Older Adult Services at Anoka County Library
Report of Phase 1:

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LIS 7963: Older Adults and the Web
MLIS Program
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Executive Summary

In this needs assessment study, we interviewed key informants in the Anoka County community and conducted a literature review of relevant research to help the Anoka County Library (ACL) determine current and future needs for older adult services. Based on our research, we identified four key findings:

1. Older adults we spoke with want to use computers and the web for shopping, news, social contact (including Facebook and email), genealogical research, games, and learning something new.
2. Factors influencing older adults’ use or lack of use of computers include their lack of interest in computers, inability to find someone to help them use various devices, and lack of access to computers.
3. When teaching older adults, trainers should emphasize steady progress rather than mastery. Furthermore, trainers must minimize older adults’ frustration with new concepts and tools.
4. Basic computer and web skills classes are useful for older adults, as is one-on-one training. A number of our informants also suggested that bringing help to older adults (in their homes or other places they might frequent) could increase the reach of the library’s services.

The report further discusses each of these findings and references other research studies on related topics.

Keeping in mind these findings and considering the range of older adult services that libraries have implemented, we noted four types of programs that would be fairly easy to start as well as be most conducive to the service learning partnership between ACL and St. Catherine University MLIS service learning students:

1. Professional development for staff regarding services to older adults,
2. Train-the-trainer initiative for older adult volunteers who will then teach others,
3. Creation of a senior/older adults advisory board, and
4. Integrating adaptive/assistive technologies.

We also recommend continuing to explore collaborations with community partners to sustain and expand the library’s programming.

The report concludes with brief suggestions of how future service learning classes might expand on our findings.
Purpose of Study

As the first phase of a multi-phase project to assist Anoka County Library (ACL) in further developing services to older adults, this needs assessment provides an overview of the rapidly aging demographics of Anoka County, identifies relevant issues and programs for the older adult population, assesses future needs of ACL in terms of adult services and technology, and recommends four possible service responses. It focuses on older adults in the Third Age (see next section) and those who are already interested in learning technology. In addition, we looked at how the ACL could collaborate with local entities. The study was conducted as the service learning component of the St. Catherine University, Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) course, LIS 7963 Special Topics: Older Adults and the Web, in collaboration with Crooked Lake Branch Library, selected for its experience with services to older adults and an already established relationship with the MLIS Program.

Ages and Stages of Life After Fifty

Mindful of the negative stereotypes often associated with the term, “senior citizens,” and the fact that chronological age is not necessarily an indication of common abilities or life situation, this report defines the target audience according to Lamdin and Fugate’s (1997) framework of “Ages and Stages”:

- First Age: the time between birth and 20 to 25 years when education, socialization, and preparation for work occurs.
- Second Age: the period between taking on the obligations of a job, marriage, and retirement from paid work.
- Third Age: usually ushered in by retirement when people have time for self-fulfillment.
- Fourth Age: the stage, once called old age (and sometimes referred to as the disability zone), which is characterized by illness, frailty, increasing dependence, and the imminence of death. Nearly all people who have reached their mid-80s (the oldest old) exhibit symptoms of the Fourth Age.

This needs assessment focuses on those in the Third Age who, at this point in time, are comprised largely of Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964). This mid-life stage is ushered in by retirement from one’s primary occupation and after one’s children are grown. People now have time for self-fulfillment and seek out other ways to be productively engaged. The Baby Boomers have approached this life stage differently than previous generations, and as they approach traditional retirement age, they are also redefining the next stage of life. The Transforming Life After 50 project notes, “As adults approach their fifties, they can generally expect 25 or more years of productive living before they have to confront the physical and mental decline traditionally associated with the very elderly” (www.transforminglifeafter50.org). This is in line with our findings. Our older adult interviewees spoke of wanting to be active, useful, and engaged in learning. For ACL, this cohort is a rapidly growing patron base and a potential source of skilled volunteers.
**Methodology**

Key components of our methodology were: (1) analysis of demographic data and trends; (2) a broad review of published studies and commentary on older adults’ learning, older adults’ use of technology, and library services for older adults; and (3) targeted data collection from the Anoka County community. To gather information from the community, we conducted:

- Key informant interviews with two volunteer computer docents, Kathie Kelly and Jim Osenberg, currently aiding older adults in the ACL system; a senior care social worker with Anoka County Adult Protection Services; Kris Niebler, Director of the Coon Rapids Senior Center; and ACL staff Janet Kleckner (Outreach Coordinator), Jenn Straumann (Crooked Lake Branch Librarian), and Jill Smith (Adult Services Manager)
- Two focus groups with older adults, one group of four at Crooked Lake Branch Library and a second group of eight at the Coon Rapids Senior Center.

We focused on asking the right questions (see Appendix E). Questions asked of key informants included:

- Tell me about the center/library.
- Tell me about programs currently offered to seniors at the center/library.
- Are there public computers at the center/library?
- How have clients navigated electronic resources?
- What have you observed regarding seniors and technology use?
- What are some things you think are important for connecting seniors and technology?
- Why do older adults use or want to use technology?
- What are the barriers to older adults using technology?

