**Digital Resources Paper: Social Media and Teen Behavior**

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Introduction

Teens are the future patrons of libraries the habits that they develop often continue on through adulthood. There is no doubt that current teenagers are more connected to technology than teenagers or the past. If public libraries are to remain viable, they must do better when it comes to serving teens. This assignment is to be a stepping stone to quantify the habits of teenagers focusing specifically on the use of technology and digital resources with the ultimate goal that a better understanding will help public libraries service the population for many generations to come.

When observing teens in a mall or other social setting, I expect them to pair into couples or larger single gender groups with their smart phones out constantly texting or utilizing their devices to game. The modern era has often been remarked as the information age. With so much information, it is a challenge to organize this often-contradictory bounty. To do this one must pick out truthful content from credible sources. Teens will likely be less discerning about the quality of their information. When thinking of teenagers using digital resources in their research for academics, many would think to go to Wikipedia for there answers. This assignment is written with the premise that most teenagers regularly use Wikipedia and do not corroborate said research from other sources. The assignment was conducted based on the premise that teens spend a significant amount of their social time on Facebook. Teens of the current generation consume more digital resources than teens of past generations. This assignment hopes to clarify the amount of technology that teens consume and whether the stereotypes that such technological use engender are warranted.

Interview/Observations

The response to types of digital resources used in academics did not match. What the author had intended as resources where scholarly journals or recognized sources of expertise or journalism such as the *New York Times*. Instead Google and Wikipedia were the responses. Google—while a critical tool—is a way to find resources, but this paper did not initially categorize the search engine as an academic resource as the search results that the Google search engine retrieves commonly include recommendations of dubious credibility. Upon reflection of responses this assignment has learned to accept Google as a resource used to find other resources. For using digital resources in everyday life, there were two responses. The first was a negative response. The second response was YouTube. While YouTube was an expected outcome, the negative response indicates that the question was not well worded. The most surprising result was that the youngest teens ages 15 and 16 did not use Facebook. These two girls were interviewed together and had identical responses. Peer pressure brings into question the validity of these responses, but even one negative on how much time they spent of Facebook was unexpected.

During my main observation session, eating and walking up and down the Fashion Fair Mall (Fresno, CA), I noticed that most teens were well behaved and while they may be well connected from a social standpoint, I noticed that I rarely saw them making phone calls or texting. Teens may be well connected to technology. Teens may be very social creatures, but they do not rely on technology solely to maintain those social connections. They still treasure face-to-face contact.

Literature Review

Most of the books concerning Teens and Digital Resources are done with published with the l librarian and educators as the intended audience. Recommended reading on this subject must include *Young Adult Resources Today: Connecting Teens with Books. Music, Games, Movies,* by Don Latham and Melissa Gross (2014). This book provides a discussion on how to promote literacy in teenagers by appealing to their interest not only in books, but music, movies, and other forms of media.

Perhaps more relevant than books are academic articles found in journals. Articles have the capability to be more current as well as more specialized in the topics that they discussed. Of interest to subject of teens and their use of digital resources is “Teen and Tech: What the Research Says” by Kathryn Zickhuhr (2014). This article discusses teens in context of them as users of technology and particularly the Internet. It highlights how teens reliance on Google has teachers concerned about the quality of those results. The article discusses the two broad approaches teachers use to combat this. They either improve the quality of their research by restricting the students to specific quality resources or by emphasizing that some online resources are better than others—going as far as to suggest that’s students take a look at resources with dubious standing a letting them figure out that these sources should not be used in their schoolwork.

The state of literature discussing teens and their use of digital resources is adequate, there is plenty of recently published articles and a good number of recently published books available discussing the topic, the only downside is the lack of information on teen’s consumption of digital resources and the social and economic consequences in relation to adulthood.

