Keys to Engaging Older Adults

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Older Adults: who are they?

America's older adults are as diverse as the rest of the population. They differ by age, education, life experience, sexuality, health status, geographic location, and income. Many live in their own homes and apartments while others live with family members or in a congregate setting.

The youngest of this group are involved in active aging: being independent in every sense. They are immersed in community activities, manage their own transportation, and generally are in good health. These adults include the Baby Boomer generation, those born between 1946 and 1964. While many are still working, others take on more volunteer roles, travel, and become active grandparents.

As people age into their 80's and 90's they tend to have more physical needs and functional impairments. They may need assistance with some of those "activities of daily living" that include bathing, dressing, taking medications, etc.

This is often when people look to moving into a smaller, more accessible living environment – sometimes one of the long-term care options. It's also when some people may become frail or start to develop memory disorders.

To learn more about this oldest group, visit some individuals in their homes and residential facilities. Pay attention to their conversations and the activities that they engage in. Notice what gives them delight and what seems to diminish them. Read some of the titles that are included here and become regular readers of blogs and articles that discuss the aging process. Become a good listener and ask plenty of questions. You want to understand what people want and how libraries can contribute to their well being.

Libraries can have an important place in the lives of older adults at every age and their programs and collections need to reflect that diversity. This toolkit is an effort to introduce librarians to a wide variety of activities and issues that can help in developing those services.

Learn More about the Aging Community

The words we choose are powerful indicators of how we perceive aging. Many terms that describe the aging process are cute or jargon-laden while others are just inappropriate. It's always safe to use language that conveys respect.

In fact, in most cases, there is no need to even refer to someone's age or status. As one marketing professional advises, "For heaven's sake, don't call them anything. Let's talk about their interests and values." If you must refer to someone's age, the terms "older adult" or "older person" seem to be the least problematic. They're neutral descriptions, neither positive or negative. Don't call anyone "elderly" or "aging" and avoid 'nurturing' language that implies someone needs caring for. The goal is to interact with older adults while avoiding stereotypes and ageism.

> *Everyone wants to live longer, but no one wants to be old.*
> *- Harry Moody*
> *AARP*

Getting Started

- **Gather** demographic and community information. Use the American Factfinder to find the latest data from the annual American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. https://factfinder.census.gov/
- **Review** your library's strategic plan and the community feedback obtained during that process.

- **Identify** and reach out to agencies and organizations that share your mission.
- **Become** the convener by hosting and promoting partnership meetings.
- **Strive** for long-term relationships with community partners. Do not rely only on one-time meetings.
- **Develop** sustainable strategic partnerships which result in community impact.

Community partnerships to consider

- Local agencies on aging
- Senior centers
- Recreation programs
- Healthcare centers
- Senior volunteer programs
- AARP chapters

- Long-term care facilities
- City/county department of aging, health, or social services
- Local organizations (Friends of the Library, Meals on Wheels, Food Banks, etc)

Organizations that offer services

- Organizations like Family Caregiver Alliance
- Networking and education meetings for providers and service professionals
- Faith-based organizations (social programs and recreational activities)
- Colleges/universities (continuing education classes and cultural programming)
- Banks and credit unions (financial education programs as well as service discounts)
- Utility companies (discounted services for seniors)
- Industry related associations/groups

Learn More about the Community

Become familiar with these organizations and agencies that are involved with issues, services, and policies regarding older adults.