The informal focus groups of older adults were asked:

- What is great about this place (or community)?
- What do you like to do at the library?
- What do you wish you could do at the library?
- How often do you come to the library?
- What is your experience with technology?

We used information gleaned from the interviews, focus groups, and contemporary secondary resources for a review of current theory surrounding technology use and older adults. This needs assessment was conducted in one semester term, i.e., approximately 3½ months.

The preliminary data we have gathered about the needs of older adults in Anoka County will serve as a basis for future students and researchers to explore in more detail the issues we have identified. Future studies can employ surveys and a larger sample size for more comprehensive results.
Anoka County: Community Overview

Demographics

As of the 2010 U.S. Census, Anoka County's population was 330,844. The following demographic information was retrieved from the U.S. Census website (2010.census.gov).

Anoka County is the fourth most populated county in Minnesota. Its population grew by 11% from 2000 to 2010, outpacing the state, which only grew by 7% during that same period. Residents are well educated and take pride in their work and community. Most have at least a high school education (91%), own their own home (82%), and have an average household income of $69,400. This compares favorably to the 13-county Twin Cities’ average of $65,100.

Between 2010 and 2030, the number of adults age 65+ is expected to nearly double, while the number of younger residents will increase only modestly. As the Baby Boomer generation ages, this huge demographic shift will affect our state’s workforce, health and human services agencies, and beyond. A desire to maintain good health, social connections, and sufficient financial resources are priorities for many older residents and their families. In addition, our older residents possess wisdom, energy, and resources that can improve the community for all.

Older residents across Minnesota are largely engaged in their communities, as evidenced by rates of volunteerism that far outpace national rates. Statewide, nearly half (45%) of local residents age 65-74 volunteer, and almost a third age 75+ give time to organizations each year.
Anoka County Population by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar Year</th>
<th>Total County Population</th>
<th>65+ County Population</th>
<th>County Percent 65+</th>
<th>85+ County Population</th>
<th>County Percent 85+</th>
<th>State Percent 65+</th>
<th>State Percent 85+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>298,084</td>
<td>21,082</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>1,862</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>330,844</td>
<td>32,232</td>
<td>9.74</td>
<td>3,140</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>393,480</td>
<td>53,440</td>
<td>13.58</td>
<td>5,350</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2030</td>
<td>411,630</td>
<td>77,870</td>
<td>18.92</td>
<td>8,760</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anoka County is experiencing strong population growth in its 65+ population. By 2020, this group will comprise over 13% of the county population and by 2030 nearly 19% of the county population.

Anoka County Library

The Anoka County Library, created in 1958, is a service of the Anoka County government and functions under the authority of the Anoka County Board of Commissioners and the Anoka County Library Board. The system operates eight libraries and has two affiliated institutions: Columbia Heights Public Library and the Anoka County History Center Library (Anoka County Library, 2012).

- The Anoka County Library already makes extensive use of volunteers in providing services (see Chart 1).
- The Anoka County Library already recognizes the importance of collaborating with other community organizations in providing services.
- The Anoka County Library has recognized the importance of its adult patronage and has accordingly increased adult library programs (see Chart 2).

Charts 1 and 2 are from the Anoka County Library Annual Report (Anoka County Library, 2011).
Chart 1. Anoka County Volunteer Hours

Chart 2: Adult Library Programs
Community Strengths and Weaknesses

Technology docents, Kathie Kelly and Joe Osenberg, are big assets to the ACL. These dedicated volunteers provide not just time and expertise, but a regular contact and a familiar face. Library patrons describe them as being very patient and generous with their time, and value the personal connection they provide. The challenge is that the ACL needs more volunteers like them.

Crooked Lake Branch Library’s strengths are that the skilled staff and current programming through volunteers are serving increasing numbers of older adults. However, there is a lack of a dedicated meeting space for training and tutoring, public computers are not easily customizable for accessibility features such as large font and zoom text, and busy staff wish for more time to devote to technology help and outreach activities.

The Coon Rapids Senior Center has an active volunteer corps and a convenient location accessible by bus. The center has active clubs with regular members. Members say, “Everything is here!” Wifi is available, as is one classroom, although the center does not have technology for seniors to use. There is an opportunity for ACL to serve these Fourth Agers at the center, a heart of the community.

Findings

As we examined the interview and focus group data, we found that four themes emerged as key:

1. Why do older adults use or want to use technology?
2. What are the factors that influence older adults using and learning to use technology?
3. What types of training are needed for older adults or those working with older adults (e.g., librarians, caregivers, volunteers)?
4. What types of programming about technology would be helpful for older adults?

This section explores findings for each of the themes from our interviews and literature reviews.

Why do older adults use or want to use technology?

Older adults we spoke with want to use computers and the web for shopping, news, social contact (including Facebook and email), genealogical research, games, and learning something new. Many have received Kindles or e-readers as gifts and do not know how to operate or use their new devices. Older adults also use the web or have family members use the web to help them obtain health and financial information, according to the county social worker. Often, this information comes in the form of downloading appropriate paperwork to receive services or in the form of using online banking tools.
Consistent with our findings, studies have shown that older adults generally want to use technology (computers and the internet) to remain active, socially connected, and independent (Barrett, 2005; Harrod, 2011; Wagner, Hassanein, & Head, 2010). Benefits from such use include increased contact with family and friends (Thayer & Ray, 2006), especially grandchildren (White & Weatherall, 2000), coping with grief (Opalinski, 2001), dealing with geographic boundaries (Alexy, 2000), and overcoming limited mobility (Alexy, 2000). Other common usages include leisure and entertainment, information seeking and productivity (Wagner, Hassanein, & Head, 2010). Several studies have found that computer use improves general well being and reduces life stress and loneliness (Wagner, Hassanein, & Head, 2010).

