what works with the Google generation?

"The Google Generation Study" of the British Library (formal title, "Information Behavior of the Researcher of the Future: A Cyber Briefing Paper, 11 January 2008") can be found at www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/reppres/gg_final_keynote_11012008.pdf (publicized by the Joint Information Systems Committee at www.jisc.ac.uk, with a podcast about the study at www.jisc.ac.uk/media/avfiles/news/interviews/podcast26google generation.mp3).

The researchers looked at studies done about young people from the 1980s to the present to see if there were differences between Generation X, Y, and the current "Google" generation. The studies were categorized by quality so that the confidence level in their conclusions range from very high to high, medium, or low. They also took into account adult information behavior as it compares to the young and the impact this whole new world has upon libraries and librarians. Their conclusions include:

- Digital formats have gained wide acceptance over traditional formats.
- Skills in social networking and Web 2.0 are widespread.
- The Google generation uses "bouncing" behaviors, they scan across information sources with seeming disregard for authority. They spend little time on a particular source and may not read anything in depth.
- Libraries seem to be bypassed by users who use Google and other social networking tools to find information instantly and at any time.
- Just because students can use the various Internet tools does not mean they are sophisticated users.
- It is more and more difficult in the age of self-publishing to judge expertise from amateur content.
- As adults learn the new technologies, they behave much like the young do in information space.
- Information literacy skills of students entering college are not nearly as high as they should be.

Their conclusions and implications for teacher-librarians include:

- Teacher-librarians should be sophisticated users of digital information and Web 2.0 technologies so they can mentor both students and adults in this complex information world.
- Teacher-librarians should welcome the creation of amateur content but continue to concentrate their teaching on discerning quality information and expertise in digital space.
- Collection development needs to be influenced by the habits of the users as much as what formats adults think the students/teachers should be using or on "traditional formats," whatever those might be. Access 24/7/365 should be measured against physical objects available only during the school day or to only one user at a time for overnight usage. The question is "What can I invest in that gets the highest usage figures, and with impact will that have on products created?"
- Teacher-librarians should create library digital access sites that are based on how students search rather than on organizational perspectives. "If you build it, they will come" is no longer a sufficient argument for having a library web site.
- Experiment as teacher-librarians with methods and systems that actually compete with Google for time and attention. Williams and Loertscher (2007) have created one system. Others need to be developed and tested for their influence on user behavior over time.

REFERENCE

Williams, R. T., & Loertscher, D. (2007). *In command! Kids and teens build and manage their own information spaces, and . . . learn to manage themselves in those spaces.* San Jose, CA: Hi Willow Research and Publishing.