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Embedded in Technology Ecosystems: Graduate Students, Mobile Devices, and Academic Workflows

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Introduction

This qualitative study uncovers how graduate students use multiple devices to support their academic pursuits, including coursework, group projects, and conducting research. Students often own several devices including smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers and use these devices in complementary ways. Graduate students represent an understudied population, as we found when we reviewed studies that looked at technology and higher education (for example, the EDUCAUSE Center for Analysis and Research [ECAR] reports are on undergraduates). The information we have gathered addresses that knowledge gap.

Our study tells the stories of how students use devices in their academic lives, how they manage their workflows among several devices, and why they chose the devices they have. Rather than simply counting workflows among several devices, and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices.

We conducted in-depth interviews with students from a range of disciplines, with varying degrees of comfort with technology, and tend to approach innovation with a high degree of skepticism and often wait until the majority of society has adopted the technological innovation. This time of adoption is significantly longer than innovators. Rather than simply counting workflows among several devices, and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices. Interviewees were asked questions regarding technology, to get a well-rounded sense of how and why graduate students are using their particular devices.

We used SurveyMonkey to recruit participants andLauncher, IO. (2006). Detailed review of Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory and educational technology-related studies based on Rogers' theory. TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 5.

Literature cited


Methodology

We used Survey Monkey to recruit participants and included questions regarding types of devices owned, activities performed using devices, academic department, and demographic information. We also asked respondents to rank themselves regarding their adoption of new technologies based on a modified version of Rogers' adopter categories (Sahin 2006). The screening survey was emailed to all currently enrolled Spring 2016 graduate students (N=2,252). From the 265 respondents (8.14% survey response rate), we chose 18 in-depth interview participants (8.14% survey response rate), from across the five schools that comprise our college while also aiming for a mix of age, gender, and ethnic backgrounds.

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Emerging themes from interviews

Students share PDFs, articles and textbooks

Blurred lines between privacy and sharing within use practices

Teens default to the technology the least going mobile means the group is comfortable with

Writing and presentation

It’s not a smartphone, it’s a scientific calculator!

Reading

Communicating

It’s not a tablet, it’s a babysitter!

Tablet computer (iPad, Android, etc.)

Desktop computer

Laptop computer

E-reader

Game console

Cell phone

What device do you use the most frequently?

Table: Which statement best describes your use of technology?

Which statement best describes your use of technology?

Table: Do you use one or more of the following? Please select all that apply.

Selected data tables

Conclusion

Graduate students at Brooklyn College are developing idiosyncratic approaches to using multiple devices and applications for academic purposes. The patterns of usage this study identifies show an adaptation in workflows from the traditional ways of approaching coursework and conducting research. Rather than using desktop computers and printouts and managing these physical workflows, students are using a complementary array of devices, including on campus and work computers. Brooklyn College is a commuter school and students often take public transit to campus and their commutes may also be times of academic productivity. Device ecosystems introduce new possibilities for collaborating, reading, and writing, which has implications for library instruction.

Applications to academic librarianship include potentially shifting to teaching students how to manage and migrate content across devices for reading, writing, sharing, note taking, and annotation and effective use of cloud-based services to do so. Furthermore, encouraging students to consider fair use and the emerging ethics surrounding sharing copyrighted material is of concern.