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"Digital Natives" or "The Dumbest Generation?"

David J. Mulder

Dordt College, david.mulder@dordt.edu

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"Digital Natives" or "The Dumbest Generation?"

Abstract

A common part of the conversation about Millennials is to describe them as exceptionally technologically-savvy; some have called them "digital natives." But research does not bear this out; people of older generations can be equally tech-savvy, and while many Millennials love their phones and social media, etc., the reality is that all of us are acculturated into a particular era of technology, and members of each generation can exhibit a range of comfort and skill working with different technologies.

Keywords

technology, digital electronics, age groups, cultural lag

Disciplines

Christianity | Communication Technology and New Media | Education

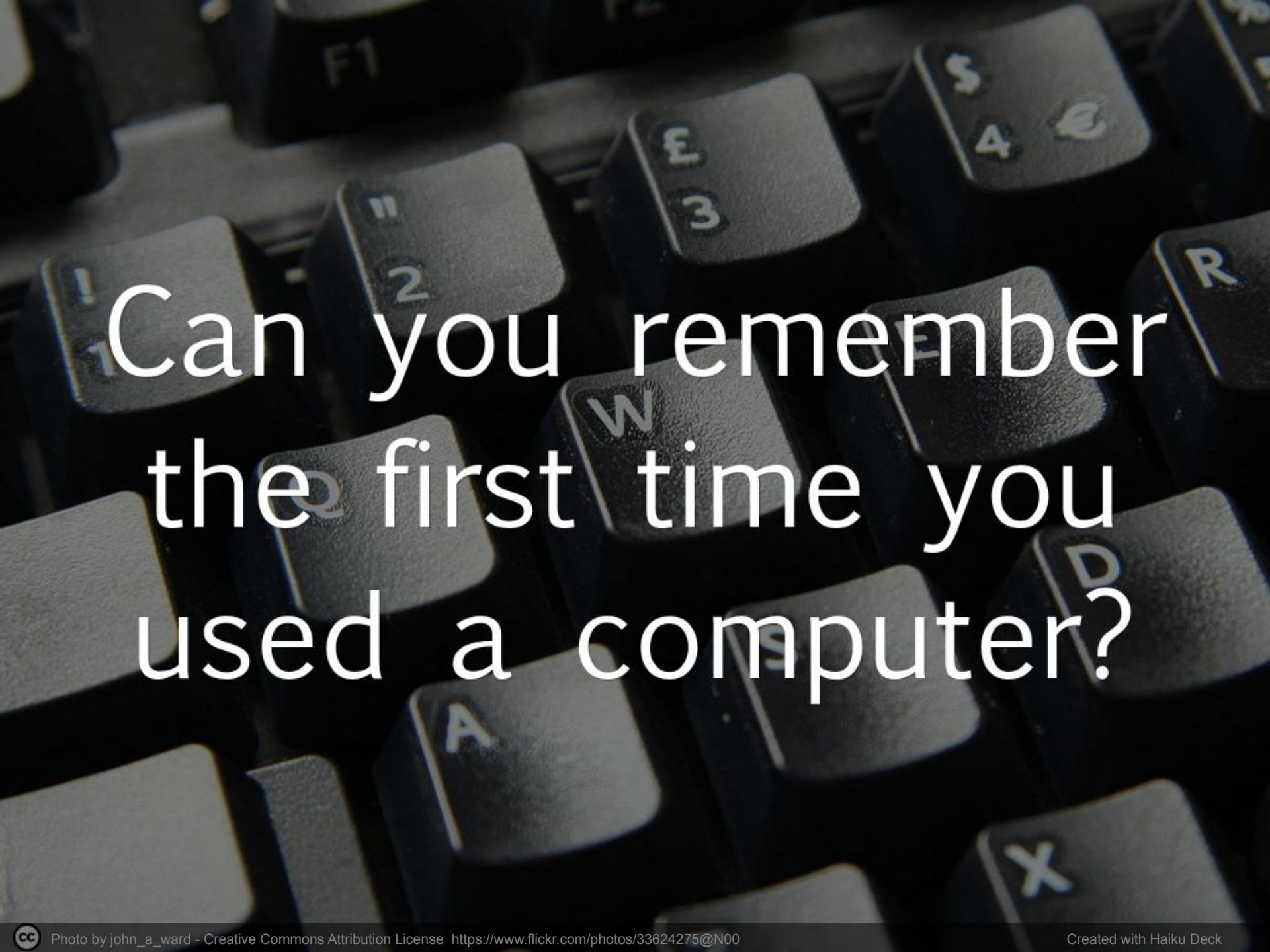
Comments

This research was presented at a Faculty Forum at Dordt College in October 2015.

“Digital Natives” or “The Dumbest Generation?”

**Understanding our students’
use of Digital Technology**

David Mulder
Faculty Forum
Dordt College
October 26, 2015



Can you remember
the first time you
used a computer?





ANGELA has typhoid.

Date: April 19, 1848

Weather: hot

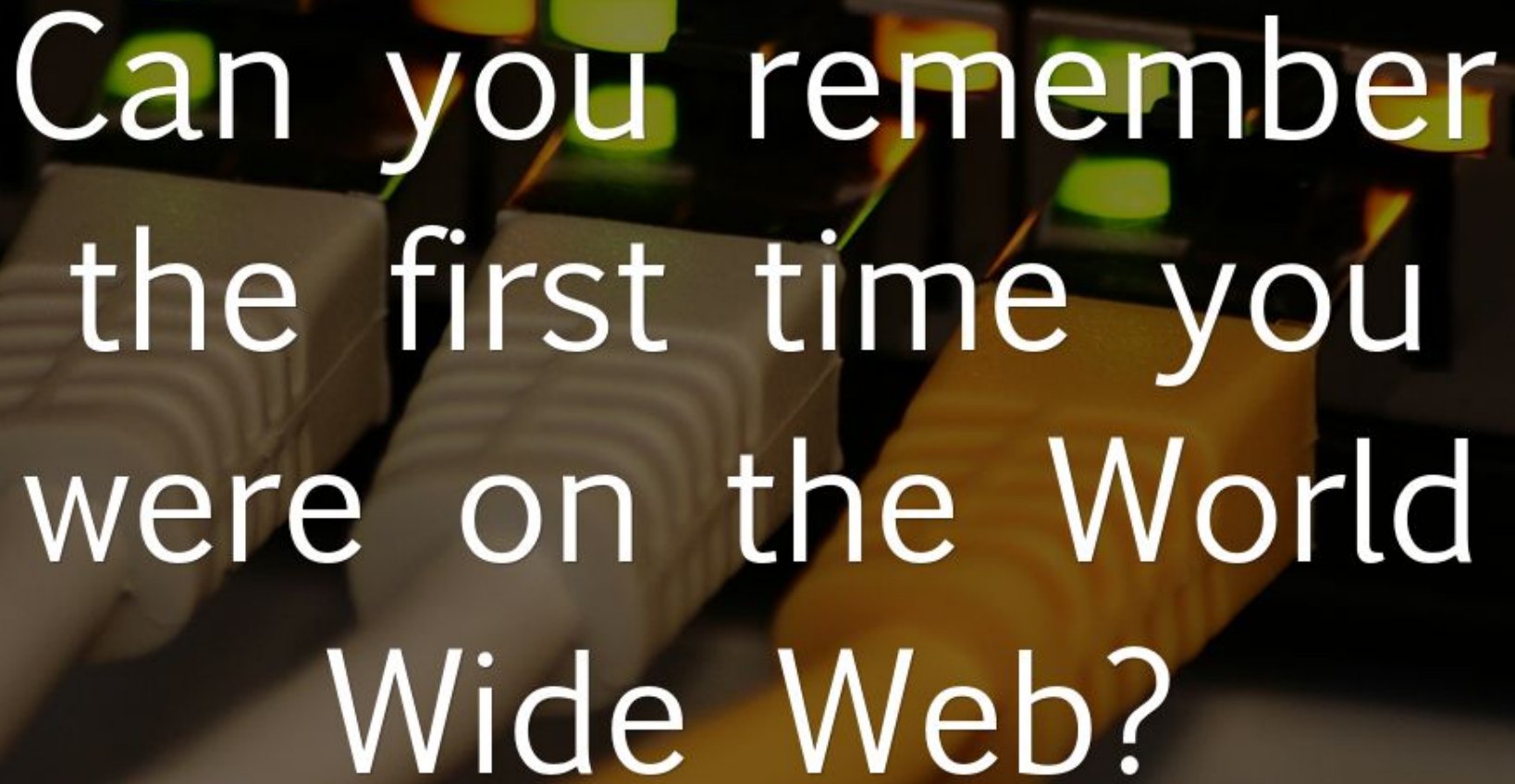
Health: fair

Food: 170 pounds

Next landmark: 89 miles

Miles traveled: 215 miles

Press SPACE BAR to continue

A close-up photograph of a network switch or patch panel. Several ports are visible, some with glowing green and yellow lights. Two white Ethernet cables are plugged into the ports in the foreground. The background is dark, and the overall image has a slightly blurred, artistic feel.

Can you remember
the first time you
were on the World
Wide Web?





David Mulder

Adjunct Instructor of Education

dvdmlr@dordt.edu

I teach EDUC 334 - Methods of Teaching Science for Elementary and Middle School.
I also teach 7th and 8th grade students at [Sioux Center Christian School](#).
I am currently an M.Ed. candidate in Dordt's [Graduate Program](#).

A [unit plan](#) I wrote for EDUC 543.
My [website](#) at SCCS.
My [resume](#). (Word document)

A purple and silver flip phone is shown open, lying on a light-colored surface. The phone has a Sprint logo on the screen and a numeric keypad with various function buttons like 'END', 'SPEAKER', and 'MENU OK'. The text 'Can you remember the first time you used a cell phone?' is overlaid in white.

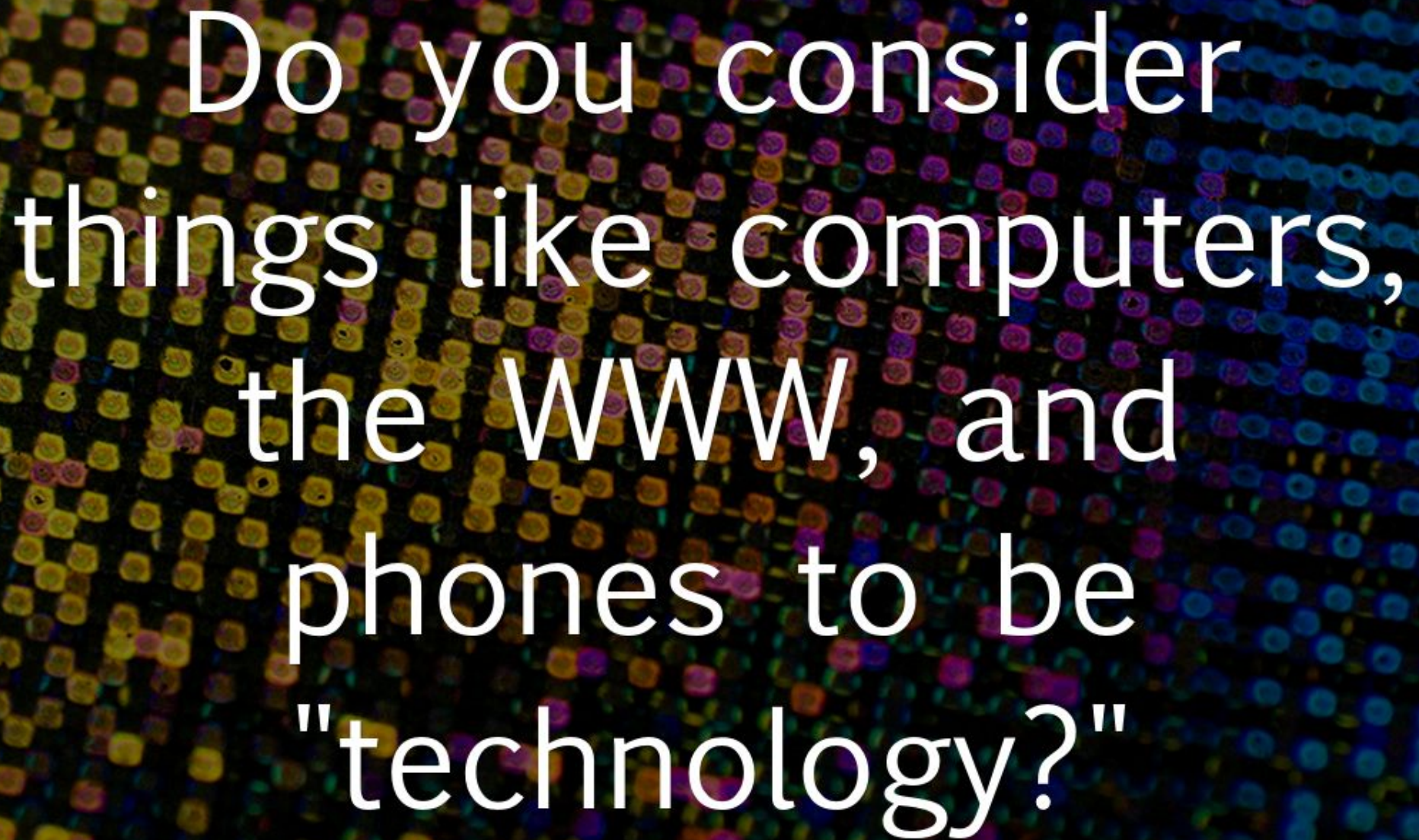
Can you remember
the first time you
used a cell phone?