In a study focused on discovering why some seniors use technology while others do not, White and Weatherall (2000) identified five major themes relevant to seniors’ own perceptions of the importance of technology in the world today: (1) connecting computer use to other hobbies (such as genealogical research), (2) appreciating mental and social stimulation in aging, (3) addressing costs of computer ownership, (4) viewing the computer as a tool for other ends, and (5) communicating with family and friends via the computer. This study underscored the importance of connecting technology to what matters to older adults already and exploring computers as a tool for social connections and cognitive stimulation.

What are the factors that influence older adults using and learning to use technology?

The barriers to technology use included lack of interest in computers (and a lack of understanding of what is important about learning to use computers), inability to find someone to help them use various devices, and lack of access to computers. Interestingly, with regards to the first barrier, a lack of interest in computers, Kathie Kelly thoughtfully noted that it is entirely fine to reassure older adults that if they do not want to use computers that they do not need to force themselves to do so. She noted that she has older adults approach her for help in checking email because they feel guilty that their children have bought them expensive laptop computers so that they can keep in touch electronically. Kathie assures them that they can continue to communicate with their children over the phone instead or by snail mail. Kathie also noted that older adults are more comfortable asking for help from peers like her.

As with any other social group, older adults as individuals are differently affected by technology as a result of historical, personal, religious, socioeconomic, educational, and other types of differences. However, across older adult groups, studies have shown that:

- Computer usage is linked to cognitive abilities, computer self-efficacy or confidence, computer interest, education, health and income (Czaja et al., 2006; Wagner, Hassanein, & Head, 2010).
- Experience seems to encourage computer usage (Charness, Kelley, Bosman, & Mottram, 2001; Czaja et al., 2001; Czaja & Sharit, 1993).
Older computer users have more “computer anxiety” than younger adults (Czaja et al., 2001; Laguna & Babcock, 1998; Shoemaker, 2003).

Teaching older adults how to deal with the stress they experience when learning and using computers is an important facet of increasing computer use (Czaja et al., 2001).

Older adults also have concerns about feelings of security, vulnerability, privacy and confidence (Rodeschini, 2011).

The cost of technology is an issue, and cost-effectiveness may be the main factor in adoption of technologies (Melenhorst, Rogers, & Bouwhuis, 2006; Rodeschini, 2011; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2000).

Age-related changes in sensory, psychomotor and cognitive abilities necessitate more time, practice and technical assistance to acquire computer skills (Xie & Bugg, 2009). Age-appropriate training methods and training materials can negate the effects of age-related changes.

In addition, adult learners have difficulty as passive learners, yet learning a completely new skill often encourages passive rather than active learning (Shoemaker, 2003). Older people tend to expect to take a teacher rather than a student role and perform better when trainers share characteristics such as age, race, and sex with them (Shoemaker, 2003; Van Fleet & Antell, 2002). Older computer users, however, often find themselves being taught and evaluated, and sometimes treated with disrespect, by much younger people.

In a study by Cavanah and Williams (1994), one male participant commented “I really think there is a stigma attached as one grows older, to confessing ignorance about something.” Other feelings of resignation were expressed, "I think there was a time [during adulthood] when I would like to learn, but right now, I just want to keep out of everybody's way." Such a response may have resulted from the presence of a combination of deterrents. It may also have resulted from feelings of being overwhelmed by changes that took place faster than the rate with which the individual could keep pace.

**What types of training are needed for older adults or those working with older adults?**

The older adults at the senior center and one of the computer docents, Jim Osenberg, noted that learning as a social activity and steady progress rather than mastery are important for those working with older adults to keep in mind. Educators should therefore expect to help older adults understand technology better but not aim for them to become experts in a short amount of time. We also heard repeatedly from those we spoke with that it is important for people to remain patient while explaining technology to older adults. Impatience and frustration on the part of teachers can inhibit older adults from asking for more help later. In a more general sense, we also heard from the social worker that older adults may experience a great deal of technophobia, and thus any program aimed at teaching older adults how to use computers and other technologies should integrate some aspects of managing that stress and fear.
What we heard is consistent with general recommendations for training older adults. Support includes repetitive practice, illustrated instructions, and overviews of the system to be learned (Harrod, 2011; Rogers, Campbell & Pak, 2001; Wagner, Hassanein, & Head, 2010), as well as promoting computer self-confidence and the personal relevance of the training (Bean, 2003; Czaja et al., 2006; Xie & Bugg, 2009). Specific recommendations include:

