Age Diversity in the Library: Maximizing Our Multi-Generational Workforce

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Warning!

On generalizations: Think in terms of generational trends, not stereotypes

On age diversity vs. generational diversity: Characteristics that reflect stage of life vs. generation

What is a generation?

A generation is...

A group of people born within a specific date range, having a worldview formed from shared experiences of defining events and trends.
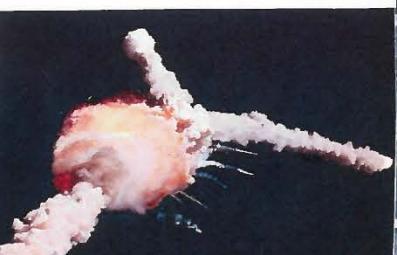
Baby Boomers

Born 1945-1964

Other names:
Me Generation,
Generation Jones

Influences:
Vietnam War
Civil Rights
Kennedy Assassination
Moon Landing
Sexual Revolution
Single-Income Family
Transistor Radio
Television

Generation X

Born 1965-1980

Other names:
Xers, Baby Busters, Post
Boomers

Influences:
Iranian Hostage Crisis
Cold War Ends
AIDS epidemic
Dual-Income Household
MTV
VCR
Pagers
First Cell Phones

Millennials

Born 1981-1997

Other names:
Gen Y, Gen Next,
Chief Friendship Officers

Influences:
9/11
School Shootings
.com Crash
Social Media
Helicopter Parents
Smart Phones
Laptops & Tablets
Digital Music

Generation Z

Born 1998-2010

Other names:
Post-millennials, Digital
Gen

Influences:
Great Recession
Trump Election
Increasingly Multicultural
Virtual Reality
Better, faster, smaller
technology
Same-Sex Marriage Legal
???

