 RIVER CAMPUS LIBRARIES May 11, 2010

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## Avoiding Obsolescence: Understanding & Engaging the Net Generation

Susan Gibbons  
Vice Provost & Dean  
River Campus Libraries  
University of Rochester

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### University of Rochester

- Private College
- Upstate NY (not Minnesota)
  - 4,608 Undergraduates
  - 2,900 Graduates
  - 1,258 Faculty
- 3 nearby campuses
  - Medical Center
  - Eastman School of Music
  - River Campus



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### Just a Bit of Background

- Anthropological & Ethnographic Studies
  - 2003-04: Faculty work practices
  - 2004-06: Undergraduate students
  - 2006-08: Graduate students
  - 2008-09: How people search
- How can we improve our services, digital presence and physical facilities?
- Real vs. Perceived User Needs

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### Outline

- Disruption & Competition
- Overview of Net Generation
  - Who are they?
  - Broad trends
- Techniques to Better Understand Your Users

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### Glorious Past



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# PAST ≠ FUTURE

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### Disruptive Technologies

Clayton Christensen's *Innovator's Dilemma*  
Sustaining vs. Disruptive Technologies

1. Lets customers do it themselves
2. Simpler product
3. Do more easily & effectively what already trying to do
4. Often inferior quality, at first

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The image contains three separate photographs. The top left shows a white ATM with a blue sign that says 'ATM' and '24 HOURS BANKING'. The top right shows a computer monitor displaying the 'travelocity' logo, which consists of three stylized snowflakes above the word 'travelocity'. The bottom center shows a silver digital camera with its LCD screen open, displaying a photo of two people.

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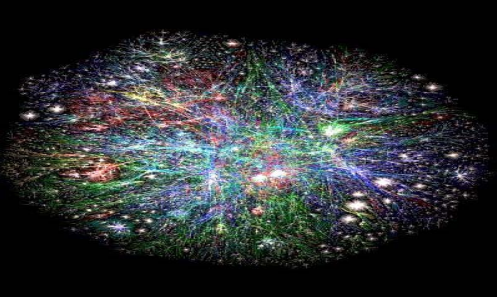
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### Disruptive Technologies for Libraries?



The image shows a complex network graph with numerous nodes and connecting lines in various colors (red, green, blue, yellow). The nodes are densely packed in the center and become sparser towards the edges. To the left of the graph, the letters 'am' are visible, likely part of the Amazon logo.

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## Competition

- No longer in a monopoly position
- Tolerated complexity, bad design, etc.




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Traits

## NET GENERATION

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## Net Generation

Generation Y; Millennials; Echo Boomers; Generation Me (1982 to 2000?)

Quite distinct from “misbehaving” Gen X

- ↓ alcohol and cigarette use
- ↓ binge drinking
- ↓ teen suicide
- ↓ abortion rates
- ↑ community service rates
- ↑ environmental concerns
- ↑ value of education

It is cool to be smart!!

