

Teaching Historical Research Skills to Generation Y: One Instructor's Approach

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NO SHORTAGE OF LITERATURE exists on Generation Y, also called the Net Generation, Digital Natives, or Millennials. From leading newspapers to academic journals, the last ten years have witnessed repeated attempts to understand how today's young adults tick, in particular, those born between 1982 and 1991. As the labels applied to this cohort suggest, technology is a "staple" in virtually every aspect of their lives. Just as members of Generation X have no personal recollection of life before television, those in Generation Y cannot imagine life without the Internet and cell phones, not to mention a host of other electronic gadgets. Research suggests that for those born even more recently—in the latter part of the 1990s and clearly in the last decade—time committed to "screen media" (be it television, videos, or computer games) rivals that spent playing outdoors. The most significant loser in our transition to digital media has been print sources. The time children spend reading books has declined to just thirty-nine minutes per day.¹

Beyond their affinity for, and facility with, technology, researchers make note of Generation Y's ability to "multi-task." If ten to fifteen years ago, the term might have connoted talking to someone on the phone and e-mailing simultaneously, for instance, today's teens may be found texting friends, checking social network sites, doing homework, and playing a video game—all at the same time. The younger the members of this generation, the more fluent they are with "nontext expression."²

Generation Y students are accustomed to having information at their fingertips. Some have not had to make the physical trips to the library that many of us in older generations associate with high school history classes. They expect to find what they are looking for easily, and sift through information rapidly. They may lack the skills to determine what information is trustworthy, however, because of the sheer volume of what is available to them through virtual media.³

Generation Y's preference for multi-tasking, and its tendency to process information very rapidly and often uncritically, have implications for the way students study and learn. While their level of visual literacy easily surpasses that of older generations, their textual literacy skills lag behind. Many students in this cohort simply do not, and in some cases *cannot*, focus on one textual source at a time and comprehend it beyond the superficial level: "In the USA it has been reported that only 31 percent of students with bachelor [*sic*] degrees demonstrate a literacy level adequate to compare viewpoints after reading two newspaper editorials....The deterioration is worse among Generation Y students, with two-thirds lacking 'active reading habits.'"⁴ Connected to this finding is the negative attitude toward education that some researchers attribute to Generation Y. As one coordinator of college-level library instruction has noted, members of this generation tend not to view pursuit of education with much enthusiasm, but instead feel it is something that they have to do to ensure their future success. They have also been able to cut corners and still get by: "Gen Y'ers have largely gotten good grades in school without doing much work, and without developing an appropriate sense of workloads."⁵

Of course, most of us have had students who defy these stereotypes; like any sweeping statements of age cohorts, there are some attributes that seem more truthful and relevant than others. Some presumed "traits" of Generation Y might entirely contradict our experiences in the classroom, at least for a minority of students. Either way, however, few would deny that new challenges arise when teaching Generation Y that stem directly from the ubiquitous presence of technology in their worlds.

Direct Challenges to Teaching

Many forums on the *Chronicle of Higher Education* website deal with the often unwelcome presence of cell phones, iPods, iPads, and laptops in the college classroom, as they severely compromise students' ability to concentrate. Frequently, instructors feel as though they are competing with the lure of an unread text message.⁶ In response to a *New York Times Magazine* cover story on the digital generation, one college instructor commented, "Having taught art history courses for more than a decade, I

have witnessed firsthand the relatively rapid and somewhat disheartening transformation of attentive, questioning college students into the easily distracted, gadget-glued generation so accurately portrayed in your article.”⁷⁷ A second contributor, who gives regular talks to teenagers about the dangers of driving while using a cell phone, reports she had to divide her presentation into snippets because her students’ attention spans were so short. Ironically, her decision resulted from some teenagers’ inability to last an hour without texting someone during her lecture, despite repeated warnings.⁸

