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DTC 101

April 23, 2013

The Digital Connection

From a 3 year old boy with his whole life ahead of him, to a 93 year old World War Two nurse, all people today are digitally connected, whether by choice or not. The lifestyle society has deemed ‘normal’ is increasingly interconnecting people through newer and faster technologies. This evolution of digital devices can be seen through the examination of 5 people from 5 different eras. Generational beliefs aside, humans have always strived to be connected to others through whatever technology available to them. But it was not until recently that the power to connect digitally with whomever, wherever became so prevalent that society has lost the power to disconnect. To further explore this, five subjects were asked a series of three questions which illuminated the digital divide, as described by Barbra Monroe (5), and digital literacy, as defined by Mossberger and Tolbert (28), are lost within generations. First, they explored how they utilize technology within their lives to preform tasks, then pondered how the amount of communication done digitally, and finally looked at how access to digital media has affected their lives. Overall, the human desire for connection overpowers most others, and that is why drastic lifestyle metamorphosis between generations exists today as the new age continues to evolve through eminent digital connection.

 Technology is becoming essential to function in today’s society. Because of this, what is known as the digital divide is dissolving within generations as those who refuse it become more accustomed to technology’s benefits. The digital divide is defined as the way some people do not have access to the internet, whether by choice or not (Monroe 6.) Those who are born into society today are growing up with no knowledge of this divide, because they are born with technology in hand, while others must learn to use this technology. Josh, a 3 year old toddler has already mastered how to work his iPad on his own. Children just like him all over the world have to teach their parents how to use technologies constantly shaping the way lifestyles work. 53 year old James purchased an iPad two weeks ago and still has yet to figure out all its features, leaving it up to his children to program it and show him how to use it. But the fact that James is willing to try and adapt to the societal norm shows the divide shrinking as devices such as iPads become common place in every generation’s home. According to Statistics Canada, between 2005 and 2008 the number of internet and technology users jumped from 68% to 73% in all age groups (par 3). This growth has continued and progressively changed the way everyone utilizes technology. Even the modern job’s skill set has progressed to include experience with technologies and typing speed. In order to fulfill these requirements many have been forced to become literate and integrate technology in their lives, changing the way they go about life and proving that technology is now essential to function in any environment.

Technology is becoming essential to communicate in today’s society. Much as many older generations would not like to admit, in order to live daily lives they are almost forced into a world where digital literacy is expected, otherwise you are shut off from much of the world. 93 year old Dee avoids modern technology such as computers, dish washers, and cell phones because “I don’t need them, and I don’t want them.” Dee doesn’t feel like for her purposes becoming literate with these technologies is essential. Level of connection only stems to the letters she write to her family and scheduled weekly phone calls. In contrast Callum, 13, does not understand how people can live without being constantly connected to others. His life revolves around his phone, his 3DS and his xBox. He even questioned how people lived before there were dishwashers and microwaves to help. To explain this divide between generations, Sami Hassanyeh states the divide in literacy and use stems between “generation X” and those over 65 years of age (Hassanyeh par 1.) According to the article, only 37% of those over 65 are using new technologies frequently (par 3), while Callum’s generation looks at about 89% regular connection and usage (par 4). This highlights the generational divide found in the way people communicate. But the way which society requires certain devices to stay connected today inhibits those of older generations to stay connected without becoming digitally literate.

Technology is becoming essential to live in today’s society. Digital literacy, referring to the knowledge used to operate digital technology, has become more prevalent in younger generations. Growing up while technological education was still developing, 19 year old David experienced some of the first technological classes required in public schooling. His cursive lessons were replaced with typing and computer classes, as the world shifted to a more efficient way to express and record information. This compared to the education of Dee, who was only allowed to use cursive in her 1 room classroom in North Dakota and still only sends letters to communicate with friends. Dee relies on the ever fading world of books and word-of-mouth to find new information, while David is literate enough to instantly look up all his desired answers. Their lifestyles are being changed and evolved so that they are literate enough to use technologies with enable what is sometimes the only way to communicate. When someone requests a friend to text them, no having or knowing how to use a cell phone hinders their lives significantly. In fact, it’s no longer acceptable not to have a Facebook if you’re under 65 years of age (Harper 21.) Therefore, livelihoods of people of all generations are being altered to fit into the digital society.

It is evident, especially in the younger generations, the digital divide is become less and less prevalent as the generation’s digital connections intertwine people from around the world. With these five people, representing the evolution of technology in our culture are becoming more and more emerged in today’s culture. Whether it’s in their use of technology, lives, or communication methods, they are all equally becoming digitally connected. Overall, we are heading towards a world that is no longer divided, but connected by the digital world.

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