

Please Note: This research project commenced in January, 2011 and is scheduled for conclusion in June, 2012. Data gathering, assessment and analysis continue on schedule. The findings and conclusions noted in this abstract are based upon the initial round of research data gathering and preliminary analysis of the resulting datasets. The final abstract and delivered paper will include findings and associated conclusions based upon analysis of the final and complete research datasets.

The Impact of Digital Natives and Social Media on the Management of Information and the Future of Global Society

Report of research conducted by H. Larry Eiring, CRM, FAI, for The ARMA International Educational Foundation

Presentation Objective

In early 2011, research sponsored and funded, in part, through a grant provided by the **ARMA International Educational Foundation** was initiated to identify and assess the potential impact of the emerging “all-digital native” generation and use of social media and networking on the information management profession¹; public and private sector organizations; users of information and the future of global society. This presentation will, for the first time publicly, present collected research data, announce the derived findings and offer key conclusions for consideration and discussion.

Statement of Findings

Initial research indicates increasing influence by “all-digital native” generation members (herein referred to as **Generation 3C** or **Gen 3C**) over attitudes and methods for managing information. Gen 3C influence is linked to such factors as parent to child age range, educational achievement and household income. A high percentage of Gen 3C members indicate an emphasis on “communication”, “collaboration” and “community” methods, applications and technology when obtaining knowledge, accessing and sharing information and conducting dialogue. Levels of understanding and appreciation for effective information creation, governance², retention and disposition are consistently lower than average.³ An increasing majority also note that their determination of information “value” is based not on traditional organizational requirements, but increasingly on their own individual needs and motives. Expanding saturation of digital communication technologies and improving global accessibility of social media and networking tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, are key enablers supporting individual-centric management of digital information. Demographically, the average Gen 3C'er is anything but average. Highly intelligent, independent and creative, a majority upholds strong values and considers ethical actions “very important.”

¹ The term “Information Management” is inclusive of Archives Management, Records Management, Content Management and Document Management unless otherwise indicated.

² Governance in this context includes principles and protocols for assuring the quality, consistency, usability, security, and availability of information

³ Statement is based upon results when placed in comparison with the same perceptions and attitudes of members of the Gen X generation and Baby Boomer generation.

Key Conclusions

The initial findings of the research indicate the following:

- Information individualism will become the norm and drive the creation of a new global economic model.
- The expectation of instantaneous, uninterrupted communication and unhindered access to information will drive continual improvements in communication and information technology.
- Individual expectations of personal information privacy will be deemed unrealistic, excepting that information the individual maintains solely in their own mind.
- Records and information statutes and regulations will evolve, influenced by the principles of the new “information individualism.”
- The creation of virtual communities of interest will link every human to every other enabling knowledge sharing supporting collaborative solutions.

In summary, Generation 3C will leverage their unique talents and world-view to introduce radical new approaches towards the management of information to improve almost every aspect of life and allow the creation of a singular, integrated and harmonious global society to become possible.