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If You Build It, Will They Come? Reality-Based Emerging Services Planning for Millennial Students

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Background

About the Learning Commons

- Library (Research Help and Information Literacy Instruction), IT Help, Learning and Writing Services



Background

About the University of Guelph

- ▣ 19,316 Full-time Undergraduate and Graduate Enrolments
- ▣ Research intensive, learner-centred university



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:



- ▣ Do students prefer Distance Ed courses to traditional in-class courses?
- ▣ 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?

Millennials: trends in the literature



- Digital natives rather than digital immigrants; immersed in a world of technology & gadgets
- Want as many services as possible to be online; want technology integrated into courses

Millennials: trends in the literature



- Into gaming
- Attracted to technologies that allow for social interaction

Millennials: trends in the literature



- Use the Internet more than the library, authority & knowledge secondary
- Learning & research shaped by technology-dependent world
- Like to work together and enjoy group work

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

Questions to consider



- Are we focusing too much on technology rather than on students' needs?
- Will students use social software and other technology for academic purposes?
- Can generalizations made in the literature be applied to all students? How much is site specific?

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:
 - 1st year
 - 2nd & 3rd year
 - 4th & 5th year
 - graduate



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
- Gender:
 - ▣ 70 % Respondents were female (61% for campus)
 - ▣ 30 % Male (39% for campus)

The Respondents: continued



- Academic Status:
 - Undergraduate: 88 % (2287) [Campus: 89%]
 - Masters: 8 % (199) [Campus: 7%]
 - Doctorate: 3 % (82) [Campus: 4%]

- Full time vs. Part time
 - Full time: 96 % (2483)
 - Part time: 4 % (107)



Hardware Ownership & Usage

Hardware: PDAs



- Do you own a PDA (PalmPilot, Treo, IPAQ etc)?
 - YES: 9 % (227)
 - Validated responses:
 - 4.9% under 20 years
 - 7.0% between 20 & 21 years
 - 12.2% between 22 & 23 years
 - 18.9% between 24 & 25 years
 - 13.4% between 26 & 29 years
 - 15.8% between 30 & 34 years
 - 8.0% between 35 & 39 years

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



Online Courses

Distance Ed



- Have you taken a Distance Ed course at U of G?
 - ▣ YES: 63 % (1575)
 - Only 10 % (212) preferred DE to in-class
 - 43 % (939) did NOT prefer DE
 - 23 % were not sure either way

Distance Ed



□ Student responses:

- Like DE courses primarily for ease of scheduling & convenience
- Do not like DE courses primarily because of learning issues
 - Time management & procrastination
 - Learning in isolation
 - Independence

Focus groups: DE



- No accountability online
- If students must work in groups (most said they don't like to), they prefer to do so in person
- Students not enthusiastic about online meeting spaces

WebCT & D2L Courses



- Have you ever taken a course with a WebCT or D2L component?
 - YES: 91 % (2287)
 - 75 % (1825) prefer courses with a WebCT/D2L component

WebCT & D2L Courses



- What do you like about courses with a WebCT/D2L component?
 - ONLINE: accessible anywhere
 - Organization (calendar with course due dates, grades)
 - Course material all in one place (lecture notes/powerpoint/study quizzes)
 - Communication (chat with professors, chat with students)
 - These reasons were reiterated in the focus groups

Online vs. Inline:



- Online vs. Inline
- Students still value in-person contact
- Students don't want technology for technology's sake: the technology must be useful



Instant Messaging & Online Social Networks

Instant Messaging



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

 - How Frequently?
 - Several times per day 25 % (588)
 - Several times per week 36 % (838)

Instant Messaging (cont')

- Chat use for academic group projects:
 - Every project: 16 % (365)
 - Most projects: 37 % (838)
 - Few projects: 31 % (713)
 - NEVER: 16 % (377)

68 Percent

Instant Messaging + Multitasking

- What other things are you likely to be doing at the same time as chatting?
 - ▣ Academic research/schoolwork:
 - FREQUENTLY: 46% (1072)
 - SOMETIMES: 41% (945)
 - RARELY: 9% (222)
 - NEVER: 2% (54)
 - ▣ Females (on average) were more likely to be chatting while doing academic work than males.

87 percent

Online Social Networks:

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

□ Several times per day: 36 % (878)

□ Several times per week: 28 % (686)

□ Several times per month: 8 % (197)

□ Once a month or less: 7 % (175)

□ Never: 21 % (528)

64 percent

OSNs Cont':

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

- On every project: 3 % (63)
- On most projects: 11 % (213)
- On few projects: 35 % (671)
- Never: 50 % (947)

85 percent

- NOTES:

- Younger respondents used OSNs more often for academic work
- Females were more likely to use OSNs for academic work

Focus groups: OSNs



- Prefer to use Facebook & OSN sites for social purposes
- Forcing students to use OSN's for academic purposes “not fun”
- 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

Online Activities

- How often do you post to blogs:
 - Several times per day: 1% (34)
 - Several times per week: 5% (126)
 - Several times per month: 8% (189)
 - Less than once per month: 13% (317)
 - Never: 70% (1629)
 - Younger respondents were slightly more likely to post to blogs than older respondents
- 83 percent
-

Online Activities (con't)

□ How often do you play online games:

- Several times per day: 4% (111)
 - Several times per week: 11% (262)
 - Several times per month: 15% (351)
 - Less than once per month: 26% (610)
 - Never: 42% (972)
- 58 percent

- Males were almost three times more likely to play online games several times per day than were females.

Online Activities: (con't)

□ Participate in online virtual worlds such as Second Life?

- Several times a day: 0.4% (10)
 - Several times per week: 0.6% (14)
 - Several times per month: 0.8% (19)
 - Less than once per month: 2.1% (50)
 - Never: 95.9 % (2214)
- } 98 percent



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.
- ▣ Literature suggests that Google is the first stop for information

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

Discussion points



- Technology and gadgets: students may not use them the way we expect them to
- Online content delivery: technology compliments rather than replaces traditional forms of delivery

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

Discussion points:



- Show students how new technologies that are not popular can be used for academic purposes
- Offer workshops on how to effectively utilize the search tools that students are already utilizing

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

Developing more unified models of service

