

# The Emerging Online Life of the Digital Native:

## What they do differently because of technology, and how they do it

By Marc Prensky

A work in progress

[5805 words]

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*“Students are not just using technology differently today, but are approaching their life and their daily activities differently because of the technology.”*  
– NetDay survey 2004, Conclusions

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**O**ne of the most interesting things I enjoy observing about young people today is the rich online world and life they are in the process of creating for themselves.

For almost every activity in their lives, these so-called “Digital Natives” (See *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*, at <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/default.asp>) are inventing new, *online* ways of making each activity happen, based on the new technologies available to them.

This is not to say that *every* young person does *every* one of these things online – many still do only a few – but the *possibilities* for what Digital Natives can do online are growing exponentially, and are being adapted by more and more of them daily (and by some adults as well, although as we will see, there are differences.)

A 2004 survey by the Net Day project of 200,000 U.S. students ([www.netday.org](http://www.netday.org)) concluded, as noted above, that “Students are not just using technology differently today, but are approaching their life and their daily activities differently because of the technology.”

Says one teenage girl in a Yahoo video, “On the Internet you can play games, you can check your mail, you can talk to your friends, you can buy things, and you can look up things that you really like.”

And the Internet is just the tip of an enormous iceberg of possibilities. As important as it may be to the Digital Natives, their online life is a whole lot bigger than just the Internet. This online life has become *an entire strategy for how to live, survive and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, where cyberspace is a part of everyday life. Today’s third graders, as the Net Day Study observed, already have multiple email addresses.

In the paragraphs that follow I will look at a large number of daily activities that *all* people do – including “Digital Immigrants” – to observe and examine just how the Digital Natives have taught themselves, and learned, to do these activities differently.

One thing we will observe is that even when Immigrants use the *exact same* technology such as eBay, or blogs, Natives and Immigrants typically do things differently. This often causes dissonance and disconnect between the two groups. If you haven’t felt this dissonance, at least in some areas, I bet you haven’t been with a lot of people from the other age group.

Also, as far as I can observe from the countries I’ve been to in the past few months, from Scotland to Italy, to New Zealand, to Japan, to Canada, the phenomenon I am describing is global in the developed world, and is quickly emerging in other countries as well.

## **AREAS OF CHANGE**

So, here follows a number of areas where the Digital Natives are creating their own way of doing things, often “under the radar” of most Digital Immigrant adults. Although this is a relatively long list – which is part of my point – I will do some summarizing at the end. (If you are impatient, or hate lists, just look for the next big red letter.)

Digital Natives are **Communicating** Differently  
*email, IM, chat*

**A**ll human communication changed radically with the advent of the worldwide computer network, and for no group more so than Digital Natives. Letters, which once took time and thought to write and time to arrive, were quickly supplemented and often supplanted by email, which could be written quickly and sent instantly to any number of people. But while Digital Immigrants spent, and still spend time worrying about which type of communication was better, the Digital Natives quickly abandoned any pretense of

traditional letter writing (“You mean on paper?” asked one incredulously) except when forced to do it by a traditionalist parent or teacher.

At the same time, long-distance communication went from being expensive (and therefore time-limited) to being essentially free. This opened up to the Natives the possibility of frequent, world-wide communication, and again, they have quickly adapted it to their own purposes, just as their parents did in the office. It is now possible for the Natives to remain in close communication with any one they meet, anywhere, and they often do, totally expanding and simplifying the traditional notion of “pen pals.” While companies like e-Pals have sprung up to protect kids, most prefer, certainly with people they know, to remain unguided and unfiltered.

Email, and even more its synchronous cousin, chat, allowed another new phenomenon to emerge – online-only acquaintances and friends. Digital Natives began realizing that you could meet people online in various news and discussion groups, and that those would be people who shared your interests. Not only that, but you could read their posts and see how they thought long before you ever contacted them, even online.

Kids quickly realized that “lookism,” that seldom-talked-about but insidious social divider, doesn’t exist at all on the web, and were thrilled to take advantage of this, with the ones who might be the least communicative in person reaping some of the biggest benefits.

[Of course with this comes the dangers of predators and criminals, which are real, but the Natives are not about to let this spoil their party. As we shall see in a minute, they have begun to create and evolve online reputation systems to keep themselves, and their friends safe (or at least safer) in the digital world.]