Discussion about Trends In Digital Resources Used by Older Teens

Teens continue to be well connected to the Internet and all of the digital resources it provides. Mobile devices continue to play a prominent method in which areas to access these resources of which 94% of teens use mobile devices to access the Internet. (Armitage, 2015)

While Facebook’s use continues to remain prominent for teens of all ages, it seems like younger teens are moving away from Facebook to other social resources, such as Instagram.

Hispanics and African-Americans use the Internet more frequently than the Caucasian counterparts. 32% of Hispanics are frequent users of the Internet with 34% of African-Americans using the Internet frequently. This compares with 19% of Caucasians. (Armitage, 2015). This trend is likely to persist in the future if Hispanics and African-American teens are denied access to opportunities as such as music and other extracurricular as has been historically the case. Teenage girls use social media more often than teenage boys. Part of this explanation is that gaming is still a male dominated industry. Among teens 91% of males own a game console while just 70% of females own a game console

Youth from economically-disadvantaged households have less opportunity to access technology than there more wealthy peers. For instance, 46% of teens from households earning less than $50,000 a year have access to a tablet; while 63% of teens belonging to households earning more than $50,000 a year have access to a tablet (Armitage 2015). Often for economically disadvantaged teens, the library is the primary provider of technology. Because of this, it behooves the library community to be knowledgeable of trends of technology consumption in the modern teen.

Conclusion

The representative teen used in the introduction was flawed. The subject of digital resources influenced the expectations in the Digital Resources Paper to think that teens were also connected to technology and always connected to their friends through their technology. The introduction took the stereotypical wired teen and dubbed that as representative of all teens. That is quite the fallacy! If the author had stepped back and just relied on observations before taking this class, the author would have come up with a very different representative teen. That is not to say that there is no truth from the stereotypical teen outlined in the introduction. For instance, 7 out of 10 teens have access to a minimum of three electronic devices (Armitage, 2015). The observations at Fashion Fair Mall depict that teens still enjoy face-to-face in person contact. While teens continue to use Facebook, my interview results show that younger teens may not be as involved with Facebook as much as I thought. The trends show that the amount of information teens must navigate through is not receding. Through the interview teens are having difficulty choosing acceptable quality resources. Librarians will be needed to help teens navigate the abundance of information and discerning between quality information and information of dubious truthfulness or of biased origin.

References

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is your age?

2. What grade will be in this coming fall?

3. Are you homeschooled?

4. How much time do you spend on the Internet?

5. How much time do you spend on Facebook?

6. Do you have an iPad or tablet?

7. Do you have a smartphone?

8. Have you ever used electronic or online resources in academics?

If yes…

Can you recall what resources you used?

9. Have you ever referenced electronic or online resources during the course of your everyday life?

If yes..

How often?

If yes..

Can you give an example of what resources you used?

10. Do you cite Wikipedia in your reports or research paper?

11. Do you use Wikipedia during the course of your research?

12. Did you include information from Wikipedia from your research without confirming it from other sources?

Appendix B

Journal of Observations

Location: Fashion Fair Mall

Date: July 26, 2015

Time: 5:36-7:19

Observations: At 5:36, Friday June 26, 2015; I arrived at Fashion Fair Mall in Fresno, California. It is one of two universal hangouts for teens and young adults in the city of Fresno (the other being River Park shopping center on the northern border of the city. I come with only my clipboard my interview questions and the lined binder paper for notes. As I walked in a pair of medium-aged Hispanic teens—a young teen boy and young teen girl—walked out of the mall. Pop music drifts from the speakers at the mall entrance. The boy does the robot dance with his elbows at 90 degrees as he crosses the sidewalk to the parking lot. His back is straight though he bends at the hips. His arms jerk at his side forward and backwards. Despite the jerkiness of his motions, there is a certain amount of elegance in is dance as his movements are synchronized with the music. The teen girl giggles and rewards the teen boy with a smile.

