Busting the Digital Native Myth

A study of the informational needs of adolescents in a school context

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What is a digital native?

Digital natives “think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors.” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1)

“today's tweens and teens fly headlong into the future, absorbing, adopting and adapting to technology along the way” (Skillen, 2010)
Debunking the myth of the digital native

“Our “digital natives” may be able to flit between Facebook and Twitter while simultaneously uploading a selfie to Instagram and texting a friend. But when it comes to evaluating information… they are easily duped. [Students need to be able to make] distinctions between a “good” and a “better” answer” (Stanford History Education Group, 2016)
Research

• Four question survey given to students after handing in their assessment tasks

• Students in Years 7-9

• HSIE subjects: Commerce, History, Geography

“there is no such thing as a digital native who is information-skilled simply because (s)he has never known a world that was not digital... designing education that assumes the presence of this ability hinders rather than helps learning. (Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017, p. 135)
Q1: what was challenging about completing your assessment task?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding specific/relevant/reliable information</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding enough information to answer the question</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasting time searching through irrelevant websites</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding information I could understand</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Started</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing a research question</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding task</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having too much information</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart shows the percentage of students who found each task challenging.
Q2: At what points in your assessment task did you feel overwhelmed or confused?

- Trying to find relevant information for my topic
- When I didn’t understand the task instructions
- When I was running out of time
- When I realised I did not have enough Information
- When I was choosing a topic/question
- When I had to meet or had exceeded the word limit
- Making a plan before my task
- Referencing my task
- When I had to write in my own words
- When I regretted my topic because it was hard to find Information
Q3: When did you feel optimistic or excited about your task?

- When the assessment task was finished
- When I started to understand the topic & learn things
- When I started to find information to answer my question
- When I understood what I needed to do
- When I found books with good information about my topic
- When I used a specific website recommended to me
- When I got started on final report
Q4: What would you do differently the next time you need to complete an investigation process?

- Starting earlier
- Spend more time on Information gathering
- Use keywords to search
- Change my topic due to the lack of relevant information
- Ask questions earlier
- Spend more time on note taking
- Reference as I go
- Read books in the library
- Look for relevant information and then choose topic
What IT questions are the librarians being asked to help with?

- Printing
- Saving things to the cloud
- Moving documents from app to app
- Formatting
- Saving documents
Role of the Librarian in countering the myth of Digital Natives

“It is clear that many children and young people will continue to require support in the creation and communication of content, with many still lacking the experience, confidence or motivation to be involved in the process of designing, implementing and evaluating self-created content.” (Selwyn, 2009, p. 374)
Where do we go from here?

• Editing assessment notifications
• Research process broken into smaller chunks
• Acknowledge that there is an issue and change teaching practice to respond to that
• Further research: into the effectiveness of librarians (control class, one class is given explicit librarian research skills)
References