Generational Makeup of the US

As of December 2015
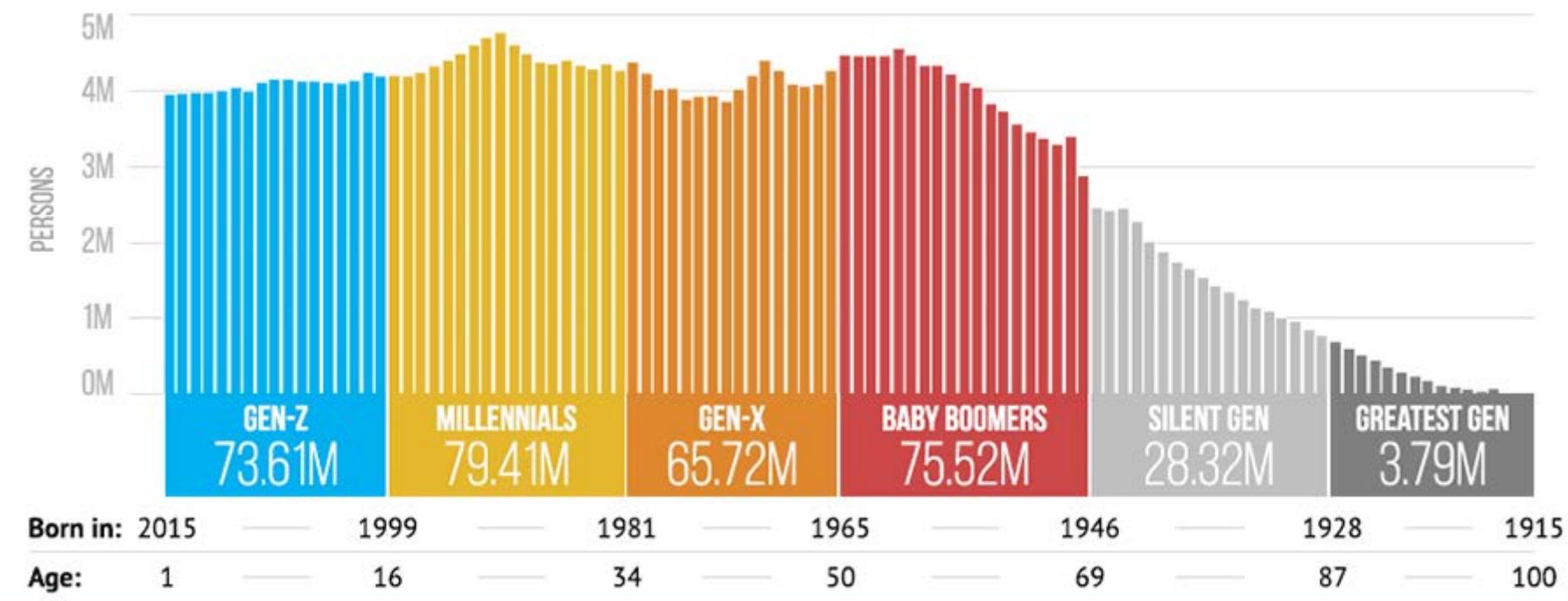
Generational Makeup of Library Workers
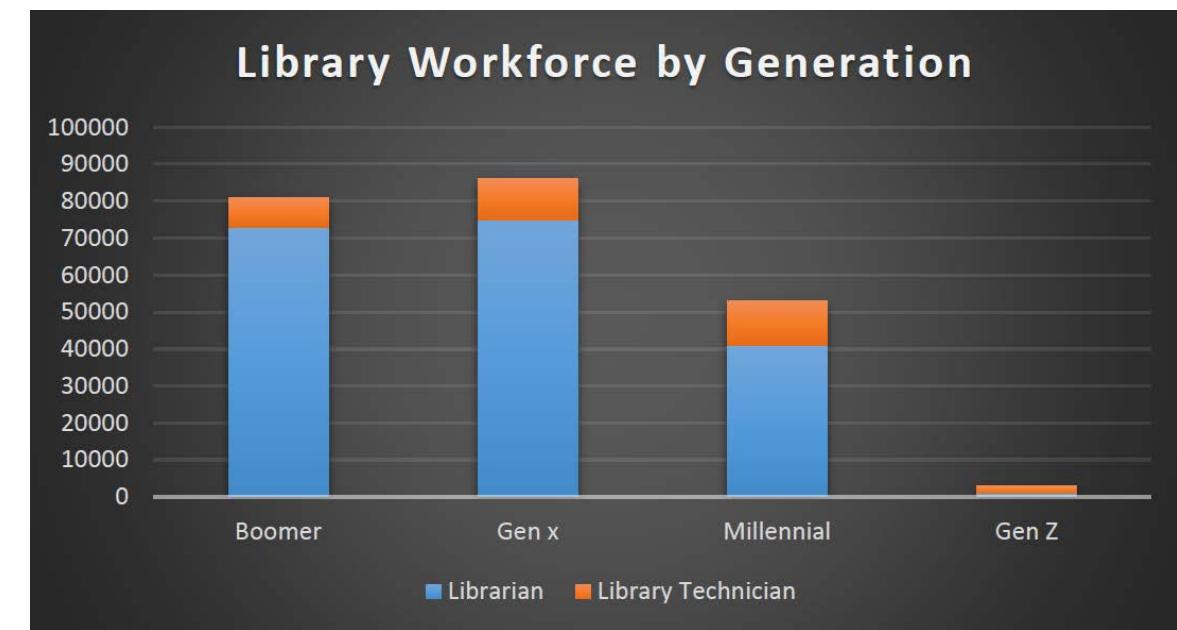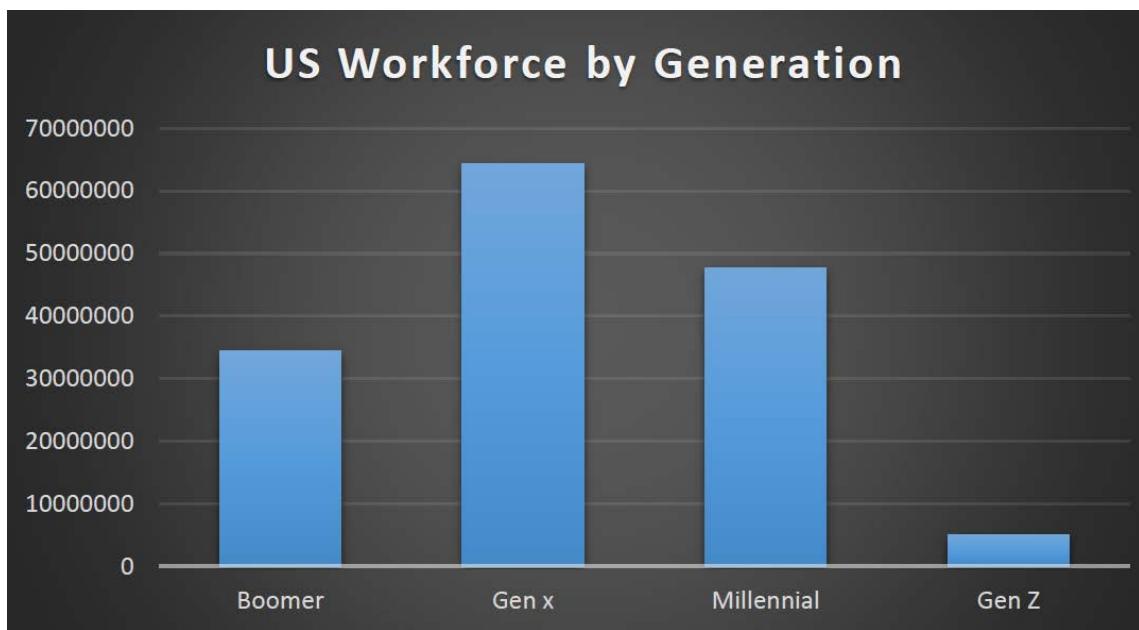
What's your library like?