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### Net Gen Traits

- Sheltered & Protected
  - Safety nets
  - Casual w/ privacy



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### Net Gen Traits

- Close Relationship to Parents
  - Conventional
  - Helicopter parents



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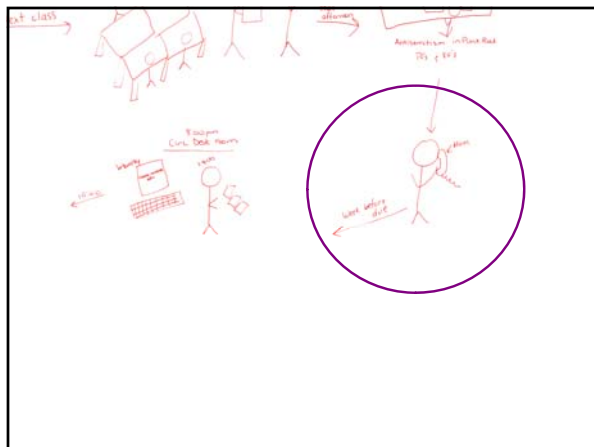
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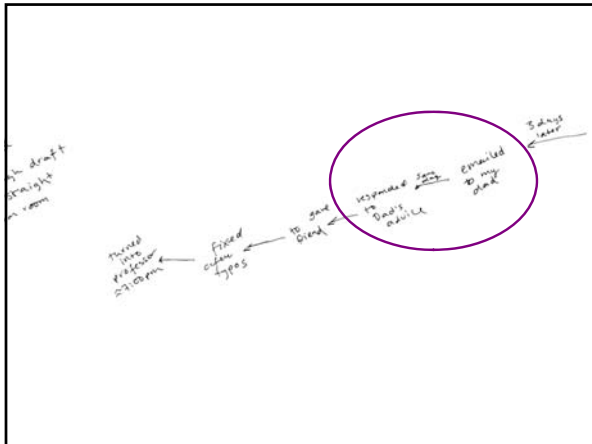
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## Net Gen Traits

- Special
  - Expectations
    - Customization
    - Personalized
    - One-stop shopping
    - “Mommy Model” of service




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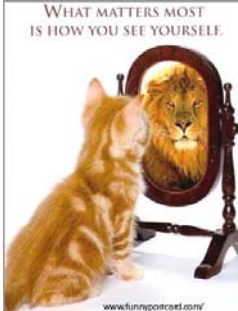
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### Net Gen Traits

- High Self-Esteem
  - Today's college men have higher self-esteem than 86% of college men in 1968
  - Women- 71%
  - Teens
    - 91% responsible
    - 74% physical attractive
    - 79% very intelligent
  - Unrealistic
  - Disappointments



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### Net Gen Traits

- Pressured
  - Increase in emotional disorders
    - 21% teens btwn 15 & 17
    - Today's college students more anxious than 71% of students in 1970's
    - "when born" more influence than family environment
  - Drop in "free time"
  - What are the rules?



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### Net Gen Traits

- Team Oriented
  - Seeking teammates
  - Desire to collaborate
    - In person
    - Online
  - Need info, ask peers (not experts)
  - Social Networking
    - Different definition of "Friends"
      - MySpace
      - Facebook



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### Net Gen Traits

- Multitaskers (not really)
  - Continuous partial attention
  - Speed over accuracy
  - Time is scarcest resource
    - Don't ask for too much

A cartoon illustration of a yellow, multi-armed character sitting at a desk. The character has several arms, each holding a different piece of technology: a laptop, a tablet, a smartphone, a camera, and a pair of headphones. The character appears overwhelmed or multitasking.

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### Net Gen Traits

- Visually Literate
  - Part of multi-tasking
  - Importance of good graphic design

Two images illustrating visual literacy. On the left, a tablet displays a periodic table with a large image of a gold nugget and the element symbol 'Au' and atomic number '79'. On the right, a smartphone displays an anatomical diagram of the human heart with various parts labeled.

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## Net Gen Traits

- Communication
  - “Email is for communication with old people”
  - Text Messaging
    - Cell phones
    - Instant messaging
    - Twitter
  - Cell phone convergence
    - Phone; camera; address book; txt messaging; scheduling device; virtual business card; web browser

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## Mobile Computing- There's an App

iPhone Screenshots

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## Law School & Library Apps & Websites

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Techniques & Methods

# STUDYING USERS

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## User Study Techniques

- Web Site Design
  - Usability Testing



The screenshot shows a software interface for conducting a card sort study. It includes a 'Monitor performance' table with columns for 'Task performance' and 'Satisfaction survey'. The 'Task performance' column lists tasks 1 through 6, and the 'Satisfaction survey' column has a 'No survey' entry. Below this is a 'Recording Details' section with various settings like 'File details', 'Capture options', and 'Recorder start and stop options'. A small video window shows a person's face.

