
"Boomer-ize" Your Library Collection

The Basics

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Call them "boomers" or "baby boomers." They are the generation born just after the end of World War II (1946) through 1964, the year the Beatles were introduced on the Ed Sullivan Show. This is the Woodstock Generation, the age that marched against the establishment with the hopes of ending the Vietnam War. This defined generation has been seen as the group that would have everything that their parents and grandparents could provide for them. Unfortunately, many of their once-strong nest eggs have shrunk over the past few years because of the financial crisis precipitated by the mortgage collapse of 2008. In general, they are much healthier, better educated, and more financially secure than their parents or grandparents. This also is the "I can do anything" generation. Being a baby boomer myself, I can concur with all that.

At the same time, the nature of what it means to grow older and the definition of what it means to be retired is being changed rapidly by this cohort. This is where libraries can play an essential role as they broaden their senior-based collection beyond traditional large-print books.

Libraries around the country are developing innovative programs to make the retirement years productive, creative, and engaging. These include the Transforming Life After 50 program developed by the California State Library and the Senior Spaces: Pennsylvania Style project developed by Commonwealth Libraries. As these programs are being developed, libraries are faced with building relevant collections that address the myriad informational needs surrounding growing older as a baby boomer.

The RUSA *Guidelines for Library and Information Services for Older Adults* (2008) suggest some key areas for collection development including: health, health care, social security, financial planning, housing, independent living, elder law, care giving (including grandparenting), lifelong learning (including adult literacy and computer skills), community service, civic engagement, and volunteering. It further states that "the Library's collections, programs, and informational services should reflect the diverse interests and needs of older adults."¹

This issue of the "The Alert Collector" is designed to assist you in developing and enhancing your physical and virtual library collections to better serve the boomer generation. It also addresses issues of the aging lifespan by including material for the "Silent Generation" and the "Greatest Generation" (the parents and grandparents of the boomers). Marketing your collection can be made easier throughout the year. For example, May is Older Americans Month, September includes National Grandparents Day and November is both

Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month and National Family Caregivers Month.

These suggestions are intended for all types of libraries, especially public libraries. Titles of a more scholarly nature on aging, geriatrics, and gerontology have been intentionally excluded from this collection list. Also not included in this article are titles that were self-published or are available in e-book (e.g., Kindle) editions only.

BUILDING A BASIC COLLECTION

Libraries should begin with an evaluation of which of these key books they already own. These titles are the standards that have been written by well-known authors and should be included in a library's basic collection. Some are updated on a regular and frequent basis.

- Butler, Robert N. 2002. *Why Survive? Growing Old in America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. 978-0-8018-7425-3.
- Cohen, Gene D. 2006. *The Mature Mind: The Positive Power of the Aging Brain*. New York: Basic Books. 978-0-465-01204-6.
- Freedman, Marc. 2007. *Encore Careers: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life*. New York: PublicAffairs. 978-1-58648-634-1. (www.encore.org)
- Friedan, Betty. 2006. *The Fountain of Age*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 978-0-7432-9987-9.
- Howells, John. 2011. *Where to Retire: America's Best and Most Affordable Places*, 7th ed. Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot. 978-0-7627-6486-0.
- Mace, Nancy L. 2011. *The 36-Hour Day: A Family Guide to Caring for People Who Have Alzheimer Disease, Related Dementias, and Memory Loss*, 5th ed. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. 978-1-4214-0279-6.
- Mathews, Joseph. 2012. *Social Security, Medicare and Government Pensions: Get the Most Out of Your Retirement and Medical Benefits*, 17th ed. Berkeley, CA: Nolo. 978-1-4133-1685-8.

I would add to this list a personal favorite:

- Fonda, Jane. 2011. *Prime Time: Love, Health, Sex, Fitness, Friendship, Spirit—Making the Most of All of Your Life*. New York: Random House. 978-1-4000-6697-1.

For those looking to purchase reference material for their collection, I would suggest:

- Gitlin, Martin. 2011. *The Baby Boomer Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood. 978-0-313-38218-5.
- Mars, Laura. 2012. *Older Americans Information Directory*. Grey House. 978-1-59237-867-8.

You also can begin by looking at specific areas in your Dewey Decimal collection. For example, what do you have on your shelves in these categories? Are they outdated or need to be replaced?