- Step-by-step, detailed instructions (Mayhorn et al., 2004);
- Hands-on experience (Van Fleet & Antell, 2002);
- Instructor- or video-based training rather than online or manual-based training (Czaja et al., 1989; Gist et al., 1988);
- Assistance from a trained demonstrator (Danowski & Sacks, 1980);
- Encouragement of questions (Van Fleet & Antell, 2002);
- Multiple sources of instruction and assistance including class presentation, individual lessons, functional “cue cards,” manuals, expert peers, and periodic meetings (Bikson & Bikson, 2001; Bikson & Eveland, 1991; Hahm & Bikson, 1989);
- Avoidance of technical jargon (Mayhorn et al., 2004);
- Self-paced, self-directed training (Charness et al., 2001; Van Fleet & Antell, 2002);
- Small group setting instead of a large group or individual setting (Danowski & Sacks, 1980);
- Dividing and organizing materials into well-defined units where each lesson builds on previous lessons and increases complexity gradually to allow for gradual expansion of knowledge and skills (Jay & Willis, 1992; Mayhorn et al., 2004);
- Ensuring that trainees experience at least some level of success at the initial stage of the training (Cody et al., 1999; Czaja et al, 2006; Mayhorn et al., 2004);
- Keeping training sessions/units brief to avoid information overload (Mayhorn et al., 2004);
- Creating a supportive environment (Edwards & Engelhardt, 1989);
- Holding meetings in a familiar and relaxed environment (Czaja et al., 2006; Jay & Willis, 1992);
- Offering the training in early morning hours which is generally the optimal time of day for older learners (Bean, 2003);
- Providing continuous training over an extended period of time (Xie, 2007);
- Providing social network support for learners to improve self-confidence and the ability to learn computer skills (Aula & Kaki, 2005; Shoemaker, 2003; Wagner, Hassanein, & Head, 2010);
- Incorporating coaches, who play a large role in helping older adults transition from non-user to user. The coaches represent an intermediary stage of computer user, one that is beyond basic level but not quite “mastery” (Harrod, 2011).

What types of programming about technology would be helpful for older adults?

We heard from the older adults and others that the library’s current course offerings of email and internet basics are useful and should remain available. A number of the people we talked to were
unaware of the drop-in computer help at the Crooked Lake Branch Library. This service has been piloted for nearly a year. Now may be an opportune time to formalize and promote it. The social worker and several others mentioned that bringing technology help to older adults rather than expecting them to travel to the library would be useful. Alternately, the library could coordinate transportation options to bring older adults to the library for specific courses. The issue of transportation and older adults’ mobility or lack thereof should remain a topic of discussion.

The older adults at the Coon Rapids Senior Center showed a great interest in the interviewer’s laptop computer and iPod Touch. They marveled at how small the devices were. Many said their grandchildren were interested in mobile phones and iPods, but they were not interested in owning such devices. They mentioned fear of “messing up the computer” and were intimidated by the expense and responsibility of technology ownership. The interviewer asked about their feelings toward a session to play with mobile devices such as e-readers, iPods and iPhones. They seemed very receptive to this “technology petting zoo” or “technology test drive” idea.

Libraries across the nation provide a diverse range of programs for older adults that could also be considered by ACL for future programming (see Appendix D).

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings from our interviews and literature review, we have identified four types of programs that would best address existing needs at ACL and in the community. We discuss each program below with consideration of overarching goals, target audiences, program description, policy implications, and feasibility. The programs are: (1) professional development for staff regarding services to older adults, (2) a train-the-trainer initiative for older adult volunteers who will then teach others, (3) creation of a senior/older adults advisory board, and (4) integrating adaptive/assistive technologies. We recognize the importance of collaboration and partnerships for the success, efficiency, and synergy of community outreach programs and recommend such cooperation to build on ACL’s current relationships and forge new ones.
Professional Development for Staff

Preparing staff to work with older adults is a key part of providing effective services to this rapidly growing population of library users. Older adults, particularly of the Fourth Age, face physical, cognitive, social, and technological barriers that often impede them from accessing information online.

GOALS:

● Foster the exchange of knowledge between ACL professional staff and MLIS students
● Provide opportunities for professional staff to better understand the needs of older adults
● Allow MLIS students to gain knowledge of older adults in library settings and apply their classroom learning to real situations

TARGET AUDIENCES:

● ACL Professional staff
● MLIS students

PROGRAM:

A professional development program for staff could involve students examining the professional literature on older adult library services and the research on pedagogy for older adults. The students could then give presentations, either in person or via webinars, to ACL staff. In return, staff could engage with students in discussions about their hands-on experiences with older adult services. Together, staff and students can then consider how the presented material can shape new directions for ACL. Ideally, students in future sections of LIS 7963 Older Adults and the Web could develop in advance a schedule of presentations for the semester.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

This program would create few changes to existing policy and be fairly easy to implement. Staff could integrate these presentations into their ongoing professional development. Students in future sections of LIS 7963 could have these presentations integrated into their course requirements.

FEASIBILITY:

One of the strengths of this program is that MLIS students will have the time to conduct literature searches and to synthesize research as part of their coursework, offering groundwork for thinking about issues that staff members often do not have time to consider in depth. Another strength is that MLIS students can provide presentations on targeted topics of interest to ACL. A weakness of this program is that it may be difficult to structure presentations so that they lead to concrete, practical applications. Another weakness is the difficulty of coordinating schedules and setting up technology for webinars or transportation for in-person presentations. One thing to keep in mind is that the MLIS Program is a night
and weekend program, so it may be easiest to have programs during those times rather than during usual work hours when many students are at their day jobs.

