

**Audience: Millennials - Growing Up in a Digital Environment**

**Chaired by Erin McDonagh;**

**Reporter, Jenna Rose**

*Erin introduced herself and some definitions and approaches:*

What is a “Millennial”?

“Millennial” is a term used to denote the demographic cohort born 1980s-1990s. They grew up in the “Digital Age.” Also known as “Generation Y” and the “Net Generation,” this group is often described in the media as coddled and overly dependent on social media.

A study done of students at American colleges in 2007 found:

- 97% had a home computer
- 94% had a cell phone
- 99% used the Internet for research
- 56% owned an MP3 player
- 57% created media content

*Gen Y* is described as

- Tech savvy – driving the creation & development of new technology
- Reliant on Internet search engines to gather research
- Interested in multi-media
- Creators of Internet content
- Multi-taskers or “serial processors”
- Visual communicators e.g. virtual reality, gaming
- Enjoy hybrid media forms i.e. “mashups”
- Emotionally open e.g. Facebook, Twitter, blogging - little fear of displaying personal information
- Prefer to work in teams, favour co-creation (\*This is good for museum professionals because they can involve multiple Gen Ys in co-creating exhibits and programs)

- Prefer typing (\*If you want Gen Ys to provide feedback for your museum, you might be more successful via the Internet.)

*Questions and answers are drawn from two sessions, each with 8-9 participants.*

**Question:** How tapped into social media should museums be?

Erin – There is such a thing as oversaturation. Too much activity can be a drawback i.e. too many Twitter updates, etc.

**Question:** Do “Millennials” want to experience museums in a classical or a new way?

Erin – Millennials distrust classical museum settings, in particular the authoritative voice of the curator. There’s been a lot of discussion regarding the relative merits of Facebook vs. Twitter as ways to engage Millennials. They are both good places to create a character for the content you are trying to get out to the public. Millennials are becoming less social, less face to face. We depend more on media. But that’s not to say that throwing technology at Millennials will get a response. Technology ought to supplement information rather than replace it; for example, an iPhone can complement the presentation of museum objects by providing almost limitless information. Emphasize *layering* of information.

**Question:** How can museums target Millennials?

Use media that complement the museum exhibit and find a way to extend the experience for me after I leave the building. A good museum website might be one way to do this. A blog space where I could write about my experiences might be another.

**Question:** What do Millennials have to offer as co-workers in a museum or gallery?

Erin – We have matured along with the technology. We are able to manipulate media creatively (i.e. mashups). Only 6% of Gen Ys are audio learners, an important statistic for the creation of museum exhibits and programs. We are great at brainstorming and working on teams.

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**Erin McDonagh** is a native of Montreal, Quebec. She has had an avid interest in museums ever since childhood. She is a graduate of Master of Arts program in Public History at Concordia University in Montreal, where she specialized in oral history and public monuments. Since graduating, she has volunteered at Concordia's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, where she trains students and Centre affiliates in the use of media devices and creating digital archives for oral history interviews. Erin has worked in the past with Dorval Museum for Local History and Heritage, and is currently a Project Coordinator with the Quebec Anglophone

Heritage Network, where she is organizing their upcoming conference "Ways of Memory: the Montreal Experience."

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