Teachers who used to assign students large amounts of reading complain that they simply can’t do it anymore (and expect most students to come prepared for class). Beyond the usual life commitments which have always competed with school work for students’ time and attention, Generation Y confronts a newer obstacle—students are actually in the habit of reading too quickly, *and* reading less. Browsing on the Internet lends itself more to scanning than it does to careful reading and comprehension. One’s mouse is poised to move to the flashing advertisement; the link that appears highlighted in a different color; and now, in the *New York Times* online edition, the article “teaser” that periodically enters the lower-right quadrant of the monitor. As one writer puts it, “You react [to these stimulants] with an itchy mouse finger, but not with your mind. Instead of finishing the paragraph you are reading, you’re already off to another server to get more information.”⁷⁹ If students are accustomed to reading in short snippets, completing a 100-page reading assignment must seem like quite a chore. Multiply that by four courses, and we start to understand why professors may decide to assign less reading, or find means to ensure that the books are at least opened. Blogs or discussion board posts, as well as short quizzes, become increasingly important to assess student effort and preparation.

Related to this tendency to scan and click, rather than read and comprehend, is some students’ reluctance to read lengthy written directions in the order they are presented. More accustomed to a menu of options than step-by-step directions taking them from Point A to B, some students find explicit, detailed instructions off-putting or even difficult to understand. Similarly, when given instructions on how to do an assignment, some Generation Y students tend to do better when provided with visual maps (graphic organizers) of the project, as well as a sense of the way in which each of the smaller steps relates to the broader concept, or goal, of the assignment.¹⁰

Put in other terms, Generation Y has been raised in the midst of a “mass customization movement.”¹¹ Problems arise when students bring this consumer mindset to their academic curriculum. Faculty members

encounter advisees who, with little foundation, feel fully capable of determining the best educational path to reach their goals. Students may be especially resistant to courses they perceive as “irrelevant” to their career objectives. Though students sign up for these courses in the end, the burden is on the professor to make the course content inspiring and the course objectives immediately relevant.¹² More so than in previous generations, Generation Y students who feel frustrated with their classes don’t tend to suffer in silence. They approach the instructor and readily air their complaints.¹³

Despite these challenges, particular pedagogical strategies have been shown to be effective for millennials. Generation Y students respond much better to “active learning” opportunities than lecture, and to classroom activities that maximize peer interaction, such as group discussion or projects. In terms of retention of content, the *best* instructional technique for this cohort is having students teach their peers.¹⁴ It is a truism that lecture-style teaching is most effective for only a minority of students. But for Generation Y, it is a very small minority, indeed.¹⁵

Generation Y and the History Teacher

What does all this mean for teachers of history at the secondary and college levels? Some answers are obvious. Young people’s greater fluency with visual media causes us to rethink the traditional lecture format. We try to incorporate visuals throughout, be they *PowerPoint* slides, video clips, or other stimuli. To the extent possible, we can easily provide students choice in their assignments, be it through the topics they are assigned to research, the resources (visual, textual, or human) they are asked to consult, or the type of assessment they are provided. Few would disagree that history is best taught when students have regular and varied opportunities to engage in active learning. They might be asked to stage a debate between two competing factions, act out an event from the past, or imagine a dialogue with a historical figure. Students who excel at art, creative writing, or music could easily bring those talents to the history classroom. Though a limited amount of frontal teaching can be useful pedagogically, there are many ways in which we can also get students to interact with the past, analyze historical themes, and reach their own conclusions.

The challenges of teaching Generation Y are especially pronounced, however, for those who teach research skills at the college level. Except for a few, most of my students reach college not fully prepared to conduct historical research. Much of the problem begins with severe limitations placed on the time of high school teachers in public schools today. Since proficiency in research skills is very difficult to measure in standardized

tests, the research and writing process have taken second place to other types of skills taught in the public high school classroom. In a 2002 survey conducted by Will Fitzhugh's *The Concord Review*, an overwhelming majority of U.S. public high school teachers reported their conviction that the term paper was a critical aspect of the high school history class. However, more than 80 percent do not assign research papers longer than 5,000 words (13-15 pages, double spaced). More than 60 percent of teachers never assign anything as long as 3,000 words (8-10 pages). Most report not having ample time to devote to this type of long-term assignment. Usually, teachers end up opting out of assigning a longer research paper. Consequently, students come to college having written mostly short essays.¹⁶

Since students think they are quite adept at finding “everything they need” on the Internet, some complete a research assignment by finding several web-based articles, which may or may not be reliable. Some students even need to be convinced that conducting library research is an important skill to develop, and something they will need in other contexts (be they academic or professional). Most students seem quite determined to avoid Wikipedia at all costs, but will turn to other websites with little hesitation. In many circumstances online “shortcuts” have enabled students to get by up until college, and they sense little need to expand their repertoire of research skills. They are often quite surprised to learn of the tremendous resources available to them through library databases, but are quickly frazzled and frustrated when they are not able to utilize them easily. Some “give up” and simply change topics before taking the time to learn how to use the databases to their advantage.

