

**D'Arcy Hutchings**  
**LS 502: Research Methods**  
**Thursday July 22**  
**Exercise 2 – Annotated Bibliography**

**Getting the Net Gen Student into the Academic Library:  
An Annotated Bibliography**

**The problem:** Though online, off-site usage of library resources remains constant, there is a decline in on-site use of library resources (databases, monographs, reference assistance, research computers, study space, etc.) in my hypothetical medium-sized academic library. We already have a successful library one-shot instruction program, and though efforts have been made, embedded librarians, required information literacy courses, and a first-year experience program are not currently an option.

**The research question:** Other than using library instruction methods, how do we get undergraduate students into the library and how do we get them to use library resources once there?

**Note:** The generation that encompasses current traditional college-age students is called many names: Net Generation (Net Gen for short), Generation Y, Millennials, Echo Boom Generation, or even the Nintendo Generation. Regardless of the specific birth years various sources define as its limits (generally around 1980 through the mid-1990s), this is the generation in which individuals have grown up in a world saturated with technology and the internet. In creating this annotated bibliography, I have used the term each author chose to use for their respective articles. For my literature review, I will use Net Generation throughout for consistency.

### **Annotated Bibliography:**

Becker, C. H., Jr. (2009). Student values and research: Are Millennials really changing the future of reference and research? *Journal of Library Administration*, 49(4), 341-364. Retrieved from Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database.

Charles Becker, Jr., the director of a community college library, takes a different and refreshing stance from most authors writing on the subject of Millennials in the academic library. He argues convincingly that the uniqueness of the new generation of college students is overemphasized, as many Millennial traits are in fact seen in other generations as well, including consumerism, a sense of entitlement, and a desire for experiential learning. He asserts that the idea of Millennials as digital natives is a “dangerous myth” because the computer and internet skills of most individuals of this generation is useful primarily for entertainment purposes and does not translate into “academic or real-world skills” (pp. 350, 361). Most librarians will relate to this assessment of the reality of the digital native. Lastly, Becker argues that an academic library’s competitive edge in a consumer culture is its customer service, not its product, which is not necessarily inherently valued by college students. After reading other articles on the subject, this article brings the reader back to the reality that assumptions made about members of a generation and emphasizing differences between generations can be problematic. For my research, it is essential for arguing that librarians looking to reach out to Millennials with library services must assess the needs of their particular students rather than relying on generational descriptions.

Boule, M. (2009). Drawing first-year students: Seven inventive programs attract newcomers on campus. *Library Journal*, 134(18), 24-25. Retrieved from Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database.

Michelle Boule, a librarian recognized by Library Journal as a “Mover and Shaker” in 2008, briefly describes what seven academic libraries are doing to break the ice with new students. Programs highlighted include creating an Amazing Race style library game, circulating Kindles and iPods, and using Twitter to keep in touch and offer

reference help. The article is meant to inform the reader of activities undertaken at other libraries with the intent of inspiring the reader to employ similar programs. It is excellent at not only providing a handful of ideas, but also clearly describing the resources involved in each. For my research, it will be especially helpful for understanding what libraries are doing and generating a list of program ideas for my poster session.

Gardner, S., & Eng, S. (2005). What students want: Generation Y and the changing function of the academic library. *Portal*, 5(3), 405-420. Retrieved from Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database.

Susan Gardner and Susanna Eng, librarians at a large university library, use the results of a survey they implemented at their library to explore whether their Generation Y students possessed the traits commonly attributed to that generation, how those traits manifest themselves in expectations for library service, and the implications of those expectations for libraries. They specifically looked at the extent to which students held high service expectations, desired customization, were comfortable with technology, and used new modes of communication. Their findings are in line with the findings of similar studies and the accepted traits of Generation Y students. Though the 2003 survey is a little older than is ideal for incoming freshmen in 2010, it is still highly relevant as a case study. As the authors make very clear, the small localized sample of the study prevents greater claims about college-aged people as a whole, thereby communicating the need for libraries to their own surveys locally. Gardner and Eng's article is perfect for assisting librarians in doing just that, as they can use this survey and process as a starting point. This well-developed article will be central to my research as it demonstrates a way to go about determining student needs and wants, as well as offering ideas for meeting the needs of today's college students.

Ismail, L. (2010). What Net Generation students really want: Determining library help-seeking preferences of undergraduates. *Reference Services Review*, 38(1), 10-27. Retrieved from Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database.