**Train-the-Trainer Initiative**

Some library programs have initiatives aimed at increasing the knowledge and comfort level of older adults in seeking and using library services/technology. One major finding in our research reflects the desire of older adults to learn from other older adults. Given the increase in volunteerism within the older adult population, training older adult volunteers to train older adult technology learners has been attempted with success in public libraries across the country.

**GOALS:**
- Increase the comfort level of older adult patrons to use library/technology
- Increase volunteer involvement of older adults in the library community
- Increase library use within the older adult population
- Increase independence and decrease social inequalities within the community

**TARGET AUDIENCES:**
- Older adult learners seeking knowledge of technology
- Older adult instructors/volunteers with technology knowledge

**PROGRAM:**
Anoka County Library already has in place a small volunteer core designed to help patrons, including older adults, to use technology at the library and technology owned by patrons that might be brought into the library. We suggest expanding this program and seeking the involvement of additional older adult volunteers. This expansion may involve an expansion of the activities of Kim Johnson, volunteer coordinator, and/or the hiring of a part-time volunteer coordinator designated to coordinate the older adult volunteer activities. This coordinator could actively recruit older adults to participate in outreach programs and training, whether individual or group oriented, within and outside the library walls.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**
A focused recruitment and training program involving older adults could serve and engage more Third Agers from the community. The public library system has the opportunity to help older adults fulfill their needs for involvement and independence. What better way than to include older adults in the programming? This increased involvement would lead to greater investment of older adults in the public library. Using older adult volunteers would also be cost effective.
FEASIBILITY:
The strength of this program would come from the community involvement needed to make it successful. The lateral give-and-take would provide more flexibility in programming as opposed to the more traditional top-down approach.

Senior Advisory Board

GOALS:
- Increase participation and give a voice to senior library patrons.
- Have the community itself define the needs of the community
- Advocacy to promote the needs of seniors in public services

TARGET AUDIENCE:
- Older adults in the community

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:
Since the Senior Advisory Board would be unpaid, ACL could use the existing structure of Teen or other existing Advisory Board. The board could meet in existing library or community space.

FEASIBILITY:
Anoka County Library already has a relationship with the Coon Rapids Senior Center. These active and engaged seniors are already involved in community life and may be open to a new collaboration. The feasibility of this program would depend on having a structure and clear roles regarding what is expected of the advisory board. It is up to the board to define those needs, and the library to design programs to meet those community needs.

Adaptive/Assistive Technologies

The independence and vitality the public gains from communication and information is increasingly dependent on online tools and resources. Libraries are called on to strengthen their technology environments so that older patrons can learn about and use technology with comfort, control, and efficiency. A wide range of no-cost to higher cost adaptive and assistive technologies may considerably improve the immediate and continuous experiences of teachers and learners in the library (see Appendix B).
GOALS:
- Improve the experiences using technology of patrons with mobility, visibility, and hearing difficulties
- Encourage older adults’ self-reliance
- Provide greater access and comfort for all patrons using technology

TARGET AUDIENCES:
- Older adults
- Professional and volunteer teachers

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:
According to the Anoka County Library and Columbia Heights Public Library 2008-2011 Technology Plan, efforts are underway to improve the library’s collection of assistive technologies: “We currently provide page magnifiers, page turner, ‘grabber,’ video magnifier, TDD, accessible website and catalog, and materials including Large Print books, audio books, described and closed captioned video materials. We will investigate available hardware and software solutions which might assist users with special needs: screen/text enlarger software such as Magic and ZoomText; large print keyboards; and larger format monitors may be purchased. Ongoing testing and monitoring of the website and catalog will be necessary. We will continue to acquire library materials to serve a diverse user population and will consider acquiring additional special materials” (p. 17).

FEASIBILITY:
Many assistive technologies are freely available or already installed on the library computers. Some minimal training for staff may be necessary for librarians to understand the accessibility features and learn how to show older adult patrons how to use the tools. The costs of more expensive assistive technologies may be covered with grants geared towards greater access for people with disabilities and technology grants.
Conclusion

In this needs assessment, we gathered information about older adults’ needs from key informants in Anoka County and conducted a broad literature review on older adult services and pedagogy for older adults. The findings from our informants were supported by the literature review, and we identified four main recommendations of types of programs that ACL might implement to expand older adult services.

Future MLIS students might gather more extensive data about Anoka County’s older adults through more interviews or a survey of a random sample of the community in order to provide more comprehensive results. Both ACL and students can also continue to assess the current climate through environmental scans to determine which programs might work best. As ACL pilots some new programs, students can help train volunteers, assess the usefulness of the programs, and explore other programming options.
Works Cited


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Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography

This annotated bibliography includes books, articles, and websites that provide valuable insights on issues relevant to services to older adults and community needs assessment.