AARP is the national organization that helps people age 50+ "have independence, choice, and control in ways that are beneficial to them and society as a whole." Check out their publications, extensive online resources, training programs, AgeLine research database, and local chapters. www.aarp.org

Your local **Area Agency on Aging (AAA)** is a key part of the National Aging Network created by the Older Americans Act. These 600+ agencies develop, plan, fund, and deliver home and community-based services and support to older adults and their caregivers. Find an agency at http://www.eldercare.gov/Eldercare.NET/Public/Index.aspx. Also, see the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). www.n4a.org

The **American Society on Aging** "is the essential resource to cultivate leadership, advance knowledge, and strengthen the skills of those who work with, and on behalf of, older adults." ASA is a more academic oriented organization that offers excellent training, publications, and networking. www.asaging.org

National Council on Aging (NCOA) is a "respected national leader … helping people aged 60+ meet the challenges of aging. NCOA partners with nonprofit organizations, government, and business to provide innovative community programs and services, online help, and advocacy." Many states and counties have "councils on aging" that offer training and conferences for the entire field of service providers. www.ncoa.org

The **U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA)** is the principal agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services designated to carry out the provisions of the Older Americans Act (OAA). This umbrella agency supports basic and innovative services for adults 60+. www.aoa.gov

All states have an agency charged with administering services for older adults. They usually have online sites with helpful demographics, publications, resource directories, reports, and services. Here are some samples:
Florida Dept. of Elder Affairs:
http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/
New York State Office for the Aging:
https://aging.ny.gov/
Virginia Division for the Aging:
http://www.vda.virginia.gov/

Key Terms

Activities of daily living (ADLs): The functional ability of a person. The primary ADLs are bathing, eating, grooming, dressing, toileting, and medicating. Others include housekeeping, shopping, and driving (ADLs are important factors in insurance contracts, professional certifications, state and federal licensing and regulations, and other practices that define services and their requirements).

Activity director/coordinator: The person who plans and implements leisure activities for the residents of independent and long-term care facilities. Activities might include art and craft projects, discussion groups, games, exercise programs, entertainment, field trips, music therapy, and cooking.

Adult day care center: Structured programs with stimulating social activities and health-related and rehabilitation services for older adults who have physical or cognitive disabilities and need a protective environment. Persons are transported to a center for a full or partial day program. Also called adult day program.

Aging in place: Remaining in the community—ideally in one's own home—as one grows older.

Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs): A network of approximately 620 organizations nationwide which serve the elderly populations (60+) of their local areas. AAAs typically plan, coordinate, and implement programs and services for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Most agencies serve a specific geographic area of several neighboring counties, although a few offer services statewide (http://www.n4a.org).

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC): ADRCs raise visibility about the full range of available options; provide objective information, advice, counseling, and assistance; empower people to make informed decisions about their long-term services and supports, and help people access public and private programs. ADRCs provide unbiased, reliable information and counseling to people with all levels of income (http://www.acl.gov).

Key Terms

Assistive technology (AT): Any item or piece of equipment used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of aging individuals in all aspects of life. Assistive Technology includes everything from low-tech reachers to high tech devices and adapted computers.

Caregiver: An individual who helps a person with his or her activities of daily living. Caregivers can be professional staff, family members, or both.

Dementia: The loss of cognitive functioning—thinking, remembering, and reasoning— and behavioral abilities to such an extent that it interferes with a person's daily life and activities. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type. Also called neurocognitive impairment.

Elder law: Elder law is a specialty in legal practice, covering estate planning, wills, trusts, arrangements for care, social security and retirement benefits, protection against elder abuse (physical, emotional and financial), and other concerns of older people.

Encore careers: The term "encore careers" generally refers to people over 50 doing work and volunteering that combines continued income/compensation with personal meaning and social impact – to meet society's biggest needs; paid work with a social purpose; often fills a need of experienced workers for meaningful, post-retirement work (see encore.org).

Home health care: The provision of medical and nursing services in an individual's home by a licensed provider.

Hospice care: Care and comfort measures provided to those with a life-limiting condition and their families. It can include medical, counseling, and social services. Most hospice care is furnished in-home, as well as in freestanding hospice facilities, hospitals, and long-term care facilities.

Key Terms

No Wrong Door: An approach that integrates long-term services, support, and referrals that are visible and accessible for all people with disabilities, seniors, and their families. It's an enrollment policy with the efforts to streamline access to services into a single system.

