Gen Z and millennials have some surprising attitudes and behaviors regarding media consumption and library use.

Generational categories like Gen Z and millennials (aged 13-40 in 2022)[1] are an important way to understand book engagement and library use because "an individual's age is one of the most common predictors of differences in attitudes and behaviors."

Mobile computing is a key aspect of daily life for Gen Z and millennials. 92% check social media every day; 25% check social media multiple times per hour. The high instance of reading on mobile devices among these groups, particulasT3 2040eDeck social media

discusses the following attitudes and behaviors Gen Z and millennials have regarding libraries:

- 54% of Gen Z and millennials visited a physical library within a twelve-month period.
- Libraries attract even Gen Z and millennials who . 23% of Gen Z and millennials had visited a physical library in a twelve-month period AND did not identify as readers.
- Subscription-only and/or mobile-exclusive content provided in apps such as Webtoon (webcomics), Radish (romance e-novels) and Audible (audiobooks) is particularly popular with Gen Z and millennials: 12% of Gen Z & 8% of millennials subscribe to webcomics and 30% of Gen Z & 38% of millennials subscribe to Audible. But subscription content, such Audible-exclusive titles, is mostly unavailable for libraries to license.
- 52% of Gen Z and millennial physical library patrons said they borrowed from library .
- Black (58%) and Latinx (57%) physical library patrons use digital collections more than the general survey population (52%).
- Long wait times for digital books disadvantage Black, Indigenous, and People of Color more than the general population. 47% of Black Gen Z and millennials overall (not just physical

Millennials (age 26–40) and especially Gen Z (age 13–25) have grown up in an increasingly digital environment, which shapes their reading behavior, reading preferences, and modes of book discovery. The survey results show that 92% of Gen Z and millennials check social media daily. 25% report checking multiple times an hour. According to 2022 Pew data, "fully 35% of teens say they are using at least one [social media platform] 'almost constantly.'" Gen Z is the first generation to have had access to mobile computing since early childhood. If previous generations had to physically move to access media in a particular location (e.g., the "tv room" in a house; a computer lab at school), most of today's teenagers and young adults have microcomputers ("phones") on their person.

The success of artificial intelligence-powered digital marketing helps to explain why 1 in 3 Gen Zers and millennials in the survey buy books based on recommendations from Instagram reviews/ads and 31% buy books because of TikTok reviews/ads. During their lives thus far, these two generations have been surrounded by pervasive media environments that mediate their interactions with friends, other social groups, and information. As a result, some of their behaviors and expectations when it comes to libraries require explanation.

More than people in previous generations, Gen Z lives in an augmented reality moving seamlessly between embodied and virtual space through phones. As one Gen Zer commented: "For me, online and offline are one and the same, basically the same thing, integrated." Yet, importantly, this comfort with the blurring of the digital and (physical world) does not translate into a preference for the digital. With more time spent on mobile computing comes increased need for "social media detox" and other efforts to limit or demarcate one's time in mobile apps. Print books are Gen Zers' #1 preferred book format. Young people visit bookstores. Despite all the digital options, browsing library shelves continues to be relevant to their discovery of new books.

Additionally, despite assumptions that young people may read less, both Gen Z and millennials are consuming books: on average they buy 1 ebook, 1 audiobook, and 2 print books per month; and read (including through subscriptions) 1 ebook, 1 audio-book, and 2 print books per month. Gen Zers buy and read more than millennials in all formats. Age negatively correlates with the number of print books bought per month: the le ma[(ne)5 IID 2nials in all formats. Age

Do Gen Zers and millennials use libraries? How and to what extent? About half of Americans aged 13–40 visit libraries in person, and this usage rate has been consistent over recent years. In the survey 54% of Gen Z and millennials reported having used physical libraries within a twelve-month period. This percentage is very close to what Pew reported for millennial library use in 2017 (53%), and is higher than Pew's findings a decade ago. 27% of Gen Z and millennials report discovering books by browsing books on shelves at public libraries. Browsing public libraries is Gen Z's #3 preferred place to discover books. Libraries are the #5 preferred place for millennials to discover books. Millennials are more likely to use the digital library collections than Gen Z. More (64%) African American or Black Gen Z and millennials visit the physical library, 10 percentage points higher than the general survey population. For both Latinx and Asian/Asian American Gen Z and millennials, browsing shelves in public libraries was the #3 preferred place of book discovery, after "on my phone in social media feeds" and "streaming TV/movies that are adapted to books."

