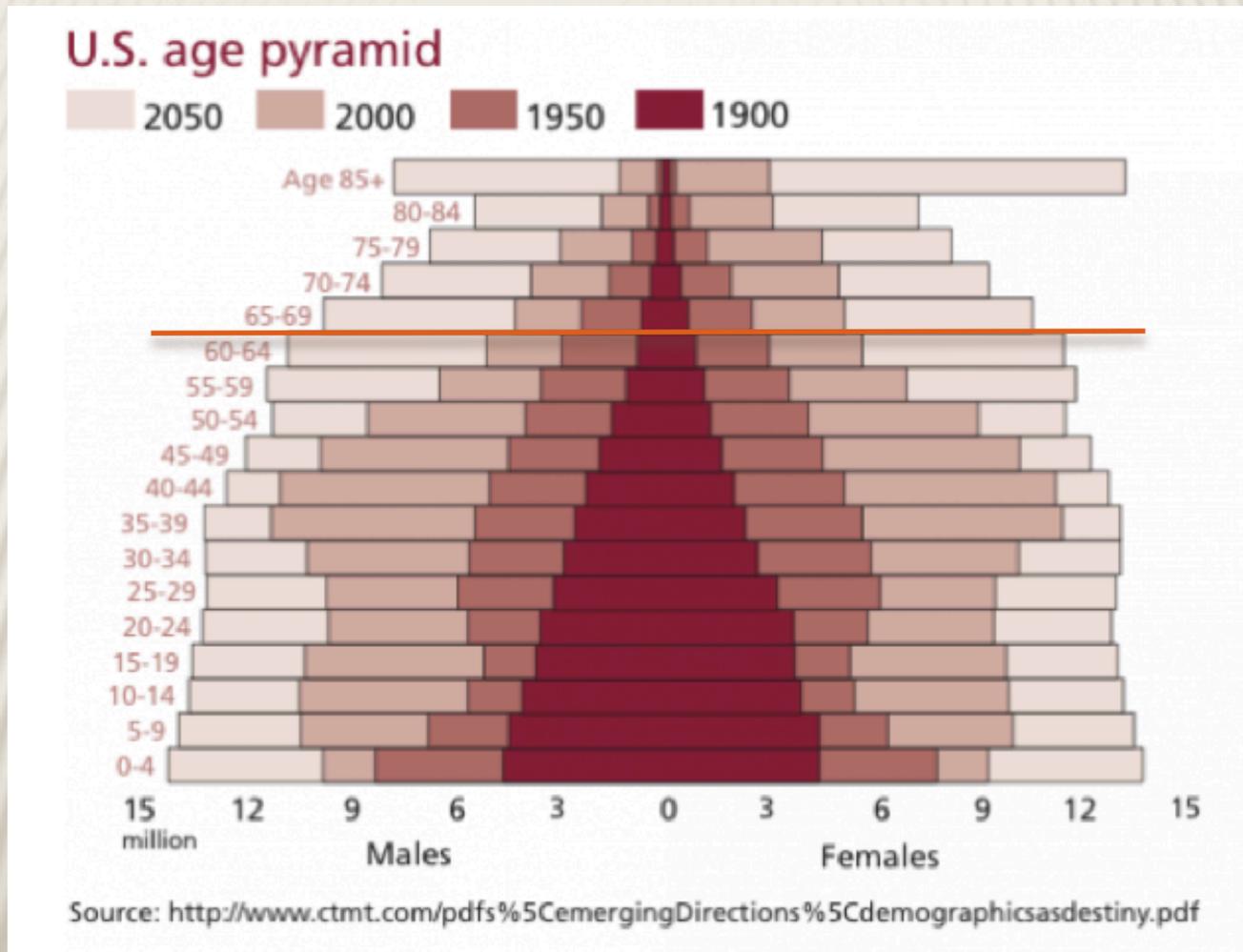


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# **FINDING THE FIRES THAT BURN WITHIN: A COMMUNITY-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING OLDER ADULT SERVICES**

# OLDER ADULTS & LIBRARY SERVICES: A PERFECT STORM



Retrieved from Sociological Images

<http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2010/03/08/the-graying-of-america/featureagingfigure1/>

# RIDING THE PERFECT STORM

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- ◆ Boomers as volunteers
- ◆ From a management approach ...
- ◆ To a community approach to volunteering
- ◆ Ideas in action: Older Adults & the Web, a service-learning MLIS course

# BOOMER LIFESTYLE & RETIREMENT

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## ◆ Lifestyle

- ▶ Living longer, healthier than previous generations
- ▶ More educated, computer savvy
- ▶ Mobile in careers/relationships/locations/roles
- ▶ Want flexibility and choice

## ◆ Retirement

- ▶ A gradual transition not an event
- ▶ Want encore careers in the nonprofit sector

Source: Fixler, Eichberg, & Lorenz, 2008

# BOOMERS AS VOLUNTEERS

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- ◆ Motivated strongly by impact, want to see results
- ◆ Top volunteer motivation is passion for a cause
- ◆ Want to leave a social legacy
- ◆ Eager to use their workplace skills when they volunteer
- ◆ Want lifelong learning opportunities

Source: Fixler, Eichberg, & Lorenz, 2008

# MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO VOLUNTEERING

- ◆ Library recruits, places, and trains volunteers to fill day-to-day staffing needs.
- ◆ Volunteer jobs are for routine tasks.
- ◆ Volunteers are told what to do and when.
- ◆ Issues (Lehn, 1999)
  - ▷ “How to get volunteers to make a long-term commitment for a routine job?”
  - ▷ “How to make them do what we want them to do?”