I enter the mall. I browse around the food court and observe many families and several working couples at the table. There is a young manager from Tilly’s (as identified by his shirt) interviewing what seems to be an older teen probably on a workers permit—he looks too young to be in college—for summer employment. The teens present in the food court fall largely into two groups: Couples of older teens and teens with their family. The teens with their families are younger, middle, and older teens with either one or two parent—often accompanied with younger siblings. When it comes to a single parent leading their child or children, the guardian is more often the mother than the father although both such groupings are observed. In the midst of observing the people in the food court, I am also observing the prices of the food court. Two restaurants are giving free samples. One of them is Charley’s Philly Steaks the other is a generic Japanese restaurant. One word to describe my diet would be: frugal. I eat at home and when I work I bring lunch from home. Due to this assignment, I will “treat” myself with a restaurant meal. I spy from Charley’s Philly Steaks a deal a free small order of fries with the purchase of a chicken Philly steak. Fries are a necessity for my observations at the food court. I add a drink to my order and pay at 5:47pm. It costs nine dollars and change—nearly twice what I would normally spend for a meal. While I am waiting on my food I observe that children older than six and teens always accept the free sample, while some adults may steer clear of the free samples. I think that this could be a minor demonstration of entitlement of children and teens versus the adults which have been. I get my food a sit at the nearest table with my back at the restaurant so that I can have the whole view of the food court at 5:50.

The *chicken* Philly steak sandwich tastes like a *steak* Philly steak sandwiches. With the amount of mayonnaise-based sauce I would be hard pressed to guess that this was a chicken sandwich on taste alone. At 5:52, a family with a teen enters the food court. This family consists of a mother, a father, a teen boy, and a five-year-old boy. The mother is wearing a white tang top. The mother is wearing a white tank top. The father is wearing a t-shirt. The kid is wearing a Nike tank top and matching, red running shorts. The teen is wearing a blue Hurley shirt with khaki shorts his hair is short. The Hurley teen is the only one to wear sunglasses into the food court. The parents and the Hurley teen confer. They split up. The father and Hurley teen go to browse a few restaurants. Nike kid runs toward the play area for children 42 inches or shorter. The play area is named Fashion Fair Forest. The mother follows Nike kid into the restaurant. I notice that Hurley teen has removed his sunglasses and that his sunglasses are hanging along the front call with one arm his pair of glasses hanging inside his shirt. It looks stylish. Hurley teen and father approach the register and order from Charley’s Philly Steaks. At 5:58, Hurley teen and father are waiting for food when they are interrupted by Nike kid. Hurley teen scoops up Nike tip flips 360 degrees and then proceeds to carry him to the table where their mother is waiting. I am impressed by the practiced ease, gentleness, and playfulness this entire action takes. Hurley teen is a responsible older brother. The father follows with the drinks. I am disappointed that their table is obstructed by a structural support. I do spy through a clear glass a lemonade as one of the drinks ordered. I take this as a sign that the family is not living as frugally as I am. At 6:01, the father brings food to the table. At 6:04, I decide to shift my position so that I can observe Hurley teen and the interactions with his family. I get up to move and discover that this is unnecessary as I see the mother, the father, and the Hurley teen pick up their tray and move to the Fashion Fair Forest. I sit back down.

If one takes time to imaging a restaurant booth and covers all surfaces of the both with a leather cover and elongates the booth until to forms nearly a complete circle, one would get the basic structure of the Fashion Fair Forest. Inside the Fashion Fair Forest are a variety of evenly spaced objects that kids can climb around. The booth benches not only act as a comfortable place for parents to watch their kids they serve as a wall to contain the kids within the play area. There is only one exit. At this exit is a wall of cubbies for children to place their shoes. On the back of the so-called booth seats is a bar lining around one side of the Fashion Fair Forest. This is where the mother, father, and Hurley teen sit. The bar is arranged so that all three can keep a watchful eye on Nike kid as Nike kid plays inside the Fashion Fair Forest.

