Retaining Intellectual Capital
Retired Faculty and Academic Libraries

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The intellectual life of retired faculty members, whose numbers will skyrocket in the coming years, can be enhanced with adequate library support. This paper provides a descriptive study of the professional activities of emeriti faculty at one large public research university, assessing their needs for continued access to library resources and their knowledge of what library privileges they continue to have in retirement. The results of a brief survey of all public Association of Research Libraries (ARL) webpages to determine what peer institutions are providing for their retired faculty are also presented. The paper concludes with a set of policy recommendations for how academic libraries can better serve the needs of their emeriti faculty.

The retirement of the baby boomer generation in the coming decades is one of the most important socioeconomic forces shaping the future of public policy and business strategies in the country. It has attracted attention from all segments of society, from politicians to the healthcare industry to the housing industry. Persons over sixty-five are the fastest growing population group in the United States, and their numbers will begin skyrocketing in 2011 when baby boomers (people born between 1946 and 1965) start reaching retirement age. The number of people in the United States age sixty-five and older is projected to increase from about 40 million in 2010 to 55 million in 2020 and almost 70 million by 2030. The percentage of the U.S. population sixty-five and older will increase 15 percent between 2000 and 2010, but is projected to increase by almost 36 percent between 2010 and 2020.[1]

Although mandatory retirement policies became illegal in 1994, these demographic trends translate inevitably into a rapidly growing number of retired faculty in university communities.[2] One third of all U.S. college professors are now fifty-five or older, compared to less than a quarter in 1989. The percentage of full-time faculty aged seventy and older has tripled in the past ten years.[3] All of these figures foreshadow a large increase in the number of retired faculty in the coming decades.

Colleges and universities have always dealt with the retirement of their oldest and most experienced professors and their replacement by younger cohorts, of course, but the acceleration of this trend in the coming years could put many academic institutions under unusual stress. University libraries, as the "collectors, organizers, preservers, and disseminators of information," are uniquely placed to help ease the stress

faced by the university from the upcoming explosion of baby boomers retiring.[4] Libraries not only could support the continued intellectual activity of these faculty in retirement, but they can also help preserve the corpus of their work and, as much as possible, make the accumulated knowledge available to future generations of university faculty.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concept of intellectual capital provides a theoretical framework to help understand the stress that can be caused when an unusually large number of highly experienced members leave any organization. As sociologists, economists, and management theorists have long recognized, members of any organization collectively develop certain "human" or "intellectual capital" that is essential to the efficient operation of the organization. Some theorists define these terms narrowly, limiting them to those things an organization is designed to do. For example, Baron and Armstrong define human capital as "the knowledge, skills, abilities and capacity to develop and innovate possessed by people in an organization," while they define intellectual capital as "the stocks and flows of knowledge available to an organization."[5] In both cases, Baron and Armstrong, representing a management perspective, focus almost exclusively on the organization's ability to do what it was created to do.

Other theorists define these terms more broadly. Nahapiet and Ghoshal refer to intellectual capital as the "knowledge and knowing capability of a social collectivity, such as an organization, intellectual community, or professional practice."[6] While this definition clearly incorporates people in a formal organization learning how to best achieve the organization's goals, because it includes more informal, amorphous "social collectivities" as well, it would also incorporate serendipitous discovery of new knowledge and innovative ways to achieve extraorganizational goals. This broader definition seems a better fit when thinking about what faculty bring to a university. But however defined, virtually any organization will benefit if it can somehow capture and continue to have access to the human and intellectual capital—or more simply, the wisdom—of its older, highly experienced members, even into their retirement.