# VOLUNTEER RETENTION?

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- ◆ 3 in 10 Boomer volunteers do not return
- ◆ Retention rates linked to volunteer activity
  - ▷ Professional and managerial (75%)
  - ▷ Engaging in music or some other type of performance (71%)
  - ▷ Tutoring, mentoring, and coaching (70%)
  - ▷ General labor or supply transportation (56%)

Source: Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007

# MISMATCH OF EXPECTATIONS

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Management Approach	Boomer Volunteer Desires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Library-centric</li><li>•Long-term commitment for a routine job</li><li>•Make them do what we want them to do</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Want to see results</li><li>•Passion for a cause</li><li>•Leave a social legacy</li><li>•Use their workplace skills</li><li>•Lifelong learning</li></ul>

# VISION OF A COMMUNITY APPROACH

- ◆ Talented, skilled, passionate Boomer volunteers serve the library's mission.
- ◆ Volunteer-staff teams make a measurable difference in meeting community needs.
- ◆ Learning together strengthens and inspires volunteers and staff and builds sustainability.

# PRINCIPLES OF A COMMUNITY APPROACH

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- ◆ Be volunteer-centric *and* library-centric.
- ◆ Do good work.
- ◆ Build a learning community for capacity-building and sustainability.

# TRANSFORMING LIBRARIES

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- ◆ Mission Viejo Library

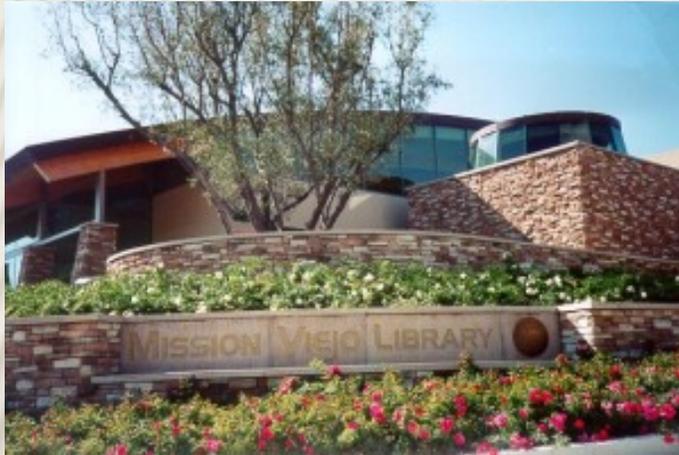


Image: [Mission Viejo Life Blog](#)

- ◆ Readers' Festival
- ◆ Population: 300,000 in Mission Viejo & surrounding cities
- ◆ Household income: \$93,300

- ◆ Monrovia Public Library



Image: [Monrovia Public Library](#)

- ◆ Volunteer Management Team
- ◆ Population: 37,000
- ◆ Household income: \$45,000

# TRANSFORMING LIBRARIES

## ◆ San Jose Public Library

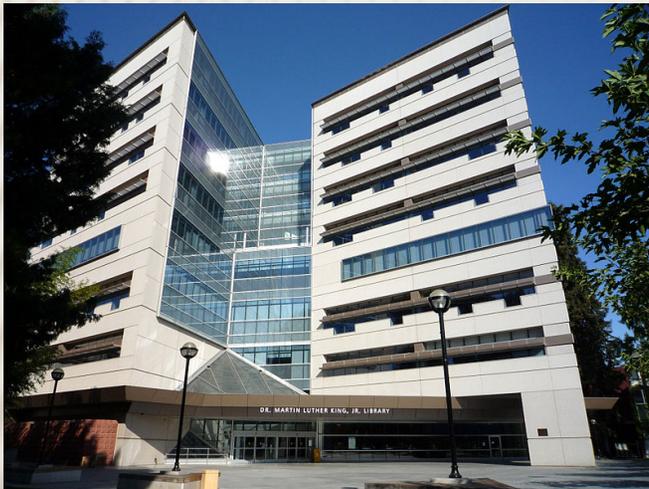


Image: [Wikipedia](#)

- ◆ Partners in Reading Program
- ◆ Population: 983,000
- ◆ Household income: \$76,900

## ◆ St. Helena Public Library



Image: [Coddling Construction](#)

- ◆ Adult Programming
- ◆ Population: 10,000
- ◆ Household income: \$58,900

## **BE VOLUNTEER- AND LIBRARY-CENTRIC**

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- ◆ Develop and promote a new vision of volunteering to further the library's mission
- ◆ Provide flexible, negotiable roles for volunteers
- ◆ Inspire volunteers with the mission and the impact their work can have
- ◆ Empower volunteers to give feedback, take initiative, recruit others

# MISSION VIEJO PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Louise Williams, Volunteer, Readers' Festival:

“Why did I volunteer? I was so impressed with the professionalism and the advancements in what the library services had to offer, and their passion and motivation to really bring a community together under the umbrella of the library. I said, ‘I want to be a part of this. I can learn from it. They’re very receptive. They’re open.’”

