Talkin' 'bout My Generalization: Confronting Assumptions About Attitudes Toward Reference Service in the Changing Library Workforce

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Introduction

Libraries are experiencing a generational shift in their workforce. A 2009 American Library Association study[1] projected that between 2005 and 2015 more than twenty-eight thousand librarians will retire. This is roughly double the number of retirements of the previous decade. A profession that has long been dominated by the Baby Boom generation is ushering in new generations of librarians. Because the shift in the library workforce is creating a new intergenerational mix of co-workers, librarians at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire—who themselves represent the three prevalent generations in the workforce—set out to explore potential differences in attitudes toward reference service in academic libraries. Rather than rely on personal anecdotes and assumptions about generational differences in attitudes, investigators sought to collect data reflecting attitudes and opinions. A survey, *Attitudes Toward Reference Services* (see appendix), was sent to randomly selected academic library staff members across the United States. This survey asked questions about the changing nature of reference work, staffing a reference desk, important characteristics and skills for reference librarians to have, and more. Through the survey, investigators hoped to determine if differences in attitudes toward reference service broke down along generational lines, and—if not—what might be some variables that influenced attitudinal differences. The findings should provide library staff and library managers with a deeper understanding of differing opinions among various groups in the workforce.

Literature Review

Businesses and libraries have started to see the influx of those born since 1979 (commonly referred to as Millennials, Generation Y or Gen Y) into their workplaces over the last five to ten years. Because of perceived generational characteristics of the newest members of the workplace, much has been written about who they are, how to manage them, what they expect, how they differ from those who came before them, and what they can contribute to an organization. Some of the literature is geared toward those, presumably older, who manage Gen Y,[2] and some is self-help-styled literature for Gen Y members on how to fit into the contemporary workplace.[3] Much of the current discussion on generations in the workplace is found in business literature; relatively little is available that specifically addresses the issue in the library environment.

In looking at attitudinal differences toward library reference service, two articles explore attitudes toward online services, but do not focus on generational dif-

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ferences. Joseph Janes differentiated among respondents based on the type of library (public vs. academic), size of library, gender, and number of years since completing a master's degree in library science (MLS). His findings indicated that those surveyed were "in general, positive and optimistic in their judgment of the impact and reach of digital reference."[4] Additionally, he found that those who had the most experience with digital reference were likelier to be more positive about it, but he qualifies that statement, suggesting that it may be self-reinforcing.[5] Janes' article reflects attitudes of a decade ago, when the Internet was barely ten years old. Availability and sophistication of online resources, comfort and expectation levels, and thus attitudes have all evolved dramatically since that study was conducted.

Kate Gronemyer and Anne-Marie Deitering's article looked at library instruction in an online environment. Results suggest that librarians found it more difficult to have an effective reference interview in the online environment than in a face-to-face environment.[6] The authors attempted to see if the library type, tool used to provide reference service online, or librarian's personal experience with online reference tools made a difference in attitudes toward these services, but they did not find any correlation.

Only one article looked at generational attitudes in the library. Linda Neyer and Kathryn Yelinek explored whether or not statements made by Pennsylvania academic librarians "matched certain stereotypical ideas of differences between generations."[7] The article only briefly touches on this topic and does not include information on Gen Y because that study took place in 2006, before Gen Y was well represented in the workforce. Similarly, it looks at only three attitudinal statements, none of which focuses on reference services. It does, however, provide some insight into workplace issues like supervision and philosophy on improvement, which may be beneficial for managers.

This study aims to fill a gap in the literature on the relationship between attitudes of staff and their generational affiliation. Though narrowly focused on reference services and attitudes toward them, this study should be useful to supervisors, directors, and others with an interest in the intergenerational workplace.

Research Design and Methodology

The investigators developed a thirty-question survey (see appendix) that delved into respondents' attitudes toward traditional and emerging academic library reference services and responsibilities. An online survey was distributed in February 2010 directly to library staff of two hundred colleges and universities randomly selected from each Carnegie Classification to represent institutions from various regions and of varying sizes. Investigators combed library directories and websites to collect email addresses for all identifiable library employees at the selected institutions. Emails with links to the online survey were sent to 7,529 individuals, and 951 respondents completed the survey, for a response rate of 13%. Qualtrics, an online survey service to which the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire subscribes, was used to administer the survey. Emails were sent through the Qualtrics program, and it is unknown how many may have been regarded as spam by various institutional email filters. Additionally, the survey was sent to all staff, but emails received in response to the mailing suggest that some potential respondents—particularly those who were not librarians or not in public service—were not sure if they were to complete the survey. The intent was to survey all non-student library employees. Some questions were designed to distinguish between librarians and support staff, but it is unclear if respondents made the distinction between librarians and other library workers in their responses.

Data were analyzed to identify generational differences, if any, in attitudes toward issues affecting reference service in academic libraries. Other potential differences drawn from collected demographic data, such as position, professional status, gender, and year of obtaining library degree were analyzed as well.

Generational definitions vary, but for the purposes of this study, generations were defined as follows:

- Baby Boomers (or Boomers): those born between 1944 and 1964
- Generation X (Gen X): those born between 1965 and 1978
- Generation Y (Gen Y): those born between 1979 and 1988

While some definitions of Generation Y include those born after 1988, the decision was made to cut off the date at 1988 to exclude library workers under 22 years of age who were likely to be student employees. Because of the low number of respondents born before 1944, investigators chose to focus on just the three aforementioned generations. In all, 532 Boomers, 285 Gen Xers and 134 Gen Yers responded to the survey.

Results and Discussion

The survey included questions that were designed to test some of the assumptions and claims made about generational attitudes, such as:

- younger library staff are more open to change; older library staff prefer the status quo
- younger library staff are more inclined to prefer technological solutions and resources than are older library staff
- older library staff are more supportive of traditional staff roles than are younger library staff
- there are generational differences of opinion regarding characteristics or traits that are important for reference librarians to hold

Assumption: younger library staff are more open to change; older library staff prefer the status quo

Several questions attempted to gauge respondents' receptiveness to change in the profession by asking for opinions on traditional library reference models and structures. For example, respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the

statement, "The reference desk is obsolete and should be dismantled altogether" on a five-point Likert scale. Eighty-six percent of all respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Interestingly, Gen Y disagreed most vehemently with 53% strongly disagreeing, compared to 48% of Gen Xers and 46% of Boomers (figure 1). A similar statement, "The reference desk is an essential service point that works well and should remain largely unchanged," yielded slightly different responses (figure 2). While most respondents in all generations steered away from strongly agreeing or disagreeing, Gen Y showed the greatest level of agreement and Gen X displayed the strongest showing of disagreement. In another question, a possible alternative was offered for changing rather than eliminating the reference desk. When asked if the reference desk should be merged with other service points, Gen Xers were more likely to agree or strongly agree than were Gen Y or Boomers (figure 3). Boomers were less enthusiastic about this idea, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing at a slightly higher rate than their younger colleagues. A relatively high level of un-