Email is a form of what is called “asynchronous” communication. A synchronous means that only one of the communicating parties needs to be there at a time; the message is composed and sent at the writer’s convenience, and is read at the receiver’s, just like “snail mail” (as the Digital Natives have dubbed the Post Office system.) This type of communication has great advantages, including the time to reflect before you write or answer. While the “etiquette” that has evolved for email demands a quick response, that response does not have to come within the hour or even the same day. So, as fast as it is, email is the Native’s “reflective” form of communicating.”

But this does nothing for those who like their communications to be “synchronous,” i.e. live and “real-time.” One form of real time communication, of course, is the phone, and for Digital Natives the cell phone has become a necessity, as we shall hear more about later. But another form of real-time communication, used by the Natives to a much greater extent than by their elders, is chat, also known, in various incarnations as instant messaging and real-time texting. Coming in a number of forms or flavors, chat are text-based systems where, typically everyone in the conversation, which can be two people only or very large numbers, is online simultaneously. Today’s Digital Natives thrive on

this form of communication – every parent I talk to marvels (and even sometimes brags) at the number of “chat windows” their kids have open simultaneously – often not realizing that this is universal. Most of these conversations are one-on-one, but some are in chat rooms, where the various “speakers” are identified by their online name or ‘handle” before their comment.

Obviously, texting is slower than just talking, so the Digital Natives have invented ways to speed it up. “Correct” spelling is replaced by whatever is readable. Anything that can be done with one key is: “k” for OK, “c” for see, “u” for you (as in cu later). Numbers replace their homonyms (as in t42) and the way characters look on the screen takes on meaning. Abbreviations are well-known (LOL=laugh out loud.) Brief communications like H4T5TNT (home for tea at five tonight) are common, and are often made up among particular users. And a semi-secret (but widely known among the Natives) code has evolved to protect texters privacy, as in “GTGPOS” (got to go, parent over shoulder.)

I have heard from numerous parents stories about how children who had trouble communicating using normal speaking, writing or even email (because of some form of dyslexia or shyness, for example) completely blossom in the norm-free communication atmosphere of chat, texting and IM, where the only “rule” is to make yourself understood.

The “missing” communication elements of facial observation and body language are often approximated in both email and texting by “emoticons” such as the happy, sad or winking face, or the textual equivalent (<grin>), enriching the communication. And while it is harder, perhaps, to tell someone is lying when you don’t see them in person, technology is addressing this too, through voice pattern and biometric analyses.

Importantly, all the various elements of the Natives’ digital life are closely related. Chat, for example, plays a big role in games. Depending on the situation, chat may be preferred even to voice communication, even when available, because it is more private. Advertisers, who watch kids’ behaviors carefully, have already picked up on this in their sales pitches, such as the TV commercial in which a group of skiers in a gondola, as a practical joke, silently text message each other to lure one friend out of the car prematurely.

Digital Natives are **Sharing** Differently  
*Blogs, webcams, camera phones*

While email and texting are clearly mechanisms for sharing, Digital Natives have evolved other, specific mechanisms to do so. Take blogs, for example (the term “blog” is a shortening of “weblog.”) These text-only (originally) sites allow Digital Natives to share the most intimate details of their personal and emotional lives, on a weekly, daily, or even hourly basis. Software has been developed that let kids with online access set up

a personal blog at almost no cost. (See [www.blogster.com](http://www.blogster.com) ) The entries get archived and the blogs remain permanently on line accessible to anyone with the address or a link.

Blogs have led to a complete reversal of the “diary” phenomenon – where once kids kept their feelings locked up in a book, today they (or at least many of them) prefer to post them online for all to see and share. Friends read each others blogs to know what’s going on in the social group. An important feature of blogs are lists of links to other blogs that the writer enjoys, so they serve as a form of interconnection.

The blogging phenomenon, of course, has also entered the Digital Immigrant world, but in a very different way – as an *intellectual* sharing tool. Many intellectuals, from news people to “gurus,” to professors, write and publish regular blogs, which become regular reading for their followers. But because the usage is so different (emotion vs. intellect) this is effectively a different medium that the blogs of the Digital Natives.

Cell phone cameras are now the primary means of sharing images among young people in many places, either sending the pictures, or even often, passing the cell phone around, as I often see school girls doing on the subway. Photo albums appear to be a thing of the past.

