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EAD 860  
Unit 8A Writing Assignment

More than anything, this course has made me conscious of how quickly the world is changing today. Various unit resources disagree about the nature of globalization but almost all agree that one striking characteristic of today's society is rapid change. With this rapid change, every human is faced with the daunting task of adaptation. One adaptation I find myself struggling with is the use of new information and communications technologies (ICT). In this writing assignment, I plan to think deeply and critically about how life in the "Learning Society" ("LS") has and is preparing me for the new ICT.

One arena of the new ICT where I am tested daily is the Internet. Between professional and personal usage, I use Internet search engines approximately ten times a day. One example of my professional purposed Internet searching is looking up high school profiles and course listings to help evaluate high school students' academic records. I use skills developed in the "LS" to think critically about the implications of my findings. For example, high school websites are often woefully incomplete and out-of-date. If I find course listings from the 2005-2006 school year, I must take into consideration that the school may have updated their offerings. Alternatively, if I find a school whose course catalog lists four Advanced Placement (AP) classes and the student whose record I am evaluating has only taken one such course, I must consider the possibility that the school does not offer every AP course every year. Burbules and Callister are quite correct in their assessment that "developing a critical capacity to read selectively, evaluate, and questions information online is one of the central educational problems raised by these new information technologies" (33). At least in the chapter "Dilemmas of Access and Credibility", Burbules and Callister do not take the step of making recommendations for solving this new educational problem. I think if we look back to some resources from Unit 7, we can find some solutions. Both Gitlin's "The Liberal Arts in and Age of Info-Glut" and Nussbaum's "Cultivating Humanity" propose utilizing a liberal arts education to help students develop critical thinking skills that can be useful in navigating the new ICT.

Another arena of the new ICT that is a challenge to me both personally and professionally is the state of "continuous partial attention" we now find ourselves in. With all the options for ICTP-television, Internet, cellphones, etc.-there are always multiple forces fighting for our attention. I see this in my own life daily. I might be out with friends watching a baseball game but getting text messages from a friend in another state. I might be watching a TV show but flipping to other stations to make sure I am not missing anything. At work, I might be on the phone with a parent or student, but also checking my email. As Linda Stone says in Lee Rainie's article, "Continuous partial attention is not the same as multitasking [...]. With continuous partial attention, we're scanning incoming alerts for the one best thing to seize upon" (10). For the most part, I feel I manage these multiple demands on my attention well. I try and stay as present in the activity I am involved in as possible; whether it be watching the baseball game, watching a TV show, or taking a phone call at work. The constant thought that some

more “interesting or important opportunity” might be texting me, on another channel, or in my email inbox is disconcerting, distracting and what you might call a symptom of our modern age of globalization. In these last two paragraphs, I can see myself really advocating moderation of the new ICT and careful consideration of how it affects our lives. While I appreciate the new ICT for allowing me access to more information than ever before, I believe that always looking around the corner for the next best thing can be a harmful state of mind.

Overall I have positive feelings towards the new ICT. My professional life has given me opportunities to expand my uses of the new ICT in some wonderful ways. I was recently introduced to a website editing software package called Adobe Contribute. This and other new ICT allow me to be more independent in my professional life and less reliant on technology personnel. One arena where a change in my professional life would provide me with an opportunity to strengthen my ability to use the new ICT is blogging. From various unit resources, including Lee Rainie’s speech, we know that teens are ultra-connected to the Internet. For example, 76% of teens get news online (4). Additionally, “17 million [people] said the internet played a crucial or important role as they were trying to find a new college for themselves or their children” (6). The largest reason people used the Internet in this major decision was to “put them in touch with other people who provided support and advice” (7). In my four years as Admissions Counselor at the Honors College at MSU, I have realized many high school students and even some parents are reticent to make a phone call to ask a question. Many people are more comfortable looking for answers online and then talking with friends when they cannot find answers. Some students and families even take to using websites like College Confidential to get their information. College Confidential includes a discussion forum where students can ask each other questions and get answers. Many times people provide information that “they have heard” and it is not truthful. I think it is very important for both prospective students and their parents to realize that College Confidential and similar sites contain much misinformation. I have gone to this site and found blatant untruths about the Honors College and Michigan State University. Unfortunately, we have devised a plan on how to deal with this issue. The problem would be if one error was corrected, there might be an expectation that all errors would be corrected. As a way to help with this problem, I would like to make the college admissions process more transparent. One way to do this might be blogging, by both admissions staff and current students. In providing blogs, we would provide a place for students to ask questions in a low-pressure environment. Additionally, we would allow for easier assessment of credibility. Assessing credibility, as discussed by Burbules and Callister, is a crucial skill many people in the midst of the college search process lack. Schools could provide their students with a tremendous resource by educating them more about Internet credibility issues.

The issue has now returned to the critical one mentioned at the beginning. Rapid change exemplifies the nature of today’s society. I believe we should concentrate our education resources in this “Learning Society” on timeless skills like critical analysis of Internet resources, partial-attention management and credibility assessment. While there will constantly be new information and communications technology to adapt to, these important skills will persist and allow us to be successful in the “Learning Society”.