FIGURE 1
The Reference Desk is Obsolete and Should be Dismantled Altogether
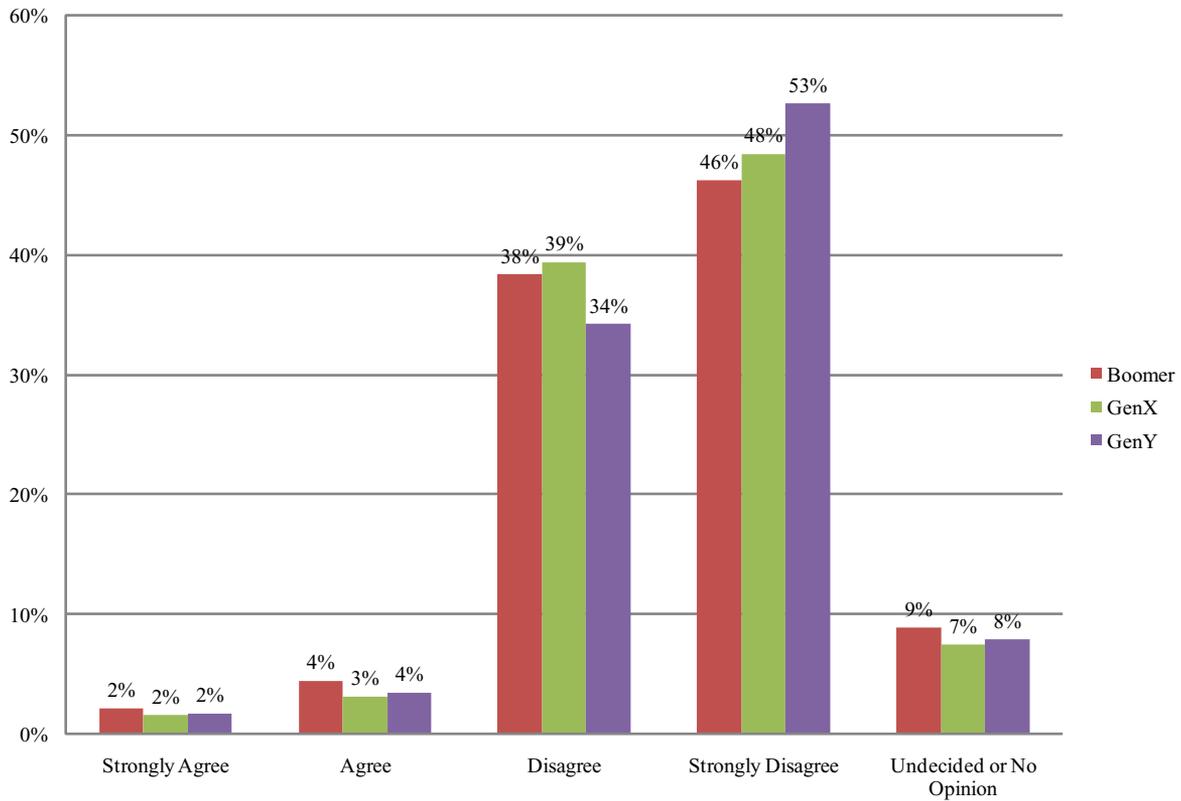
FIGURE 2
The Reference Desk Remains an Essential Service Point that Works Well and Should Remain Largely Unchanged
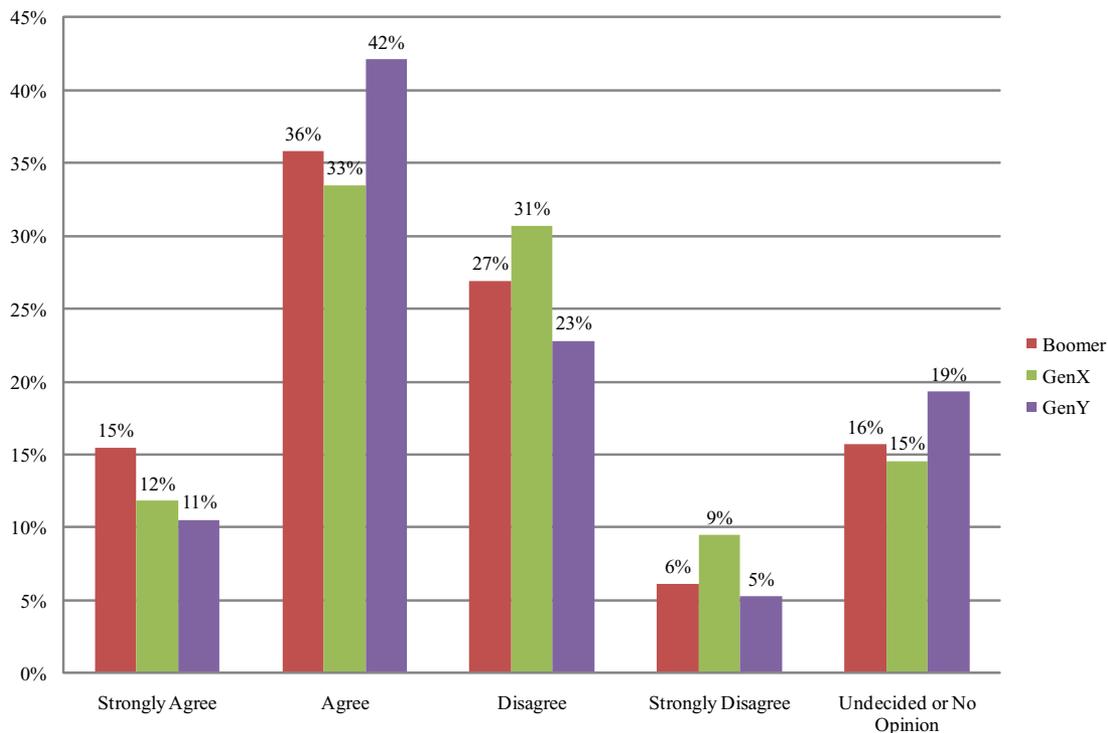
FIGURE 3
The Reference Desk Should be Merged with Other Service Points in the Library, Such as the Circulation Desk, and Offer Tiered Levels Of Service
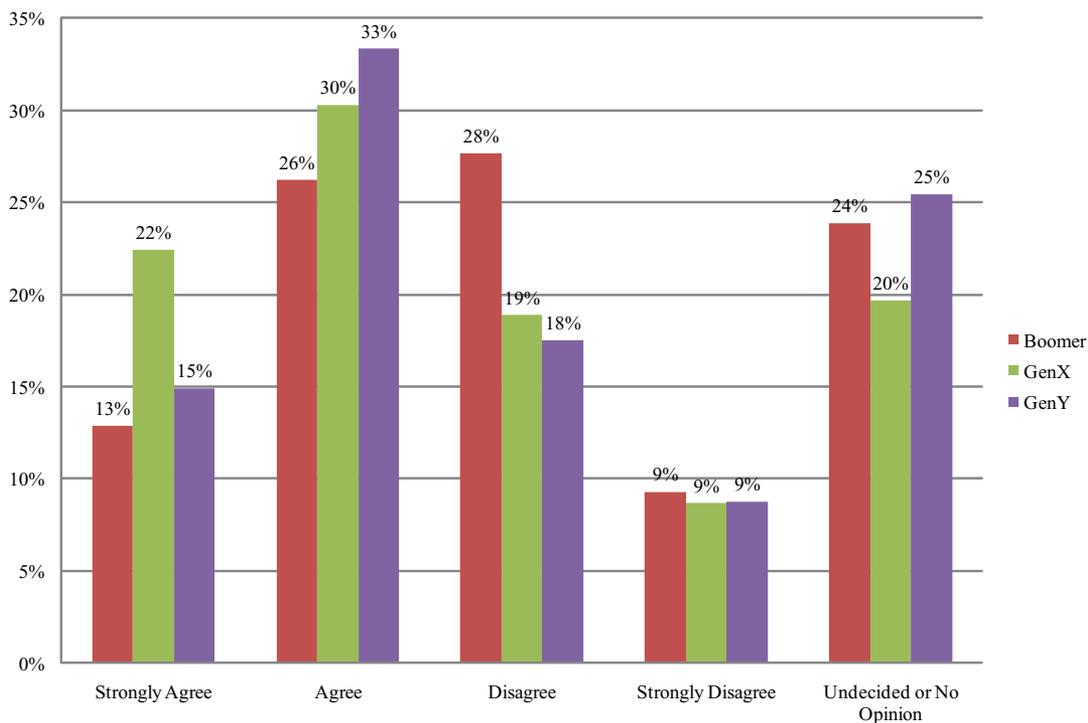
decided responses to this question suggests that there are conditions surrounding such a merger that would influence responses, and "it depends" may have been a preferred option. Although these examples do not show a large variance in how the three generations view the reference desk, the results reveal slightly more support for the traditional reference desk model in libraries among the youngest generation.

Staffing a reference desk with individuals other than professional librarians is a relatively recent trend that breaks from the traditional model. Some questions assessed differences in attitudes toward this development. When asked what percentage of its service hours a reference desk should be staffed by a librarian, respondents of all generations tended toward higher percentages (Insert figure 4). Gen Y was most vehement with 42% selecting 76–100% and 30% selecting 51–75%. While Gen X showed the second highest support for librarians staffing the desk 76–100% of the time (37%), they were also the most likely to respond that librarians should not staff the desk at all (7% compared to 5% for Boomers and 3% for Gen Y).

A related question asked who should staff an academic library reference desk, providing possible responses ranging from librarians to paraprofessional staff to students (figure 5). Not surprisingly, all respondents identified reference librarians or reference/instruction librarians to the greatest degree. However, Gen X held this view to a lesser degree than did Gen Y and Boomers. Gen Yers were less likely than their older colleagues to think that paraprofessionals and graduate students should staff the reference desk. In speculating on possible reasons for this result, one possibility is that Gen Yers, with their freshly minted library degrees and relatively recent job search experience, may feel more strongly that a library degree is a necessary qualification for providing such service. Perhaps they see paraprofessionals and graduate students as taking potential jobs away from entry-level librarians.

When looking at the results of this question by position in the library, those who identified themselves as working in administration (as opposed to technical services, public services or a combination thereof), regardless of generational affiliation, were most supportive of graduate students staffing the reference desk (figure 6). Similarly, those in administration were 10 to 15% *less* likely to support reference

