

Bridging the Gap: Boomer Librarians Lure Millennial Students to the Library

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Abstract:

Old dogs can learn new tricks and industrious baby boomer librarians can bridge the generation gap with the just-in-time millennial students who form the new wave crashing upon the ancient rock of the library. And millennial students are finding the library is the place to be, as did their parents before them. The library of the Curtin University of Technology has been busy bridging the gap by adapting traditional services to new technology, creating new services out of new technologies and transforming the physical place of the library into a comfortable blend of the real and the virtual.

Recent innovative changes illustrate the library response to the preferences of the so called millennial student and demonstrate the meshing of technology and the physical space of the library. The ground breaking SMS enquiry service, where students can ask anything via SMS and receive cogent replies in real time, is now in its third year. The online reference service has evolved into a heavily used versatile real time chat facility that makes library staff accessible from all parts of a large library building, breaking the barrier of a physical service point, and where students can summon in-person help when required. Web delivered resources have been reviewed and tailored to suit hand held devices. The student portal provides a seamless entry point into all library authenticated services and a single click to interactive review of loans, recall and fines. Pod casts provide library information and information literacy in bite sized grabs for the time shifting student. The library lounge offers a modern, comfortable physical space where food, drink, computing and study can be combined. Ubiquitous wireless networking allows versatile use of personal devices throughout the building. Student access to the wired network offers high speed internet access and power points for student laptops. Library Blogs deliver syndicated information while providing mechanisms for closing the loop.

And while students can do most of this from the comfort of their own broad banded bedrooms they also choose, in large numbers, to immerse themselves in the university experience in the context of a modern library. The busy millennial students can flock with their class mates in re-furnished group study rooms, lounge on plush couches watching World News and eating hot chips, have remote discourse with librarians and do so with their device of choice – large or small, wired or wireless. They can check their loans with a single click while checking their email and entering their tutorial chat room, or glide seamlessly from study plan to full text library resources.

The library is the place to be courtesy of an aging but energetic profession who are not ready to make way yet.