

## Teaching in a Social Participatory Culture

Have you heard or said, "Students today lack critical thinking skills"? I have until one day I discovered this:

*Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Henry Jenkins, Director of the Comparative Media Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2005 Pew internet and American Life Study) – <http://www.newmedialiteracies.org>

### DEFINITION OF PARTICIPATORY CULTURE:

1. **A participatory culture is** a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and **some type of informal mentorship** whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices.
2. **A participatory culture is** also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created). Forms of participatory culture include:
  - **Affiliations** — memberships, formal and informal, in online communities centered around various forms of media, such as Friendster, Facebook, message boards, metagaming, game clans, or MySpace).
  - **Expressions** — producing new creative forms, such as digital sampling, skinning and modding, fan videomaking, fan fiction writing, zines, mash-ups).
  - **Collaborative Problem-solving**— working together in teams, formal and informal, to complete tasks and develop new knowledge (such as through *Wikipedia*, alternative reality gaming, spoiling).
  - **Circulations** — Shaping the flow of media (such as podcasting, blogging).

Participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from one of individual expression to community involvement. **(BINGO!)**

weblogcartoons.com



I AM TRYING TO  
ADD MORE FRIENDS

**2005 Statistics – *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***, Henry Jenkins, Director of the Comparative Media Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (**2005** Pew internet and American Life Study)

- More than **one-half** of all American teens-and **57 percent of teens who use the Internet could be considered media creators**.  
**A media creator** is someone who created a blog or webpage, posted original artwork, photography, stories or videos online or remixed online content into their own new creation. Most have done two or more of these activities.
- One-third of teens share what they create online with others.
- 22 percent have their own websites
- 19 percent blog
- 19 percent remix online content.

**We are moving away from a world in which some produce and many consume media, toward one in which everyone has a more active stake in the culture that is produced.**

- Young people who create and circulate their own media are more likely to respect the intellectual property rights of others because they feel a greater stake in the cultural economy. -The Pew study (Lenhardt & Madden, 2005)
- The new participatory culture offers many opportunities for youth to engage in civic debates, to participate in community life.
- Empowerment comes from making meaningful decisions within a real civic context: we learn the skills of citizenship by becoming political actors and gradually coming to understand the choices we make in political terms.

**The new literacies almost all involve social skills developed through collaboration and networking. These skills build on the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom.**

- Before students can engage with the new participatory culture, they must be able to read and write. Just as the emergence of written language changed oral traditions and the emergence of printed texts changed our relationship to written language, the emergence of new digital modes of expression changes our relationship to printed texts.
- Blogs and ePortfolios may provide students with global feedback on their writing and experience in communicating with a global community.
- With the digital natives entering the educational system, traditional literacies must change to reflect the new media. **Students must expand their required competencies, not push aside old skills to make room for the new.**

**Note: These are 2005 statistics! Imagine what the statistics would show for 2008.**

**Do you believe in Digital Natives?** - <http://www.wozofcleveland.com>

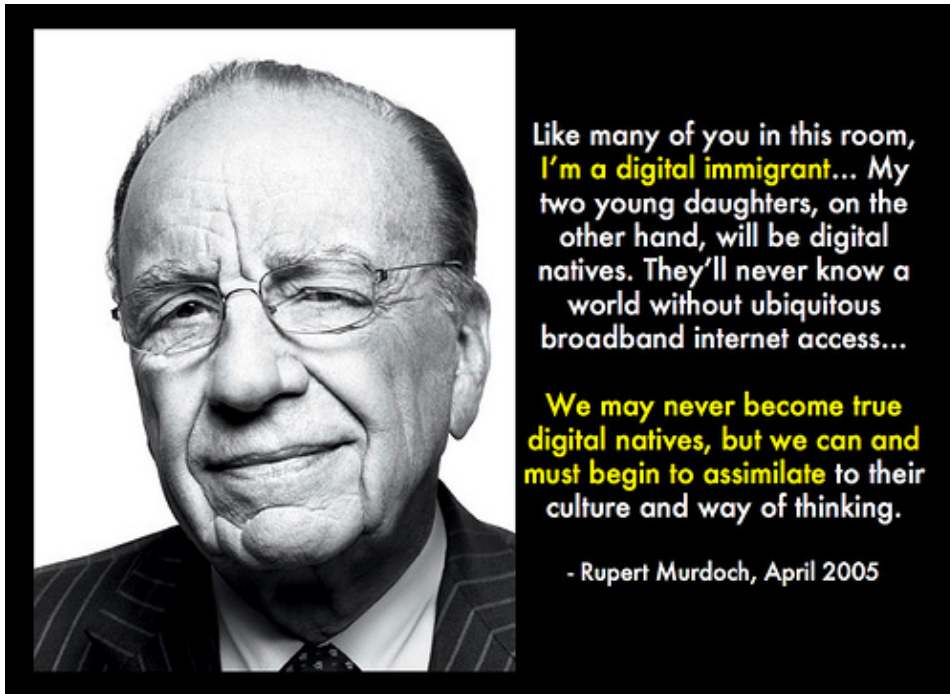
Every time an educator says, "I don't believe in digital natives" a digital native out there falls through the cracks of the educational system.



If you believe in Digital Natives, Clap your hands! Don't let a Digital Native fall through the cracks of the educational system!

**True Story** - My 2 ½ year old granddaughter visited me and took over my laptop computer. She told me, "Nanu, I want to use the puter, please." I asked her to sit on my lap and Nanu would help her. She retorted, "NO! I want the puter myself, please." I put it down on her level and got her a chair. She promptly typed in the URL to the Noggin site, letter by letter, and we all chimed in, "w-w-w dot n-o-g-g-i-n dot c-o-m". Her Gen-X Mom told her to press enter and she started clicking away. A few minutes later she decided Nanu's mouse was too big and clunky. She stopped and asked her Gen-X Dad to connect her own, smaller mouse. Her Dad, promptly, received the order, pulled out her mouse from his laptop case, and plugged it into Nanu's computer. Nanu (me) stood frozen in shock and awe over all of this. Are we ready for this generation of learners?

## Digital Natives vs Digital Immigrants



**Digital Natives** are those who grew up with digital technology from birth, whereas **Digital Immigrants** are those who were already socialized in predigital ways when digital technology arrived on the scene.

Prensky, M. 2001. Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon* 9 (5).  
<http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf> (accessed June 1, 2005).

**Update Comment – July 28, 2008.**



Dennis Crompton of [Archigram fame](http://www.archigram.net) (<http://www.archigram.net>) was in town to photograph and archive, fellow Archigrammer, Michael Webb's work. We were engaged in conversation around how the move from film to digital has changed the process and amount of time for photographing and archiving documents and drawings. I asked if it was important for photography students to learn the film process. I was surprised at his answer, "No, today's young students don't know what film is. The digital process is all they know and understand, and for our purposes, that's all they need to know."