

## Reviews

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Eugène Loos, Leslie Haddon and Enid Mante-Meijer, *Generational Use of New Media*, Ashgate, Farnham, UK, 2012, 236 pp., hbk £55, ISBN: 978-1-4094-2657-8.

The main purpose of this book is to answer the question whether all generations are able to appreciate, find and use new technologies and the possibilities they open up. It is composed of diverse chapters, some including theoretical reflections and some more focused on reporting empirical outcomes. The book is divided into three sections: two framed according to biological ageing categories (younger and older people's interaction with new media), and the third composed of chapters more focused on comparing the two age groups. Mixed methods involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used, ranging from ethnography to surveys and studies using eye tracking and heatmaps to investigate usage.

Framed around questions of inclusion and 'inclusive society', the volume pays considerable attention to the issue of the digital (generational) divide and to the extent to which the distinction between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' exists. Marc Prensky first used these terms (Prensky 2001*a*, 2001*b*) when arguing that students beginning their studies with him in 2001 were radically different from previous cohorts (and, more to the point, from their lecturers and educational institutions) in the way they thought and processed information. The discussion born in this particular field (*i.e.* education studies) has since broadened to include the generational divide between those born before and after the introduction of digital technologies. One problem with the idea of this supposed digital divide, well identified by several chapters in the volume, is that it simplifies issues such as *when* exactly this introduction happened, and how we can determine its impact on the way we think. The book shows how the concept of the digital divide problematically flattens intra-generational and socio-economic differences as inconsequential. This presumed homogeneity of technology users fails to recognise significant differences among younger adults who are not proficient or not particularly interested in navigating the digital landscape, older adults who are proficient or interested, and everyone in the middle. The authors suggest instead a 'digital spectrum': a concept taking into account varying degrees of usage depending on such factors as gender, education, income, ethnicity and status as a more useful approach for understanding the relationship between technology and age.

In Part 1, Chapter 1 discusses family relations around internet usage, and different parental mediation strategies (*e.g.* restriction *versus* control),

with particular attention paid to issues of trust and privacy. Chapter 2 provides the reader with a discussion of how teenagers become 'competent moral agents' by developing a framework to establish a moral decision-making process when using the internet. Morality is interestingly discussed here as socially, culturally and contextually contingent. Chapter 3 highlights divergences in the way new (networked) communication shapes 'new forms of social life' and how children tend to see the internet and computers as being recreational, while parents tend to connect them more to complex modes of communication and realities linked with status. Attention is paid here to gender differences, in that distinction is sometimes made between female and male adolescents' attitudes (and those of their parents) towards internet security. Chapter 4 challenges the very concept of 'digital natives' and their competency by providing us with data from students taking internet proficiency classes who display diverse skills sets and interests in these media.

In Part 2, Chapter 5 shows convincingly how complex the often oversimplified category of 'oldest old' is, managing to provide us succinctly with good tools for thought, both theoretical (from gerontological and Science and Technology Studies perspectives) and empirical. The author warns us, for example, to make a distinction between the consequences of age itself and those due to generational belonging. He also discusses the complex decision-making process people experience when learning to use a 'new' device. In his words, '[o]ne does not start using any new technology without being sure that its usefulness is greater than the effort it takes to learn to use it' (p. 97). Chapter 6 is strongly based on empirical research and provides web designers with a research-based 'check list' of things to take into account for inclusive design in this area. Chapter 7 also consists of an applied and empirically based section discussing heat-maps of people's interaction with transportation-related ticket machines.

In Part 3, Chapter 8 takes a look at the communication capabilities and problems (intended as an interaction between individual skills, motivation and access opportunities) of different age groups after briefly discussing how to classify digital 'natives' and 'immigrants'. Chapter 9 introduces different social factors that affect users' interaction with the digital world, suggesting that educational attainment is the most influential in determining all types of internet skills. Chapter 10 compares older and younger adults' web browsing using eye-tracking studies. The authors show how the most important determining factor of proficiency in using the internet is the frequency of internet usage rather than age.

The diverse approaches of the chapters will appeal to different audiences. Some of the applied chapters will be useful to people working in this area and looking for practical suggestions to implement design while others will be valuable to people thinking about the difficult questions emerging in this field and give a flavour of the complexity of the topic.

## References

- Prensky, M. 2001 *a*. Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9, 5, 1–6.  
 Prensky, M. 2001 *b*. Digital natives, digital immigrants. Part II: Do they really think differently? *On the Horizon*, 9, 6, 1–9.

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Helen Yallop, *Age and Identity in Eighteenth-century England*,  
 Pickering & Chatto, London, 2013, 192 pp., hbk £64.23, ISBN  
 13: 9781848934016.

The eighteenth century is notably a time of transition in England. Enlightened thought, grounded in scientific research methodology, began to challenge, or at least enhance, traditional world-views and ideas of man's place within them. From the second half of the century, the Industrial Revolution irreversibly altered the way individuals lived. And by the end of the century the concept of the modern self as a unique, interiorised, identity appears to have begun to take root (Wahrman 2004). This is the background against which *Age and Identity in Eighteenth-century England* is set.

Leaning heavily on medical advice literature, but incorporating historical, physiological, philosophical and other contemporary texts, the book adopts a socio-cultural approach to explain how citizens of eighteenth-century England understood age and the ageing process in the context of personal identity and the importance of this to individual world-view. For as Yallop points out, age and ageing, like gender, class and race, help us to define who we are. In her words, they are part of our personhood, reaching beyond mere body and medical issues, and becoming a lens through which to explore the 'nature of mankind and its relationship with society' at any given place and time (p. 3).

In six chapters following the Introduction, the author explores the foundations of how ageing was understood by academics and other writers and portrayed to the populace; the relationship between these understandings and recommended behaviours; and how identity and character were inextricably intertwined with the body throughout the lifecourse.

Chapter 1 examines the meanings of age and ageing in eighteenth-century England and the concepts people used to understand them, emphasising the importance of interpreting ageing in stages. Chapter 2 then considers social, spiritual, cosmological and physical influences on how the ageing body was perceived, as well as the recognised causes of ageing. Climacteric years, Christian dogma, humours, temperament and the non-naturals are discussed as a means of demonstrating the extent to which the body and ageing were affected by external forces and how variable the effects are between individuals.

In Chapter 3, the author probes new physiological paradigms, and particularly the mechanistic and sensible bodies, which, she argues, may