FIGURE 4
What Percentage of a Reference Desk's (or Equivalent Service Point) Open Hours Should be Staffed by a Librarian?
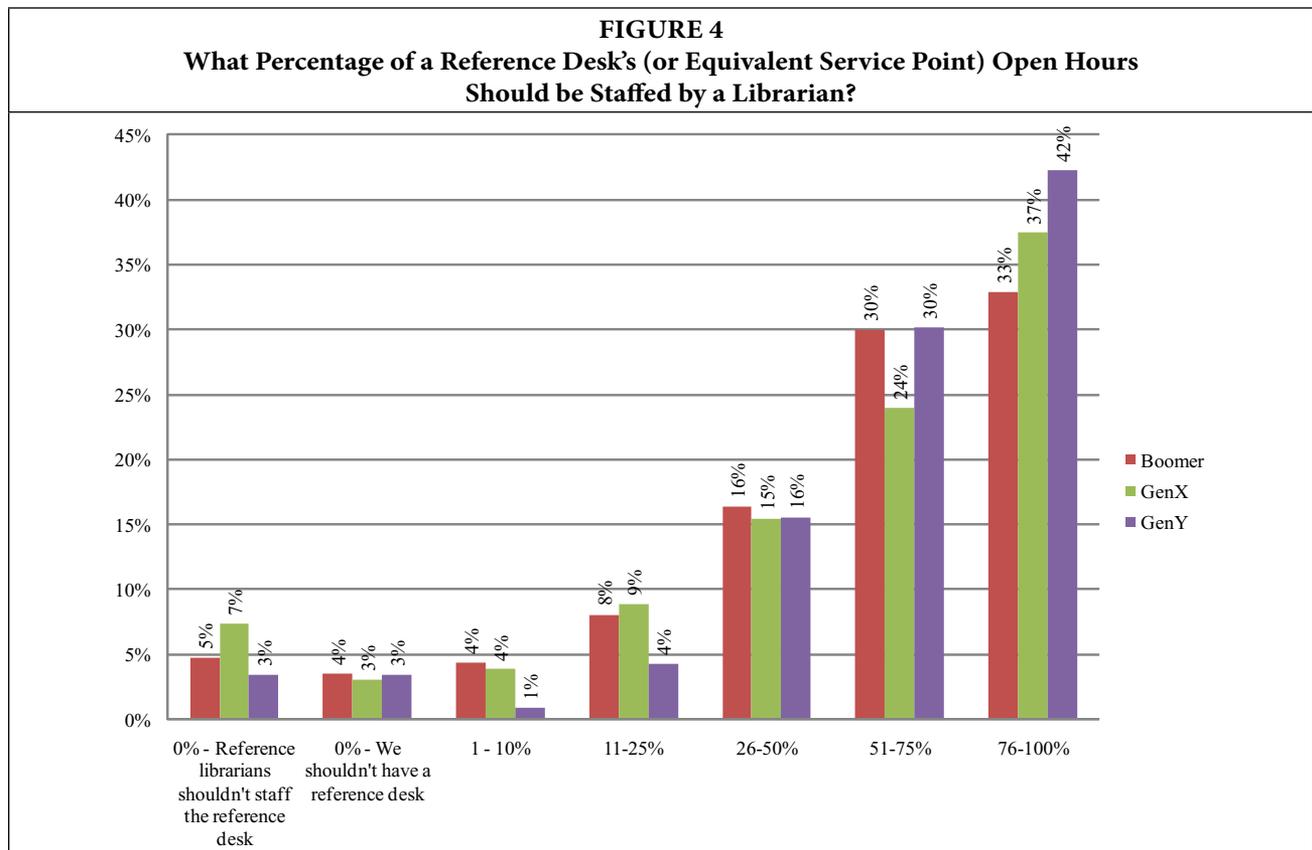
FIGURE 5
Who Should Staff an Academic Library Reference Desk? (Check all that Apply)
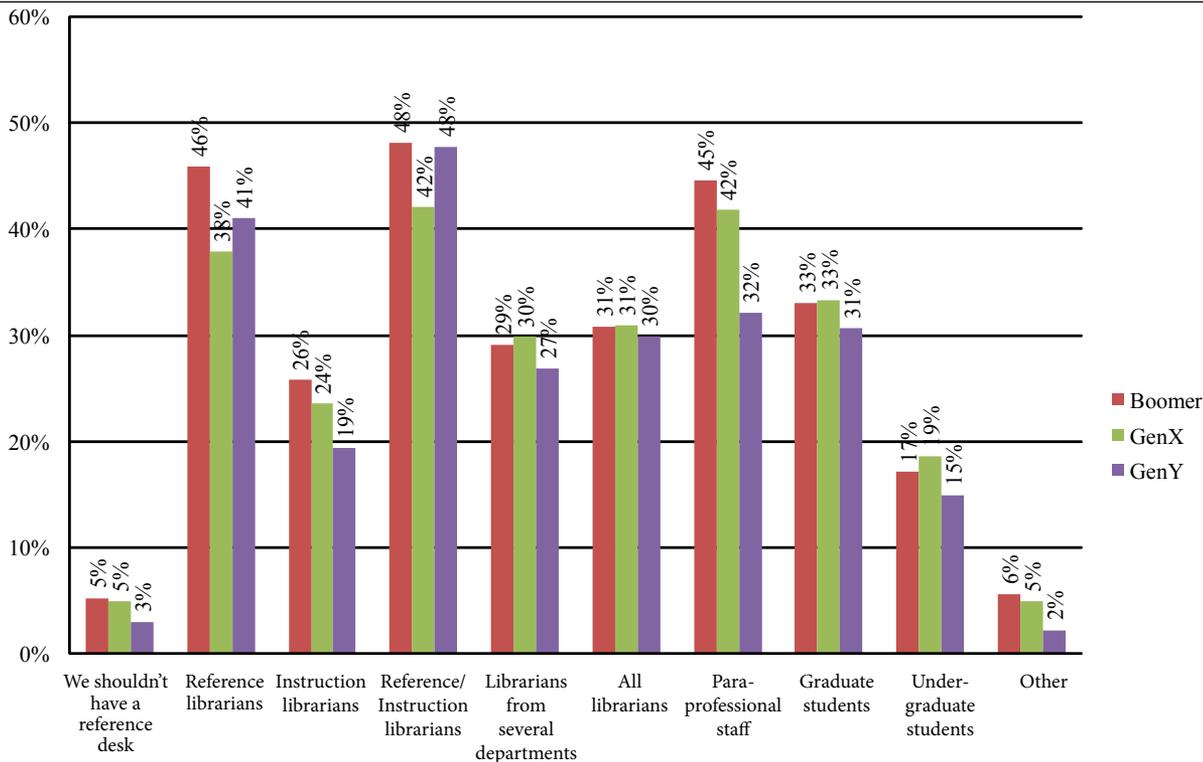
FIGURE 6
Who Should Staff an Academic Library Reference Desk? (Check all that Apply)
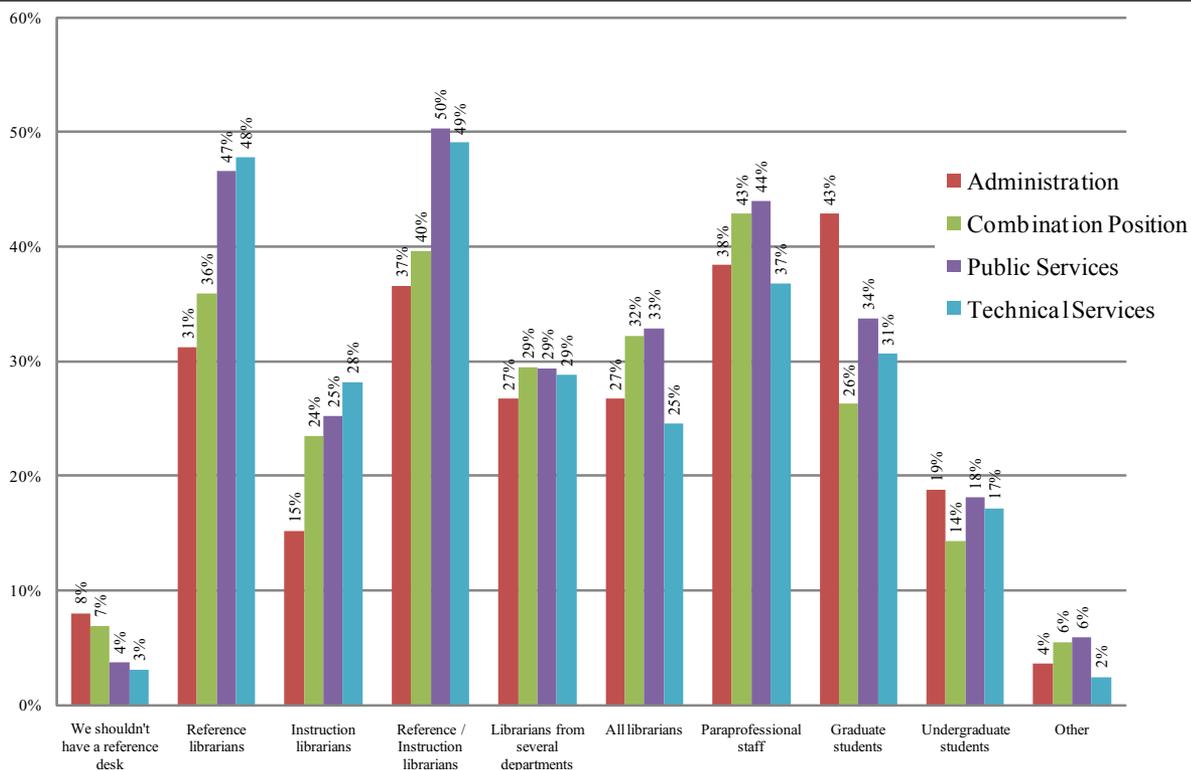
or reference/instruction librarians working at the reference desk in comparison to those in public service (including reference and instruction librarians themselves). Perhaps administrators, necessarily focused on budget issues, see graduate students as a more economical and efficient means of staffing a service desk that experiences ebbs and flows in questions requiring professional attention. But, again, this is conjecture, as the reasons behind the responses were not explored.

Such responses, while not always statistically significant, do not on the whole support assumptions that preferences for change or for status quo correlate with age.