In my experience, here lies the main challenge in teaching research skills to Generation Y: These students are often very impatient learners. Unaccustomed to having to be resourceful beyond the confines of a Google search, students expect the research process to be fast, painless, and relatively free of complications. As a teacher of an introductory research class at Towson University, a large state institution just north of Baltimore, one of my key objectives is to help my contingent of Generation Y students “slow down” and think carefully about one research topic over the course of six to eight weeks of the semester. As one student shared, “Before this class, I would simply cram a paper out a week or few days before it was due.”¹⁷ This is the rule, sadly—not the exception.

In the course of four semesters of teaching this class, I have come to realize that I am challenging many of the “natural” inclinations associated with Generation Y that were outlined in the first part of this essay. Usually, we read about pedagogical techniques which try to *accommodate* Generation Y's reliance on technology, short attention spans, and desire

for relevance and customization of the learning experience. But doing historical research actually requires this generation of students to *challenge* their preferred modes of learning in some respects, as well. If the rates of textual literacy are falling, students need more opportunities to focus at length on primary sources, question them analytically, and draw their own conclusions. Below, I offer a summary of the major research assignment I have developed for HIST 100, as well as the successes and struggles I have had along the way.

Back to the Basics of Historical Research

The bulk of the semester in HIST 100 is devoted to a “research proposal” that takes students step-by-step through the traditional research process. The final product the students submit includes most items short of the research paper itself: The students need to include the paper’s introductory paragraphs with research question and thesis statement; an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources; and a detailed sentence outline of their main ideas and supporting evidence. The students also do a five-minute oral presentation and *PowerPoint* in which they share their major findings and arguments with the class. For the purposes of this essay, I will describe my approach to the research question, evidence, thesis statement, and outline sections of the assignment, as well as some writing strategies I address when students compose their introductory paragraphs.

The rationale undergirding this assignment is as follows: Most of my students are simply not ready to write history research papers on the college level. Often, students write a single draft of a paper in a rush to meet an impending deadline, and feel this practice is entirely adequate for completing the assignment. When they receive an assignment with a lousy grade on it, they are not really sure of why they received that grade, or how they could have improved upon it if given the chance. In a nutshell, students are not familiar with the thought process that *precedes* (or should precede) the writing of the paper—the logical reasoning and creativity that need to join forces in order to formulate a research question and a coherent, well-defended argument. Moreover, even for those students who *are* already capable of writing good research papers, they seldom have the time, or incentive, to reflect on how that paper evolved from a topic of interest to a finished essay.

The content I have chosen for my course is America in the 1960s, from which every student is asked to choose a general category of interest: Civil Rights, Vietnam, Student Protest Movements, the Women’s Movement, Politics and International Relations, and the Counterculture. Students

typically receive their first choice of “umbrella topic.” They are divided into groups of three to five students based on topic, and return to these groupings at several points throughout the semester. The students act as peer consultants for each member of their group throughout the research process.

Exploring Topics with Background Sources

Students first meet in the library with the history department liaison, a veteran librarian who introduces them to the general flowchart associated with historical research, from gathering sources, to source analysis, to outlining and draft writing (among others). She presents students with a wide range of encyclopedias, both print and electronic, that relate to America in the 1960s. Students learn the reasons to consult an encyclopedia article when starting historical research: gathering basic facts and events about their topic of choice, creating a list of useful terms for catalog searches, and generating an initial list of secondary sources. The main goal of the first library session is to help students find topics they wish to explore in depth that also have secondary sources readily available in our library or others in the state of Maryland. Another critical aim is to help students become familiar with the library website, which they almost always describe as “overwhelming.”¹⁸

The session is conducted in a computer lab. Before the librarian finishes her overview of resources, most students invariably tune out and begin surfing the Internet in order to arrive at a topic so they can satisfy the initial requirement. The students’ desire to produce fast results for this stage of the project clashes with the deliberate process we are trying to model, a tension that will remain with the students—often causing them stress—throughout the semester. The topics selected at this early stage typically change multiple times before the students decide on one they want to “live” with for the semester. Once topics have been chosen, students submit them to me for evaluation. Usually, students choose subjects that are far too broad for a 10- to 15-page research paper, and will struggle to narrow them over the next month. “Struggle” is the critical word here.