The Generations at Work

Boomers

Work View

A Lifelong Quest
Careers Matter

Assets

Service Oriented
Team Perspective
Experience

Millennials

Work View

Make a
difference

Assets

Optimistic
Tech Savvy
Multi-Tasker

Gen X

Work View

An Employment
Contract

Assets

Adaptability
Independence
Creativity

Gen Z

Work View

A Passion

Assets

Determined
Open-minded
Problem solver
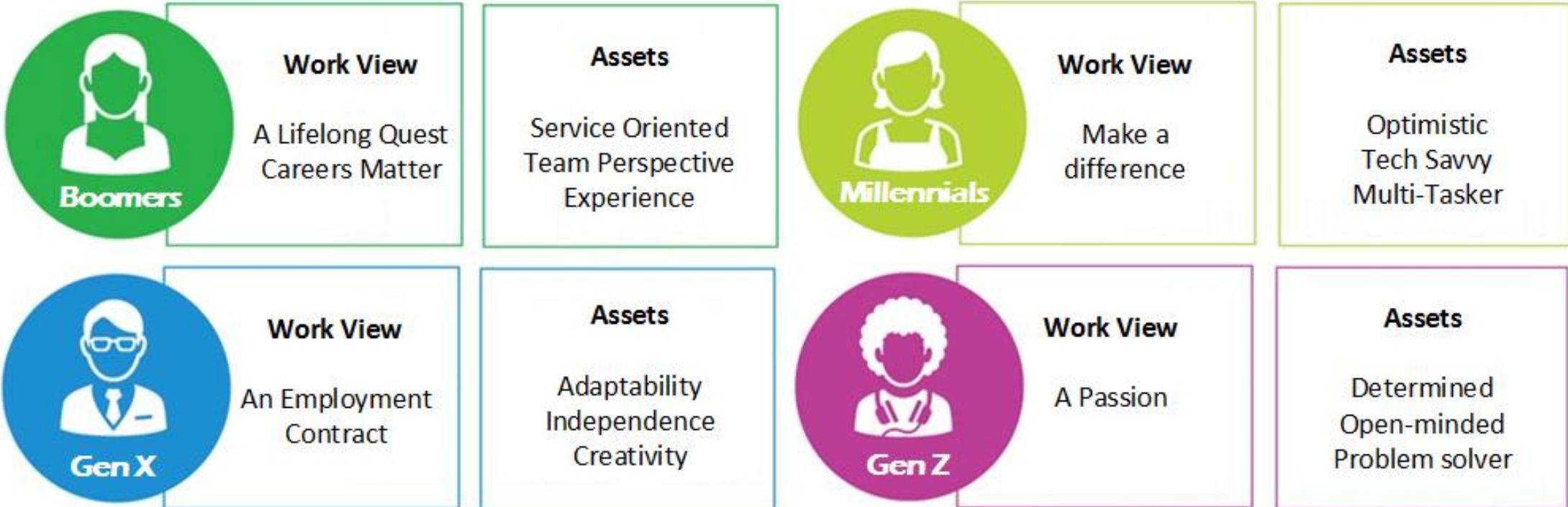
The Big Divides

- Preferred leadership style
- Time at work
- Teamwork/collaboration
- Technology and Communication
- Rewards and recognition

Preferred Leadership Style

Boomers: Chain and Change of Command

Gen X: Self-Command

Millennials: Don't Command, Collaborate!

