Challenging the Myth of the “Digital Native”
The Origins of the Myth
Mark Prensky identified two
groups: digital natives (those
born with technology as a
“native language”) and digital immigrants (those who must
learn technology as a
Tracking my cookies?
They will never get my recipe!

Boomers: Millennials and gen z can't do anything without our help
Also boomers:

In the "I'm getting old" department..., a kid saw this and said, "oh, you 3D-printed the 'Save' Icon."

THE DIGITAL ACCENT?
Digital Dialects & Idiolects

**Dialect**

di·a·lect

/ˈdīəˌlekt/

a particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group.

"this novel is written in the dialect of Trinidad"

**Idiolect**

id·i·o·lect

/ˈidēəˌlekt/

the speech habits peculiar to a particular person.

"in his strange idiolect, he preferred to call angels “angelicals“"
Recap

• “Digital native” is not a useful category for talking about our students, because it puts them and us into unhelpful boxes.
• Everyone’s technical proficiency/fluency/ability is different, and we need to take that into account when we’re asking our students to use technology.
Outcomes Based Instructional Design

• Just like with readings, we must select the technologies we’re employing in our classrooms with the overriding question: what does this technology do to help my students move towards the learning objectives I have for them in the course.
• When presented with new technologies, we have to be balance between being too slow to change and being too fast to change; resisting the ‘pedagogical impulse.’
• How does this program/app/platform enable my students to succeed in the course? What are the affordances and limitations of using it? Who will it enable and who might it constrain?

Credit to Dr. Amy Robillard who first brought my attention to the ‘pedagogical impulse.’
Activity Theory Based Instructional Design

• What specific activities can this technology be useful for? Which activities might be hindered by it?
• How many different platforms can students adequately and robustly engage with in a particular semester?
• Is the goal for technology use to be apparent or transparent?
General Best Practices

• Minimize the number of tools you’re using in a particular course; that minimizes the amount of class time you’ll need to spend explaining technology.
• Don’t assume that any particular student has familiarity with a tool you want to use.
• Offer individual help with technology in private; it’s often something students don’t want to ask about around their peers.
• Avoid activities that require technology use in class that can’t be done on multiple platforms—some students don’t have laptops but might have a smart phone.
• Make conversations about technology a part of the course—relate your experiences to theirs to avoid an us/them mentality.
Discussion/Questions?

• What has been your experience using technology in the classroom in terms of students’ “nativeness” with it?

• What are some of your take-aways from this presentation and what do you think you could do going forward?
David Giovagnoli
dgiovag@ilstu.edu