On a related note, investigators were curious to determine if one generation or another stood out in terms of the strength of its convictions. Was one generation more likely than another to indicate strongly held opinions as opposed to uncertainty or ambivalence? A persistent stereotype is that older people are more set in their ways. Conversely, a recent study suggests that as people age they are more able to consider different perspectives. Grossman, et al. wrote that "older people make more use of higher-order reasoning schemes that emphasize the need for multiple

perspectives, allow for compromise, and recognize the limits of knowledge."[8] While the Grossman study focused on social reasoning, investigators were interested in seeing if this finding also held true with the specific questions asked regarding attitudes toward reference service. Would older respondents be more likely to consider multiple perspectives and therefore demonstrate more conditional, less definitive responses? Investigators looked at the twelve questions on the survey that used a five-point Likert scale. Looking at percentages of respondents who strongly agreed or disagreed with a position (rather than merely agreeing, disagreeing or remaining undecided), the results were essentially the same across generational lines (figure 7). No generation revealed itself to be more firm in its positions than another.

Assumption: younger library staff are more inclined to prefer technological solutions and resources than are older library staff

Some questions probed attitudes toward technology in reference service. One such question asked if virtual reference services (such as chat, instant messaging, Skype, etc.) are effective. Perhaps not surprisingly, Gen Y respondents were more likely than

FIGURE 7
Strength of conviction Average of all Likert Scale Questions
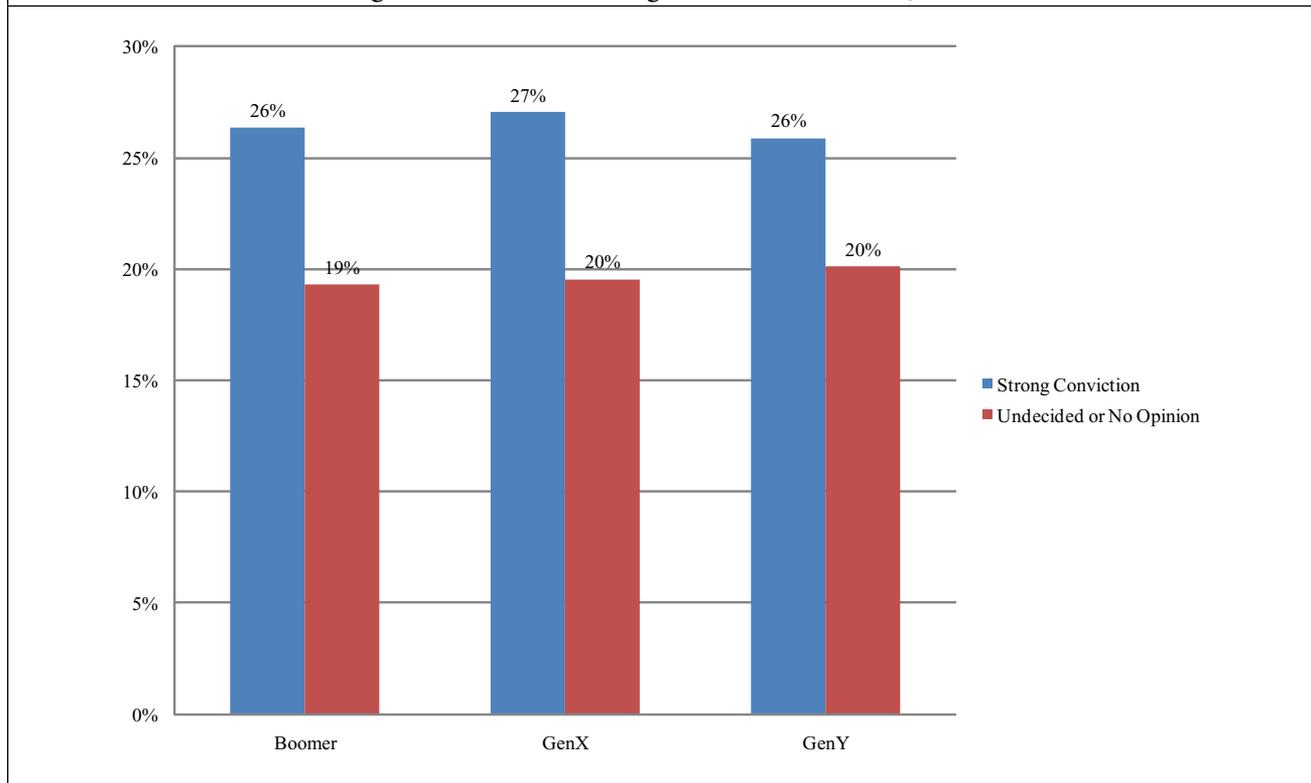
FIGURE 8
Virtual Reference Services (Chat, IM, Skype, etc.) are Effective
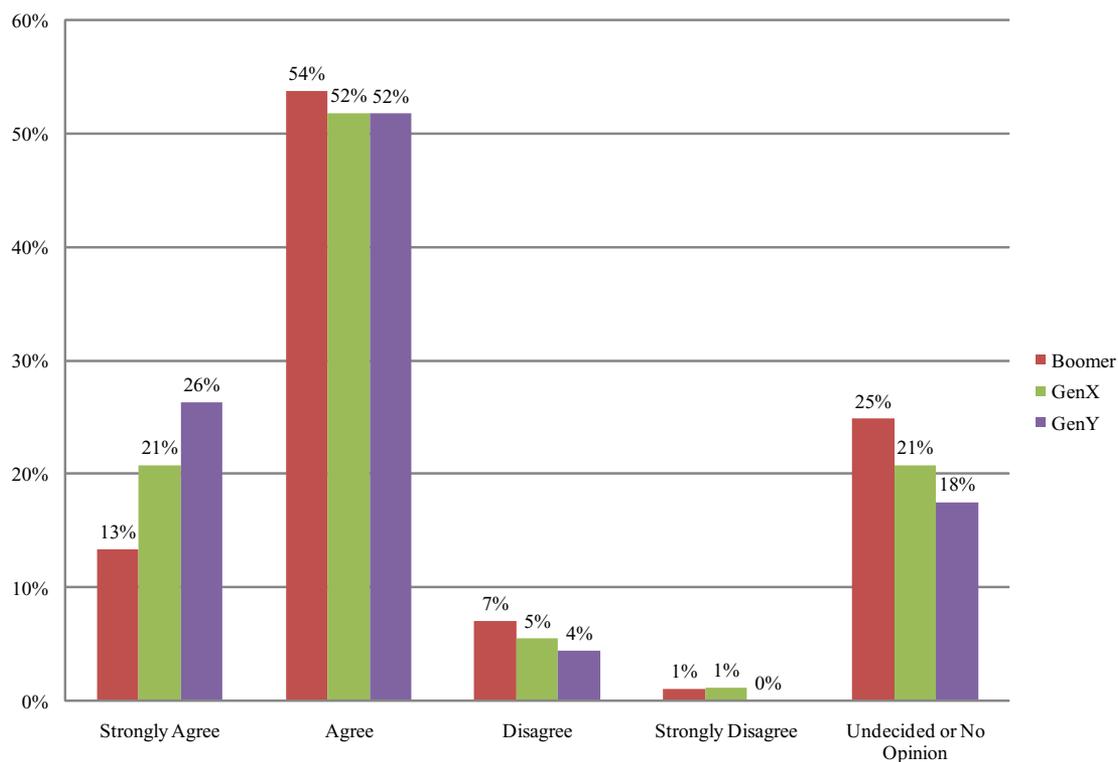
FIGURE 9
The Reference Collection Should be Transformed to an Online Only Collection