Nutrition sites: Organizations that offer meals to seniors at social and community centers including senior centers, churches, and schools. These congregate sites also offer seniors social interaction, mental stimulation, and community involvement.

Respite Care: Temporary relief from duties for caregivers, ranging from several hours to days. May be provided in-home or in a residential care.

Universal design: The design of products and environments to be usable by people of all ages and abilities, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for significant adaptation or specialized design.

Types of residential facilities

Independent living facility: Multi-unit senior housing that may provide supportive services such as meals, housekeeping, social activities, and transportation (Retirement Community, Supportive Housing, Congregate Living). It may also describe housing with few or no services (Senior Apartment).

Assisted living facility (ALF): A state licensed program offered at a residential community with services that include meals, laundry, housekeeping, medication reminders, and staff that assist with activities of daily living. Some ALFs are memory care facilities for persons with cognitive impairments.

Skilled nursing facility: A health-care institution that meets federal criteria for Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement for nursing care including especially the supervision of the care of every patient by a physician and the availability of nursing care 24 hours a day. Some nursing facilities specialize in cardiac rehabilitation, pain management, and other specific conditions.

Continuing care retirement community (CCRC): A community that offers a continuum of housing, services, and healthcare—independent living, assisted living, nursing care, and home health—on one campus or site. Also called Life Plan Communities.

Engagement and Implementation

- **Choose** the best approaches for your community.
- **Establish** an advisory group with diverse constituents including older adults and service providers.
- **Host** informal focus groups where you can share ideas.
- **Conduct** simple surveys with both library regulars and non-users.
- **Sponsor** community forums and open houses on hot topics with older adults.
- **Invite** key community leaders to review plans and offer suggestions.
- **Staff** projects with older adult volunteers.

It's essential to engage seniors in the earliest program planning stages and keep them involved and active as the program evolves and matures. This is also a great way to discover new talent and build ownership of these unique library activities.

Seek out people who care about the library and the community, who have ideas and useful experience - people who want things to change for the better and who can make things happen. Include care partners and service providers, too. Seek out people who care about the library and the community, who have ideas and useful experience, people who want things to change for the better, and people who can make things happen. Include partners and service providers, too.

Finding Funding

Identifying local and national funding sources will help the library strengthen and expand its services to older adults.

Funding sources may include foundations, local businesses, non-profit community-based organizations, and local corporations.

To identify national and local grant opportunities and improve your grant writing skills, use the following tools and resources.

Tools for identifying grant opportunities

- Administration on Community Living/Administration on Aging: www.acl.gov/grants
- Community Foundation Locator: Council on Foundations: www.cof.org/whoweserve/community/resources/
- The Foundation Center: www.foundationcenter.org
- Grants.gov: www.grants.gov
- Grantmakers In Aging: www.giaging.org
- National Network of Libraries of Medicine/ Funding Opportunities: http://nnlm.gov/funding/
- The Grantsmanship Center: Funding Sources: www.tgci.com/funding

Tools for keeping current

- The Foundation Center Newsletters: www.foundationcenter.org/newsletters/
- The Philanthropy Journal: www.philanthropyjournal.org/about/subscribe/rss

Tools for writing a successful grant

- Environmental Protection Agency: Tips on Writing a Grant Proposal
- www.epa.gov/ogd/recipient/tips
- Non-Profit Guides: Grant-writing tools for non-profit organizations http://www.npguides.org/index.html

Measuring your Success

Whatever you may call it - program, project, service, or initiative - the evaluation of your efforts is essential to building program success and sustainability.

Evaluation comes in many forms. For a one-time program, a simple customer feedback survey may be best. If you're involved with a larger effort such as a program series or new service, you'll want to pursue a more formal evaluation process that includes distinguishing goals, objectives, tasks, activities, logic models, outcomes and/or outcome indicators. If resources are available, you may want to hire an evaluator.