Formulating the Research Question

When students have settled on a particular topic and begin reading secondary sources, they are asked to isolate a particular question, or issue, which they would like to learn more about. The question they ultimately settle on will become their formal “research question” that will guide their search for information for the remainder of the semester. We spend several

sessions reviewing what constitutes an effective research question: it must invite analytical thinking as opposed to a list of facts; it should be narrow and specific in scope; and it should be a question that can be researched and answered in the course of the semester. Writing a formal research question is something most of my students have not done before; previous experience has taught them to find the thesis first, and then come up with evidence to support it. I find this method counterintuitive, and encourage them to view the process much more flexibly.

Students come to class with tentative research questions and analyze them critically. The most frequent problem I encounter—even with more advanced undergraduates—is the students’ tendency to formulate questions that simply ask for a recounting of facts. Students are required to *rethink*, and then *rewrite* their research questions until they are worded to invite a thoughtful, debatable thesis statement in response. They typically find it easier to critique others’ questions first (anonymously), and then try their hand at their own questions. Often, as a part of the process, students communicate with me electronically as they experiment with various questions; the direct feedback in written form allows them to see the way their question has evolved, and helps them overcome obstacles which might be frustrating. To “test” their questions, I ask the students to brainstorm the types of sources they would need in order to come up with satisfactory answers. Their lists have to include primary sources as well as secondary; if they can answer the question *without* consulting primary sources, their questions need further revision. I explain that relying on secondary sources *alone*—which many students report having done in the past—will enable them to write only an encyclopedia article, with no original arguments. This insight is new for most of my students.

The session in which students critique their peers’ research questions has been the most rewarding thus far. For this particular classroom assignment—more so than others—the students work quite well together to find problems with the questions presented, and are extremely engaged. To eliminate the risk of embarrassment, the questions they examine are taken from a separate class of HIST 100 students. This process of analysis, as new to the students as the “research question” itself, is fun and challenging for them; their homework is to apply the critical thinking skills they have acquired to their own research questions.

Finding Primary and Secondary Sources

We journey from the research question to the evidence, which for this assignment needs to include both visual and text-based sources. I describe the research question as the “frame” that will help them determine what

sources are most relevant. Students typically report that having a research question in place keeps them from feeling “overwhelmed” when they begin looking at sources. We practice reading primary and secondary sources critically during class time, especially those that offer conflicting accounts of the same event.¹⁹ We discuss the goals of the author, his or her bias and credibility, and the limitations inherent in any primary—or secondary—source. Just as no two first-hand perspectives on historical events are the same, students need to appreciate that their own interpretations of documents might differ from those of other scholars, and that it is up to them to formulate, and defend, their own conclusions.

In the course of finding primary sources, the students learn that research is an unpredictable process that usually presents hurdles along the way. Often, students are surprised when they discover that the sources they have found do not satisfactorily answer the research question they have written, and that they need to revise the question once again. They learn to go back and forth between the question and their evidence until they can make “an appropriate match.” I often use the analogy of solving a mystery or a puzzle. If a particular student is willing to share her research stumbling block, we use class time to dissect logically the student’s topic and research question, and then consider the problems that arose in looking for an answer. Together, students suggest new directions which might yield better results. These “group consultations” are conducted in a constructive manner and do not seem to make students uncomfortable. Other students sometimes become motivated to participate who were not originally willing to do so.

