

Thoughts from the State Librarian

by Christie Brandau, State Librarian



The library world recently got some pretty encouraging news from a [Pew Internet & American Life survey and report](#) documenting that members of Generation Y (age 18-29) are leading the pack in using libraries! In the report summary, it states that “the survey results challenge the assumption that libraries are losing relevance in the Internet age. Libraries drew visits by more than half of Americans (53%) in the past year for all kinds of purposes. Young adults in Generation Y (age 18-29) are the heaviest users of libraries...and the most likely library visitors for any purpose.”

The report goes on to say that most Generation Y members who visit libraries for “problem-solving information” are very satisfied with what they find and they appreciate the resources available there, especially access to computers and the Internet.

An interesting complement to the Pew study is a [recent IMLS-funded study done by the Idaho State Library](#) on the perception of libraries by “digital natives,” this time ages 12 to 25.

This group of young people place a high value on learning and education, but in general believe that libraries are “for young children and older adults” and think of libraries as “an old-fashioned and cumbersome way to get information.” They think a bookstore is a good place to hang out with friends – but not a library! A few of the suggestions offered for making the library more appealing to digital natives include:

- Make library service convenient; searching the Internet for information is easier and faster than heading to the library;
- Offer a range of services, activities and environments;
- Advertise programs and services;
- Involve the community when designing programs and events, not just people who currently use the library.

Both studies support what front line library staff have been saying: more people are coming to the library! But in order to keep that trend going, we need to listen to what our community – including young people – want and need from the library.

Best,

Christie Brandau