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## User Study Techniques

- Web Site Design
  - Usability Testing
  - Design Workshops

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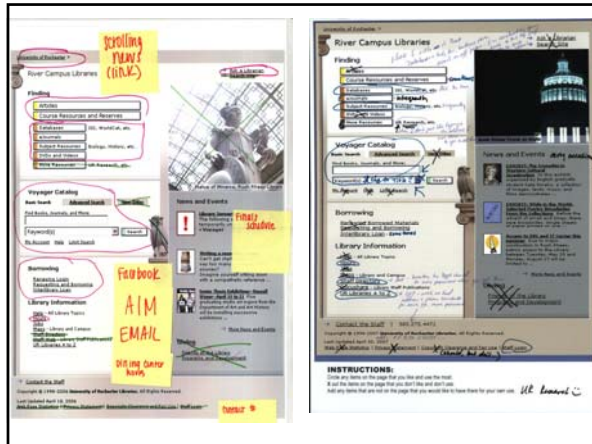
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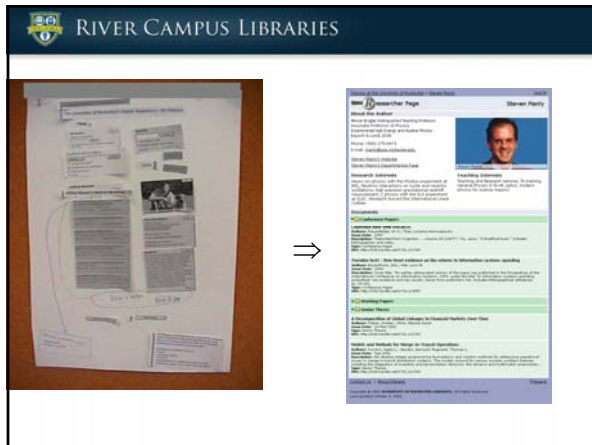
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## User Study Techniques

- Web Site Design
  - Usability Testing
  - Design Workshops
  - Usage logs

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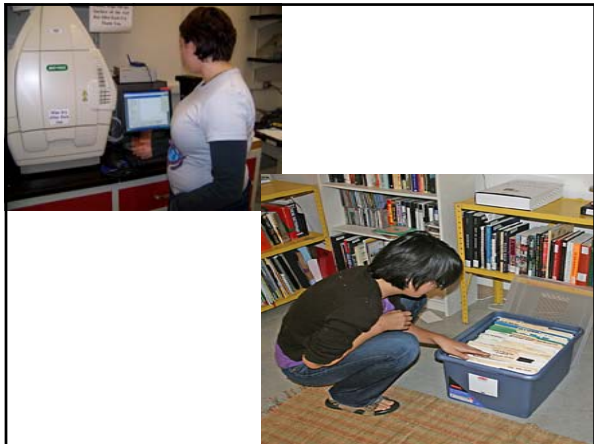
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### User Study Techniques