As students search for appropriate sources—both primary and secondary—they begin to appreciate their university librarians as (often) untapped resources for guidance. While some students have no trouble admitting they need assistance, others are quite embarrassed by what they don’t know or have not been taught, and are reluctant to e-mail the librarian or approach the reference desk. The quest for sources requires students to utilize new commercial databases they are not sure how to access, let alone search efficiently, and to distinguish primary from secondary sources in the online library catalog. A second group library session focuses on precisely these skills, but students often need additional (one-on-one) help. Accustomed to being technologically savvy, students are unfamiliar with the feeling of *not* knowing how to access the right information when sitting in front of a screen, and may close their laptops in disgust. Using databases is often not intuitive. Mastering these strategies and techniques—or at the very least practicing them with a library professional—enables students to feel more capable of doing an independent research project rather than bewildered by all they have not learned.²⁰

The Thesis Statement

Once students have gathered appropriate sources, we turn to the thesis. Writing an effective thesis statement is sometimes the hardest skill to teach, because students come into class thinking “they already know everything they need to know.” The thesis is one of the core concepts introduced to students when they first learn expository writing skills; the challenge is that students’ understandings of the “thesis statement” are often severely limited in scope and resistant to change. Misconceptions are deeply engrained. Most frequently, students perceive the thesis as a statement of purpose rather than a concise statement of the paper’s argument. They do not think of it as something that needs to be continually revised and updated in accordance with their research findings.

I introduce the thesis as an answer to the research question, and explain that it needs to match the research question in terms of specificity and scope. It needs to be supported by primary source evidence in order to be considered an original argument, and cannot simply be a summary of viewpoints found in secondary sources. Students often believe a thesis needs to take up a paragraph, but they are required to condense it down to one or two sentences for this assignment. Just as they spend a good deal of time revising their research questions, I challenge students to continue rethinking—and rewriting—their thesis statements until the sentence directly answers the research question and until it conveys *precisely* what they want them to say. The students occasionally submit whole paragraphs which dance around the main argument, but do not clearly articulate it. My central task is to dispel common myths about the thesis and the role it serves in the larger paper.

Ultimately, writing (and rewriting) their thesis statements is where the students begin to understand what makes a historian’s task so difficult. They seldom sit through one class session in which I don’t say multiple times, “But how can you prove that?” or “How do you know that’s true?” They may spend several nights pondering one verb in their own thesis statements and considering synonyms that may be more effective. Perhaps most importantly, students learn that their thesis statement must be clear not only to themselves, but to their reader. Unfortunately for many students, writing is something that usually takes place late at night on a computer; they don’t give themselves time to edit or revise a rough draft for clarity, let alone review their thesis statement with a team of peers. Now they have that chance.

The Outline

We move from the thesis to the sentence outline. I continually struggle with this stage of the assignment pedagogically, simply because the

techniques that help some students appear to do little to assist others. While plenty of web sources are available on writing thesis statements, it is harder to find “sample” outlines for historical writing. Beyond collecting my former students’ “good” outlines and sharing them with current students, I ask the students to use their thesis statements as guides for organizing the paper, with the caveat that the most logical argumentative structure does not always come to mind immediately. During class, we begin with a “sample thesis statement” and as a group debate the most logical structure of the paper that should result from it. We discuss the need to acknowledge alternative arguments (and/or contradictory evidence) in order to strengthen a writer’s credibility.

More so than other sections of this assignment, students’ experience with writing outlines is highly variable. Few have had to submit formal outlines as part of a college course. Less important to me than the precise format of the outline is that I am able to verify that students are structuring their papers logically in order to prove the thesis, and are drawing upon primary and secondary sources in a balanced and appropriate fashion. Critically important to me is that students recognize that the argument they derived from historical documents (not merely background facts) must take up the bulk of their paper. Some students say they prefer writing drafts to outlines; while I do not accept drafts for this portion of the assignment, I am quite lenient on format, as long as the progression of ideas is clearly expressed.

Introductory Paragraphs

The only section of the paper the students actually write during the course of the semester is the introduction. The introductory paragraphs need to provide adequate historical background on their topic, introduce the research question and the thesis statement, and describe the most relevant primary sources which help them prove their argument. Earlier in the semester, I have students study professional historians’ introductions to practice identifying these components in journal articles and monographs. In drafts of just a few paragraphs on a topic they know quite well by this point, students learn to avoid common pitfalls associated with poor introductions: presenting an argument of extraordinary scope; making gross generalizations that cause readers to question the author’s knowledge and credibility; and failing to present their material in a scholarly fashion. I inject a good bit of humor into my session on introductions; we joke about the “beginning of time” introduction, the “dawn of man introduction,” etc.