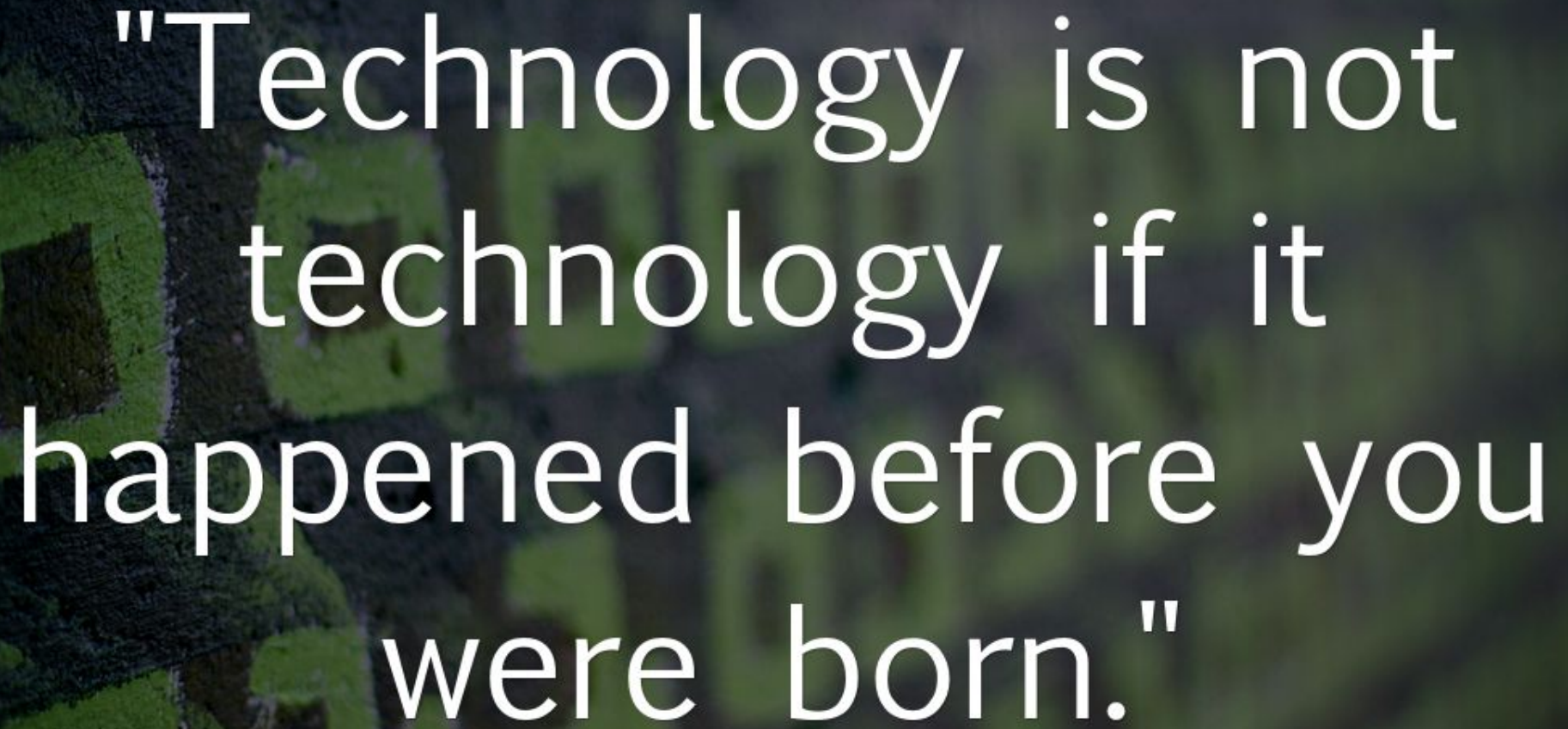




The million dollar question...



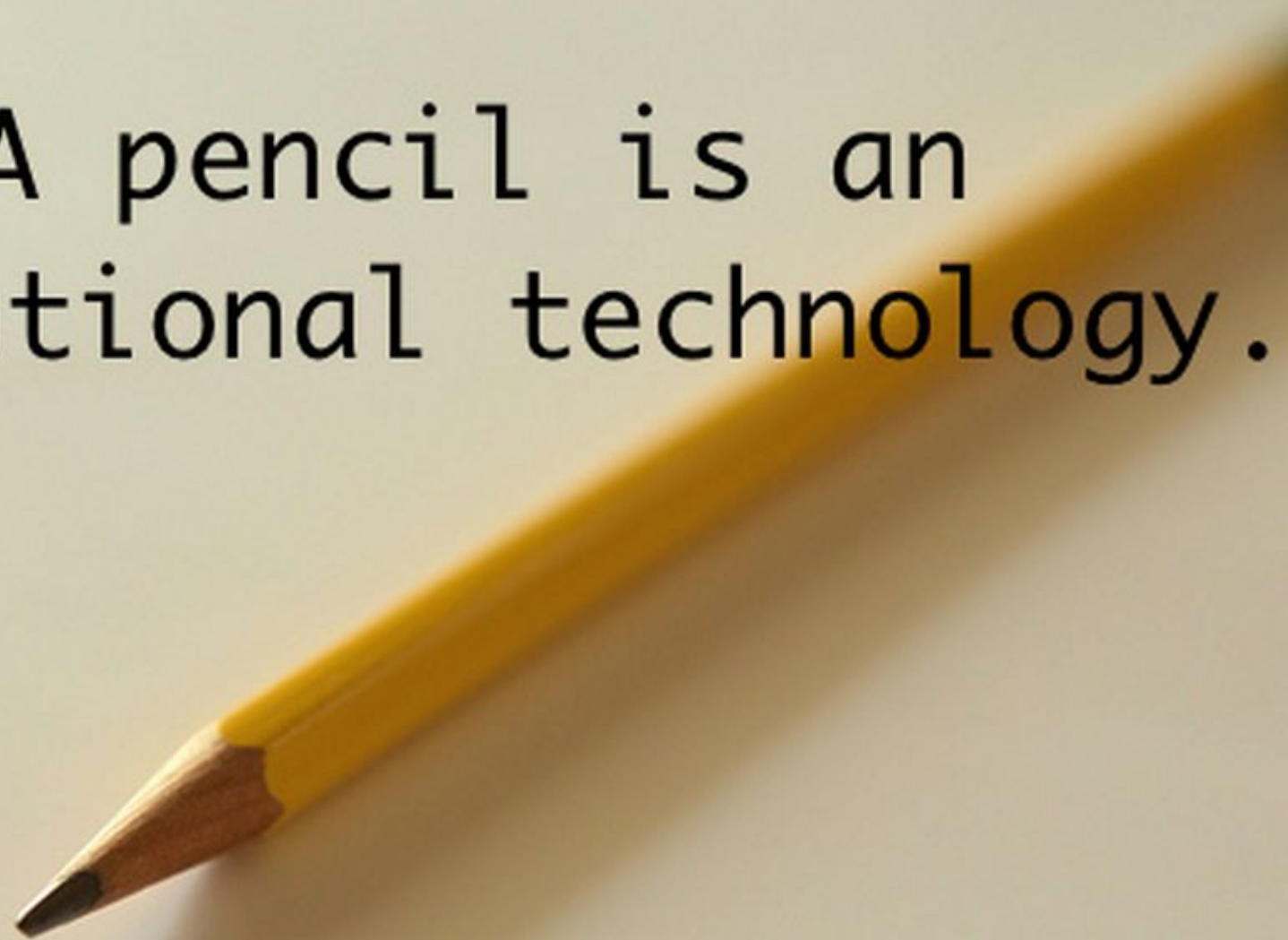
Do you consider
things like computers,
the WWW, and
phones to be
"technology?"

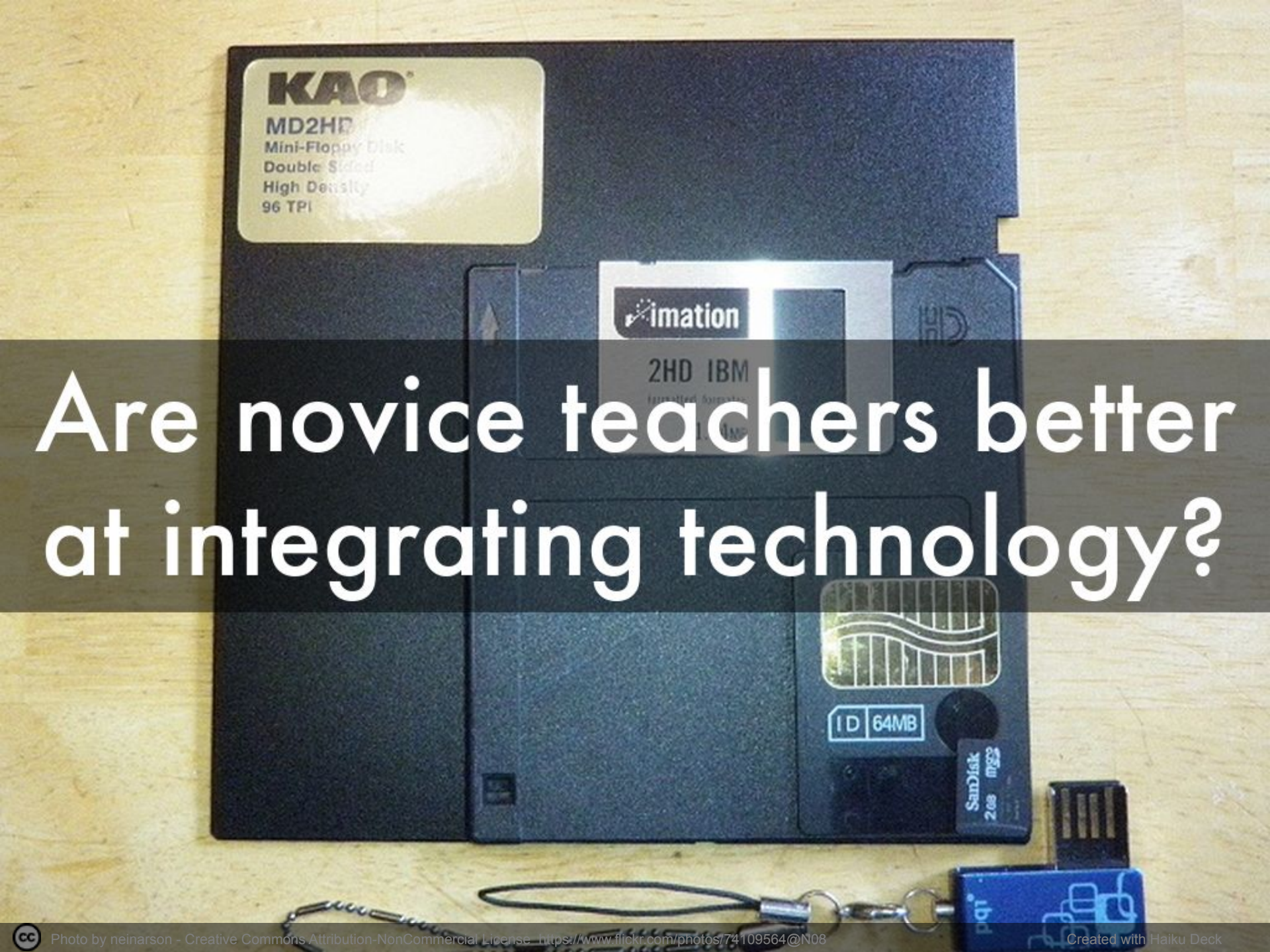


"Technology is not
technology if it
happened before you
were born."