FIGURE 10
The Print Reference Collection is Becoming Obsolete and Should be Dismantled Altogether
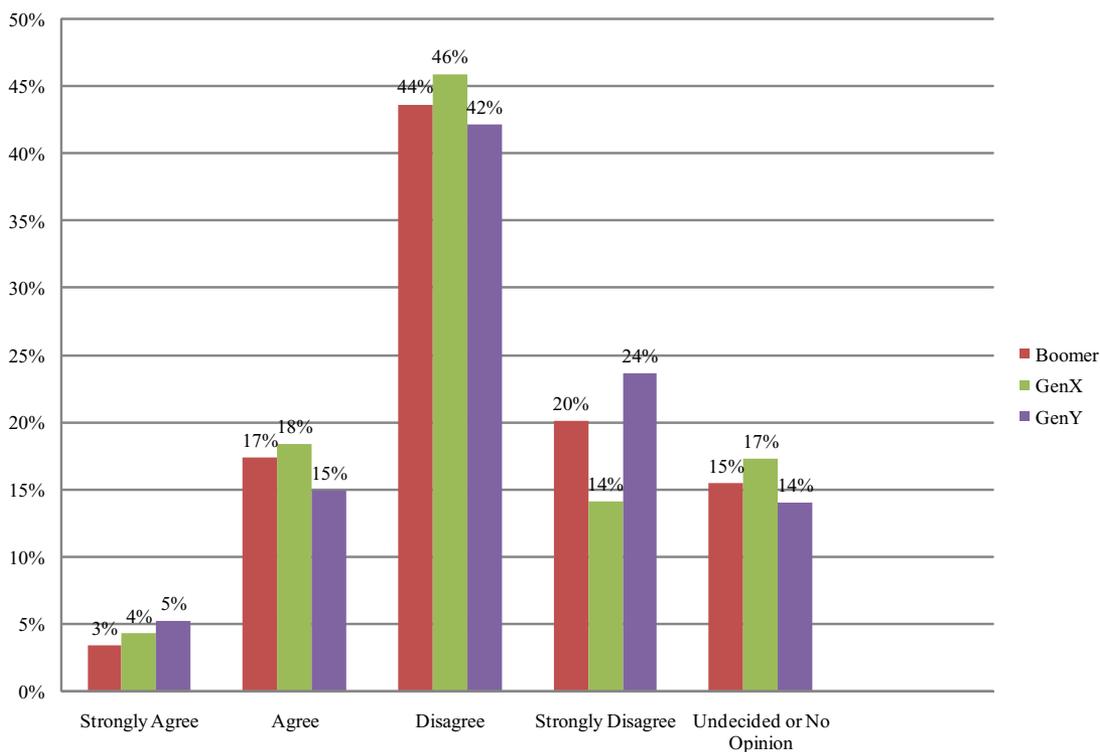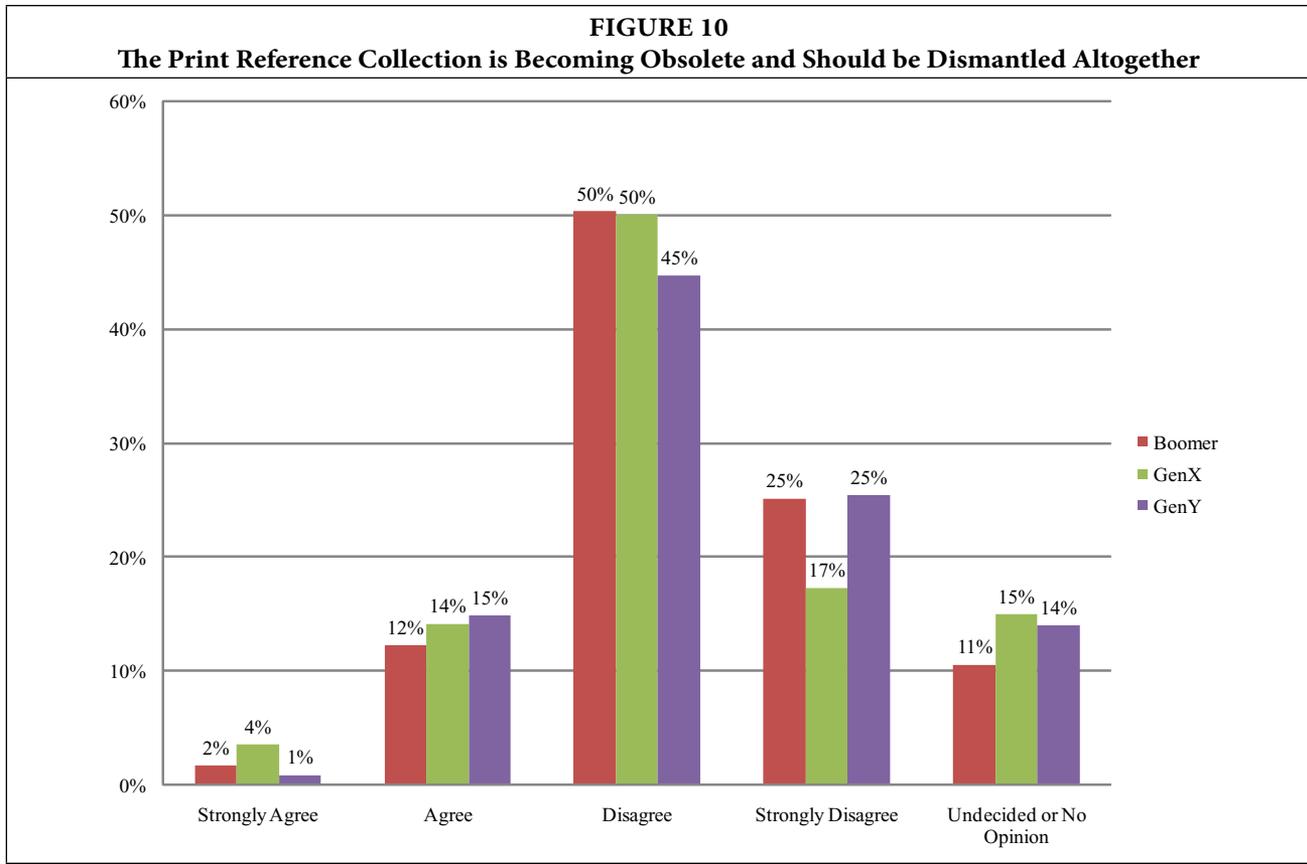
Boomers and Gen X respondents to agree or strongly agree with this statement (Insert figure 8). These are the communication tools with which they have grown up.

When asked if the reference collection should be transformed to an online-only collection, 63% of all respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, a greater percentage of Gen Y strongly disagreed (24%) than Gen X (14 %) or Boomers (20%) (Insert figure 9). A similar statement suggesting that print reference collections are becoming obsolete and should be dismantled altogether, garnered similar responses (figure 10). There was general disagreement, with Gen Y exhibiting the strongest disagreement by a slim margin.

In response to the statement, "Wikipedia is an appropriate resource to use in the provision of reference service," only 3% of all respondents strongly agreed, and the remaining responses were evenly distributed among agree, disagree, strongly disagree and undecided. It is interesting to note that Gen Y again registered the strongest disagreement (25%, compared to 21% for Gen X and 20% for Boomers) (figure 11). A possible explanation for this result may be that Gen Y was schooled in the Wikipedia age, when teachers and

professors were likely to ban it as a resource for papers due to perceived unreliability. Boomers were the most likely of the three generations to agree or—to a lesser extent—strongly agree with the statement.

Taken together, the responses to these questions do not suggest that older librarians are more committed to print resources than are younger librarians, or that younger respondents are more enamored of technological resources than are their older colleagues. Much like the questions exploring openness to change, these results indicate that younger library staff are no more likely to embrace new technologies or resources than are their older colleagues. In fact, in some cases their responses suggest a greater level of skepticism regarding technological developments than those of their more seasoned counterparts.

Assumption: older library staff are more supportive of traditional staff roles than are younger library staff

To address this assumption, respondents were asked their opinions about reference librarian roles and primary responsibilities.

When asked what percentage of their time reference librarians should be staffing the reference desk,