This statement is particularly true of academic institutions and their emeriti faculty for several reasons.[7] First, all faculty are members of larger though less formally organized intellectual disciplines that, like more formal organizations, have their own norms, values, worldviews, and standard operating procedures. The intellectual capital gained from professional activities in an academic discipline is crucial knowledge for junior faculty in that same discipline to acquire, information that more experienced—if sometimes officially retired—faculty are in a unique position to share in formal or informal mentoring relationships. Additionally, senior faculty often have national or even international reputations to bring to their departments and universities, and their prestige influences how the institution is viewed externally.[8]

Even more to the point, however, a core mission of research universities (their *raison d'etre*) is to generate new knowledge—knowledge that is open and freely distributed to people outside of the organization. It is the faculty whose job it is to produce this knowledge. Universities devote significant resources to the development of the research capabilities and careers of their faculty and typically see continued and often growing benefits from that investment as individual researchers become more experienced and better at their jobs. This falls under the broader meaning of intellectual capital, but it is extremely valuable to academic institutions—and they should want to continue to reap the benefits from their investment as long as they can.

There is very little extant research on what retired college and university faculty actually do in retirement, but what exists clearly suggests that a significant number of senior faculty continue to be professionally active in some manner. Faculty are an occupational group that demonstrates a lifelong commitment to work, and the boundaries between work and leisure are often blurred.[9] In a series of interview studies with older and retired faculty, Dorfman and her colleagues found that 70 percent of senior faculty continue to be engaged in some type of professional activity well into retirement, with research and writing, followed by teaching, heading the list.[10] "For many of the retirees, the secret of happiness in retirement was professional role continuity."[11] Thus it is in both the university's and the retiree's interests to develop the opportunity structures for retired faculty to continue being productive researchers and teachers. Universities should do everything they possibly can to retain the intellectual capital of their retired faculty, maintain the products of their faculty's research careers (possibly in institutional repositories), and obtain as much new knowledge as they can from the continued professional activities of emeriti faculty.

OVERVIEW OF METHODS

One of the opportunity structures that is vital to the continued research productivity of retired fac-

ulty is access to library resources. Yet herein lies a dilemma. While public libraries offer innovative programs for senior citizens of all stripes, and guidelines have been developed for library services to older adults, there is no literature on what academic libraries are doing for emeriti faculty.[12] In fact, we know very little about what types of library resources retired faculty feel they need to continue their research, nor even if they are aware of library resources that are available to them.

The aim of this project was to determine the extent of current use of library resources by retired faculty at Rutgers University, to assess their awareness of issues surrounding modern digital libraries, and to identify any general barriers that retired faculty experience in their use of the university's libraries. During the first phase of the investigation, a number of small group meetings were conducted with a convenience sample of retired faculty and faculty anticipating retirement in the near future. The common themes from these discussions are reported below, with direct quotations that help illustrate the types of barriers that are experienced by retired faculty. The second phase of this research consisted of a systematic search of the library webpages of the public university members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) to determine the suite of services offered to retired faculty. This brief survey of what other research universities are doing for retired faculty suggests that the problems faced by Rutgers faculty generalize to retired faculty at many other universities around the country. I conclude with a set of service and policy recommendations about how academic libraries can better serve the needs of their emeriti faculty.

STUDY 1: ASSESSING THE LIBRARY NEEDS OF EMERITI FACULTY AT RUTGERS

Over the course of the 2006–07 academic year, a series of small group meetings were held with a total of a dozen professors emeriti and older, soon-to-be retired faculty. These meetings were led by the author and one other Rutgers librarian. Discussions were informal but followed a prepared set of questions. None of the participants saw any of the questions before the discussions began. The project adhered to institutional guidelines for human subjects research.

Among the participants were a current but retiring dean and a former dean. Care was taken that there were representatives from the natural and social sciences, the humanities, and several professional schools. Participation was limited to

retired and retiring faculty still living in the university area who could easily travel to campus, where the group discussions were conducted. The discussions focused on how these retired faculty typically acquired necessary information for research and teaching during their active (that is, preretirement) years, whether they had received any information about library services once they had retired, and whether or how they were currently using library services. Participants were also introduced to the newly released institutional repository, a set of digital services that preserves the intellectual capital of the university, and asked if they would be interested in contributing to it.

At the time these discussions were held, library services for retired faculty were in transition at Rutgers, and there was some confusion about what library privileges were available to retired faculty. Emeriti retained all in-house library privileges, but remote Internet access to electronic resources was not available.

RESULTS

The following issues arose in all discussions.

