

Title: How Different is Interpretation for College Students (Millennials)?

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Abstract (100 word description)

College students who fit into the “millennials” cohort represent an important group of visitors to interpretive sites yet some interpreters are not familiar with millennials’ characteristics. This article describes a variety of ways that millennials’ view the world with the hope that providing interpreters with such key insights will help them make adjustments to their interpretive offerings and better meet the needs of millennials.

Keywords

communication, critical thinking, hands-on learning, interactive technology, interpretation, millennials, multitasking, technology, texting, college students

INTRODUCTION

College students who fit into the “millennials” cohort (aka Generation Y) represent an important group of visitors to interpretive sites. According to the Pew Research Center (2014), millennials are on track to be the most educated generation ever.

Who are “millennials”? Their cohort represents people who will “come of age” in the new millennium. The Pew Research Center (2014) describes them as born from 1981-1996 and of 18 to 31 years of age. They are more ethnically and racially diverse than prior cohorts. They are liberally minded and are optimistic that they will eventually meet long-term financial goals. They are not as skeptical of the government when compared with their elders and feel that the government should do more to help solve problems. However, about two-thirds are wary of human nature and think you can’t be too careful when interacting with other people. What surprises some people is that millennials rank parenthood and marriage higher than career and financial success. In addition, millennials get along well with their parents and respect elders.

Yet some interpreters are not familiar with millennials’ characteristics. As a result, those interpreters

may find it hard to “target” their interpretive offerings to meet millennials’ needs. This paper will describe a variety of ways that millennials view the world. The aim is to provide interpreters with key insights that could help them make adjustments to their interpretive offerings.

THE WAY MANY MILLENNIALS SEE THE WORLD

Some insights into how millennials view the world are provided below.

To millennials, computers are not technology. Cell phones, portable computers, and the Internet are a normal part of their life just like telephones and television were to earlier cohorts.

Millennials think **the solution to almost every problem can be found on-online.** If millennials have a question, they Google it. If millennials want an opinion, they Facebook it or text it to a friend. About 3 in 4 millennials have created a profile on a social networking site.

Millennials **don’t like to be taught what they can look up** on the Internet.

Texting is a primary form of communication for millennials, not an auxiliary form.

Millennials **express ideas on the Internet** that they would not voice in other settings. In fact, one in five has posted a personal video online (N. Illinois University, 2014).

Millennials believe in **escape buttons.** They don’t like the idea of “no going back,” yet “no going back” is, unfortunately, the rule in most situations in life.

Millennials expect **interactive technology** for learning and if it isn’t present, they’ll go somewhere else to learn.

Millennials are **hurried and impatient.** They have zero tolerance for delays.

Millennials have **shorter attention spans** so they want you to get to the point rather than go on and on (Wendover, 2014).

Millennials believe **reality isn’t necessarily real** because Photoshop can change anything and emails don’t necessarily come from the person who owns the address. “Catfishing” and other “online” realities have taught them that what you see is definitely not always what you get.

Millennials are great **multitaskers.** However, such multitasking may prevent them from getting a deeper understanding of information (Wolpert, 2009).

Millennials like to **work in groups** not in isolation.

Millennials work best when working on **significant/important projects** (projects that they can clearly see are part of the “bigger picture”).

Millennials like **hands-on learning** because doing is more important than knowing. The half-life of information is so short that knowledge isn’t the ultimate goal for millennials. The ultimate goals are results that they can be a part of through their actions.

Millennials expect to be **engaged in their learning** and do not learn as much when put into a passive learning environment.

Millennials believe that **learning more closely resembles Nintendo than logic** because they feel losing is often the fastest way to master a game.

Millennials **filter out media** they find uninteresting. That helps explain why reading for pleasure has declined in young people.

Millennials' **critical thinking skills** have declined. This is at least partially because reading for pleasure has declined among young people (such reading enhances thinking and engages the imagination). Visual media tend to be "real-time" media that don't allow time for reflection, analysis, or imagination (Wolpert, 2009). If millennials get stuck solving a problem, they text someone in charge to get the answer.

Millennials believe **work** is something you fit into life rather than vice versa. While their parents' generation may have come up with the mindset of "working to live, not living to work," millennials have seemingly unanimously adopted it as a defining slogan of their generation.

Millennials are **more upbeat** than older cohorts about America's future.

CONCLUSION

Traditional approaches to interpretation may not address the learning preferences of the "millennial" cohort into which college students land. By learning more about the way millennials view the world, interpreters should have a better chance at designing interpretive offerings that will match the needs of millennials.

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