FIGURE 11
Wikipedia is an Appropriate Resource to Use in Providing Reference Service
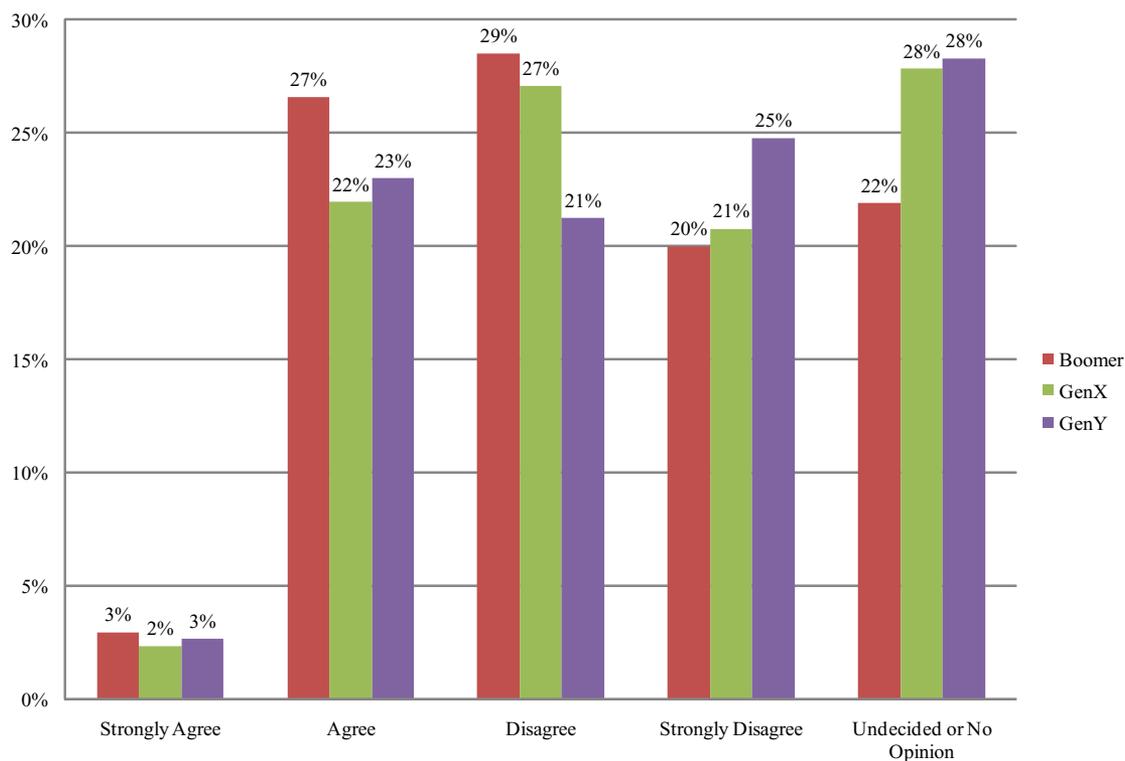
FIGURE 12
What Percentage of Their Time Should Individual Reference Librarians be Staffing the Reference Desk (or Equivalent Service Point)?
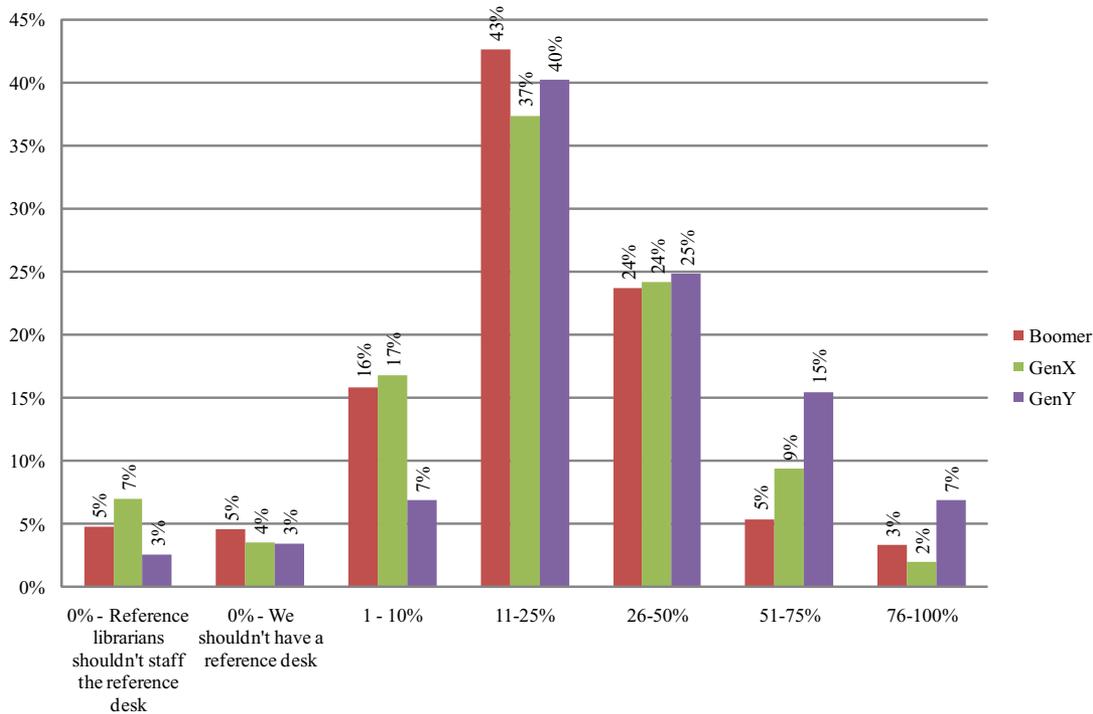
the greatest response overall was in the 11 to 50% range (figure 12). Gen Y respondents were more likely than their Gen X and Boomer counterparts to select 51 to 100%. Gen X, followed by Boomers, were the most likely group to respond that librarians should not staff the reference desk at all.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, greater differentiation in responses to this question resulted when variables other than age were considered. Looking at respondents by their position reveals that those who identified themselves as being in technical services believed that reference librarians should spend a greater percentage of their time at the reference desk. Those who identified themselves as administrators selected the least amount of time overall (figure 13). Similarly, in looking at the difference between respondents with faculty status and those without, it is not surprising to find differences. Those with faculty status are more likely than others to indicate that less than 25% of a librarian's time should be spent staffing the reference desk. A possible explanation for this difference could be that tenure track librarians have competing demands on their time such as scholarship and service that

are not necessarily expected of those not in tenure-track positions (figure 14).

The survey explored thoughts on areas of responsibility that are appropriate for reference librarians. Respondents were asked to select from a list of eleven common library responsibilities those they thought were appropriate for reference librarians (figure 15). Boomers identified more areas than did their younger colleagues in which reference librarians should have responsibility. Boomers outnumbered other generations in identifying collection development, electronic resource management, government documents, periodicals, special collections/archives, systems/automation and web design/maintenance as appropriate responsibilities for reference librarians. They tied with Gen Y respondents in the area of interlibrary loan. Gen Y identified cataloging and circulation to a higher degree than did older generations, and Gen X outvoted other generations only in the area of outreach. It is interesting that Boomers were significantly more likely to identify additional areas of responsibility for reference librarians, especially areas involving technology. It may be that these are the people who over time assumed these additional responsibilities as the

FIGURE 13
In Your Opinion, What Percentage of Their Time Should Individual Reference Librarians be Staffing the Reference Desk (or Equivalent Service Point)?
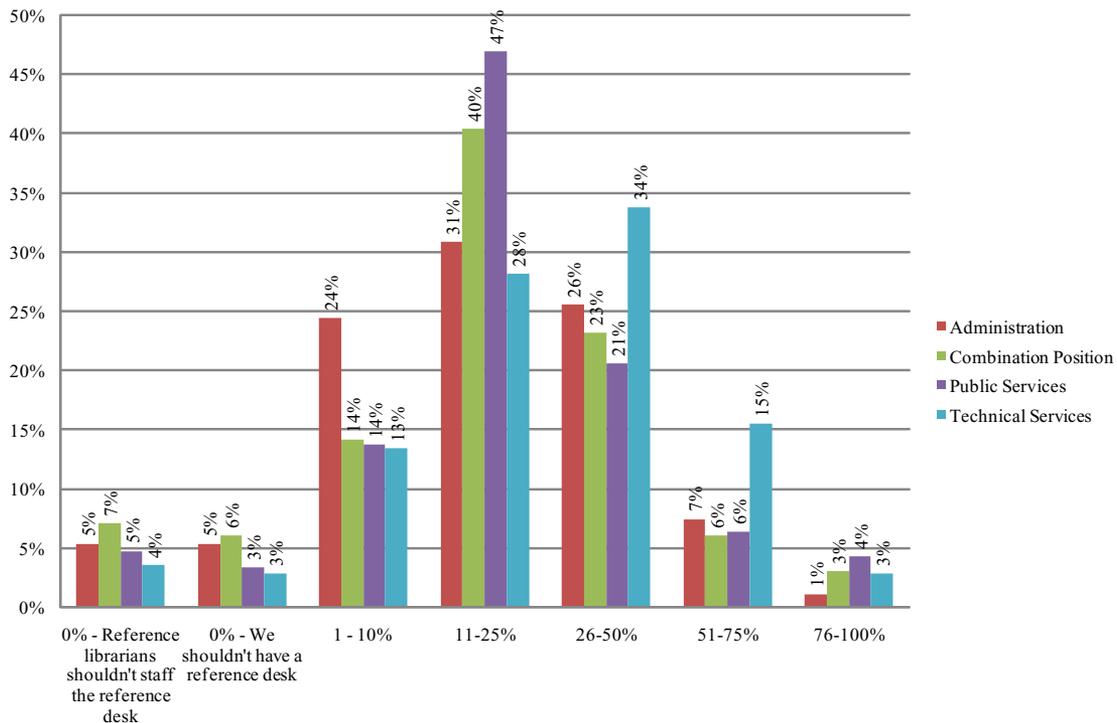
FIGURE 14
What Percentage of Their Time Should Individual Reference Librarians be Staffing the Reference Desk (or Equivalent Service Point)?
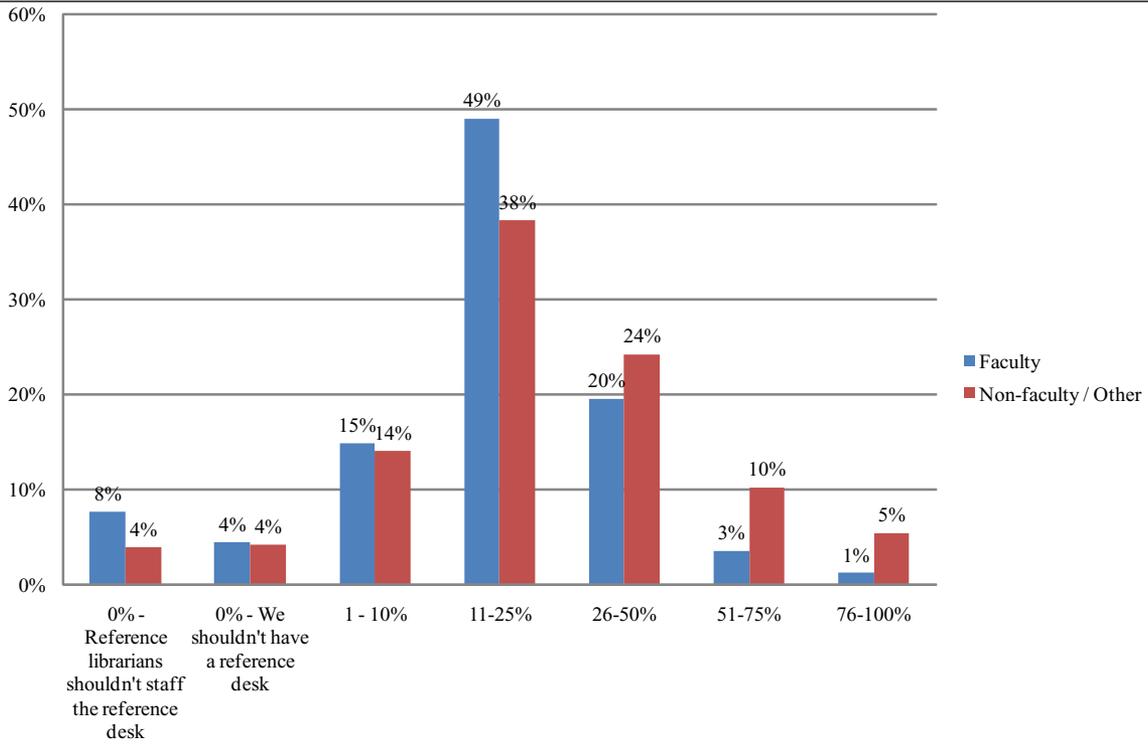
FIGURE 15
Reference Librarians Should Have Some Responsibilities in the Following Areas: (Check all that Apply)
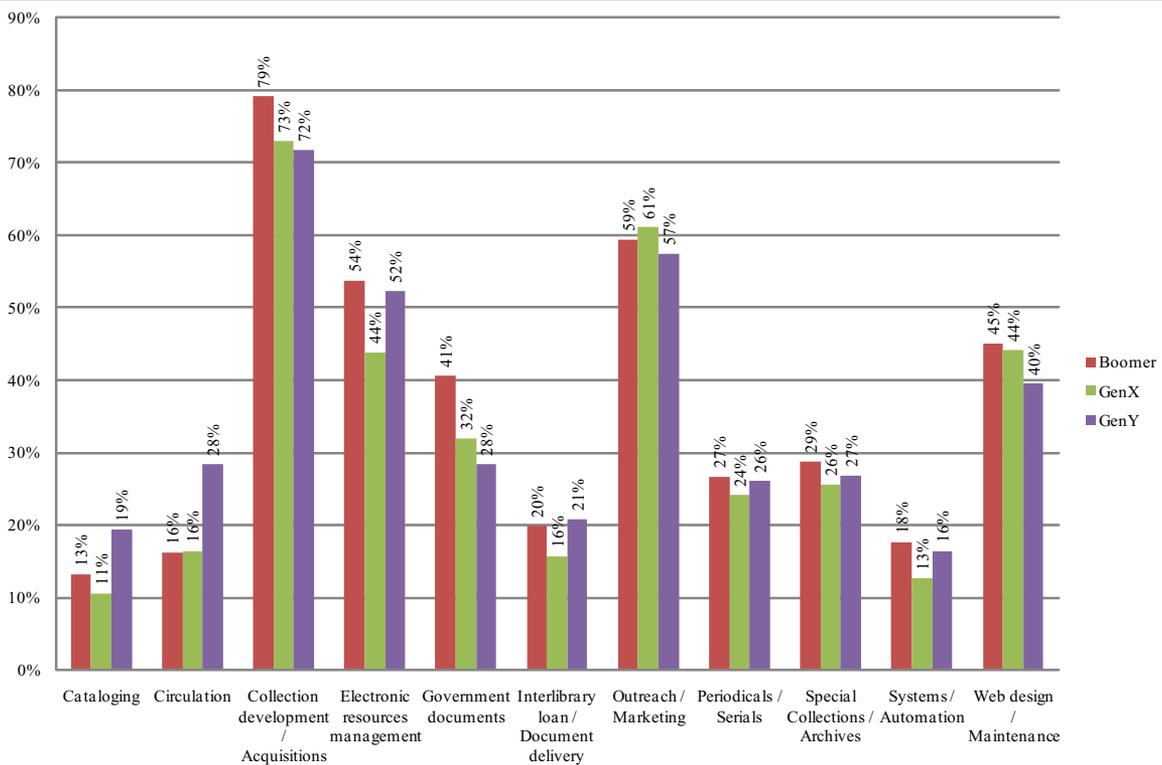
profession evolved. The areas receiving the most Gen Y votes are those that have arguably been the most distinct from traditional reference work in the past. Gen X seems to be the least receptive to additional responsibilities for reference librarians. One speculative explanation may be that this generation is at a stage of life when searching for balance between life and work is paramount. Again, the evidence does not necessarily support the assumption that older library staff are more entrenched in traditional roles than are younger library staff.