Baker, Leitner, and McAuley discussed the Oklahoma Aging Advocacy Leadership Academy (OAALA), an institute designed to prepare advocates for the work of engaging legislators and policymakers about older adults’ needs. Baker et al. noted that much advocacy work for older adults comes from volunteers and those without a professional background in lobbying or other types of advocacy work, and thus the OAALA serves a crucial purpose in training people to be effective advocates. The curriculum for OAALA follows two tracks: “specific age-related content and advocacy/voluntary skills training” (396). The people who attend OAALA established various programs in cooperation with local city governments, schools, and other entities to offer instruction and volunteer opportunities to serve older adults. Noticeably absent in the examples that the article mentioned, however, was any programming run through public libraries though OAALA participants may well have done so.


Although an older article, its ideas rang true with our more current readings and the persons we spoke to about older adult learning and technology. Cavanah and Williams conclude from participation statistics that the potential of those aged 65 and over who could be interested in education is still large. They identify educational needs concerns in health conditions, financial management, living arrangements and contending with change itself. They found educational value for aid in coping skills in areas of role-change such as retirement, widowhood, and disability. Content which focused on facilitating independence was important. Voluntary participation in non-formal learning activities was found to emphasize social contact and anticipated use of the new knowledge or skill as primary motivating factors. Cavanah and Williams discuss the need to consider physiological, psychological and financial costs in developing programming with an eye for educators who respect and appreciate older persons, both as competent individuals with abilities and as a group involved in valued contributions to their communities. Marketing to older adults is also discussed.

This is a brief, inspiring interview with Allen Kleinman, a senior and public librarian. Kleinman suggests libraries can easily improve services to older adults by inviting them to participate in existing programs for adults and young adults. He describes a successful "senior-teen" gaming night he started, where young and older adults were invited to play videogames and form a stronger sense of community in the library. Kleinman also expresses interest in creating senior spaces, much like teen spaces, where older adults feel especially comfortable to congregate and use library materials and resources.


This article describes building a "team of unlikely alliances" (young and older adults) to improve services, spaces, and community relationships at Lancaster Public Library. Along with collaboratively building a teen space, literary events, and "Socrates Cafe" (regularly meetings where young and older adults "hang out" and discuss their lives), this young-older adult group created computer/technology workshops where young adults helped older adults explore and overcome obstacles in using computers and technology.


Ten years ago, the city of St. Louis Park, MN created a strategic plan for developing their downtown core. Once they described the goals they had a series of meetings with a wide variety of citizens, workers and business leaders of the town, Instead if mere surveys, the city used a method of interviewing called "Appreciative Inquiry" which asks people to start with the end goal in mind, and what are the steps to get there? It is a method that relies on personal feeling and emotion to develop a plan of action.


Harrod discusses the motivation of older adults to use the internet for health information. It is an enlightening piece that highlights the importance of independence present in the current culture of the United States. She finds that many older adults were motivated to use the internet to demonstrate their independence and to remain active.

Hibner and Kelly describe their early experiences teaching computer classes to seniors as reference librarians at the Salem-South Lyon District Library in Michigan. They emphasize many mistakes they initially made in equipment choices and lesson content, but also how they came to reevaluate the goals of their computer classes. Making older adults comfortable and involved with technology became the primary goal for the librarians, and they were best able to do so by reworking classes to be social, fun, and laid-back.


Kane, Priester, and Neumann studied a subset of the older adult population—those with disabilities—to consider the extent to which ageism is bound up with other perceived weaknesses. Kane et al. discussed how people with disabilities are often treated differently and as incapable of taking care of themselves, and in conjunction with perceptions of the infirmity of older adults, this perspective on disabled persons can be especially challenging for older adults. They pointed out that decreased spending on the elderly from all levels of government is leaving this subset of the population in an especially vulnerable position if they are not offered the services necessary to maintaining their well-being. Their general recommendation was that advocacy for disabled older adults, as it is for disabled persons generally and older adults generally, is the key to making sure that prejudices do not affect the well-being of these adults.


A larger-scale study of public library services for older adults in three Maryland public libraries, this report provides a unique resource for public librarians assessing services for older adults. The researchers utilized the ALA's seven guidelines for serving older adults as data collection instruments, breaking each guideline down into subcategories of assessment. Along with offering developed concepts of access and civic engagement, this report is applicable to assessing and improving older adult services in many different libraries.


Rodeschini's article studies the relationship between the aging process and new technologies by focusing on gerotechnology, i.e., an interdisciplinary field of research and application involving gerontology, the study of aging, and technology, the development and distribution of technology based products, environments and services. Motivational factors for the use of technology as discussed are divided into
four categories: age and cohort, physical and cognitive factors, sociopsychological factors and socioeconomic factors. It points to a focus on the needs of older adults in their everyday life. Rodeschini argues that extending the use of technologies to older adults means focusing on the interaction between people and technologies, rather than imposing the adoption of technological capabilities suggested by designers. Older users are active subjects in the technological process, not assessed for their "characteristics" but rather, "in situation", in interaction with technology in their everyday activities.


This article is a review of then existing literature/research regarding how the changes experienced by older adults impact their use of the computer and the internet. The authors take into account the relationships between person, behavior and environment in analyzing the use of computers and the internet by older adults and in identifying motivational factors. The authors highlight the importance of training and a good support system for older adults citing that training has been shown to increase older adults' computer self-efficacy and that higher levels of self-efficacy have been shown to increase computer use. The authors also address the perceived lack of benefit and lack of motivation for computer use among older adults, and suggest ways to overcome these barriers.