The short length of the introduction (for our purposes, about two to three good paragraphs) allows students to concentrate on them and make

significant improvements in the last weeks of the project. It is relatively easy for me to read drafts and get them back to students in enough time for revision. Again, as in the crafting of the thesis statement, the goal of this short writing exercise is to teach students the importance of linguistic clarity in history writing. Occasionally, students will complain that “this isn’t an English course,” and may resent the focus on writing, however abbreviated the passage may be. But in the long run, working hard on a few paragraphs serves my students well. I am not shy in writing comments on drafts, telling students quite openly when they are “padding” their introductions with unnecessary information, or relying too heavily on personal opinion. The final drafts they turn in typically contain the students’ best writing of the semester. For the most part, the introductions are free of grammatical errors and are clear on what they are trying to accomplish. Clear thinking, they learn, leads to clear writing, and the introductions reflect the students’ more developed understanding of their research topics and arguments.

Ongoing Struggles in Teaching

This is a very difficult class to teach. It is classified as a General Education course, which means that many students who take the class need to take it to fulfill a requirement; were that not the case, they would likely pick something else. Course evaluations reveal a wide range of responses, from those who feel that have learned valuable, practical thinking skills, to those who do not regard the major assignment as applicable to their academic or career goals. Most students who do well put forth considerable effort and get acclimated to frequent challenges to their thinking, logic, and writing. Others feel they took a 100-level course that was “too hard” to be considered a “fair” introductory class. I try throughout the semester to emphasize the practical use of what we are learning, but because it is set within the framework of a history course, students in other majors sometimes refuse to make that leap of faith.

Perhaps the greatest challenge from an educator’s perspective is having the time to give each student the individual attention which I feel makes this process work. Requiring the students to come to office hours to discuss their research often results in wasted time, as many students show up expecting me to tell them what to do, and how to think about their topic. Even though I stagger the deadlines for each component of the research proposal, students still put off doing their best work until the end of the semester; few seem as intellectually invested in the early stages as I would like.

In the fall of 2011, I updated my syllabus to deal with some of these issues. Two earlier assignments in the course were converted to quizzes so

the bulk of the students' focus outside of class time is the major research project. To counter the students' tendency to procrastinate, I had them keep a research journal throughout the semester. On several occasions, students took ten to fifteen minutes to:

- Write a paragraph describing their progress on a particular stage of the process.
- Identify any questions or problems they are having.

This is an informal assignment that can be assessed very quickly and does not require a grade, per se (although completion of it counts as part of the students' participation grades). It enables me, in partnership with our librarian, to tailor upcoming class sessions to address problems that many students share. My hope is that this system—through which I can monitor their progress—will give the students a greater sense of accountability and ownership of the research process.

A second benefit of keeping a research journal is that students enhance their ability to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses as they complete the project. Generation Y students often move quickly through their assignments, and self-reflection does not seem to come easily to some. Perhaps a written account of their research journey enables students to see what learning has taken place, and what they need to work on in the future.

Conclusion: Working With (and Against?) Generation Y

The project I have described requires students to experience research as a difficult process that demands their patience, perseverance, and assiduousness. Group work in class clearly plays to students' strengths and helps ease the way. The faint of heart may struggle, particularly at the end of the semester, but the vast majority have come out ahead. One freshman has summarized her experience this way, which is representative of most: "When the research proposal was first assigned, I thought it would be easy and would not take long at all. To my surprise, it was much harder than I had originally thought."²¹ Teaching research to Generation Y in this fashion has made me into a track coach who is trying to convert sprinters into marathoners. Running a research marathon—even one that lasts just seven to eight weeks—ultimately boosts students' capacities for problem-solving and critical thinking. At times, students run uphill for long stretches, and feel like the downhill path is nowhere to be seen. Others run *very* slowly the whole way, and save their energy for the final stretch. A precious few maintain a steady pace, and arrive at the finish line with minimal soreness.

Generation Y students are by nature expert sprinters in many parts of their lives, and have been rewarded for their ability to go fast, and produce results quickly. It's time they learn to slow down.