Assumption: there are generational differences of opinion regarding characteristics or traits that are important for reference librarians to hold

Another question asked respondents to rank thirteen characteristics of academic reference librarians by importance. The rankings were strikingly similar among the generations; interpersonal communication skills ranked number one, technology skills hovered at about seven, and written communication skills came in dead last. While demonstrating a certain unified thought across the generations that does not value technology skills above all else, this finding does suggest a disconnect between what the profession says it values and how it hires. The initial gatekeeper into most library positions, and by extension into the profession, is generally an application in the form of written communication.

When looking at the valued characteristics from the generational perspective, the differences—albeit minimal—do support some generational stereotypes. For example, one of the characteristics being ranked was technology skills. The average ranking by Boomers for this characteristic/skill is 7.9, followed by Gen X (7.6) and the lowest ranking by Gen Y at 7.1. Keep in mind, a lower ranking suggests a greater degree of importance placed on that characteristic (table 1). The difference between the Boomer and Gen Y rankings is almost one full point. However, the difference in ranking "facility with new and emerging technologies such as social networking" between Boomer and Gen Y diminishes to 0.2. Curiously, Gen X has the highest ranking (denoting less importance) in that category

TABLE 2
Ranking of Facility with New and Emerging Technologies by Generation

A value of 1 is most important and 13 is least important			
	Boomer	GenX	GenY
Facility with new and emerging technologies such as social networking	9.1	9.3	8.9

with a 9.3 (table 2). A possible explanation for the differences in rankings among technology-related skills may be that a greater distinction is made between general technology skills and the use of social networking applications and other emerging technologies by Gen X and Gen Y, both of whom rank social networking and other emerging technologies less important by nearly two points than general technology skills. It is possible that facility with technologies such as social networking is assumed by younger generations. While Gen Y ranked technology skills as slightly more important than did Gen X and Boomers, the difference is too small to suggest significant generational differences in regard to the importance of technology skills among reference librarians.

In looking at other potential variables affecting the ranking of technology skills, investigators looked at how respondents in different positions in the library ranked facility with new and emerging technologies. Those in administrative positions ranked it as more important by nearly 1.5 points than did those in public service, and those in technical services ranked it as more important by a little more than one point than did those in public service (table 3). One speculative explanation for the differences may be that administrators are more attuned to being innovative and at the cutting edge where technology is involved. Public service staff (e.g., reference librarians), on the other hand, are often on the "front lines" of the library and may be more interested in technology that offers pragmatic, practical solutions to existing problems and less concerned about innovation for its own sake.

Addressing the assumption that older generations are more tied to print resources than are their younger counterparts, this survey question included the characteristic/skill "knowledge of print resources" in its ranking (table 4). Boomers are more likely to rank knowledge of print resources as more important than are their colleagues. A larger gap exists between Boomers and Gen X than between Gen X and Gen Y.

TABLE 1
Ranking of Technology Skills by Generation

A value of 1 is most important and 13 is least important			
	Boomer	GenX	GenY
Technology skills	7.9	7.6	7.1

TABLE 3 Ranking of Facility with New and Emerging Technologies by Position Type				
A value of 1 is most important and 13 is least important	Administration	Combination Position	Public Services	Technical Services
Facility with new and emerging technologies such as social networking	8.1	9.0	9.6	8.5

In looking for other variables that could account for differing opinions regarding this characteristic/skill, one finds that library education plays a larger role than generational affiliation. At nearly two ranks of difference, those with a master's degree in library science (MLS or equivalent) are likely to rank knowledge of print resources as less important than are those without (table 5). Similarly, those without an MLS also rank both knowledge of online resources and knowledge of specific disciplines as more important than do their MLS-carrying colleagues (table 6).

By continuing to look at differences between those with and without an MLS, a theme takes shape. It seems that those with an MLS tend to place more value than do their colleagues on abstract, less tangible personality characteristics for reference librarians. For example, those with an MLS rank "curiosity" as more important by two points than do those without an MLS. Similarly, "creativity" and "empathy" are ranked as more important by one point, and "adaptability/flexibility" and "interpersonal communication skills" are ranked as more important by half a point by those with an MLS (Insert table 7). Because the survey did not ask respondents to explain their rankings, attempts to explain the differences are conjecture at best. Perhaps those with an MLS have a learned or acquired perception that the skills enabling librarians to adapt to changing formats and content are ultimately more valuable than familiarity with existing information resources or fields of knowledge.

TABLE 4 Ranking of Knowledge of Print Reference Collection by Generation			
A value of 1 is most important and 13 is least important			
	Boomer	GenX	GenY
Knowledge of print reference collection	6.6	7.4	7.1

TABLE 5 Ranking of Knowledge of Print Reference Collection by those with MLS and those without MLS		
A value of 1 is most important and 13 is least important		
	No MLS	Yes MLS
Knowledge of print reference collection	5.6	7.3

TABLE 6 Ranking of Knowledge of Online Sources and Specific Disciplines by those with MLS and those without MLS		
A value of 1 is most important and 13 is least important		
	No MLS	Yes MLS
Knowledge of online sources	4.2	4.4
Knowledge of specific disciplines	7.0	7.9

TABLE 7 Ranking of Personality Characteristics by those with MLS and those without MLS		
A value of 1 is most important and 13 is least important		
	No MLS	Yes MLS
Adaptability / flexibility	4.7	4.2
Creativity	8.5	7.5
Curiosity	8.4	6.8
Empathy	8.9	8.0
Interpersonal communication skills	3.3	2.7

Conclusions

Results of this study suggest that generational differences in attitudes toward reference services are not nearly as dramatic as assumed. Resistance to change in the profession cannot necessarily be attributed to age. In fact, this study suggests that Generation Y, comprising the youngest members in the study, is the most supportive of several traditional library services and roles.