1. Many but not all retired faculty continue to engage in intellectual and professional activities. This includes teaching short, noncredit courses, serving on dissertation committees, and traditional research and publication activity.

> During my teaching years, we knew that the library was primarily for doing research . . . . Now (that I am retired) I still use the library quite a bit. . . . Occasionally I read a manuscript from a journal and then very often find it necessary to look up what else this author has done and certain related points. The other use now is I occasionally teach a (lifelong learning) course, and to prepare this course, I use the library—*retired chemistry professor*[13]

> Since retiring, . . . I've been teaching in the summer session running elementary labs . . . at least half of them every year. So it's a new bunch and an old bunch (of preparations) every year. I try to integrate it when I do the summer session. So (there is) a lot of Web stuff in that aspect of teaching. Also . . . textbooks and reference books were useful for background—*retired astronomy and physics professor*

> What I really need and what interests me and I think what interests a lot of people

who are involved is being able to get books. I am not involved in . . . research, I quit that a few years ago. I figured when I'm done, I'm done. But I continue to teach. I have to do a lot of background (reading) and what I need for that is books—*retired Spanish and Portugese professor*

Although this was not a representative sample of retired faculty at Rutgers, it is clear that the faculty I talked to were very similar in their continued engagement in professional activity to the few previous studies of retired faculty at other universities. The two deans I spoke with each estimated that about 20 percent of their retired faculty continued scholarly research well into retirement. It would also appear that a number of those who have remained in the Rutgers area continue to teach. The library is crucial for both of these activities.

2. It was also clear that many emeriti professors saw retirement as an opportunity to pursue new intellectual interests that had not been part of their prior professional research careers.

On the research side, I've used (the library) mainly in history of science. I have sort of an avocational interest in the history of science and I am writing a long book that kind of reflects on all my work, so I've made more use of the history of science collection. And I anticipate in the next couple of months actually chasing journals I don't have. . . . So I expect to increase my own searches and requests for help—*retired psychology professor*

I discovered I tend to use the library now depending on what course I'm teaching. . . . My academic training is in Latin American theater and Mexican literature and so on. . . . One of the nice things about (lifelong learning courses) is that you can teach whatever you want and you really can get into research interests that are not your professional research interests. And that's tremendous fun. I have taught courses in T. S. Eliot poetry, the history of the development of comedy, things that I've been interested in for a long time, but they didn't fit into what my department would be allowed to teach, and I have a chance to spread out and do these kinds of things—*retired Spanish and Portugese professor*

The continuation of library services should be particularly important for faculty developing new intellectual interests because they would not have a storehouse of knowledge and expertise and books and journals of their own to rely upon. Retired faculty can develop new interests and set new goals for themselves, but they pursue those goals and interests with tried-and-true methods—and these often involve gathering information from library resources.

3. One of the biggest problems retired faculty experienced was the inability to access electronic resources remotely. The participants were unanimous in recommending that these privileges should be extended to emeriti professors.

It's a question for definition I think, as for what you can provide and what you want to provide and what your constituency is, but I think it's relatively easy to talk about us who can come (to the library itself) real easily, but there are people who can't and still are not dead from the neck up. And still maintain and hold interests and are generating new interests—*retired astronomy and physics professor*

There are a lot of people who are very active still and having availability through the Internet or whatever or however would be enormously important to them—*retired management and labor relations professor*

The university is looking for incentives for the faculty to retire. Continuing library services could be used as an inducement for the retirement package. . . . Priority one should be access to electronic journals. . . . Library services should be incorporated in the larger context of benefits for retirees. The off-site access to electronic resources could be offered as a subscription for a nominal fee—*former engineering dean*

(I have) a couple of comments (about) the journals which are now only available online. There are more and more of them. . . . I heard somewhere that these are available on computers on campus or on the home computers for people who have a Rutgers account. I was curious and tried to get something from my home computer, somehow I couldn't get it. So that's something to respond to—*retired chemistry professor*

4. It became obvious that none of the participants were clear about how or if their library

privileges changed as a function of retirement. They all recommended that policies and the service range for retired faculty had to be clarified and more clearly communicated. Several respondents felt that there was a need for a comprehensive website with this information, analogous to the alumni page on the Rutgers library website. Coordination of information provided by university human resources vis-à-vis the libraries regarding retirement was also deemed desirable.