Webcams are another device Digital Natives use frequently for sharing, while Digital Immigrants use them typically for monitoring. As a “sharing” phenomenon, webcamming consists of setting up one or more cheap, tiny video cameras that broadcast continually to a web site. Digital Natives might share continuous views of their room, something in nature, a pet – often the weirder the better. Immigrants, on the other hand, typically use webcams for “monitoring” in a security or similar situation, such as a “babycam.” As a preview of the Digital Native’s future, I recently watched a form of webcam sharing in which a technology-oriented father on the Internet searched the web cams in each room in his house in order to share with me “live” pictures of the baby.

Digital Natives are **Buying and Selling** Differently  
*eBay, schoolwork*

Shopping – who would have imagined the extent to which the digital revolution has changed it? While for Immigrants the internet has brought convenience, comparison and collectables, for Natives it has brought access to new wealth and access, mainly through the ability to purchase clothing, computers and other things on eBay. I know of schoolgirls who buy all their clothes on eBay – and dress only in designer ware. For equipment geeks, the web, and eBay in particular, are a source of a never ending flea market.

Of course it also didn’t take the Natives long to figure out that the Web is a great place to buy and sell school-related information – in particular papers and exams. This has,

unfortunately, led their Immigrant professors to become digital sleuths, rather than searching for, and inventing new teaching methods.

eBay has also become the place for Digital Natives to “monetize,” if they choose, the work they do in a game, by offering for sale advanced characters, weapons and other items. This has led one economics professor to conclude, by assuming that the relative value of the assets sold online was applied to everything in the game, that the online game *EverQuest* has a larger economy than Russia!

One other important thing that Digital Natives have learned to buy and sell online are their services, as free lancers, employees, and even spouses. The web is now the preferred means of finding a job (not to mention a mate.) And chances are good that your Digital Native son or daughter will be finding some or all of their dates online.

Digital Natives are **Exchanging** Differently  
*music, movies, humor*

Digital Natives love to trade, to give and get, especially items that express their personality, such as songs, movies and web sites. Sites that are humorous get passed around particularly quickly, in what has now become known as the “viral” way. This has led to a great clash with the old system, as young people increasingly see things available to them online as “free” of ownership and cost. Although legislation and some widely publicized prosecutions have slowed this sharing down somewhat in the United States, I predict this is just temporary, as new business models evolve. Although the 99 cent song has made some headway in the U.S., free music and video file sharing continues unabated and at record paces around the world and in most of our colleges. The data shows a continual increase of peer-to-peer (P2P) activity, and P2P applications are still the most downloaded on the Internet.

Digital Natives are **Creating** Differently  
*sites, avatars, mods*

One of the defining characteristics of the Digital Native is the desire to create. Digital Natives are adept (or become quickly so, given the chance) at building Web sites, Flash movies, and other online creations. In their games they create not only avatars (characters to represent them), but entire worlds, including the houses, furniture, clothes, weapons and implements of whatever world they are inhabiting. More and more games now come with tools, such as “level editors” included in the box, which allow interested players to create entirely new worlds and games of their own invention. This process, known as “modding,” has a huge number of participants, who create everything from levels to complete games (total modifications) some of which get sold separately. Prizes of up to \$1 million are offered for this (usually collaborative) skill. Mods that use the same tools to create passive movies rather than interactive games are known as “Machinima” and they too have a large creative force and following on the web (try

Googling “machinima.”) In many games the volume of player-created content equals or surpasses content created by the game developers.

The important point here is about tools. Digital Natives expect to have powerful tools available to them, and they know, by teaching themselves and teaching each other, how to use them.

Digital Natives are **Meeting** Differently  
*3D chat rooms, dating*

Meeting used to be considered purely a face-to-face activity. Obviously, people still do meet face-to-face, but online meeting, and arranging meetings online has become an important hallmark of this generation. All kinds of software exists to facilitate this, from instant messaging “chat rooms,” to tools like “wikis” and “net meeting.” There are tools to help people set up live meetings, such as [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com). In Japan, people use their cell phones as a meeting mechanism, setting profiles in a program called Lovegety, which set both phones ringing when passersbys’ profiles match up.

Digital Natives are **Collecting** Differently  
*mp3, video, sensor data*

I don’t know how many Digital Natives still collect stamps, but I do know they collect a lot of songs and videos – the statistics are that 2 billion songs are downloaded per month. Young people exchange music as an expression of who they are, and although some are paying for songs under the new schemes from Apple and others, most of what is collected is exchanged and downloaded for free. Peer to peer (P2P) applications that facilitate this collecting are the most downloaded apps on the Net.

