

Digital Media: Exploration of Social Networking and New Media

Posted on **October 23, 2009** by **Leslie Blair**



by Samantha Ruiz

Could today's youth be the ultimate experts in the digital evolution?

Craig Watkins, associate professor of **Radio-Television-Film**, answers this question and takes us into the world of new media in his latest project, "**The Young and the Digital: What the Migration to Social Network Sites, Games, and Anytime, Anywhere Media Means for Our Future**" (Beacon 2009). "The Young and the Digital" explores highs and lows of digital media and how it affects lives of today's youth from tweens, to teens, to 20-somethings.

He examines how the use of social networks, online gaming, and time spent online in general are influencing the way we view evolution of the digital scene and social media platforms.

"Social media has emerged as the dominant media in our lives because it offers something that television cannot offer: the constant opportunity to connect and share our lives with close friends and acquaintances," Watkins said.

ShelfLife@Texas recently sat down to interview Watkins on his new book and his experience with digital media.

Q: How has media affected your life on a personal level?

A: Digital media has made it much easier for me to keep up with the news and information sources that I prefer. I have to admit that I stopped reading newspapers on a regular basis many years ago, but that does not mean that I have abandoned the news. As a result of the Internet, the reverse has happened. I'm able to follow news in a much more flexible yet detailed way and learn about a wide array of topics or the things that I really care about which include health, technology, politics, and the business and culture of sports.

Q: You have an 8-year-old daughter, what role does new media play in her life?

A: Like most kids her age she is quite comfortable with new media including mobile phones, mobile phone apps, video games, and computers. My daughter usually takes the lead in downloading new apps for my phone and eagerly explores all of its capabilities. She has introduced me to new features on my phone that have actually been useful for me. Research over the years shows that young children, unlike their adult counterparts, are not intimidated by technological innovation. In fact, they seem to be really drawn to new technologies and have typically emerged as the "tech gurus" in their own homes.

Q: What, if anything, do you think we can learn from today's youth and their knowledge of digital media?

A: Young people's enthusiastic embrace of technology is about being able to communicate more efficiently with a wide array of friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

Q: What was the most surprising outcome that you found through your research?

A: That the more things change the more they really do seem to stay the same. Here's what I mean: there is no question that young people's non-stop use of technology—mobile phones, social media—represents a major shift in behavior. That is, how they use technology at home, in the classroom, and even when they are with each other. It represents new ways of being "social" in the world today. Some, of course, question if young people are social. But the idea of what it means to be social is constantly evolving in the face of technological innovations. This, I discovered, is really a constant theme in modern American life.

Watkins teaches in the Department of Radio-TV-Film and at the [Center for African and African American Studies](#). He is also involved in the [MacArthur Foundation Project](#).

His other books include "Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture and the Struggle for the soul of a Movement" (Beacon Press 2005) and "Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema" (University of Chicago Press 1998).

"The Young and the Digital" was released in October. You can view a trailer by Watkins at YouTube or read more at www.theyounganddigital.com.

This entry was posted in [Author Interviews](#), [Faculty Books](#) and tagged "[The Young and the Digital](#)", [Center for African and African American Studies](#), [College of Communication](#), [Craig Watkins](#), [Radio-Television-Film](#) by [Leslie Blair](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#) [<https://sites.utexas.edu/shelflife/2009/10/23/digital-media-exploration-of-social-networking-and-new-media/>].

2 THOUGHTS ON "DIGITAL MEDIA: EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL NETWORKING AND NEW MEDIA"



Lauren Edwards

on **October 27, 2009 at 12:03 pm** said:

Great blog! We have you on our blog roll over here at the Graduate School & always enjoy reading.



Adam

on **October 30, 2009 at 9:33 am** said:

WOW,what an extraordinary report.

Comments are closed.