

INTRODUCTION

What are media arts? The concept may be confusing to some, as media can be considered both traditional and contemporary. However, the acceptance of media arts as a term understood as embracing new forms of technology is supported by the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and its participation in the development of the National Core Art Standards for Media Arts. The 2014 revision of the 1994 National Fine Arts Standards includes media arts as a fifth arts discipline along with dance, music, theater, and visual arts.

The standards define media arts as “a unique medium of artistic expression that can amplify and integrate the four traditional art forms by incorporating the technological advances of the contemporary world with emerging skill sets available to students and teachers. Media arts students cultivate both artistic abilities and a technological aptitude. The media artist utilizes a fundamental understanding of the mediums of analog and digital media to integrate digital technologies with traditional forms of artistic expression.”

Similarly, the National Endowment for the Arts defines media arts as “all genres and forms that use electronic media, film, and technology (analog and digital, old and new) as an artistic medium or a medium to broaden arts appreciation and awareness of any discipline. This includes projects presented via film, television, radio, audio, video, the Internet, interactive and mobile technologies, video games, immersive and multi-platform storytelling, and satellite streaming.”

If you are feeling unprepared to tackle all that technology, you’re not alone. Bringing media arts into the classroom is a challenge for teachers because many of us are digital immigrants, not natives. According to Marc Prensky, the author of the article “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,” a digital immigrant is someone who was not born into the digital world. I can remember rotary phones, filmstrips, overhead projectors, Pegasus mail, and the first time someone showed me a web browser. My first computer was a Macintosh Classic (which I still have). Even though my fellow digital immigrant teachers and I may want to learn the new digital language, we will never completely lose our “accent”—our foot in the past. Yet our students today are all native speakers of our now prevalent digital language and media-saturated world.

Prensky contends that the single biggest problem facing education today is that “our DI instructors, who speak an



Nancy's digital portrait by Kasmira Mohanty

outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language.” Our students today are digital natives. There is no time in their lives that this technology didn’t exist. And we can’t even imagine what advances will be made in technology during our students’ lives.

So, how can teachers who are digital immigrants reach students who expect connectivity and instantaneity in all media? Prensky advises teachers to accept that we need to learn to communicate in the language of our digitally native students, adapting materials to their language.

As art teachers, we need to learn as much as we can of the new digital language, accept help from our students to do so, and look for ways to utilize digital technology for learning and creating in media arts.

In *Media Arts*, the first volume in the *SchoolArts* Collection, we have compiled articles written by the best educators in the business of teaching media arts and new technologies. Whether you are a digital immigrant or a digital native, this book will give you a wealth of ideas for using media arts in your classroom.

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