Digital Natives are **Coordinating** Differently  
*Projects, workgroups, MMORPGs*

Teachers would be jealous if they had any idea to what extent Digital Natives are able to coordinate their activities online, and to run projects that may involve hundreds people. One classic example is that when a game didn’t have a wide enough variety of spaceships to suit the players, the players just set up their own teams to create more of them. Some made the wire frame models, others the “skins” others the weapons for these very complex creations, and through a totally ad-hoc coordination process they got added to the game.

In Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games, or MMORPGs, such as *RuneScape*, *Toontown*, *EverQuest*, *Lineage*, *Dark Age of Camelot*, *Star Wars Galaxies* and *City of Heroes* (to name only some), players form groups, either ad hoc or standing, to work together on tasks such as freeing a building or storming a castle. Some groups are formed quickly as required, but others are long-lasting clans or guilds, where players have had to

prove their skill to join, and pledge to be available when needed. Imagine 50-100 players, all with different powers, all going at a certain hour into the online world together (from wherever in the physical world each of them happens to be) to storm a castle – and the castle defenders frantically contacting each other to get online to defend. (Actually, you don't have to imagine this at all – a video of this is online at [www.marcprensky.com/tocome](http://www.marcprensky.com/tocome) for you to watch.)

Many aspects of these complex forms of self-coordination are second nature to today's game players, and to Digital Natives in general.

Digital Natives are **Evaluating** Differently  
*Reputation systems—Epinions, Amazon, Slashdot*

When one is working with other people online – people one may never meet face-to-face – it is useful and important to have ways to evaluate whether to trust and believe them. While people with little online experience fret a lot about this (and while online predators do exist and kids need to be careful) much has been done in the online world, by Digital Natives and others, to allow people to establish, and rely on, online reputations.

One of the most widely used ways of establishing a reputation is through rating systems. If you buy or sell on eBay or Amazon, you get to rate the opposing buyer and the seller on their promptness, honesty, efficiency, etc. Bad apples get weeded out and good ones rise to the top. On group blogs such as Slashdot.com (an information site for nerds) and others, people's posts – comments – get rated by the community, from worthless (1) to insightful (5). You the user can set your filter to see only comments of a certain caliber, or only comments from people with a certain reputation. While some Immigrants may see all these rating opportunities (rate this page, rate this post) as intrusions, or wastes of time, natives know their online compass depends upon them and are often more eager to comply.

Of course at the same time one is evaluating others' behavior and content, one is building up one's own reputation. By being honest, following norms (e.g. no cursing or "shouting" (ALL CAPS) when posting, and being thoughtful in comments and posts, one builds up a positive online reputation. Building a negative online rep, or a mixed one, is possible as well.

And as one spends more time online, one's presence and reputation is there for all to see – unlike in the offline world – and can be determined, at one level, by just Googling a person's name. The number of people linking to them (which determines in large part their Google position) as well as the online work they have created, will speak for itself.

Digital Natives are **Gaming** Differently  
*“versus,” small & large groups*

The experiences called “games” by the Digital Natives are totally different than what their Digital Immigrant parents called (and still call) “games,” and this difference lies at the root of much of the objection to and rejection of games by teachers, parents and others. Although there is some holdover – known today as casual or mini-games – games today are not the games of the previous generation. Those games – mostly card, board, and word games, were typically short, uncomplicated and even trivial, (with a big one even being named “Trivial Pursuit.”) The old games could be won in a couple of hours at most, often much less.

Today’s best-selling computer and video games, by contrast, are deep, complex experiences that take anywhere from 30 to over 100 hours to finish. And even today’s so-called “casual” and “mini” games, which take less time, deliver a much more intricate, adaptive experience than in the past.

Today’s games are also almost exclusively multi-player. Although in many Digital Immigrants’ minds computer and video gaming means “one individual in front of a machine,” solo gaming is pretty much passé – an artifact of the aberrant time when computers were not yet connected. Gaming with others now has so many components that there is something there for everyone. Games (although not the same games) are played by people of all ages and social groups. Multi-player games involving anywhere from two players to up to a million players. Recently a female college senior, a software engineering major who is the top student in her class, admitted to me that she has been a “closet” game player for years, not telling anyone outside of her gaming friends for fear of being laughed at, but that now she is ready to “come out.”