Notes

1. Diana Oblinger and James Oblinger, "Is It Age or IT: First Steps Toward Understanding the Net Generation," in *Educating the Net Generation*, ed. Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger (Boulder, CO: Educause, 2005), 2.2, <<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/pub7101.pdf>>.
2. Ibid. Diana and James Oblinger define "nontext expression" as audio, video, and graphics.
3. P. L. Wessels and L. P. Steenkamp, "Generation Y Students: Appropriate Learning Styles and Teaching Approaches in the Economic and Management Sciences Faculty," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 23, no. 5 (2009): 1042.
4. National Endowment for the Arts, *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence*, Research Report #47 (2007), as quoted in Wessels and Steenkamp, "Generation Y Students," 1042.
5. Kate Manuel, "Teaching Information Literacy to Generation Y," *Journal of Library Administration* 36, no. 1/2 (January 2002): 208.
6. In the *Chronicle* Forum entitled "In the Classroom," there are dozens of threads in which instructors attempt to craft appropriate policies on the use of electronics, and seek insight from others who deal with the same problem.
7. Brian E. Hack, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 25 November 2010, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/26/opinion/126digital.html>>. This letter was written in response to Matt Richtel, "Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction," *New York Times*, 21 November 2010, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/21/technology/21brain.html>>.
8. Misty Daily, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 25 November 2010. See URL in note 7.
9. Kirk McElhearn, "Click Me (Or, the Ubiquity of Hypertext)," *TidBITS* 534 (2000), as quoted in Manuel, 201.
10. Manuel, 202. Manuel notes that for her information literacy course conducted at California State University, replacing the written instructions for an assignment with visual symbols—at least when the assignment was initially presented—was preferable to some students, increasing the number of students who completed the assignment, as well as the average score.
11. Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All of Life is a Paid-For Experience* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2000), quoted in Kate Manuel, "Teaching Information Literacy to Generation Y," *Journal of Library Administration* 36, no. 1/2 (January 2002): 203.
12. Victor Dwyer, "A Crash Course in Reality 101: Generation Y Asks Universities to Deliver for their Futures," *Maclean's*, 25 November 1996, 50-55, in Manuel, 204.
13. Don Tapscott, *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1999), 87, in Kate Manuel, "Teaching Information Literacy to Generation Y," *Journal of Library Administration* 36, no. 1/2 (January 2002): 206.

14. Lisa Miller, "Cooperative Learning Users Groups: Modeling Cooperation," *New Ways of "Learning the Library" and Beyond* (Ann Arbor, MI: Pierian, 1996), 127, in Manuel, 207.

15. Michael Garry, "Training for the Nintendo Generation," *Progressive Grocer* 75, no. 4 (1996): 87-90, in Manuel, 207.

16. Will Fitzhugh, Introduction, *History Research Paper Study for the Concord Review, Inc.*, (Sudbury, MA: Concord Review, Inc., 2002), 2, <<http://www.tcr.org/tcr/institute/historytcr.pdf>>. Also see a related article, Sam Dillon, "Journal Showcases Dying Art of the Research Paper," *New York Times*, 7 January 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/08/education/08research.html?scp=1&sq=fitzhugh%20concord%20review&st=cse>>.

17. Student from History 100, Towson University, Fall 2010. The course for which this assignment was designed, "Using Information Effectively in History," had for several years been required for the history major, and for the undergraduate core curriculum at Towson (students had to enroll in a "Using Information Effectively" class, available in multiple disciplines across the University). In the University's new core curriculum, UIE classes have been replaced by a core freshman seminar (the Towson Seminar), intended to acclimate students to college-level work, including writing a 10-page research paper. I have incorporated the assignment described here into my Towson Seminars, but now assign a draft and full paper, in addition to the proposal. In its current iteration, the full project takes the students thirteen weeks to complete instead of eight.

18. My sincere thanks to Sara Nixon, the librarian at Towson University who leads these sessions.

19. Students need to submit a few types of primary sources for this assignment; they cannot all be newspaper articles, for instance.

20. The course also includes a third library session on evaluating websites, which attempts to help students develop strategies for judging which websites are trustworthy.

21. History 100 student, Towson University, Spring 2011.

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