Review

The New Digital Scholar: Exploring and Enriching the Research and Writing Practices of NextGen Students


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If you’re looking for a comprehensive and thorough book about the complicated world of library research instruction and undergraduate research papers, this is the book for you. The editors of The New Digital Scholar have collected papers written by librarians, writing instructors, and higher education administrators to give interdisciplinary insight on what they have termed “NextGen Students.”

The book is separated into four parts. The first two parts explore the problems with student research-writing and present studies on how students currently research. The third and fourth parts give pedagogical suggestions and programmatic implications of those findings. The editors have done a wonderful job selecting the articles and creating a logical flow of information from chapter to chapter. The resulting collection keeps the reader’s interest as the conclusions from each chapter complement and build upon one another.
Perhaps the most innovative section of the book is Part Two, which includes in-depth research studies of actual student research-writing. As author Ruth Mirth says at the beginning of her article’s literature review, “Surprisingly little research has been done that observes the actual searching behavior of students in the process of composing academic research papers” (p. 190). She is correct in that observation, and this section of the book seeks to remedy that. The authors use innovative longitudinal studies and harness the use of newer technologies such as screen capture software to give a more complete view of where student research stands today. Most impressive is the chapter where authors Jamieson and Howard, both writing professors, describe their in-depth Citation Project where they were able to use citation analysis to discover the amount of reading comprehension in student writing.

If you’ve been following the academic library instruction conversation closely, much of this book will only reinforce what you already have heard. However, if you are new to the field of academic librarianship or looking for an extensive overview of student scholarship in the digital age, then this book will be especially useful and well worth the read.

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