~Sir Ken Robinson

A pencil is an
educational technology.





Are novice teachers better
at integrating technology?



GROWING UP DIGITAL



It's a generational thing...

Baby Boomers

"A reader should be thinking all the time while reading."

1. Important information
2. Facts about characters or the story
3. Predictions - what might happen next?
4. Questions about words, characters, the story
5. Personal reactions

"1st Student Helper
Brandon/Phillip"

Scissors
Heather

Colorful
Helpers

A photograph of a man with a beard and blonde hair, wearing a black and yellow striped long-sleeved shirt, playing a blue electric guitar. The background is a warm, orange-brown color. The text "Generation X" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, bold font.

Generation X

Today's Young Teachers...

- Generation Y
- Millennials
- the Digital Generation
- the NetGen



Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants



A NAME YOU SHOULD KNOW IN EDTECH:
MARK PRENSKY



A close-up photograph of a person's face, likely of indigenous descent, featuring vibrant orange body paint. Black markings, resembling stylized feathers or leaves, are painted on the cheeks and forehead. The person has a small, light-colored object, possibly a feather or stick, in their mouth. They are wearing a colorful beaded necklace with red, yellow, and blue patterns. The background is blurred, showing another person in a white shirt and a purple object.

NATIVE?

NATIVE?





NATIVE?

IMMIGRANT?





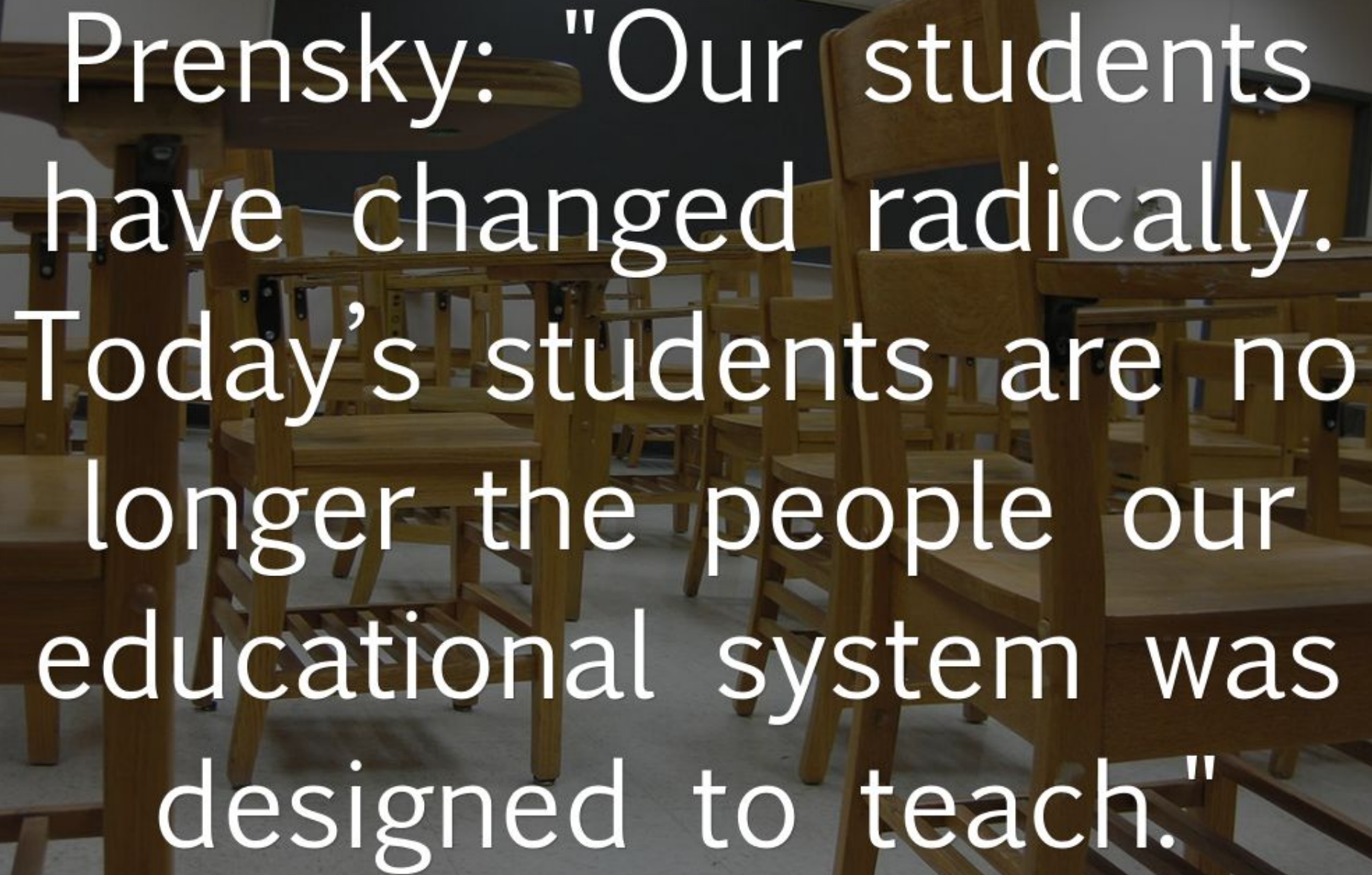
IMMIGRANT?



IMMIGRANT?



Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants

A photograph of a classroom with rows of wooden desks and chairs. In the background, there is a blackboard. The text is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

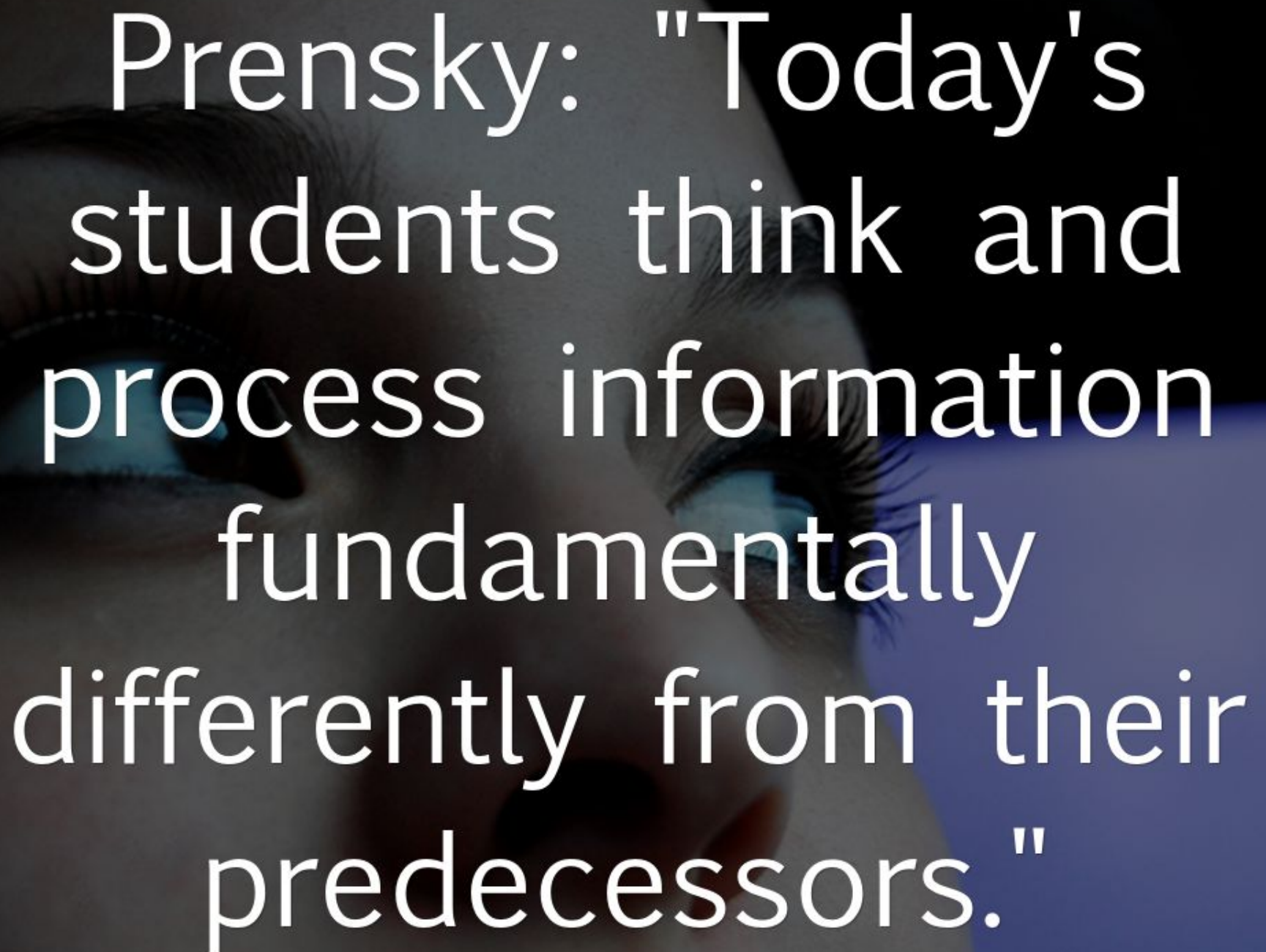
Prensky: "Our students have changed radically. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach."



NOT AN INCREMENTAL CHANGE

DISCONTINUITY





Prensky: "Today's
students think and
process information
fundamentally
differently from their
predecessors."



IMMIGRANTS



"ACCENT"

User's Guide

READ THE MANUAL?

Microsoft
WORD
Microsoft Series



"DIAL" A PHONE?

"A BROKEN RECORD?"

