

## Book Review

### The New Digital Shoreline: How Web 2.0 and Millennials are Revolutionizing Higher Education

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**Citation:** Roger McHaney. (2011). *The New Digital Shoreline: How Web 2.0 and Millennials are Revolutionizing Higher Education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

**Publisher's Description:** *Two seismic forces beyond our control – the advent of Web 2.0 and the inexorable influx of tech-savvy Millennials on campus – are shaping what Roger McHaney calls “The New Digital Shoreline” of higher education. Failure to chart its contours, and adapt, poses a major threat to higher education as we know it.*

*These forces demand that we as educators reconsider the learning theories, pedagogies, and practices on which we have depended, and modify our interactions with students and peers—all without sacrificing good teaching, or lowering standards, to improve student outcomes.*

*Achieving these goals requires understanding how the indigenous population of this new shoreline is different. These students aren't necessarily smarter or technologically superior, but they do have different expectations. Their approaches to learning are shaped by social networking and other forms of convenient, computer-enabled and mobile communication devices; by instant access to an over-abundance of information; by technologies that have conferred the ability to personalize and customize their world to a degree never seen before; and by time-shifting and time-slicing.*

*As well as understanding students' assumptions and expectations, we have no option but to familiarize ourselves with the characteristics and applications of Web 2.0—essentially a new mind set about how to use Internet technologies around the concepts of social computing, social media, content sharing, filtering, and user experience.*

*Roger McHaney not only deftly analyzes how Web 2.0 is shaping the attitudes and motivations of today's students, but guides us through the topography of existing and emerging digital media, environments, applications, platforms and devices – not least the impact of e-readers and tablets on the future of the textbook – and the potential they have for disrupting teacher-student relationships; and, if appropriately used, for engaging students in their learning.*

*This book argues for nothing less than a reinvention of higher education to meet these new realities. Just adding technology to our teaching practices will not suffice. McHaney calls for a complete rethinking of our practice of teaching to meet the needs of this emerging world and envisioning ourselves as connected, co-learners with our students.*

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In *The New Digital Shoreline: How Web 2.0 and Millennials are Revolutionizing Higher Education*, author Roger McHaney presents an accessible and user-friendly account of how to approach technology and digital learning in the 21st century. In an easy-to-read tone, McHaney outlines how an explosion of affordable technological devices and applications has the power to disrupt the way higher education delivers learning and how students access that learning.

Taking up the collective perception of today's students as digital natives, McHaney sketches out broad descriptions of millennials as a generation of socially networked, computer-enabled individuals. Although McHaney's characterization of millennials as impatient and self-absorbed is negative and stereotypical, it does serve to underscore the idea that the majority of the students in today's higher education classes are accustomed to immediate answers, thrive in social settings, and expect to have input into the design of their physical and virtual learning environments. Their expectations for personalized learning experiences often stand in stark contrast with what actually happens in many higher education classrooms, often because of, as McHaney admits, the inadequate training with technological tools and their instructors' skills and knowledge in pedagogical practices that integrate those tools.

Despite significant challenges in coordinating users' experience with Web 2.0 features because of rapid evolutions of technology and how quickly applications move in and out of vogue, McHaney's detailed chapters on interactive devices, tools for content development and delivery, gaming as learning strategies, mobile devices, social media, and virtual learning environments serve as useful foundations on which to build a technology repertoire. Before reading these chapters, however, some readers will benefit from sailing over to Chapter 7: Convergence in the New Shore and reading descriptions of several adult learning theories first. This should help to anchor the reader's consideration of pedagogy in terms of philosophical beliefs about teaching and learning before getting swept away in the oceans of technological possibilities that McHaney has shared.

By harnessing the power of the typical millennial student's connection to data-rich networks of peers and information, instructional strategies and learning activities—both in and outside the classroom and regardless of geography—become relevant, engaging, and responsive. The advice for instructors to “update their knowledge and be able to communicate within the world their tech savvy students inhabit” (p. 194) is a key take-away. Something McHaney does not reiterate enough is security of sensitive information and the importance of holding learning outcomes at the forefront of pedagogical planning rather than the implementation of the technological tool. As well, a frank and realistic discussion of Web 2.0 technologies in terms of privacy, equitable access to technology, Internet access, and appropriate use is warranted. Another important detail that McHanley glosses over is the disparity between instructors' pedagogical skill sets in terms of teaching and assessment. When new technologies are introduced into teaching and learning practices, productivity decreases as users climb the learning curve.

Higher education still has some barriers to overcome before providing an authentic, seamless learning experience that incorporates Web 2.0 technologies. Web 2.0 technology and applications cannot be successful in isolation. In order to function and thrive in the 21st century, all levels of higher education will need to accept and leverage Web 2.0 technologies to transform the way they engage with potential and current students and how they innovate in product (i.e., education) and service delivery. An engaging instructor and effective curriculum design with

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inspiring content are vital criteria for a successful learning program in higher education. Despite its limitations, this text is a valuable navigational tool.