

Being born in 1987 makes me feel as though I don't fit into a typical generational lump. Pop culture labels me as a millennial, but I have never felt like the tech crazy, helpless millennial that is the butt of many jokes. My family was very large, and we lived within our means. I can remember in elementary school being incredibly envious because my friends had cable TV and were beginning to get the internet. I would cry and complain to my parents because my friends were able to do their research on their computers, but I had to do mine with a collection of encyclopedias. Those encyclopedias became increasingly difficult because my family couldn't afford a new set and their material was becoming outdated. The first time I was not able to find something in the encyclopedia, my mother and I began to walk to the library regularly and thus started my relationship with technology. The library had 8 computers, each within their own cubicle. I would spend hours in a cubicle, mesmerized with what a computer could do.

Throughout my young life, I would not have considered myself a digital native, as penned by Marc Prensky, especially compared to my peers. That feeling of inadequacy is what drove me to learn.

My elementary school, being of lower income, was granted funding for a computer lab. I can vividly remember the excitement as we added "tech" class to our schedule. At the time I was unimpressed because we spent our time playing typing games. It wasn't until middle school that I was able to complete projects that included maneuvering the web and becoming proficient at various processing software. However, my technology education peaked in middle school. Throughout high school and the start of college, computers were used for research and writing. I did not use a computer enough to warrant buying one, so I used the library. However, towards the end of my undergraduate studies, I enrolled in a few online courses. These courses were specifically designed for teachers. I found myself, yet again, feeling inadequate compared to my peers. My lack of familiarity with the latest and greatest made each semester more and more challenging. Feeling left behind, I used the money I had to purchase my own computer and programs, so that I could practice at home. Throughout my self-education, I was able to create a strong technological background.

My first year in the classroom, I taught special education. My students were either 2 or more grade levels behind in reading, many were on behavioral plans, but all came from strained financial situations. I was tasked with teaching them science, a subject that is standardized tested, but given no co-teacher support. That year, I was presented with a SMART board, for which I had no clue how to use. I was never given any formal training, so I spent many of my evenings after school playing around. By the end of the year, I was able to run my first professional development. A few years passed and I decided to apply for a new position at a very well-known private school. In my regular reading and research, I uncovered that many universities are requiring digital portfolios as summative program requirements. I had a very strong resume but

did not have an online professional website. I didn't have a consolidated place where I could present my university coursework or professional credits. As Carr states in his article, *Is Google Making Us Stupid*, "traditional media have to adapt to the audience's new expectations." Technology is becoming a prominent figure in our society, so it is only fitting that schools require the same of their teachers and students. If technology is becoming a regular fixture, then we need to make sure all students come out of school prepared for this world, as summarized by Motoko Rich in his article, *Online: R U Really Reading*.

I was offered the job at the private school and a whole world opened to me. On my first day, I was presented with a MacBook. I had never used any Apple products. I had to learn a whole new operating system before the start of the school year. I was provided mentors and endless amounts of tools. I became a master teacher and colleague. The more I was given, the more I wanted to learn. I couldn't settle for adequate teaching, I wanted to make my lessons memorable. Conference after conference and professional development after professional development, my students remained engaged and interested in the dry topics I was teaching. I have recently been named the educational technologist, which means I mentor other teachers on how to use technology in the classroom.

With the development of high speed internet, e-readers and cell phones, the way we read has been exponentially changed. While I used to do my research and paper writing at the dining room table, all of my work is done now in an office with a touch screen computer and wireless printer. As Carr says, these devices have become, "...our map and our clock, our printing press and our typewriter, our calculator and our telephone, and our radio and TV." More significantly, educational leaders question whether this influx of technology is helping or hurting our learners. Carr outlines that technology provides "an incredibly rich store of information," but believes it is "chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation." As a mother, I worry about the lack of grit my child may possess with such a crutch at her fingertips. As an educator, I appreciate how much technology has increased engagement within the walls of my classroom. As a user, there is a bit of worry and naivete about how much power my technology has over me. As a human, I am concerned that the amount of browsing and skimming done online will lead to a lack of drive for the truth. A bit of complacency.

My story leads me to believe with great confidence that I am producing students that are ready for the digital world. Producing students that are technologically sound, but are also able to balance. My anecdotal evidence provides many opportunities to learn, especially when paired with other's autobiographical experiences. Autobiographical inquiry can engage in self-examination not only for the reader but the one writing. Ethnographic inquiry could provide opportunities to enhance the autobiographical story. Writing our stories allows us to connect with others of different backgrounds and paths. While our stories are told, it does not provide the

larger picture. To paint the whole picture, multiple forms of inquiry will need to be employed at once.