- Work Practice Methods
  - Study “Natural Habitats”
  - Map Work Cycles

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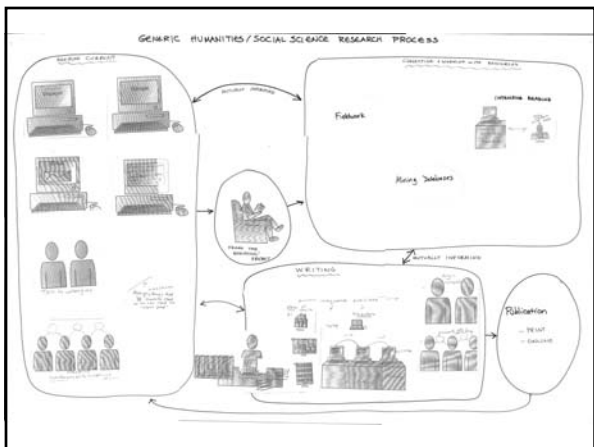
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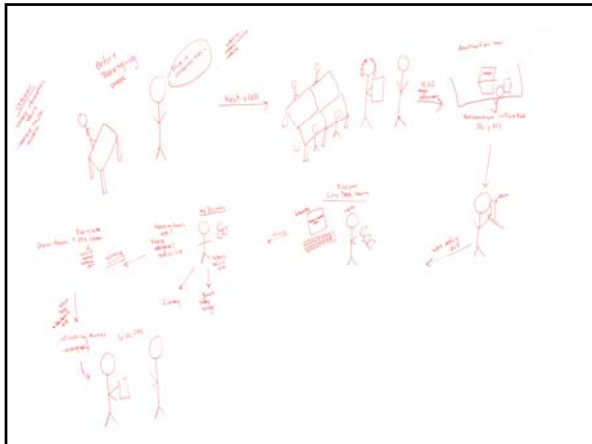
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### User Study Techniques

- Work Practice Methods
  - Study “Natural Habitats”
  - Map Work Cycles
  - Observations



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### User Study Techniques

- Work Practice Methods
  - Study “Natural Habitats”
  - Map Work Cycles
  - Observation
  - Photo elicitation

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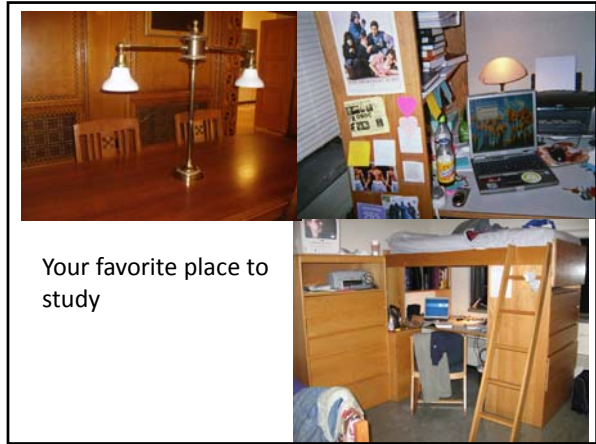
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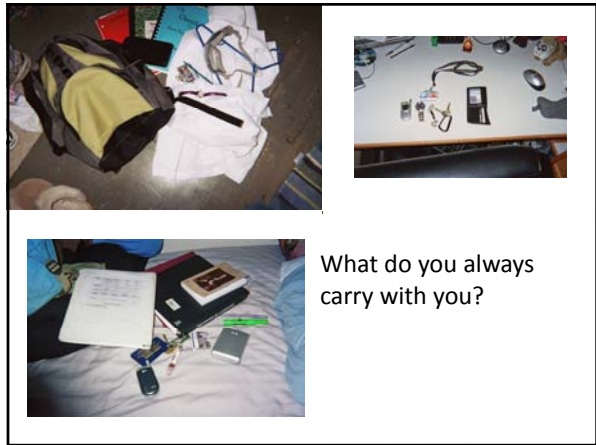
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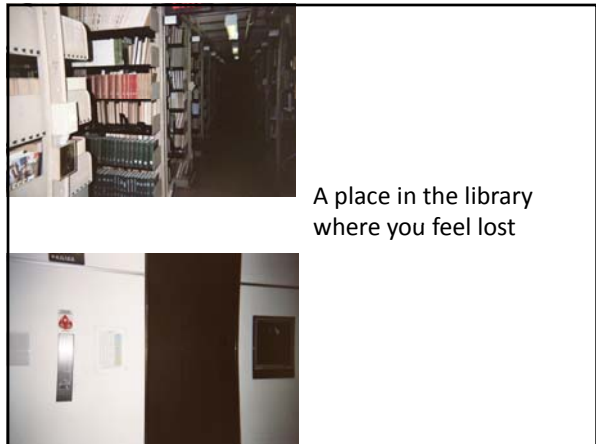
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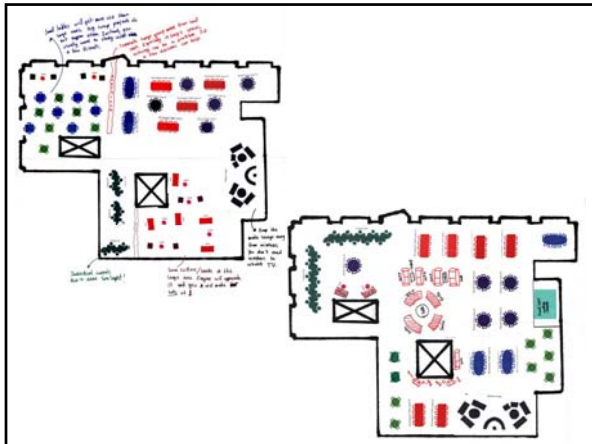
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### Facilities Trends