West takes a big picture approach to bridging the digital divide and simplifies tech training for the busy librarian, providing an easy-to-use handbook full of techniques that can be used to teach not only older adults but other populations who want to learn how to use the internet’s many tools.


This is the "must listen to" item for anyone conducting a needs assessment, focus group or even a community survey. Joan Frye Williams and George Needham describe how to get out of the trap of canned questions and predictable answers, by asking the right questions of your community's "Movers and Shakers" By asking broad questions such as "What keeps you up at night? What makes this community great?" people will give thoughtful questions that the library can set about answering.

The Working Together Project was a pilot program run by the Canadian Library Association that targeted underserved and marginalized population across the country. WTP is a model for letting the community, not library experts, drive the outcomes and goals of public library service. Although it does not pertain only to senior citizens, it is a useful framework demonstrating the importance of listening to how communities define themselves.


This article presents a study which sought to address the gap between research and practice regarding older adult use of the internet through the use of a public library training program for older adults that was developed and implemented as a strategic and productive collaboration among public libraries, senior centers, the NIA and NLM of NIH and an LIS academic program. The study is touted as being very successful in that the participants reported learning a lot and had increased interest in using the internet and expressed an interest in more training. While an important means to an end, the authors also point out the training's positive effect on lifelong learning. The article addresses age-appropriate training techniques.
Appendix B: Assistive Technology Recommendations

The technology available in Hennepin County Library (http://www.hclib.org/pub/info/accessibility.cfm) indicates assistive technology commonly provided in large library systems.

### Assistive Technology Product Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>Product Name</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Windows compatible</th>
<th>Mac compatible</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjustable Office Chairs</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2-3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustable Height Table</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>TBD ($500-1,500+)</td>
<td>If the table is an adjustable height table, the space can accommodate people with wheelchairs or other ergonomic needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g. Balt Ergo E. Eazy Pneumatic Workstation or Populas Equity 4830 Accessible Workstation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Computer Monitor</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>A large monitor, minimally 19 inches, is important for using screen magnification software effectively. For example, the Hennepin County Library Assistive Technology Lab has 21-inch monitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Reader Software</td>
<td>JAWS Pro (Industry Standard Product)</td>
<td>Freedom Scientific</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$1,095</td>
<td>Although it is expensive, it is by far the most used screen reader and the one libraries/schools are most likely to have. &quot;Many people with low incomes cannot afford to purchase it for their own home use yet are expected to know how to use the software to acquire good-paying jobs. In a very unofficial survey of libraries that have assistive technology, this is the most requested and most used product&quot; (Mates,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Reader Software (Additional)</td>
<td>NonVisual Desktop Access (NVDA)</td>
<td>NV Access</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>Free, open source screen reader software.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Reader Software (Additional; Web Application)</td>
<td>WebAnywhere</td>
<td>WebInSight</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>This is a free Web app screen reader, so it is system and browser independent. It is a basic screen reader with limited features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Reader Software (Mac)</td>
<td>VoiceOver</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>VoiceOver is part of the accessibility software included in all Mac computers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Magnification Software (MAGic Pro is recommended, but other options are shown below.)</td>
<td>MAGic Pro (Industry Standard Product)</td>
<td>Freedom Scientific</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Speech: $495 No Speech: $295</td>
<td>The speech option reads the words aloud as they are highlighted. This screen magnification software is very popular (as is ZoomText). MAGic is fully compatible with JAWS, and they can be run simultaneously. Of all the AT that Hennepin County Libraries offer, JAWS and MAGic Pro are the only two computer-related AT devices that are available at ALL libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Magnification Software (Alternative)</td>
<td>ZoomText</td>
<td>AI Squared</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$395</td>
<td>ZoomText does not have read-aloud capability. St. Paul Public Libraries and St. Catherine University’s Resources for Disabilities Center use ZoomText.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Magnification Software (Alternative)</td>
<td>WinZoom Screen Magnifier/Reader</td>
<td>Clarity Technology</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$299</td>
<td>WinZoom is significantly less popular than MAGic or ZoomText, but it has read-aloud capability and is a lower-cost choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice Recognition Software</td>
<td>Dragon Naturally Speaking (Home) (Industry Standard)</td>
<td>Nuance Communications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>This is the most popular speech-to-text software on the market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product)</td>
<td>Simplified Computer Interface Software</td>
<td>AbleLink</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$199</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed for users with intellectual disabilities, this software creates simplified interfaces for the computer desktop, internet browser, and email application.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product)</th>
<th>Large Print Keyboard</th>
<th>AbleNet</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>$22 (EnableMart)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed for users with intellectual disabilities, this software creates simplified interfaces for the computer desktop, internet browser, and email application.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product)</th>
<th>Large Print Keyboard (Alternative)</th>
<th>AbleNet</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>$13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed for users with intellectual disabilities, this software creates simplified interfaces for the computer desktop, internet browser, and email application.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product)</th>
<th>Alternative Mouse</th>
<th>AbleNet</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>$149</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed for users with intellectual disabilities, this software creates simplified interfaces for the computer desktop, internet browser, and email application.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product)</th>
<th>Alternative Mouse (Additional)</th>
<th>AbleNet</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>$25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed for users with intellectual disabilities, this software creates simplified interfaces for the computer desktop, internet browser, and email application.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product)</th>
<th>Alternative Mouse (Additional)</th>
<th>AbleNet</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>$99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed for users with intellectual disabilities, this software creates simplified interfaces for the computer desktop, internet browser, and email application.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product)</th>
<th>Alternative Mouse (Additional)</th>
<th>AbleNet</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>$294 (EnableMart)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed for users with intellectual disabilities, this software creates simplified interfaces for the computer desktop, internet browser, and email application.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Keys-U-See**
- **SeniorMouse**
- **TinyMouse for Seniors**
- **Expert Mouse**
- **Roller II**
Appendix C: Older Adult Library Services Online

