Creativity & Personalization:
Freshman Orientation for the Millennial Generation

Ann Wheeler and Pam Harris
Swarthmore College
LOEX 2006
Our Research Questions

• Who are the Millennials?

• How do we provide an effective orientation for these students?

• What can we learn from our peer institutions?
Generations in Libraries Today

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Birth Dates</th>
<th>Current Ages</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silents</td>
<td>1925 – 1942</td>
<td>64 – 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1943 – 1960</td>
<td>46 – 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>1982 – 2002</td>
<td>4 – 24</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEARTS in “THE BIG STEP”

LET’S GET MARRIED FIRST

LET’S GET STONED FIRST

LET’S GET TESTED FIRST

LET’S DO NATIONAL SERVICE FIRST

MATURES 1950

BOOMERS 1970

Gen X’rs 1990

Millennial 2010
Who are the Millennials?

• Generation Y, Baby Boomlets, Digital Generation

• Largest generation in history

• Over 80 million entered college in 2000

• Will be entering college until 2020!
Characteristics of the Millennials

- Sheltered
- Self-assured
- Optimistic
- Respectful
- Socially engaged
- Family-oriented
- Ethnically-diverse
- Open-minded

- Academically ambitious
- Collaborative
- Team-oriented
- Multi-taskers
- Communication experts
- Blogging, MySpace, Flikr, IM, cell phones
- Want customization
Jessica

Female
18 years old
STROUDSBURG,
PENNSYLVANIA
United States

Last Login:
5/3/2006

Jessica is in your extended network

Jessica’s Latest Blog Entry [Subscribe to this Blog]

Bon Voyage or should I say Buen Viaje (view more)

Summer time—and the living is easy (view more)

View All Blog Entries

Jessica’s Blubs

About me:
I’m a seventeen year old who lives in Pennsylvania. I love singing and
skiing and school, the 3 S’s, haha. Next fall I will be attending Vassar
College as a freshman and I cannot wait! That’s all folks!

Who I’d like to meet:
Hugh Grant

Jessica’s Friend Space

Jessica has 171 friends.

[Thom...], [christina], [Kristen], [Cornstalk]

Jessica’s Interests

General

sonic

[opposite]

View All of Jessica’s Friends
Millennial Learning Styles

- Visual learners
- Low threshold for boredom or memorization
- Need interactive, customized learning experiences
- Active learning, kinesthetic, hands-on
- “Hypertext” thinkers, not linear thinkers
How do we provide an effective orientation for our students?
What Didn’t Work

• Optional attendance
• Teaching specific resources
• Lack of human interaction
• Info glut
• No articulated goals
• Limited assessment
### Our New Approach

- Set Clear Goals
- Develop a Program for the Millennials
- Assess our Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the most important thing for Freshman to learn?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students said:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1) How to get help, including Reference Desk and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reference Librarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Locations in the library, esp. computer lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Foreign language dictionaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff said:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Using the OPAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) LC system</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Goal 1: Show the personal face of the library

Program Development:

• Positive, friendly first impression

• Staff-guided tours

• Let your personalities show, have fun!
Goal 2: “We’re here to help!”

Program Development:

- Reduce information overload
- Focus on how to get help
- Reference desk and reference librarians
- Handed out “We’re here to help” bookmarks
Goal 3: Location, location, location

Program Development:

• Campus map

• Seven libraries of Swarthmore exhibit

• Finding a book using Library of Congress call numbers

• Computer classroom, Reference desk, Reserves desk, DVDs and videos
Goal 4: Make it interactive and fun

Program Development:

• Fun reference book examples

• “What is Tripod?” quiz

• Encourage questions and feedback
Win a Free iPod Shuffle
From the Swarthmore College Library!

Answer these three questions for a chance to win.

1. What is your name?

2. What is your email address?

3. What is the most important thing you learned about the library today?
What They Learned

What is the most important thing you learned about the library today?

- Library Catalog / LC Call Numbers: 190
- Library Locations: 113
- How to Get Help / Librarians are friendly: 77
- Other responses: 67

Number of Responses
What can we learn from our peer institutions?

- [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)
- 22 questions sent to instruction librarians at 75 Oberlin Group libraries
- 58% response rate
- About 50% have a library freshman orientation, 50% do not
Similarities of “Very Successful” Orientations

• “Revisionist” planning style

• Mandatory orientation

• Coordinated with other groups on campus

• Included many types of library staff

• Set clear, attainable goals

• Used multiple assessment tools
Goal Statements of “Very Successful” Orientations

- “Have fun, meet some new people, and learn a little about the library.”

- “Spend a fun hour meeting our staff, enjoying delicious refreshments, and learning your way around the IS sites on campus.”

- “Introduce the first-years to the building, the people, and let them have fun.”

- “Introduce all First Year students to the physical space, to show the library homepage and catalog access, and teach how to locate a book with LC classification.”
Putting It All Together: Best Practices

• Collaborate
• Get Staff Involved
• Set Clear Goals
• Address Millennial Learning Styles
• Evaluate Your Program
“That Tripod is NOT a 3-eyed green alien.”

“Librarians are the greatest resource we have. And they are very nice, too.”

“How the Library of Congress system works 😊”

“They like us!”