> I would say . . . that the libraries could do with a little publicity. I was on the Rutgers library site and I see they've got something for alumni. Nothing that I saw for retirees . . . nothing to tell them what they could do. . . . I think the suggestion that if there were some document that said, here are the resources, here's what you have access to, and here's what you might have access to if you wanted to pay for it, I think that would be extrememly helpful. One way you could do that besides putting some kind of link on your website would be the (human resources) people who hold the retiree orientation sessions—*retired astronomy and physics professor*

> Each of us has been dealing with it hit or miss depending on who he or she knew. I think some kind of centralized (resource) availablility would be marvelous—*retired chemistry professor, after saying he still relies on help from the longtime library liaison to his former department*

5. Finally, there was moderate support from retired faculty for the idea of an institutional repository, mixed with considerable skepticism of how many faculty would take the extra time and effort to contribute material to it.

> (The public policy school) has a very nice website representing faculty members and their research and teaching activities. I don't think at this point they need any alternatives—*retired public policy professor*

> I think the Rutgers University Community Repository (RUCore) is positive for Rutgers University. . . . There is a tremendous duplication of efforts in terms of posting/removing documents from department pages, reserves, etc. If submission to RU-Core streamlines these scattered efforts in

addition to solving the archival issues, it would be very attractive—*retiring political science professor*

> I think repository could be a service to the profession. Being expansive is to the best interest of the profession. I would say that in the math department, 50 percent of faculty have their papers and course-related documents posted on the Web. The computer science department is 100 percent—*retiring mathematics professor*

> The key is the incentive to use the repository, such as a reward system. Faculty will not use it automatically. There should be a clear benefit by using it, and penalty by not using it. If major sponsors mandate it, because publicly funded research should be made available publicly, then, there will be submissions—*retired former engineering dean*

Together, these small group meetings with retired and soon-to-be retired faculty provided important insights into how retired faculty use the library, and how library services can be improved for this extremely important clientele. There is no reason to believe that retired faculty from other research universities would be any different from those at Rutgers in their needs and desires for continued access to their university's research libraries. However, as a point of comparison before making general policy recommendations, the author examined the information and services provided to retired faculty by other public university libraries.

STUDY 2: FACULTY RETIREES AND LIBRARY SERVICES AT PUBLIC ARL INSTITUTIONS

To determine what public research university libraries were doing for emeriti faculty, the author examined the webpages of the sixty-six ARL public university members for listings of services provided to retired faculty.[14] This environmental scan was conducted between April and June 2007 using the local search box to look for any references to "emeritus," "emeriti," "retired faculty," and "retirees." The available services could be grouped into information about borrowing privileges, interlibrary loan, library cards, remote access to electronic resources, and whether study carrels and study rooms were available to retired faculty. Other types of information the libraries provided

specifically for retired faculty (e.g., spouse privileges, proxy borrowers, public computer use the library, etc.) were also noted.

RESULTS

The data are summarized in figure 1. The first bar in the figure indicates the proportion of libraries whose webpages make any reference to retired faculty. The great majority (86 percent) of ARL public university libraries do target some information to this group. More than half specifically mention borrowing privileges for retired faculty. Beyond this, however, the breadth of the information that is provided to retired faculty falls off precipitously. Less than 30 percent of the library homepages provide information about interlibrary loan services for retired faculty, and only 17 percent communicate anything about remote access to online resources for retired faculty, the single issue that my sample cared about more than any other. Only 12 percent—less than 1 in 8—provide information about the availability to retired faculty of carrels and study rooms in the library—another issue one could imagine would be particularly important to people who may no longer have an office on campus. The miscellaneous category includes other services for emeriti, but none are individually mentioned by more than a handful of libraries. Thus it may be fair to conclude that most university libraries recognize that retired faculty are still part of their clientele, but that the libraries are not especially sensitive to this population's particular needs.

