
In *The New Digital Scholar*, editors Randall McClure and James P. Purdy have assembled a collection of critical essays that challenge conventional ideas about how NextGen students read, write, and conduct research. Broad statements about the scholarly ineptitude of new undergraduates are frequently heard in the hallways of university and college campuses the world over, but the authors here confront these claims head-on and offer a framework for greater reflection and improved practice for composition scholars, writing centre teachers and administrators, librarians, and anyone interested in the quality of scholarship of today's post-secondary students.

The book is divided into four major sections. In the first, entitled “NextGen Students and the Research-Writing Problem,” the authors expertly situate writing and research into the academic lives of NextGen students. McClure's discussion of the various perspectives on student information behaviour sets the tone for the entire section. While traditional information literacy instruction has largely focused on teaching and demonstrating a set of research skills, it is McClure's contention that studying and understanding the array of processes by which undergraduate students engage with information in the real world will contribute to a dispelling of myths and provide a dramatic improvement in the practice of research instruction.

The other chapters in this section make a very compelling argument for a new approach to teaching research to undergraduate students. In particular, Karen Kaiser Lee's critique of the traditional research paper assignment forces the reader to consider how the structure of writing assignments situate the student in relation to information, as a consumer or as an active participant in the development of new knowledge. Brian Ballentine closes the section by discussing the connection between recent technological developments and the apparent shallowing of students' attention. While some may fall into the trap of assigning value judgments to this change (as exemplified in the difference of terminology: shallow- vs. hyper-attention), Ballentine asks us to instead focus on how to shape our response to this reality to encourage deep thinking and learning.

The second part, “Explorations of What NextGen Students Do in the Undergraduate Writing Classroom,” transitions quickly into an empirical look at the topic. The section consists of summary articles of four studies in student information behaviour, each offering tremendous insight into the habits of undergraduate students in the research writing process. Here, we begin to get a much clearer picture of NextGen students: frantically searching for the right “quotes” for their papers, relying heavily on inadequate past practices of information gathering, struggling with (or even fighting against) library database interfaces, all while feeling like they are outside of scholarly research rather
than a part of it. Nonetheless, these authors seem unanimously positive that student perceptions and behaviours can be improved through effective instruction.

In Part Three, we are offered suggestions of how this improvement can happen. “Pedagogical Solutions to Enrich the Research and Writing Practices of NextGen Students” is a section full of big, intriguing ideas. Teston and McNely give us an evidence-based framework for delivering instruction to build students’ sense of themselves as creators of knowledge. Rachel Milloy identifies five common issues with how students conduct research and shares three marvelous assignments she created to address them. David Bailey discusses environmental scanning as a suitable technique to engage students in effective research behaviour, while drawing on the strengths of their existing research habits. For a practicing information literacy librarian, this may be the most interesting section in the text. These examples of pedagogy will serve as an excellent foundation on which to develop great sessions, whether they are one-shot or more intensive.

We move into the fourth section, “Programmatic Solutions to Enrich the Research and Writing Practices of NextGen Students,” fully prepared for some practical examples of how these new pedagogical models can be used in the development and assessment of a research-writing program. First, Maid and D’Angelo take us through the major aspects of information literacy theory and instruction. The concepts in this chapter will be familiar to instruction librarians who have spent the better part of the past two decades considering and discussing the shape of information literacy in post-secondary education, but here we’re reminded that this text is for practitioners beyond IL and library instruction. Composition scholars and writing instructors, among others who may not have the same familiarity with IL, will find this summary chapter helpful. Also, this chapter touches on some of the core principles of critical information literacy, which may be tremendously useful for librarians seeking an update to their understanding of a well-established and widely studied concept.

The remaining chapters take turns further addressing faculty-librarian collaborations, matching student expectations of electronic search systems through usability testing, and methods for assessing the effectiveness of an information literacy program. Each of these seems to call back to topics in previous chapters, but here we find some concrete examples put into practice at post-secondary institutions.

Overall, this book provides the reader with a fairly clear picture of the problem we face in undergraduate research and writing instruction: NextGen students, while regarded as largely technologically savvy, do not exhibit adequate information behaviours to meet the expectations of traditional research models as presented in undergraduate assignments. While many chalk this up to laziness on the part of students, the authors here, collectively and compellingly, argue that these problems arise largely out of our shortcoming as instructors to match our model of information literacy instruction to the new realities of the information environment, making it our responsibility to adapt for the benefit of our students. The suggested pedagogical and programmatic solutions
presented here will help all instructors from across the research-writing fields improve their own work and the work of their students.

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