Initial review of the data collected suggests that attitudinal differences are more likely to lie elsewhere. For example, differences in attitudes were perhaps unsurprisingly identified when broken down

by a respondents' positions in the library (e.g. public service, technical service or administration). The study raises questions for further exploration, such as whether or not responses change over an individual's career or maturation process. Do attitudes change as a library employee progresses through various stages of life and work? Longitudinal studies may provide some insight. Data were collected, but not yet fully analyzed, to look at relationships between responses and variables such as size of institution, geographical region, year of obtaining library degree, presence or absence of faculty status for librarians, and current practices at a respondent's institution. (For example, who staffs a reference desk at your library and who *should* staff a reference desk at your library?) Additional study of the data could look at relationships among variables such as generation, gender, date of completion of degree, and position in the library to see if differences emerge when combinations of variables exist.

This study reveals that we agree more than we disagree, and with regard to attitudes toward reference service in academic libraries, generational generalizations may be just that.

Appendix
Attitudes Toward Reference Services Survey

By checking the "Yes" box below, you are indicating that you have read and understood the description in the email cover letter and that you agree to participate in the research project entitled: *Attitudes Toward Reference Services.*   ❑ Yes   ❑ No

When were you born?
❑ Before 1944   ❑ Between 1944 and 1964   ❑ Between 1965 and 1978   ❑ Between 1979 and 1988   ❑ After 1989

What is your gender?   ❑ Male   ❑ Female

When did you receive your Master's degree in library science (or equivalent degree)?
❑ Before 1971   ❑ 1971–75   ❑ 1976–80   ❑ 1981–85   ❑ 1986–90   ❑ 1991–95   ❑ 1996–2000
❑ 2001–2005   ❑ After 2005

❑ Do not have MLS (or equivalent) degree

Do you currently hold a librarian position?   ❑ Yes   ❑ No
If yes, which of the following best describes your position?
❑ Faculty with tenure
❑ Faculty status without tenure
❑ Non-faculty (i.e. professional or academic staff)
❑ Other _____

Do you have an advanced degree (Master's degree or higher) in an academic discipline besides librarianship?
❑ Yes   ❑ No

Which of the following best describes your current position in the library?
❑ Public Services   ❑ Technical Services   ❑ Administration   ❑ Combination

Which of the following statements best describes your career intentions for the next 3–5 years?
❏ I plan to stay in my current position
❏ I plan to stay at my current institution but hope to move into another position with an increased level of responsibility and / or salary
❏ I plan to move to a comparable position at another institution
❏ I plan to move to a position with an increased level of responsibility and / or salary at another institution
❏ I plan a career and / or life change that does not involve librarianship
❏ Other _____

Who staffs the reference desk at your library? (Check all that apply)
❏ We do not have a reference desk   ❏ Reference librarians   ❏ Instruction librarians
❏ Reference / Instruction librarians (no distinction made on our campus)
❏ Librarians from several departments   ❏ All librarians   ❏ Paraprofessional staff   ❏ Graduate students
❏ Undergraduate students   ❏ Other _____

Who teaches library instruction / information literacy sessions in your library? (Check all that apply)
❏ We do not offer instruction / information literacy sessions   ❏ Reference librarians
❏ Instruction librarians   ❏ Reference / Instruction librarians (no distinction made on our campus)
❏ Librarians from several departments   ❏ All librarians   ❏ Paraprofessional staff   ❏ Graduate students
❏ Undergraduate students   ❏ Other _____

Which of the following responsibilities are required of academic reference librarians at your library? (Check all that apply)
❏ We do not have reference librarians   ❏ Staffing the reference desk
❏ Staffing the reference desk on weekends and / or evenings
❏ Teaching library instruction / information literacy sessions   ❏ Creating print / online research guides
❏ Technology / computer assistance   ❏ Web development ❏ Selecting / weeding of reference collection
❏ Selecting / weeding of other library collections   ❏ Serving as a liaison to academic department(s)
❏ Managing electronic resources (such as databases, electronic access journals, website, etc.)
❏ Supervising students / support staff   ❏ Scholarly activity such as publishing and presenting at conferences
❏ Other _____

Reference librarians should have some responsibilities in the following areas: (Check all that apply)
❏ Cataloging   ❏ Circulation   ❏ Collection development / Acquisitions   ❏ Electronic resources management
Government documents   ❏ Interlibrary loan / Document delivery   ❏ Outreach / Marketing
❏ Periodicals / Serials   ❏ Special Collections / Archives   ❏ Systems / Automation   ❏ Web design / Maintenance

In your opinion, who should staff an academic library reference desk (check all that apply)?
❏ We shouldn't have a reference desk   ❏ Reference librarians   ❏ Instruction librarians
❏ Reference / Instruction librarians (no distinction made on our campus
❏ Librarians from several departments   ❏ All librarians   ❏ Paraprofessional staff   ❏ Graduate students
❏ Undergraduate students   ❏ Other _____

In your opinion, who should teach library instruction / information literacy on your campus (check all that apply)?
❏ We shouldn't teach library instruction / information literacy   ❏ Reference librarians
❏ Instruction librarians   ❏ Reference / Instruction librarians (no distinction should be made)
❏ Librarians from several departments   ❏ All librarians   ❏ Paraprofessional staff   ❏ Graduate students
❏ Undergraduate students   ❏ Faculty from the academic disciplines
❏ Other _____

In your opinion, what percentage of their time should individual reference librarians be staffing the reference desk (or equivalent service point)?
❑ 0%–We shouldn't have a reference desk   ❑ 0%–Reference librarians shouldn't staff the reference desk
❑ 1–10%   ❑ 11–25%   ❑ 26–50%   ❑ 51–75%   ❑ 76–100%

In your opinion, what percentage of a reference desk's (or equivalent service point) open hours should be staffed by a librarian?
❑ 0%–We shouldn't have a reference desk   ❑ 0%–Reference librarians shouldn't staff the reference desk
❑ 1–10%   ❑ 11–25%   ❑ 26–50%   ❑ 51–75%   ❑ 76–100%

Rank the following characteristics from most important to least important for an academic reference librarian to possess. (Number the statements in order of importance)
❑ Adaptability / Flexibility   ❑ Creativity   ❑ Curiosity   ❑ Empathy
❑ Facility with new and emerging technologies such as social networking
❑ Interpersonal communication skills   ❑ Knowledge of online sources
❑ Knowledge of print reference collection   ❑ Knowledge of specific disciplines   ❑ Outgoing personality
❑ Teaching ability   ❑ Technology skills   ❑ Written communication skills

Please indicate if you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are undecided or have no opinion (U), disagree (D) or strongly disagree (SD) with the following statements:

SA A U D SD	Statement
SA A U D SD	Reference librarians in academic libraries should be required to have a Master's degree in library science.
SA A U D SD	Reference librarians in academic libraries should be required to have an advanced degree in an academic discipline (besides librarianship).
SA A U D SD	The reference desk remains an essential service point that works well and should remain largely unchanged.
SA A U D SD	Virtual reference services (chat, IM, Skype, etc.) are effective.
SA A U D SD	The reference desk should be merged with other service points in the library, such as the circulation desk, and offer tiered levels of service.
SA A U D SD	The reference desk should become a virtual service, where service is offered online or via phone, but should no longer be a physical desk.
SA A U D SD	Virtual reference services with staffing shared by multiple geographically-dispersed libraries are effective.
SA A U D SD	The reference desk is obsolete and should be dismantled altogether.
SA A U D SD	The print reference collection is becoming obsolete and should be dismantled altogether.
SA A U D SD	Academic libraries should begin circulating most or all print reference resources.
SA A U D SD	The reference collection should be transformed to an online only collection.
SA A U D SD	Wikipedia is an appropriate resource to use in the provision of reference service.

Notes

1.   Denise M. Davis, Planning for 2015: The Recent History and Future Supply of Librarians (Chicago: American Library Association, 2009).

2.   Chip Espinoza, Mick Ukleja, and Craig Rush, *Managing the Millennials: Discover the Core Competencies for Managing Today's Workforce* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2010); Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman, *The M-factor: How the Millennial Generation is Rocking the Workforce* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010); Bruce Tulgan, *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009); Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak, Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace (New York: AMACOM, 2000).

3.   Tamara J. Erickson, *Plugged In: The Generation Y Guide to Thriving at Work* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008).

4.   Joseph Janes, "Digital Reference: Reference Librarians' Experiences and Attitudes," Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology 53, no. 7 (2002): 560.

5.   Ibid.

6.   Kate Gronemeyer and Anne-Marie Deitering, "'I Don't Think It's Harder, Just That It's Different,'" *Reference Services Review* 37, no. 4 (2009): 426.

7.   Linda Neyer and Kathryn Yelinek, "Boomer Meets Nextgen: Mentoring the New Millennium," *Pennsylvania Library Association Bulletin* 62, no.6 (2007): 12.

8.   Igor Grossman et al., "Reasoning about Social Conflicts Improves into Old Age," *PNAS: Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America* 107, no. 16 (2010): 1, http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2010/03/23/1001715107.full.pdf