Lizah Ismail, a public services librarian at a small university, relates the experiences of her library in implementing services prior to determining local needs, administering a survey to identify future services to pursue, and the results of that survey. Though some of the results are in line with other research, others contradicted the Net Generation profile, namely the students' negative response to receiving research assistance via Facebook, MySpace, and IM/chat. The author concludes that it is essential for libraries to determine the needs of local students rather than designing programs and services based on the general Net Generation profile. Though the responses to the survey were so low as to prevent conclusions of any kind – not even for the author's university – the survey itself, the process the author used, and the lessons learned from the process will be helpful for librarians needing to conduct surveys as part of a needs assessment for their Net Generation students. Unfortunately, the article as a whole and the author's primary argument is underdeveloped, leaving the reading wanting more. Regardless, taken along with other similar articles, this piece is useful for my research because it emphasizes the need to assess the needs of local students prior to embarking on any new plan aimed at increasing library use. It also suggests a couple ideas programs libraries can use that may increase library use which I can incorporate into my poster session.

Johnson, R. D. (2009). If at first you don't succeed... Creative transformation at a small academic college. *Technical Services Quarterly*, 26(2), 107-124. Retrieved from Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database.

Rita Dursi Johnson, a director of a small liberal arts college library, does an excellent job explaining what not to do when considering making changes in order to increase student library use – that is, rushing to make changes based on what you think students need without checking with them first. Readers learn that before implementing ideas, it is essential to do some sort of formal needs assessment, conduct a literature review, and ensure collection of adequate and relevant statistics. In addition, her article

provides a number of simple, low cost ideas that effectively increased usage at her library that may have a similar effect at other libraries. Johnson goes into enough detail about both their unsuccessful and successful attempts that librarians interested in implementing similar measures may see what worked at this library, what it cost, and what it entailed. However, readers may find some of the ideas to be too simplistic and may want to read elsewhere for more creative or bold ideas. This article will be useful in my project, both for the literature review and in describing best practices on my poster.

Prescott, M. K., & Veldof, J. R. (2010). A process approach to defining services for undergraduates. *Portal, 10*(1), 29-56. Retrieved from Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database.

Melissa Kalpin Prescott and Jerilyn Veldof, reference services coordinator and director of Coordinated Educational Services at a large university library, guide the reader through their library's extensive and ultimately successful process for determining and implementing programs and services targeted to their undergraduates' needs. That process includes assessing needs; analyzing data; determining core themes; brainstorming and evaluating possible initiatives; gathering feedback; seeking funds; and implementing new programs and services. The authors argue that such a process involving the assessment of needs and "translating these needs into tangible strategic initiatives" is necessary for responding effectively to the changing needs and expectations of students (p. 29). This article is essential reading for any librarian considering implementing programs and services aimed at increasing undergraduate use of the academic library because it not only emphasizes the importance of needs assessment and a careful program selection process, but clearly spells out a successful process. It is central to my research for these reasons as well as the variety of program and service ideas it presents.

Walker, S. (2006). Academic library services for the Millennial generation. *Georgia Library Quarterly*, 43(2), 8-12. Retrieved from Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database.

Shaundra Walker, an Instruction and Reference Librarian at a university library, offers a profile of the Millennial generation and explains how some of their generational traits translate into library needs. Highlighted connections are related to collaborative learning, orientation toward results, expectation of instant access to information, multi-tasking, and consumer behavior. Though she acknowledges a need for libraries to tailor services and resources to meet the unique needs of Millennials, she fails to offer much in the way of innovative or creative ideas. Regardless of this weakness, the article is still useful for my research as it places the Millennial student into the academic library context and provides a framework for brainstorming ideas for services.

Wasielewski, A. (2009). The huge hubbub: Freshman orientation fun at the library. *College & Research Libraries News*, 70(7), 394-396. Retrieved from Library Literature and Information Science Full Text database.

Reference and Instruction Librarian Alice Wasielewski describes a successful annual freshmen orientation extravaganza at the University of Kentucky library in detail in this article. She outlines the library's goals and processes for the project, challenges faced, attractions and activities offered at the event, an evaluation of its success, and advice for libraries wishing to do a similar event. Many of the activities and attractions mentioned as part of this event could be used for other events or as stand-alone events to draw attention to the library and increase perception of the library as a fun place. The author makes several assertions of success but provides no evidence beyond anecdotal impressions to substantiate her claims. Turn-out for a fun event does not necessarily mean students will return to the library for academic purposes. Regardless of this weakness, the article is useful for my research as it offers an idea for increasing student use that may work for some libraries.