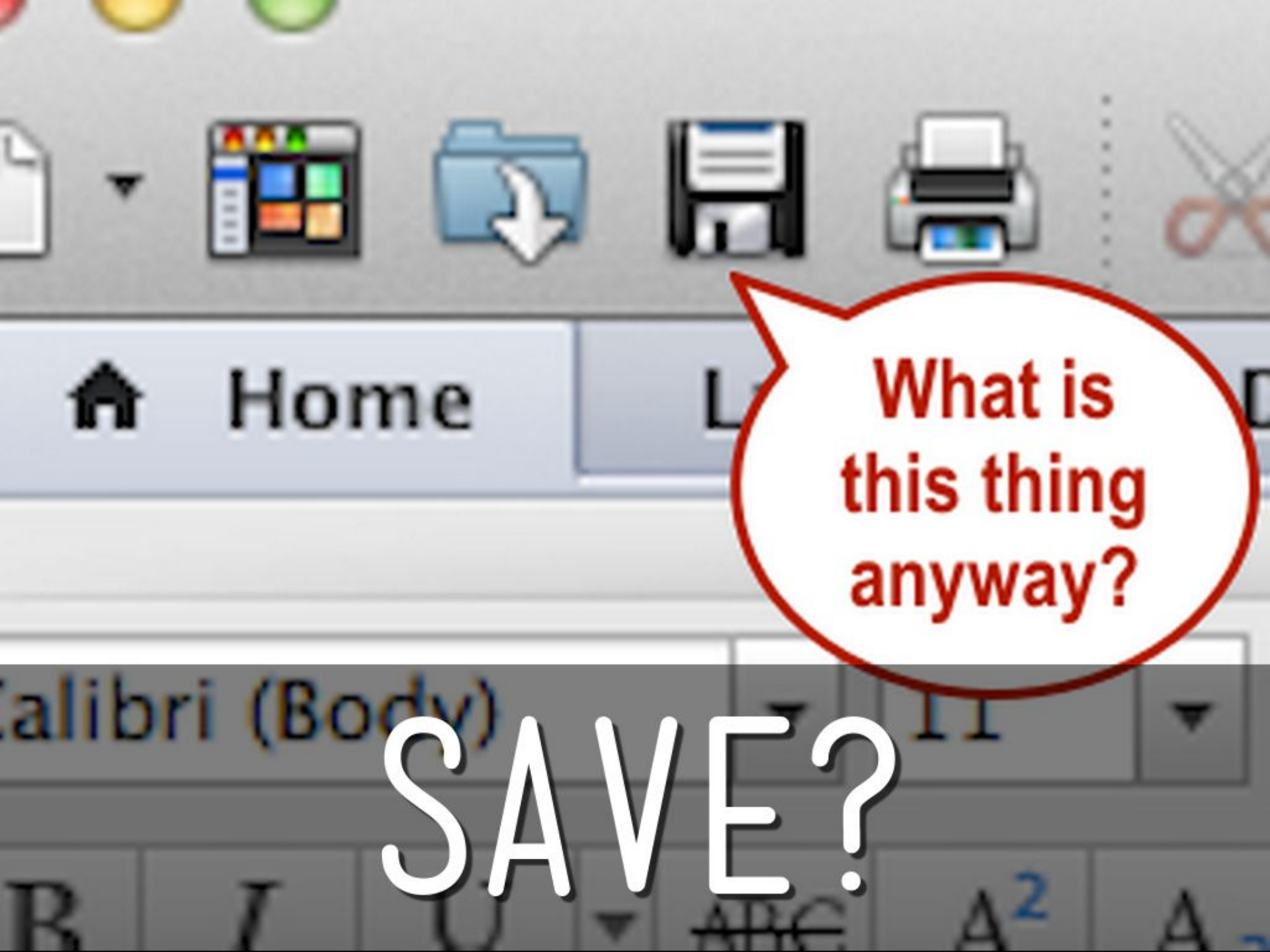


A photograph showing three young boys sitting in a row, each wearing a VR headset. They are looking upwards and to the right, presumably at a large screen. The boy in the foreground is wearing a brown hoodie and blue jeans. The boy in the middle is wearing a red and grey plaid shirt. The boy in the background is wearing a purple and white plaid shirt. They are in a classroom or computer lab setting with computer monitors and equipment visible in the background.

"Virtual" vs "Real Life"



OMG UR MY BFF!



What is
this thing
anyway?

SAVE?

Prensky: "Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language."



Innately Skillful Use of Technology?





Repeated Experiences?





MY STUDENTS JUST DON'T...





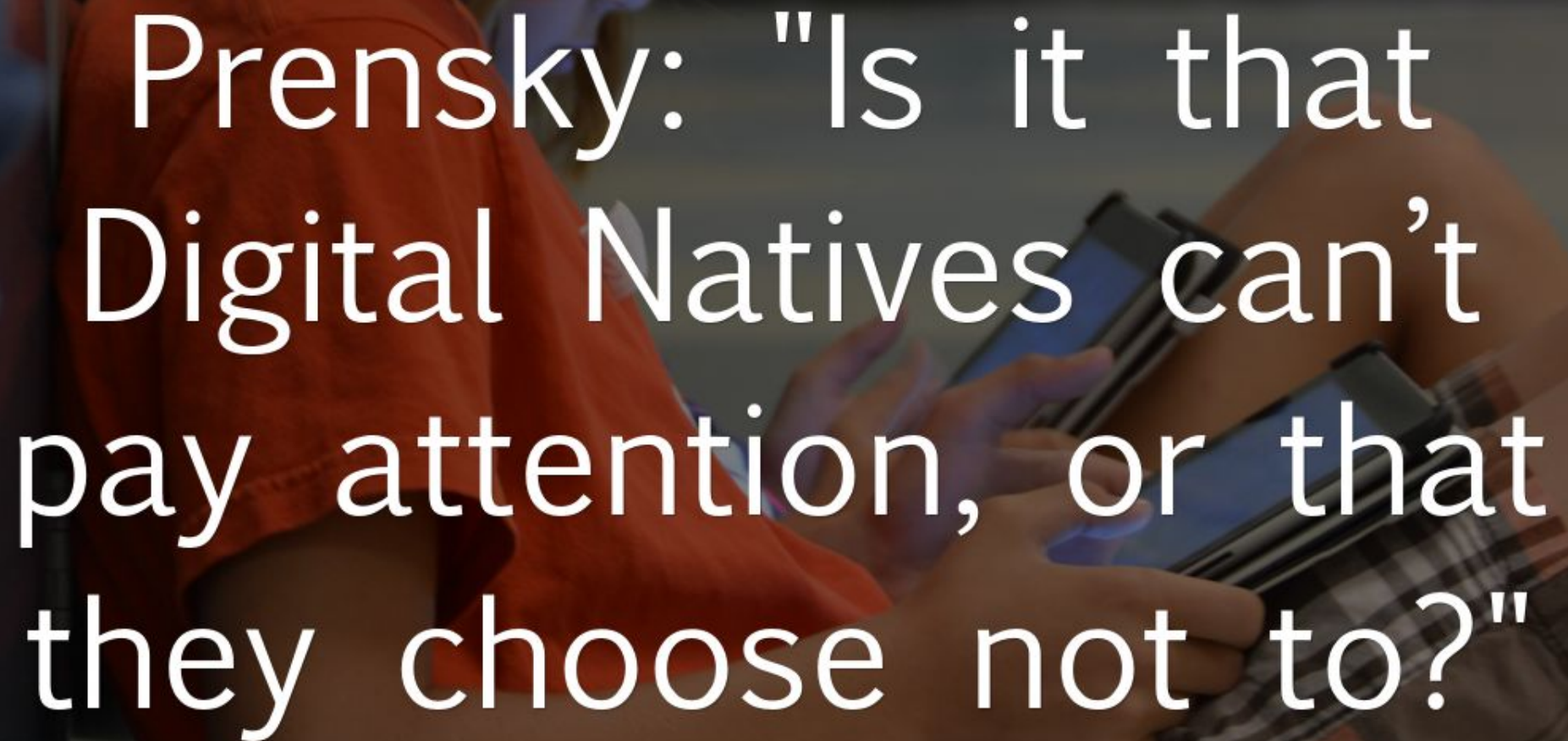
I CAN'T GET THEM TO...



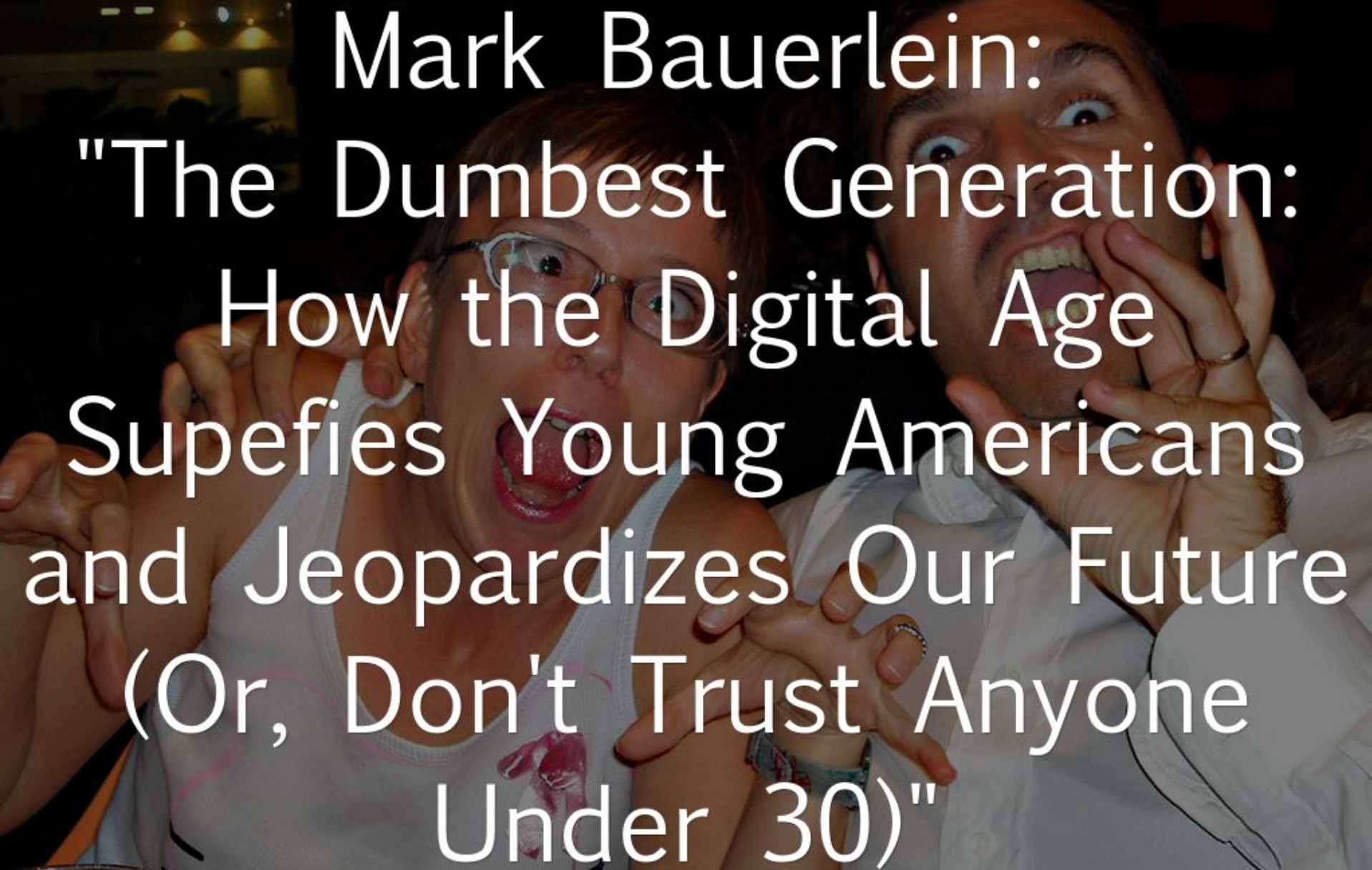


THEY HAVE NO APPRECIATION FOR...

