

# The generation Z connection: teaching information literacy to the newest net generation.

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Article Excerpt

YOUTHS BORN IN OR AFTER 1990 ARE MEMBERS OF THE NEWEST NET GENERATION, DEFINED IN THIS ARTICLE AS GENERATION Z. THESE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE UNIQUE BECAUSE THEIR BIRTH COINCIDES WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GRAPHICAL WEB THAT RESEMBLES THE INTERNET OF TODAY. THESE ADOLESCENTS ARE AMATEUR INTERNET SEARCHERS LACKING SKILLS IN EVALUATING WEB CONTENT AND USING RESOURCES OTHER THAN POPULAR INTERNET SEARCH TOOLS SUCH AS GOOGLE. THE INTERNET CAN BE THE PERFECT MEDIUM TO INTRODUCE AND DEVELOP INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS BECAUSE THESE YOUNGSTERS WILL BE RECEPTIVE TO ANY SORT OF INSTRUCTION THAT MAKES THEM APPEAR WEB SAVVIER. IDEAS AND STRATEGIES ARE OFFERED HEREIN TO UPDATE BOTH INSTRUCTION AND LIBRARY SERVICE USING THE INTERNET AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL AID.

According the Encarta World English Dictionary, Generation Y is defined as people born in or after 1980. Although Generation Z is not yet defined in the dictionary, the term is sometimes used to describe the already-existing net generation of teenagers born in or after 1990 in technologically advanced countries. Today's Generation Z currently comprises 14-year-olds or those approaching their early teens; these youths were born into a totally different technological world than what their immediate predecessors were, Generation Y. In fact, the Generation Z birth years closely correspond to the conception and birth of the World Wide Web. Tim Berners-Lee created this system of hyperlinks in 1990 and officially introduced this new way or web browsing in 1991. A critical milestone in improved web browsing came in 1993 with the introduction or the Mosaic Web Browser, the first graphical web browser. Mosaic generated huge interest in the Internet because web users could visualize how they were traversing the Web. These initial digital events in the early 1990s triggered an entire technological revolution and are key factors in understanding how this generation's development to adolescence has been affected since birth.

## WHY IS THIS GENERATION SPECIAL IN TODAY'S WORLD?

These youths are the first generation to be born into a digital world. What distinguishes these adolescents from those of every other generation is that they are the most electronically connected generation in history. From infancy, these teenagers grew up in an environment surrounded by and using

\* graphical web browsers;

- \* laptops;
- \* cell phones;
- \* instant messenger services;
- \* broadband;
- \* wireless;
- \* video games.

These adolescents have been exposed to many high-tech influences, and today's high-speed digital devices enable them to always be connected to the Internet, their friends, and others. This connectivity permits teens to communicate and collaborate in real-time regardless of physical location; to access a wealth of diverse information, including vast digital collections; and to author or contribute content instantaneously to web sites and weblogs.

These teens will more likely than any previous generation evolve into electronic multitaskers. For example, they will seek information by simultaneously

- \* searching and using several Internet browser windows at the same computer;
- \* using several different software applications at the same computer;
- \* using two computers at the same time, such as computer workstations and laptops;...