Gen Z: Comrades and Commanders

Time at Work and Work Philosophy

Boomers: Work/Life Imbalance: Live to Work

Generation X: Work/Life Balance: Work to Live

Millennials: Work/Life Blended: Work is Fun

Gen Z: Work for a Purpose: Work is a Passion

Technology

Boomers: Adapted, technology as a tool

Gen X: Assimilated new technology

Millennials: Technology is integral

Gen Z: Interactive technology

Rewards and Recognition

Boomers: Appreciation, valued work, promotion

Gen X: Results-driven, free time

Millennials: Praise and feedback, pay raise

Gen Z: Problem-solving, participatory leadership

What do you think the generations can learn from one another?

What do you think are potential points of conflict or misunderstanding?

How to Maximize Your Multi-Generational Workplace

Assess: Is your workplace cross-generationally friendly?

Check: What is the generational makeup of your workplace?

More Ideas

- HR Practices: Equality, Support, Options
- Training on Multigenerational Diversity
- Succession Planning
- Reciprocal Mentoring
- Build multi-generational teams
- Mix it up, get together, have fun!

Sources and Further Reading

Available on conference website

TL;DR: see AARP's "Leading a Multigenerational Workforce"

http://bit.do/multigenAARP
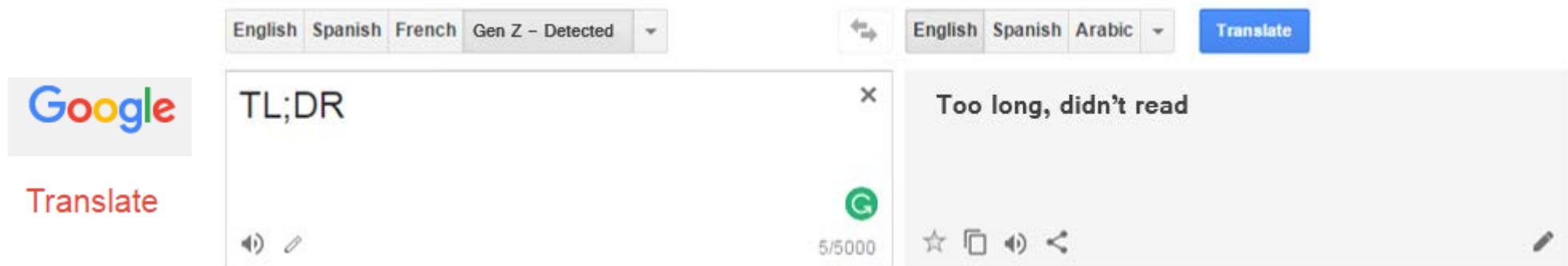
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How Cross-Generationally Friendly is Your Library?

Mark the statements that are true for your library:

___ There's not just one type of person who's successful here.

___ When we put a team of committee together, we consciously include a variety of perspectives.

___ We treat our employees like our patrons.

___ We communicate about different viewpoints, often with humor.

___ We talk openly about what we want from our jobs and what works best, such as workload, schedule, and policies.

___ Policies and decision-making is based on what our employees and patrons want, with a minimum of red tape.

___ Our workplace is relaxed and informal; we have fun here.

___ The people who work here see the big picture along with specific goals and measures, and feel free to find their own best way of reaching them.

___ Management is known for being straight-forward and adaptable in their leadership style.

___ We expect the best from everyone here, and we treat them as if they have great things to offer and are motivated to do their best.

___ Retention is an important focus.

___ Our work assignments are broad, providing a variety and challenge, and allow each employee to develop a range of skills.

Analyze the statements that you did not check to identify areas in which your library might improve. Even if you have checked the majority of the statements, there still may be areas worth looking at and changing.

Adapted from: Zemke, R., Filipczak, B., Raines, C. (2013). Generations at work: managing the clash of Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers in the workplace. New York: AMACOM.