# DO GOOD WORK

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- ◆ Make a measurable difference to the community
- ◆ Plan, implement and be accountable as a volunteer-staff team
- ◆ Start small with well managed pilot projects
- ◆ Use volunteer talents creatively
- ◆ Appreciate volunteer work appropriately

# SAN JOSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Ray Blockie, Volunteer, Partners in Reading Program:

“What’s this collaboration meant? For me personally, it’s meant the opportunity to keep using the skills acquired over the past 40 years of managing various companies. For the library staff, it’s allowed them to free up time for activities that they normally wouldn’t be able to do. ... If I were to leave you with one thing, it would be don’t be afraid to let your volunteers lead their organizations. Let the volunteers use the skills they’ve acquired over a lifetime. Talk and engage with your volunteers. Remember this is a partnership.”

# BUILD A LEARNING COMMUNITY

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- ◆ Create an environment that:
  - ▷ Encourages open communication and feedback
  - ▷ Values diverse perspectives and contributions
  - ▷ Celebrates success
  - ▷ Supports risk-taking and learning from failure
- ◆ Provide opportunities for:
  - ▷ Sharing expertise
  - ▷ Professional development
  - ▷ Taking leadership

# ST. HELENA PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Jennifer Baker, Library Director:

“We learn from the mistakes together. If you really cultivate the relationship and focus on the person not just the task, you can build something that’s sustainable. We’ve found that working with volunteers at this level can be successful if we give a clear idea of what we want to accomplish. It’s also important to empower the volunteers, give them permission to be flexible, independent, and creative about how the job gets done.”

## **REWARDS: CAPACITY BUILDING & SUSTAINABILITY**

- ◆ Staff gains expertise from volunteers & are freed to use higher-level skills.
- ◆ Volunteers gain understanding of the library and how their skills can give benefit in that context.
- ◆ The volunteer-staff team builds organizational capacity.
- ◆ Committed volunteers provide momentum for future volunteer participation in mission-driven activities.
- ◆ The library gains loyal, enthusiastic supporters who advocate for the library.
- ◆ Lessons learned apply to volunteers of all ages.

# MISSION VIEJO PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Valerie McGinnis, Director:

“Creating, establishing and fostering relationships with the volunteers has been key to our success. These volunteers then go out and advocate for you. We just had a recall election in our city which was going to be very detrimental to the library. Thanks to our volunteers and members of our Friends group, that didn't happen. Also, the mayor of our city who attended our Readers' Festival, was so impressed that he proposed to the Council at the next Council meeting that another \$150,000 be added back to our budget this year.”

# IDEAS IN ACTION: A SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE

- ◆ Older Adults & the Web
  - ▷ Course goal: prepare students to serve older adults
  - ▷ Service-learning is one component of the course
    - + Long-term collaboration between MLIS and Anoka County Library (ACL)
    - + Enhance services to older adults by using older adult volunteer trainers
    - + Team: library staff & volunteer computer docent, students, faculty member
- ◆ Volunteer (student)-centric and library-centric
  - ▷ Needs identified by ACL
  - ▷ Graduate students motivated to share their skills, learn from ACL and serve older adults in line with the library's mission
  - ▷ Leadership, support and mentoring by library staff
  - ▷ Faculty member as facilitator
- ◆ Good work underway
  - ▷ Phase 1: Needs assessment, 2012
  - ▷ Phase 2: Train-the-Trainer initiative, 2013
- ◆ Building a learning community

# FIND THE FIRES THAT BURN WITHIN

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- ◆ The library's vision, mission, values
- ◆ The volunteers
- ◆ The library staff
- ◆ The synergy
- ◆ Where are the fires that burn within your libraries?

## REFERENCES & RESOURCES

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- ◆ California State Library. *Transforming Life After 50*. [www.transforminglifeafter50.org](http://www.transforminglifeafter50.org)
- ◆ Fixler, J. F., Eichberg, S., & Lorenz, G. (2008). *Boomer volunteer engagement: Collaborate today, thrive tomorrow*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.
- ◆ Lehn, C. (1999). *Volunteer participation in California Libraries: "Best practices."* Sacramento, CA: California State Libraries.
- ◆ More resources at [www.jyukawa.com/main/present](http://www.jyukawa.com/main/present)