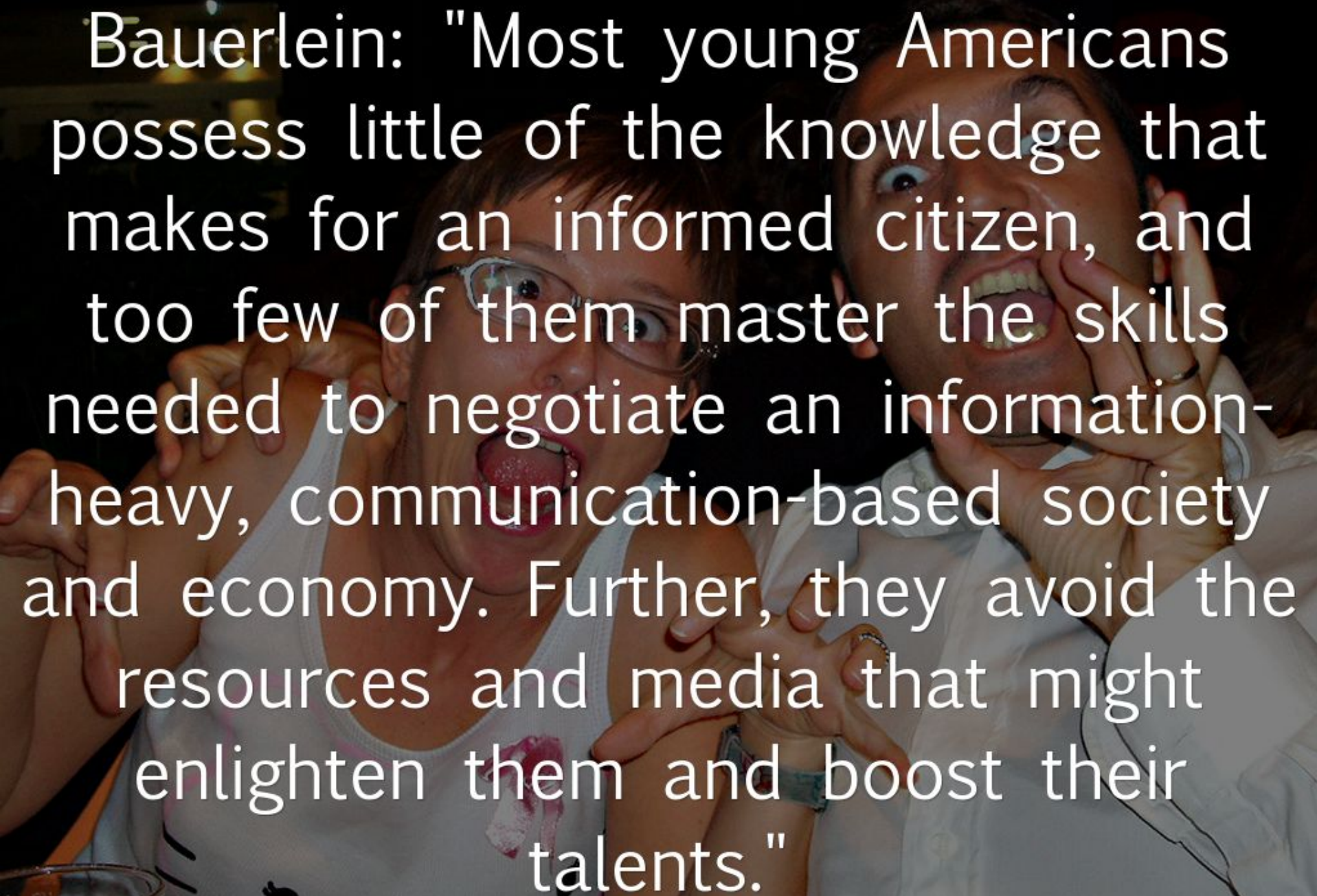


A young person with light-colored hair, wearing an orange t-shirt, is looking down at a smartphone held in their hands. In the foreground, another person's hand is visible, holding a different smartphone. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting. The text is overlaid in white, sans-serif font.

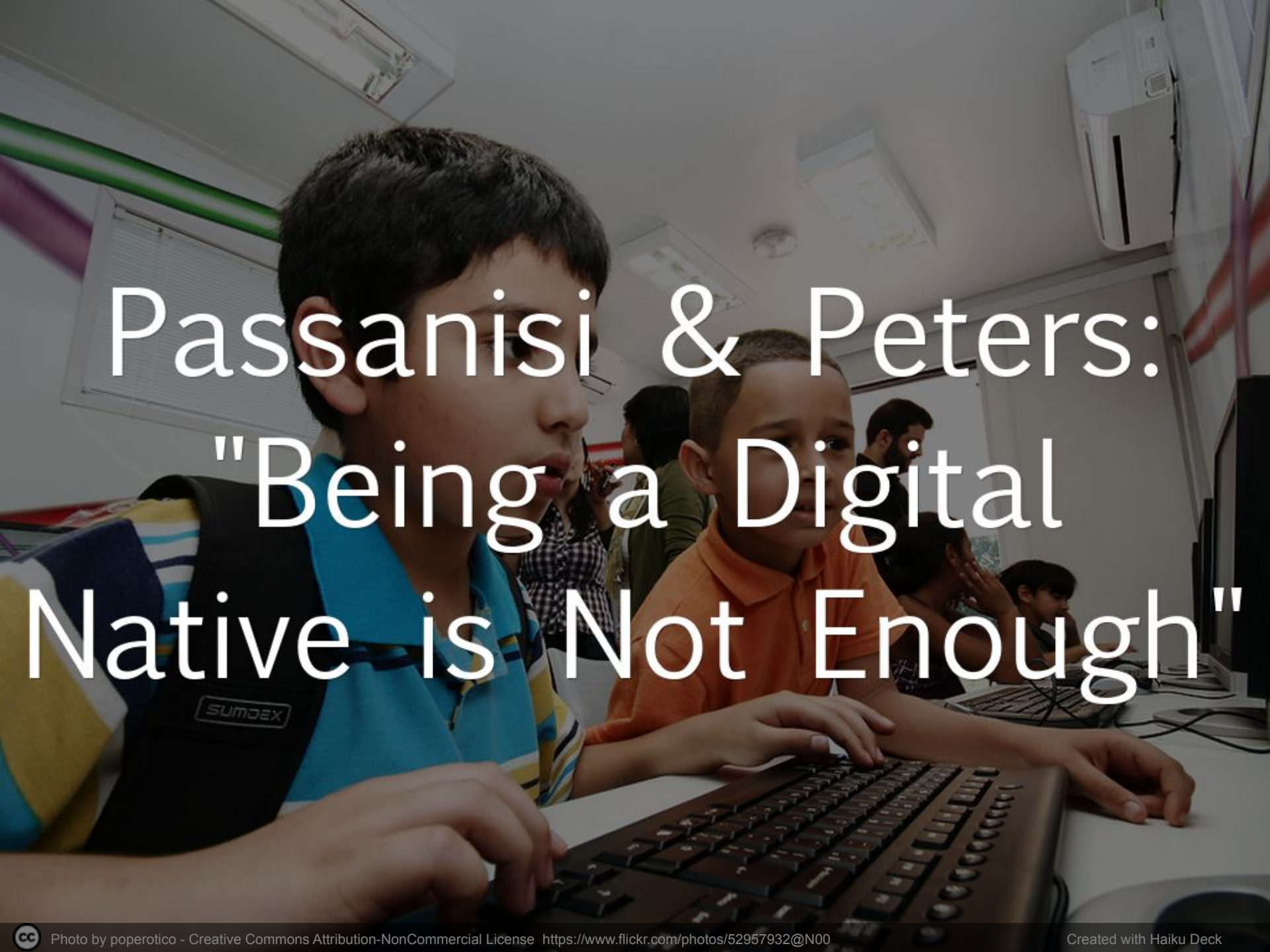
Prensky: "Is it that
Digital Natives can't
pay attention, or that
they choose not to?"

A photograph of a man and a woman in the foreground, both with wide-eyed, open-mouthed expressions of shock or surprise. The woman on the left wears glasses and a white tank top. The man on the right has a mustache and is wearing a white button-down shirt. They are both holding up their hands near their faces. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some lights from what appears to be an indoor event or concert.

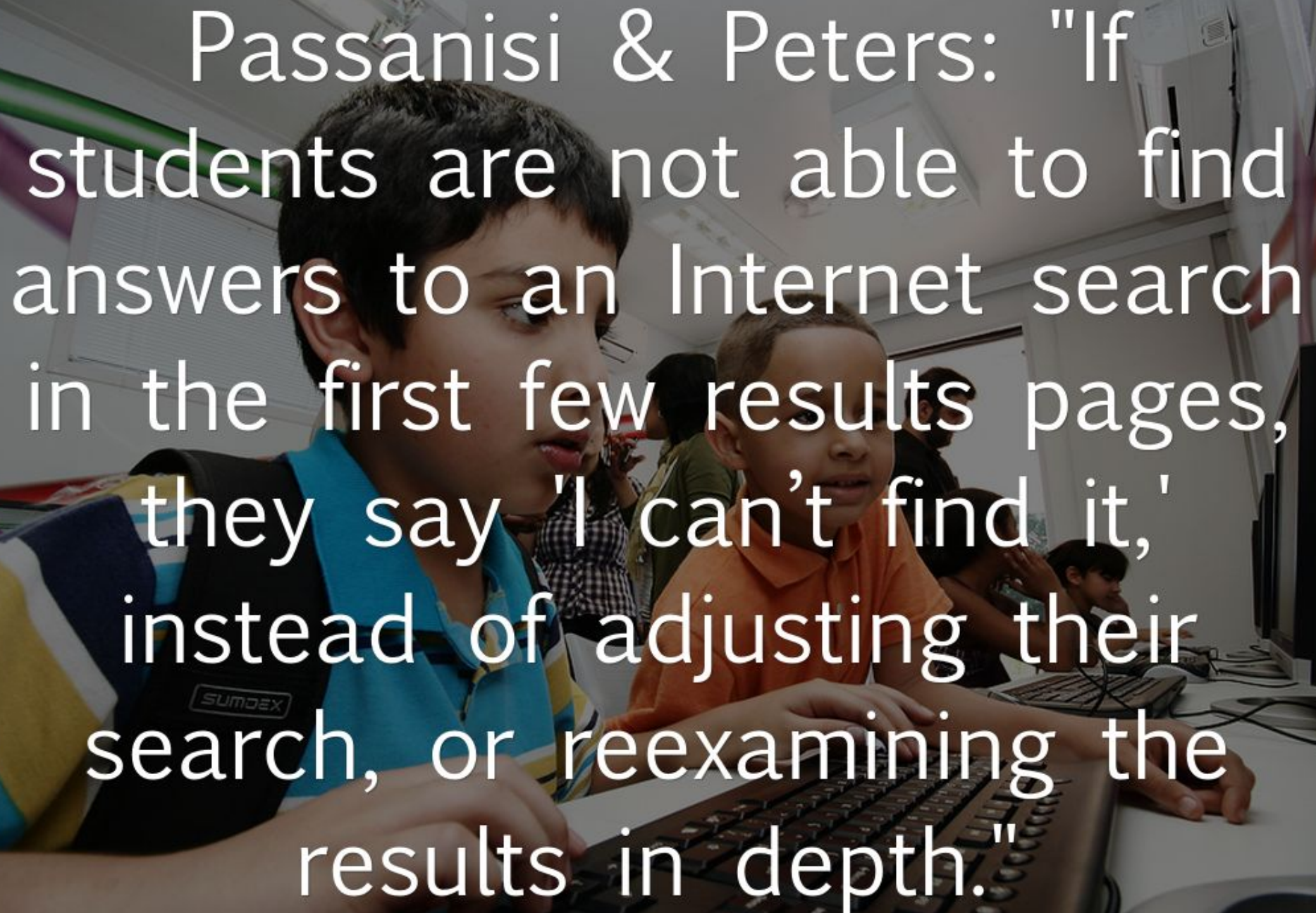
Mark Bauerlein:
"The Dumbest Generation:
How the Digital Age
Supefies Young Americans
and Jeopardizes Our Future
(Or, Don't Trust Anyone
Under 30)"

A photograph of a man and a woman in the foreground, both with their mouths wide open as if shouting or cheering. The woman on the left is wearing glasses and a white tank top. The man on the right is wearing a white button-down shirt. Their hands are raised near their faces, with fingers spread. The background is dark and out of focus. Overlaid on this image is a large white text quote.

Bauerlein: "Most young Americans possess little of the knowledge that makes for an informed citizen, and too few of them master the skills needed to negotiate an information-heavy, communication-based society and economy. Further, they avoid the resources and media that might enlighten them and boost their talents."



