

# LMK, IDK: Texting is writing, researcher says

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MSU student Erica Shekell texts several times a day. Photo by G.L. Kohuth

(PhysOrg.com) -- The days of traditional college writing instruction are nearly over, contends a Michigan State University researcher who found that college students now rank texting as the No. 1 form of writing and cell phones as a top writing platform.

Lead researcher Jeff Grabill, professor of [writing](#) and rhetoric, studied the writing behaviors of more than 1,300 first-year [college students](#) across the nation from a variety of institutions and locations from April to June.

[Texting](#) is indeed writing, students said, and they value their texts more than any other writing style - even above [social networking](#) status updates and comments.

People may argue texting is bad writing, but it's writing many people do every day, said Grabill, co-director of MSU's Writing in Digital Environments Research Center. So as 15 million students take first-year writing in the United States this year, colleges and universities need to take note.

"We're teaching writing the way we've been teaching it for the last 100 years," he said. "And so as a matter of good intellectual practice, we ought to be looking for thoughtful changes in how we teach writing. With research like this, we'll increasingly come to a better understanding about what it means to write in the 21st century and structure our writing programs to support that."

Contrary to the popular belief that "kids these days don't write," college students lead complex writing lives and write more than any other generation, he said.

In fact, college students report engaging in frequent personal writing such as poetry. And, contrary to what most college professors think, students value their academic writing.

Other key findings:

- E-mail is for "old people." Students use it primarily to communicate with professors and parents, and while they do it frequently they don't value it highly.
- Students prefer to write alone rather than collaborate with classmates.
- Most writing on Facebook is related to interpersonal messaging. Students more often comment on posts and [status updates](#) of friends than post things to their own profiles. They also report using Facebook for writing everything from lists to screenplays to poetry.

So why texting? As with other writing genres, it's communicative and it's a vehicle to conduct real-world work, Grabill said. In addition, texting is fast, it's efficient and it's second nature in an age of instant connectivity - something writing papers isn't.

"Teaching students how to write about literature doesn't teach them how to write to various audiences or about various subjects," Grabill said.

"We would better serve students by helping them to solve the writing problems they encounter in their lives using the technologies appropriate for those tasks."

Provided by Michigan State University

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