Gen Z slightly outperforms millennials in visits to physical libraries in the last twelve months. It also corresponds with Gen Z's preference for printed books. Nourishing Gen Zers' use of the library continues to require physical space and print materials because they like print books. Gen Z and millennials who *had not* been to the physical library in a twelve-month period read less than the general population across all formats except text messages and emails. Notably, 17% of the group that didn't physically visit the library did report using library digital services.

Physical library visitors identified these barriers or attitudes to digital borrowing:

- 41% "I didn't know how to access library services during the pandemic."
- 20% "I don't use library services."
- 14% "There's no library close to where I live."
- 12% "I lost my library card."

Gen Z and millennials are not going to the library *only* to borrow print books. Across age demographics, there was a 23 percentage point increase in Americans who attended library programs from 2014 to 2019.[i]
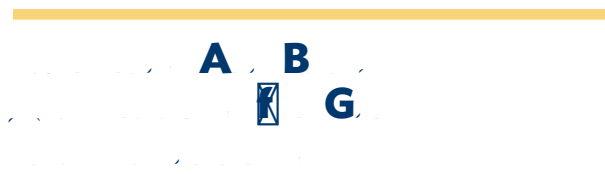
What role do libraries play in Gen Z and millennial reading habits and book discovery? In the *Immersive Media and Books 2020* research, researchers found that 1 in 3 book engagers bought a book that they first found at the library.[ii] Generally, book engagers were *context agnostic*, meaning that they often found a book in one place and bought it or borrowed it in another. Turning attention to Gen Z and millennials specifically in 2022, libraries fit well with the

through which Gen Z and millennials consume other media (such as Netflix, Kindle Unlimited, Xbox Game Pass, Spotify, Audible, etc.) allow them to try new media products risk-free. In the traditional, print-centered book publishing ecosystem, libraries are the place for robust sampling.

Libraries allow people to try out books risk-free. This, and the role that libraries play in curating and promoting books, mean that libraries bolster publishers' low marketing budgets—for free.

Penguin Random House disclosed during the Department of Justice antitrust trial on the proposed acquisition of Simon & Schuster that they allocate 2% of their budget for marketing. Extrapolating fpTi0bhd,

In 2023, independent bookstores are a surprising success story, despite consumers buying more books from online retailers. 2023 has seen a growth of independent bookstores, leading to the highest number of American Bookseller Association members in over two decades.[1] In keeping with this, bookstores are an important part of reading for many Americans in the 13–40 age group. This research found that 58% of Gen Z and millennials bought a book in a bookstore in the prior twelve months. More than one third (35%) of those bought a book because they were browsing at the store and found something they liked. While bookstores don't allow for the same level of robust sampling that libraries do, they do allow readers to examine different books in person and often offer book recommendations and events.

A secondary appeal: indie bookstores tap into people's ethical values to "shop local" as a means of supporting one's community. 13% of Gen Z and millennials said they bought books to support their local bookstore. Browsing shelves in brick-and-mortar libraries is the #3 preferred place for Gen Z and millennials to discover books (13%), followed by browsing shelves in brick-and-mortar bookstores as #4 (11%). The #5 preferred way is browsing shelves in public libraries (11% of Gen Z and millennials). These data demonstrate that Gen Z and millennials slightly prefer bookstores to libraries for printed book discovery. However, Gen Z and millennials equally prefer recommendations from booksellers and librarians (15%).

