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Introduction to Digital Technology and Culture

Authoring Project 2

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Digital Shift

When asked about technology and being connected, the majority of people think about the internet and social media, like Facebook and twitter. Being connected conjures up images of shared connections in the form of instagram, chat and forums on any topic. The digital divide is becoming more of a shift as we are going to see more people electing to limit their use of digital technology in their personal lives. The shift will based more on a generational influence than a person’s socioeconomic standing. A sub-culture of digital knowledgeable people across all socioeconomic classes are choosing to focus more on real life interactions and will surpass those who consist of the digital divide today.

In 2009 Americans in the 65+ age group, the Silent Generation that grew up during the Great Depression, only 38% went online. When you look at the Baby Boomer generation, ages 55 to 64, internet use jumps to 70%. (Fox) Looking at the different experiences and live lived between these generations is important. We see that income is not the sole reason why seniors choose to not be online.

Joe is part of the 38% of the Silent Generation that goes online and is immersed in the digital world as he has followed the computer movement since it started to take off in the 60’s. When asked about the Digital Divide in seniors he states “Being an Old Fart, and not having grown up with all this 'digital' stuff, digital literacy is an ongoing journey/quest, just to try and keep up.” (Davison) His reply is consistent with how a generation is raised is a huge factor in why so few go online. They have been doing just fine without it for most of their lives and will continue to fine.

Some observers of the Digital Divide think that people do not integrate the digital world into their lives because of digital illiteracy and poverty. In Crossing the Digital Divide, Monroe points out “even though fewer African Americans are online, they spend comparable amounts per capita on Internet shopping.” (Monroe) It is not the amount of time but the goal of what one wants from the Internet that is evident here.

Teresa is part of generation X and an accounting professional that is digitally literate but chooses to have a minimal presence online. Even though owning a laptop and having a broadband connection at home she has made it a point to not be dependent on being connected at all times. When asked why she does not use Facebook she stated “When I logged off after the first few times I noticed that hours, instead of minutes, went by and I knew I wasted my time. When I missed a planned get together with the friends I connected with on Facebook I decided right then that I wasn’t going to log back on.” (Garrett)

Millennials, or Generation Y, are the teens and young adults we see plugged in 24/7, no matter where they are. Whether they are on their smart phone or a personal computer 93% are online. (Lenhart) With the availability of smart phones and services at low monthly cost owning a computer is not needed to be online.

As a high school freshman, Parras uses not only his phone for internet access but also his xbox to play games and stream movies. In just this last year he has become more aware of how technology has consumes his time. When asked what technology he could not live without he said, “I could live without any of it; I would be able to have a life.” He clarifies is answer by stating that he would hang out with his friend’s more and just get out of the house. (Mann) At an age of self-discovery he has realized that the real life has more to offer than being online.

The generation that is being born during the 2000’s are growing up with the integration of digital technology in every aspect of their lives that they will not know any different. Your average 5 or 7 year old may not sit for hours surfing the net but without even knowing it they are accessing online resources.

Douglas is a 7 year old boy that does not get personal computer time but knows that he is connected to the internet when he watches Netflix on the TV and when he downloads new games on his DSi XL. When asked about the internet and Google he quickly replied, “You ask Google what you want to know and it will tell you, like when we asked it how much the water tower can hold.” (Koopmann) At his age being connected is about discovery of the world around him as well as access to entertainment.

The flaw in most people’s perception of the digital divide is thinking that everyone desires to submerge themselves in it. We are starting to feel a Digital Shift as more people choose to not be dependent on being connected at all times. As each generation ages the divide will shrink and the shift will become more prominent. As getting connected becomes cheaper and easier your socioeconomic standing will have less of an impact defining where people fit in the divide. The time that someone was born will have a bigger influence on how whether choose to use technology and by how much.

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