Teaching Techno-Criticism to Digital Natives: Participatory Journalism as Pedagogical Practice

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Abstract : Teaching media and digital literacy to "digital natives" presents a unique set of pedagogical obstacles, especially when critique is involved, as these early-adopters tend to deify most technological and/or digital advancements and inventions. Knowing no other way of being, these natives are often reluctant to hear criticisms of the way they receive information, educate themselves, communicate with others, and even become enculturated because critique often connotes generational gaps and/or clandestine efforts to produce neo-Luddites. To digital natives, techno-criticism is more the result of an antiquated, out-of-touch agenda rather than a constructive, progressive praxis. However, the need to cultivate a techno-critical perspective among technology's premier users has, perhaps, never been more pressing. In an effort to sidestep reluctance and encourage critical thought about where we are in terms of digital technology and where exactly it may be taking us, this essay outlines a new model for teaching techno-criticism to digital natives. Specifically, it recasts the techniques of participatory journalism—helping writers and readers understand subjects outside of their specific historical context—as progressive, interdisciplinary pedagogy. The model arises out of a review of relevant literature and data gathered via literary analysis and participant observation. Given the tenuous relationships between novel digital advancements, individual identity, collective engagement, and, indeed, Truth/fact, shepherding digital natives toward routine practice of "techno-realism" seems of utter importance.

Keywords : digital natives, journalism education, media literacy, techno-criticism
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