Digital Natives are **Learning** Differently  
*About stuff that interests them*

Digital Native learning is also very different. Of course it only happens in its true form for things the Natives want to learn about (hobbies, vacations, games, for example.) but the natives are very much aware that if they actually *want* to learn something (usually for their own purposes) the tools online are available for them to do it on their own. Recently when a 12-year-old, whose in-school problems were giving his parents fits, wanted a pet lizard, he spent days searching the web for everything he could find on different types of lizards as pets, and the advantages and disadvantages of each, and presented his parents with a 20 page report. (He didn’t get the lizard, but his parents were impressed, as was I.) A third grade girl became interested in butterflies and, on her own, prepared a report that totally impressed her teacher and her classmates.

Today, when a student is motivated to learn something, they have the tools to go further in their learning than ever before – far beyond their teachers’ ability and knowledge, and far beyond what even adults could have done in the past. The Digital Natives exploit this

to the fullest, while ignoring, to a larger and larger extent, the things they are *not* motivated to learn, which, unfortunately, includes most, if not all, of their schoolwork.

Digital Natives are **Searching** Differently  
*Info, connections, people*

Search is now the second biggest use of the Internet, after email. A great deal of what the Digital Natives do online involves searching – for information, products, people, connections – and the Natives have very sophisticated tools available to them for this purpose.

Did you know you can use Google to search for phone numbers, dictionary definitions, and online images? The Natives do. Build a better search tool, such as Google did when others were using more primitive engines such as Yahoo and Alta Vista, and the Natives will switch *en masse* overnight. This is why Microsoft has spent \$100 million to move into the search business.

Is Native searching different from Immigrant searching? Certainly, in terms of the topics searched. And there are also differences, I think, in the type of information each is looking for. Immigrants, in general, want the most filtering – they get overwhelmed easily by lots of information; Natives, on the other hand prefer more raw information so they can filter for themselves. (I’ve never heard a Digital Native complain about “information overload” – it’s a fact of life for them.)

While teachers often complain about their students’ inability to discriminate between good bad, true, false, useful or un-useful information, this ability is not lacking in general, but only in the domains the students don’t understand well. It this is not at all true in domains that they understand – give boys raw information about games or skateboards, or girls information about social groups to which they belong, and they will discriminate just fine.

Digital Natives are **Analyzing** Differently  
*SETI, drug molecules*

Digital Natives have volunteered in large numbers (along with many Immigrants, to be sure) to be part of massive analysis projects, by running internet connected “screen saver” programs that download chunks of data and use their computer’s free processor cycles to analyze them and send back the results.

Data that is being analyzed in this “distributed” way include the information from the SETI (Search For Extraterrestrial Intelligence) project of the University of California, and

programs to search through millions of possible drug combinations for the few that seem promising against certain diseases.

Digital Natives are also more open to themselves and especially their devices being sensors, providing data for large projects, such as reporting conditions simultaneously around the world, such as weather.

Digital Natives are **Reporting** Differently  
*Moblogs, digital photos*

In contrast with their parents, who used to love to keep any information they had secret (“Knowledge is Power,” was their motto) Digital Natives love to share and report information as soon as they receive it (perhaps “Sharing Knowledge is Power” is their new, unvoiced, motto.) As soon as the Web appeared, Digital Natives began using it as a reporting tool about their lives and their interests. With a free web site or a blog, any kid can be an online reporter on any topic. Digital Native web sites and blogs exist about every topic, from politics to entertainment. Extreme forms of reporting include the story of many kids who went to see the movie *The Hulk*, expecting it to be a big blockbuster, text-messaging their friends from the theater that the movie was a dud, before the movie had even ended.

Digital cameras and video cams, and particularly cell phone cameras and webcams, let natives report in completely new ways. Moblogging (mobile-blogging), for example is the phenomenon by which people enter data into their blog (via pictures, voice, or texting) from their cell phones while on-the-go,.

Digital Natives are **Programming** Differently  
*Open systems, mods, search*

Pretty much every Digital Native can program to some extent, even if it is only setting up and personalizing his or her cell phone, or using “and” or “or” in search engines. Many, or course, program to a far greater extent, even those that have not studied programming formally (though today more and more have.) Today, in fact, we have a situation similar to ancient times when only a few people (known as “scribes”) could read and write. If you needed to send a letter, you went to a scribe, who created it for you. Today, if you need a program to do something, such as, for example collecting political contributions online, you would go to a Digital Native programmer, who would create whatever you need, from a website to a program often in a matter of hours.

