Final Projects Winter 2022

LIS 9704: Librarianship and Evolving
Technologies

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Library Program: Assisting Elderly Patrons with Technology

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<u>Final Project:</u>

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Summary

When considering which population requires the most support in relation to technology use and adaptation, the elderly community immediately comes to mind. As noted by Meeks (1994), "With an aging world society, policy makers, researchers, and producers need to give more attention to the role of technology in helping the elderly maintain independence and self-sufficiency" (p. 15). Since technology has been advancing so drastically and quickly, it is important to ensure that the elderly community does not fall behind on essential trends. There are many classes offered at libraries and through other entities to help individuals with technology use, but usually, they cater to people from all different demographics. When creating a lesson for the elderly community, there are many additional aspects to consider, and it would be safe to argue that the rate at which elderly people pick up on technological use and the speed at which they are able to perform these tasks independently are vastly different in relation to a younger adult or teenager. As well, the way of instruction must take into consideration features which are important for the elderly regarding their retention of memory and the speed at which the lesson progresses.

Project Description and Goals

This workshop, which would take place at the London Public Library (Central Branch), will focus on teaching elderly people about various forms of technology. The workshop would be a ten-week program covering various topics related to technology use which elderly people would benefit from.

Patrons will have the option of attending any class for free with their library card and will have to sign up in advance. At the Central Branch there is a computer room which offers the use of 15 Windows-based computers. As such, there will be a capacity of 15 individuals per class, and patrons will not be allowed to use or bring their personal computers. For lessons centered around cellphone usage, patrons are encouraged to bring their cellphones for these lessons. The example cellphones displayed in the presentations will reflect both using an iPhone and Android (Samsung).

The lessons will all be geared toward an elderly audience taking into consideration the teaching style, the pace at which the lesson progresses, and the use of extra materials to help solidify the knowledge. Due to this, when patrons are signing up, there will be priority given to elderly (60+) individuals and a waitlist will be established for those who do not reach the age requirement. If there are extra spots available for the class the day before, a staff member will go down the waitlist and contact the people who are also interested. This selection process is due to the nature of the lessons and in order to reach the ultimate goal of the program, which is to aid elderly patrons in their use of technology. After attending these classes, the elderly population in attendance will be able to navigate various forms of technology with confidence and independence.

Week Breakdown and Description of Lessons

Week 1: Library Technology Part 1

In this section, individuals will learn the basics of using technology in the library. Patrons who attend this class will have the opportunity to use the library's computers to accomplish

various tasks such as searching through the online catalogue and learning about the accessibility options available to them.

Before the class begins, the staff member will take a survey of the participants in relation to their accessibility requirements. After learning the specific needs of the class, the staff member will go over the different accessibility features available to the patrons while using the computer. These are text enlargement, text-to-speech options, volume control, and adjusting the brightness of the screen. After each person feels comfortable with their set-up, the class will dive into the topic of searching through the online database with ease and accuracy. Patrons will be taught how to use advanced searching methods and the use of Boolean operators (and, not, or) as well as how to effectively use the filter options. Additionally, they will learn how to submit requests to place a book on hold or transferred a book from another library and other specific features of the library catalogue.

After taking this course, patrons will understand how to set up their library computers in order to make them accessible to their needs. As well, they will have a newfound confidence in their ability to use online resources for searching for books and putting them on hold/requesting an inter-library transfer.

<u>Week 2: Library Technology Part 2</u>

Many elderly patrons find it difficult to use technology when it comes to checking out books and making photocopies (as well as other technology-based services). These individuals often rely on librarians to assist them with all their various needs, and by having this reliance on staff members, this affects their sense of independence and autonomy. In this part of the series, patrons will learn how to use all functions of the printers, such as sending a document to print

and how to scan and/or photocopy a document. They will also be walked through the self-checkout services the library offers. This class would take the shape of more of a tour as opposed to a stagnant lesson, and patrons signing up should be aware of this in case, they have mobility concerns. Any mobility concerns should be reported to the staff member when the individual is signing up.

<div align="center">Week 3: Email Addresses</div>

This class will teach people how to set up an email address (through Gmail) and the different features associated with emailing. When signing up, patrons will be notified that this is a lesson centered around setting up a Gmail account and not concerned with other email options (Yahoo, Live, Rogers, etc.). After taking this course, patrons will feel confident creating folders and organizing their email to their preferences, knowledge of the use of CC and BCC as well as forwarding when emailing, and other sorting features such as labels and stars. There will also be a short lesson on what constitutes "Junk Mail" and being aware of phishing emails and email scams.

