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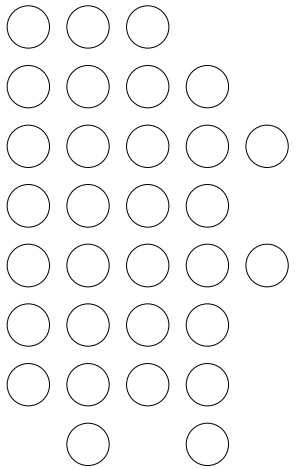
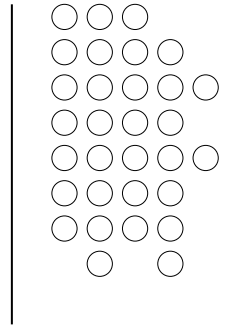
How real is the Google Generation?

David Bawden

City University London

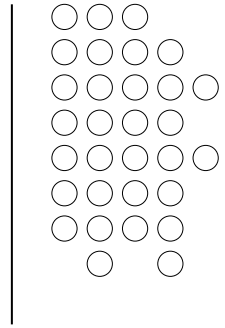


Google generation



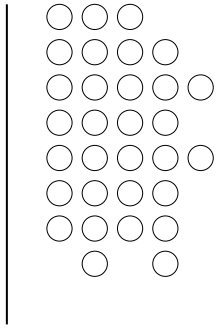
- those born in, or after, 1993
- who have not known a world before the web
- Last in line of ‘generations’: baby boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, etc.

Assumptions



- the Google generation are different
- they love computers
- they hate books (and libraries)
- and many more

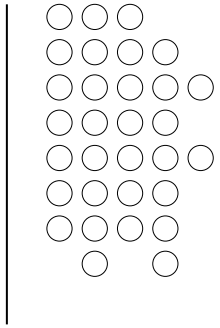
Evidence



- Rather lacking

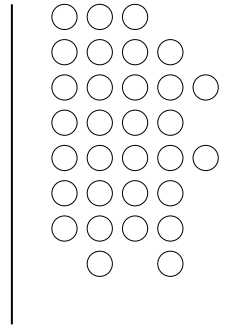
- Few empirical studies
- Lots of anecdote and opinion
- Hardly any evaluation and ‘meta study’
  (University College London - Ian Rowlands)

10 assumptions



- About the Google generation and information
- How justified are they ?
- Summarise evidence (with some personal observation)

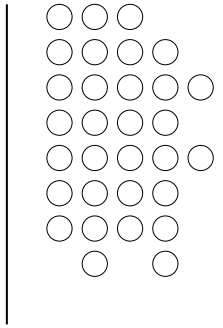
Google generation are different and homogenous



- perceived as different
- but still large differences
  - between individuals
  - between socio-economic groups
  - between countries

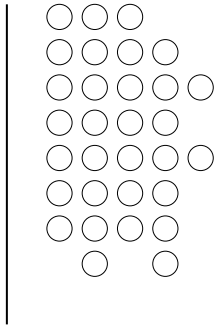
- and many similarity with older groups

Google generation are obsessed by technology



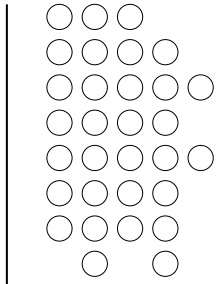
- Not all of them
- Not all the time

Google generation prefer multimedia to text



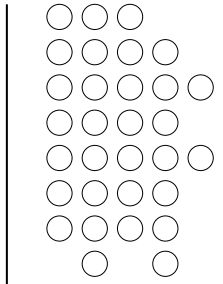
- not all of them
- none of them all the time
- reading more than previous generations
- novelty fades

Google generation demand edutainment and infotainment



- not all of them
- none of them all the time
- novelty fades
- easiest and quickest is best

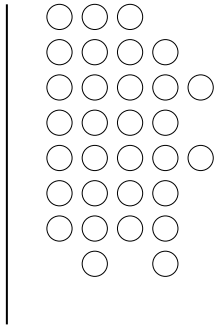
Google generation demands instant information



- yes
- so do most other people
- GG cannot remember a time when this was not the norm

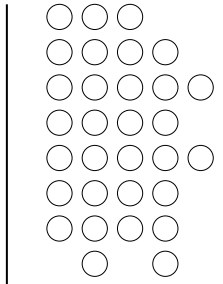
- Maybe ‘slow information’ is the next trend (City University PhD project)

Google generation are skilled with technology



- not really
- some are, most aren’t
- confidence is mistaken for skill

Google generation are good at finding information

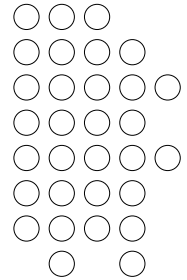


- not so

- they can often find something quickly
- but it may not be what they want
- lack understanding of ‘information world’
- limited judgement and evaluation
- stop at ‘good enough’ without appreciation what ‘better’ might be

  (like the rest of us ?)

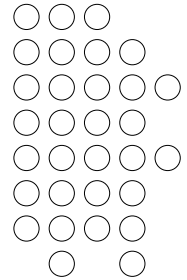
Google generation wants only digital communication



- true, to a large extent

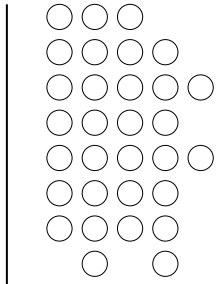
- but this may reflect cost (free texts) and convenience

Google generation multitasks effectively



- Need to stay connected
- Attempt to do several things ‘at once’
- Distraction problem
  - Getting worse ?

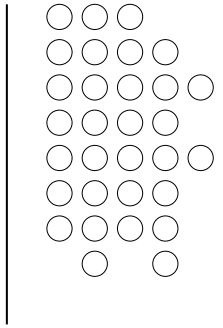
Google generation rely on peers rather than ‘authority’



- ‘wisdom of crowds’ view
- social networking effect

- no evidence for this
- peers are quick and convenient sources

Concluding thoughts



- Google generation
  - Not so similar to eachother
  - Not so different from everyone else
  - Not so good with technology and information as they, and others, think
  - Show same trends are previous (but more so?)
  - Difficult to provide for
  - Need to be understood better