Develop your evaluation method/tool as an integral part of the initial planning effort. Don't wait until the end. If you've received specific funding for an initiative, always follow the funder's evaluation guidelines.

Look at these helpful resources:

Evaluation Resources

Outcomes-based evaluation information from the Institute of Museum and Library Services:
https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/evaluation-resources

United Way of America's Measuring Program Outcomes:
www.liveunited.org/Outcomes/Resources/MPO/excerpts.cfm

W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Logic Model Development Guide:
https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook:
https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook

Reaching Older Adults

1

Collaborate

Organizations and businesses such as Meals on Wheels and home health agencies can help to distribute information to people's homes that would otherwise be difficult to reach.

Consider offering or expanding Outreach Services such as bookmobile and lobby service visits or mobile technology labs.

Develop and maintain mailing lists (including emails) for reaching agencies and organizations that serve older adults. Include faith-based organizations, aging services, and residential programs, at a minimum.

2

Partner

Develop strong relationships with senior centers, congregate meal sites, and other locations where older adults spend time. Offer to give brief presentations about the library at these venues.

Celebrate and plan activities with local organizations for Older Americans Month, which takes place in May.

3

Promote

Place materials promoting library programs and services at the library as well as other community focal points.

The Accessibility Factor

Having a library accessible to older adults is more than just following the letter of the law. Older adults may need extra assistance due to auditory, visual, or mobility impairment. To provide the highest level of service for these users, libraries need to anticipate their needs - which means having resources and equipment, as well as a trained staff prepared to utilize them.

ASGCLA (The Association of Specialized, Government and Cooperative Library Agencies) has resources on how to best serve people with a variety of special needs (http://www.asgcladirect.org/resources).

Auditory

- Announce yourself (visually or auditorily)
- Do not leave without the patron knowing
- Speak patiently with the customer, not through a caregiver
- Be on eye level and face your customer directly
- Speak clearly without jargon
- Offer one-on-one and wide area assistive listening devices (i.e., audio loops and FM or infrared systems)
- Have a public TTY (text telephone) or video-phone to access the library
- Offer an assistive listening device in a quiet space to have a one-on-one conversation or reference interview
- Provide real-time captioning or CART (www.washington.edu/doit/what-real-time-captioning)

Visual

- Provide public access computers with screen reader software
- Offer handheld and lighted magnifiers
- Offer large-print materials (and enlarged photocopiers)
- Offer audio recordings
- Offer closed-circuit TV (CCTV) enlargers
- Assure proper lighting is available, without glare
- Promote the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS - www.loc.gov/nls/) that provides extensive information on visual and physical disabilities

Mobility

- Consider a drive-up window and book drops with access from a car
- Monitor aisles for obstructions, like step stools, that can make aisles impassable
- Provide a wheelchair or scooter for persons who cannot stand/walk for long periods of time
- Make sure there is seating everywhere (someone might need to rest)
- Treat service animals, wheelchairs, walkers, and other devices as extensions of the person and do not touch without invitation

Library users who, for various reasons, may be temporarily or permanently unable to leave home should have access to library service. Introduce users to telephone reference and the library's online services. Consider books-by-mail, home visits, institutional deposit collections, institutional visits, accessible bookmobiles, and outreach programming.

Offer remote access programs either online or via telephone geared for this audience.
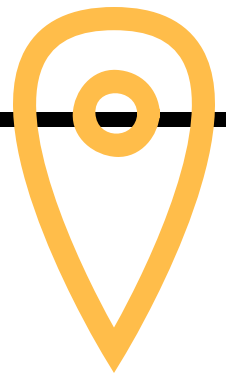
Model Programs

Alameda County Library - Fremont, California

Older Adult Services

http://www.aclibrary.org/services/seniorServices/

This system-wide program provides active living programs, homebound services, computer classes, Wii bowling for seniors, and inter-generational technology instruction.