<div align="center">Week 4: Google Applications</div>

This section will teach individuals about the different options provided to them through their Google account. Patrons will learn how to use Google Docs, Google Slides, and other functions available to them. To join this class, the person must have the prerequisite of the Week 3 class or already set up with a Gmail account. Individuals will learn how to share their Google Documents with others and allow or restrict people from editing them. They will also learn how to use and manipulate templates available through the application as well as other basic word-

processing features. They will also learn the basics of creating a slide show using Google Slides and learn how to use Google Drive.

Week 5: Smartphones Part 1

In this class, patrons will learn how to text message/iMessage and the difference between them, use of emojis and short forms, and learn how to make their phones more accessible to them (large text, dim the backlight, text-to-speech, etc.). To join this class, patrons will be informed that they must bring a fully charged cellphone (either iPhone or Android). When signing up, patrons will be asked which type of cellphone they possess in order to allow the instructor to prepare accordingly. Those without smartphones, but still wanting to join will be placed on a waitlist and notified the day before if there are any spots still available. Since the course is focused on assisting those with the existing technology, individuals already in possession of smartphones will be prioritized.

Additional skills which will be taught will be how to change language options for when text messaging or typing in general, how to disable and enable read receipts (iMessage), and delete unwanted text messages. Regarding unwanted messages, patrons will be taught how to spot scam text messages and the dangers of clicking links. There will also be a slideshow presentation showing these individuals examples of phishing text messages and, once they have spotted the disinformation, how to block those numbers.

Week 6: Smartphones Part 2

In this lesson, people will learn how to use specific elements of their phone, such as how to fully utilize the camera option (regular pictures, extra features, filters, video recording, etc.) and how to send pictures to their friends/loved ones. To join this class, patrons will be informed

that they must bring a fully charged cellphone (either iPhone or Android [Samsung]). When signing up, patrons will be asked which type of cellphone they possess to allow the instructor to prepare accordingly. This class is meant to be a fun and engaging experience for elderly users and allow them to use more than the basic functions of calling and texting on their devices. Most of the emphasis will be on the camera feature, since this is a feature usually underutilized by elderly individuals. Additionally, they will learn how to create and share their albums, select their "favorite" pictures, and add them to a specific album, as well as how to send pictures via text message/iMessage, email, and airdrop (for iPhone users).

Week 7: Facebook

Since Facebook is one of the major social media sites for elderly/mature individuals and provides a space where they can connect with their peers and people from their past, it is important to teach this demographic of people how to fully utilize this platform. This class will teach individuals how to create an account and events, how to add and search for friends (including the library), interact with people and the use of Facebook Messenger. The only prerequisite for joining this class is to have a valid email address which they can access during the lesson. Patrons are not required to have a smartphone, but it is encouraged. The lesson will cover setting up a Facebook account through the use of a computer and how to access it on their phones (if they bring a smartphone).

Week 8: Instagram

Similar to the Week 7 lesson on Facebook, this lesson will be focused on social media, particularly Instagram. With more and more people joining this social network, it is important for elderly people to know how to utilize this platform. This lesson will focus on how to set up an

account, post pictures and stories, how to share content, comment, and appropriate etiquette. There will also be time dedicated to showing patrons how to create saved folders within their account and how to add/set up an additional Instagram account which is linked to their main page. Like in Week 7, the only prerequisite to join this class is to have a valid and accessible email. There will also be time dedicated to setting Instagram up on their smartphones if the patron is in possession of one.

Week 9: Zoom

With the world and technology rapidly evolving, it is crucial to be able to connect to people via a video platform. As well, since the library has multiple programs available through Zoom, it is important for elderly patrons to learn how to use this platform with ease. In this class, patrons will learn how to use all aspects of Zoom and how to join library programs. Patrons will have the option of attending in person or on Zoom. There will be a capacity of 15 people for the in-person class and a capacity of 20 individuals able to join via Zoom. The only prerequisite needed is having a valid email address which patrons can access during the lesson. After this course is finished, patrons will be able to not only join zoom meetings but also host them as well. They will learn how to use the polling options, reactions, change their digital background, as well as important functions such as mute and turning one's video off and on.