This brief list of key resources provides guidelines for serving older adults and examples of exemplary services offered in libraries nationwide.

- ALA Office for Literacy & Outreach Services (2010). Keys to Engaging Older Adults @ your library. (http://www.ala.org/offices/olos/toolkits/olderadults) This toolkit provides advice on programming, accessibility, finding funding, engagement and implementation, model programs, and more.
- ALA Reference and User Services Association. Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults. (http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/libraryservices)
- Transforming Life after 50 (http://www.transforminglifeafter50.org) was launched by the California State Library to address the changing nature of aging. It has become a national model of innovation, not just for libraries, but all kinds of organizations that aim to serve and engage mid-life adults, ages 50+.
- Brooklyn Public Library. Service to the Aging. (http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/seniors/) Example of a user-friendly online page describing the library’s services to older adults.
- Maine State Library. Serving Seniors. (http://www.maine.gov/msl/mrls/resources/seniors.htm) A first stop for valuable information, this page provides links to online information about services to older adults, covering resource manuals, reports, model library programs, web tools, and research and reference materials.
- Old Bridge Public Library (NJ). Senior Spaces. (http://www.infolink.org/seniorspaces/) Specially designed areas in the library for three generations of older adults featuring programming activities focusing on technology, gaming, and lifelong learning.
Appendix D: Older Adult Programming by Other Libraries

A number of libraries across the nation have received Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and Institute for Museum & Library Services (IMLS) grants for innovative programs for older adults.

- **LSTA grant funded California Libraries** ([http://www.transforminglifeafter50.org/innovators/california-libraries](http://www.transforminglifeafter50.org/innovators/california-libraries)) as part of the Transforming Life after 50 initiative have initiated such projects & programs as:
  - Healthy aging: financial, mental (including brain fitness), social, physical, spiritual
  - Technology training: computers, mobile devices, digital cameras, internet, social networking
  - Digital storytelling about community history
  - Collaboration with Parks & Recreation Dept.
  - Career change and career counseling
  - Inter-generational programming with community youth: creative writing, book clubs, community service
  - Library staff training for working with older adults and older adult volunteers, such as the County of Los Angeles Public Library “Baby Boomer Volunteer Recruitment” project that developed tools and resources for publicizing volunteer opportunities at the library ($14,329)
  - Research to assess older adult needs, desires for programs, and desired volunteer opportunities
  - Creation of an online business center to serve Boomer business people
  - Recruitment and training of high-level volunteers to supervise other volunteers
  - Information literacy; internet literacy; health information literacy
  - Caregiver information and support
  - Formation of advisory group along with new older adult space in the library

- **IMLS-funded programs and services for older adults** are similar to the list above, with some additions such as:
  - Acquisition of assistive technology
  - Outreach services to the homebound and those in residential facilities
Appendix E: Asking the Right Questions for a Community Needs Assessment

Interviewing techniques, community engagement, and facilitation are important for a needs assessment. “Good questions evoke the truth. Questions must be non-threatening” (StatPac, 2012). “Taking the time to listen to someone shows that you value his or her thoughts, which is a positive basis for later follow-up. Do the questions leave room for people to ‘tell their story’?” (Access Project, 1999, p.4). The use of prompts to draw out more specific information about a topic or question is one way to help people think more about what they know (Access Project, 1999, p.5).

Library strategist Joan Frye Williams (2012) advises asking broad big picture questions. Ask people to talk about what they care about. If you ask non-library people about library business, they will say what they think you want to hear (Williams, 2012). If you ask “what is great about living in this community?” or “what do you want for your children?” most people will have a ready answer. “Overall, it is always important to keep in mind that our role in the community is not to tell community members what they need or identify the best service for their needs. Rather, our role is to facilitate the process of identifying and articulating their needs” (Working Together Project, 2008, p.19).

Listen to what the community values. Listen to what is working, or not working. Ask them, “If this was working, how could we tell? What could be different?” We want to find out how they want this to turn out, and then we will figure out the path to get there. Management determines principles, and staff identifies tools and techniques to deliver outcomes (Williams, 2012). Douglas County librarian Jamie LaRue (2008) advises, “The 21st century library needs to be community-centric… the library has to assess key issues in its community, and address those where it can make a significant improvement, not just a statement.”