DISCUSSION

Many emeriti faculty remain professionally active long after they have officially retired from their jobs. Many engage in research and a large percentage continue teaching. A surprising number of retired professors in my sample saw retirement as an opportunity to pursue new intellectual interests unrelated, or minimally related, to their former careers. The university library often plays a critical role in the pursuit of all of these professional activities.

Yet information about services for retired and emeriti faculty, if provided, is often difficult to locate on the webpages of public university research libraries. It is frequently buried several levels down and scattered across several pages. Nor is the amount of information provided to retired faculty extensive. A notable exception is the University of Michigan website, which includes on its homepage a link to information for retired faculty and staff.[15]

The one issue that came up repeatedly in all of the discussion groups was the continuation of remote Internet access to the library's online resources for retired faculty. The faculty who attended these discussions were local residents. One can only assume that the demand for (and benefits of) online access would be even higher for people who have moved away from the university area. Indeed, the only interaction these people can have with the library is through the Internet, and university libraries can continue to aid in the productivity of emeriti faculty if they can make many scholarly databases and other academic resources available electronically.

As a result of the current project and continued input from emeriti faculty, the Rutgers University Libraries developed a webpage for this group. The page is an option under "faculty services" and describes the range of services available to emeriti faculty.[16] These services are congruent with the needs articulated by the retired faculty and include remote access to electronic resources. The author is a designated contact person for this user group, and the services continue to be evaluated.

CONCLUSIONS

Several service and policy recommendations for how university libraries can facilitate the continued productivity and successful retirement of

Figure 1. Information Provided to Retired Faculty on Public University ARL Webpages
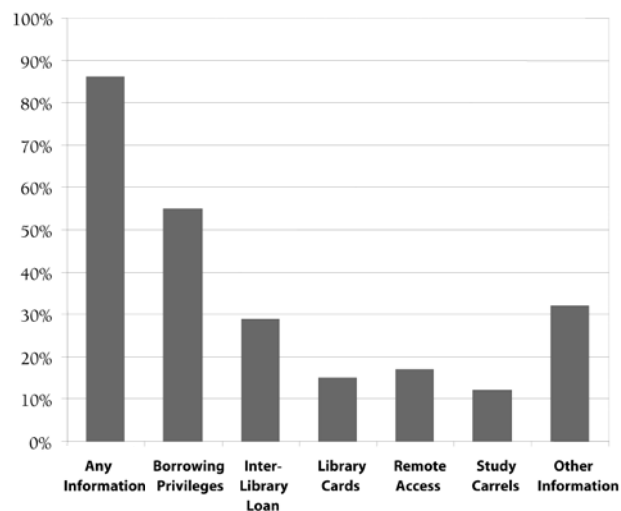
emeriti faculty from their institution emerged from these studies:

Universities should have clear, well-thought-out policies for the types of library privileges available to retired faculty, in the same way that they have clear policies about health insurance, office space, use of university facilities, and a host of other issues that typically fall under employment benefits. These privileges should be communicated by human resource specialists to retiring faculty at the time of their retirement. These same library privileges should also be listed on a library's webpages, with clear links to "emeriti" and "retired faculty."

Remote-access privileges should be routinely extended to all emeriti faculty. Licensing and implementation issues must be addressed to make it possible for retired faculty to have remote access to proprietary electronic databases. These individuals have made significant contributions to the mission of the university; they should be defined simply as faculty, and therefore included under current licensing agreements. Their research and teaching, which brings prestige to the university, is greatly facilitated by continued access to library resources.

As academic libraries develop institutional repositories to preserve and disseminate the intellectual capital of their faculties, it seems logical to encourage retired faculty to deposit their intellectual products. Emeriti faculty can also serve as links to their departments and cultivate this behavior in their colleagues.[17] Academic libraries and retired faculty can both benefit from such activity.

Finally, connection to emeriti faculty can be incorporated into the library organization through specific appointment of a liaison to this user group. Additional avenues for mutual benefit would be routinely explored by the liaison. For example, interested retired faculty could help teach library research clinics specific to their disciplinary areas. Most importantly, the liaison would have responsibility for regularly reviewing and updating current policies for emeriti as the needs of this group evolve.

Acknowledgements

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