Week 10: Scams and Disinformation

With the rapid evolution of technology and the increase in the aging population, many sinister individuals attempt to take advantage of seniors through various forms of scams. Seniors are prime targets due to their lack of technology proficiency, health issues such as memory impairment, and their willingness to carry on a conversation (Bruce, 2008). In response to this,

this final class will teach patrons how to spot fake information, including phone scams and other forms of disinformation, through technological spaces. The lesson will begin with a time for people to share their experiences with scams if they feel comfortable doing so. After this, the staff member will focus on scams through telephones and teach patrons proper ways of addressing such cons. After this, the lesson will turn to email phishing and text message scams. The lesson will conclude with an optional question-and-answer period for individuals who have specific questions that were not addressed in the main lesson.

Conclusion and Evaluation:

At the end of each lesson, there will be an optional survey passed out to participants. The purpose of these surveys is to analyze the usefulness of these classes and see if there is a need for them to run again in the future. Staff members signing up individuals will also be asked to take note of how many people wanted to sign up but were not able to due to space or other circumstances. Since the classes are split into multiple one-off/two-part classes, if there is a certain week which appears to be more popular or beneficial to the public, the library will be able to schedule a future lesson.

Part of the strategic goals set by the London Public Library (2021) is to, "actively engage with patrons to understand their unique needs, exhaust all tools and resources in doing so, and work to identify barriers in helping Londoners succeed" (p. 6). By creating and implementing these classes, the London Public Library will directly address its strategic plan by helping a community which is often overlooked, while also making up a large proportion of the patrons visiting public libraries across London, Ontario. These classes will ultimately help the London aging community develop their knowledge of technology, and how to utilize all aspects of the

library in an online and technological setting, as well as protect this population from potential harm.

<u>Reflection:</u>

When thinking about technology and the library in terms of a lesson or training module, I wanted to focus on a demographic that is predominantly underserved and disregarded. At first, I thought of making a training seminar for young children to teach them about potential dangers regarding technology. However, though many children and young adults need extra help in relation to cybersecurity, there is another part of the population that one could argue, needs more help in more areas of technology than just cybersecurity. This brought me to create a ten-week training program for the elderly population of London, Ontario. When assessing the needs of this group of people, many aspects of technology and using technology in library spaces arose. Many individuals in this demographic still rely on the traditional checkout features and may not have the knowledge of different features available to them through the library's website, such as reserving books and inter-library transfers. Additionally, there are many aspects of technology that have progressed so quickly that senior citizens may not have been able to adapt quickly enough to these changes. These include the utilization of smartphone technology, the rampant use of social media, and the onslaught of scams through technological means.

Another reason to run this type of program in a library setting is due to the trust relationship developed within this group of patrons. To many people, especially aging populations, who grew up with the institution of the library being a haven for information retrieval, the library has become a trusted entity in the realm of public services. On the contrary, the internet, particularly for elderly individuals, is seen as the complete opposite. The internet is viewed as a scary and intimidating space where misinformation and disinformation run rampant.

Thus, if this aging population attempts to find information online, especially regarding scams, they may find themselves in the middle of a predicament they were trying to prevent. By running this type of program in a library setting, this reassures this demographic of people that the information provided was curated in their best interest. Additionally, by operating this program through the library, it will help develop a stronger sense of community and reaffirm the trust-relationship with this group of people.

Currently, there are no programs running in the London Public focused on helping seniors adapt to technology. Due to this fact, there is an apparent need to fill this gap and provide programs for the population of London that are not only focused on book clubs and ESL lessons. As stated in the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan (2021), "Patrons will enjoy and utilize modern program and meeting spaces equipped to hose a broad spectrum of experiences and engage with participants in person and virtually" (p. 8). By creating and executing this program, this is in direct connection with the London Public Library's current strategic plan through the utilization of modern programs and aiding patrons in the use of its digital resources and spaces.

With technology advancing at an alarming rate and the access to information increasing by the minute, it is imperative that libraries adapt to the evolving world. By implementing programs such as this one, the library is moving forward into the digital era while still maintaining its tenants of community engagement and aiding in the dissemination of information. As well, the library is often critiqued for how it is "stuck in the past" and not adapting to the evolving use of technology. By running programs such as this one, the library will display its own way of adapting to evolving technologies while staying in line with its core principles.

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