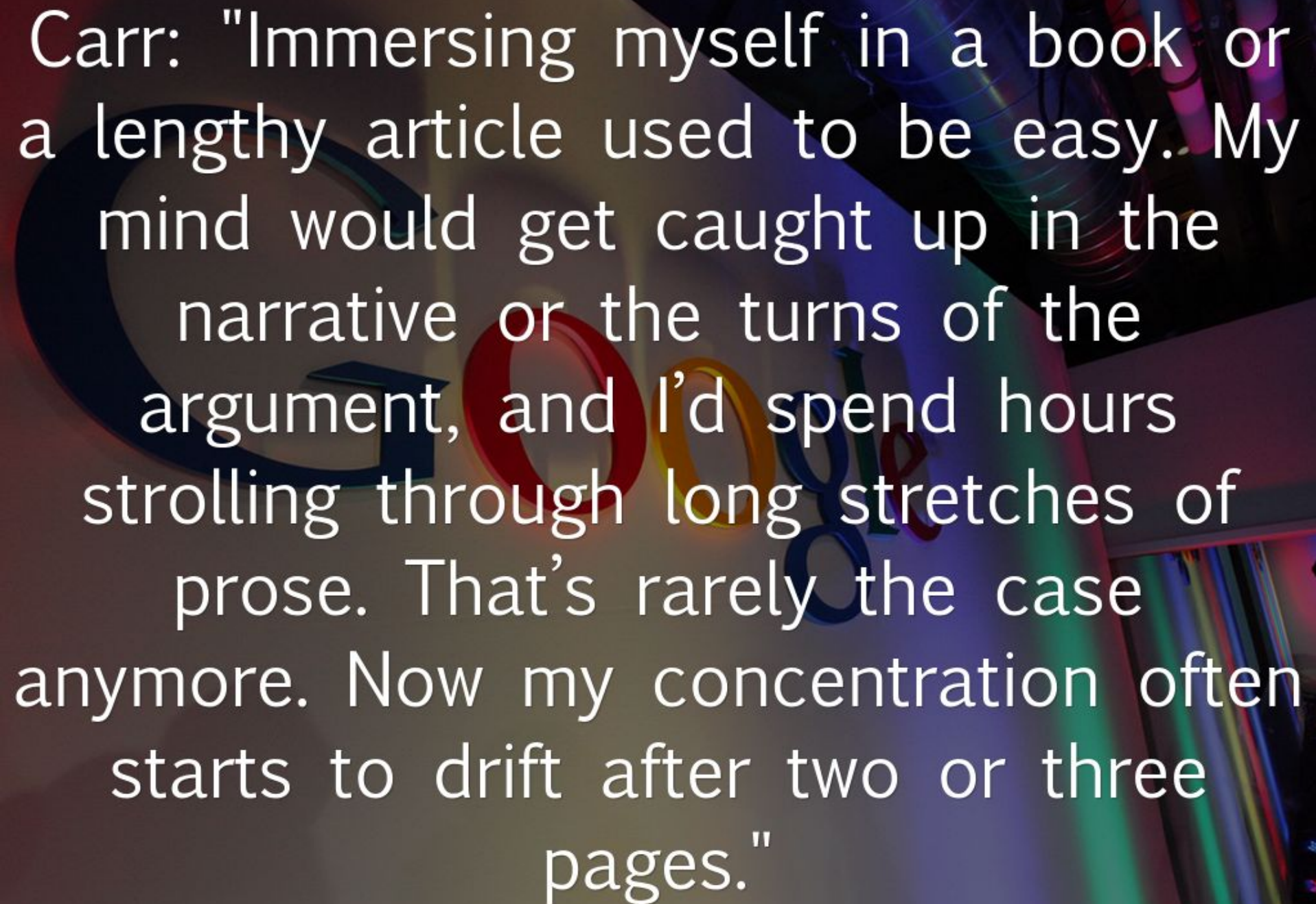
Passanisi & Peters: "Being a Digital Native is Not Enough"

A photograph of several children in a computer lab, sitting at desks and looking at computer monitors. The image is dimmed to serve as a background for the text. The child in the foreground is a young boy with dark hair, wearing a blue and yellow striped shirt, looking intently at a screen. Other children are visible in the background, also working at computers.

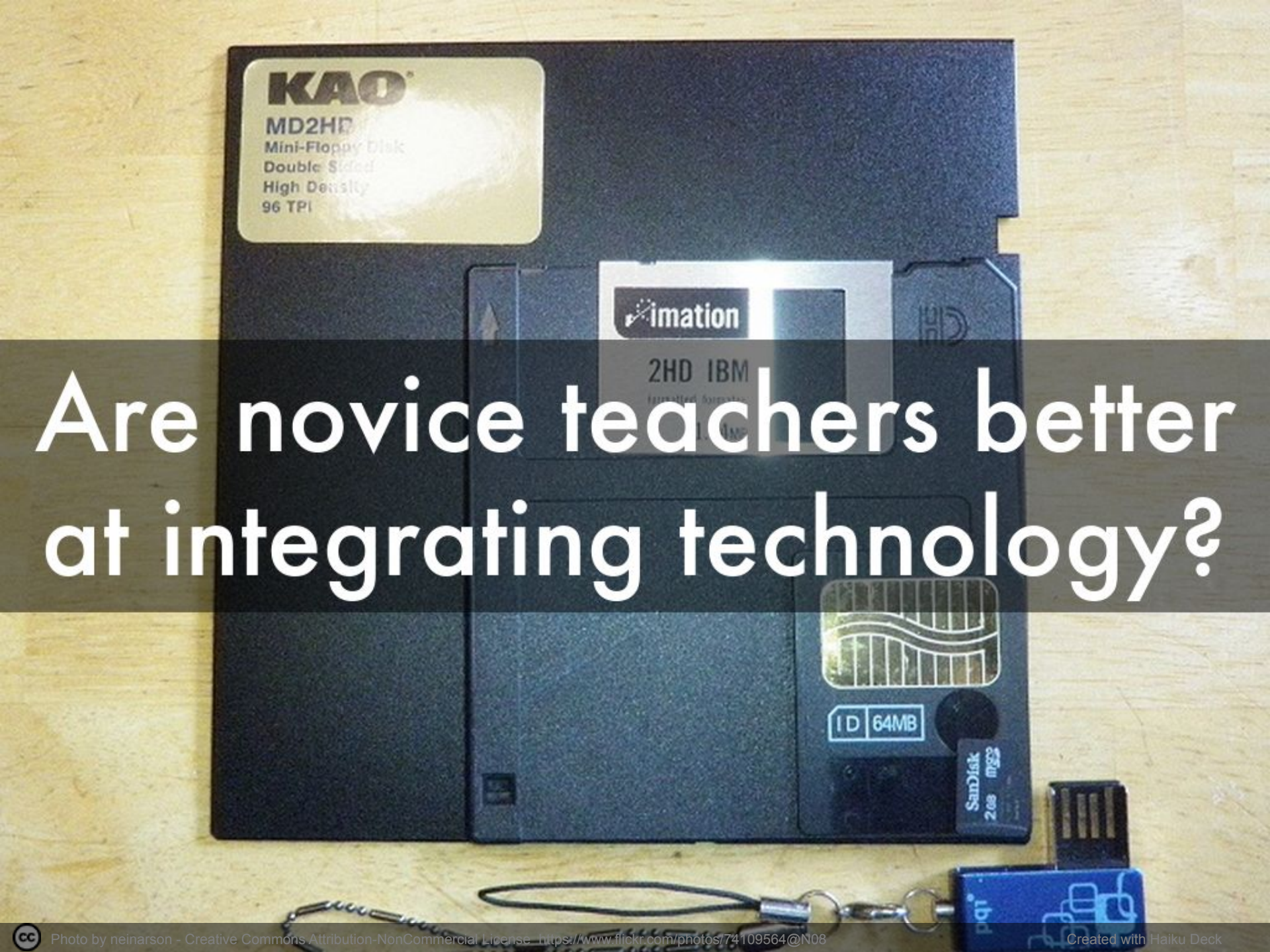
Passanisi & Peters: "If students are not able to find answers to an Internet search in the first few results pages, they say 'I can't find it,' instead of adjusting their search, or reexamining the results in depth."



Nicholas Carr: "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"



Carr: "Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy. My mind would get caught up in the narrative or the turns of the argument, and I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages."



Are novice teachers better
at integrating technology?

NO

**JUST BECAUSE
KIDS KNOW HOW TO
USE TWITTER, SNAPCHAT, AND INSTAGRAM
DOESN'T MEAN THEY
KNOW HOW TO
USE TECHNOLOGY
TO ENHANCE
THEIR LEARNING.**



CREATED BY SEAN JUNKINS

via Sean Junkins

A person wearing a blue hoodie with "78 CACTUS" on the chest is sitting at a desk. They are using a tablet with their right hand and a smartphone with their left hand. A black Logitech keyboard is also on the desk. The word "Natives?" is overlaid in large white text.

Natives?

78 CACTUS E

Experiences?





Preferences?

The Digital Native: Fact or Fiction?



A close-up portrait of a man with short brown hair, brown eyes, and a slight smile. He is looking directly at the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

PRENSKY ISN'T WRONG...



But he may not have
it all JUST right...

A young boy with light brown hair and blue eyes is wearing Google Glass. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing another child's head on the right side. The text "Kids are acculturated into a digital society (technopoly?)" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Kids are acculturated
into a digital society
(technopoly?)



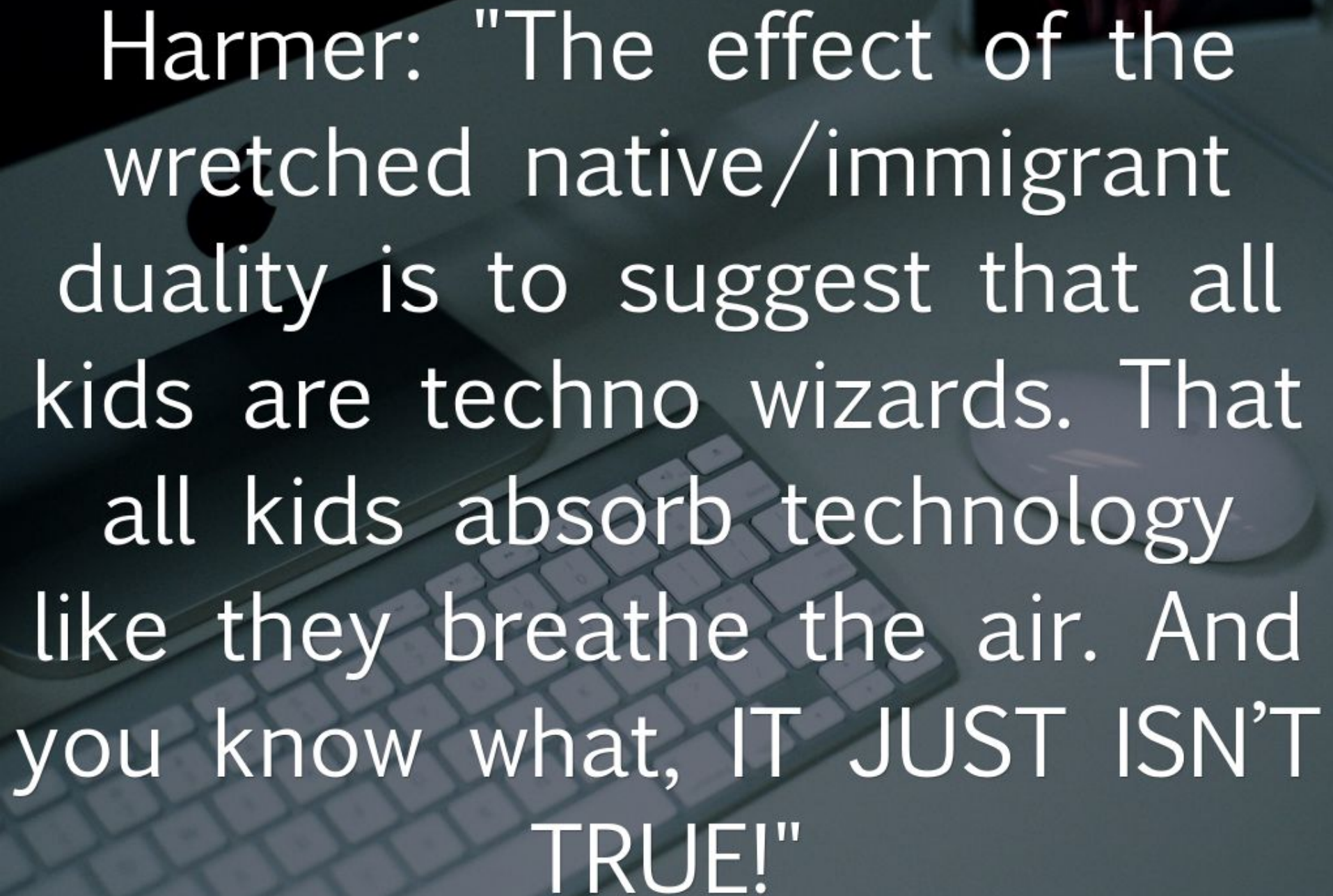
...but so are adults.

A close-up photograph of a man with a shocked or surprised expression, his eyes wide and mouth open. He is wearing a light-colored shirt. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a candid feel. The text is overlaid on this image.