The instant availability of popular titles and the shopping experience would seem to be the most important differentiators between bookstores and libraries; however, the most popular print books at the library are less likely to be on the shelves for patrons to browse because they are borrowed out and on hold lists. By contrast, bookstores highlight the most popular titles on tables and face them out on shelves, increasing visibility and availability of in-demand products. Indie bookstores often feature cafés and places to sit where customers can make themselves as they browse. The Public Library Asso-

What are the barriers to digital borrowing for those who *haven't* visited a physical library in a 12-month period? 40% said "I don't use library services." 28% said "I didn't know how to access library services during the pandemic." 20% said "I don't read audiobooks or ebooks." 12% said "I lost my library card."

Use of library digital collections breaks down patrons often encounter with popular digital materials. While 83% of library users ages 13–40 report not being deterred by wait times for digital library resources, Gen Zers are more deterred by long wait lines than millennials (21% compared to 17%). Notably, a combined total of 75% of Gen Zers and millennials say that a wait time of *one week or less* is "long."

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Than the General Population

and serialized fiction apps like Wattpad, Radish, and Kindle Vella; and subscription services in the "Other" category which includes Webtoon, Substack, Patreon, and others. Of the Gen Zers and millennials who read webnovels, 60% pay for faster access to content; for people who use Substack, 79% pay for faster access to content.[1] "Original" content usually means it can be accessed exclusively on that platform. Readers tender an unseen payment in the "attention economy" as they read on these apps: the pattern of their time on site, how often they check the site, how quickly one opens a new installment, and far more granular information than that.[1]

Modes of book discovery differ somewhat between Gen Z and millennials. Gen Z invests more trust in celebrities, influencers, and social lists, though both groups accept them as trusted resources. More than one third (34%) of Gen Z people discover books based on recommendations from influencers (TikTokers, Instagrammers,

influencers (7%), and social lists (6%). ' These two categories together (friends and social media/influencers) far outpace recommendations from family (9%) as the most-preferred way to find books.

There are both similarities and di erences between the social media platforms that Gen Z and millennials preference. Both groups prefer Instagram (21%) and YouTube (Gen Z—16%; millennials—16010 0 3ce two

are media omnivores who discover new content across media, finding a story they like in one format and following that story through its representations in other formats ("crossmedia"). These generations also move nimbly from virtual to embodied space. Latinx Gen Z and millennials reported strong engagement with fanfiction, 48% (10 percentage points more than the general population) and 27% subscribe to mobile serial fiction apps such as Wattpad, Radish and Kindle Vella (10 percentage points more than the general population).

Digging deeper, we asked survey respondents to check *all* of the ways they discover books (the bars in the chart above) and their *preferred* way of discovering books (the bars in the chart above). Recommendation from friends (25%) is the most-preferred way to find books, closely followed by recommendations from talent (8%),

interaction builds trust and establishes credibility. That's why talent and influencers are also sites of

Libraries (and publishers) face three main challenges when it comes to Gen Z and millennial media habits and preferences.

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Gen Z and millennials' high use of Amazon's audiobook and ebook paid subscription services poses a challenge for libraries particularly because of "Amazon-exclusive" licensing, which prohibits some authors from distributing their work outside the Amazon ecosystem. The same is true for "Amazon Originals," which is exclusively available to Amazon subscribers. In June 2022, DPLA partnered with Lyrasis and Knight Foundation to launch The Palace Project, a not-for-profit e-reader app, platform, and marketplace that allows libraries to serve e-content from all their vendors to patrons via a single

case decided in a federal district court, winning the right to charge licensing prices without additional regulatory oversight beyond existing laws. This win is welcome news for publishers, but it doesn't affect ebook reading beyond the scope of library licensing. Publishers might benefit in the long run by encouraging Gen Z and millennials to borrow more ebooks from libraries, because doing so might train them to seek out licensed ebooks and audiobooks rather than pirated, often substandard, versions.

Based on this report about Gen Z and millennials, we researchers have two top-level recommendations supported by several specific ways libraries might increase their relevance with Gen Z and millennials.

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