Brooklyn Public Library - Brooklyn, New York

Services for Older Adults

http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/seniors/

Brooklyn Public Library's Services for Older Adults program provides library programs and resources to older adults and the homebound throughout Brooklyn. Delivered in BPL's neighborhood libraries and numerous off-site community locations, Services for Older Adults programs provide access to meaningful activities, opportunities for self-expression and vital connections with the outside world.

Cranston Public Library - Cranston, Rhode Island

Books at Home

http://www.cranstonlibrary.org/booksathome.htm

Homebound library users who are Cranston residents are eligible to receive books and other library materials.

Cuyahoga County Public Library - Parma, Ohio

Encore Entrepreneurs

http://ww.ccplencore.org

With a portfolio of offerings, Encore Entrepreneurs aspires individuals to launch successful enterprises. The primary offering is a six-week session of workshops including ideation, business plan development, finding financial support, legal aspects, marketing, and business coaching.

Lee County Library System - Fort Myers, Florida

Community Conversations

http://www.leegov.com/library/s_services/Documents/Volunteer/CCProject.pdf

Started in 2011, the Community Conversations Project trains a group of volunteers to provide library programs for older adults in assisted living facilities and adult daycare centers. The project exposes adults to stimulating ideas and thoughtful discussion by offering monthly programs at each location. The multi-sensory activities feature thematic discussions that use poetry, essays, short stories, and music combined with reminiscence. Request information on their Volunteer Training manual and project wiki. See the 10 Tips for Successful Activities.

Old Bridge Public Library - Old Bridge, New Jersey

Senior Spaces

www.infolink.org/seniorspaces

Specially designed "destination" area in the library for three generations of older adults features programming activities focusing on technology, gaming, and lifelong learning. This prototype is being replicated by other libraries in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Sonoma County Library - Santa Rosa, California

Healthy Living @ the Library

https://sonomalibrary.org

Through its strategic planning process, Sonoma County Library identified one of its objectives as creation of a comprehensive literacy services program. One project is a health literacy program called Healthy Living @ the Library, a series of free classes and events throughout the county with a focus on nutrition, healthy cooking, and physical fitness. This includes a class on Senior Health Literacy. The library is partnering with several community-based organizations.

Recommend Further Readings

Here are a few titles to help understand the issues around aging in America.
They also are great for discussion groups.

Brent, Carolyn A. *The Caregiver's Companion – Caring for Your Loved One Medically, Financially and Emotionally While Caring for Yourself.* Don Mills/Harlequin, 2015.

> This complete guide to caregiving outlines what caregivers need to do and ask in a wide range of situations that may arise.

Feather, John. *Successful Corporate and Foundation Fundraising for Nonprofits,Grantmakers In Aging*, retrieved from https://www.giaging.org on November 1, 2016.

> Grantmakers In Aging, CEO and Certified Fund Raising Executive, Dr. John Feather provides insightful strategies on how to approach corporations and foundations.This PowerPoint presentation includes: how to build relationships with potential funders, avoid errors in pitfalls when pitching your concept, and more.

Gawande, Atul. *Being Mortal – Medicine and What Matters in the End*, Metropolitan Bks./Holt, 2014.

> Gawande tackles the hardest challenge of his profession: how medicine can not only improve life but also the process of its ending.

Jenkins, Jo Ann and Boe Workman. *Disrupt Aging- A Bold New Path to Living Your Best Life at Every Age*. Public Affairs, 2016.

> Dr. Jenkins, CEO of AARP, has written a book peppered with inspirational stories, practical action steps, and shows us how to craft a life worth living. Available in large print.

Kinsley, Michael. *Old Age – A Beginner's Guide,* Tim Duggan Books/Crown Publishing, 2016.

> A Boomer's examination of aging as he enters the last chapter of life. Kinsley has Parkinson's disease and his take on aging is "at once a fresh assessment of a generation and a frequently funny account of one man's journey toward the finish line."