- 305.26 Older Persons
- 305.262 Older Women
- 331.398 Older Workers
- 362.042 Caregivers
- 362.196 Alzheimer's Disease
- 571.878 Aging (or 612.67, 305.26)
- 618.97 Geriatrics
- 649.808 Home Care

MAGAZINES

For your Library reading section, you might include some of the top magazines:

- *The AARP Magazine* (ISSN: 1541-9894; \$16, 12 issues/year) with a readership of more than 23 million continues at the top of the list for all things "senior."
- *Good Old Days* (ISSN: 0046-6158; \$17.95, 6 issues/year) is a nostalgic magazine of days gone by from the turn of the century through the 1950s with contributed stories.
- *Kiplinger's Retirement Report* (ISSN: 1075-6671; \$59.95, 12 issues/year) provides up-to-date information on better ways to be more financially secure and develop practical strategies for the retirement years.
- *Reminisce* (ISSN: 1057-2368; \$12.98, 6 issues/year) is similar to *Good Old Days* with a more professional look to the magazine.
- *Road Scholar: Adventures in Lifelong Learning* (formerly *Elderhostel*) is a free quarterly newsletter that was once a staple in every public library. To subscribe, contact them at: www.roadscholar.org.
- *Travel 50 and Beyond* (ISSN: 1049-6211; \$15.80, 4 issues/year) includes practical tips and vacation ideas geared toward finding the best travel bargains in North America.
- *Where to Retire* (ISSN: 1060-0094; \$29.70, 6 issues/year) is a great resource if you are not sure where you want to retire, it provides a good place to start.

Your virtual Library might include the following:

- *Grand: The Digital Magazine for Grandparents and Their Families*. (www.grandmagazine.com). Previously available in print, this glossy magazine has been transferred to web only. Limited free access. Subscription-based for full contents.
- *AARP Magazine*. (www.aarp.org). It contains book reviews, booklists such as "Books for Grandparents," co-developed with Publishers Weekly, and the AARP Bookstore (a source for books with the AARP imprint published by Wiley). The bookstore includes titles in print, e-books,

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and downloads on topics such as travel, health, technology, cooking, and money.

Some recent titles from AARP to add to your collection include the following:

- *Betty Crocker Cooking for Two*. 2012. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. 978-1-118-23597-3.
- Boyd, Barbara. *AARP iPad: Tech to Connect*. 2012. New York: Wiley. 978-1-118-38796-2.
- Cullinane, Jan. 2012. *The Single Woman's Guide to Retirement*. New York: Wiley. 978-1-118-22950-7.
- Hannon, Kerry. 2012. *Great Jobs for Everyone 50+: Finding Work That Keeps You Happy and Healthy. . . . and Pays the Bills*. New York: Wiley. 978-1-118-20368-2.
- Peterson, Jonathan. 2012. *Social Security for Dummies*. New York: Wiley. 978-1-118-20573-0.
- Shadel, Doug. 2012. *Outsmarting the Scam Artists: How to Protect Yourself From the Most Clever Cons*. New York: Wiley. 978-1-118-17364-0.

FILMS

AARP has developed an annual listing of "Movies for Grown-ups" (www.aarp.org/entertainment/movies-for-grownups), which is an excellent resource to purchase movies for your collection that also can be used for programming efforts.

"The Legacy Film Series: New Perspectives on Aging" distributes and makes available rentals for films that portray positive images of aging (www.legacyfilmseries.com). I was excited to learn they have available the Academy Award-winning "Close Harmony," which was previously unavailable.

Terra Nova Films (founded in 1981) produces and distributes videos and other educational material on aging (www.terranova.org). They also sponsor the ongoing "Silver Image Film and Video Showcase," which provides additional resources for those working with older adults; many of their titles are now available for streaming on demand.

Many of the individual programs and series from PBS (www.shoppbs.org) are available through their educational media catalog. Titles can be purchased for home use or with public performance rights. Some titles you may want to screen in your library include the following:

- *The Sixties: The Years that Shaped a Generation*. 2005. DVD. Directed by David Davis and Stephen Talbot. Hollywood, CA: PBS Home Video.
- *Brain Fitness*, vol. 1. 2007. DVD. Executive producer, Anthony Tiano; produced by Lennlee Keep; directed by Eli Brown; associate producer, Jim Hoppin. Alexandria, VA: PBS Distribution.
- *Younger Next Year: The New Science of Aging*. 2011. DVD. PBS Home Video.
- *Life* (part 2). 2007. DVD. Directed by Bob Lampel. St. Paul, MN: Twin Cities Public Television. Supplemental

information can be found on the accompanying website: www.pbs.org/lifepart2.

BRAIN FITNESS: BOOMER "EXERCISE FOR THE MIND"

Brain fitness is an ever-growing field of book publication and software development. Libraries such as The New York Public Library, the Washington DC Public Library, and the Palo Alto Public Library are beginning to develop programs in this area. Libraries may want to review the Brain Fitness series from PBS (mentioned in the Films section) and look at company websites such as SharpBrains (www.sharpbrains.com) and PostitScience (www.postitscience) for additional ideas for purchase and programming options. In terms of collection development, consider this AARP best book nomination:

- Fernandez, Alvaro. 2009. *The SharpBrains Guide to Brain Fitness: 18 Interviews with Scientists, Practical Advice, and Product Reviews to Keep Your Brain Sharp*. San Francisco, CA: SharpBrains. 978-0-9823629-0-7.