With the arrangement along the, I can see that Hurley Kid is drinking a soda instead of the lemonade. At 6:05, Nike kid’s head pops over the wall and Hurley teen gives Nike kid a high-five. At 6:06, Hurley teen attempts to feed the kid a French fry. Nike kid elects to pick directly from his mother plate. From my observation, Nike kid elects to play inside Fashion Fair Forest and only occasionally talks to either mother, or father, or Hurley teen and sometimes may even eat a bite of food during these interactions. It is observed that Nike kid favors conversation with Hurley teen, but is more accepting of food from mother. Both Hurley teen and father are observed successfully feeding Nike kid, but they do not feed Nike kid as nearly as much as mother does. The booth benches do an adequate job of containing the chaos; but with a dozen little kids inside the enclosure, it is not uncommon to see a little kid stand on the seat and climb over the back. When Nike kid attempts to do this on side opposite of his family, Hurley teen is the one to get up and retrieve the errant boy.

After Hurley teen halts Nike kid’s escape, Hurley teen then proceeds to get a free refill from Charley’s Philly Steaks. I observe that Harley teen is wearing Vans. I only have a few fries left, but I realize that I want a free refill. I look for a time when Charley’s Philly Steaks has no line, so that I can get a free refill. A free refill significantly improves the value proposition of my meal. While waiting for the opportunity, a young adult wearing a referee shirt comes to purchase a meal. I then remember that Nike employees are dressed as referees. I realize that I have yet to actively catalog employees of the mall as being common sights in the mall’s food court. Charley’s Philly Steaks has no line in front of it. I get my free refill.

When I return to my seat, Hurley teen and is sitting on a booth bench inside Fashion Fair Forest. He is playing with

At 6:33 Nike kid makes a break for the exit of the food court. He is running as fast as his little legs can carry him. Hurley teen catches Nike kid and then scoops him up. Hurley teen carries Nike kid to mother and father and sets him down, When Hurley teen sets Nike kid down, Hurley teen remains slouched over Nike kid with his arms drooping to the bottom. The effect is that it looks like Nike kid is in a cage. Nike kid and Hurley teen have a conversation, from the facial expression of Hurley teen I infer that the conversation is playful. The family then proceeds into the rest of the mall.

I take my drink and clipboard and make a survey of the surroundings. At this point in time I have interviewed two teen volunteers from Leo Politi Library of Fresno County that match the criteria. I have interviewed patrons that I thought were 15-18 years-of-age but they were all either older or younger than the target age. I am looking for additional interviewees. While I can be assertive in an official capacity during the course of my job I am naturally timid and respectful. I am search around the food court for a 15-18 year old teenager not associating with other. All prospective teens are part of a group.

The food court is close to the Macy’s end of the mall. I proceeded toward Macy’s to search for my teen interviewee. I reach Macy’s at 6:50. I turn around catching a glimpse of a makeup artist inside Macy’s whose hot pink hair style matches the stereotype of the insubordinate teen. I proceed to the other end of the mall. The mall corridor goes through JCPenney. To get to the other end of the mall I must walk through JCPenney. As I walk to through JCPenney, two teens girls with stylish tops walked by followed by a much younger boy who I guess to be seven years-of-age. One teen asks the other to do something, I hear the response “as long as we don’t get in trouble.”

At 6:58, I pass by Macy’s Men’s and Children’s. I realize that holding the drink makes it awkward to conduct the interview and I ditch the soda. In front of Macy’s Men’s and Children’s is a small outdoor courtyard surrounded by shops. At, 7:01 I explore the courtyard only to find young kids and their parents. At 7:04, I head inside the mall. At 7:08 I reach the other end of the mall which is anchored by Forever 21. I head back through the mall to my car. At 7:13 I pass by Hurley teen and his family. Hurley teen ducks inside the Pac Sun store while his family waits outside. At 7:17, mall security found me and handed me my name badge (from work). I must have dropped earlier. At 7:19, I exit the mall.

It should be noted that on the way home I stopped by the River Park movie theater and found a pair of teen girls waiting for a movie. I was able to ask them my interview questions at 7:41.