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The “Mindset List” for the Class of 2013

Gary Breed
Editorial Director



For this issue’s column, I’ll do what many others in the media do this time of year (late August)—highlight some interesting and funny items from the annual Beloit College Mindset List. The list is intended to remind college faculty and staff (and everyone else) of those things that have shaped the lives of new students. I’ll start with an excerpt from the list’s own introductory comments:

“If the entering college Class of 2013 had been more alert back in 1991 when most of them were born, they would now be experiencing a severe case of déjà vu. The headlines that year railed about government interventions, bailouts, bad loans, unemployment and greater regulation of the finance industry. The Tonight Show changed hosts for the first time in decades, and the nation asked ‘was Iraq worth a war?’

“Each August since 1998, Beloit College has released the Beloit College Mindset List. It provides a look at the cultural touchstones that shape the lives of students entering college. It is the creation of Beloit’s Keefer Professor of the Humanities Tom McBride and Emeritus Public Affairs Director Ron Nief. It is used around the world as the school year begins, as a reminder of the rapidly changing frame of reference for this new generation. It is widely reprinted, and the Mindset List website at <http://www.beloit.edu/mindset/> receives more than 300,000 hits annually.”

Here are some items from the list that engineers and others in the technology business might identify with. For students born in 1991...

- They have never used a card catalog to find a book.
- They have been preparing for the arrival of HDTV all their lives.
- Text has always been hyper.
- Babies have always had a Social Security Number.
- They have never had to “shake down” an oral thermometer.
- American students have always lived anxiously with high-stakes educational testing.
- The European Union has always existed.
- Cable television systems have always offered telephone service and vice versa.
- The nation’s key economic indicator has always been the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- They have always been able to read books on an electronic screen.
- Amateur radio operators have never needed to know Morse code.

- There have always been flat screen televisions.
- Nobody has been able to make a deposit in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI).
- Everyone has always known what the evening news was before the Evening News came on.
- There has always been a computer in the Oval Office.
- Migration of once independent media like radio, TV, videos and compact discs to the computer has never amazed them.
- Women have always outnumbered men in college.

My own research found a few more things that might be added to the list for new EE students...

- Wireless local networks (WLAN) have always been around.

- There have always been digital cell phones.
- The Internet has always been used for commercial purposes (and there have always been Web browsers).
- PCs have always been used for microwave design and electromagnetic analysis.
- Plessey, Cushman Electronics, Gigabit Logic and Precision Monolithics have never existed; ANZAC and Avantek were gone by their first birthday.

Finally, here are a few more Mindset List items of general interest (and entertainment)...

- For these students, Martha Graham, Pan American Airways, Michael Landon, Dr. Seuss, Miles Davis, The Dallas Times Herald, Gene Roddenberry, and

Freddie Mercury have always been dead.

- Tattoos have always been very chic and highly visible.
- Rap music has always been mainstream.
- We have always watched wars, coups, and police arrests unfold on television in real time.
- McDonald's has always been serving Happy Meals in China.
- Bobby Cox has always managed the Atlanta Braves.
- Belarus, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, have always been independent nations.
- The American health care system has always been in critical condition.
- CDs have never been sold in cardboard packaging.
- Salsa has always outsold ketchup.