TECHNOLOGY

Abby Stokes' book on technology is essential not only for the new learner but library staff as well. Her website (www.abbyandme.com) is a good resource for library staff that find themselves teaching computer classes for seniors.

- Stokes, Abby. 2012. *Is This Thing On? A Computer Handbook for Late Bloomers, Technophobes and the Kicking and Screaming*. New York: Workman. 978-0-7611-6882-9.

The "For Dummies" series by Wiley has several titles that are great additions to your technology collection; however, seniors have expressed to me that "dummies" is not necessarily how they want to be referred to. Consider adding the titles below to your collection:

- Muir, Nancy. 2011. *iPhone 4s for Seniors for Dummies*. New York: Wiley. 978-1-118-20961-5.
- ———. 2102. *iPad for Seniors for Dummies*, 4th ed. New York: Wiley. 978-1-118-35277-9.

I prefer the Studio Visual Steps series because the entire series is aimed toward seniors by utilizing large print and containing clear diagrams and photographs. Each book also is linked to the company's website for additional information and updates on the subject. At the writing of this article, there are more than twenty-five titles in print on topics like Windows 7, iPad, Mac, Windows Vista, Windows XP, Applications (like social media and Google), Microsoft Office, and digital photography and editing. For a complete list of current (and future) titles, check out their website (www.visualsteps).

com). The website also contains a teacher's guide for each title that acts as a lesson plan should you want to use the books in a library computer-training program.

AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES PROJECT

Cities around the United States and around the world are participating in the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_network/en/index.html). New titles have begun to be published to assist seniors, their families, and city planners as they face the challenges in this area. Titles include the following:

- Ball, M. Scott. 2012. *Livable Communities for Aging Populations: Urban Design for Longevity*. New York: Wiley. 978-0-470-64192-7.
- Cisneros, Henry, Margaret Dyer-Chamberlain, and Jane Hickie. 2012. *Independent for Life: Homes and Neighborhoods for an Aging America*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 978-0-292-73791-4.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Websites for older adults have evolved over the last decade to resemble a mix of social media and interactive Web 2.0 providing alternatives to Facebook. Most are free but often require registration (with a valid email address). Here are some resources to consider:

- AARP (www.aarp.org) is the best website for everything "senior" from health to technology that you can find on the web. It has some interactive discussion boards throughout the site and is the biggest senior destination on the web.
- The Elders: Independent Global Leaders Working Together for Peace and Human Rights (www.theelders.org). Not exactly a website devoted to aging, the Elders demonstrate the potential of the community working together to solve world issues.
- Eldr: Celebrate Aging! (www.eldr.com) "offers fresh viewpoints on social issues and new ideas on health, fitness, finance and activism."
- National Institutes on Health, Senior Health (www.NIH.SeniorHealth.gov) provides information on health and wellness including exercise stories and health videos.
- Retirement Living TV (www.rl.tv) is the website companion to the TV network and offers online previews of many of their cable shows. Check your local cable provider to see if RL is available in your area.
- Second Act (You. Part Two) www.secondact.com focuses

on the careers, lifestyles, and financial independence of younger boomers.

- Senior Job Bank (www.seniorjobbank.org) provides resources and job information for boomers and seniors in the workforce over the age of fifty.
- ThirdAge. (www.thirdage.com) Founded in 1997 by Mary Furlong (founder of Senionet), ThirdAge is the "50+ woman's site for Healthy Body, Mind & Spirit." Mary is the author of *Turning Silver into Gold: How to Profit in the New Boomer Marketplace* (FT Press, 2007) and annually organizes the "What's Next: Boomer Business Summit." You can subscribe to her newsletter on things boomer at: www.maryfurlong.com.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To assist in developing services for older adults at your library, these resources from the American Library Association are essential:

- RUSA RSS Library Service to an Aging Population Committee (www.ala.org/rusa/sections/rss/rsssection/rsscomm/libraryservage/libraryservices)
- OLOS Older Adults Task Force (www.ala.org/olos)

These two documents provide additional information on serving seniors in the library, and they are updated on a regular basis:

- RUSA Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults (2008)
www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/libraryservices
- Keys to Engaging Older Adults @ Your Library (2010)
www.ala.org/offices/olos/toolkits/olderadults

CONCLUSION

In 2006, the first baby boomers born in 1946 hit the magic age of sixty. Over the next decade, the senior population will grow from the current 35 million to an estimated 78 million. Discussion has begun on the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. How will these population changes affect libraries? What demands will this cohort make on our collections? Libraries of all types should view this not as a challenge but rather as an opportunity for improving, marketing, and targeting their collection to their users.

Reference

1. "Guidelines for Library and Information Services to older Adults," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 210.