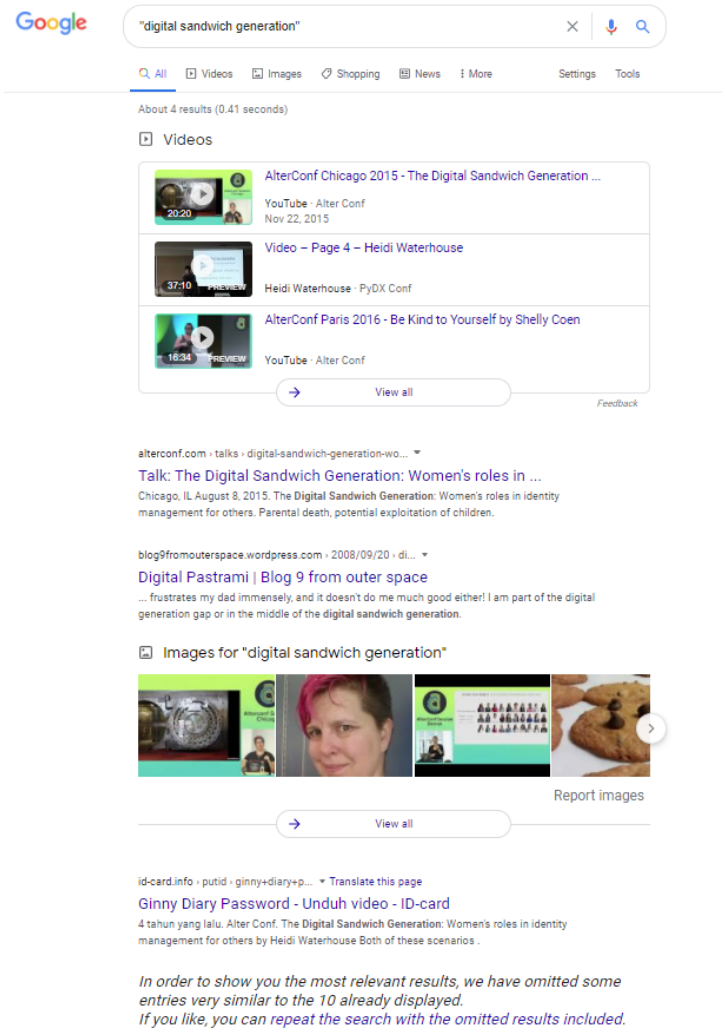
DSG Part 9: New Workshops, New People

Starting from about 2011 or so, I feel as if I came into my own as to training and managing classes. Again, new devices were *streaming* into our libraries and questions just exploded.

One of my first classes featured 20 people with different devices, none of which I had actually ever physically handled in real life. That was *crazy*. I got through about three hours and just about collapsed after. It was a “drink from the firehose” moment that forced me to get up to speed quickly; it’s one thing to search for technology on the Internet, read about it, and even watch videos to attempt to prepare, it’s another to have all those eyes on *you*, wanting answers. That was daunting, but overall, a good experience.

I was fully immersed in the digital sandwich; there was absolutely no getting away from it. I didn’t know it at that time; it’s been looking back and tallying numbers that have helped me recognize where I was, where we are now, and the amount of work still needing to be done.

The very first post was the picture and description of what I have called the Digital Sandwich Generation. Fantastically, to me, here are the *actual Google search results for* “digital sandwich generation” (including the quotes):



THERE ARE FOUR RESULTS. I REPEAT, FOUR GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS. Fortunately, the first result is a fantastic lecture by Heidi Waterhouse I'll link right here (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6X1aNU8zzvs). She is great and I recommend the video; she and I dovetail on many ideas and experiences.

I hope my contribution here increases these results, and I will stack my site with keywords to that effect. I'll also link right to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (https://www.digitalinclusion.org/) as they are doing fabulous work as well!

It strikes me as being very funny that we are smack-dab in the middle of it, yet we're not talking about it in a more overarching manner - well, Heidi was, but she appears to be ahead of the curve (Her video is from 2015).

I'm using the **Digital Sandwich Generation** to include the terms here (these are listed in *no particular order*), and applying them most specifically to the *sandwich*: digital inclusion, natives, access, equity, diversity, literacy, technology, education, ability, understanding, working, teaching, privacy, security, devices, decision making, and more that I'm missing.

Please remember, Sandwich Generations without the "Digital" component are: The **Traditional Sandwich Generation** — Adults typically in their 40s or early 50s sandwiched between their elderly parents and their typically adult children who both need financial or other assistance; The **Club Sandwich Generation** — Older adults in their 50 or 60s who are wedged between aging parents, their adult children and possibly grandchildren. This term can also refer to younger adults in their 30s or 40s who have younger children, elderly parents and aging grandparents; The **Open Faced Sandwich Generation** — Anyone who's non-professionally involved in elder care, which is an estimated 25% of individuals at some point in their lives.

We, as librarians, seem to fit between Club and Open. We assist people of all ages, wedged right between everyone, including not just age gaps, but digital literacy gaps, too. Hence, the name Digital Sandwich seems to be apropos.

I've been fortunate to be in a position of assistance to tens of thousands of people in public library systems around Western New York over the past decade. I've logged thousands of miles and workshops in this wide-ranging area and I hope to share some of what I've learned along the way.

Digital literacy workshops have evolved as the devices, the Internet, and the questions evolved. We started on bulky desktop computers, moved to laptops, then to phones, then tablets, then smartphones. The Internet went from being a luxury to a necessity for school, business and government institutions. The devices went from being almost unaffordable to almost necessary for people to do the things they want to do: travel, shop, communicate. Even if a person doesn't have a device, they might rely on a person or family member who *does* have a device and the knowledge to use it (I have personal experience with this). If they don't have a friend or family member to help them, the local public library is a fantastic fit; so that's where they come for the devices, the Internet access, and even the company, warmth, and atmosphere a library so naturally provides.