National Geographic-Roper Public Affairs
2006 Geographic Literacy Survey

Survey Highlights
Survey Methodology

• 510 interviews with a representative sample of 18- to 24-year-olds in the continental United States
• In-home, face-to-face methodology
• Fieldwork dates: December 17, 2005 to January 20, 2006
Survey Conclusions

• Young people in the U.S. – the most recent graduates of our educational system – appear unprepared for an increasingly global future.

• Far too many lack basic skills for navigating the international economy or understanding the relationships among people and places that provide critical context for world events.
Young Americans Don’t See…
Importance of Some Key Skills

- Use a Computer: 61% Absolutely Necessary, 35% Important But Not Absolutely Necessary, 4% Not Too Important
- Use the Internet: 56% Absolutely Necessary, 36% Important But Not Absolutely Necessary, 8% Not Too Important
- Read a Map: 51% Absolutely Necessary, 37% Important But Not Absolutely Necessary, 11% Not Too Important
- Know where Countries in the News are Located: 50% Absolutely Necessary, 28% Important But Not Absolutely Necessary, 21% Not Too Important
- Speak a Foreign Language: 47% Absolutely Necessary, 38% Important But Not Absolutely Necessary, 14% Not Too Important
- Use a GPS Device: 50% Absolutely Necessary, 35% Important But Not Absolutely Necessary, 10% Not Too Important

Note: Don’t know/Refused answers not shown
Young Americans Don’t Know…
the Middle East

% can locate country on map of Middle East

14% can locate all four

I raq 37
Saudi Arabia 37
Iran 26
Israel 25
Young Americans Don’t Know…

Asia

% can locate country on map of Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Can Locate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6% can locate all five
Young Americans Don’t Know…

World Hotspots

• 7 in 10 can’t find **North Korea** on a map of Asia
  – Nearly **two-thirds** don’t know its border with South Korea is the most heavily-fortified in the world

• 9 in 10 can’t find **Afghanistan** on a map of Asia

• Many don’t know **Sudan** and **Rwanda** are in Africa
  – 20% think Sudan is in Asia, 10% put it in Europe
Young Americans Even Struggle With…

U.S. Geography

% can locate state on map of U.S.

- California: 92%
- Texas: 92%
- Louisiana: 67%
- Nevada: 63%
- Mississippi: 52%
- New York: 50%
- Ohio: 43%

20% can locate all seven
Young Americans Don’t Know…
Natural Disasters

• Wrath of Katrina: One-third can’t find Louisiana, half can’t find Mississippi on a U.S. map

• Two-thirds don’t select Pakistan – from only four possible choices -- as the correct location of the October 2005 earthquake that killed over 70,000

• Half can’t even place tsunami-ravaged Sri Lanka on the right continent: Asia
Young Americans Don’t Know…

China

-- 45% think China’s population is just **twice** that of U.S…

-- it’s actually more than **four times** the U.S. population

298 million

1.3 billion
Young Americans Don’t Know…

China

• Half think **China** is the world’s largest exporter in dollar value
  - The correct answer is the **United States**

• Three-quarters think the world’s most-spoken native tongue is **English**
  - The correct answer is **Mandarin Chinese**, selected correctly from a list of four choices by only **18%** of young Americans
Young Americans Don’t Understand…

People and Places

In which country is a majority of the population Muslim?

- Indonesia: 25
- India: 48
- Armenia: 10
- South Africa: 9

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2006 Geographic Literacy Survey Results
Though better at practical map skills, many are still deficient

- Told to evacuate to the Northwest to escape a hurricane headed for City C, **one-third** head the wrong way.
- A full **third** also don’t know the time in LA if it’s noon in New York City.
Summary

• Young Americans show limited knowledge of the world within and beyond our borders
• Many lack skills to navigate the international economy
• They don’t understand the relationships between people and places that give context to world events
• Many are unprepared for a global future