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Only Connect: Graduate Students, Mobile Devices, and Academic Workflows

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Only Connect
Graduate Students, Mobile Devices, and Academic Workflows

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Graduate Students and Mobile Devices

Research Questions:

RQ1. How do graduate students use mobile devices in their academic lives?

RQ2. What are the stumbling blocks(drawbacks)/drawbacks of using mobile devices for academic work? What are the benefits/positive experiences?
Graduate Students and Mobile Devices

Methodology:

- Screening survey to recruit participants for in-depth interviews
- Brooklyn College Graduate Student population N=3,252; Respondents N=265 (8.14% response rate)
- Selected 18 interviewees drawn from a range of disciplines, demographics, and degree of comfort with technology

Device Usage Screening Survey (N=265)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tablet computer (iPad, Android, etc.)</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phone (not a smartphone)</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desktop computer</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphone (iPhone, Android, Google Nexus, Samsung Galaxy, etc.)</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop computer</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mp3 player (Phil, Sandisk, Sony, etc.)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game console</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-reader (Nook, Kindle, etc.)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Smartphone, laptop are most commonly used devices

Smartphone is most frequently used device
From devices to ecosystem

Students use a variety of devices to complete tasks and manage their academic workloads—we conceptualize this as an academic device ecosystem.

While each device plays an important role in many of our daily activities, their real power exists in how they are used together with other devices. This multi-device usage sets the foundation of a product ecosystem. (Levin, M. Designing Multi-Device Experiences, p.2 2014)

Some findings so far...

- Smartphone is indispensable
- Device ecosystems often include work computers or campus computers
- Smartphones are academic toolkits
- Wifi access is key
Graduate Students and Devices On the Go

- Commute is for productivity and they prepare their devices ahead of time to read offline
- Cloud-based storage or email for version control/draft purposes
- “Old school” pen and paper complements devices

Collaborating with classmates

- For collaborative projects, students will default to the technology the least savvy member of the group is comfortable using
- Share PDFs of articles, book chapters, textbooks with each other
- Will often use a mix of apps and approaches throughout project process
Comfort vs. convenience

- Convenience is a common theme for both academic workflow and device ecosystem
- Students expect and rely on universal access to coursework and course management systems so they can work anywhere at any time
- Students often use an array of devices in various combinations to complete a project (and sometimes the task the device performs is surprising!)

Implications for libraries and librarians

- Offer classes for using online collaborative tools
- Ensure library website is be responsive and mobile-friendly
- Educate regarding fair use/copyright concerns and file sharing
Thank you!

Questions? Feedback?

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