Perkins, Fatima. *Passport to Aging: Celebrating Global Perspectives,* American Library Association-Carnegie Whitney, 2015.

> A compendium of resources complied of resources which explore various aspects of aging including global perspectives.

Contributors

- Holly Kurtz, Librarian/retired, Ontario (Calif) City Library
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Resources

- **Administration for Community Living** – ACL brings together the efforts and achievements of the Administration on Aging (AoA), the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD), and the HHS Office on Disability to serve as the Federal agency responsible for increasing access to community support, while focusing attention and resources on the unique needs of older Americans and people with disabilities across the lifespan. https://www.acl.gov/about-acl
- **Next Avenue: Where Grownups Keep Growing** – NextAvenue.org, a site sponsored by PBS, offers the first and only national journalism service for America's booming older population. Its daily content delivers vital ideas, context and perspectives on issues that matter most as people age. The site features hundreds of articles, videos, and slideshows.
- **Time Goes On: What It's Really Like to Get Old** – Written by a woman in her 70s, TimeGoesOn.net is a blog that describes the day-to-day challenges for older adults and offers a lively and thoughtful take on all things aging.
- **Encore.org: Second Acts for the Greater Good** – Encore.org is building a movement of millions to tap the talents, wisdom, and experiences of those in midlife and beyond to improve communities through work that benefits society.
- **Guidelines for Library Services with 60+ Audience: Best Practices** – Library Services to an Aging Population Committee, RSS-RUSA, revised June 2017.
- **ALA/Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach (ODLOS)** The ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services supports library and information science workers in creating responsible and all-inclusive spaces that serve and represent the entire community. ala.org/diversity
- **Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (ABOS)** – ABOS is a library association that provides a forum for discussing activities, programs, challenges, and successes in the field of bookmobile and library outreach services. It holds an annual conference with educational opportunities for all levels of staff, sponsors an online discussion forum, and promotes bookmobile and outreach services. abos-outreach.com

Programming Resources

- **ProgrammingLibrarian.org** is run by ALA's Public Programs Office. It's a place for library professionals to share, learn and be inspired to present excellent programming for their communities. Through resources, ideas, and professional development opportunities, it seeks to help libraries fill their role as cultural and civic hubs in their communities.
- **BiFolkal Productions, Inc.** (www.bifolkal.org) developed reminiscence-based, multi-sensory programming kits and resources to help people create programs with and for older adults. While BiFolkal is no longer selling kits, these thematic resources are in libraries throughout the country. They are still popular and can be models for developing local topics You can still purchase many materials in print or digital download formats.
- **Music & Memory** (http://musicandmemory.org) explores the dramatic impact of music on the lives of persons with dementia. The site includes information on training, resources, research, and activities (also, see their outstanding film: "Alive Inside – The Story of Music and Memory").
- **People & Stories** (www.peopleandstories.net) offers reading and discussion programs that invite participants to read, examine, and analyze enduring short stories resulting in increased awareness, empowered voices, and continued interest in literature. Contact them for training opportunities.
- **Tales and Travel Memory Programs** (http://talesandtravelmemories.com) is an innovative program developed at the Gail Borden Public Library District for persons with various dementias. Each one-hour program takes participants on an imaginary trip to another country or region of the United States. It has received a positive reception from residents at assisted living facilities and nursing homes with dementia units.
- **TimeSlips – Creative Storytelling** (www.TimeSlips.org) uses open, improvisational storytelling and invites people with dementia to express themselves and connect with others. Groups create their own stories based on photos, an approach that replaces the pressure to remember with the freedom to imagine. The site includes training and sample activities.

Notes

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This toolkit may be used and/or adapted by libraries, librarians, and other educators for nonprofit training and educational purposes, including the development of derivative works. All such uses should include the notice "Content used by permission of ODLOS, ALA".

Special thanks to RUSA and RSS - Library Services to an Aging Population for their involvement in this project.

To share your questions, successes, challenges, and observations, please send an email to diversity@ala.org.