In addition, programming is spreading quickly among Digital Natives in the form of graphical programming languages, particularly Macromedia’s Flash. Many young people can program successfully in this language, and banks of free code modules are quickly being established to make it even easier. (A great example was the “This Land Is Your

Land” clip that drew national attention during the U.S. presidential election, but that is just one non-interactive example of the many things Flash is capable of. All kinds of expressions and games are emerging (see [www.socialimpactgames.com](http://www.socialimpactgames.com) for lots of examples.) In a short time Flash players will be incorporated into all new cell phones, so that natives can share their programming on phones as well as on the Web.

Digital Natives are **Socializing** Differently  
*Learning social behavior, influence*

Digital Natives are both socializing online and “being socialized,” as the social scientists say. Their online contacts are as “real” to them as their face-to-face ones, albeit different in style. In a positive sense, online relationships are not affected by the “lookism” and status that is so important and frustrating in kids face-to-face social lives – online, you and other people are judged only by what you say and produce. Reputation and influence are earned, and not based on social caste. Yet as in the face-to-face world, group norms of behavior must be learned and followed, often on pain of ostracism – try “shouting” (i.e. typing in all caps) in an online forum. For older Natives, meeting new people to date and even your spouse online seems natural. It seems inevitable that this will soon filter down to finding friends at all ages.

Digital Natives are **Evolving** Differently  
*Peripheral, emergent behaviors*

One of the most intriguing things about the Digital Natives’ e-life is that it is continually evolving, and the kids are continually creating new behaviors that facilitate their lives. Natives have learned to type messages with the keys on their cell phones, in their pockets, at quite reasonable rates of speed. They have learned to manage 20 conversations in 20 instant messaging windows simultaneously, while still doing their homework in their lap. (“I don’t understand how she does it,” says her mother. “She tells me ‘It’s easy.’”) When instant messaging, the two letters “OK” take too long to type – believe it or not – so the Natives use just a “k.” The sociologist Mimi Ito and others have observed new social behaviors emerging among Japanese Digital Natives, such as leaving home with no fixed meeting place, and arranging their meeting on-the-fly on their cell phones.

Digital Natives are **Growing Up** Differently  
*Exploring, transgressing*

Finally, online (a term that has been already outmoded by wireless – we need, and the Digital Natives will no doubt invent – a new one) is one of the key places, in addition to home, school and physical meeting places, where the Digital Natives are growing up. Like all young people, they explore, transgress, and test the limits in each of their spaces.

Yes, pornography is easier to find on line than under someone's bed, but what does that mean? We adults ought to be understanding and thinking about these coming-of-age behaviors on the web so we can help our kids navigate their new world.

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**T**hose are just some of the many changes going on today – what do they all signify? More than anything, I think, they signify that the Digital Native generation is moving ahead in its own direction. It's headed, inexorably, (although some of its members will move faster than others) to incorporating its birthright – digital technology – into its life in new, often unexpected, ways.

And while some Digital Immigrants are afraid of the new technology, and others may question its value, the Natives are never going back, en masse, to the old ways.

Yes, there will be some Digital Natives who still hand-write letters, just as there are musicians who play 16<sup>th</sup> century music on old instruments. But letter writing in longhand is a thing of the past, like it or not. So are things like holding only one conversation at a time, looking people in the eye to know if you trust them, shaking hands as the final rite of a deal, hiding porn under the mattress, keeping information to oneself for personal status, paying for music, buying without easy comparison shopping, games where you don't create parts yourself, dating that isn't technology-mediated, reputations based on status rather than performance, excuses for not having information, and many, many other things. Get used to it.

In a very short time technology has changed an entire generation's behavior radically, and it behooves all of us who are not from that generation but whose daily life involves interaction with them, such as parents and teachers, to learn as much as we can about the new behaviors.

(If you are someone who doesn't think behavior *can* change that fast around technology, try to think back to how quickly, when telephone answering machines first appeared, the norm went from "It's rude to have an answering machine" to "It's rude NOT to have an answering machine.")

Today norms and behaviors are changing *much* faster than in the past, because the technology changes rapidly and the Digital Natives are programmed to – and *want* to – keep up with it. For adults, some new Digital Native behaviors may be worth immediately imitating and adopting (blogging, for example), others will seem really strange (online dating, perhaps), and others will forever be out of reach and impossible to adopt given their pre-digital "accents" (e.g. one handed typing on a cell phone in your pocket.)

But there is a new, emerging, *different* form of life out there, that the Digital Natives are creating for themselves. If you are a parent or educator, the one thing you can be absolutely sure of is that you ignore it at your peril!

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