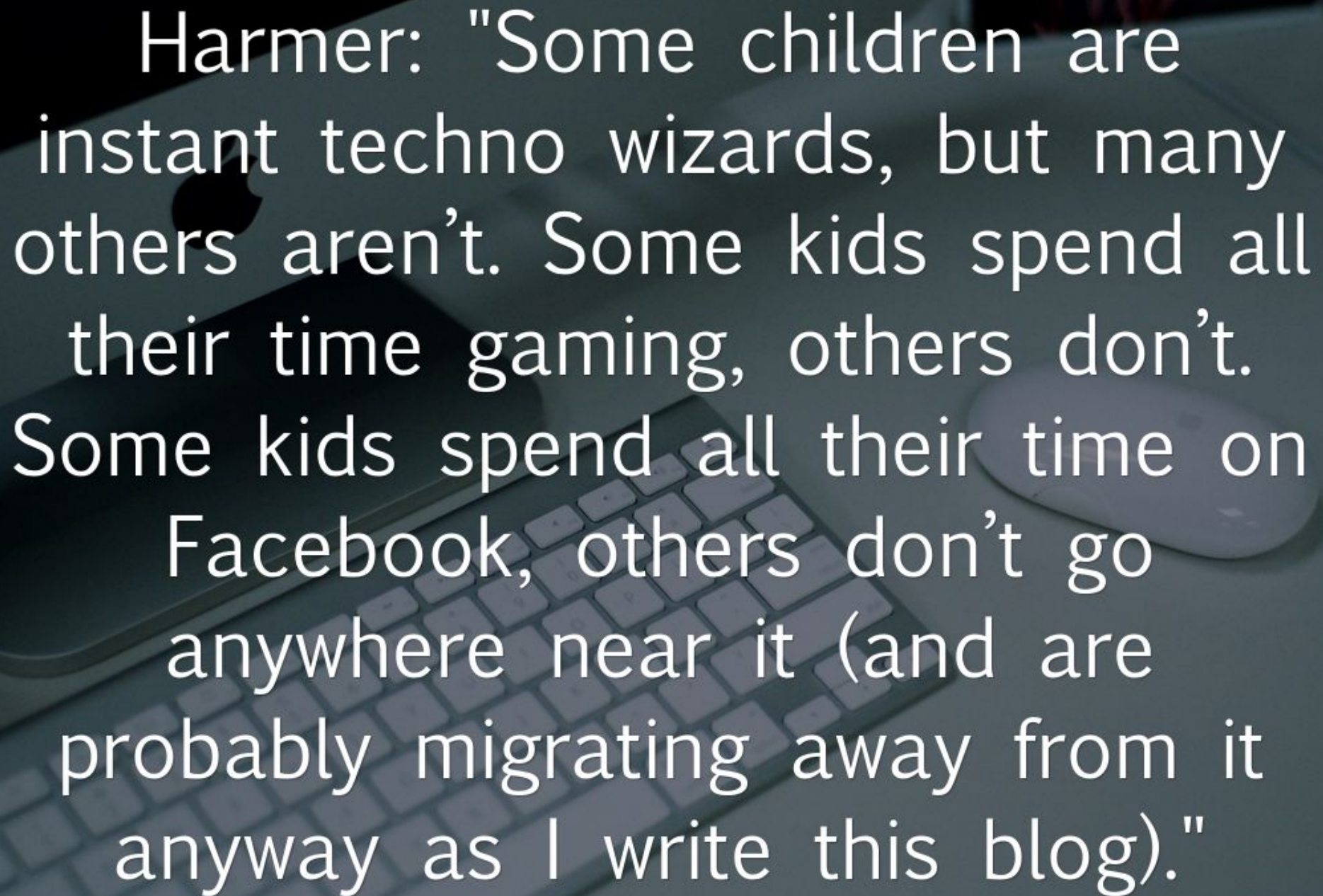
Kids don't *really*
have a "native" sense
of how to use
technology.



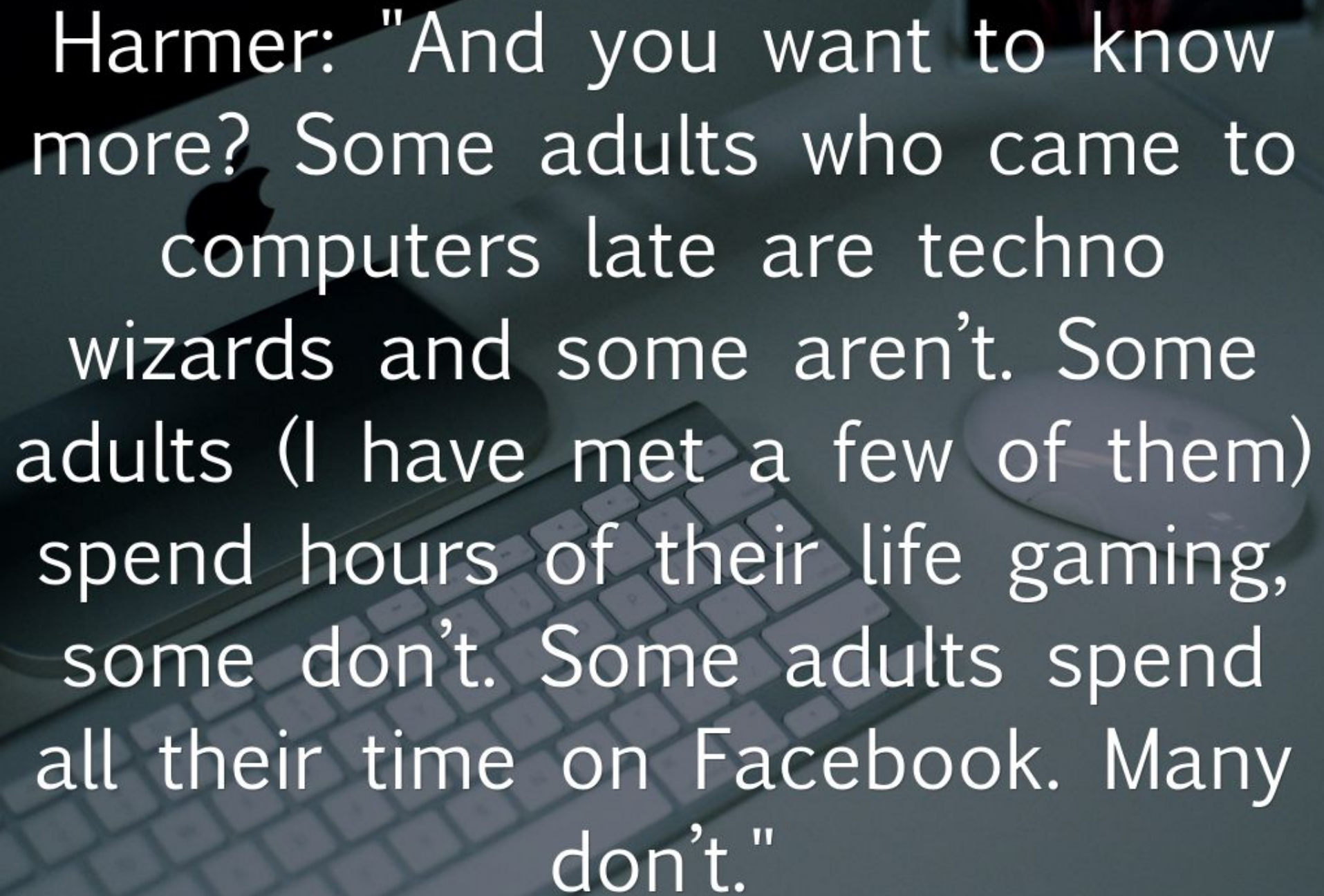
Jeremy Harmer: "Shall We Kill Off the Digital Native?"



Harmer: "The effect of the wretched native/immigrant duality is to suggest that all kids are techno wizards. That all kids absorb technology like they breathe the air. And you know what, IT JUST ISN'T TRUE!"



Harmer: "Some children are instant techno wizards, but many others aren't. Some kids spend all their time gaming, others don't. Some kids spend all their time on Facebook, others don't go anywhere near it (and are probably migrating away from it anyway as I write this blog)."



Harmer: "And you want to know more? Some adults who came to computers late are techno wizards and some aren't. Some adults (I have met a few of them) spend hours of their life gaming, some don't. Some adults spend all their time on Facebook. Many don't."