- Technology changes facility needs
- Technology changes furniture
- Collaborative
- Flexibility
- Blurring of work and social

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### User Study Techniques

- Facility Design Methods
  - Design Workshops
  - Mapping Exercises

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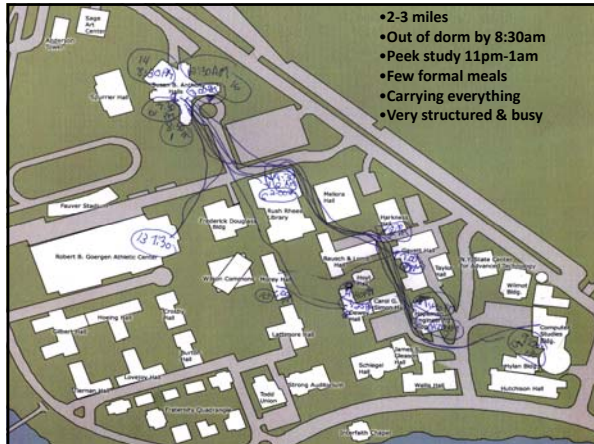
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### User Study Techniques

- Facility Design Methods
  - Design Workshops
  - Mapping Exercises
  - Comfort Zones

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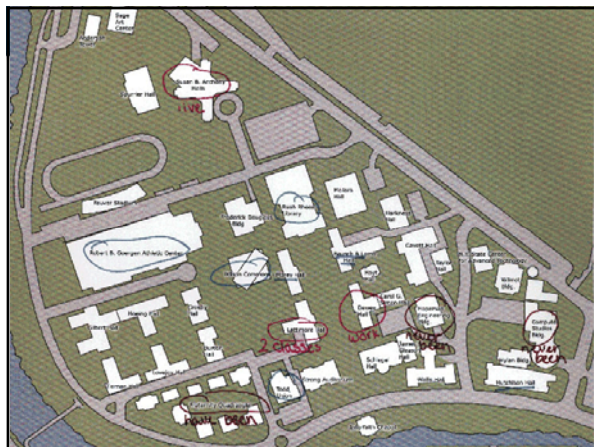
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### User-Centered Culture

- Us/Them shifted
- Tolerance of change
- Tolerance of failure
- Embrace experimentation
- Test first, then ask the hard questions
- Banned “when I was in college...”
- Barriers to entry need to be lowered

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### Lasting Results

- Publications & presentation
- Real research
- Protocols
- Great stories
- “Go To” division on campus
  - Development
  - Communications
  - Student services, etc.

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### Results

- High levels of satisfaction
- Fantastic PR
  - 3-page spread in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
- President’s Cabinet
- Flat-ish budget

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### More information?

*Studying Students: The Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester*, published by ACRL, 2008

Available as FREE PDF download,  
<http://hdl.handle.net/1802/7520>



*The Academic Library and the Net Gen Student*, published by ALA Editions



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