooses not to have internet or even text messaging access on her phone. Her cell phone has the capability to text which she is fully aware of but willingly has chosen to not use it which I found interesting because I didn’t think she understood how to text. Eric on the other hand Skype’s on his own from his computer in California, he also calls and texts from his cell phone as he pleases and he is only seven. That in its self is amazing to on how easy he picked up on the concepts of technology, how to translate the icons, and how to navigate the internet and cell phone to contact loved ones. I personally learned how to text from peers at school when I received my first cell phone in 8th grade. It wasn’t until the end of my high school years that I learned how to post pictures on my social websites as well as picture message with friends. Jeff a 60 year old father of three utilizes a multiple number of social networks and stays updated with the latest trends in gadgets and programs. He probably uses more than the average person in their 20s and 30s. I don’t think the uses of virtual avenues is a matter of age or capability, it’s really about the desire to use these tools more and more in the among them and how easy it is to access; but it really comes down to the choice on how much we use and what we don’t use. Those choices and freedoms is what diversifies us as users. (Tolbert p. 212)

In the 90’s race and social status seemed to play a role in the ‘divide.’ The ability to access computers with internet was not available to just anyone at the time. Lower income families could simply not afford a computer, much less the internet to go with it; smart phones were not around yet either. So it wasn’t until these tools became more affordable that schools were able to carry them to teach younger students, and the ‘have nots’ of these technologies became the ‘haves.’ (Tolbert p. 202-203) This, along with the other simple conclusion that Monroe came to was both you have adequate and reliable access to the internet or you don’t. ( Ch. 1 Reconsidering the terms of the debate.)

Alyssa, age 24 is a banker as well as a student and she is literally to own a laptop with internet as well as a cell phone in order for her to perform her duties each day. She takes classes online so her laptop must also have a camera as a requirement, and she uses her cell phone so customers may reach her directly. It’s interesting to know that she is not involved on any social forum or network like facebook. While asking her why she doesn’t have any social mediums to keep in touch with her friends online; her response was that she just calls or texts people she knows or emails them but other than that she is too busy to use those.

Lastly I interviewed Martina age 45 and who is a nurse. She has an iPhone and an iPad which she uses for emails, video chat, and digital reading. All her important documents and medical reading materials are uploaded onto these devices so she can have access on hand whenever she needs it. Also she enjoys reading novels in her free time so she does that using her iPad while by the pool in her condo in Arizona. She uses her cell phone, like most of us, for texting, calling, Skype, and email to stay in touch with the people she knows. I was surprised to find she has also chosen not to participate in any social forums other than the ones mentioned.

Learning the diversity in technology use and social preferences are at a social split I have found. Some stick to the old way of socializing, some stick to the early technological ways, and others keep up with the latest trends in the digital world. It was a pleasant surprise to know that my grandma knows what texting is and genuinely doesn’t want to use it. I knew my dad was super tech oriented but other than him I was surprised to learn what I did about these chosen members in my family. I would almost like to ask other family members my interview questions out of my own curiosity.

# Bibliography

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