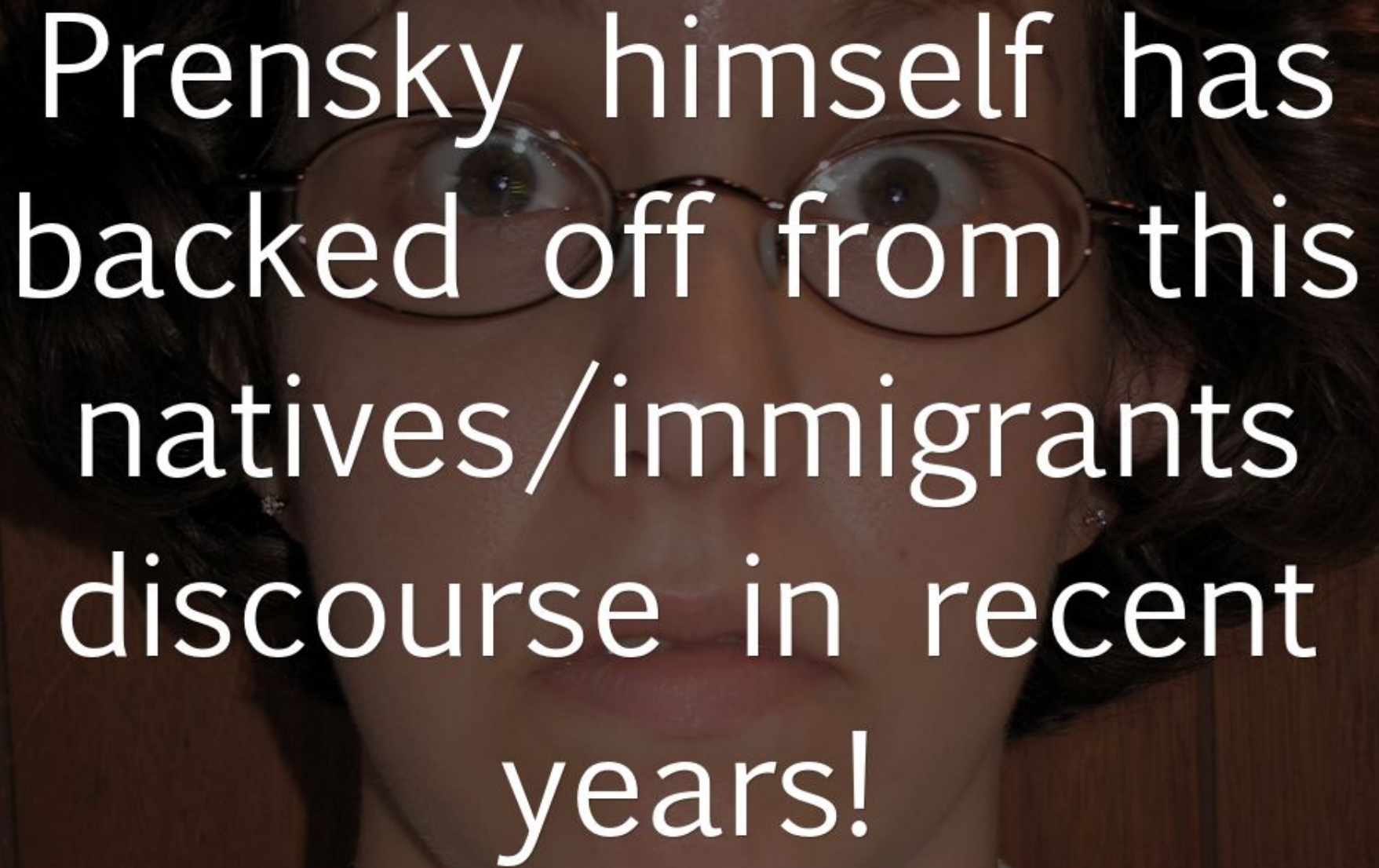
DIGITAL CITIZENS

ALL OF US... "NATIVES" AND "IMMIGRANTS ALIKE






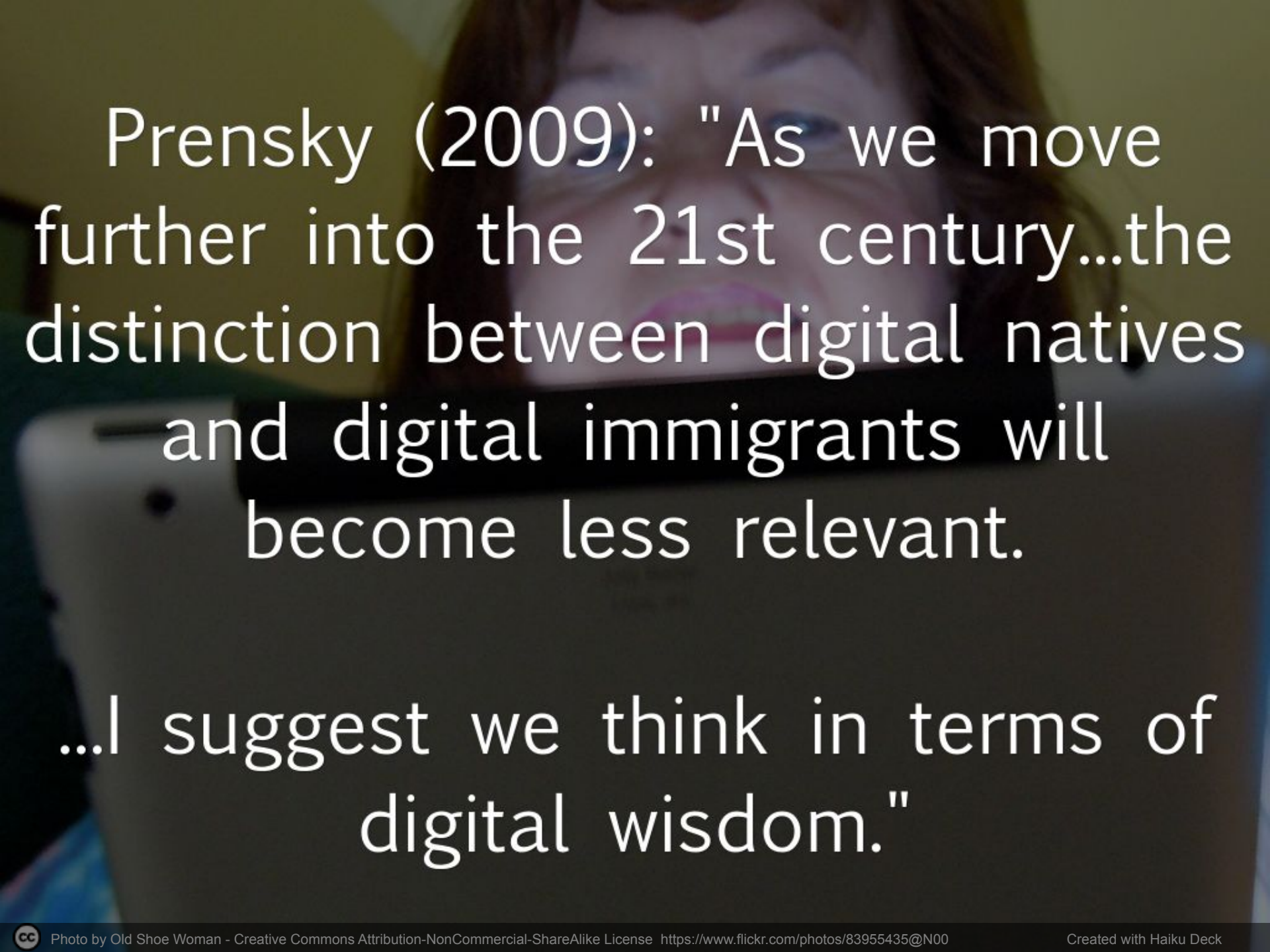
INTERESTING NOTE...



Prensky himself has
backed off from this
natives/immigrants
discourse in recent
years!



Lately, Prensky talks
more about
"digital wisdom"

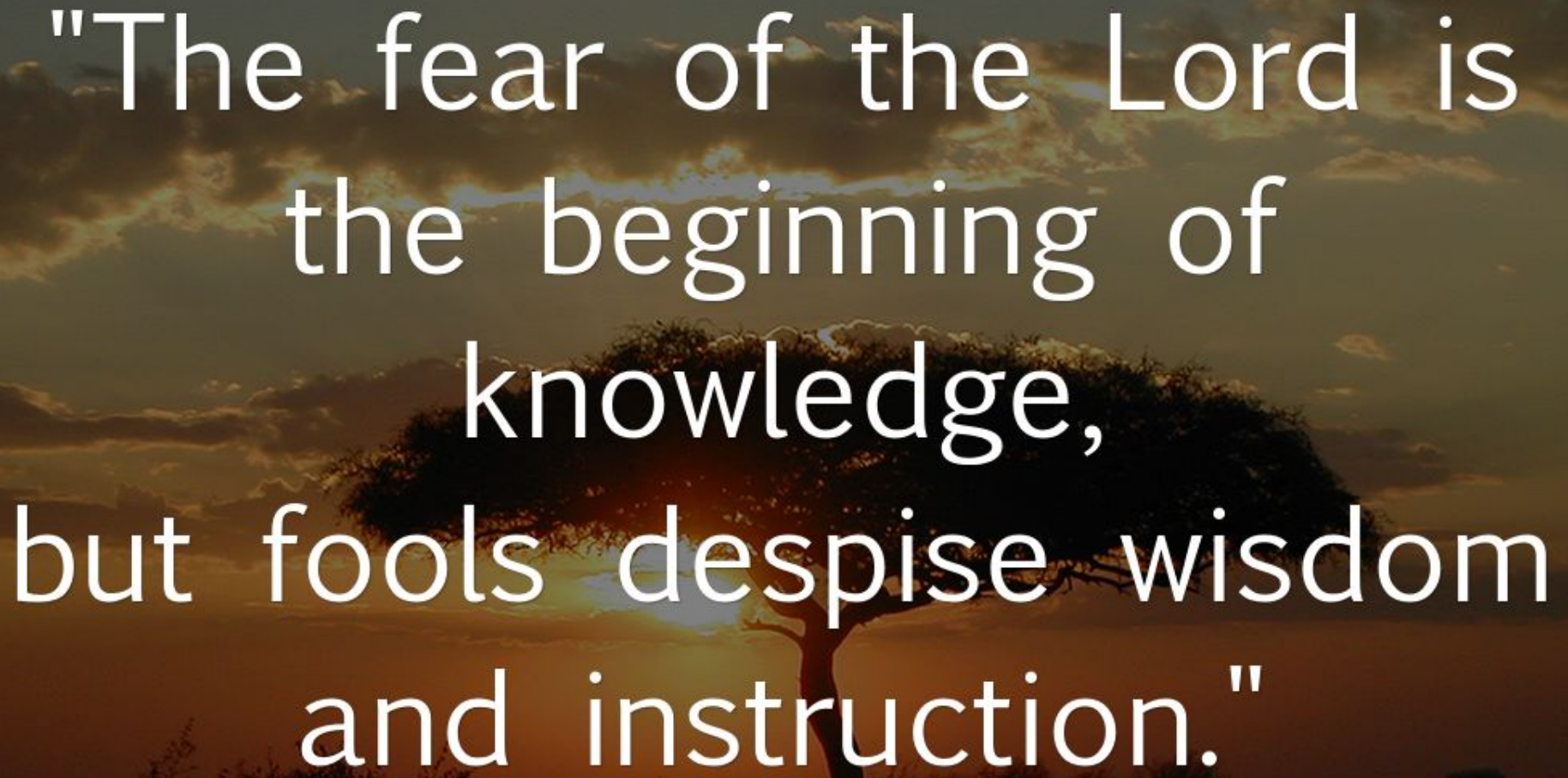
A young woman with long brown hair is looking down at a tablet computer. The image is slightly blurred and has a dark overlay, making it suitable for text placement.

Prensky (2009): "As we move further into the 21st century...the distinction between digital natives and digital immigrants will become less relevant.

...I suggest we think in terms of digital wisdom."

A photograph of a savanna landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with large, golden clouds illuminated by the low sun. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a large, spreading acacia tree stands prominently. The ground is a mix of dark grass and small shrubs. In the far distance, a small, light-colored vehicle is visible on the right side of the horizon. The word "WISDOM?" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image, partially obscuring the tree and the sky.

WISDOM?

A sunset scene with a large tree silhouette in the foreground and a car in the distance.

"The fear of the Lord is
the beginning of
knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom
and instruction."

Proverbs 1:8

A person is sitting at a desk, using a laptop. The laptop screen displays a code editor with a dark background and light-colored text, showing various lines of code. The person's hands are visible on the keyboard. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk with some papers and a red object.

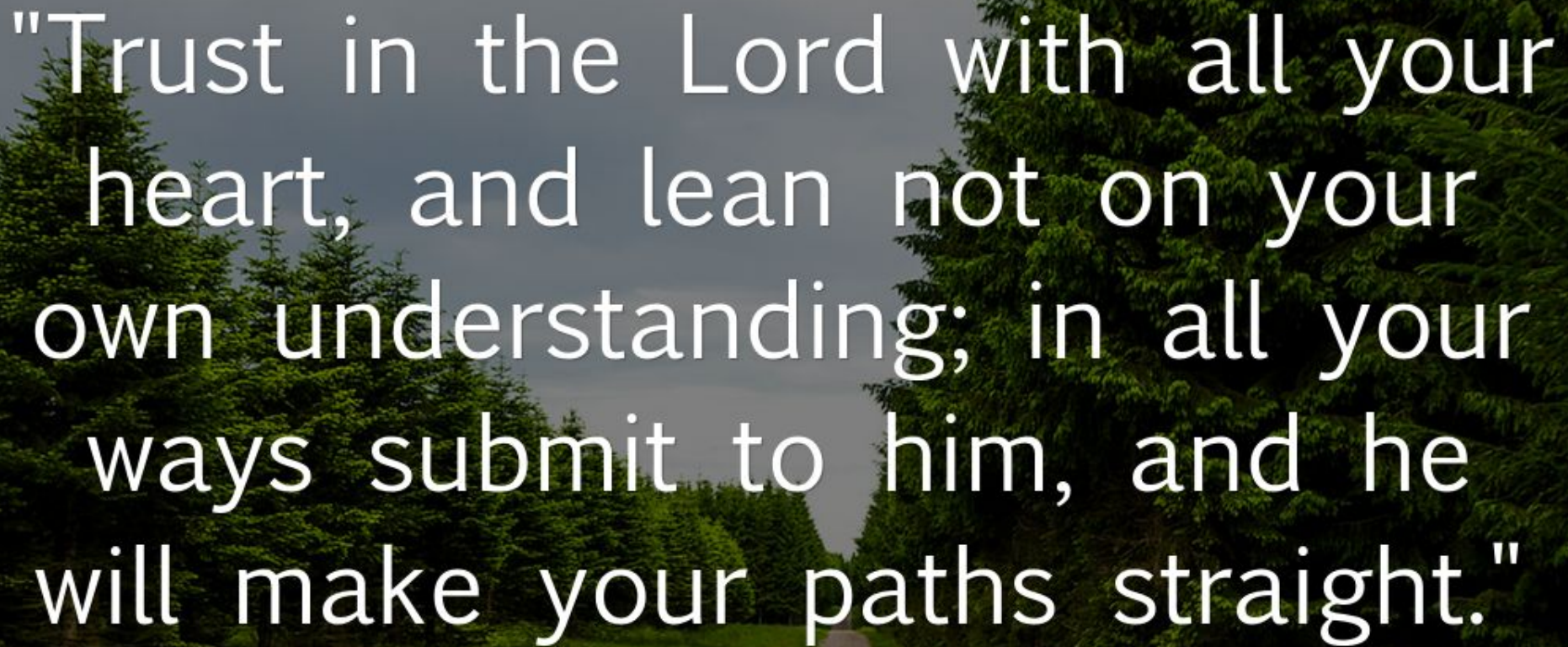
Can we use technology with wisdom?



Can we TEACH with wisdom?



How do we foster
wisdom in our
students?

A gravel path leads straight through a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. The path is flanked by lush green grass and the trees create a canopy overhead. The scene is peaceful and serene, with the path leading the eye towards the horizon.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Proverbs 3:5-6

Questions for Discussion...

- I have been researching pre-service teachers specifically. Does this ring true for students in your discipline?
- Should we expect students to learn to do it “our way,” or should we expect to teach in “their way?”
- Are your students learners? Are you a learner?